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subject: Rav Frand - Torah-Sanctioned Zealotry

Parshas Pinchas

Torah-Sanctioned Zealotry

"RavFrand" List – Rabbi Frand on Parshas Pinchas

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 336, Tisha B'Av on Motzoei Shabbos.

This is the last shiur before the summer break. The shiur will resume in Elul. Good Shabbos!

In last week's parsha, Pinchas turned back Hashem's anger towards the Jewish people through his act of kanaus (zealotry). The Halacha states that – subject to very strict conditions – a kanai (zealot) may kill a "boel aramis" (a person who is engaged in a specific type of public sexual immorality). As a payment to Pinchas for his act, Hashem gave Pinchas His Brisi Shalom (Covenant of Peace). Many commentators are bothered by the appropriateness of this reward. A kanai is usually understood to be someone who engages in arguments and controversy. Why is peace the appropriate reward?

There is an interesting Medrash that contains an implied criticism of Moshe Rabbeinu: "Since Moshe was passive during this incident, no one knows the location of his grave.

This teaches us that a person must be as bold as a leopard, nimble as an eagle, speedy as a deer, and mighty as a lion to do the will of his Creator." This Medrash indicates that the anonymity of Moshe's gravesite is a punishment for the very slight infraction of Moshe not performing this act of kanaus himself. The Medrash itself points out that this is an example of Hashem acting meticulously with the righteous, measuring their actions with precision.

Properly performing an act of kanaus is not something that just anyone can take upon themselves. The person must be at the highest spiritual level. But the Medrash here faults Moshe Rabbeinu in the context of Hashem measuring the acts of the righteous "by a hair's breadth."

Rav Mordechai Gifter (Rosh Yeshiva, Telshe Yeshiva, Cleveland Ohio) emphasizes a very important point. The Torah describes Pinchas, or anyone who kills a person who is demonstrating this public immorality, as a "kanai". People tend to translate the word "kanai" to mean an "extremist." Rav Gifter writes that this is incorrect. As the Rambam writes (Hilchos Dayos 1:4), Judaism does not appreciate extremism. The middle path, the "golden mean" is the way the Torah advises people to act. "Kanaus" is not extremism.

Quoting the Sifrei, Rav Gifter defines kanaus as the act of sublimating a person's entire self to the wants of Hashem, to the extent that the person is willing to give up his life, if necessary. That is why not all of us can assume the mantle of kanaus. Torah-sanctioned kanaus is reserved for those people who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for Hashem. When a personal agenda does not exist — when all that exists is Hashem's honor — then, and only then, do we consider a person's actions to be in the category of Torah-sanctioned kanaus. If a person's motives are not completely pure — if there is an admixture of other motives to the act of kanaus — then it ceases to be an approved act of kanaus.

Consequently, it is highly appropriate that the reward for this act is the Brisi Shalom. Shalom does not necessarily mean peace. Shalom means perfection, as in the word "shalem" (complete). When a person performs an act of kanaus, such that his will and Hashem's will become one, then he has achieved shleimus (completeness) with his Maker. The gift of shalom, meaning shalem is thus highly appropriate.

The chachomim (sages) say that despite the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu erred — if we can even use that word — by failing to assume the mantle of kanaus, Moshe corrects this passivity in next week's Parsha. In Parshas Mattos, Moshe is commanded to "Seek revenge for the children of Israel against the Midianites, then be gathered into your nation" (Bamidbar 31:2). The chachomim infer from this connection between seeking revenge against Midyan and Moshe dying that Moshe had the ability to extend his lifetime. His death was dependent on his first taking revenge against Midyan. Moshe, in effect, had a blank check. He could have taken two years or five years or ten years to seek revenge against Midyan. What did Moshe

do? Moshe immediately proceeded to take revenge against Midyan, knowing full well that its completion would pave the way for his own imminent demise. Here, Moshe performed the ultimate act of kanaus.

Kanaus is completely sublimating personal desires to the point that the person is prepared to even give up his life for Hashem. That is precisely what Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrates in Parshas Mattos. This is why Chazal view that incident as a kaparah (an atonement) for his passiveness during the incident at the end of last week's parsha.

The 'Sin' of the Father Passes Down to the Son to Demonstrate True Parenthood

There is a famous comment of the Da'as Zekeinim m'Baalei haTosfos that appears in Sefer Bereishis.

There is a census in this week's parsha that enumerates the various families of the Jewish nation. One pasuk (verse) contains the phrase, "Yoshuv of the family of Yohuvi" (Bamidbar 26:24). Yoshuv was one of the sons of Yissocher. However, in Parshas Vayigash, where the descendants of the shevatim (tribes) who went down to Mitzraim are listed, there is no such son of Yissocher listed. However, there is a son of Yissocher listed named Yov (Bereishis 46:13).

The Da'as Zekeinim makes the following enigmatic comment. There is a controversy as to how the name Yissocher (which is spelled with a double letter 'sin') is pronounced. Do we pronounce both 'sin's (Yissoscher) or just one of them (Yissocher)? Prior to Parshas Pinchas, where Yissoscher's son is always called by the name Yov (without an extra 'sin'), we pronounce Yissascher with both 'sin's. Starting here in Parshas Pinchas, we pronounce Yissocher, as if it were written with only one 'sin'. What happened?

The chachomim say that Yov complained to his father that he had the same name as an idol and he did not like the name. Therefore, his father took a 'sin' from his own name and gave it to his son, whose name became Yashuv. From this point forward, we read Yissocher's name with a single 'sin'.

Rav Gifter quotes a simple question (from Rav Chaim Elezari). Why was this necessary? We do not need a 'donor' in order to add a letter. Why couldn't any letter or name be added without removing it from someone else?

Rav Gifter says that the answer is obvious. This is a father who is trying to protect his son. Has there ever been a father who spared anything to guarantee that his son was protected? That is what parenting is all about. Nothing concerns us like the welfare of our children. "I am not going to rely on just any old 'sin' from the Aleph-bais. I am not sure that just any 'sin' will do the trick. I am giving you MY 'sin'. My name will be different. My name will be lacking something and so will I. But that does not concern me in the least – because I am a father and my son's welfare is all that counts! I insist on giving you the very best letter – one that comes straight from my name – to make sure that you are protected." That is a father and that is love.

The gematria (numeric value using system of ascribing numeric values to Hebrew letters) of 'ahavah' (love) is 13 (1+5+2+5). The gematria of 'da'agah' (worry) is also 13 (4+1+3+5). Ahavah = Da'agah (Love = Worry). Every parent can appreciate this gematria. Being a parent means losing sleep, caring and worrying. It means looking at the clock, going to the window, and pulling the curtain. Why aren't they home yet? Why haven't they called? Ahava = Da'agah. This is what parenthood is all about.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem DavidATwersky@gmail.com Edited by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Series on the weekly Torah portion.

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from: **Rabbi YY Jacobson** <rabiyy@theyeshiva.net>

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subject: The Mission Statement of Judaism - Essay by Rabbi YY

The Mission Statement of Judaism

"One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon"

The Verse that Says It All

A fascinating Midrash credits an isolated verse in this week's Torah portion, Pinchas, encapsulating the quintessence of Judaism[1].

The Midrash quotes four opinions as to which biblical verse best sums up the ultimate message of Torah. One sage, by the name of Ben Azzai, believed it was the verse in Genesis[2]: "This is the book of the chronicles of man; on the day that G-d created man He created him in the image of G-d."

Another sage, by the name of Ben Zoma, holds a different verse to be more central to Jewish thought: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our G-d, the Lord is One[3]."

A third Talmudist, Ben Nanas, chooses this verse: "You shall love your fellow man like yourself[4]." Finally, the fourth sage, Shimon, the son of Pazi, casts his pitch for the epic verse of the Torah. It is culled from the section in this week's portion that deals with the obligation during the time of the Temple to bring each day two lambs as an offering to G-d. "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon[5]."

