

Ohr SHABBOS

PARSHAS PINCHAS

The Power of L'Shem Shamayim
By R' Adam Teitelbaum

Our days are filled with countless single acts. Acts which can sometimes seem disconnected from our deeper purposes and the direct relevance of which may be hidden. Parshas Pinchas reminds us of just how important a single act can be, both through the clear ramifications seen as well as the hidden ways in which the lives of those closest to us are impacted.

We see at the beginning of the Parsha, in verse 12, that Pinchas is granted a covenant of peace and, in verse 13, that he is gifted an ever-lasting Kehuna for having effected atonement for Bnei Yisrael. Indeed, such atonement is a primary responsibility for the Kohanim Gadolim, who, according to the Navi in Divrei Ha-Yomim and the Sifri, were descendants of Pinchas who had proved their ability to atone for the people. Indeed, the Ramban points out that countless lives were saved as a result of Pinchas' act.

And yet, because Pinchas acted L'Shem Shamayim, even the past was improved.

The Ohr Hachayim tells us that, as a result of the calf which Aaron had made, many people lost their lives. He observes that, as a result of Pinchas' act of restoring peace, he succeeded in saving many lives and, thus, provided a Tikun in this regard for his grandfather.

Rabbi Sorotzkin tells us that, according to the Kabbalah, Nadav and Avihu shared with Pinchas the trait of having an intense desire to be close to Hashem. Nadav and Avihu, though, allowed this trait to bring them beyond the proper boundaries, leading to disastrous results. Pinchas on the other hand channeled his zealotness to what is favourable in Hashem's eyes and thus became a perfect vessel for them to rectify their sin. Thus, again we see that, through acting L'Shem Shamayim, Pinchas was able to provide a Tikun for those who came before him.

Perhaps one can speculate that these Tikkunim, which he provided for his predecessors in the Kehunah, and which were accomplished through loving and pursuing peace with zealotness to do Hashem's will, enabled Pinchas to merit the eternal Kehunah and ever-important role of Kohen Gadol for the generations.

In our own lives, we must always remember that there are many hidden reasons for the importance of each of the many acts we do and that each is an opportunity which we will not have again.

May we be blessed to come closer to Hashem.

THE REST OF THE STORY:

What's behind the Pasuk?

By R' Yosef Dovid Rothbart

The command was issued: only people who were included in the census - men between the ages of 20 and 60 - would receive a portion in Eretz Yisrael. But one thing remained unclear: did Hashem intend that only men, and not women, would have a share in the land, or that among the men only those included in the census would receive a share? Therefore the daughters of Tzlafchad came before Moshe to obtain a ruling regarding the question whether the Torah justified their claim.

At that moment, however, the law that applied to this situation eluded Moshe. This was a punishment for Moshe. When he originally set up the judicial system in the wilderness, he told the people that if any case were too difficult for the judges, the question should be brought to him and he would decide. Measure for measure, when this question was presented to him, he was unable to answer. Instead, he was forced to turn to Hashem for guidance.

This is indicated in the words of the Pesukim. ויקרב משה את משפטן - לקני יקוק "And Moshe brought their case before Hashem" (27, 5). The letter Nun, which is the final letter of the word משפטן - their case - is very long. The numerical value of the letter נ is 50. The reason why the נ is long is to focus our attention on the fact that the fiftieth gate of knowledge was closed to Moshe. Because Moshe only had access to 49 of the gates of wisdom, this Halacha eluded him.

There is a second approach, that while Moshe was really aware of the proper ruling in this situation, he wished to teach the judges of future generations by example. In the future, a judge might be presented with a question on which he is uncertain of the proper ruling. He must not be embarrassed to consult those who are more learned than himself. Therefore, Moshe, although he knew what the Halacha was, deliberately turned to Hashem for guidance so that in future generations a judge could look to him as an example and not be hesitant to consult someone else.

(based on Rabbeinu Bachya)

בקנאו את קנאתי בתוכם ולא כליתי את בני ישראל - Pinchas asserted My rights and saved the entire nation from the destruction that would have befallen it had I been forced to assert My rights Myself. A society in which there is no champion of Hashem's word is lost. (Rav Hirsch)

HALACHA

BY R'ELI KOHANANOO

Hilchos K'riyas HaTorah (part 5)

In an earlier column we mentioned that a person who is given an Aliyah has to be shown the portion that is going to be read during his Aliyah since the bracha which he recites applies to that portion. What happens if the Ba'al Koreh shows him the wrong portion and this mistake is only realized after the bracha has already been recited? The Beis Yosef (O.C. 140) cites the Avudraham, who writes that in such a situation a new bracha must be recited. He explains that the rolling of the Torah to the correct place constitutes a Hefsek, an interruption, between the bracha and the Mitzvah. This is similar to when one makes a bracha on food and then delays eating it. However, the Beis Yosef disagrees with this opinion and argues that, in reciting a bracha on the Torah, a person makes a bracha on the entire Torah. Therefore, even if a person was shown the wrong place, he would not need to repeat the blessing. Both opinions are brought in Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 140, 3). The Mishna Berurah (ibid, 9) writes that the custom is to repeat the blessing. The Mishna Berurah points out that there are exceptions. The Chayei Odom writes that if a person was shown the wrong place but the correct column was opened, the bracha is not repeated for it is assumed that he intended to recite a bracha on everything that was in front of him. As well, no scrolling is needed. Furthermore, if a person was shown the wrong place in the current week's Parsha, he doesn't recite a new bracha for the same reasons.

