

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

PINHAS

JULY 14, 2012 24 TAMUZ 5772

Rosh Hodesh Ab will be celebrated on Friday, July 20.

**DEDICATIONS :** In memory of Mr. Sam Schwartz. Our condolences to the entire family.

**Sephardic Congregation of Long Beach Schedule and Announcements**

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David will B'H be in the Synagogue this Shabbat giving the speech and class, the President refused to give him off

Friday Night: Candles: 8:07PM - Afternoon and Evening service (Minha/Arbith): 7:00 PM

Morning Service (Shaharith): 9:00AM - Please say Shemah at home by 8:26 AM

No sponsor for Kiddush this week. We also have the next two weeks open. Please sponsor a Kiddush. You can email back, call IDA or go on to our website BenaiAsher.org. Dairy Kiddush starts at \$200, \$300 deluxe and \$400 with Bourikas. Meat Kiddush starts at \$350, \$450 for deluxe and \$600 for the works! Please dedicate one this summer in memory of a loved one, or in honor of a birthday, anniversary, or other occasion.

Pirkei Avot with Rabbi Aharon at 6:40 PM -

Childrens program at 6:40 with Rabbi Colish followed by Minha: 7:20 PM -

Seudah Shelishi and a Class 8:00 - with David - Sponsored In memory of my grandmother Victoria Bat Rosa, Victoria Gindi whose Yahrzeit is next Friday Rosh Hodesh Ab, and for a refuah shelemah for Farha Bat Esther.

Evening Service (Arbith): 9:00 PM - Shabbat Ends: 9:06PM

## WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE

Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

NEW MINCHA AND ARBIT SUNDAY - 7:45 PM - Lets see if we can make a minyan each Sunday for the Summer

ALSO MONDAY at 7:45 PM preceding Rabbi Yanai and Rabbi Colish's classes

## WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE

Sunday Morning, Halacha and Kosher kitchen cancelled this week

Daily 6:30 AM class - Shelah Hakadosh on the Perasha

Monday Night Class with Rabba Yanai - 8PM Monday night

Hebrew Reading Crash Course - 8-9 PM and continuing Monday Nights throughout the Summer. Beginner and intermediate levels welcome! We would like to pray Mincha and Arbit first on Monday nights. 7:45PM

Men's Halacha Class Tuesday Nights 8:30-10:30: Basar BeChalav - With Michael and David - No class this week

Ladies Shabbat Class at the home of Tina Lemberger - each Shabbat at 5:30

Volley Ball with Daniel Wagner - Sunday mornings at the beach at 10AM All summer long.

Reserve the date - Scholar in residence - We are pleased to have Rabbi Avraham Priel and his family join us as a scholar in residence, Aug 18, 2012. Rabbi Priel is a well known rabbi from the Sephardic Community, formally of the Sephardic Services at the Fifth Avenue Synagogue, the Rabbi is the founder and director of Midrash Yosef Shalom. We will be having a Friday night dinner at the shul where everyone can meet Rabbi Priel and his family in an intimate setting. Rabbi Priel will speak both on Friday night and on Shabbat day after musuf.

To RSVP for the dinner please email Hindy Mizrahi hmizny@gmail.com or Patti Azizo pattif@netscape.com or call Patti 608-2320. Cost for the dinner: Children 3 and under free Children ages 4-10 \$10 Ages 11 and up \$18

Unveiling for Jeffrey Oberman - rescheduled for October

We are considering founding a Cub Scout Troop for the youth of Long Beach. There will be a one hour information meeting in the social hall on Tuesday evening July 24th at 8pm with the Local Boy Scout Council. All those interested in learning more please contact Rabbi Yosef Colish.

please reply to  
[ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:ShabbatShalomNewsletter@gmail.com)

**Take a peek into Kosher Culinary Arts School in Jerusalem when the first class is all about taking the dishes to the Mikveh. My daughter Mikhayla is going through a rigorous 6 month program and will be writing about it on-bitemebymik.blogspot.com**

### Editors Notes

In this week's portion, we see Moshe handing the reins to the next generation. Pinchas as a Kohen who will eventually be High Priest and Joshua who will lead the nation as they cross the Jordan, conquer the land and divide it among the tribes.

