

Torah Weekly



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Parshas Pinchas

For the week ending 17 Tamuz 5755(24 Tamuz 5755)*

14 & 15 July 1995(21 & 22 July 1995)*

*week ending dates for locations outside of Israel

Summary

Hashem tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that he will receive Hashem's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action — executing *Zimri* and the Midianite princess *Kozbi*. Hashem commands Moshe that the people must maintain a state of enmity with the *Midianim* because they allured the Jewish People to sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each of the Tribes. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. Hashem instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to the Bnei Yisrael. The number of the families of the Levites is recorded. The daughters of *Tslofchad* file a claim with Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks Hashem what the ruling is in this case, and Hashem tells him that the daughters' claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of an inheritance. Hashem tells Moshe to ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not. Moshe asks Hashem to designate the subsequent leader of the people, and Hashem selects *Yehoshua bin Nun*. Moshe ordains *Yehoshua* as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Commentaries

"...a covenant of peace" (25:12).

It may seem ironic that the reward for a violent killing should be "a covenant of peace." The word in Hebrew *shalom* means not only peace, but it also connotes completeness and perfection — any peace which lacks completeness and perfection is not really peace. And there can only be One Completeness and One Perfection, so there can

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only be One real Peace — Hashem's peace, for only "He who makes peace in His exalted realms, He will make peace for us and for all of Israel..."

Appeasement is not peace and never leads to peace. However an act of zealotry divorced of pure intentions can be a crime in itself. For this reason the Torah points out that Pinchas acted "for his G-d" — he had no motivation whatsoever other than to do the will of the Almighty.

(Based on the *Ohr Yoel*)

"Behold I am giving him

(Pinchas) My covenant of peace. And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of peace" (25:12).

Why was Pinchas rewarded specifically that his offspring should be *Kohanim*? It is an abiding principle that Hashem punishes and rewards "measure for measure" — that the reward is precisely attuned to the action that merited it. When *Zimri*, a Prince of Israel, committed a brazen act of immorality, there were many who were shocked and repelled by his behavior. "And they cried at the entrance to the *Mishkan*." By executing *Zimri* and his consort, Pinchas expressed and concretized the feelings of the Jewish People. This is exactly what the *Kohen* does — when, as an envoy of the Jewish People he brings an offering, he concretizes and gives physical expression to the thoughts and feelings of love that the Jewish People have for their Father in Heaven. Thus the gift of the *Kehuna* to Pinchas' progeny was the perfect reflection of his service to the People of Israel.

(Sfas Emes)

“...because he showed zealotness for His G-d” (25:13).

When a person falls in his level of spirituality and transgresses, he looks at others and thinks to himself “He does the same too. Why should I be “*frumer*” than him?!” It is for this reason that the Ten Commandments are written in the singular, so that each one of us should feel that the Torah was given to him alone, and we shouldn’t look at what others are doing...or not doing. When Pinchas saw Moshe and Aaron and the seventy elders standing and watching *Zimri* committing a grave sin, and none of them lifted a finger, he could certainly have said to himself, “Why should I be *frumer* than them?” However, he didn’t think like this, but did what was needed for the Honor of Heaven. Therefore the Torah writes “he showed zealotness for *his* G-d.” He acted as though at that moment, Hashem was only *his* G-d and that there was no-one else in the world to do the job.

(Chomas Aish)

Haftorah:

I Kings 18:46 -19:21

Just as Pinchas was unflinching in guarding the loyalty of the Jewish People to Hashem, taking on a Prince of Israel and a princess of *Moav*, so in the Haftorah, *Eliyahu* was unflinching in taking on King *Achav* and his wicked queen *Izevel*. In more recent times, one of the greatest guardians of the citadel was Rabbi Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld of *Yerushalayim*. He was well-known for his vigorous and unstinting efforts to maintain the sanctity of Judaism against those who attempt to secularize and debase its holiness. Thus, he would frequently speak out with words of fire. He was once asked “Is it not the way of a *tzadik* to try to show the actions of the Jewish People in a favorable light, to find a way of giving them the benefit of the doubt?” He replied “Not a day passes without me beseeching Hashem with tears and Psalms on behalf of even the worst of our people that Hashem should view their actions favorably. That, however, is between me and the Almighty, may His Name be blessed, but concerning the people themselves, I am duty-bound to rebuke them with the harshest and most stringent words, so that others don’t follow their example, and so that they themselves will mend their ways and repent.”

Perek 1

The Boy At the Bottom of the Class

Pirkei Avos

“Be patient in judgment, raise up many disciples and put a fence around the Torah.”

Anshei Knesses Hagedolah (Avos 1:1)




The Sage Hillel once called an assembly of all his disciples. When they were all gathered he asked them if every single one of his disciples was indeed present. He was informed that everyone was there except for the least advanced of the group. Hillel refused to begin his discourse until that disciple was brought in, because he would eventually become the leader of his generation. That disciple was none other than Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai who is mentioned in Perek Two, Mishnah 8 as the successor of Hillel to the mantle of leadership.

Never overlook the student at the bottom of the class in favor of the superior ones, because we can never be sure who is destined to achieve greatness...

Rabbeinu Yonah

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