

JULY 19[™] 2025 • כ״ג תמוז תשפ״ה

פרשת פינחס PARSHAT PINCHAS

PIRKEI AVOT 1 | SHABBAT MEVARCHIM



XX

ישראל

Simchat Shmuel Rabbi Sam Shor Page 46



Summertime Parenting: A Toolbox for Life with Rabbanit Esther Levanon Rebbetzin Zemira Ozarowski Page 54



ובראשי חדשיכם תקריבו עלה לה' במדבר כ"ח:י"א

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT PINCHAS ZMANIM CANDLES **7:08 PM •** EARLY **6:17 PM •** HAVDALA **8:25 PM •** RABBEINU TAM **9:01 PM**

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IMPORTANT REMINDERS



COVER IMAGE Photographed by Howard Gordon

My wife and I made Aliyah from Manchester UK in September 2023. We live in Ramat Beit Shemesh Aleph, close to three of our children. We are blessed that all of our children now live in Israel and many grandchildren too. The Churva Shul is a beautiful building, a tribute to the city's ongoing renewal. It is always a focal point whenever we visit Jerusalem.

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



PINCHAS			MATOT- MASEI		
				,	Havdala
					8:21
7:26	6:19	8:27	7:22	6:16	8:22
7:27	6:18	8:26	7:23	6:15	8:21
7:24	6:17	8:25	7:20	6:14	8:21
7:26	6:19	8:28	7:22	6:16	8:23
7:25	6:18	8:26	7:21	6:15	8:22
7:27	6:19	8:28	7:23	6:17	8:24
7:24	6:18	8:26	7:21	6:15	8:21
7:26	6:19	8:27	7:22	6:16	8:23
7:08	6:19	8:28	7:05	6:16	8:23
7:25	6:18	8:27	7:21	6:15	8:22
7:17	6:20	8:29	7:13	6:17	8:24
7:24	6:17	8:26	7:20	6:14	8:21
7:26	6:19	8:28	7:22	6:16	8:23
7:29	6:17	8:26	7:25	6:14	8:21
7:24	6:17	8:25	7:20	6:14	8:20
7:26	6:20	8:28	7:22	6:17	8:23
7:26	6:19	8:27	7:22	6:16	8:22
7:20	6:18	8:28	7:16	6:15	8:23
7:24	6:17	8:26	7:20	6:14	8:22
7:26	6:20	8:29	7:22	6:17	8:24
7:26	6:18	8:27	7:22	6:15	8:23
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Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Pinchas 9:01 PM • Matot- Masei 8:57 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities; 40 mins in Yerushalyim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Avodah Zarah 31



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JERUSALEM

Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat July 16 - 26 / 20 Tammuz - 1 Av

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	4:46-4:54
Sunrise	5:45-5:51
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:15-9:18
Magen Avraham	8:32-8:36
Sof Zman Tefila	10:25-10:27
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTany	a)
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	12:45
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	1:20
Plag Mincha	6:17-6:13
Sunset (Including Elevation)	7:49-7:44



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL ABERMAN@OUISRAEL.ORG

There is a line I've heard from Rav Nachman Kahana many times that has had a profound impact on the way I view making *aliyah*. Rav Kahana says that people don't really "make" *aliyah*, but rather, *aliyah* makes them. This idea has really resonated with me ever since I heard it. So much of who I am today, who I married, the children that my wife and I raised, our grandchildren, everything that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has given us, is all based on the lives we live in Israel, the Torah we keep in Israel, and the Jewish people living in the State of Israel. Quite literally, *aliyah* made us into who we are.

Yet, beyond the idea of it, I think it is also practical. It teaches us that not just who we surround ourselves with but where we are physically living shapes and impacts us on a deep level. Those of us that have had the *zechut* of making *aliyah* know that heir lives in Israel are nothing like they were in *chutz la'aretz*. It calls on those who can to make that change and make themselves in the process.

As I've shared many times, my family made *aliyah* when I was nine years old, and I had three younger siblings at the time. We left New York to go to Israel on the 4th of July, as symbolic as that is. It was not a small decision for my parents to leave America. In fact, neither of them had ever visited Israel before



making *aliyah*. But they grew up in very Zionist homes, and it was clear to them that Israel was the place that every Jew should be. So they sat with each one of their three older children individually and explained to them why the family was moving to Israel, and we began to pack up the house .

A number of weeks before we were set to move, after my parents had already sold our house, we got a phone call from the Jewish Agency. They explained to us that, Baruch Hashem, the State of Israel was successful in bringing thousands of Jews from Ethiopia to Israel. The area we were meant to go to, the merkaz klita (absorption center) in Mevaseret was taken up by the new immigrants from Ethiopia. So they wanted to ask us to please postpone our aliyah until everything was sorted out. My father turned down this proposal. For one, if the move was postponed, we'd have to join our schools in Israel in the middle of the year, but mostly, he saw the momentum in the family. We were pumped to go. We had already told the whole extended family, all of our friends, and so on. He did not want to pass up on this excitement and let it die down before we even stepped foot on Israeli soil.

So if we couldn't go to the *merkaz klita* in Mevaseret, where could we go? A friend of my father told him to call the Gush Emunim movement, and my father, not knowing exactly what they were, spoke to someone by the name of Yaakov Sternberg. After looking into it, Yaakov called my father back and told him that he could get our family a cement caravan on a *yishuv* in the Shomron called Kedumim. Long story short, we moved from a big home in the United States to a caravan in Kedumim. That was 40 years ago this past Friday.

Every year on the 15th of Tammuz, we leave out *tachanun* in our davening, as our rabbis have *paskened*, to celebrate the anniversary of our *aliyah*. Additionally, every ten years, our family makes it a special day to celebrate. This year, in addition to this big 40, it is also the 50th anniversary of my parents marriage. What a celebration! We decided as a family that my five siblings, their spouses, and my family, would all do a Shabbat together with our parents.

We started our lives as *olim* in the *yishuw* of Kedumim, and so we felt it appropriate to spend this family *Shabbat* in the Shomron. To be there would bring us back to our roots, since we're all living in the greater Yerushalayim area these days. We wanted a place that could bring us back to the mountains of the Shomron and where we could once again connect to the incredible atmosphere and the incredible history that the Shomron has to give us. Therefore, we booked the *yeshiva* in Elon Moreh, with plenty of rooms, a big lunchroom, and a *Beit Midrash* for us to study and *daven* in.

On Friday we toured the Shomron, going from Mitzpe Yosef, which overlooks Kever Yosef in Shechem, to Har Kabir, which overlooks Har Gerizim and Har Eival, as well as the entire Emek Tirzah, which we're going to be reading about in this week's parsha - Emek Tirzah is the inheritance that Tirzah, the daughter of Tzlofechad, received. For many of my siblings' children and grandchildren, this was the first time that they had made it out to Elon Moreh and to the mountains of the Shomron.



It wasn't hard at all for them to connect. Just the ride out on the many new roads in Yehuda and the Shomron were really breathtaking, with incredible scenery and mountains. They were able to see, hear and learn the history of the Jewish people that literally happened on those mountains from "and Avram traveled the land until Shechem, until Elon Moreh" (Bereshit 12:6), and seeing the fulfilment of the prophecy of "you shall yet plant vines upon the mountains of Shomron" (Yirmiyah 31:5) when we can clearly see the vineyards and the wineries that are being established there.

One of the pioneers that started the *yishuv* of Elon Moreh is a man by the name of Rav Benny Katzover. Rav Benny co-founded the Gush Emunim movement, which ultimately began the building up of Yehuda and the

Shomron. Since we were in Elon Moreh, I asked Rav Benny if he could come and tell us the history. He gave us a beautiful audio-visual presentation in the amazing *midrasha* in Elon Moreh, giving the whole story of the rebuilding of Elon Moreh, as well the entire area as told in Tanach.

After the grand tour on Friday of all the different sights and lookouts, we all got ready for Shabbat and gathered together with my parents. All of us in a room together, it was just incredible. To think that 40 years ago, my parents came with just four of us, and how the family has grown from that point was so heartwarming and inspiring. The whole family showed their thanks to them and to give them the *nachat* they so deserve for bringing us to the Land of Israel. We thanked them for giving us such important values, of hachnasat orchim, of loving every Jew no matter what he or she look like, of having a strong relationship with HaKadosh Baruch *Hu*, as well as not being afraid to accomplish whatever we feel we are able to accomplish.

At the end of Shabbat, I spoke to everyone. I said that even if all of my parents' descendants would stand up on Har Gerizim for weeks and months and just scream thank you to my parents over and over again, it would never be enough to thank them for what they gave us by making *aliyah*.

So let me continue to thank my parents here in these pages, for giving me the values that it takes to work for the OU, and specifically the OU in Israel, where the values that they gave me are identical to the values that we try to implement at the OU in Israel: to love every Jew, to try to help every Jew, whether they're teens at risk in Israel, or they are *olim* that made *aliyah* and are trying to be absorbed in Israel and connect to the Land of Israel. May *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* continue giving my parents endless health, *yiddishe nachat* from all their descendants, and may we be *zoche* to continue celebrating together for many more years.

One of the highlights of the weekend was the fact that our son Mordechai Tzemach started putting on *tefillin* this past Friday, our aliyah anniversary. To be able to do it with our entire family and then to have my father stand next to my son when he put on *tefillin* for the first time, that was so tremendous. For my father to be able to see not just many descendants continuing, but also that moment of literal connection, of Mordechai Tzemach tying himself through his tefillin to previous generations of his father and his grandfather and especially to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, that was so important. He will be able to take the values that he received from his grandparents and ancestors and continue them into the future. With Hashem's help, Mordechai Tzemach, together with all of his siblings, will continue walking in the ways of Hashem and the values passed down to them.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat,

Rabbi Avi Berman





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FROM THE DESK OF RABBI MOSHE HAUER





Becoming Torah

Are Torah-observant Jews different or do we just do different things? How personally transformative is our faith and practice?

Klal Yisrael was consistently exhorted by our prophets and leaders to be mindful of ritual actions and words empty of feeling (Yeshayahu 29:13), and of the utter inconsistency, meaninglessness, and even repulsiveness of the religious observances of those who are harmful and apathetic to others (Yeshayahu 1:10-17). If we are just doing and not feeling, or if we are doing some things while blatantly ignoring others, we are in that failed zone of doing without being. "Making it a part of ourselves" may sound cliché, but there is nothing more real.



Pinchas was someone who successfully made the Torah part of himself. My rebbe, Harav Yaakov Weinberg zt"l, whose yahrzeit was this week (17th of Tammuz), noted how the first Mishna in Pirkei Avot teaches us *"ha'amidu talmidim harbei*, raise up – or more literally stand up - many students." While we are accustomed to teachers telling their students to sit down and listen, the ideal is to empower the students to make the lessons their own and to get up and act upon them. That was Pinchas. When Moshe himself was unable to respond it was Pinchas who stood up and acted upon the lessons that Moshe had taught him (Rashi Bamidbar 25:6-7). Hashem Himself then offers the ultimate description and accolade of Pinchas' integration of religious values when He praises Pinchas for being passionate on His behalf, b'kano et kinati (Bamidbar 25:11). Pinchas did not just do Torah, he became Torah, as his own feelings and visceral reactions reflected the values of Hashem and His Torah.

This perspective may add a layer of meaning to the known tradition that identifies Pinchas with another great person known for his passion on G-d's behalf, Eliyahu *Hanavi* (Pirkei d'Rabi Eliezer 16). Amongst other things, Eliyahu had the unusual experience of leaving this world by ascending in a chariot of fire – body and soul - to the heavens (Melachim II 2:11). He was the very opposite of Korach, who descended – body and soul, still breathing – into the depths of the earth.

