

# OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT PINCHAS · 14 TAMMUZ 5771 · JULY 16, 2011 · VOL. 18 NO. 41

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### ONLY ONE JOB

*“Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon, the Kohen...” (25:11)*

A true story. A number of years ago a unique manuscript came to light in the Cairo Museum of Antiquities. The manuscript was a previously unknown work by one of the *Rishonim* (earlier commentators). Its existence came to the attention of a certain Jew whom we shall call ‘Reb Shalom’. Reb Shalom made it his business to track down and publish such manuscripts.

Reb Shalom made overtures to the Egyptians. They were unresponsive. Undeterred, Reb Shalom went to work. He galvanized every source of pressure he could bring to bear. He lobbied Senators in Washington, Members of Parliament in Westminster. Eventually, the Egyptians were prepared to listen. To the Jewish People, the manuscript was priceless. To the Egyptians, it was worth three-quarters of a million dollars.

Three-quarters of a million dollars is not a paltry sum by anyone’s estimation. Reb Shalom did not flinch, and in due course the money was paid and the manuscript delivered. With great eagerness, Reb Shalom and his team of experts gathered around as the manuscript was opened. Silence fell upon the room as, for the first time in centuries, the holy words of the manuscript greeted the eyes of those who truly knew their meaning and significance. And then, one of Reb Shalom’s colleagues leaned forward to examine a certain line, and in doing so his coat brushed against a large Styrofoam cup that held a full cup of hot coffee. The material of the coat barely grazed the cup, but it was enough. The entire contents of the cup spilled over the delicate manuscript. Within seconds the entire manuscript became a sodden un-decipherable mess. The man who had spilled the coffee slumped into his chair with his head between his hands. The room filled with a deafening silence. After a few

moments Reb Shalom walked over to the man, put his hand on his shoulder and said:

“Don’t worry. We’ll get you another cup of coffee.”

A Jew only has one job in life – to do the Will of G-d. Up until the moment that the coffee spilled, Reb Shalom’s job was to publish the manuscript. After it spilled, his job was to not get angry. The job doesn’t change, only the context.

When people would ask Reb Shalom how the work on the manuscript was coming along, he would reply that it was going to be a very long job. In fact, the story of what happened to the manuscript didn’t emerge until many years later, when, after Reb Shalom’s death, the person who had spilled the coffee revealed the fate of the manuscript.

At the end of last week’s Torah Portion, Pinchas takes a spear in his hand and slays Salu, a prince of the tribe of Shimon, together with a Midianite princess called Cozbi. At the beginning of this week’s Torah portion, the Torah refers to Pinchas as “the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the *kohen*.” The Torah specifically links Pinchas to Aharon, his grandfather. The job of Aharon, and of every *kohen*, is to create *shalom* “peace” between the Jewish People and G-d. Actually *shalom* is not adequately translated by the word peace. *Shalom* means a state of wholeness, of completion. Sometimes we create *shalom* through gentle acts of kindness and mercy, and sometime *shalom* can only come, as in this case, through intransigence and apparent cruelty. However, the common denominator is that our entire job in life is to do the Will of G-d, whether that may be through gentleness, or zealotry — or by offering another cup of coffee.

• Source: Adapted from a story told by Rabbi Zvi Myer Zylberberg as heard from Rabbi Reuven Levitt

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that Pinchas will receive G-d's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action - executing Zimri and the Midianite princess Kozbi. G-d commands Moshe to maintain a state of enmity with the Midianites who lured the Jewish People into sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each tribe. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. G-d instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the Levites' families is recorded. Tzofchad's daughters file a claim with

Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks G-d for the ruling, and G-d tells Moshe that their claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of inheritance. G-d tells Moshe that he will ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks G-d to designate the subsequent leader, and G-d selects Yehoshua bin Nun. Moshe ordains Yehoshua as his successor in the presence of the entire nation. The Parsha concludes with special teachings of the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

## ISRAEL Forever

### TWO VIEWS OF THE LAND

“Go up to this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the Children of Israel.”  
(*Bamidbar 27:12*)

“And you shall see it...” (Ibid. 27:13)

In this week's Torah portion Moshe is reminded by G-d that he will not enter Eretz Yisrael, and he is invited to ascend a mountain to see the land. But why is the invitation to see it repeated in the very next passage?