This verse, according to Shimon, the son of Pazi, is the defining verse of Judaism.

The Midrash concludes: "One of the rabbis stood on his feet and declared, "The verdict follows the opinion of Shimon the son of Pazi!"

The Big Question

This is strange. The first three opinions make sense. The

notion that all of Judaism can be traced back to the idea that a human being reflects G-d seems right. The same can be said about the concept of a single and universal G-d, or the injunction to love our fellow man like ourselves—these ideas, introduced 3300 years ago by the Hebrew Bible, vividly embody the essential weltanschauung of Judaism and its contribution to civilization.

But how does the verse "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon" represent the core essence of Torah? How can one even begin to compare the message about offering two lambs with the global and noble ideas contained in the other three opinions?

What is even more astonishing is that the final verdict in the Midrash selects this verse about the sheep as the "winner." The biblical verses dealing with love, monotheism and human dignity, the foundations of morality and civilization, did not "make it" in the contest; it is precisely this verse enjoining us to offer a lamb in the morning and a lamb in the afternoon -- that was chosen as the ultimate embodiment of Judaism!

The Depth of Perseverance

One of the most seminal Jewish thinkers in the post-medieval period was Rabbi Judah Loew (1525-1609), who was known as the Maharal and served as the Chief Rabbi of Prague. In one of his works[6] he offers a powerful answer.

What the fourth and last sage, Shimon the son of Pazi, was suggesting is that the verse that ultimately defines what it means to be a Jew is the one that speaks of unwavering consistency, "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon." Every single morning and every single afternoon you shall make a sacrifice for your Creator.

The biblical declarations that reveal the philosophical depth of Torah and its grand vision for humanity—monotheism, love, human dignity—are powerful, splendid, and revolutionary. They have redefined theology, sociology, and psychology. But what makes Judaism and Jewish life unique is the unswerving commitment to live and breathe these truths day in, day out, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

I can be moved to tears by the notion of tikkun olam, of healing the world; I can preach about the ideals of human dignity, love, and peace. But the ideas and inspiration are fleeting. The real and ultimate power of Judaism is that it managed to translate the profound visionary ideals in daily routines and behaviors. Judaism always inspired its people to cultivate their relationship with G-d on a continuous basis, every day of their lives. Torah asks the human being to make daily sacrifices for truth, for love, for peace, for G-d, for family, for marriage. "One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon."

During exciting days and monotonous days, on bright days and bleak days—"One sheep you shall offer in the morning and the second sheep in the afternoon." In the morning, when you awake, you are called to make a sacrifice to G-d. In the

afternoon, when your day is winding down, you are called, once again, to sacrifice something of your ego and insecurity for G-d.

Judaism is not only about a moving Yom Kippur experience or an emotional memorial ceremony; it is something the Jew lives every moment of his life. It is the dedication of ordinary people to construct, through daily ordinary acts, a fragment of heaven on planet earth.

It is a truth the great artists grasp well: Consistency is the soil in which creativity blossoms. The mission statement of Judaism is that you are always an ambassador of the Divine, an ambassador for love, light, and hope. When your sun rises and when your sun sets, you are G-d's agent here on earth to infuse it with meaning, purpose, and harmony, creating unity out of chaos, oneness out of fragmentation, light weaved from the stuff of darkness. You may be having a good day or a bad day, you may be at peace or in the midst of a struggle, but you are, in the words of the Maharal, an "Eved Hashem," a servant, a messenger of G-d. You are a ray of infinity, working for G-d, and reflecting His oneness in the world you inhabit.

(Please make even a small and secure contribution to help us continue our work. Click here. To watch a more elaborate video presentation of this class by Rabbi YY Jacobson, please click here.)

[1] The Midrash is quoted in the introduction to Ein Yakov, compiled by Rabbi Yaakov Ben Chaviv. He writes there that he found this information recorded in the name of the Midrash, but could not discover the original source. He proceeds to present his own explanation to the Midrash. 2] Genesis 5:1. [3] Deuteronomy 6:4. [4] Leviticus 19:18. [5] Numbers 28:4. [6] Nesivos Olam vol. 2 Nesiv Ahavas Ria chapter one. (My gratitude to Rabbi Nir Gurevitch, spiritual leader of the Australian Gold Coast community. I first heard this Midrash and Maharal from Rabbi Gurevitch, when I visited his community years ago.)

The Prohibition of Sorcery Revivim Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

According to the vast majority of Jewish sages, sorcery has the power to change things and know hidden matters, but its power is not constant * Many times they err and fail * Since it involves spiritual forces, there are many charlatans in this field * There are people who have special spiritual abilities to see and sense beyond the norm * Sorcery can harm even good and righteous people * The more a person ascends in levels of righteousness, the less power sorcerers have to harm them In this week's Torah portion Balak, we learn about the great sorcerer Balaam, and this is an opportunity to discuss the prohibition of sorcery and its significance.

God commanded Israel not to practice any form of sorcery, as written in the Torah: "When you come to the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. Let no one be found

among you who consigns his son or daughter to the fire, or who is an augur, a soothsayer, a diviner, a sorcerer, one who casts spells, or one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits, or one who inquires of the dead. For anyone who does such things is abhorrent to the Lord, and it is because of these abhorrent things that the Lord your God is dispossessing them before you. You must be wholehearted with the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 18:9-15). It’s worth noting that according to our Sages, the prohibition of sorcery does not apply to non-Jews.

There are two main aims of sorcery: 1) to change things in nature, such as casting a curse on a person to cause their death or make them poor. 2) To know hidden matters and future events.

Those Who Believe Sorcery is False

Some poskim believe that all the acts of sorcerers are false, as Maimonides states (Laws of Idolatry 11:16): “All these matters are falsehood and lies, and it was with these that the idolaters of old misled the nations of the lands to follow them. It is not fitting for Israel, who are wise and intelligent, to be drawn after these vanities, nor to imagine that they are of any consequence... Anyone who believes in these and similar things, thinking in his heart that they are true and words of wisdom, but that the Torah prohibited them, is nothing but a fool and lacking in reason... But those of wisdom and sound mind know with clear proofs that all these matters that the Torah forbade are not words of wisdom but emptiness and vanity that those lacking in reason were drawn after, abandoning all ways of truth because of them...” In other words, according to Maimonides, the sorcery for which an Israelite who performs it is liable to death by stoning is sorcery that many people believe the sorcerer succeeded in using to effect real changes in the world.

This is also the opinion of Rav Shmuel ben Chofni Gaon, and Rav Saadia Gaon and Rav Hai Gaon leaned towards this view, in the story of Saul’s necromancer (see Radak, I Samuel 28:24). This is also the view of the Sefer HaChinuch (249), and Tiferet Yisrael (Kiddushin 4, Boaz 1). This is also the opinion of Ibn Ezra (Leviticus 19:31), who explained that Balaam knew through astrology when disasters would befall individuals and nations, and would then curse them, causing people to think that the disasters came upon them because of his curse (cited in Rabbeinu Bachya, Numbers 22:6).

The Words of our Sages Imply that Sorcery Has Power

From the words of our Sages in many places, it appears that they regarded sorcery as something real. However, according to Maimonides, their words are allegory and secret that should not be understood literally. Some explain that even Maimonides and his followers agree that there is truth in the existence of these powers (Radbaz 5:1695; Responsa Maharshal 3; Bach, Maaseh Rokeach, and others). However, since they often lie, and even when they succeed, their actions

ultimately lead to failure, they considered their acts as falsehood and vanity.

It can be said that just as Maimonides explained the words of our Sages not according to their simple meaning, so too, many commentators explained Maimonides’ words not according to their simple meaning.

