



DIVREI MENACHEM

BY MENACHEM PERSOFF

Special Projects Consultant, OU Israel Center
mpersoff@ou.org

What (Exactly) is the Brit Shalom?

In our Parsha, Pinchas is awarded the *Brit Shalom* – the Covenant of Peace – for his part in preventing the plague from spreading. Rashi suggests that this covenant was a sign of Hashem’s indebtedness to Pinchas for zealously defending the honor of Hashem and the Jewish people. As a reward, Pinchas was now endowed with eternal priesthood, an accolade previously denied to him and his offspring (see Rashi).

Why, then, was the covenant called *Brit Shalom* and not *Brit Kehunah*, the Covenant of Priesthood? Perhaps, following Ibn Ezra, because the Brit would act as a defense against Pinchas’ detractors, especially from the family and supporters of Zimri, killed by Pinchas.

However, we might find a more comprehensive answer to that question by searching the Torah narrative following this incident. It treats Hashem’s directive to Moshe to smite the Midianites who caused the plague and the people’s downfall. First, Hashem declares: “Attack the Midianites and smite

them!” and then Moshe is commanded to count the people in preparation for the allocation of Eretz Yisrael to the tribes.

Our rabbis taught that the allocation of the Land was achieved by lots; if so, why count the people? Furthermore, why the double entendre – Attack and smite? The answer to all these questions is one. First, note that, following the Baal Hatanya, each Jewish soul has its unique God-given quality, arising from Hashem’s wisdom. For the Sefat Emet, every Jew has an intrinsic share in Torah, in Eretz Yisrael, and the world to come.

Rabbi M. Miller explains that this soul allocation corresponds to the drawing of lots in apportioning the Land. Therefore, a Jew must grow to sense his or her allocated purpose in this world, to achieve harmony and gain integrity. This harmony is the essence of the Brit Shalom. To reach that goal, however, first, one must attack by defining “Midian” as the enemy. Then one launches the attack on the Yetzer Hara, the evil inclination, until it is vanquished. Pinchas was the prototype of this Brit Shalom. ■

Shabbat Shalom!

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