After writing about the Shulchan Aruch Learning Program and Yeshivat Pirchei Shoshanim, someone asked me, "Do we really need so many rabbis?"

I realized that there was much more here than a simple question. It was a double edged question. "Do we really need so many rabbis?" was the first part, but the second and unmentioned part was, and "who will support them"? As we continued the conversation, I was able to draw that question out.

It is interesting to note that the commentaries explain that Joshua as a "leader", 38 years prior when the spies were selected, was a leader of 50. Which would have made him one of 12,000 "leaders" of 50, and let's not forget that there were also 60,000 leaders of ten. So in essence even in Moses time there were lots of Rabbis. If they needed so many then, wouldn't we need as many now?

At the Semicha ceremony we were honored to have a Harav

Hagaon Rabbi Chaim Walkin Shlit"a speak to us. I knew that the Rabbi had something to do with the Mir Yeshiva in China. I quickly googled him and learned that Rabbi Chaim Walkin is the scion of a rabbinical family. His grandfather, Rabbi Aron Walkin, was the Chief Rabbi of Pinsk, Belarus, and a Torah giant of his day. His maternal grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Londinsky, headed the yeshiva in Radin with the Chafetz Chaim. His uncle and namesake, Rabbi Chaim Walkin, served as the last dean of the Volozhin yeshiva until World War II. Rabbi Walkin's father, Rabbi Shmuel Walkin, was active in rescue of Jews during World War II from Europe. He headed the Jewish community in Shanghai, and was famous for his warmth and care of all the refugees. Upon arrival in the U.S. in 1946, he founded a synagogue for the refugee families and provided for their needs. The Shanghai refugees were his closest family until his death in 1979.

Rabbi Walkin, who was born in Shanghai told us that after arriving in America, his father worked feverishly over the next two years to bring the students to New York. If you have never read or heard the story of the Mir in Shanghai, google it!

At the time getting into America was difficult. But if a Rabbi was invited by a congregation, he would be permitted entry. Rabbi Shmuel Walkin went to see Secretary of State, Dean Acheson.

Mr., Acheson looked at his request for entry for the entire Yeshiva and every one was listed as a Rabbi. He turned to Rabbi Shmuel and said, "we know that the objective of the Nazis was first to annihilate all the Rabbis, So how could it be that all the people who are stuck in Shanghai are

Rabbis? If they were the first to be attacked and killed, how is it possible?"

Rabbi Walkin said that his father prayed that an answer from heaven. And he turned to Mr Acheson and said, "Mr. Secretary let me explain. Our education is different from what one comes to expect in other societies. By us, the basic Jewish education leads to the rabbinate, from lower school, through high school through houses of higher learning, everyone completing their education would by nature become an ordained rabbi, but historically only so many rabbis were needed. So many left and entered other fields along the way. Now though, after the holocaust where our rabbis were decimated by the evil Nazis, everyone who can, must follow his natural education through the system to the rabbinate".

Said Rabbi Walkin, "And now 64 years later, I see now how right my father was." Then in Yiddish he stated, that this Rabbi is within every Jew. We see today that semicha is being bestowed upon doctors, lawyers, professionals, successful businessmen, and people from all walks of life. Given how far so many Jews today are from the connections that their grandparents had, it is incumbent upon each of us in this generation, whoever can, must.

This answers the first question and begins to answer the second as well. Almost everyone receiving Semicha was not looking for his semicha to be his pay check. These were professionals who just wished to do a bit more. Each has a desire to learn and teach and help their communities.

The rabbis of the Talmud were by and large gainfully employed in every trade from blacksmith to

tanner. The rishonim too were often gainfully employed. Both Rambam and Ramban were physicians. Rashi ran a vineyard and winery. Don Isaac Abarbanel served as finance minister to the nations of Spain and Portugal. The Arizal was in the textile business.