According to Many, Sorcery Has Power

However, according to the vast majority of Jewish sages, sorcery has the power to change things and know hidden matters, but its power is not constant, and they often err and fail. As Ramban wrote (Deuteronomy 18:9): “Many act piously regarding omens, saying that there is no truth in them at all, for who can tell the raven and the crane what will be.” It’s worth noting how he referred to Maimonides’ position as one of piety, that out of his great piety he denied the power of sorcerers. However, Ramban continued: “But we cannot deny things that are well-known to the eyes of observers, and our rabbis also acknowledge them...” He went on to explain that unlike sorcerers, who often err and mislead, God gave us true prophets. As our Sages said (Sifrei, *ibid.*): “Lest you say they have something to inquire of and I have nothing? Scripture teaches, ‘But as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you to do so,’” but rather, He gave you prophets who continue the guidance of the Torah.

This is also the opinion of Recanati, Rabbeinu Bachya, Abarbanel on Deuteronomy 18; Sefer Ha’Ikarim 3:8; Ran Discourses 4, 12; Rivash 92; Radbaz 3:405; Vilna Gaon Yoreh Deah 179:13, and many others.

It is Agreed that They Often Lie

Since these are spiritual powers that are difficult to measure, there are many deceivers in this field. Some deceive themselves into thinking they have spiritual powers, some know they don’t have powers and deceive people into thinking they do, and some who had powers in the past and lost them over time, but continue to deceive themselves and others that they still have powers. However, one cannot deny that there are people with special spiritual abilities to see and sense beyond the norm, and when they connect to forces of impurity, they can perform sorcery to cause events and know the future.

The Power of Speech for Good and Evil

The main power of a person to change the world for better or worse is through speech, because God created the world and sustains it through letters and speech. God created man in the ‘image of God’, meaning in a way that he too can act in the world and change it. Therefore, he has the ability to speak, learn and teach, and cooperate with others to add goodness and blessing to the world. Or conversely, to arouse them to evil. Moreover, God gave man the talent to connect to higher levels above this world, through which the righteous can elevate the world and advance it, spiritually and morally. Likewise, the righteous who understand the secret of the names and letters in the Book of Creation can create things in the world through intentions and utterances of holy names and combinations of

letters (though it is not advisable to do so). In contrast, sorcerers can, through intentions and utterances of impure names and incantations, change the letters and words through which abundance flows to the world, causing harm to those they wish to curse. To strengthen their sorcery, they perform various acts, such as burning incense, and the like.

Developing Sorcery through Strengthening Evil

Just as the righteous who cling to God and good traits can thereby understand the inner depth of the Torah and merit divine inspiration, and act to rectify and perfect the world, so too can the wicked who cling to evil traits, understand the roots of evil, and its ways of operation. People with spiritual talent, by connecting to forces of impurity, can receive inspiration to invent spells and sorceries capable of acting in the world. For God created this against that, and just as He created the good orders of the world, which are the foundation for good traits, such as kindness and truth, righteousness and justice, and all of them together are ten sefirot, so too, He created against this the forces of destruction, which are the foundation of evil traits, such as lust, envy and honor, and they too are ten impure sefirot. Just as in holiness one can, through prayers to God and performing mitzvot, bring blessing to the world, against this, in impurity, through incantations and acts of sorcery, one can block the flow of life. And so our Sages explained (Avot 5:19) that traits are the foundation of everything. Therefore, three things characterized the disciples of Balaam the wicked, the great sorcerer: 'An evil eye' – envious of others. 'A haughty spirit' – arrogant. 'A broad soul' – lustful. And their end is "they inherit Gehinnom and descend to the pit of destruction", as our Sages said (Avot 4:21): "Envy, lust and honor remove a person from the world."

The Power of Sorcerers Against the Righteous

Sorcery can harm even good and righteous people. Since God created the ability for man to influence what happens in the spiritual worlds, just as if a wicked person strikes a righteous person a fatal blow – the righteous person will die, so too, if the sorcerer succeeds in disrupting the channels of abundance of the righteous person, he will be harmed and die. However, the more a person ascends in levels of righteousness, the less power sorcerers have to harm him. This is because just as there are levels in holiness, so too against this, there are levels in impurity, and only if the sorcerer succeeds in connecting to a higher level in impurity than the parallel level of the righteous person in holiness, can he harm him.

The great sorcerers sought the moral weak point in those they wanted to curse, and thus could arouse accusations against them. When anger would arise against them in the upper realms, they would curse them, and their curse would take effect. Our Sages said (Berachot 7a) about Balaam the wicked who sought to accuse Israel, and at the moment when anger would be aroused against them for not behaving properly, he would curse them with a curse of destruction. However, to save Israel, during all those days, God did not become angry

with Israel, and Balaam could not curse them, as he said (Numbers 23:8): "How shall I curse, whom God has not cursed? And how shall I denounce, whom the Lord has not denounced?"

Confronting Them through Faith in God

Although the forces of evil have the ability to harm the righteous, God commanded Israel not to engage in sorcery, but to cling to God and follow His ways. By doing so, they would be saved from sorcery, which will not be able to harm them.

As we learned in the previous Torah portion, when snakes attacked Israel, when they lifted their eyes to heaven, they were saved (Mishnah Rosh Hashanah 3:8).

Similarly, it is told (Sanhedrin 67b) about Rabbi Chanina that a certain sorceress tried to take dust from under his feet, so that by doing so, she could cast a strong spell on him. Rabbi Chanina said to her: I am not afraid of this, "For the Lord is God; there is none else besides Him." This does not mean he relied on a miracle that God would perform for him due to his merits, for it is not proper for a person to rely on a miracle and consider himself so righteous that God must help him. Rather, Rabbi Chanina recognized in himself that he was perfect in his faith that God governs everything, and in such a state, there is no place for sorcery to enter and intervene between him and Divine governance. Consequently, he had nothing to fear from her sorceries. And even if she succeeded in harming him, it would be through Divine providence from God for his benefit. Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>

subject: Covenant and Conversation
COVENANT & CONVERSATION

Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Pacing Change

PINCHAS

Embedded in this week's parsha is one of the great principles of leadership. The context is this: Moses, knowing that he was not destined to lead the next generation across the Jordan into the promised land, asked God to appoint a successor. He remembered what had happened when he had been away from the Israelites for a mere 40 days. They had panicked and made a Golden Calf. Even when he was present, there were times of strife, and in recent memory, the rebellion on the part of Korach and others against his leadership. The possibility of rift or schism if he died without a designated successor in place was immense. So he said to God:

"May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in. Let the Lord's people not be like sheep without a shepherd."

Num. 27:16-17

God duly chose Joshua, and Moses inducted him. One detail in Moses' request, however, always puzzled me. Moses asked for

a leader who would “go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in.” That, surely, is saying the same thing twice. If you go out before the people, you are leading them out. If you come in before the people, you are bringing them in. Why then say the same thing twice?

The answer comes from a direct experience of leadership itself. One of the arts of leadership – and it is an art, not a science – is a sense of timing, of knowing what is possible when.

Sometimes the problem is technical. In 1981, there was a threat of a coal miners’ strike. Margaret Thatcher knew that the country had very limited supplies of coal and could not survive a prolonged strike. So she negotiated a settlement. In effect, she gave in. Afterward, and very quietly, she ordered coal stocks to be built up. The next time there was a dispute between the miners and the government – 1984-1985 – there were large coal reserves. She resisted the miners and after many weeks of strike action they conceded defeat. The miners may have been right both times, or wrong both times, but in 1981 the Prime Minister knew she could not win, and in 1984 she knew she could.

A much more formidable challenge occurs when it is people, not facts, that must change. Human change is a very slow. Moses discovered this in the most dramatic way, through the episode of the spies. An entire generation lost the chance of entering the land. Born in slavery, they lacked the courage and independence of mind to face a prolonged struggle. That would take a new generation born in freedom.