Typically, death testifies to the failed integration of body and soul, as "the dust returns to the earth where it began, and the spirit returns to the G-d Who gave it" (Koheles 12:7). In the case of Korach, his denial of the divine communication and connection experienced by Moshe testified to the utter grounding of his own spirit, its complete absorption by his physicality, to the point where it joined the body in being swallowed up by the earth. Eliyahu/Pinchas was the opposite. He passionately and completely upheld and supported Moshe, believing and feeling the connection of G-d and man to the point where his body joined his soul in its ascent to the heavens. Eliyahu/Pinchas was - to use a phrase that may sound shallow - a totally spiritual person. He wasn't just doing Jewish; he was transformed by his Judaism.

We have just begun the Three Weeks, the period of mourning over the destruction of Yerushalayim and the Mikdash. As the Talmud records, the attacking Babylonian generals – or for that matter their Persian, Greek, Roman, German, Russian, Palestinian, and Iranian successors – were powerless to destroy a city or a temple occupied by G-d. They could only destroy an empty shell. "A Divine Voice emerged and said to (Nevuzaradon): You killed a nation that was already dead, you burned a Sanctuary that was already burned, and you ground flour that was already ground (Sanhedrin 96b)."

Our task during this time and always is to ensure that our Jewish communities, our shuls, and our selves are not hollow shells but living, breathing entities, transformed and infused through and through by our vibrant connection to Hashem and His Torah. Now Available: Large 5 room apartment on upper floor with amazing view opposite Marina. Near beach, shopping and Synagogues. This luxury building has a gym, sauna and underground parking. Call us today!

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OU... BEYOND KASHRUT

Beit Gojo – OU Israel Teen Centers' Ethiopian Heritage Home

OU Israel's 20 Teen Centers across Israel serve thousands of at-risk Israeli teens every week. Many of our groups are comprised of immigrant populations, including Ethiopians, Bnei Menashe Olim from India, Russian-speakers and others. Our advisors help these teens acclimate into Israeli society while being respectful of the many beautiful customs they brought to Israel. Our advisors hear many challenging stories these teens, especially the Ethiopian-Israelis, experience. How do we educate teens about their Ethiopian-Israeli peers and the tremendous sacrifices they made to come to Israel? How do we increase and teach tolerance?

Chaim Pelzner, Program Director, developed a unique idea and together with the staff and teens in our Kiryat Gat Teen Center, they built Beit Gojo - a genuine Ethiopian hut home - with their own hands. Beit Gojo provides an experiential education opportunity for groups to come learn about Ethiopian culture and the Jews of Ethiopia living in these huts as part of their commitment to avoid assimilation. In Beit Gojo, there are several activities: building with mud like they did in Ethiopia, trivia about Ethiopian-Israeli culture and the journey to Israel, pita making and Ethiopian coffee and a traditional ceremony

To book a visit to Beit Gojo: Beitgojo@gmail.com or contact Guy at 054-3115982

Each week we share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English-speaking Olim with their Klita and impacting Israeli society.





A SHORT VORT | BY RABBI CHANOCH YERES RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

אלה בני בנימין....חמישה וארבעים אלף ושש מאות....אלה בני דן.....ארבעה וששים אלף וארבע מאות (כו:מא-מג)

"These are the sons of Binyamin.... forty-five thousand six hundred.... These are the sons of Dan...sixty-four thousand four hundred."

Looking back in the Book of Bereishit, it is noted that Binyamin was blessed with ten sons (46:21), while Dan had only one son, Chushim, who the Talmud (Sotah 13) describes as having a hearing disability. However, the Torah dictates to us that in the span of only a few generations, the tribe of Dan multiplied and surpassed the tribe of Binyamin and his ten sons. The Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan 1838-1933) points out a very important lesson we learn from this information. We learn that when G-d grants success to an individual, it can be achieved even when blessed with only one child, in the fullness of time. Similarly, when one has possessions or wealth. A poor person, lacking great possessions, can be blessed with tremendous satisfaction in their lives, where a person with great wealth is not guaranteed happiness. Quantities and amounts alone do not imply success, since G-d's blessings come viq multiple paths and various means.

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PARSHAT PINCHAS



1ST ALIYA (BAMIDBAR25:10-26:4)

Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aharon halted the plague. He will merit the covenant of peace, of priesthood. Those killed by him were Zimri, the prince of a family of Shimon and Kozbi, the daughter of a prince of a family of Midian. Harass the Midianites due to this enticement. G-d instructs Moshe and Elazar to take a census of the men over the age of 20.

The parsha begins half way through a story. A Jewish man and a Midinite woman engaged in illicit relations apparently in a rather public fashion at the end of last week's parsha. And not just any man and woman but the prince of a tribe with the daughter of a prince of Midian. Royalty. Leaders. Pinchas grabbed a spear and killed them.

Our parsha begins with praise of Pinchas for that act. The opening section of a parsha always gets outsized attention. The praise of Pinchas grabs our attention.

But the violence is unsettling.

There are two aspects to this story. Moral outrage. And violence. For which one is Pinchas praised? The moral outrage? Or the violence? The message or the method?

This is not the first story in the Torah of moral outrage over the union of a Jew and

non-Jew that resulted in violence.

The story of Dinah and Shechem is a parallel to this story. In that story it was a Jewish woman Dina and a non-Jewish man Shechem; here a Jewish man and non-Jewish woman. In that story Shimon and Levi slew the males of the city; in this Pinchas does. There Yaakov watched, as the next generation acted. In this, Moshe stood by as Pinchas acted. In that story Yaakov was not happy, for that was not his way. And here? Moshe does not respond.

Both stories are the stories of the new generation settling scores with violence. There it was the sons of Yaakov. Here it is Pinchas. the son of the new Kohen Gadol, Elazar.

The stories are of moral outrage. "Can our sister be treated such?" the brothers said to Yaakov. But Yaakov was not happy with the method, the violence.

Here too Pinchas is outraged. Perhaps he is concerned that this act of a leader sets a very bad example; it destroys the needed aversion to the lure of non-Jewish women that will be ever so prevalent once we enter the Land.

Moral outrage is desirable. Especially standing up to power. We don't want those in power to be above the law, beyond reproach.

The method, though, the method is unsettling. Violence? Killing? In the verse stating Pinchas was rewarded with a covenant of peace there is a "vav" in the word peace that is broken in the middle. The Talmud states as well that taking the law into one's own

hands in the manner Pinchas did is "halacha v'ain morin ken", may be the law but don't publicize it. Don't teach it. Don't follow it.

Violence in the name of religion is dangerous. We know it in our own time.

We can feel outrage at times. And feel like we should act, even with violence. But don't do it. Violence is not for us.



2ND ALIYA (26:5-51)

The census of each tribe is done. listing the families and the census count of each tribe. The census total is 601.730 men over the age of 20.

Though my summary of this aliya is rather terse, it is in fact a lengthy aliya of 47 verses. The purpose of this count is to prepare for the dividing of the Land, instructions for which are in the next aliya. The census is preparing for the imminent conquest and division of the Land.



3RD ALIYA (26:52-27:5)

The Land is to be divided according to this census; those

with more, receive more. The plots are given by lottery. The tribe of Levi is enumerated, though they will not receive land allocations. None of those of the census of Moshe and Aharon are alive for this census, save Yehoshua and Calev. The 5 daughters of Zelophchad question Moshe and Elazar: though our father left Egypt, he has no male heirs to enter the Land. Why should his name be forgotten? Let us claim his portion. Moshe brought their query before G-d.

The claim of these daughters is a legitimate claim. We ought to have a family portion in the Land. In the narrative of transition of leadership, Elazar is getting his first lesson from Moshe: we don't know it all. Nothing wrong with a leader, even Moshe, saying "I

don't know".

And perhaps this is an introduction to governance in the Land. Pay attention to the aggrieved. However insignificant their number. We just made a census of over 600,000 people, all of whom are part of the division of the Land. And then 5 women come with a claim? No matter that they are just 5 people. Pay attention to them. Society will be judged on its attention to all of its people.

4TH ALIYA (27:6-23)

Moshe is told that the daughters of Tzelophchad are correct; their father's portion will be allotted to them. Moshe is told to ascend the mountain and gaze at the Land of Israel for he will not enter it. Moshe asks for a successor. G-d instructs him to transfer his leadership to Yehoshua in front of all the people. He did so in front of Elazar and all the people.

Moshe, the humblest of all, when reminded that he will not enter the Land. initiates the transition, the one to take his place. He initiates the search for the new leader. A self-serving leader will never pursue a successor when his ego convinces him that no one could possibly fill his shoes. However, when the leader is altruistic, serving not himself but his people, well, then it's different; they can be served mighty fine by me or by someone else. Moshe initiates the topic of succession. For in his service of the people, he wants their success whether through him or his successor.

5TH ALIYA (28:1-15)



The Communal Offerings.

There are specific offerings for specific occasions that are My bread, My pleasant aroma. Daily: 2 lambs, one in the morning, one in the evening, accompanied by flour with oil and wine. Like was brought at Sinai. **Shabbat** Mussaf: 2 additional lambs with their flour, oil and wine. **Rosh Chodesh** Mussaf: 2 bulls, 1 ram, 7 lambs, with their flour, oil and wine and 1 goat sin offering.

Every day there is an offering done in the Temple, the daily offering of a lamb in the morning and in the afternoon. Very simple. On special occasions there is an additional offering, the Mussaf. The special occasions include Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and in the upcoming aliyot, all the holidays of the year. At the end of the Parsha, I have appended a chart of these offerings, to make the patterns easier to see, visually.



6TH ALIYA (28:16-29:11)

Pesach is on the 14th of the 1st month. On the 15th begins the

7-day holiday of Matzah. The first day is a holiday. The Mussaf for each day of Pesach: 2 bulls, 1 ram, 7 lambs, with their flour, oil and wine and 1 goat sin offering. The 7th day is a holiday. **Shavuot**: the new grain offering is brought. Mussaf: same as Pesach. **Rosh Hashana:** is a holiday, a day of Teruah. Mussaf: the same as the others except only 1 bull, not 2. **Yom Kippur:** is a holiday, a day

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of affliction. Mussaf: same as Rosh Hashana.

The daily tamid and the Mussaf offerings are communal; brought on behalf of the entire nation of Israel. But the placement of these communal sacrifices here seems out of place. Didn't we have a pretty exhaustive description of the sacrifices in Sefer Vayikra? Why is this section about sacrifices out of place, delayed until here?

These offerings are the offerings of our people, as a people. We approach G-d as a people. In the march to the Land, the covenant that the Jewish people will inhabit the Land is a covenant with the Jewish people as an entity, Am Yisrael.

We live in two worlds. Our private life. And as a part of a glorious nation, the Jewish people, Am Yisrael. The holiness of the holidays was emphasized in Vayikra. Holiness is a personal experience. The holidays are also communal, national, moments of approaching G-d as a people. Hence, this parsha belongs here as part of the march of the nation to the Land of Israel.



7TH ALIYA (29:12-30:1)

Sukkot: the first day is a holiday. Mussaf: 13 bulls, 2 rams, 7

lambs with their flour, oil and wine and 1 goat sin offering. The 2nd day of the holiday has the same Mussaf except only 12 bulls. The 3rd day is 11 bulls. Each of the 7 days has one less bull, with all the other offerings the same. **Shemini Atzeret**: is a holiday. Mussaf: the same as Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Immediately apparent from this chart are the groupings: Pesach and Shavuot, the uniqueness of the extra offerings of Sukkot, and the pairing of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur and oddly enough, Shmini Atzeret. Shmini Atzeret has an element of the gravity, the weightiness of the high holidays, unlike the normal yom tov days.

