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PARSHA INSIGHTS

STATUS SIMPLE

“Pinchas... son of Aaron, the Kohen” (25:11)

The Guardian newspaper in England has just run a preview of a bio-pic of the life of Princess Diana. With all its razzle-dazzle, Hollywood could not have outglitized this movie.

I remember well the outpouring of grief when she died. That people should mourn a life cut off in its prime is understandable. What was remarkable, however, was the spectacle of a world rending its clothes and beating its breast at the demise of a self-confessed adulteress. Youth, beauty and royalty apparently gilds marital treachery and turns it into the stuff of true life romance.

This singular flood of tears, however, was not a mere aberration of public sense and sensibility. From time immemorial there has existed such a double standard in society. Throughout history, kings have exercised what the French in their exquisitely delicate manner call the *droit de seigneur* - “the right of the master.”

This was the accepted custom of the ruler to claim the first night of a girl’s marriage.

In this week’s Torah portion, Pinchas puts an end to a plague which has killed 24,000. The cause of this plague was an orgy of immorality with the women of Midian and Moav. Instead of applauding his action, however, the people accused him of murder. It’s interesting that the accusation leveled at him is that ‘this grandson of someone who fattened calves to be calves to be sacrificed to idols’ had the gall to kill a prince of Israel. If you think about it, what does the social status of Pinchas have to do with whether his actions were justified or not?

Adultery amongst the *hoi-poloi* is as gilded as romance amongst the glitterati. Status makes everything permissible.

LITTLE ME

“And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood, because he took vengeance for his G-d.” (25:13)

Why wasn’t Pinchas anointed with Aharon and his descendants long before his extraordinary zeal in avenging G-d’s name? Why was it necessary for Pinchas to be rewarded with a “covenant of eternal priesthood” rather than having the priesthood as his right?

The mystical sources teach that the soul of *Pinchas* came from the same soul-source as Cain. Cain killed his brother Abel. The Zohar says that any *kohen* who murders is disqualified from the *kehuna* forever, and thus Pinchas, through Cain, “forfeited” his right to offspring. Cain lost the *kehuna* for Pinchas, and it was only Pinchas’ extraordinary zeal that earned the *kehuna* for himself and his descendants.

How did Pinchas’ killing heal the damage of Cain’s killing?

The name Cain comes from the same root as *kinyan*, meaning “acquisition.” Chava, Cain’s mother, said, “I have acquired a man with G-d.” (Gen. 4:1)

In Jewish thought, acquisition is synonymous with existence. We talk of G-d “acquiring Heaven and Earth.” G-d’s “acquisition” was the action by which he brought Heaven and Earth into existence.

In Cain’s eyes he was the only acquisition in this world, its only existence.

This is the root of all evil.

For there can be no room for G-d in a world which is filled with “BIG ME.” If the world is filled with the glory of ME, how can there be any other Existence? BIG ME is the root of all atheism. BIG ME is the root of all jealousy. And ultimate jealousy leads ultimately to murder. For BIG ME has no more effective means to remove jealousy than to remove the source of jealousy – Little You. (You don’t exist anyway.)

However, the sense of self can have a positive side. Every single person is obliged to say to himself “the world was created for me” (*Sanhedrin* 37). In some way we are supposed to look at the world as though we were the only *kinyan* in it. In the Book of Chronicles it says that “The heart of King *Yehoshofat* (the son of David) was raised up in the ways of G-d” (*Chron. II* 17:6). A heart can be high with ego and evil, or it can be raised up with a zeal-ousness to serve G-d.

When Pinchas took it upon himself to avenge the vengeance of G-d, even though he was not obliged to do so, he tapped into the positive side of Cain’s unregenerate egocentricity.

For it is only when someone does something that he doesn’t have to do that we can recognize the paradox of the heart that is raised up to serve.