The commentaries see this as a reference to two different

ways of seeing Eretz Yisrael. There is a physical look at the land and a spiritual one. Moshe was privileged just before his death to miraculously view all of Eretz Yisrael and to also probe its spiritual depth.

To see Eretz Yisrael today in only a physical way is a serious case of short-sightedness. Only by appreciating the land's spiritual qualities and attaching ourselves to those values can we gain the privilege of truly seeing our Promised Land forever.

## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### A REASON FOR ALIYA

So few Jews today take advantage of the opportunity to settle in Eretz Yisrael despite the fact that it opens its arms to welcome them. The reason for this reluctance is often the unwillingness to part with some of the comforts enjoyed abroad.

The prayers of Moshe Rabbeinu to be allowed to enter Eretz Yisrael that are mentioned in the Torah portion of Vaetchanan give us a totally different insight.



Why did Moshe so wish to enter the Holy Land, ask our Sages? Was it to enjoy its fruits and bounty?

The answer given is that Moshe was aware that there are certain *mitzvot* that can be fulfilled only in Eretz Yisrael, and he longed for the opportunity to fulfill them.

If the goal of *aliya* is spiritual fulfillment, a person will be happy to make the move despite all the problems.

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## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. Why was Pinchas not originally a *kohen*?
2. Why was Moav spared the fate of Midian?
3. What does the *yud* and *heh* added to the family names testify?
4. Korach and his congregation became a “sign.” What do they signify?
5. Why did Korach’s children survive?
6. Name six families in this Parsha whose names are changed.
7. Who was Yaakov’s only living granddaughter at the time of the census?
8. How many years did it take to conquer the Land? How long to divide the Land?
9. Two brothers leave Egypt and die in the *midbar*. One brother has three sons. The other brother has only one son. When these four cousins enter the Land, how many portions will the one son get?
10. What do Yocheved, Ard and Na’aman all have in common?
11. Why did the decree to die in the desert not apply to the women?
12. What trait did Tzlofchad’s daughters exhibit that their ancestor Yosef also exhibited?
13. Why does the Torah change the order of Tzlofchad’s daughters’ names?
14. Tzlofchad died for what transgression?
15. Why did Moshe use the phrase “G-d of the spirits of all flesh”?
16. Moshe “put some of his glory” upon Yehoshua. What does this mean?
17. Where were the daily offerings slaughtered?
18. Goats are brought as *musaf* sin-offerings. For what sin do they atone?
19. Why is Shavuot called *Yom Habikkurim*?
20. What do the 70 bulls offered on Succot symbolize?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week’s Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 25:13 - *Kehuna* (priesthood) was given to Aharon and his sons (not grandsons), and to any of their descendants born *after* they were anointed. Pinchas, Aharon’s grandson, was born *prior* to the anointing.
2. 25:18 - For the sake of Ruth, a future descendant of Moav.
3. 26:5 - That the families were truly children of their tribe.
4. 26:10 - That *kehuna* was given forever to Aharon and his sons, and that no one should ever dispute this.
5. 26:11 - Because they repented.
6. 26:13,16,24,38,39,42 - Zerach, Ozni, Yashuv, Achiram, Shfufam, Shucham.
7. 26:46 - Serach bat Asher
8. 26:53 - Seven years. Seven years.
9. 26:55 - Two portions. That is, the four cousins merit four portions among them. These four portions are then split among them as if their fathers were inheriting them; *i.e.*, two portions to one father and two portions to the other father.
10. 26:24,56 - They came down to Mitzrayim in their mothers’ wombs.
11. 26:64 - In the incident of the *meraglim*, only the men wished to return to Egypt. The women wanted to enter *Eretz Yisrael*.
12. 27:1 - Love for *Eretz Yisrael*.
13. 27:1 - To teach that they were equal in greatness.
14. 27:3 - Rabbi Akiva says that Tzlofchad gathered sticks on Shabbat. Rabbi Shimon says that Tzlofchad was one who tried to enter *Eretz Yisrael* after the sin of the *meraglim*.
15. 27:16 - He was asking G-d, who knows the multitude of dispositions among the Jewish People, to appoint a leader who can deal with each person on that person’s level.
16. 27:20 - That Yehoshua’s face beamed like the moon.
17. 28:3 - At a spot opposite the sun. The morning offering was slaughtered on the west side of the slaughtering area and the afternoon offering on the east side.
18. 28:15 - For unnoticed ritual impurity of the Sanctuary or its vessels.
19. 28:26 - The Shavuot double-bread offering was the first wheat-offering made from the new crop.
20. 29:18 - The seventy nations.