At the same time though we certainly need professional rabbis whose only responsibility is to their congregations. I know in my own Shul, there are certainly congregants who would rather have a full time Rabbi. ( A full time administrator and bookkeeper too). I'm not sure if it's because they can't threaten the rabbi with docking his (my) salary (can't take something from nothing) or perhaps they want to have more control or they simply want someone who can give them 60 hours a week (I stop at 30). But with finances as they are, the unsalaried rabbi is a tough deal to beat. ( As is the volunteer bookkeeper and administrator.) Maybe that's why I have been getting offers from others Synagogues lately. (I admit it's very flattering). When finances are questionable, that salary with benefits is often the single largest Synagogue expense). Still, if finances were not an issue, I too would like a full time Rabbi, or two or three Rabbis. I miss my own Rabbi and miss the relationships I had with Rabbis who were completely dedicated to their position. (Although I would stick with the voluntary administrator and bookkeeper – and instead of complaining, we should all tell each of those volunteers THANK YOU!).

So to the guy who asked me if there are too many rabbis. There are certainly not! As to the other question, everything works in balance.

So if you have not learned much, why not check out Pirchei Shoshanim's beginner programs. And if you have and you're ready to up the ante, look into the semicha program. It will change your life. You have the blessings of such greats as Maran HaRav Ovadia Yoesef, HaRav Avigdor Neventzal, HaRav Yon Metzger, HaRav Ezeriel Auerbach and HaRav Simcha HaKohen Kook. And two luminaries HaRav Shmuel Birnbaum Z'sl, and HaRav Michel Yehuda Lefkowitz, Z'sl. Listen guys, if I can do it ... you can do.

### WEDDING INVITATIONS

Someone sent me a question this week, asking why is that at Sephardic Weddings nobody arrives until a few hours after the time on the invitation. I found the question amusing as when I got married, we had two invitations. One for the Syrians that listed the wedding at 3PM and another for the Ashkenaz that listed the wedding at 6PM.

When I got to the Synagogue, I found one poor couple who must have got the wrong invitation already there. I apologized and tried to explain.

At the time I thought that it was just a custom of being fashionably late. My wife Chantelle discovered that it was much more than that. Being late was common in the Arab world. But why?

Our friend Malki Gottlieb's father Rabbi Simcha Cohen wrote an article a few weeks back for the Jewish Press.

Question: It is known that some sephardim generally arrive at a simcha a few hours subsequent to the time noted on the invitation. Is there any logic behind this custom?

Answer: Years ago, while serving as a rav in Los Angeles, I, together with my wife, went to a bat mitzvah celebration at the home of a prominent Iranian friend. The event was called for 7 p.m. We arrived shortly after 7:00 and were escorted to the backyard of the venue where there were tables and chairs for at least 500 people. Yet, to our shock and amazement, not a single person was there. Thinking that we had come on the wrong date, I informed the person who had escorted us that I had probably made an error and that we were departing. As we were about to leave, I was told that the party was in fact taking place that evening. Noticed my puzzlement, the host himself came forward to speak with me. He said that the satan visits every happy event in order to create an ayin hara and mar the simcha. To counter this, all invitations announce the simcha for at least an hour prior to the time when the event is really scheduled to begin. When the satan arrives at the scheduled time and sees no one there, he figures he is wasting his time – it's a "no-show party" – and leaves. The guests, however, know in advance that the event won't begin until at least an hour after the official time and therefore only arrive after the satan has already departed. Not wishing to provide the satan with an opportunity to mar the simcha, my wife and I departed and returned two hours later – just in time for the beginning of the festivities.

When I searched further I found a source that took us back to the party Abraham and Sarah made after Isaac was weaned. The midrashim tell us that Satan showed up and in all the business started so much trouble leading eventually to Abraham's trial of the binding of Isaac. I guess it would have been better if Satan

showed up and found nobody there.

I would love to hear if anyone has any other thoughts on coming fashionably late!

Shabbat Shalom,  
David Bibi

### Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

1st Aliya: As a reward for his act of zealousness, Pinchas is appointed as a Kohain. Although a grandson to Aharon, he was not included in the original selection of Kohanim. No other person would ever be so honored

2nd Aliya: Moshe is told to do battle against the Midianites in retaliation for the incident at Baal Peor. Moshe counts the Bnai Yisroel in preparation for entering Eretz Yisroel. The total number of men over 20 years old, not including the Leviyim, is 601,730; compared to 40 years earlier when it was 603,550. If you include all men, women and children, the total is approx. three million

3rd Aliya: Moshe divides Israel through a lottery that miraculously matched each tribe to its proper portion. The Leviyim are counted.