• Source: Based on the *Shem M’Shemuel*

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. Tzlofchad'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.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

RAV OVADIA OF BATENURA

“Moshe received the Torah at Sinai” (*Avot 1:1*)
Unlike all the other *masechtot*, *Avot* is not based on any one of the *mitzvot* of the Torah. It consists only of counsel in regard to self-improvement and good character.

Wise individuals of other nations also compiled ethi-



cal works, which they developed with their own intellect, on how people should relate to one another. One might think that *Avot* is also a creation of man.

The Sages therefore begin this Tractate of *Avot* with “Moshe received the Torah at Sinai” to tell us that this *masechta* is not man-made but was relayed to Moshe at Sinai.

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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.

PESACHIM 9 - 15

“Is ‘Chulda’ a prophet?”

Who says that that our Sages had no sense of humor? This statement of Rava on our *daf* is posed as a question on the answer that Abayei proposed to reconcile an apparent contradiction in a *mishna* that deals with whether one needs to be worried that a “*chulda*” – weasel in Hebrew – had moved *chametz* in a manner that would require a new checking prior to Pesach.

In the context of our *gemara* the word “*chulda*” indeed means weasel, and Abayei’s answer seems to imply an ability of a weasel to discern in advance whether more *chametz* will be baked the next day, and whether it should save some of the *chametz* it finds today or not.

Although Rava’s challenge “Is ‘Chulda’ a prophet?” is meant as a challenge of Abayei’s distinction, it is difficult to read Rava’s statement without a smile, since “Chulda” is in fact the name of one of the prophetesses of the Jewish People.

• Pesachim 9b

“And you will be seen as innocent by G-d and by the Jewish People” (Bamidbar 32:22)

A *beraita* on our *daf* learns from this *passuk* that not only should one be innocent and honest, but should act in a way that looks innocent as well.

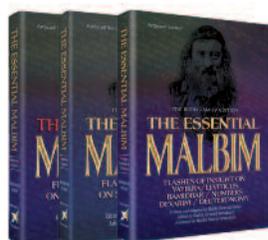
For example, charity treasurers who have extra copper coins after distributing to the poor and fear the rusting of these coins should not convert them into silver coins of their own so that people should not suspect any wrongdoing. Rather, they should give the copper coins to another person and receive silver coins from the other person in return, to keep for distribution as needed. Likewise, communal gatherers of food for the needy who have leftover food after feeding the hungry, should sell the excess food to others but not to themselves – in order to avoid suspicion and maintain the appearance of innocence and honesty.

• Pesachim 13a

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REAL TALK

From: Scott

Dear Rabbi,

What's the Jewish idea of how people will interact with each other after Resurrection? Since there will be bodies, will the interaction be as it is now, or since people will be so spiritual, the interaction will be more on the level of the soul?

Dear Scott,

This is a very interesting question.

To appreciate the answer of what it will be like in the ideal state of the future, it's necessary to consider what life was like in the precedent for it – namely in Eden before the downfall of Adam and Eve.

Mystical sources in Judaism describe this couple in the initial, ideal state of Mankind as “beings of light”. They are portrayed as reaching from earth to heaven, and with the ability to “see” from one side of the world to the other.

Yet, they were also creations in the physical world comprised of the material, and with the limitations of this-worldliness. Accordingly, how are we to understand the previous teachings that depict a transcendental state of existence?

Before the sin, Mankind was on such an elevated spiritual plane that the material of the world paled in the brilliance of their pristine perception of G-d. Since their own souls were similarly intensely aglow, they did not relate to each other on the physical plane but rather interacted on the soul plane. What's more, the bright inner light of their souls actually “energized” their bodies so that they took on a quality of this

light as well.

In this way, they were beings of light. This can be understood when we consider our perception of a burning light bulb. The body of the bulb is barely visible in the light of the energy emanating from within it. In fact, the bulb itself glows with that energy. So too, in the ideal state, the brilliance of the soul both conceals and transforms the body.