	OL	CHATAT SIN OFFERING			
DAY	BULLS	RAMS	LAMBS	GOAT	
WEEKDAY DAILY NOT MUSSAF	0	0	1 morning 1 evening	0	
SHABBAT	0	0	2	0	
ROSH CHODESH	2	1	7	1	
PESACH (ALL DAYS)	2	1	7	1	
SHAVUOT	2	1	7	1	
ROSH HASHANA	1	1	7	1	
YOM KIPPUR	1	1	7	1	
SUKKOT DAY 1	13	2	14	1	
SUKKOT -2	12	2	14	1	
SUKKOT – 3	11	2	14	1	
SUKKOT – 4	10	2	14	1	
SUKKOT – 5	9	2	14	1	
SUKKOT – 6	8	2	14	1	
SUKKOT – 7	7	2	14	1	
SHMINI ATZERET	1	1	7	1	



STATS

41st of the 54 sedras;
8th of 10 in Bamidbar.
Written on 280 lines (rank: 2nd).
35 Parshiyot; 10p 25s (2nd most).
168 psukim 2nd (2nd in Bemidbar).
1887 words 9th (2nd in Bemidbar).
7853 letters 4th (2nd in Bemidbar).



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BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB OU EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, EMERITUS

Safeguards Against Extremism

A story with important implications for our own times is referred to in the opening passage of this week's Torah portion, *Pinchas* (Numbers 25:10-30:1).

The background to the story is described in detail in last week's Torah portion, *Balak* (see Numbers 25:1-9). It is a sad tale, a shameful tale, but unfortunately a true tale.

It is a blatant description of decadence and grave immorality. The Israelites are attracted to the daughters of Moab. They join them in festive offerings to the gods of Moab, chief of whom was the *Baal Peor*, thus angering the Lord.

Suddenly, an Israelite man intimately embraces a Midianite woman in public; indeed, in the very presence of Moshe and the entire assembly. All are shocked, paralyzed, tearful.

Pinchas son of Elazar, son of Aharon the Kohen, sees the scene, and immediately, spontaneously, leaps up, spear in hand, and fatally pierces the bodies of both the Israelite man and the woman.

Things quiet down and thus concludes last week's narrative.

This Shabbat, as we open our *Chumashim*, 16 TORAH TIDBITS 1621 / PINCHAS we discover the sequel to last week's disastrous drama. We become informed that the Lord spoke to Moshe with words of praise for Pinchas for having removed His wrath from the Children of Israel. The Lord affirms:

"Therefore, proclaim that I grant him My Covenant—peace!"

How are we to react to the story and to the sequel? Some of us may feel compelled to applaud Pinchas for his bravery and holy zealotry in defense of the Almighty and the honor of His people. Others might find his zealotry excessive and perhaps unduly impulsive.

Still others might adopt the reaction described in the Jerusalem Talmud (*Sanhedrin* chapter 9, paragraph 7); "Some say that zealots are permitted to attack those who consort with Aramean women; but we are taught that this is not the policy of the Sages and that Pinchas acted against the will of the Sages. Rabbi Judah ben Pazi insisted that the Sages sought to excommunicate Pinchas but were prevented by the instantaneous intervention of the Holy Spirit granting him, and his descendants, the eternal covenant of priestly peace."

The Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 82a) delves into this issue at some length. I find this Talmudic passage to be particularly relevant to our times. This is because what biblical and rabbinic sources call *kanaut*, zealotry, is awfully close to what we call extremism. Thus, whatever the Talmud can teach us about ways to safeguard against zealotry can help us modify, and eventually control, extremism, whether it be left-wing extremism or right-wing extremism, in political affairs or in religious ideology.

The voice of several of the "safeguards" against illegitimate zealotry in the Talmudic passage just mentioned is the great second century sage, known simply as "Rav". He outlines three such safeguards:

The would-be zealot must be absolutely confident that his zealous intentions conform to *halacha*. That is, that they are consistent with the standards of justice and have judicial precedent. In Pinchas' case, *"ra'ah maaseh v'nizkar halacha*, he observed an act, and recalled a halachic precedent."

That he has no personal bias against the offenders that would motivate his zealotry, that his motives were pure, unselfish, and unprejudiced.

That he acts spontaneously, without prior consultation with some neutral expert advisor. After all, *"ha'ba l'himalech ein morin lo,* had he consulted with an authority he would have been advised NOT to do so."

Only if these three conditions are met can he be excused and even complimented for his zealous outburst.

There is a fourth condition which can justify zealotry, a condition which I would describe as "cultural context". It is enunciated by one of the supreme halachic authorities of the previous century, known as the Chazon Ish, Rav Avraham Yeshaya Kerelitz, *zt"l*, in his discussion of the laws of ritual slaughter. He refers to a Talmudic ruling which condones very severe punishment for one who violates certain Torah prohibitions. He notes that such harsh punishments could only be applied in times when the cultural context was one of universal piety and faithful commitment to all halachic restrictions. Then the outlier,



as part of a minute minority, could be held accountable for his failure to conform to society at large. In our times, argues the Chazon Ish, when such levels of piety and meticulous Torah observance are, to say the least, not the norm at all, but all sorts of deviant behaviors are tolerated and even advocated, the individual who does not conform cannot be punished so harshly. Such individuals are simply conforming to the norms of their environment and are swept away by powerful cultural influences, and have in effect been "brainwashed". Extremist actions against those with whom we may disagree cannot be justified in such cultural contexts. Zealots

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So much for constraints on extremism. Let me conclude with some of the statements made by Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, *zt"l*, about the deleterious effects that extremism has had upon the Jewish people during the entire course of our history. These statements are to be found in a very early book of Rav Kook's, only recently finally published. The work is entitled L'Nevuchei HaDor (For the Perplexed of the Generation). It is published by Yediot Acharonot and has stimulated much interest, discussion, and controversy. Here is his assertion, translated to the best of my ability: "The tendency toward extremism has caused pain to every beneficent sector-extremism in education and in actions, and also extremism in ideologies ... We have reached a level of extremism that is sufficiently extreme to assert dogmas and policies which are clearly refutable from every perspective."

Writing well over a hundred years ago, he is clearly referring to positions held then, and still not relinquished today, against the nationalist hopes and goals advocated by the Zionist movements. He insists that nationalism and patriotism are not at all inconsistent with our religious values and tradition, that we are a nation and not just a religion.

As in all of Rav Kook's writings, there are sparks of prophecy that one can recognize and should at least contemplate, consider, and debate. One thing is for sure; extremism is not always beneficial. It must be tempered, controlled, and redirected toward cooperation and mutual understanding. We all must share in the Almighty's gift to Pinchas—His covenant of *SHALOM*!



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My, How Time Flies....

You may well have missed it, but an astounding phenomenon took place in the Torah a few weeks ago...

Nearly thirty-eight years passed without comment from the text.

In one fell swoop, the Torah jumps from the Rebellion of Korach to the death of Miriam, close to forty years later. Sandwiched between these two events, the Israelites' period of wilderness wandering completely disappears from the text. From this point on, the Torah deals solely with the nation's final year in the wilderness and with the messages and commandments transmitted by Moshe during that year.

Why is the Torah silent concerning the bulk of the forty-year period of wilderness wandering? It would seem that these were important, formative years. An entire generation, the

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Why, then, do all the wilderness years pass without any comment at all; without, in fact, even a note in the text that they have passed?

Strangely enough, the Torah's silence concerning the missing thirty-eight years is matched by a similar silence from the classical commentaries. While some scholars clearly note the phenomenon of the missing years; they make no attempt to explain why the Torah does not chronicle this period of time more fully.

Perhaps the key to this mystery lies in the answer to another, more technical question...

What is the symbolism of the repeated appearance of the *number forty* at critical junctures in the biblical text? Why are there: forty years of rain that create the flood; forty days repeatedly spent by Moshe on Mount Sinai's summit over the course of Revelation; forty days during which the spies tour the Land of Canaan; forty years of wandering in the wilderness...?

A possible answer to this second question emerges from an unexpected source...

In commenting on the development of a human fetus, the Talmud states that, until the passage of forty days from conception, the embryo is considered to be *maya b'alma*, "mere water". From that point on, the fetus enters a new, more advanced stage of development. Clearly, to the rabbinic mind, *the fortieth day marks a critical point in the*

gestation process.1

If the number forty represents a critical juncture in the biological gestation of a human being; perhaps the number forty plays a similar role throughout Jewish tradition.

Upon consideration, *each time a phenomenon appears in units of forty in the Torah text, a new reality is about to be born.* The forty days of rain in Noach's time, mark not only the destruction of the old world but *the birth of a new one;* Moshe's forty days on the summit of Mount Sinai signal *the birth of a new nation* forged on the foundation of God's law; the forty day tour of the spies through Canaan gives rise to *the birth of a new, devastating reality* for the generation of the Exodus; and the forty years of wilderness wandering give *birth to a new generation of Israelites* who will enter the land.

The forty-year period of wilderness wandering, therefore, carries no intrinsic, independent significance. Instead, these years emerge as a period of incubation, a time when, step by step, a new generation is forged through a crucible of experience. The value of the wilderness years will therefore ultimately be determined by the nature of the generation born; by the product created during the passing years.

Will this new generation of Israelites avoid the missteps of their fathers? Will these people; surrounding by clouds of God's protection, sustained on the heaven-sent Manna,



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guided on their journeys by God's manifest will; effectively transition from the 'fear of' to the 'love of' God? Will the forty years have done their job?

These questions can only be answered in retrospect, as the story of this generation unfolds, *after* the wilderness years have passed. The Torah therefore remains silent concerning the passage of the years themselves, allowing us to draw our conclusions concerning their value after the fact, on the basis of the actions of the generation born.

Turning to our day, we find ourselves in the midst of dramatic, historic events; "giving birth" to new realities that will affect the entire globe. And once again, as it has throughout history, the small land of Israel stands at the crossroads of destiny, at the spear-point of earth-shattering change.

Clearly the questions abound...

Where will the tectonic shifts around OU ISRAEL CENTER 21

^{1.} Note: A word of caution: This rabbinic statement concerning the developmental stages of the human fetus should not be misinterpreted as an automatic acceptance of abortion during the early, forty day period, of gestation. While the laws of abortion in Jewish law are complex and detailed, the general rule remains that abortion is prohibited at any time after conception unless the life of the mother is threatened. Under all circumstances, appropriate rabbinic authority should be consulted.

us ultimately lead? Will this painful, yet hopeful, period finally give birth to a "New Middle East?" Will our struggles result in the permanent weakening of our enemies and in the emergence and strengthening of alliances? And, given the unleashing of public antisemitism across the globe, how will we move forward in the community of nations?

But there is another set of questions that is equally, if not more, important...

Who will we be when the dust settles?

What lessons will we learn from this period of great potential, deep pain, and burgeoning hope? Will the unity forged on the battlefield carry over to our struggles in times of peace? Will a recognition of the vulnerability caused by our divisions compel us to transcend the fault lines within our society? Will the painful cost of war convince us to never again take the preciousness of life for granted? Will our ongoing struggles and successes strengthen the bonds between diaspora Jewish communities and the State of Israel? Above all, will the miraculous confluence of events of these past months result in a deeper appreciation of God's presence in our lives and of His guiding hand in our nation's history?

Long ago, our nation's years of wilderness wandering "gave birth" to a new generation, facing new challenges, in a changing world. These past months have seen our world immeasurably transformed. With God's help, we will be transformed as well, as we confront the new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Rabbi Goldin is the author of the OU Press volumes "Unlocking the Torah Text," and "Unlocking the Haggada."



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With Pinchas a new type enters the world of Israel: the zealot.

"Pinchas son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the Priest, has turned My anger away from the Israelites by being zealous with My zeal in their midst, so that I did not put an end to them in My zeal." (Num. 25:11)

He was followed, many centuries later, by the one other figure in Tanach described as a zealot, the prophet Elijah, who tells God on Mount Horeb, "I have been very zealous for the Lord, God Almighty" (1 Kings 19:14).

In fact, tradition identified and linked the two men even more closely: "Pinchas is Elijah" (Yalkut Shimoni, Torah, 771). Pinchas, says Targum Yonatan (to Num. 25:12), "became an angel who lives forever and will be the harbinger of redemption at the End of Days."