4th Aliya: Motivated by the "shayla - question" of Tzelafchad's daughters regarding their father who died without any sons, the laws of inheritance are discussed. Moshe is told to prepare for his death, and Yehoshua is chosen as his successor.

5th, 6th & 7th Aliyot: The remainder of the Parsha details the various public sacrifices offered throughout the year: daily, Shabbos, Musaf, Rosh Chodesh, and every Yom Tov.

Jeremiah 1:1 - 2:3 - Tlas Diparanuta is the name given to the next three Haftoros. These are special selections from the Navi Yirmiyahu that were chosen because they prophesies the destruction of Yerushalayim and the 1st Beit Hamikdash. In this Haftorah, Yirmiyahu HaNavi foretells of the Babylonian invasion. The condemnation of the Jews for abandoning G-d and Torah is somewhat softened by the concluding description of Hashem's love for His children. "I remember the devotedness of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown." as if we are given permission to envision the tears of the Creator as He confronts His beloved's infidelity.

### EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

"Therefore say: Behold I give him My covenant of peace."  
(Bemidbar 25:12)

Hashem gave Pinhas the gift of peace. Peace is a great thing and world peace is perhaps one of the most talked about subjects in world events. We are always worried about peace in Israel and the threat of terror is always on our minds. In the Torah the word shalom is written with a broken vav. The Ozneyim Latorah explains that perhaps the significance of this unusual phenomenon is to convey that there will never be true peace in the world until the advent of the Mashiah – for Pinhas is identified with Eliyahu Hanavi, who will usher in the era of the Mashiah. Although nowadays there are occasionally periods when there is no war, in the words of a famous general, "Peacetime is only a preparation for the next war." Only Mashiah will abolish all wars.

It is interesting to note that the story of the act of zealousness of Pinhas was related at the end of last week's perashah of Balak. The reward for Pinhas was stated in this week's perashah of Pinhas. Wouldn't it have made sense to add on to last week's perashah the reward to Pinhas, together with his brave act? The Rabbi Ohev Yisrael (quoted in Hameir) explains that the Torah, by separating the two, wanted to teach us a great lesson. When a man does an act of zealousness needed to defend the honor of Hashem amongst the Jewish people, one cannot be quick to give him reward. It must first be investigated to find out the true motivation that was behind the act. A full week should be spent pondering this act. Only after this long study is it appropriate to announce that this act was purely for the sake of the honor of Hashem and had no personal motives. Therefore, when the Torah separates the act from the reward it is to teach us this lesson. Of course Hashem knew right away that Pinhas was pure and could have announced his reward in last week's perashah, but Hashem put a delay to teach us humans, who don't have Divine wisdom, to always wait and study the motives of the zealot.

All of this is a lesson to us to always think twice before we do an act of a zealot to make sure we are pure. Shabbat Shalom.  
Rabbi Reuven Semah

### TO LIVE FOR

The first financial goal of a young person is to earn enough "to live on." As time passes and the business grows or the career progresses, basic necessities are met. At that point, the goal of working changes. No longer is the objective merely to cover the

bills, but also to acquire some of life's pleasures. These include jewels, vacations, and assorted other "big boy" and "big girl" toys.

But for life to be satisfying, you don't only need what to live "on" – you need goals to live "for." Satisfaction is a function of the spirit, not the body; therefore, to achieve satisfaction, you need to satisfy the spirit. Driving yourself towards a goal – even a material one – gives you a sense of purpose that injects energy into all that you do. When the goal is spiritual, this magical feeling is magnified.

Should you get a little sluggish and feel that routine is bringing you down, change your focus and decide to live "for" a goal. Define the finish line and start driving downfield in that direction. This strategic change can jumpstart your enthusiasm and put the pep back into your life. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR** **Appreciating Other** **People's Needs**

In Parashat Pinhas, God informs Moshe that he would soon pass on, due to his sin at the incident of Meh Meriba. Moshe then requested that a suitable successor be appointed, so that Beneh Yisrael would enter the land under the guidance of a capable leader. God responded by instructing Moshe to appoint Yehoshua for this role, and He described Yehoshua as "Ish Asher Ru'ah Bo" – literally, "a man who has spirit within him" (27:18). This description refers to Yehoshua's quality of understanding the individual needs of each and every person, the ability to relate to different people and their specific needs.