However, the Achronim (Igros Moshe O.C. 1, 36, Minchas Yitzchak 7, 7) posit that a person should follow the opinion of the Beis Yosef and shouldn't make a bracha even in a situation when he is shown the wrong place and the Torah needs to be rolled to the correct place.

The Biur Halacha (140, s.v. V'Azkiruhu) cites the opinion of the Pri Megadim, who maintains that this discussion only applies when the person making the bracha knows on which Parsha he is making the bracha, thinks he was shown the right place, and only realizes afterwards that he made an error. If, however, he knew the right portion and just didn't realize what he was making a bracha on, he doesn't need to repeat the bracha for his Kavana was on the correct Parsha.

The Poskim therefore rule that since, according to the opinion of the Pri Megadim and the Beis Yosef - who maintains that a person never repeats the Bracha - the rule of "Safek brachos L'Hakeil" is applied, one should not repeat the bracha if such a mistake should happen.

*Suddenly the magician
pulls something out of
nowhere and has the crowd
gasping in awe.*

A SECOND LOOK

At the beginning of the Parsha we are told that, through his courageous act of killing Zimri, Pinchas merited to serve in the Mikdash. Rashi points out that although Pinchas was a descendent of Aharon, he was born before the anointment as Kohanim of Aharon and his sons. Only descendents of Aharon who were born after the initial anointing were considered Kohanim and able to serve in the Mikdash. Therefore, only after he killed Zimri did Pinchas earn the Kehunah. This seems puzzling. If Hashem had chosen the family of Aharon to serve as the Kohanim, why was Pinchas set apart from all of Aharon's descendents with the result that he needed to perform this daring act in order to earn the Kehunah?

Rav Mordechai Druk, ztl, offers a beautiful idea.

The behaviour of Pinchas conveyed an important message. Every day Pinchas would watch his father, uncles and grandfather perform the Avodah. Inside, he would yearn to be involved in the Avodah himself, but Hashem had not granted him the opportunity. Could there be anything more painful than standing there and watching others do

what he had hoped to do himself?

There is a Halacha that a Kohen who kills someone is prohibited from performing the Avodah. Had Pinchas been allowed to perform the Avodah prior to this event he would have lost the privilege to continue doing so once he killed Zimri! Therefore, Hashem waited until now to "reward" him with the opportunity to serve in the Mikdash.

The message Pinchas's story conveys is that one can't always understand the reasons behind Hashem's actions. A person can live many years thinking his lot in life is miserable. In reality though, it's truly for his benefit.

The following parable can help us understand this concept a bit more clearly.

Imagine you are standing in a large group of people watching a magician perform some of his tricks. There are times when he will execute bigger tricks and times when he will pull off smaller tricks. The longer the crowd watches the show, the more they try to figure out how the magician is accomplishing his "magic". Was there something up his sleeve? Was it behind his ear? At this point the crowd is feverishly trying to figure it out, but no one has any real insight. Suddenly the magician pulls something out of nowhere and has the crowd gasping in awe. It's at that point that the magician earns the most respect.

Similarly, many times Hashem works in ways that we don't understand. However it's up to us to realize that the more we don't understand what's going on, the greater of a "Magician" Hashem is. As part of the audience, in the "show" of life, we can't always comprehend the "tricks". But it is comforting to know that the Master Magician has it all figured out, with a purpose, and that sometimes only later on, whether in this World or the Next, do we have the privilege of looking back and seeing how it was all for the best.

Shabbos table discussions

- A person who was awake the entire night is not allowed to go to bed one half hour (or less) before Alos HaShachar without davening unless he appoints a friend to wake him up when it is time to daven. Does it help to set an alarm clock if there is no one else around or is there a concern that he will turn off the alarm and miss davening?
- If a person who has difficulty pronouncing the words of davening has Yartzheit and wishes to serve as the Chazan, should the Rav allow him to do so?

Shabbos STORY

By R' Yossi Bergman

In the previous issue, Zrodny and his wife, now Jewish, moved to Eretz Yisroel.

We now return to Valentin, the young Count Pototzky, or rather the Ger-Tzedek Avrohom ben Avrohom, whom we left in Amsterdam, deeply immersed in Torah study and in prayer day and night. Every waking moment was absolutely precious to him. "My first birthday" -- he often reminded himself -- "was when I was twenty years old; I do not know how many birthdays G-d has in store for me; I cannot afford to lose a minute!"