What is truly fascinating is how Judaism – both biblical and post-biblical – dealt with the idea of the zealot. First, let us recall the two contexts.

First is that of Pinchas. Having failed to curse the Israelites, Bilaam eventually devised a strategy that succeeded. He 24 TORAH TIDBITS 1621 / PINCHAS persuaded the Moabite women to seduce Israelite men and then lure them into idolatry. This evoked intense Divine anger, and a plague broke out among the Israelites. To make matters worse, Zimri, a leader of the tribe of Shimon, brought a Midianite woman into the camp where they flagrantly engaged in intimacy. Perhaps sensing that Moses felt powerless – he had himself married a Midianite woman – Pinchas seized the initiative and stabbed and killed them both, ending the misbehaviour and the plague by which 24,000 Israelites had already died. That is the story of Pinchas.

Elijah's story begins with the accession of Ahab to the throne of the northern kingdom, Israel. The king had married Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon, and under her influence introduced Baal worship into the kingdom, building a pagan temple and erecting a pole in Samaria honouring the Ugaritic mother goddess Asherah. Jezebel, meanwhile, was organising a programme of killing the "prophets of the Lord." The Bible (I King 16) says of Ahab that "he did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him."

Elijah announced that there would be a drought to punish the king and the Baal-worshipping nation. Confronted by Ahab, Elijah challenged him to gather the 450 prophets of Baal to a test at Mount Carmel. When all assembled present, Elijah issued the challenge. The prophets would each prepare sacrifices and call on God, and so would Elijah. The one who summoned fire from heaven would confirm the true God. The Baal prophets agreed, made their preparations, and then called on their god, but nothing happened. In a rare show of scornful humour, Elijah told them to cry louder. Perhaps, he said, Baal is busy or travelling, or sleeping. The false prophets worked themselves into a frenzy, gashing themselves until their blood flowed, but still nothing happened. Elijah then prepared his sacrifice and had the people douse it three times with water to make it even harder to ignite. He then called on God. Fire descended from heaven, consuming the sacrifice. The people, awestruck, cried out, "The Lord - He is God! The Lord - He is God!" words we say nowadays at the climax of Neilah at the end of Yom Kippur. The people then executed the false prophets of Baal. God had been vindicated.

There can be no doubt that Pinchas and Elijah were religious heroes. They stepped into the breach at a time when the nation was facing religious and moral crisis and palpable Divine anger. They acted while everyone else, at best, watched. They risked their lives by doing so. There can be little doubt that the mob might have turned against them and attacked them. Indeed after the trial at Mount Carmel, Jezebel lets it be known that she intends to have Elijah killed. Both men acted for the sake of God and the religious welfare of the nation. And God Himself is called "zealous" many times in the Torah.

Yet their treatment in both the written and



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Eta Morris Realty, Ltd. etamorrisrealestate@gmail.com Eta: 054-723-3863 etamorrisrealty.co.il oral Torah is deeply ambivalent. God gives Pinchas "my covenant of peace," meaning that he will never again have to act the part of a zealot. Indeed, in Judaism, the shedding of human blood is incompatible with service at the Sanctuary (King David was forbidden to build the Temple for this reason: see I Chronicles 22:8, 28:3). As for Elijah, he was implicitly rebuked by God in one of the great scenes of the Bible. Standing at Horeb, God shows him a whirlwind, an earthquake and a fire, but God is not in any of these. Then He comes to Elijah in a "still, small voice" (1 Kings 19). He then asks Elijah, for the second time, "What are you doing here?" and Elijah replies in exactly the same words as he had used before: "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty." He has not understood that God has been trying to tell him that He is not to be found in violent confrontation, but in gentleness and the word softly spoken. God then tells him to appoint Elisha as his successor.

Pinchas and Elijah are, in other words, both gently rebuked by God.

Halachically, the precedent of Pinchas is severely limited. Although his act was lawful, the Sages nonetheless said that had Zimri turned around and killed Pinchas instead, he would be deemed innocent since he would have acted in self-defence. Had Pinchas killed Zimri even *one moment after* the act of immorality, he would have been guilty of murder. And had Pinchas asked a court of law whether he was permitted to do what he was about to do, the answer would have been no. This is a rare instance of the rule, *halachah ve-ein morin kein*, "It is a law that is not taught" (Sanhedrin 82a).

Why this moral ambivalence? The simplest answer is that the zealot is not acting within

the normal parameters of the law. Zimri may have committed a sin that carried the death sentence, but Pinchas executed punishment without a trial. Elijah may have been acting under the imperative of removing idolatry from Israel, but he did an act – offering a sacrifice outside the Temple - normally forbidden in Jewish law. There are extenuating circumstances in Jewish law in which either the king or the court may execute non-judicial punishment to secure social order (see Maimonides, Hilchot Sanhedrin 24:4; Hilchot Melachim 3:10). But Pinchas was neither a king nor acting as a representative of the court. He was acting on his own initiative, taking the law into his own hands (avid dina lenafshei). There are instances where this is justified and where the consequences of inaction would be catastrophic. But in general, we are not empowered to do so, since the result would be lawlessness and violence on a grand scale.

More profoundly, the zealot is in effect taking the place of God. As Rashi says, commenting on the phrase, "Pinchas ... has turned My anger away from the Israelites by being zealous with My zeal", Pinchas "executed My vengeance and showed the anger I should have shown" (Rashi to Num. 25:11).

In Judaism, we are commanded to "walk in God's ways" and imitate His attributes. "Just as He is merciful and compassionate, so you be merciful and compassionate." That is not, however, the case when it comes to executing punishment or vengeance. God, who knows all, may execute a sentence without a trial, but we, being mere humans, may not. There are forms of justice that are God's domain, not ours.

The zealot who takes the law into his own

hands is embarking on a course of action fraught with moral danger. Only the most holy may do so, only once in a lifetime, and only in the direst circumstance when the nation is at risk, when there is nothing else to be done, and no one else to do it. Even then, were the zealot to ask permission from a court, he would be denied it.

Pinchas gave his name to the Parsha in which Moses asks God to appoint a successor. Rabbi Menahem Mendel, the Rebbe of Kotzk, asked why Pinchas, hero of the hour, was not appointed instead of Joshua. His answer was that a zealot cannot be a leader. That requires patience, forbearance, and respect for due process.

The zealots within besieged Jerusalem in the last days of the Second Temple played a significant part in the city's destruction. They were more intent on fighting one another than the Romans outside the city walls. Nothing in religious life is more risk-laden than zeal, and nothing more compelling than the truth God taught Elijah, that God is not to be found in the use of force but in the still, small voice that turns the sinner from sin. As for vengeance, that belongs to God alone.

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PROBING THE PROPHETS

BY RABBI NACHMAN (NEIL) WINKLER FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

A Journey to Joy

In his introduction to the "Haftarot of the Summer", those prophetic messages that are read from before "the Three Weeks" until Rosh Hashanah, Rav Moshe Lichtenstein points to their "uniqueness" for being ten readings that were not chosen on the basis of their connection to the parasha of that week, but, rather, to the overriding theme of the season itself.

The *P'sikta* reflects on this long-observed minhag that was established in Eretz Yisrael, (according to the Tosafists) by dividing these haftarah readings into two sections, familiar to most: "*T'lat d'poranuta*" – the three haftarot that precede Tish'a B'Av, warning Israel of the punishments that she would suffer for her sins, and "*Shev d'n'chemta*" the seven haftarah readings following Tish'a B'Av, that comfort the mourning nation



grieving over her loss. However, the P'sikta adds a third section –"*Tartei d'tiyuvta*" – two haftarot of Teshuva that follow Rosh Hashanah, calling the people to return to Hashem, as we find in the readings of Shabbat Shuva and Tzom Gedaliah.

It is clear that our ancients regarded this season of mourning, comfort and repentance as being of such import that they chose to disregard the well-established tradition of selecting haftarot that reflect the events or themes found in the Torah reading. Instead, they favored including those meaningful prophecies that would impact the Jewish world with the significance of this season of repentance.

The division of the haftarot echoes the process of Teshuva, as illuminated by the Rambam:

• Recognition of sin:

Where Israel is made to realize her iniquity through the prophets' censures in the first three haftarot – which lead to...

- Regret for the commission of the sin: As Israel's remorse is reflected in Yishayahu's comforting words directed to the mourning nation in the seven subsequent haftarot - which bring on...
- **Return** to Hashem: The cry to Israel for Teshuva, repentance and eventual atonement.

It is quite fitting, therefore, that the first of these haftarot are taken from the opening nevuot of Yirmiyahu, who, himself, struggled through difficult years. He had no children

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and he never married. As a kohen whose life was dedicated both to G-d and to his people, he was sadly required to serve Hashem through His divine charge to condemn his nation. His early years of prophecy were, seemingly, good years for Israel, as they were freed from the grip of the Assyrian Empire and, under the righteous reign of King Yoshiyahu, had entered into an era of repentance (after the discovery of the Sefer Torah in the Beit HaMikdash) that followed with a campaign to uproot the existing idolatry.

And yet....it was during this very time that Yirmiyahu received his first prophecy from G-d, a divine mission of which we read this Shabbat. In it, Hashem commands the navi to warn Judea of the coming invasion from the surrounding enemies, a punishment for their sinful ways! It must have been a more than surprising revelation to Yirmiyahu who, assuming that the people had been shown remorse and return, was reluctant to accept such a mission. And understandably, the population itself could not accept such prophecies and, as a result, saw Yirmiyahu as a false prophet and, indeed, a traitor to his people.

Among the messages we learn from our haftarah is that recognizing sin requires objective discernment of our behavior, that divine retribution should also be a tool leading to sincere remorse which, in turn, should bring us to repentance that brings us hope!

A proper comprehension of the messages of these haftarot will ultimately bring us to the hope and joy of Succot, Z'man Simchateinu.

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Rosh Chodesh Reflections

ROSH CHODESH – HIDDEN HOLINESS

In Parshat Pinchas the Torah depicts the korbanot that were offered on the various holidays, including the sacrifice offered on Rosh Chodesh. Rosh Chodesh in general is a mysterious day. Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik once referred to a deceased in a hesped that he gave as a "Rosh Chodesh Man". What was his intention? On Rosh Chodesh we recite Hallel and Mussaf, yet there is no prohibition to work and there is no obligation to partake in a festive meal. Is it a yom tov or a yom chol? It is a hybrid - where the kedusha may be less apparent, and somewhat hidden. Apparently, the deceased individual being eulogized was a tzaddik, but his saintly activities were performed anonymously and were not apparent to many.

YOUR ROSH CHODESH

When the offering of Rosh Chodesh is introduced in Parshat Pinchas it is referred to as: ובראשי חדשיכם – on **your** Roshei Chodesh.



Why is such language utilized in connection with Rosh Chodesh and not any other holiday? The Torah does not relate other days as being "ours". It does not state: ובשבתכם ובשבתכם – when referring to Shabbat or Shavout.

LIGHT REFLECTED UPON

The Seforno offers an interesting explanation. Since it is this hybrid day, we infuse it with sanctity. Furthermore, the relationship between Am Yisrael and Hashem is comparable to the relationship between the sun and the moon. The moon does not give off its own light. Rather, the moon obtains its brightness as reflected upon by the sun, based on its proximity to the sun. Similarly, with respect to Am Yisrael. We receive our light from Hashem. As we recite in Tehillim (27:1) ה אורי וישעי – God is our light and salvation. When we are distant from Hashem, we experience hester panim, God's face is hidden from us and we experience dark and challenging times. When we are close to Hashem, we are enlightened by his presence. It is up to us to determine how close we are to Hashem. Therefore, Rosh Chodesh is a day attributed to us.