Different approaches have been taken to explain why God punished Moshe so severely for the sin of Meh Meriba. According to the Rambam, Moshe sinned by expressing anger. For a person of Moshe's stature, speaking angrily to the people was indeed a grave sin, and for this he was punished so severely and was denied the right to enter Eretz Yisrael. There is, however, an additional explanation. Ever since his appointment as leader of Beneh Yisrael, Moshe stood up for the people. When God sent Moshe to Pharaoh to demand Beneh Yisrael's freedom, and the meeting resulted in further intensified persecution, Moshe turned to God and demanded, "Why have You done evil to this nation!" (Shemot 5:22). The heavenly angels questioned how God could tolerate such a brazen complaint, but God explained that He looks kindly upon Moshe for expressing his anguish and pleading the people's case. Likewise, after the sin of the golden calf, when God announced His plans to annihilate Beneh Yisrael and create a new nation from Moshe, Moshe interceded on the people's behalf and refused to abandon them. Even though they had just worshipped a graven image, Moshe pleaded their case before God and stood firmly on their side. This pattern repeated itself on numerous occasions throughout Moshe's tenure as leader.

At Meh Meriba, however, which occurred at the end of the 40-year period of desert travel, Moshe did not stand with the people. They made a reasonable request, demanding water, without which they could not survive, but Moshe reacted with anger. It seems that Moshe, who constantly continued throughout his life to grow and advance in his devotion to God and stature of sanctity, reached

the point where he could no longer relate to the needs of ordinary human beings. In a certain sense, his failure at Meh Meriba was actually a tribute to his level of greatness. He became almost like an angel, removed from the needs and concerns of normal people. But human beings cannot be led by an angel. And thus once this happened, God informed him that he could no longer lead. A leader must be somebody "Asher Ru'ah Bo," who can genuinely identify and empathize with the individual needs and concerns of each and every person, regardless of his stature or standing. When Moshe raised himself to the level where this was no longer possible, he was replaced by Yehoshua.

This insight conveys a valuable lesson that is relevant to all people, and not just to leaders. We must be attentive and sensitive to other people's needs, even if they are different than our own needs. People are different and need different things. Kindness does not mean doing for others only what we would want done in their situation; rather, it means trying to identify what their personal needs are, and meeting them.

The Rebbe of Sanz was known for his extraordinary kindness, and for giving charity to anybody who came to him in need. Once, his wife approached him and said that at the butcher shop she saw a woman to whom he gives charity, and that woman was purchasing duck – a very expensive delicacy. His wife was outraged that a woman who supports herself by asking for charity would be treating herself to such luxuries. The Rebbe, however, responded, "Thank you for telling me. Now I realize that she needs duck." They may have viewed duck as a luxury, but apparently this woman saw it as a

need. People are different, and they have different needs. What one person finds unnecessary is a necessity for somebody else.

This is the message of "Ish Asher Ru'ah Bo" – being able to relate to and empathize with the needs and concerns of the people around us, even if those needs are concerns are much different than ours.

### Rabbi Wein

A further count of the Jewish people is recorded for us in this week's parsha. Though the numbers match almost exactly to the count that was reported in the at the beginning of the book of Bamidbar, the Torah nevertheless goes through it again in great detail and with precision. All of the commentators to the Torah have struggled to find meaning in this counting of Israel once again.

Equally troubling is the fact that over the decades of Israel's sojourn in the desert no material change in the amount occurred. It seems that the Torah, early on, wished to inform us of the few in number that would characterize the Jewish people throughout its millennia long history.

The Jewish people, over the last seventy-five years, have yet to make up the numbers it lost during the Holocaust. The count in this week's parsha illustrates the struggle of the Jewish people to survive demographically. God promised us that we would be the smallest in numbers of all peoples and at the same time He ordained us to build families and guarantee our existence demographically from one generation to the next.