If you do not challenge people, you are not a leader. But if you challenge them too far, too fast, disaster happens. First there is dissension. People start complaining. Then there are challenges to your leadership. They grow more clamorous, more dangerous. Eventually there will be a rebellion or worse.

On 13 September 1993, on the lawn of the White House, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yasser Arafat shook hands and signed a Declaration of Principles intended to carry the parties forward to a negotiated peace. Rabin’s body language that day made it clear that he had many qualms, but he continued to negotiate. Meanwhile, month by month, public disagreement within Israel grew.

Two phenomena in the summer of 1995 were particularly striking: the increasingly vituperative language being used between the factions, and several public calls to civil disobedience, suggesting that students serving in Israel’s defence forces should disobey army orders if called on to evacuate settlements as part of a peace agreement.

Calls to civil disobedience on any significant scale is a sign of a breakdown of trust in the political process and of a deep rift between the government and a section of society. Violent language in the public arena is also dangerous. It testifies to a loss of confidence in reason, persuasion, and civil debate.

On 29 September 1995 I published an article in support of Rabin and the peace process. Privately, however, I wrote to him and urged him to spend more time on winning the argument within Israel itself. You did not have to be a prophet to see the danger he was in from his fellow Jews.

The weeks went by, and I did not hear from him. Then, on Motzei Shabbat, 4 November 1995, we heard the news that he had been assassinated. I went to the funeral in Jerusalem. The next morning, Tuesday 7 November, I went to the Israeli Embassy in London to pay my condolences to the ambassador. He handed me a letter, saying, “This has just arrived for you.” We opened it and read it together in silence. It was from Yitzhak Rabin, one of the last letters he ever wrote. It was his reply to my letter. It was three pages long, deeply moving, an eloquent restatement of his commitment to peace. We have it, framed, on the walls of my office to this day. But it was too late.

That, at critical moments, is the hardest of all leadership challenges. When times are normal, change can come slowly. But there are situations in which leadership involves getting people to change, and that is something they resist, especially when they experience change as a form of loss.

Great leaders see the need for change, but not everyone else does. People cling to the past. They feel safe in the way things were. They see the new policy as a form of betrayal. It is no accident that some of the greatest of all leaders – Lincoln, Gandhi, John F. and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Sadat, and Rabin himself – were assassinated.

A leader who fails to work for change is not a leader. But a leader who attempts too much change in too short a time will fail. That, ultimately, is why neither Moses nor his entire generation (with a handful of exceptions) were destined to enter the land. It is a problem of timing and pace, and there is no way of knowing in advance what is too fast and what too slow, but this is the challenge a leader must strive to address.

That is what Moses meant when he asked God to appoint a leader “to go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in.” These were two separate requests. The first – “to go out before them and come in before them” – was for someone who would lead from the front, setting a personal example of being unafraid to face new challenges. That is the easier part.

The second request – for someone who would “lead them out and bring them in” – is harder. A leader can be so far out in front that when he turns round he sees that no one is following. He or she has gone out “before” the people, but has not “led them out.” He has led but people have not followed. His courage is not in doubt. Neither is his vision. What is wrong in this case is simply his sense of timing. His people are not yet ready.

It seems that at the end of his life Moses realised that he had been impatient, expecting people to change faster than they were capable of doing. That impatience is evident at several

points in the book of Numbers, most famously when he lost his temper at Merivah, got angry with the people and struck the rock, for which he forfeited the chance of leading the people across the Jordan and into the promised land.

Leading from the front, all too often he found people not willing to follow. Realising this, it is as if he were urging his successor not to make the same mistake. Leadership is a constant battle between the changes you know must be made, and the changes people are willing to make. That is why the most visionary of leaders seem, in their lifetime, to have failed. So it was. So it always will be.

But in truth they have not failed. Their success comes when – as in the case of Moses and Joshua – others complete what they began.

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The Three Weeks

By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Question #1: Nights

Is it permitted to schedule a wedding for the night of Shiva Asar BeTamuz?

Question #2: Going swimming?

I have not yet gone swimming this year. May I go during the Three Weeks?

Question #3:

May I schedule my son's upsherin during the Three Weeks?

Introduction

This article will discuss the laws and customs associated with the Three Weeks. The Three Weeks is a significant period of mourning in the Jewish calendar, dedicated to commemorating the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim. Spanning from the 17th of Tamuz to Tisha B'Av, this solemn time serves as a reminder of the tremendous losses suffered by the Jewish people and allows for reflection on the spiritual significance of the Beis Hamikdash and what we are missing by its loss.

This season is referred to by the Midrash Rabbah (Eicha 1:3) as the period of Bein Hametzarim (see Eicha 1:3). In the pasuk, these words mean "in difficult times" or "in dire straits." Referring to the season as Bein Hametzarim means that it is a difficult mourning period between the two days in which the Jewish people suffered many tragic events.

The Mishnah (Ta'anis 26 a-b) teaches that five tragic events occurred on the 17th day of Tamuz:

1. The luchos (tablets) containing the Aseres Hadibros were destroyed.
2. The daily korbanos offered in the First Beis Hamikdash were stopped (see Rambam, Hilchos Ta'anis 5:2).
3. The walls of the city of Yerushalayim were breached, leading to the destruction of the Second Beis Hamikdash (Ta'anis 28b).

4. The wicked Apostomus, a Greek officer, burned the Torah, during the period of the second Beis Hamikdash (see Talmud Yerushalmi and Tiferes Yisrael).

5. An idol was placed inside the Beis Hamikdash. According to Rashi, this was done by the evil King Menashe. Others explain that this incident occurred during the Second Beis Hamikdash time period (Rambam, Hilchos Ta'anis 5:2). These two interpretations reflect two opinions recorded in the Talmud Yerushalmi.

It should be noted that neither the Mishnah nor the Gemara associates any mourning practices with the Bein Hametzarim period. The Mishnah (Ta'anis 26b) mentions only a mourning period beginning on Rosh Chodesh Av by "decreasing simcha," Mishenichnas Av mema'atim b'simcha; "Once Av enters, we decrease our happiness." Although the Mishnah does not clarify what we must do to decrease our happiness, the Gemara (Yevamos 43a) lists four activities that are banned during these days:

1. We decrease our business activities.
2. We refrain from construction and planting intended for joyous reasons (Yerushalmi Taanis, cited by Tosafos to Yevamos 43a s.v. Milisa).
3. We do not conduct weddings.
4. We do not make a festive meal to celebrate an engagement. (Please note that this interpretation of the Gemara follows the Ramban in Toras Ha'adam and the Tur Orach Chayim 551, but is not the approach of Rashi ad loc.)

Thus, the Gemara prohibits conducting weddings during the period we call "The Nine Days," but not during "The Three Weeks." Refraining from making weddings during the Three Weeks developed among Ashkenazic communities, which started the period of mourning from the 17th of Tamuz (Darkei Moshe, Orach Chayim 551:5 and the Rema to Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:2). This practice has also been accepted by many Sefardic communities. However, some Sefardic communities permit weddings until Rosh Chodesh Av, and even later, under certain circumstances (Shu't Yabia Omer 6: Orach Chayim #43).

Notwithstanding the accepted Ashkenazic custom, the Shevus Yaakov, a highly respected European, early eighteenth century authority, suggests that someone who has not yet fulfilled the mitzvah of peru urvu may marry during the Three Weeks. He compares it to a mourner who, even during the sheloshim mourning period, may marry if he has not yet fulfilled peru urvu.

Following the ruling of the Shevus Yaakov, the Chayei Adam (133:11) rules that someone who has not fulfilled peru urvu may indeed marry, even during the Nine Days, although he notes that the custom is not to. The Kaf Hachayim (551:33, 101) disagrees with the Chayei Adam, citing authorities who prohibit even someone who has not yet fulfilled peru urvu from getting married during the Nine Days. It is interesting that the Kaf Hachayim concludes that a childless Ashkenazi

has more basis to be lenient and marry than a childless Sefardi, since the Rema permits one to override restrictions of the Bein Hametzarim period in order to fulfill a mitzvah, whereas the Beis Yosef concludes otherwise!