After years of avid Torah study, he decided it was time to carry out the instruction of the Sages, "Go into exile to a place of Torah, and do not say that it will come after you." So he left Amsterdam and wandered from city to city, stopping in the local Yeshivah to listen quietly to a shiur, occasionally even participating in a Gemara discussion. Most of the time, however, he sat in a corner of the Bais-Medrash and studied by himself. When he was called up to the Torah by his name "Avrohom ben Avrohom," a name usually given to a Ger, after the Father of all Gerei-Tzedek, there was no longer any secret about his Jewish identity. But this was a matter that was only whispered about, and, in any case, it was highly unlikely that anyone in the Jewish community would connect him with the mysterious disappearance of the young son of Count Pototzky some ten years earlier.

Eventually, his wanderings brought him back to his native country, and he settled down in a small town, Ilya, not far from Vilna.

One day, as the Ger-Tzedek was engrossed in his solitary study in the Bais Medrash, several children burst in playfully, and began to run around noisily. The Ger-Tzedek reminded them that they were in a holy place, and asked them to play outside. All the boys walked out of the Bais Medrash, except the oldest of them, who was evidently their leader. He stayed on and defiantly continued to jump up and down on the benches, until the Ger-Tzedek grabbed hold of him and forcibly led him out, shutting the door behind him.

The boy ran home crying, and told his father: "That strange man, who sits all day in the Bais Medrash in his Tallis and Tefillin, hit me and threw me out of there."

Now, the boy's father, whose name was Chayim Yoshkes, was an unlearned, crude individual, a tailor by trade. Most of the time he worked for the landed gentry in the vicinity of the town. When his son came home crying and complaining about that man, the tailor swore that no one who hit his son would get away with it. He lost no time in carrying out his threat.

The tailor, whose work brought him into the homes of the local Polish gentry, had heard about the tragedy that had befallen the

Count and Countess of Pototzky regarding the disappearance of their only son Valentin. The story, that was long the talk of the Polish nobility, eventually faded and was almost forgotten.

When the Ger-Tzedek quietly came to town and settled down in the Bais Medrash, as a saintly recluse, the tailor, like some of the other Jews in town, was a little curious as to who he was and where he came from. After a few days, since no one knew the answer, and the Ger himself wasn't talking, the Jews got used to his presence and went about their business. The good women in town took turns in providing the saintly Tzaddik, as he was soon referred to, with his meager daily fare. When it became the turn for the tailor's wife to serve the Tzaddik, the other women didn't let her. It's likely that they thought her food could not be trusted.

Well, Chayim Yoshkes decided to get even on both scores. He had for some time suspected that the mysterious Ger was none other than Valentin, the missing young count Pototzky. All he had to do was to inform the authorities of his "discovery".

The tailor did just that...

To be continued...

RIDDLE

By R' Naftali Spiegel

The conclusion of the Halacha column has one exception. What situation is this?

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Please include your name.

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Answer to last week's riddle: The Kav Hayahar writes that angels taught Balak magic.

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Learn, given by Rabbi Baruch
Lichtenstein at 12:15 every Tuesday in
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Did you know...

- If Pinchas had not slain Zimri, the entire Jewish nation would have been wiped out? Although 24,000 people were killed by the plague, Hashem was not appeased until Pinchas performed his act of zealousness. This can be understood with the following parable. A king was once travelling and came across a group of people. Suddenly, one of them jumped up and started to scream and insult the king. Enraged, the king ordered his soldiers to kill the entire group. One of the members of the group rose up and slew the man who had spoken out against the king. Seeing that someone in the group was disturbed enough over the insult to the king to the point where he was ready to avenge his honour, the king's anger quickly subsided. Hashem had shown that He was angry over Zimri's brazen act. He had intended to kill the entire Jewish people. However, when Pinchas risked his life for the honour of Hashem, He was appeased.
- Besides the ability to serve in the Mikdash as a Kohen, Pichas merited other rewards? He was rewarded with the honour of heralding Mashiach's arrival along with the gift of immortality.

- Moshe was told to confer on Yehoshua some of the radiance of his face? Hashem told him to give over some of this glow but not all of it. This means that Moshe was instructed to give Yehoshua some, but not all, of his prophetic abilities. Indeed, Chazal tell us that the face of Moshe shone like the sun and the face of Yehoshua shone like the moon. That is, the prophetic abilities of Moshe were far more developed than those of Yehoshua.

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riddle

By R' Naftali Spiegel

Where do we find two words that contain three letter Yuds consecutively?

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Please include your name and age.

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Answer to last week's riddle: The Parshios of Ribbis, Tzitzis and using inaccurate measurements mention Yetzias Mitzrayim.

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