Perhaps that is why the first mitzva commanded to Bnei Yisrael was Kiddush HaChodesh. So that we understand that now we are no longer Avadim L'Pharoah, but we are Avdei Hashem and receive our "light" from His source!

It is on Rosh Chodesh, when the moon is small and hardly visible that we recall that even when we are distant from Hashem, like the cycle of the moon, we have the opportunity to get closer to Hashem so that we can reflect his light upon us. May we merit to see the day when our relationship with Hashem is always at its height, as we state in Kiddush Levana - שגיעת החמה למלאות - We ask Hashem to fill the defect of the moon ... so that the light of the moon be as bright as the light of the sun. ■



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Mindful Motivation

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Our *parashah* begins noting the lineage of Pinchas as the grandson of Aharon Hakohen. Rashi wonders at the Torah's need to repeat something we already know and offers the following explanation. People taunted Pinchas that his grandfather Yitro fattened cows to serve idols, implying that Pinchas was flawed and unsuited to kill a prince of Israel. Therefore, the Torah emphasizes his holy

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For more information – Google Search for "levine advancement of tinnitus" lineage, praising Pinchas that his character was modeled after his paternal grandfather, Aharon Hakohen. The question is obvious; *Am Yisrael* saw that the plague ceased in the merit of Pinchas's actions, why would they still doubt his legitimacy?

The Saba of Slabodka offers a powerful insight regarding human action. An act may only be judged based on the intentions of the one acting as opposed to the end result. In other words, one must examine the root cause that led to a particular action. Although Pinchas was correct in killing Zimri, it was unclear to the people what motivated him to act this way. By linking Pinchas to his grandfather Aharon Hakohen, the Torah confirms that Pinchas was solely motivated by his desire for peace, the same quality Aharon Hakohen was known for. Similarly, in Parashat Shemot, we are told that the Jewish midwives did not follow Paroh's directive to kill the Jewish males. The Torah clearly states their motivation, "Vayehi ki yar'u hameyaldot et haElokim,

"Vayehi ki yar'u hameyaldot et haElokim, vaya'as lahem batim – Now the midwives feared Hashem, and He made houses for them." (Shemot 1:21) Clearly the midwives wanted to save the babies yet their act was driven by their primary desire to do the will of Hashem. The Torah is teaching us to consider and evaluate the impetus, the catalyst that drives us to do what we do. As Hashem is the true judge of what motivates each person, we cannot judge another's actions with a superficial assessment.

We find that the Ramban highlights this idea as well at the end of *Parashat Emor*. When the Jews stoned the 'mekallel," the individual that cursed, the Torah tells us, "U'venei Yisrael asu ka'asher tzivah Hashem et Moshe -and Bnei Yisrael did as Hashem commanded Moshe." (Vavikra 24:23) The people only killed him because this was what they were commanded to do, not because they held a personal vendetta against this Egyptian man. In Ohr Yechezkel, Rav Chatzkel Levenstien points out yet another example. When Shmuel Hanavi kills Agag, King of Amalek, the passuk explicitly says, "lifnei Hashem – before Hashem." (Shmuel I 15:33) He acted purely to do the will of Hashem, without allowing any personal feelings of revenge or anger to interfere.

With this background, we can appreciate a thought shared by Yeshivat Kelm, quoted in the name of Rav Asher Kalman *zt*"l. In our morning tefillah we say, "*La'asot nekama ba'goyim... ka'asot bahem mishpat hadar hu le'chol chasidav. Hallelukah!* - to execute vengeance among the nations...to execute upon them written judgement – that will be the splendor of all His devout ones. Hallelukah!" (*Tehillim 149:7,9*) It is specifically the pious ones who can take revenge because only they can act with pure intent, *l'shem Shamayim*, therefore they are '*hadar*,' praised with splendor.

It is so easy to take revenge from a desire to win, for honor, for one's own ego. One must examine his motives and drives to be sure that they are coming from a noble place, for the right reasons. As the *Chidushei Harim* would quip, "all your deeds must be for the sake of Heaven," even one's '*l'shem Shamayim*' must to be '*l'shem Shamayim*'!"





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Pinchas: More Than Just The Chicken

The Divrei Chaim, Reb Chaim Halberstam of Tzanz, zy'a (d. 1876), was beloved for his generosity and famous for his righteousness. The poor of the community and travelers who were dependent on his Leil Shabbos Tisch for their Friday night meal, would be invited to sit close to him at the table. His Chasidim would sit behind him and in the outer rows. One Leil Shabbos, when the Gabbaim brought out the chicken for the *Seudah*, the Rebbe turned to his son, Reb Yechezkel, who would later become the Shinover Rov. He pointed out someone at the table: "Do you see that poor Chasid over there? He's got a lot of Mazal and good fortune; just watch and you'll

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Later that night, after the Tish, Reb Yechezkel asked his father, "If that Jew has such good Mazal, how is it that he's still so poor and depends on your *Tish* for his meal?" The Divrei Chayim thought for a moment and said, "It's true, he does have a lot of Mazal; whatever he wants, Hashem graces him and he receives it. The problem is, the only thing he wants in his life, the only thing he aspires to, is a large piece of chicken."

•••••

In our sedra, Pinchas faces national calamity, and responds with prayer and action.

ויַעֵמֹד פִּינְחָס וִיִפַּלֵּל וַתֵּעַצַר הַמַּגֶפָה:

"And Pinchas arose and intervened (or 'prayed'), and the plague stopped (Tehillim 106:30)."

In *Sefer Pri haAretz*, Rebbe Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk teaches, that when a person prays before Hashem regarding something he lacks, the main thing is that he should place his attention on the degradation of the Shechinah...and nothing in the world should matter to him in comparison to the anguish of the Shechinah.

Sometimes, due to our constricted sense of self, we feel unworthy to have such grandiose aspirations. Getting to davening can be challenging enough; what attention can I give to impacting the Divine presence?
Rebbe Moshe Chaim Luzzatto addresses our misplaced lack of confidence:

A Chasid... will certainly feel actual pain over the exile and the destruction of the Temple, as there is a diminishing (so to speak) of Hashem's honor. He will long for the Redemption because then the honor of Hashem will be exalted....

If one will say, 'Who am I, and what importance am I that I should pray regarding the exile and Jerusalem? Will the exiles be ingathered and the salvation sprout because of my prayers?!' The answer to him is near [his question], as we have learned: "Thus man was created alone, so that each person should say: 'בשביל' נברא העולם', 'for my sake the world was created."'(Sanhedrin, 37a). And even though his request might not be fulfilled because the proper time has not yet come, or for some other reason, nevertheless, he has done his part and the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoices in this.

...For it is impossible for the honor of G-d to be raised except through Ge'ulah and the raising of Israel's honor: one depends on the other... " And he grieves over the honor of the Holy One, blessed be He, and over the honor of Israel." (Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 19).

Yemei Bein haMeitzarim, the three weeks of introspection and mourning over the loss of our Beis haMikdash is a time to consider deeply both our national and personal state, our aspirations, and hopes — our *Retzonos*. What do we find ourselves thinking about; what are we focused on in life? What is truly important to us? What do we really want?

Although these are days of *Meitzarim*, 'constrictions', they are also paradoxically days when we have an opportunity to transcend ourselves and tap into a more expansive vision. If we can honestly evaluate our narrowness, we can glimpse the bigger picture, our true *Ratzon* and purpose in the world, our real potential as a Jew.

With our Tefillos we have the ability to directly affect change in ourselves and the world around us. These three weeks are an opportune time for us to become un-stuck from any limited self-perception — from the exile mentality that we are unworthy and unable to hope for anything greater than a big piece of chicken.

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OU KASHRUT

PAGE

BY RABBI EZRA FRIEDMAN Director, The Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education

Bishul Akum Conditions – Raw Food

Our Sages decreed that food cooked by non-Jews—*Bishul Akum*—is prohibited for consumption, even when the ingredients themselves are entirely kosher. According to most early authorities the rationale behind this decree is the concern that social interaction over meals might lead to intermarriage.

Based on this reasoning, our Sages established specific conditions under which food is classified as *Bishul Akum*. One key condition is that the food must be of a type that is not typically eaten raw. If a food is commonly consumed raw, then it is exempt from the laws of *Bishul Akum*. In halacha, this condition is referred to as "*ne'echal chai*"—literally, "eaten raw."

EXAMPLES

Classic examples of foods that are typically



eaten raw and are therefore exempt from *Bishul Akum* even if they are later cooked include fruits, most vegetables, and salt. Early halachic authorities clarify that even if a food is often improved through cooking, it is still exempt from *Bishul Akum* if it is commonly eaten raw.

For instance, while some nuts are preferred roasted, many people eat them raw. Therefore, they are not subject to *Bishul Akum*. Another example is mozzarella cheese. Although it is commonly used in cooked dishes such as pizza or lasagna, mozzarella is also widely eaten raw—as in string cheese making it exempt from *Bishul Akum*.

Rav Yisroel Belsky, zt"l, a *posek* for the OU, elaborated on this point. He explained that the exemption for foods that are "eaten raw" applies even if the food is significantly improved by cooking. As long as the food is considered edible in its raw form, it is not subject to the prohibition of *Bishul Akum*. Rav Belsky noted that classic halachic examples of foods not edible raw include eggs, flour, bitter dates, fish, and meat—foods that people would generally find unpleasant or unpalatable when raw. In contrast, foods that are edible raw, even if less desirable that way, are included in the category of *ne'echal chai*. An example of this is fresh sweet corn.

MIXTURES

A more complex case arises when a mixture contains both foods that require *Bishul Yisrael* (i.e., must be cooked by a Jew) and foods that are exempt. What is the status of The OU Israel Gustave & Carol Jacobs Center for Kashrut Education was created to raise awareness and educate the public in all areas of kashrut. Rabbi Ezra Friedman, Deputy Rabbinic Administrator for OU Kosher Israel is the Center's director.

such a dish in relation to Bishul Akum?

Poskim differentiate between various types of mixtures. The Rashb"a (Torat Habayit 95) holds that the determination is based on the primary or more important ingredient in the mixture. The Gemara (Avodah Zara 38:a) discusses a dish known as kessei de-harsana, a food eaten in Talmudic times that consisted of fish oil and flour. The Gemara rules that since flour—an ingredient not typically eaten raw—is the primary component, the entire dish requires cooking by a Jew.

By the same logic, a dish such as sautéed vegetables with meat would also require *Bishul Yisrael*, even if the meat constitutes a slightly smaller portion by volume. Since the meat is the central component of the dish, its presence determines the halachic status (See *Aruch Hashulchan* YD 113:21-23).

The Aruch HaShulchan (113:14) adds that if the mixture contains equal parts of food that are eaten raw and food that are not, one may be lenient, given that the prohibition of *Bishul Akum* is rabbinic in nature. Although it seems clear to all authorities that in a case where the food which qualifies for *Bishul Akum* is the majority the mixture the product must be cooked by a Jew even if it is not the primary component of the dish (see Aruch Hashulchan, ibid).

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KINOT UPDATE

Drs. David Luchins and Ronald Wachtel will be leading Kinot Tisha BAv morning with NCSY's ID Summer Program

Details forthcoming in next week's Tidbits





THIS WEEK'S INSPIRATIONAL TORAH LEARNING

SUNDAY

7:30 PM

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8:30 PM

The Bais (for Men) - Semichat Chaver Program Rav Elyada Goldwicht@ Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod St.



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TUESDAY

JULY 22



COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN BAKAA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM Understanding Tefila Rabbi Yossi Goldin (Will Resume in Sept.)