This can also be appreciated through another common life experience. Try to think of how your best friend looks. It usually takes time. Most people who have such very close friends paradoxically lose sight of what they look like. This is precisely because as such close friends, they interact on a much more internal plane and no longer see bodies, but each other.

When Adam and Eve transgressed, their inner light was greatly diminished such that their bodies became opaque and visible. This is what's meant in the Torah by G-d's enclothing them in garments of skin – their heretofore spiritual bodies congealed to flesh. Furthermore, in this light, we can understand the revelation of their “nakedness”. The concealment of their inner light blinded them to the soul, thus deflecting their vision outward, “opening” their eyes to the heretofore concealed physical aspect of the body, now exposed.

It is to this plane of interaction that they plummeted, and it is on this plane that people interact till this day.

But according to the Jewish idea of Resurrection, people who seek the light of spirituality in the current state of concealment will merit the reunion of both a purified and perfected soul and body, resurrected and restored to the state of Mankind before the downfall. In that realm and on that plane, people will interact with each other not as they appear now but rather as they really are.

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WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR

Question:

I have a close friend whom I like but who occasionally is tempted to do something I consider morally wrong. This makes me doubt whether it is worthwhile maintaining such a friendship. What is the right thing to do?

Answer:

A popular safety slogan in Israel says: "When you drink don't drive. That's what friends are for."

The Torah take on friendship is a lot broader. Rabbi Yonah of Gerundi, in his classic commentary on *Pirkei Avot*, lists three things that "friends are for".

In addition to the obvious human need to have a friend in whom you can confide and with whom you can share joy and

sorrow, there is the Torah wisdom one gains from studying with a friend, a gain that even surpasses what one receives from a teacher.

It is the third need for a friend that applies to your question. You need a friend to serve as your conscience when you are tempted to do the wrong thing and he is not. This is a symbiotic relationship with you acting as his conscience when things are the other way around.

Don't drop the relationship. Try instead to enrich it by helping one another get over moral lapses.

In conclusion, friends are not for merely driving you home when you get drunk, but to stop you from getting drunk in the first place.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

PLAYING MUSICAL COATS

"I bought this coat here but it is not exactly what I want and I would like to exchange it for another." This was the request made by a woman to the people running the Begged Yad-Le-Yad Used Clothing Center in Jerusalem. Her wish was granted and she walked out with the coat she liked, leaving the old one behind. Soon afterwards another customer entered with a similar request, and she ended up exchanging the coat she was wearing for the one that the previous customer had left behind.

As if this were not enough, a third lady came soon afterwards and exchanged her coat for the one that her prede-

cessor had discarded. This lady, however, spiced her visit with a humorous accusation that the *Gemach* (the Hebrew term for a service such as this) was causing her trouble!

She went on to explain that when she went to a government office to plead for a reduction in taxes based on her economic plight the clerk remarked that the nice clothes she wore belied her plea of poverty. In response she told the clerk that she purchased her clothes for virtual pennies at the *Gemach* and they did not reflect her real financial situation.

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When Do 'THE THREE WEEKS' Start?

BY RABBI YEHUDA SPITZ

Several years ago, a certain Talmid Chacham could not find an available wedding hall for the wedding of his daughter. The only open date was the night of Shiva Assar b'Tammuz. To the astonishment of many, he booked it! Although he made sure that the *Chupa* was before nightfall, he was heard to have commented that many people do not realize when the period known as 'The Three Weeks' actually starts.

We are entering the period of mourning that the Midrash refers to as "Bein HaMetzarim", or 'Between the Confines (Straits)'. This period of Three Weeks commemorates the heralding of the beginning of the tragedies that took place prior to the destruction of both *Batei Hamikdash*, from the breaching of the walls of ancient Jerusalem on the 17th of Tammuz, until the actual destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash* on the 9th of Av. As detailed in the *Mishna* and *Gemara Ta'anit* both of these days have since become communal Fast Days in remembrance of the tragedies that happened on these days.