The low birth rate and the high number of intermarriages among many sections of Jewish society are harmful to our continued existence. Yet the high birth rate

and demographic growth within the religiously observant Jewish communities in Israel and worldwide offer us a window of hope and optimism. The simple truth is that Judaism cannot survive without there being Jews. Our task is to provide those necessary individual Jews to the Jewish nation as a whole.

The Torah counts people. Except for the necessary public accounting of the wealth collected and spent on the Mishkan construction and its artifacts, and the priestly vestments, we do not find another detailed count of money or wealth in the Torah. People are the most important items in Jewish life. And even people are never counted directly – only indirectly through coins, sheep, etc. – for what number can truly encompass the value and quality of an individual person.

There is a tendency in the world to count wealth, to see wealth as the most important commodity in national or personal lives. I recall that as a rabbi in Miami Beach decades ago I witnessed hundreds of retired people queuing up in front of the local banks four times a year to have their interest dividend recorded in their savings account passbook.

As is usual, there were people who pushed and shoved and attempted to force their way to the head of the line. People were expendable to these pushers and shovers - the physical count of money, which their savings passbook represented to them, prevailed over simple basic human consideration for other people.

Not so in the view of the Torah. For us people count the most. From the Torah's repetitive counting of the Jewish people, we become aware that people, for us, are truly the most precious

commodity. With this in mind we certainly should strive to act accordingly, based upon the values that the Torah has implanted within the Jewish people over the ages.

### Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Parsha Parables ©2012 Eternal Leader

When Hashem tells Moshe that he is soon to depart this physical world, Moshe's first request is not for himself, rather for his nation. "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that do not have a shepherd."

Moshe beseeches Hashem to provide a certain type of leader. But he does more than that; he details a vision for a relationship between the leader and the people, comparing the Jews to sheep and the prospective leader a shepherd.

He describes Hashem in a manner that seems out of place, "G-d of the spirits of all flesh." The Jewish people are comprised of a fraction of the world's population. Moshe was asking for a leader for the next generation. Why is he describing Hashem in eternal terms and all encompassing terms? He also asks for a leader to bring them and take them. Well of course! Isn't that the job of a leader? He asks that someone go out before them and come in before them. The language that Moshe uses to show his concern that "lest they be "katzon asher ain lahem roeh" like sheep that do not have their shepherd, also draws attention. He could have said, "lest they be like sheep with no shepherd." What is the significance of this special and specific delineation?

The Story: My good friend, Joe Bobker, author of numerous as well as humorous titles sent me the following story. In 1954, when Ben Gurion was Prime Minister, he travelled to the USA to meet with President Eisenhower to request his assistance and support, in the early and difficult days of the State of Israel. John Foster Dulles who was the then Secretary of State confronted Ben Gurion and challenged him as follows: Tell me, Mr. Prime Minister who do you and your State represent? Does it represent the Jews of Poland, perhaps Yemen, Romania, Morocco, Iraq, Russia or perhaps Brazil? After 2000 years of exile can you honestly speak about a single nation, a single culture? Can you speak about a single heritage or perhaps a single Jewish tradition?

Ben Gurion answered him as follows: Look, Mr Secretary of State, approximately 300 years ago the Mayflower set sail from England and on it were the first settlers who settled in what would become the largest democratic superpower known as the United States of America. Now, do me a favor - go out into the streets and find 10 American children and ask them the following:

What was the name of the Captain of the Mayflower?  
How long did the voyage take?  
What did he give the people to eat? How did he interact with the passengers?

I'm sure you would agree with me that there is a good chance that you won't get a good answer to these questions. Now in contrast, not 300 but more than 3000 years ago, the Jews left the land of Egypt. I would kindly request from you Mr. Secretary that on one of your trips around the world, try and meet 10 Jewish children in different countries and ask them:

What was the name of the leader who took the Jews out of Egypt?  
How long did it take them before they got to the land of Israel?  
What did they eat during the period when they were wandering in the desert?  
And what happened when their general encountered the sea.

Once you get the answers to these questions, please carefully consider the question that you have just asked me!

The Message: Perhaps, Moshe is asking for more than a leader of men. He asks that Klal Yisrael get a leader with whom all Klal Yisrael can connect and relate to. He asks that the G-d of all spirits, forever appoint leaders who will not only impact this generation, but create a relationship that is worthy of the G-d of all flesh forever. Because our leaders are not relics of the past confined to the history books! They are linked with us and we are linked with them eternally.