10:15 AM Meaning in Mitzvot Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

11:25 AM

Modern Masters Rabbi Sam Shor (Rabbi Goldin will resume in Fall)

12:20 PM Unpacking the Messages of Chazal Rabbi Shai Finkelstein



MODIIN-THE BAIS

Men's Programs in Modiin Yeshivat Hesder Meir Harel, Emek Beit Shean 53, Modiin

10:00AM -2:00PM Weekly Kollel Boker -Instructors include Rabbi Avi Herzog, Rabbi David Fine, Rabbi Ian Shaffer, Rabbi Dovid Wolpe

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

WEDNESDAY JULY 23

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA @ Bet Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM Holy Poetry Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM Contemporary Issues in Halacha and Hashkafa Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM Rebuilding the Mikdash: Are We Doing Enough? Rabbi Joel Keningsberg (Rabbi Goldscheider will resume in Sept.)

12:30PM Medieval Jewish History Dr. Deborah Polster (Will Resume in Sept.) THURSDAY JULY 24

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai Agnon, 11 Rechov Leib Yaffe, Arnona

9:15 AM Parshat HaShavua Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:30AM Parshat HaShavua Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:20AM AMTrailblazing the Text of TaNach Rabbi Neil Winkler

8:00 PM Halachic Controversies (the Bais) Rabbi Aschi Dick @ Bet Knesset Ohel Yitzchak, Keren Hayesod Street NOTE NEW NIGHT!!!!

8:30 PM The Bais- Men's Chabura in partnership with Kehilat Hashiveinu aRabbi Noam Kenigsberg RAMOT

SPECIAL EVENT: 6:00PM Stones With Sould Old City Walk Rabbi Sam Shor



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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES, OU ISRAEL

This *Shabbat* we bless the month ahead of *Chodesh Menachem Av.* During these days of the months of *Tamuz* and *Av*, we are meant to focus our attention on both the absence of the *Beit HaMikdash*, the root cause of its destruction, the longing for its being rebuilt, and the work we must engage in to repair the world and bring that reconstruction to fruition.

There is a challenging passage in the Gemara in Masechet Taanit (29a), which describes the scene of Churban Bayit Rishon. אָנּוּ רַבְּנַן: מִשְׁחָרֵב הַבַּיִת בָּרִאשׁוֹנָה, נִתְקַבְּצוּ כִּיתּוֹת כִּיתּוֹת שֶׁל פִּרְחֵי כְּהוּנָה וּמַפְתָחוֹת הַהֵיכָל בְּיָדָן, וְעָלוּ לְגַג הַהֵיכָל, וְאָמְרוּ לְפָנָיו: רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל אַזֹּכָינוּ לְהִיוֹת גָּזְבָרִין נֶאֱמָנִים – יִהְיוּ עוֹלָם! הוֹאִיל וְלָא זָכִינוּ לְהִיוֹת גָּזְבָרִין נֶאֱמָנִים – יִהְיוּ מַפְתְחוֹת מְסוּרוֹת לֶךָ. וּזְרָקוּם כְּלַפֵּי מַעְלָה. וְיָצְתָה כְּעֵין פִּיסַת יָד וְקִיבְּלָתַן מֵהֶם. וְהֵם קָפְצוּ וְנָפְלוּ לְתוֹך הָאוּר.

The Sages taught: When the Temple was destroyed for the first time, many groups of young priests gathered together with the Temple keys in their hands. And they ascended to the roof of the Sanctuary and said before Hashem: Master of the Universe, since we did not merit to be faithful treasurers, and the Temple is being destroyed, let the Temple keys be handed to You. And they threw them upward, and the image of a hand emerged and received the keys from them. And the young priests jumped from the roof and fell into the fire of the burning Temple.

How are we to understand this difficult teaching? What does it mean that the young *Kohanim* held the keys to the *Beit HaMikdash* **46 TORAH TIDBITS 1621 / PINCHAS** in their hands? What is the significance of the proverbial *Hand of Hashem* taking the keys back from them? Why does the passage end with the tragedy of these young *Kohanim* plunging into the flames below? Simply stated, how are to unpack this Talmudic teaching to uncover the take home message we are meant to glean from it.

Rabbi Moshe Wolfson, zy'a, wrote that in addition to the tragedies that have befallen Am Yisrael during these three weeks, there are actually two great events which are said to occur during these days. Rav Wolfson suggests that it is on the 17th of Tamuz when Boaz marries Rut, hence setting into motion the birth of David Hamelech. from whom Mashiach will be descended. So too, our tradition teaches us that Mashiach will be born on Tisha B'Av. Rav Wolfson, suggests therefore, that these three weeks are in their essence days of great joy and anticipation. However those great lights of hope, have been covered over and clouded by the darkness and tragedies which have subsequently come to be associated with these days. The work of these three weeks is to strive to uncover those great lights.

With Rav Wolfson's insight, perhaps we can now revisit and begin to understand our troubling talmudic passage as well. The young *Kohanim* represent the future of *Am Yisrael*. Indeed the keys to our future, the keys to a better and brighter tomorrow, remain in our hands. The work of these three weeks is the work of repairing the world, one kind deed, one friendship, one *mitzva*, one *tefila at a time*. The keys to revealing those great lights are indeed in our hands and within our reach.

Yehi Ratzon, may we be blessed to use these days wisely, to do much good, to reveal those great lights, and bring about that brighter tomorrow.

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GEULAS YISRAEL

RABBI MOSHE TARAGIN RAM YESHIVAT HAR ETZION MAGGID SHIUR ALL PARSHA AND ALL DAF, OU.ORG

A Land in Which Tradition Breathes and Changes Flow

The instructions for dividing the Land of Israel had just been delivered to Moshe. Larger shevatim were granted broader tracts of territory. To ensure fairness and to prevent suspicions of favoritism, the process was governed by a supernatural lottery or *goral*, not human judgment. Everything seemed ready. The long-awaited Divine promise was at last unfolding: we were poised to enter the Land of Hashem. Every shevet and every family had been counted and prepared. All except for one.

Thirty-eight years earlier, a man named Tzelafchad had died in the desert, for reasons the Torah does not disclose. He left behind no sons. As inheritance passes along the male line, his absence cast a shadow over the future—threatening to erase his legacy.



No sons meant no one to carry his name forward, no one to inherit his portion of land and no anchor to the soil of Israel.

His five daughters stepped forward, approaching Moshe in search of a solution. Moshe is confronted with a challenge he cannot resolve alone. How can he uphold halachic integrity while addressing their rightful yearning? Uncertain, he refers their case to Hashem.

UNVEILING YERUSHA

In response, Hashem does not merely craft a tailored solution for five sisters. Instead, He delivers the entire framework of *yerusha* or inheritance law. Included in this system of halachot is the provision that, in the absence of sons, daughters may inherit the estate. Logically, these halachot should have been introduced earlier—immediately following the general mitzvot concerning the division of Eretz Yisrael. Logically, the Torah should have first outlined the national allocation of land and then, seamlessly, presented the halachot of how property passes down through family lines.

Yet the halachot of inheritance remained hidden until the daughters of Tzelafchad emerged. The laws of family inheritance were revealed specifically in response to the request of the daughters of Tzelafchad. There is something deeply moving and remarkable about how these daughters faced this delicate crisis. Their dignity and resolve brought forth an entire body of halachot, shaped by their plea and courage.

THE OUTSIDERS

The five women were consummate outsiders. As women, they assumed they stood beyond the boundaries of inheritance. Am Yisrael was preparing for its final census before entering the Land. Unlike the earlier census in Parshat Bamidbar, which simply counted the population of each shevet, the census in Pinchas counted families. These families were identified by their male patriarchs. It was a male-centered census, with the land allocated to families through the male line. The entire framework—both the structure of inheritance and the tone of the census—was male-centric.

But it wasn't only their gender that marked them as outsiders. This entire "predicament" began with the death of their father who died suddenly in the wilderness. Had their father lived, perhaps he would have had a son and the family claim to the land would have been straightforward.

The Torah omits the reason for Tzelafchad's death, because he died in disgrace. The Gemara debates whether he was the mekoshesh etzim—the man who defiantly violated Shabbat—or the megadef of Parshat Emor, who publicly blasphemed the Divine Name. Either way, the family bore a shadow. These women carried the silent stigma of being daughters of a man who had fallen in sin.

Furthermore, the daughters did not belong to a prominent or influential shevet. Later



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in Jewish history, the tribe of Menashe would rise to significance—producing kings, leaders and warriors. Yet at this point in the desert, Menashe was still a minor shevet merely a branch of the larger tribe of Yosef, without any prominence. Had these women hailed from Yehuda, or Reuven, or even from Levi, their voices may have carried natural weight. But they came from an inconspicuous tribe, without prestige or standing. Everything about their background—gender, family shame, tribal identity—conspired to silence them. And yet they spoke.

STANDING IN THE PRESENCE OF AUTHORITY

The Torah describes them as approaching Moshe and Aharon, Elazar the Kohen, the Beit Din, and the entire eidah. It was not a private conversation behind closed doors it was a public appearance before the full structure of national leadership. וַתַּעַמֹדְנָה לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וִלִפְנֵי אֶלְעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וְלִפְנֵי

הַנְּשִׂיאִם וְכָל הָעֵדָה פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֵאמׂר For these five women, standing before this august assembly must have been intimidating. Five ordinary women stepping into the center of national attention.

SINCERITY, NOT REBELLION

This moment stands out in the desert narrative: a halachic dilemma presented not through rebellion or complaint, but with dignity and spiritual sincerity. With quiet sincerity, these women raise their concerns—neither demanding nor accusing, but respectfully seeking justice within the framework of halacha.

Respectfully. Boldly. Faithfully.

Because of the way they carried themselves, they became the conduit through which the entire halachic structure of Jewish inheritance was revealed. Of course, Hashem would have transmitted hilchot *yerusha* regardless; these laws are part of Torah and would have been revealed in due course. Yet their behavior was the catalyst that brought these halachot into the open at that moment.

THE RIVER

And not just any halachot, but the laws of inheritance—those that preserve family memory and uphold continuity. The Hebrew word for inheritance is "נחלה" (nachalah), which shares the same root as "נחלל" (nachalah), meaning river. A river constantly flows, weaving its way through different regions and landscapes. It symbolizes continuity and connection. Inheritance, too, represents family continuity—not merely the passing down of assets, but the transmission of values, lifestyles, and masorah to future generations. Inheritance preserves families and sustains their legacy. It is like a river, ever flowing, ensuring the past lives on within the future. Nachalah is like a nachal.

In approaching Moshe Rabbeinu and seeking change, the daughters could have challenged the *masorah* outright by claiming it was unfair. Instead, they searched for a solution *within* the existing framework rather than breaking it down. They sought change—not rebellion—and their plea ultimately brought about the formal delivery of the laws of *nachalah*, designed precisely to preserve traditions and ensure continuity. In a striking twist, their call for change became the very force that safeguarded the past.

FLEXING WITHOUT FRACTURING

This story offers vital insight into how we navigate changing circumstances that challenge traditional values. Avodat Hashem is rooted in receiving and preserving the traditions of the past. Our values are eternal—anchored in Hashem's unchanging will, revealed at Sinai, and shaped by centuries of wisdom, faith, and commitment. Torah holds within it the ability to speak to every generation and respond to every challenge.

When change challenges established orders, we face two choices: either break down the existing framework to meet new circumstances, or preserve the core values while thoughtfully adapting them to the new dynamics. Often, these adaptations become the strongest means to safeguard a system's essence. If a system fails to evolve, it risks becoming obsolete—no longer compatible with the realities it must serve.

It is through thoughtful adjustments and subtle adaptations that we protect this living tradition—so long as the core of our masorah remains intact. The answers to new realities come not from breaking down the system, but from uncovering the pathways halacha and our *masorah* offer within it.

These five heroines taught us the path to preserving masorah and ensuring continuity. Their request for change didn't disrupt tradition—it deepened it. They became the spark that revealed the laws of inheritance, anchoring family continuity.

