

Torah Weekly



Parshas Pinchas

For the week ending 21 Tammuz 5757
25 & 26 July 1997

Overview

Hashem tells Moshe to inform Pinchas that he will receive Hashem's "covenant of peace" as reward for his bold action — executing *Zimri* and the Midianite princess *Kozbi*. Hashem commands Moshe that the people must maintain a state of enmity with the *Midianim* because they allured the Jewish People to sin. Moshe and Elazar are told to count the Jewish People. The Torah lists the names of the families in each of the Tribes. The total number of males eligible to serve in the army is 601,730. Hashem instructs Moshe how to allot the Land of Israel to the *Bnei Yisrael*. The number of the families of the Levites is recorded. The daughters of *Tzlofchad* file a claim with Moshe: In the absence of a brother, they request their late father's portion in the Land. Moshe asks Hashem what the ruling is in this case, and Hashem tells him that the daughters' claim is just. The Torah teaches the laws and priorities which determine the order of an inheritance. Hashem tells Moshe to ascend a mountain and view the Land that the Jewish People will soon enter, although Moshe himself will not enter. Moshe asks Hashem to designate the subsequent leader of the people, and Hashem 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 *Beis Hamikdash*.

Nothing is
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Insights

WHEN BROKEN IS WHOLE

"I am giving him My covenant of peace" (25:12)

"Nothing is as whole as a broken heart." Thus wrote the *Kotzke Rebbe*. Nothing is as complete in its devotion to the Creator as a contrite spirit.

When we see ourselves as perfected, as completed, then we are a million miles from Hashem because we have made ourselves the center of our own illusory, perfect universe. When our hearts are broken and our spirits humbled, it is then that we are able to come close to our Father in Heaven.

If you look in a Sefer Torah, you will see that when the Torah writes about Pinchas, "I (Hashem) am giving him My covenant of *shalom*," the letter *vav* in the word *shalom* is broken in the middle. The letter *vav* is like a person. It is a straight vertical line. It looks like someone standing upright. The numerical equivalent of *vav* is six. Man was created on the sixth day.

The letter *vav* is 'broken.' This hints to us that in order to be truly *shalem* (whole), a person has to be 'broken' — contrite and humble in spirit.

KEEPING UP WITH THE GOLDBERGS

"...because he showed zealousness for His G-d" (25:13)

Why are the Ten Commandments written in the singular? If they were given to the Jewish People as a whole, shouldn't they be written in the plural?

The Ten Commandments are written in the singular so that we should feel they were given to each one of us alone. Each person is responsible for keeping the Torah, no matter what others are doing.

In life, there is a great temptation to set our level of self-expectation by the standards of other people. We look around us and think: "Well, Mr. Goldberg gives only \$10,000 to charity, and he earns the same as me. Why should I be *frumer* (more pious) than him?" The Ten Commandments were written in the singular to teach us that we shouldn't look at what others are doing — or not doing.

Pinchas saw Moshe and Aaron and the seventy elders standing and watching *Zimri* committing a grave sin, and none of them lifted a finger. He could certainly have said to himself, "Moshe and Aaron aren't doing anything. Why should I be *frumer* than them?" However, Pinchas picked up his spear and avenged the honor of Heaven without a second thought and without reference to what others were doing or not doing.

It is for this reason that the Torah writes "*he showed zealousness for his G-d*." Pinchas acted as if Hashem was *his G-d*, and that there was no one else in the world to do the job.

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WAR AND PEACE

"...My covenant of peace" (25:12)

Pinchas' reward for avenging the honor of Heaven by executing Zimri and Kozbi was "My covenant of peace." Isn't it ironic that the reward for a violent killing should be a "covenant of peace"?

The Hebrew word "shalom" means more than just peace; it also denotes completeness and perfection. Any peace which lacks completeness and perfection is not really peace.

If something is perfect, it means that it can only be perfect in *one* way — the way it is. If it could also be perfect in another form, then the perfection itself is lacking.

Haftorah: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

The three Haftorahs which are read in the Three Weeks (between 17th Tammuz and 9th Av) are called the "three of affliction." They detail the dire consequences that will befall Israel if they the Jewish People do not return to Hashem. Nevertheless, each of these three Haftorahs end on a note of optimism, expressing the confidence that Hashem never forgets His people even in the deepest and darkest exile.

BAD COMPANY

"Thus says Hashem: 'I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the wilderness in a land not sown.' Israel is sacred to Hashem, the first of his grain; all who devour him shall bear his guilt, evil shall come upon them — the word of Hashem." (2:2,3)

Once there was a sensitive lad, who spent all his days in study and refining his character. While still at a tender age, he was captured by bandits and forced to live amongst them. At first, he was repulsed by their coarseness, and clung to his original demeanor.

However, as the weeks lengthened into years and no sign of rescue came, slowly but surely he began to

There can only be One Completeness and One Perfection, and thus there can only be One real Peace — Hashem's peace, for only "He who makes peace in His exalted realms, He will make peace for us and for all of Israel."

Appeasement is not peace and never leads to peace. However, an act of zealousness divorced of pure intentions can be a crime in itself. For this reason the Torah points out that Pinchas acted "for his G-d" — i.e., he had no motivation whatsoever other than to do the will of the Almighty. Only when our intentions are *entirely* pure can zealousness lead to "a covenant of peace."

Haftorah: Yirmiyahu 1:1-2:3

degenerate to the level of his captors, and eventually he became indistinguishable from them.

When the Jewish People are finally redeemed from exile, the nations that have oppressed them will be held to account, not just for their own misdeeds against Israel, *but also for Israel's transgressions*; for had it not been for the company the Jewish People kept in exile, they would still be on the same spiritual level that they were on when they were in the desert.

That is the meaning of these verses: "*I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the wilderness in a land not sown.*" I remember, says Hashem, how you were when you followed after Me through the wilderness, before you were exiled amongst the nations. At your root you are holy, and if you have sinned it is because of the atmosphere you have imbibed during the long night of exile.

(Kochav M'Yaakov in Mayana shel Torah)

Sources:

When Broken Is Whole - Rabbi Menachem Zvi Goldbaum,

Darchei Mussar, Moser Derech

Keeping Up With The Goldbergs - Chomas Aish

War And Peace - Ohr Yoel

Fatherly Advice

- tidbits from the Ethics of the Fathers traditionally studied on Summer Sabbaths

What is the proper path for a person to follow? To consider the future implication of his actions.

What is the wrong path which a person must avoid? To be a borrower who does not repay.

Rabbi Shimon. Avos 2:9

In response to the challenge of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, four of his five great disciples offered a positive approach as the proper path and its opposite as the wrong path. (Good heart — evil heart; good friend — evil friend, etc.) Only Rabbi Shimon broke this pattern. He did not suggest that one who fails to anticipate the consequences of his actions will necessarily meet with failure, since there is a possibility that he will be capable of improvising a solution. But one who loses his credit by failing to repay debts is definitely doomed, because he will find no one to lend him money in his moment of abject need.

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