In order to properly commemorate and feel the devastation, halacha dictates various restrictions on us during these "Three Weeks", getting progressively stringent up until Tisha B'Av. These restrictions include not getting married, not getting haircuts unless specific need, refraining from public music and dancing, not putting oneself in an overly dangerous situation, and not making the *she-hechyanu* blessing on a new item (meaning to refrain from purchasing a new item on which one would be required to make said blessing.)

These above restrictions follow Ashenazic practice as instituted by many Rishonim and later codified by Ashkenazic authorities. Although there are several Sefardic authorities who maintain that Sefardim should at least follow the Ashkenazic *minhag* of starting the 9 Days restrictions from Rosh Chodesh Av, nevertheless, most Sefardim start these restrictions only from the actual week of Tisha B'Av as per the ruling of the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim 551:10*).

There is some debate in recent Rabbinic literature as to when these prohibitions of the Three Weeks actually start. I was actually asked this *sheilah* a few times yesterday alone.

"Rabbi, I know tonight the Three Weeks technically start, since the start of a *halachic* new day is the preceding evening, but since the Fast of 17th of Tammuz only starts in the morning, can I still get a haircut and/or shave this evening?"

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein addressed a similar question over 60 years ago, whether one may get married on the night of the 17th of Tammuz. He noted that there is some debate in the early authorities whether the restrictions depend on the fast day itself. Meaning that if the 'Three Week' restrictions are dependant on the Fast of the 17th of Tammuz, then they would only start at the same time the fast does - on the morning of the 17th. But if they

are considered independent of each other, then the restrictions would start on the preceding evening, even though the fast itself would only start the next morning. Rabbi Feinstein maintained that since that is not clear-cut in the Rishonim, and the whole issue of the restrictions of the 'Three Weeks' is essentially a *minhag* to show communal mourning, which is only recognizable in the morning when everyone is fasting, and especially as a wedding is considered *l'tzorech* - a considerable need - he ruled that one may be lenient and get married on the eve of the 17th of Tammuz.

Several *poskim* extrapolate that Rabbi Feinstein would have held similarly by a haircut - that if there is great need, then one may be lenient as well on the eve of the 17th of Tammuz.

However, Rabbi Shmuel HaLevi Vosner disagrees with this theory and maintains that regarding a wedding (especially on Motzai Shabbat, which actually was the original question asked to Rabbi Feinstein) there is more halachic rationale to rely upon than for a simple haircut. Furthermore, he concludes, haircuts are generally not considered a great need.

Interestingly, years later, Rabbi Feinstein addressed this issue directly, ruling that the same leniency *does* apply to haircuts and one may therefore take a haircut on the evening of the 17th of Tammuz in times of great need, and not as Rabbi Vosner understood his opinion.

Nevertheless, many contemporary halachic decisors, including Rabbi Vosner, as well as Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and the Tzitz Eliezer, feel that the issue is a moot point, and that even for a wedding, let alone a haircut, one should not exercise leniency, as the evening of the 17th is already considered part and parcel of the 'Three Weeks', and included in the restrictions thereof.

So, even if one feels he needs a haircut desperately (perhaps someone suffering from lycanthropy) on the 16th of Tammuz, it is definitely preferable to get a haircut right away and not wait until evening and thereby subject oneself to a halachic dispute.

However, it's important not to lose the forest for the trees. Instead of debating the finer points of whether a haircut is permitted or forbidden, it is important for us all to remember that these restrictions were instituted by Chazal to publicly show our mourning during the most devastating time period on the timeline of the Jewish year. As the Mishna Berura notes, the focus of these days of sorrow serve to remind us of the national tragedies that befell our people, and the events that led to them. Our goal should then be to utilize these restrictions to focus inward, at our own personal challenges in our relationship with G-d, and rectify that negativity which led to these tragic events in our history.

This article was written l'zechut for Shira Yaffa bas Rochel Miriam v'chol chalatzeha for a yeshua teikif umiyad.