**Sir Jonathan Sacks  
Chief Rabbi of the United  
Hebrew Congregations  
of the Commonwealth**

**The Zealot**

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 Tanakh described as a zealot, the prophet Elijah. He tells God on Mount Horeb, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty." (1 Kings 19: 14). In fact, tradition identified the two men: "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 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 Shimoni, 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 both of them, 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 (1 King 16) says of Ahab that "he did more evil in the eyes of the Lord than any of those before him."

Elijah announces that there will be a drought to punish the king and the Baal-worshipping nation.

Confronted by Ahab, Elijah challenges him to gather the 450 prophets of Baal to a test at Mount Carmel. When all are present, Elijah issues the challenge. They and he will prepare sacrifices and call on God. The one who sends fire from heaven will be the true God. The Baal prophets do so and call on their god, but nothing happens. In a rare show of scornful humour, Elijah tells them to cry louder. Maybe, he says, Baal is busy or travelling or having a sleep. The false prophets work themselves into a frenzy, gashing themselves until their blood flows, but still nothing happens. Elijah then prepares his sacrifice and has the people douse it three times with water to make it harder to burn. He then calls on God. Fire descends from heaven, consuming the sacrifice. The people, awestruck, cry 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 kill the prophets of Baal. God has 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 so doing. 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 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.

Halakhically, the precedent of Pinchas is severely limited. Although his act was lawful, the sages none the less 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 a 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, halakhah 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, Hilkhoh Sanhedrin 24: 4; Hilkhoh Melakhim 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 general 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 sentence without a trial, but we, being human, 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 most dire 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. R. 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 the 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.

### **AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL**

"And you will see it" (27:12)

Why was it necessary to see the land? Moshe surely believed Hashem's promises of the exceptional excellence of the land, and even without viewing the land he would be deeply grateful to Hashem. But here we learn we are all in this life for the purpose of gaining a sensory Awareness of Hashem and His Wisdom and His Kindliness. Although all this would be fully revealed to Moshe in the Afterlife,

it was of the most urgent necessity to gain this information in this life, where the Free-Will operates to bestow the true Perfection.

And this perfection does not consist merely of knowing Hashem's wisdom and kindness, but especially in seeing and experiencing His wisdom and His kindness. By utilizing our Free-Will existence here to gain the most concrete form of Awareness by means of our senses, we achieve the True Knowledge ('Daat') for which we were created.

"You will see it" while you are yet alive. "I have caused you to see with your eyes" (Devarim 34:4). "With Your eyes", while you are yet alive and are able to exercise your Free-Will to feel the emotion of gratitude for the gift of this beautiful land. Similarly, Moshe had requested "Cause me to see Your glory (Shemot 33:18), for he did not wish to wait until he entered the Afterlife where he could gaze at Hashem's Presence (Iyov 19:26, Berachot 17A). He desired to see as much as was possible with his eyes of flesh and his Free-Will in this life.

Similarly, Hashem "brought Abram to the outdoors" (Beresheet 15:5) to see how numerous are the stars, "and He said to him: So shall be your seed" (ibid.). Why was it necessary to show him the stars? Hashem could have spoken to Abraham in his tent that his seed would be too numerous to count. But here we see that Abraham was being given the opportunity to experience a sensory perception of the great number of his progeny in order for his physical faculties of sight and his emotion of gratitude to Hashem to be activated, in addition to the

mere intellectual knowledge of Hashem's promise.

We learn that men are in this world in order that their nerves and brains and their mouths and ears should experience the sensory Awareness of Hashem and His wisdom and power and kindness. "The praise of Hashem my mouth shall speak, and all flesh shall bless His holy name forever" (Tehillim 145:21). "My heart And my flesh shall sing to the living G-d" (ibid. 84:3).

The True Knowledge is gained not from mere ideas, but from the manner in which the great truths become perceived by our physical faculties, which is the Awareness (Yirat Hashem) that Hashem created Man to attain.

Quoted from "Journey Into Greatness" by Rabbi Avigdor Miller Z'TL

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