The Evening of the 17th

Regarding weddings on the evening of the 17th of Tamuz, many poskim recommend having the chupah before sunset of the 16th of Tamuz to avoid the restrictions associated with the actual day of the 17th (Piskei Teshuvos 551:7 footnote 51). This is because many authorities treat the night of the 17th with the stringencies of the Nine Days (Elyah Rabbah; Shu't Chayim Sha'al #24; Biur Halacha 551:2). Similarly, when the 17th of Tamuz falls on Sunday, most poskim prohibit making a wedding on the night of the 17th (Motza'ei Shabbos).

However, under extenuating circumstances, Rav Moshe Feinstein permits scheduling a wedding on the Motza'ei Shabbos of the 17th of Tamuz (Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:168).

Ashkenazic custom did not ban celebrating engagements during the Three Weeks, but the Magen Avraham rules that there should be no music or dancing (Magen Avraham 551:10). Until Rosh Chodesh, it is allowed to celebrate the engagement with a festive meal, while from Rosh Chodesh onward, it should include only light refreshments (Magen Avraham 551:10; Mishnah Berurah 551:19).

Most forms of dancing are prohibited during the Three Weeks, although there are authorities who permit dancing at a sheva brachos (Magen Avraham 551:10; Elyah Rabbah 551:6; Mishnah Berurah 551:16).

Listening to or playing music is generally prohibited during the Three Weeks (Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim Vol. 4:21:4; Shu't Tzitz Eliezer 15:33). However, it is permitted to play music for non-Jews or to teach music for a livelihood (Biur Halacha to 551:2). Some poskim permit taking music lessons that one intends to use for one's livelihood, provided there will be a loss of skill if one refrains from lessons (Shu't Tzitz Eliezer 16:19). This would include music practice for a professional musician or group that needs to keep its skills sharp or is preparing for a concert. Nevertheless, the Kaf Hachayim (Orach Chayim 551:41) suggests teaching that a music teacher should teach sad songs, or, even better, avoid teaching music altogether during this time.

Sefardim and the Three Weeks

The Shulchan Aruch, the main Sefardic source, makes no mention of extending mourning before Rosh Chodesh. It appears that in his day and place, there was still no observance of "Three Weeks," but only of "Nine Days." However, other Sefardic authorities mention that this practice spread to their communities (Keneses Ha'gedolah, Hagahos Tur end of 551; Ben Ish Chai, Parshas Devarim #4; Kaf Hachayim 551:33, 101). By the nineteenth century, it appears that most Sefardic communities observed the entire Three Weeks period, certainly to the extent of prohibiting weddings. For example,

the Ben Ish Chai assumed that weddings are not performed the entire Three Weeks, as did the Sedei Chemed.

Frummer

If the Mishnah and Gemara permit all these activities, why did Ashkenazim create prohibitions that were stricter than those observed at the time of the Gemara?

The reason is that in the times of Chazal, the memories of the Beis Hamikdash were still very fresh in people's minds, and a shorter period of mourning was a sufficient reminder of the churban. But now, after being in an extended period of golus, we require a longer period of mourning to arouse our feelings and mourn properly for the Beis Hamikdash.

Some commentaries point out that the public mourning follows the exact opposite procedure of private mourning. Whereas private mourning moves from the more intense mourning periods to less intense, the public mourning begins with the Three Weeks, then to the Nine Days, then to the week in which Tisha B'Av occurs, then to Erev Tisha B'Av, and finally the intense mourning of Tisha B'Av itself. By gradually increasing the intensity of the mourning, we should be able to reach the appropriate sense of loss on the day of Tisha B'Av.

Reciting Shehecheyanu during the Three Weeks

Regarding the recitation of the Shehecheyanu blessing during the Three Weeks, there are three opinions among the poskim.

1. The Arizal holds that Shehecheyanu should not be recited at all during this period, not even on Shabbos. The Ari's reason for not reciting Shehecheyanu during the Three Weeks is not due to mourning, but rather because it is deemed inappropriate to recite a blessing expressing gratitude for being rejuvenated at a time that is considered highly inauspicious. This reasoning extends to Shabbos as well (Magen Avraham; Shu't Chayim Sha'al #24).

2. The Sefer Chassidim takes a middle stance, stating that Shehecheyanu should not be recited on weekdays but may be recited on Shabbos. The rationale behind this position is that laws of mourning do not apply on Shabbos, so Shehecheyanu may be recited. Some suggest an alternative approach, stating that it is a mitzvah to derive joy from the world and recite Shehecheyanu. This mitzvah takes precedence over the concern about reciting the blessing during the Three Weeks, but it is advisable to postpone it to Shabbos (Mekor Chessed commentary to Sefer Chassidim #840, based on a passage of Talmud Yerushalmi at the end of Kiddushin).

3. The Taz and the Gra maintain that Shehecheyanu may be recited even on weekdays (Orach Chayim 551:17). The Gra disagrees with the reason attributed to the Ari and maintains that there is no halachic prohibition on a mourner to recite Shehecheyanu, and therefore no reason why we should not recite the berocha during the Three Weeks.

According to all opinions, one recites a Shehecheyanu when performing the mitzvos of pidyon haben or bris milah (for those who recite a Shehecheyanu at a bris).

Most halachic authorities follow the middle opinion, permitting the recitation of Shehecheyanu on Shabbos but not on weekdays (Magen Avraham, Elyah Rabbah, Chayei Adam, Mishnah Berurah). The Rema (Orach Chayim 551:2) permits reciting a Shehecheyanu on a new fruit that will not be available after Tisha B'Av. Mishnah Berurah (551:99) permits a pregnant woman or an ill person to eat a new fruit, without reciting the Shehecheyanu. It is permitted to purchase clothes that do not require a Shehecheyanu. However, this should not be done during the Nine Days.

Shehecheyanu on the night of the 17th?

Most poskim hold that one should not recite Shehecheyanu on the night of the 17th (Shu't Chayim Sha'al #24; Sedei Chemed Volume 5, pg. 277; Biur Halacha 551:2). However, Rav Moshe Feinstein contends that the mourning period does not start until the morning of the 17th, implying that one may recite a Shehecheyanu at night (Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 1:168).

Children and Shehecheyanu

The involvement of children in the observance of the Three Weeks raises additional considerations regarding the recitation of Shehecheyanu. The question arises as to whether children, depending on their age and understanding of mourning practices, may recite Shehecheyanu during this period. If a child is old enough to appreciate the significance of aveilus (mourning), it is advisable to train him not to say Shehecheyanu during the Three Weeks. However, if a child is too young to comprehend the mourning practices, but is capable of reciting the blessing, some authorities permit him to say Shehecheyanu (Birkei Yosef, Orach Chayim 551:9).

Purchasing new items during the Three Weeks

It is questionable whether one may acquire new items, such as cars or appliances, during the Three Weeks. Rav Moshe Feinstein rules that if the purchase is for pleasure or convenience, one should wait until after the Three Weeks to buy the item. However, if the acquisition is necessary for one's livelihood, the purchase is permissible during the Three Weeks. In such cases, it is preferable to delay reciting Shehecheyanu until after the Three Weeks (Shu't Igros Moshe, Orach Chayim 3:80). Additionally, some poskim allow for the purchase of necessary appliances, such as refrigerators or washing machines, to replace items that broke during the Three Weeks (Piskei Teshuvos 551:11).

Other halachos of the Three Weeks

In addition to the specific guidelines mentioned above, there are various other halachic practices observed during the Three Weeks. Engaging in dangerous activities should be avoided, and elective surgeries are often postponed until after Tisha B'Av (see Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:18; Piskei Teshuvos 551:1). Some individuals refrain from participating in entertaining activities, such as hikes or trips to the beach, during the Three Weeks (Sedei Chemed, Vol. 5, pg. 376:10).