NEW AND ANCIENT

Of course, these women weren't simply seeking land inheritance. They wanted to be part of the great project of settling the Land of Israel itself. The daughters of Tzelafchad, with their respectful and sincere request, set the tone for our entry into the Land. Their story teaches us how to enter the Land: our masorah must be preserved, steadfast and whole. Yet at the same time, there may be subtle adjustments—small shifts that allow the tradition to live and breathe as we step into a new land and a new era. Settling the Land of Israel and entering a new reality naturally challenges established traditions. Traditions are deeply tied to culture and geography, and relocating to Israel inevitably tests them. We are returning to Israel after an absence of thousands of years. We are not simply entering a new land—we are stepping into a new historical era.

For some, this transition may make the masorah feel less compelling or even uncertain. That cannot happen. Our masorah has been carefully shaped over millennia, grounded in halacha and Jewish tradition.

Yet inevitably, with the ingathering of Jews from diverse lands—each carrying their own minhagim and halachic cultures—friction and change will arise. Traditions will meet, sometimes rub up against each other, and evolve. The challenge is to find ways to make necessary adjustments without compromising the core of our masorah. This is no simple task.

It is often easier to remain enclosed within separate enclaves of masorah, clinging steadfastly to the past. But the daughters of Tzelafchad provide an important roadmap for entering Israel and this new era. Solutions must be found from within—not by opposing the masorah, or by suspending halacha, chas v'shalom. Flexing, not fracturing.



OU ISRAEL CENTER 51



HAFTORAH INSIGHTS

BY REBBETZIN DR. ADINA SHMIDMAN DIRECTOR, OU WOMEN'S INITIATIVE

Walking the Long Road

YIRMIYAHU 1:1-2:3

At the moment of destruction, the Midrash (Eicha Rabbah, Introduction, Chapter 24) paints a heartbreaking scene. Avraham Avinu is walking with Hashem – ארוכות וקצרות, long and short paths. He turns to God and asks: מרי מרי? מרי? "— "What is My beloved doing in My house?" How can this sacred space lie in ruin? Hashem answers: "Your children have sinned." Avraham pleads: "Perhaps only a little?" But Hashem replies: "Their sins are many... and not only that, they have driven the Shechinah away from among them."

Avraham's anguish runs deeper than the loss of a building. He fears spiritual extinction — that in the aftermath of churban and exile, Torah itself will be forgotten. Hashem



shows him two paths: a short one and a long one. The short exile is that of seventy years after the destruction of the First Temple. Even in that brief period, Torah was nearly lost. The people no longer knew how to observe Shabbat properly until Nechemiah re-taught them the halachot. What, then, would happen in a longer, more bitter exile?

omen's

But Hashem then shows him the longer road — the exile we are still navigating. And in it lies a promise: *Torah will not be forgotten*. Despite the tears, the wandering, the pain — the flame of Torah will continue to burn.

That is the context in which we read this week's Haftorah from Yirmiyahu, the first of the שלוש דפורענותא, the three prophetic readings of affliction that lead us toward Tisha B'Av. In this Haftorah, Yirmiyahu is charged with a daunting mission. Hashem declares: רְאֵה הִפְקַדְתִּיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עֵל־הַגּוֹיִם וְעֵל־ רְאֵה הִפְקַדְתִיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה עֵל־הַגוֹיִם וְעַל־ וְאַרָּטוֹעֵ:

"See, I appoint you this day over nations and kingdoms: to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant." (Yirmiyahu 1:10)

The charge includes both destruction and restoration. Yirmiyahu is not only sent to warn, but to begin the slow and painful process of rebuilding. Even in the first breath of prophecy, Hashem places both *churban* and *geulah*, both uprooting and replanting, side by side.

This is the story of our people. After the first exile, Torah almost vanished. But we

were brought back and rebuilt — not only the walls of Jerusalem, but the spiritual core of our nation. In the second, longer exile, we have endured with Torah in our hands. From Babylon to Poland, from Yemen to Brooklyn, from Vilna to Yerushalayim — the words of Torah have not ceased.

As we begin the Three Weeks, we mourn what was lost. But we also recommit to what was never allowed to disappear. We are the generation Avraham hoped would come — a generation that still learns, still teaches, still clings to the words that have shaped our people since Sinai.

In this season of sorrow, we hold fast to the closing words of Yirmiyahu's first prophecy: *"to build and to plant."* Because even now, especially now, the seeds of redemption are being sown.

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TOWARDS MEANINGFUL PARENTING

REBBETZIN ZEMIRA OZAROWSKI DIRECTOR OF OU ISRAEL WOMEN'S DIVISION

Summertime Parenting: A Toolbox for Life with Rabbanit Esther Levanon

A couple of weeks ago, I had the privilege of spending Shabbat in Alon Moreh at my son's yeshiva. On Shabbat afternoon, Rabbanit Esther Levanon, wife of the Rosh Yeshiva Rav Elyakim Levanon, gave a talk to the mothers of the yeshiva boys titled **"A Toolbox for Life."**

She shared a series of simple life rules nothing revolutionary, nothing we haven't heard before. But hearing them from a woman who has lived through decades of life experience, who spoke with such sincerity and simplicity from the heart, made all the difference. Her words resonated deeply and she spoke with strength and conviction, as if to say: *This is what I've learned, and I want to pass it on.*

As I reflect on her words, I realize that even though the talk wasn't specifically about parenting (though she gives plenty of parenting talks too), it was exactly what I needed to hear as a mother heading into summer vacation—a time that's always a challenge for me. Juggling a full-time job while managing a house full of kids is no small task. Rabbanit Levanon's insights offered me a sense of perspective, and a bit of peace.

Here are a few of the tools she shared: 54 TORAH TIDBITS 1621 / PINCHAS

RULE #1 – BE FULLY PRESENT IN WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING

She shared that many women come to her for advice feeling torn—like they're never fully present anywhere. At work, they feel guilty for not being with their children; at home, their minds are still at work. Her advice: *Be where you are.* When you're at work, focus on work. When you're at home, focus on family. Don't try to be perfect, just be present.

This message spoke to me on so many levels. I constantly feel that pull between different responsibilities, especially during the summer, and her reminder to live each moment with intention was both grounding and empowering.

RULE #2 – OUR HOMES ARE MEANT TO SERVE US, NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND

Rabbanit Levanon told a beautiful story about her grandfather who was escaping with the Mir Yeshiva during the war. The Yeshiva students came upon a house with a mezuzah and hoped to stay the night. Their boots were caked in mud, and when the woman of the house opened the door to a living room covered in wall-to-wall carpet (a luxury at the time), they hesitated. But she insisted: *"Our home is meant to serve us. We are not meant to serve our home."* That story has been passed down in her family for generations—and now to us.

During the summer, my house often feels like a disaster zone. With so many people home for so many hours, keeping things tidy can feel impossible. But this story reminded me that while it's good to strive for order and to involve the kids in helping, it's also okay if the house looks lived-in. That's *what* it's meant to do during the summer. No need to let the mess ruin the mood.

RULE #3 - DRAW THE TARGET AROUND THE DART

Rabbanit Levanon told of a story of a man who always hit the bullseye in darts. People were amazed—until he explained his trick: he'd throw the dart first, and then draw the target around wherever it landed.

Sometimes in life, we set goals and plans, and we aim high. And that's great. But sometimes, reality has other plans. She shared a story of a teacher who longed to teach eighth grade but was continually assigned to third. It made her miserable—until Rabbanit Levanon gently told her, *"It's time to draw the target around the dart."*

Often, I make big plans for the summer: meaningful outings, creative projects, family bonding, smiles all around. And while some of that may happen, some days don't go that way. And that's okay. Sometimes we need to take a fresh look at our reality and reshape our goals accordingly.

RULE #4 – LIVE IN THE PRESENT, NOT IN THE FUTURE

Over the years, Rabbanit Levanon has met countless young women who live in a constant state of *"when." When* I finish school... *when* I get married... *when* life calms down *then* I'll be happy.



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It hit me that I've been living the summer version of that mindset: Okay, we survived week one... just eight more to go. Halfway there... almost done. Survival mode. But what if, instead, I could find a way to embrace the summer—with all its mess and chaos—and actually live it? Not just mark the days off, but make the days count.

B'ezrat Hashem, may we all take these tools and internalize them—not just for the summer, but for life. May we find ways to live more fully, more presently, and more compassionately, with ourselves and with those around us.





RABBI AARON GOLDSCHEIDER

EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS RAV, THE JERUSALEM SHUL BAKA, JERUSALEM

Birkat HaOre'ach: Reviving a Lost Prayer

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

The Artscroll publication of *Birkat Hamazon* includes a curious note regarding one of the blessings which is recited in *Birkat Hamazon*. It states the following: "Many authorities

are at a loss to explain why the prescribed text has fallen into disuse..." ("The Family Zemiros," Artscroll, 1987, p.18).

This note appears in reference to the blessing known as the *Birkat HaOre'ach* ('The Blessing of the Guest'). This short blessing is recited by a guest when sitting at the table of a host. It is perplexing why this beautiful blessing first

recorded in the Talmud fell into disuse, perhaps for many hundreds of years.

It is interesting to see, however, that



many of the newly published siddurim and *birkonim* include *Birkat HaOre'ach* as part of the standard text of *Birkat Hamazon*.

The original source for this blessing and the

practice of offering a special prayer for the host is found in the Talmud *Berachot* (46a): "The guest recites the *Birkat Hamazon* so that he blesses the host. What is the text of the blessing? 'May it be Your will that the master of this house shall not suffer shame in this world, nor humiliation in the World-to-Come.' Rabbi Yehuda added to it the follow-

ing: "And may he be very successful with all his possessions, and may his possessions and our possessions be successful and near the city, and may Satan control neither his deeds nor our deeds, and may no thought of sin, iniquity, or transgression stand before him or before us from now and for evermore."

Why specifically does the guest pray that the host be spared from enduring any embarrassment? Why do we bless the host that his work "be near the city"? And what is the intention of praying that the host overcomes the pressure of Satan?

Rav Kook offered an exquisite explanation regarding all three aspects of the guest's prayer. First, the opening part of the prayer which is directed at the host not experiencing a feeling of embarrassment stems from the fact that the guest is expressing a feeling that he may very well be experiencing himself as a guest sitting at someone else's table. When one needs to ask assistance from others it often brings with it feelings of discomfort or possibly humiliation. The guest, therefore, chooses to confer a blessing towards the host concerning a situation which the guest himself is undergoing at that very moment. Thus this blessing is indeed a heartfelt prayer conferred on the host that he should never experience a similar situation of embarrassment or feeling any kind of degradation.

The second blessing the guest bestows on his host is in regard to his financial well being.

What is the precise intent of this blessing's phrase that "your work be near the city"?

According to Rav Kook the guest is blessing the host not only that his business location is in close proximity to his home, but also that his daily engagements should always be geared to the overall needs of the community. The more one assists and provides for others, the more a person enhances their own growth and spirituality. There is a heightened quality to a mitzvah carried out for the sake of the community. As a proof text, Rav Kook quotes the mishnah in Pirkei Avot: "Whoever brings merit to the masses will not be connected to sin" (Avot 5:21).

Thirdly, the "Prayer of the Guest" includes the notion of overcoming the negative force of *Satan*. What is the meaning behind this statement? In rabbinic literature the idea of Satan often parallels the concept of yetzer hara (evil inclination). Rav Kook interprets this phrase of the guest's blessing to be playing off of the previous words of the blessing in which the guest prays for the host's continued involvement in communal life. It is a most noble act to be involved in helping the community at large, and yet openness to the life of the city often presents spiritual risks to one's own religious life. A multitude of stumbling blocks present themselves when interacting with a wide variety of people and being exposed to secular settings. The guest therefore concludes his blessing with a prayer that his host be guarded from any negative influences. (Ain Aya, Berachot 7:10, 7:11)

EVERYONE IS A GUEST AT THE MASTER'S TABLE

Rav Kook adds a beautiful foundational thought concerning this blessing recited by the guest sitting at the table of the host. He suggests that the notion of offering thanks for sitting at the table of the host should be kept in mind every time we partake of a meal, even when we sit at our own table. Reciting *Birkat Hamazon* reminds us that the food we eat is truly a gift from the "Host" in heaven. Hashem is our provider and we simply partake of His benevolence.