A digest of the topics covered in the seven weekly pages of the Talmud studied in the course of the worldwide Daf Yomi cycle along with an insight from them

- The status of the *palgass* – in between lamb and sheep
- Not quite matzah or chametz
- The difference between slaughter of the red heifer and the calf atoning for unsolved murder
- Qualifications of *kohanim* and levites for sacred duty
- Different vessels and their susceptibility to spiritual impurity
- The status of wine made from grape skins
- The age of a girl regarding laws pertaining to her
- Variations of *havdalah*
- What constitutes a valid *shechitah* of animal or fowl
- Why fish do not require *shechitah*
- Rabbi Yehuda's added requirement for *shechitah*
- When a non-Jew participates in the *shechitah*

## TWO LEVELS OF SANCTITY

**H***avdalah* is the term used to describe the distinction between the sacred and the secular. We give expression to this distinction at the conclusion of Shabbat or Holiday by adding a special prayer to our Ma'ariv service and to the blessing we make over wine.

But what do we do when the Shabbat precedes or follows a Holiday, when both days are sacred ones?

The *mishnah* informs us that when the Holiday follows Shabbat we do make *havdalah* – but with a difference. In the *kiddush* we make to usher in the Holiday we add to it the

regular text of the *havdalah*. But we add another distinction – the one between the greater sanctity of the Shabbat and that of the lesser one of the Holiday. Since we cannot conclude this addition with the regular praise of G-d as “the One Who distinguishes between the sacred and the secular” we say instead “the One Who distinguishes between the sacred and the sacred.” This is our way of expressing the difference in levels of sanctity between Shabbat and Holiday.

When Shabbat follows the Holiday, however, we do not make *havdalah* because we are moving into a higher level of sanctity and there is no need to mark this transition.

• *Chullin 26b*

## What the SAGES Say

“Wherever the term corruption is used in our sources it refers to sexual immorality and idol worship.”

• *The Yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael*

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## OLD FRIENDS

**From: Andy**

*Dear Rabbi,  
I have decided to become observant. But I also enjoy the friends I have and the things we do. Is there any problem with still being with them even if they are doing things that aren't good as long as I don't do them myself?*

Dear Andy,

It's great that you've decided to become observant. It's also great that you have good friends and want to keep up your friendships. And it is common in these situations that people experience a certain conflict of interests between old friends and habits as opposed to the new beliefs and practices associated with becoming religious.

As long as your old friends are acting in a way and doing things that are basically acceptable, it would not be wrong to spend time with them. If it's possible, you might even discuss religious topics with them from time to time, without being oppressive, or suggest activities of a Jewish nature that might be taking place in your area.

As you grow Jewishly, your friends either will or won't. As long as your friendships are fulfilling and consistent with your values, you'll continue to value them. However, it's natural that over time, a person simply doesn't enjoy spending time with or doing things with friends that aren't in tune with his lifestyle. While these friendships may remain, the actual time spent together may wane.

However, if and when your friends are doing things that are not acceptable according to the Torah, you should not be with them, even if you personally are not acting in a bad way or doing anything wrong.

This should be obvious at least on one level: If you intend to abide by the law and had the decision to be with people who were doing something illegal or avoid them, you would clearly avoid being with them during the crime, and perhaps even at other times. You wouldn't want to give your tacit approval to crime, you wouldn't want to be suspected or implicated, you wouldn't want to get punished, you wouldn't

want to get in harm's way, and you wouldn't want to be drawn into that behavior in the first place, which would only increase the chance of the other things happening as well.