Going to the beach and swimming are permitted between the 17th of Tamuz and Rosh Chodesh Av, even if it is the first time that one is going during this season, notwithstanding a common misconception to the contrary (Rav Moishe Shternbuch in Teshuvos Vehanhagos 2:263). Rav Shternbuch contends that the practice of refraining from swimming for the first time during the Three Weeks lacks a halachic basis and is not a binding custom. It is therefore permitted, without requiring hataras nedarim (nullification of vows).

Haircutting

During the Three Weeks, Ashkenazim have the custom not to shave or have a haircut (Darkei Moshe, Orach Chayim 551:5 and Rema, Orach Chayim 551:4). There are exceptions to this ruling, such as trimming one's mustache, if it interferes with eating (Ran; Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 551:13). Additionally, individuals who shave every day may be permitted to shave on Fridays, during the Three Weeks, in honor of Shabbos, according to the ruling of Shu't Chasam Sofer (Yoreh Deah #348 s.v. Ve'i golach). However, these exceptions are subject to controversy, and one should consult a rabbinic authority for guidance.

On the occasion of a bris during the Three Weeks, the father of the baby, the mohel, and the sandek are permitted to shave or have a haircut. (Shu't Chasam Sofer, Orach Chayim #158).

Some authorities also permit the kvatter and the sandek me'umad (also known as "amidah lebrachos") to shave and have a haircut (She'arim Hametzuyanim Bahalacha, Kuntrus Acharon 120:8), but most poskim restrict this permission to the mohel, the sandek, and the father of the baby.

While some poskim permit scheduling an upsheren (also called a chalakeh) during the Three Weeks, if it coincides with the child's birthday, the prevailing practice is to postpone it until after Tisha B'Av (Piskei Teshuvos 551:44). Similarly, there is a discussion among recent poskim regarding a bar mitzvah boy who needs a haircut during the Three Weeks. Some suggest that it may be permissible for him to have a haircut before his bar mitzvah, relying on the opinion that minors may have a haircut during this period (She'arim Hametzuyanim Bahalacha, Kuntrus Acharon 120:8).

The question of whether a woman may have her hair cut during the Three Weeks is subject to debate among halachic authorities. Many poskim rule that a woman may tweeze her eyebrows and engage in similar cosmetic activities, even during the week of Tisha B'Av (Shu't Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah 2:137; Halichos Beisah, Chapter 25, footnote 70). Clipping fingernails is permitted during the Three Weeks, according to all opinions.

Conclusion

The Three Weeks is a period of introspection and mourning, allowing individuals to reflect on the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and its significance in Jewish history. Some tzaddikim make a point of reciting tikkun chatzos, wherein we mourn the galus of the Shechina, every night. The most

important aspect of the Three Weeks is to focus on the tremendous loss we continue to suffer because of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

The prophet Yeshaya declared: “Exult with Yerushalayim and rejoice over her, all those who love her. Rejoice with her, rejoicing, all those who mourned over her” (Yeshayahu 66:10). “From here we see,” says the Gemara, “that whoever mourns over Yerushalayim will merit to see her happiness, and whoever does not mourn over Yerushalayim will not merit to see her happiness” (Taanis 30b).

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Parsha Parables By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Parshas Pinchas

A View from Above

Imagine you have been the Chief Operating Officer of a major corporation. The owner and Chairman of the board spotted you some forty years back. Observing your commitment and concern during a totally different mission, he picked you to steer his fledgling group of workers into a major force in the corporate world. During your forty year tenure with the firm, you fulfilled every one of your boss’s wishes with honesty and skill. You cared for the corporation and every one of its employees as if they were your offspring. The Chairman, who supplied every one of the company’s needs, financial, moral, physical, and spiritual, commended you as the greatest individual that the would ever lead the corporation. But before you get to lead the company into a new phase of operation, the boss says it is time to retire.

So far so good. But then in a parting request you come into your boss’s office and begin to lecture him on the qualifications of a successor. You tell him to make sure that the next corporate officer has the qualities of leadership that will be able to bring the corporation into the next millenium. Then you add the kicker. After all, you tell the boss, “you don’t want to leave the company like sheep without a leader.” In simple terms, it sounds like there is a word that defines the move — chutzpah.

Though it may not be a perfect parable, it seems like Moshe did just that. After he realizes that he will not lead the Jewish people into the Land of Canaan he approaches Hashem with a request. “May Hashem the Lord of all spirits appoint a man over the assembly, who shall take them out and bring them in and let them not be like sheep that have no shepherd” (Number 27:15-18). The question is simple. How does Moshe have the gall to tell the Master Of The Universe, He who breathes life into the centipede while splitting the sea and delivering manna, the qualifications of the next leader? Out of the multitudes of earthlings that are on the planet, does the Lord need guidance in appointing a new leader of the Jewish people?

During the last months of the life of the Rebbe, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezhriz life, the decrees against the Jews living in Russia increased many fold. Young men were forced into the Czar’s army and ripped from their families, heritage, and faith. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk went to beseech Rabbi Dov Ber, the Holy Magid of Mezhriz to intercede on their behalf by praying to the Almighty to force an annulment of the Czar’s dastardly decrees.

“Perhaps,” suggested the Rebbe Elimelech, “we should declare a communal fast led by the Magid — surely our united prayers will evoke Heavenly compassion!”

But the Rebbe Dov Ber quietly assured his disciple of an amazing secret. “Soon I will be departing this world. There is no need to gather the community and have them deprive their weak bodies of food. I will personally approach the heavenly throne and plead for mercy from the Almighty.”

Sure enough, two weeks later the Mezhrizter Maggid passed from this world. The week of shiva passed, but the decrees were not annulled. The thirty period of morning passed as well, and still no change. The conscriptions were as ferocious as ever. Rabbi Elimelech became frustrated. Didn’t the Magid promise salvation?

Desperate for an answer, he went to the Magid’s grave and asked him why the decrees were not abolished.

That night the Magid appeared to his disciple and revealed to him the reason that nothing had occurred.

“On earth there is one view — one that I shared with you. Like you, I also saw the decree as a most terrible event befalling our nation. But here in Heaven I see a different picture. Now I understand everything from an entirely different perspective. And frankly, the view from above is not as bleak as the view from below. In fact, I don’t even see the decree as a curse. I cannot pray to annul the decree. At this point, your only salvation is to ask an earthly rabbi to help you. Only a human leader can feel the mortal pain as you and the community feel it. Only someone who sees life from your perspective can pray on your behalf.”

Moshe knew that Hashem can choose whomever He wants. But he felt it was his obligation to beseech the Almighty to continue his particular legacy and direction in leading the people. Moshe wanted the appointment based on his opinion of what the Jewish nation needs, not based on a Divine choice. A ruler with the attribute of pure justice may have been harsher on the people. He would not respond to each complaint by beseeching the Almighty for a miraculous solution. The sweetened waters of marah, the deliverance of quail, the splitting of the sea, the victories over Amalek, and the healing of Miriam were all preceded by a common denominator Moshe’s intervention. A different leader with a different personality may have chosen a different direction. And an immortal leader may have not felt the despair of the people. Moshe created a destiny for his people based on his humility and understanding of the plight of his fellow Jews. And he

wanted a shepherd like himself to care for his sheep. Even if it meant attempting to cajole his Creator with a very human philosophy.

Good Shabbos

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

Dedicated in honor of the first wedding anniversary of Larry & Marcia Atlas by Mr. & Mrs. Larry Atlas

Drasha is the email edition of FaxHomily which is a Project of the Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

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subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

Pinchas: Genuine Zealotry

Rav Kook Torah

“Pinchas... zealously avenged My cause among the Israelites.... Therefore, tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace.” (Num. 25:11-12)

Why did God present Pinchas, the archetypical zealot, with a covenant of peace? What was the nature of this covenant?