Rav Kook's comment brings to mind a well-known and beloved story which is told about the esteemed sage, the Chafetz Chaim, with whom he shared a very close bond. A wealthy American businessman who was passing through the Polish town of Radin paid a visit to the home of the leader of his generation, the saintly Rabbi Yisrael Meir HaKohen, known as the Chafetz Chaim. Upon entering the home, he was struck by how sparsely it was furnished. "Where is all your furniture??," the businessman asked. "And where are yours?," replied the Chafetz Chaim. Somewhat startled by the response, the businessman said, "Oh, I am only passing through." To which the Chofetz Chaim replied, "I, too, am only passing through."

RESTORING A PRECIOUS PRAYER

The Rambam (*Hilchot Berachot* Chapter 2) codifies the practice of reciting the "Blessing of the Guest" and shares the text of blessing as it is presented in the Talmud. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim, siman* #201) does the same. Moreover, if we look at the modern day poskim such as the *Mishne Berurah* we also find that he encouraged the practice and adds that the Talmud states that one who is offered to lead the *Birkat Hamazon* and turns it down is "punished with shortening of his life." He is penalized because they have withheld giving a blessing to the host (*Orach Chaim, siman* #201).

It is noteworthy that the *Aruch Hashulchan* states that it is evident that in our time when the custom is that everyone recites *Birkat Hamazon* for themselves (and we no longer have the practice of one individual at the table to reciting *Birkat Hamazon* on behalf of all who are present) it is incumbent upon every person to include the *Birkat HaOreach* in their own *Birkat Hamazon* (*Aruch HaShulchan Orach Chaim* siman #201).

Do children who eat at their parents table recite this blessing? The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim, siman* #201) says that children are also guests at their parent's table and should therefore recite the blessing for their parents.

One final note. When Rav Hershel Schachter served as a Scholar-in-Residence in a shul in Woodmere N.Y., Rabbi Aryeh Leibowitz was sitting next to him when he recited the 58 TORAH TIDBITS 1621 / PINCHAS benching and overheard that Rav Schachter added the *Birkat HaOre'ach*. Apparently, explained Rabbi Leibowitz, Rabbi Schachter considered himself a guest and therefore felt obligated to direct his blessings to those who were his hosts (i.e. the rabbi, shul board). (YU Torah, Rabbi Aryeh Leibowitz, 10 Minute Halacha, Birkat HaOre'ach).



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Wearing a Kippa in Today's U.S. Social Atmosphere

לעילוי נשמת יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז״ל

Question: Some of my students (American young-adult *shomrei mitzvot*) who are in college and the workplace have asked me if they should wear a *kippa* there, since it can expose them to discrimination or verbal or physical attack. What do you recommend?

Answer: We will look at classical sources and recent discussion of *kippot* in the workplace before discussing today's situation.

There are three **main** Talmudic contexts of men's head covering. One gemara (Shabbat 156b) implies that one must cover his head for davening, and the Shulchan Aruch (OC 91:3 applies it to uttering Hashem's Name and entering a shul. Another gemara (Kiddushin 31a) tells of an Amora who would not walk four amot with his head uncovered, as an acknowledgement that Hashem is "above our head." The gemara (ibid. 33a) says that it is disrespectful to stand before a *talmid* chacham with an uncovered head. The implication is that it is not Talmudically required to wear a kippa, except in the context of things related to holiness, but it is appropriate for those who act with special tzniut (see Rambam, De'ot 5:6),

Nevertheless, the Shulchan Aruch (Orach 60 TORAH TIDBITS 1621 / PINCHAS Chayim 2:6) codifies not walking four *amot* without a *kippa* as standard guidance. Indeed, it is not unusual for behavior of the elite to be accepted by *Klal Yisrael* as expected of the general populace. It then is taken seriously but often with more leniency than a Torah law and even a Rabbinic law.

However, things became more complicated. The Mahari Bruna (Shut 34) notes that in his time (15th century Germany) non-Jews viewed uncovering one's head as a religious value, and he therefore compared a Jew doing so to *chukot hagoyim* (a Torah-level prohibition against "copying" practices of other religions or perhaps of non-Jews in general). The Taz (8:3) agrees that *chukot hagoyim* applies, whereas the Magen Avraham (91:3) apparently does not. *Chukot hagoyim* is societally dependent, and was not applicable in Muslim countries, as they do not make a point of removing head coverings as a sign of respect for religious matters.

In contemporary times, some say that *chukot hagoyim* does not apply because removing a covering is now more societal than religious (Igrot Moshe OC, IV:2). On the other hand, since wearing a *kippa* has become an observant Jewish man's "uniform," not wearing one seems to disavow that affiliation (see Otzar Hakippa p. 431). Eretz Hemdah, the Institute for Advanced Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, is headed by Rav Yosef Carmel and Rav Moshe Ehrenreich, founded by Rav Shaul Yisraeli, zt"l, to prepare rabbanim and dayanim to serve the National Religious community in the Israel and abroad. Ask the Rabbi is a joint venture of the OU, Eretz Hemdah, and OU Israel's Torah Tidbits.



Practically, the more accepted approach in America is Rav Moshe Feinstein's (see Igrot Moshe ibid.). He says that in certain cases of need, one can assume like the Magen Avraham that wearing a kippa is a matter of middat chasidut, which is not stronger than a positive mitzva for which one does not have to lose significant money (Rama, OC 656:1). His context is when being bareheaded is needed in his place of work. One would also need to cover his head for a beracha and put one on in contexts in which it is possible (e.g., they mind when meeting with clients, not with office staff). College settings are rarely discussed, and there is much less room for leniency. It is rare for one to need to go to a place where he cannot wear a kippa in order to get good professional training. Also, it is usually acceptable to wear a baseball hat, and at worst take it off after being seated in the classroom (see Mahari Bruna ibid.)

Your question about antisemitic atmosphere is a good one. On the one hand, there has always been antisemitism in the US, even as the identity of the perpetrators and their "motivation" changes. On the other hand, through the 1960s, most observant Jews did not wear a kippa at work outside our community, avoiding outward signs of their observant Judaism although less frequently their Jewish identity (or family names). One who is in a setting where he has real concern for damaging or upsetting encounters, can ask his rabbi for his blessing to not wear a kippa. A person's "makeup" and size are among factors. However, the consensus of my rabbinic colleagues in the US is that there is not a general plan to act more submissive now in this regard compared to before October 7.





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Dina's Mother?

Last time we brought a "proof" that the birth mother is the mother and not the genetic mother, from the verse describing Esther's parents.

Another proof that has been suggested is in the comparison between two different Talmudic passages. The Gemara (Berachot 60a) describes how Leah prayed that the male child she was carrying would become a female. This miracle occurred and Dina was born.

In another Talmudic passage, (Niddah 31a) a verse is brought to prove that if the man gives seed first the child will be a girl and if the woman gives seed first the child will be a boy. The verse is "these are the children of Leah that she bore for Yaakov in Padan Aram, and Dina, his daughter" (Bereishit 46:15). The daughters are dependent on the father and the sons on the mother.



But these two sources contradict each other, if Dina was originally a boy and became a girl due to Leah's prayers, how can she prove that if the man gives seed first the couple will have a girl?

The Maharasha explains in the name of a book that we do not know of, called Paaneach Razi, that Leah and Rachel were both pregnant, Leah with a boy, Yosef, and Rachel with a girl, Dina, and the two embryos switched. Thus, Dina was always a girl and only moved from one mother to the next.

Since Rachel is definitely Yosef's mother, this can be used as a proof that the birth mother is the mother.

But this "proof" is also problematic; not only is it a slightly fanciful Aggadic portion of the Talmud that may not carry any halachic weight, but due to a comment by the Tosafot. The Tosafot in their commentary on the Torah bring a Midrash that Dina married Shimon, but it is forbidden for a brother and sister from the same parents to marry, even according to the Noachide laws. Since prior to the Torah being given Yaakov's family were obligated in Noachide laws at the very least, how could Dina and Shimon marry?

They answer that, in fact, Dina and Shimon shared the same father but not the same mother, since Dina was actually Rachel's daughter. This suggests that this same "proof" can be employed to prove the opposite position, that the genetic mother is the mother and not the woman who delivered the baby.

More on this next time.



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Coping During the Quiet Periods

לעילוי נשמת מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז״ל

Shoshana asks:

A friend of mine reached out recently, and I could hear the ache in her voice.

"How can I cope during a time when no dating suggestions are coming in? I feel stuck, and it's bringing up a lot of difficult emotions."

Aleeza answers:

I can feel the stress in her question, and the panic that's behind it. These quiet periods, when no names are coming in and the waiting feels endless, can be deeply painful. She's not imagining it. She's not overreacting. She's just... feeling. And she's uncomfortable.

When the world feels still, and she's doing everything "right" but nothing is happening,



it can feel like something's wrong. But I want to offer a reframe: perhaps nothing is wrong. Perhaps her bashert is hidden. Or maybe he's not ready. Hashem is working behind the scenes, even when we see nothing at all.

This is how Hashem created the world, he's hidden in layers of life. There are moments when everything is visible and moving and we clearly see the hand of Hashem. And then there are times like this, where we're underground, like a seed waiting to grow. No one sees it, but something sacred is taking root.

Still, that feeling of stuckness is real. And it can bring up doubt, sadness, frustration, even questions about her own value. But please remind her: her worth is not measured by the number of suggestions she gets. She is just as worthy today, without suggestions, as she will be when her story begins to unfold.

So what can she do in the meantime?

- Lean into growth. Focus on areas of life that bring light learning, creativity, friendships, connection and joy.
- Let trusted people know she's open to new suggestions. Sometimes the net-work just needs a gentle reminder.
- Surround herself with people who see her. She doesn't need everyone to understand just a few who really do.

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And most of all, she can ask herself:

- Can I believe this pause is part of the plan not a punishment?
- Can I hold onto the truth that I'm being prepared, not forgotten?

She's not behind. She's exactly where she needs to be. Every "no," every silence, every moment of stillness is leading her closer to her "yes." Don't let her give up. Let her know that you believe her soulmate is on the way. Because that's the truth. He's on the way.

Blessings,

Aleeza 🔳



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HASHEM'S COVENANT OF PEACE

Can an act of violence ever lead to peace? After Bnei Yisrael became involved in improper relationships that led them toward idolatry, Hashem's anger was aroused and a plague broke out, killing 24,000. At the height of this, Zimri publicly brought a midyanite woman into the camp, and Pinchas responded by killing them both. Hashem then stopped the plague.

"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying, Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron the priest, turned back my anger from upon Bnei Yisrael, with his arousal of zeal - my zeal within them.And I did not finish the children of Israel. Therefore say, Behold I give him My covenant of peace:" (Bamidbar 25:10-12)



Why should Pinchas—who acted violently—be given a covenant of peace? Pinchas's action expressed his own wholehearted love for Hashem and awakened that zealousness within the Jewish people. Pinchas inspired the people to improve. This is a core aspect of being a true leader.

In English, the word peace brings to mind appeasement. When people are appeased, there can be peace, or the end of violence.

In Hebrew, the word for "peace" comes from the word "Shalem," meaning "wholeness" or "harmony." True peace is an active state that requires harmonious interaction between people, not just appeasement. Just as true peace is an active state, a true peacemaker is an active participant.

Pinchas's difficult action inspired Bnei Yisrael toward doing good, as opposed to passively staying away from evil.

May we be inspired to pursue true harmony and find the courage to stand for what's right, for Hashem's values. Shabbat Shalom!

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