Now I'm not suggesting that your friends are doing "illegal" things from society's point of view. But if you've decided to become observant of Jewish Law, then things that oppose the Torah are illegal in that sense. And you should not be present if and when they transgress the Torah, even if it's unintentional.

But even on a more subtle level, being there without doing anything wrong is also harmful. For one, it can subconsciously erode your commitment until you'll eventually lapse into the same old behavior. Also, it has a spiritually damaging effect in that exposure to these things, even if you're not actively participating, prevents you from refining your soul. This can be compared to someone who goes to a malodorous place – he absorbs the bad odor from the air such that when he leaves, others can still smell where he's been. Conversely, being around righteous and holy people, even if we aren't pious ourselves, has a good spiritual influence that can be compared to one who enters a perfume shop – even without putting on fragrance, the good scents one absorbs by just being there is pleasantly perceived when he's left.

This dynamic is also readily apparent on children. When a good child starts hanging around bad children, even if he doesn't do what the others are doing, the effect of their behavior on him is obvious. This is because children are naturally so innocent, that the harmful effects of their environment are immediately noticeable on the backdrop of their purity. We, as adults, also have to be on guard to preserve the integrity of our souls.

Although you ask about friends, your question is also related to family, which is a much more sensitive and delicate subject. While in general what I wrote here would apply to family as well, in practice, even more love, sensitivity and patience is necessary. With the right intention and proper guidance, despite the potentially rocky and challenging period of adjustment, a newly-religious person should be able to maintain healthy and mutually-fulfilling relationships with non-religious friends, and even more so family, that last for life.

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# QUESTION MARKET

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## THE CAB-BUS WORLD WAR

**Question:** As one who avoids intercity travel with my own car because of the parking problem in my place of work I regularly get to my destination either by bus or taxi depending on how much of a rush I am in. This gives me an opportunity to share in the frustration of the driver of the bus I am on when a cab stubbornly obstructs his path to pick up or discharge his passenger. But I am sometimes that very passenger! What is the right thing for me to do in such a situation?

**Answer:** A cabbie friend of mine once compared the perpetual battle between drivers like himself and the busmen to the historic struggle in the “old west” between the cattlemen and the homesteaders. Each side is absolutely convinced that justice is on his side and blames the other for “thinking he owns the street”.

Without actually taking sides in this “world war” (although it would seem that if traffic laws accord a public vehicle the right of way this should extend to giving priority

to the bus as well) in which tempers flare, there is no reason for you to be an accomplice to a cabbie’s inconsiderate action. If you are hailing a cab and he stops for you smack in front of a bus, just signal to him to pull over to a spot that will not obstruct the route of the bus. The same procedure should be followed when the cabbie stops in front of a bus to let you out. Politely tell him that you wish him to drive over to a spot where your disembarking will not be at the expense of the bus driver and his passengers.

In both cases your cabbie may get upset at your telling him how to run his business. Remember, however, that you are the paying customer and have a right to make such demands. You may also be losing a minute of your precious time by insisting on such consideration. But isn’t it worth sacrificing a minute of your time to save a minute for dozens of passengers on the bus behind you, especially since you know how they feel from your own experience as a bus rider?

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### THANK YOU, CABBIE!

**T**he cab stopped for a moment next to a Jerusalem bus stop on a very busy thoroughfare. The driver called to a gentleman who was waiting for a bus.

Cab drivers rarely pause for even a moment, especially when there are impatient drivers behind them, unless they see someone flagging them down for a ride. The fellow waiting for the bus had no intention of spending money on a cab, so his first reaction was to ignore the call as the desperate solicitation of a customer on a slow day for cab drivers. When the cabbie called again he suddenly realized

that he was being informed that his wallet had fallen on the ground when he had reached into his pocket to take out his monthly bus pass.

For the fortunate retriever of his wallet this was a lesson in judging others favorably. For all of us it should be a reminder that cab drivers are not necessarily fare-hungry extensions of a steering wheel but are thinking, feeling creations of G-d and deserve a nice “thank you” at the end of the ride and not only when they help you retrieve a lost wallet.

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