Heretics and Informers

The Talmud (Berakhot 28b) recounts a significant moment in Jewish history following the destruction of Jerusalem. Rabban Gamliel, who presided over the Sanhedrin in Yavneh, recognized the urgent need to amend the daily prayer. The Jewish people needed Divine protection against heretics and informers threatening the Jewish community.

Rabban Gamliel, however, struggled to find a scholar capable of composing such a prayer.

In the end, Shmuel HaKatan - ‘Samuel the modest’ - agreed to formulate the prayer, called Birkat HaMinim. Why was it so difficult to find a scholar to author this prayer? What made Shmuel HaKatan uniquely qualified for the task?

The Prayer of Shmuel HaKatan

By its very nature, prayer is a medium of harmony and understanding, imbued with kindness and love. Any scholar who has attained the appropriate spiritual level is capable of composing prayers that are fitting for a holy and wise nation. A prayer decrying slanderers and heretics, however, touches upon powerful emotions of hostility and anger. It is natural to feel hatred towards those who seek to harm us and our community. To compose a fitting prayer against enemies requires an individual who is utterly pure and holy, one who has succeeded in eliminating all hatred and petty resentments from his heart. In order that such a prayer will be pure, its sole intention must be to limit the damage and correct the harm caused by the wicked, as they impede the world’s spiritual and ethical progress. It is for the sake of this pure, unselfish motive that we beseech God to thwart the wicked and foil their malevolent designs.

Even when our initial motives are pure, if we are subject to the slightest feelings of animosity, naturally aroused when feeling

attacked, our thoughts will be tainted by personal hatred, and our prayer will deviate from the true intent.

Only Shmuel HaKatan was a suitable candidate to compose this difficult prayer. His life’s guiding principle was “Do not rejoice when your enemy falls” (Avot 4:24). Shmuel succeeded in removing all feelings of enmity from his heart, even towards personal enemies. Only this saintly scholar was able to compose a prayer against slanderers that would reflect the feelings of a pure heart, expressing the soul’s inner aspirations for complete universal good.

Refining Zeal

From Shmuel HaKatan we see that zealotry is not a simple matter. Zeal must be carefully refined to ensure that it is truly for the sake of heaven. As Rav Kook explained in Orot HaKodesh (vol. III, p. 244):

“We must refine the attribute of zeal, so that when it enters the realm of the holy, it will be a pure zeal for God. Since zealotry often harbors some slight influence of human failings, our powers of self-examination must determine its primary motive. We must ensure that it is not rooted in personal jealousy, which rots one’s very bones, but rather a genuine zeal for God, which provides a covenant of peace.”

When God gave Pinchas a covenant of peace, He affirmed that Pinchas’ act of zealotry - defending the Jewish people from idolatrous influences - was performed with pure motives. Only God could testify as to the purity of Pinchas’ zeal, that he had acted solely for the sake of Heaven, without any admixture of pettiness or personal animosity. Pinchas’ zeal was the product of his burning love for God, an expression of his desire to bring true peace and perfection (shleimut) to the world.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Chief Rabbi Mirvis

Pinchas

The best invitation you’ll ever get...

What’s the best way for us to make people to want to come to Shul? In Parshat Pinchas, the Torah reveals to us details of the major festivals and the term that is used for a festival is ‘Mikra Kodesh’.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch translates this term as being a call to holiness, it’s an invitation that Hashem extends to us, to engage with him in a spiritual and meaningful way. I’m sure that you’re just like me, when an invitation arrives in the post, there is a sense of excitement.

You can see that the envelope suggests this must be an invitation, then you open it up and you reveal its content and indeed you are being invited to do something, to come along somewhere. It is left up to you to send the RSVP and you’re looking forward to the occasion, when you have decided that

you want to take advantage of the opportunity, to benefit from that experience.

That is how the Torah presents our engagement with our Judaism. It's not just the festivals, it's not just attending Shul on a weekly or daily basis, it's the performance of all our Torah and mitzvot, God has sent us a personal invitation. You know there was a time when people would do the right thing, out of a sense of loyalty, but today I think within our communities around the globe, most people will do the right thing because they've decided to of their own accord, not because they have been 'coerced', but because they find it appealing and it's their decision.

We are so blessed because we have the ultimate product, it is a system of life, it's a way of life authored by Almighty God himself, relevant to every single generation and all we need to do, is to answer that invitation in the affirmative - to pitch up, to engage. And I promise you, it will give you phenomenal deep meaning and ongoing joy in life. We're so lucky, because it's the best invitation you can ever get. Let's send our RSVP now.

Shabbat Shalom.

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Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Yitzchak ben Avraham Andisman.

Follow the Leader

Moshe spoke to Hashem saying, "May Hashem, God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over the assembly who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and who shall bring them in" (27:15-17).

This week's parsha includes a remarkable conversation between Moshe and Hashem about the succession plan for leadership of Bnei Yisroel after Moshe's demise. Initially, after seeing that the daughters of Tzefafchad prevail in their quest to inherit their father's share in Eretz Yisroel, Moshe is moved to ask Hashem if his children could succeed him as leader. However, Hashem informs Moshe that He has other intentions; namely, that Moshe's faithful servant Yehoshua be rewarded for his service (see Rashi 27:16).

Hashem then enjoins Moshe to "take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun [...]" (27:18). Rashi (ad loc) explains that Hashem wanted Moshe to persuade Yehoshua by telling him how fortunate he was to get to lead the children of Hashem. Yet, a few verses later (27:22), when Moshe actually fulfills what Hashem had asked him to do – "Moshe did as Hashem commanded him. He took Yehoshua" – Rashi (ad loc) comments that Moshe convinced Yehoshua by informing him of the great reward for the leaders of the Jewish people in the World to Come.

Hashem had asked Moshe to tell Yehoshua how fortunate he was to be offered the ultimate leadership position of Hashem's children, yet Moshe basically talked to him about the retirement benefits. Why did Moshe change what Hashem had initially asked him to tell Yehoshua?

To understand what transpired we must start by examining how Moshe described the kind of person necessary for his job. Moshe makes a specific request that Hashem appoint someone who "will go out in front of them and come in before them." Moshe then adds, "who shall take them out and who shall bring them in" (27:17). This request seems a bit contradictory; does the leader go out in front of them and come in before them, or does he take them out and bring them in?

There is a very enigmatic statement in the Gemara (Kesuvos 105b) regarding leadership (it's one that haunts shul rabbis the world over), "Abaye said – this young rabbi who is beloved by the people of his town, it is not because they think he has such fine character, it is because he doesn't rebuke them in religious matters." Abaye's statement is very difficult to understand: If a rabbi is beloved, it's because he isn't doing his job. However, the converse seems just as bad: If he is doing his job (criticizing his constituency), he will be despised. Surely, a hated rabbi cannot be considered to be doing his job properly either!

The Torah is teaching us the fundamentals of leadership. Every leader has two roles; one is to lead by example, the other is to direct the people to do what needs to be done. The primary responsibility of a leader is to inspire the people to act in a certain way; i.e. a leader needs to be relatable and charismatic enough that the people will follow his lead. They need to look up to him, want to emulate him and his way of living, and buy into his goals in order to help fulfill his vision for the community.

But a leader also has an important, albeit secondary, role: to make sure his followers are doing what they are supposed to be doing, even when they don't want to do the right thing. This is a much harder task, as it must come from an outside force rather than an inner motivation. A leader is empowered to force his constituents to do the right thing, even when they don't want to.

Moshe's request from Hashem reflects these two roles; "he must lead them out and lead them in," but if they don't want to then he must "bring them out and bring them in." This also explains the two versions of what Moshe was to tell Yehoshua. Hashem was telling him to persuade Yehoshua by extolling the privilege of inspiring the children of Hashem through leadership. The word Rashi uses in that verse (27:18) is l'hanhig – to lead. When Moshe tells Yehoshua he is referring to the less pleasant aspect of leadership – criticizing and forcing the people to do what they do want to do. Rashi in that verse (27:22) uses the word parnes – provider. The ultimate power behind a leader is that he is their provider; which is how he can force them to do the right thing. But this is very

difficult and unpleasant to do, and as Moshe tells Yehoshua, “the reward for providers of the Jewish people is in the next world.”

Just as Moshe made sure that Yehoshua would fully understand both roles of leadership, we must understand and apply these same principles to our own homes. A parent’s leadership role is primarily to inspire his children to follow in the proper way to live. The children have to look at his example and feel like they want to emulate him. A key component of this is that the parent needs to be someone whom they want to emulate. Of course, a parent has to criticize and gently redirect his children when they make mistakes. But even then, the primary goal is to make sure the children understand he is doing it out of love for them, not because he wants to control them. In this way, they will choose to follow in his path long after they have left their parents’ house.

A Will to Want Not

If a man will die and he has no son, you shall cause his inheritance to pass over to his daughter (27:8).

This week’s parsha recounts the entire incident of the daughters of Tzelafchad who wished to inherit their father’s portion in Eretz Yisroel, even though he predeceased the actual distribution of the land of Israel to the respective tribes. The issue was whether or not a daughter may inherit property from her father in a case where there were no sons.

The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 400), in his discussion of the laws of inheritance, rules that although the Torah ascribes directives in dealing with inheritance, there is no obligation for a parent to leave an inheritance for a child. This imperative is only found in regards to the nations of the world.

This seems a little difficult to understand; it is within every Jewish parent’s nature to be concerned for his child’s financial well-being, with special emphasis placed upon ensuring his child’s security even after the parent’s death. The Chinuch’s ruling seems contrary to the innate character of the Jew. What could possibly be the Chinuch’s reasoning?

A similar question can be asked on a ruling of the Talmud. The Gemara (Kesuvos 49b) states that a parent need only be concerned for the financial well-being of his child until the age of six. How can we possibly fathom a Jewish parent considering his child financially independent at the age of six? The attribute of kindness defines a Jew’s nature. Therefore, there is never any doubt that a Jewish parent will assume responsibility for his six-year-old child. Rather, the Torah is sending a profound message to the child to appreciate all that his parents are doing for him, for their financial assistance is done out of a sense of compassion, not obligation. Providing for your children is an expression of love, not a fulfillment of an obligation. Once a child begins to internalize his parents’ motivation for supporting him, it will strengthen the child’s love for his parents.

Standing on their Shoulders

The sons of Reuvein: of Chanoch, the family of the Chanochite [...] (26:5).

Prior to Bnei Yisroel entering Eretz Yisroel, Hashem commanded Moshe and Elazar to conduct a new census. To all the family names, the letter “hey” was added as a prefix and “yud” as a suffix. For example, the family of Chanoch was referred to as “HaChanochi.” Rashi (ad loc) explains that those letters formed the name of Hashem. The reason for this change to their names is that the nations of the world mocked the purity of the Jewish lineage.

They pointed out that Bnei Yisroel tracing their genealogy according to the tribes of their father was a fantasy. They claimed that since the Egyptians had complete control of the Jewish males (who were slaves), surely they had violated the Jewish women; leading to many Jews being descendants of the Egyptians. Therefore, Hashem attached His name to the names of the Jewish families in order to attest to the purity of Jewish ancestry.

It is difficult to understand how adding two letters to Jewish families’ names deflects the claims of the nations. The only possible answer is that Hashem had no intention of deflecting the claims of the nations. Rather, this was done to assuage the insecurities of Bnei Yisroel themselves. At this time, Bnei Yisroel were recovering from a plague that decimated a significant portion of the nation. This plague came as a punishment for their involvement in licentious behavior and acts of depravity while consorting with the daughters of Midian. These transgressions seem to indicate characteristics distinctly attributed to Egyptian nature and culture.

Consequently, these transgressions committed by Bnei Yisroel might have led some to give credence to the notion that the allegations of the nations of the world were indeed true.

Therefore, Hashem lent His holy name to the Jewish families to reassure them that they were of pure lineage.

However, there is also a much deeper lesson to be learned here. We often ascribe our own failings to issues that are beyond our control, when in truth we must own our mistakes and work to improve ourselves. We tend to blame our parents or circumstances beyond our control for things that we ought to own as our responsibility. Hashem is lending His name to our lineage to tell us that our past is in His hands, but our present and future are in our own control.

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by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair -
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PARSHA INSIGHTS**

Should Joe Biden Join the Rolling Stones?

“It was after the plague...” (26:1)

While Sir Mick Jagger is lithely running up and down the stage at the age of 80, President Joe Biden is tripping over his tongue, let alone his feet. True, it’s a lot to do with genes: Jagger’s father was a physical education instructor and he looks after himself, and — let’s face it — being Joe Biden and running one of the largest countries in the world is somewhat more stressful than running up and down the stage belting out “Jumpin’ Jack Flash.” But age is an obsession in the modern world, as gallons and gallons of Botox and billions of dollars of plastic surgery attest to.

In Hebrew, the word of ‘old’ is *zaken*: *zayn*, *koof*, *nun*, which is an acronym for ‘*mi sh’kana chochma*,” meaning “the one who has acquired wisdom.” In the secular vernacular, ‘old’ is an unpardonable sin remedied only by extensive plastic surgery.

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky, one of the great sages of the previous generation, was once sitting in an airplane next to the head of the Histadrut, the Israeli Labor Federation. As Reb Yaakov was of advanced age, his children insisted that he travel in Business Class to minimize the rigors of the journey from America to Israel. The rest of his family traveled in Economy.

As soon as the "fasten seat belt" sign went off, one of his grandchildren bounded forward and said, "Zeide, would you like a drink?" Not long afterwards, another grandchild appeared and said, "Zeide, are you comfortable? Would you like another pillow?" This grandchild was followed by another and yet another. This monotonous procession of doting grandchildren did not escape the notice of the head of the Histadrut.

After the fifth grandchild made his exit, the man turned to Reb Yaakov and said, "Forgive me, Rabbi, but may I ask you a question?" "Of course," replied Reb Yaakov. Said the man: "I couldn't help but notice the tremendous respect your grandchildren give you. I'm lucky if I get a birthday card from my grandchildren. What's your secret? Why is it that your children and grandchildren give you such respect?"

Reb Yaakov replied, "You see, we believe that we are descended from people whose spiritual greatness is almost impossible for us to imagine: Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Moshe. My rebbe (Torah teacher) used to say, without false modesty and in total sincerity that he didn't come to the ankles of his rebbe, neither in Torah learning nor in purity of character. If you asked my rebbe's rebbe about his rebbe, he would have said the same. If you extrapolate this backwards even a few generations, it becomes very difficult for us to have any idea of the greatness of the Vilna Gaon, who lived only 250 years ago, let alone of the Avot, the Patriarchs.

"Ever since that supernal moment when G-d spoke to our ancestors at Sinai, our spiritual journey has been ever downward. And this is why my children give me respect,

because they see me as closer to Sinai than they. I am one generation closer to the giving of the Torah!

“You, on the other hand, believe that you share common ancestry with the ape. So why should your children respect you? You are one generation closer to the ape than they are! They see themselves as a step up the ladder of the 'ascent of man.' In their view, it is you who should give them respect." "It was after the plague..."

Rashi comments that Hashem commanded a census after the plague, like a shepherd who counts his flock after it has been ravaged by wolves. The plague was a result of the profligacy of the Jewish men with the Midianite women. That census continues down the generations. The fact that we survive against a tide of physicality is because our holy zeides and their zeides lifted their souls — instead of their faces....