

Likutei Divrei Torah

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Shabbat Parashat Pinchas

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Covenant and Conversation Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

Pacing Change

Embedded in this week's parsha is one of the great principles of leadership. The context is this: Moses, knowing that he was not destined to lead the next generation across the Jordan into the promised land, asked God to appoint a successor. He remembered what had happened when he had been away from the Israelites for a mere 40 days. They had panicked and made a Golden Calf. Even when he was present, there were times of strife, and in recent memory, the rebellion on the part of Korach and others against his leadership. The possibility of rift or schism if he died without a designated successor in place was immense. So he said to God:

"May the Lord, the God who gives breath to all living things, appoint someone over this community to go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in. Let the Lord's people not be like sheep without a shepherd." Num. 27:16-17

God duly chose Joshua, and Moses inducted him. One detail in Moses' request, however, always puzzled me. Moses asked for a leader who would "go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in." That, surely, is saying the same thing twice. If you go out before the people, you are leading them out. If you come in before the people, you are bringing them in. Why then say the same thing twice?

The answer comes from a direct experience of leadership itself. One of the arts of leadership – and it is an art, not a science – is a sense of timing, of knowing what is possible when.

Sometimes the problem is technical. In 1981, there was a threat of a coal miners' strike. Margaret Thatcher knew that the country had very limited supplies of coal and could not survive a prolonged strike. So she negotiated a settlement. In effect, she gave in. Afterward, and very quietly, she ordered coal stocks to be built up. The next time there was a dispute between the miners and the government – 1984-1985 – there were large coal reserves. She resisted the miners and after

many weeks of strike action they conceded defeat. The miners may have been right both times, or wrong both times, but in 1981 the Prime Minister knew she could not win, and in 1984 she knew she could.

A much more formidable challenge occurs when it is people, not facts, that must change. Human change is a very slow. Moses discovered this in the most dramatic way, through the episode of the spies. An entire generation lost the chance of entering the land. Born in slavery, they lacked the courage and independence of mind to face a prolonged struggle. That would take a new generation born in freedom.

If you do not challenge people, you are not a leader. But if you challenge them too far, too fast, disaster happens. First there is dissension. People start complaining. Then there are challenges to your leadership. They grow more clamorous, more dangerous. Eventually

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In memory of Scott Leitner, a"h

there will be a rebellion or worse.

On 13 September 1993, on the lawn of the White House, Yitzhak Rabin, Shimon Peres, and Yasser Arafat shook hands and signed a Declaration of Principles intended to carry the parties forward to a negotiated peace. Rabin's body language that day made it clear that he had many qualms, but he continued to negotiate. Meanwhile, month by month, public disagreement within Israel grew.

Two phenomena in the summer of 1995 were particularly striking: the increasingly vituperative language being used between the factions, and several public calls to civil disobedience, suggesting that students serving in Israel's defence forces should disobey army orders if called on to evacuate settlements as part of a peace agreement.

Calls to civil disobedience on any significant scale is a sign of a breakdown of trust in the political process and of a deep rift between the government and a section of society. Violent language in the public arena is also dangerous. It testifies to a loss of confidence in reason, persuasion, and civil debate.

On 29 September 1995 I published an article in support

of Rabin and the peace process. Privately, however, I wrote to him and urged him to spend more time on winning the argument within Israel itself. You did not have to be a prophet to see the danger he was in from his fellow Jews.

The weeks went by, and I did not hear from him. Then, on Motzei Shabbat, 4 November 1995, we heard the news that he had been assassinated. I went to the funeral in Jerusalem. The next morning, Tuesday 7 November, I went to the Israeli Embassy in London to pay my condolences to the ambassador. He handed me a letter, saying, "This has just arrived for you."

We opened it and read it together in silence. It was from Yitzhak Rabin, one of the last letters he ever wrote. It was his reply to my letter. It was three pages long, deeply moving, an eloquent restatement of his commitment to peace. We have it, framed, on the walls of my office to this day. But it was too late.

That, at critical moments, is the hardest of all leadership challenges. When times are normal, change can come slowly. But there are situations in which leadership involves getting people to change, and that is something they resist, especially when they experience change as a form of loss.

Great leaders see the need for change, but not everyone else does. People cling to the past. They feel safe in the way things were. They see the new policy as a form of betrayal. It is no accident that some of the greatest of all leaders – Lincoln, Gandhi, John F. and Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Sadat, and Rabin himself – were assassinated.

A leader who fails to work for change is not a leader. But a leader who attempts too much change in too short a time will fail. That, ultimately, is why neither Moses nor his entire generation (with a handful of exceptions) were destined to enter the land. It is a problem of timing and pace, and there is no way of knowing in advance what is too fast and what too slow, but this is the challenge a leader must strive to address.

That is what Moses meant when he asked God to appoint a leader "to go out before them and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in." These were two separate requests. The first – "to go out before them and come in before them" – was for someone who would lead from the front, setting a personal example of being unafraid to face new challenges. That is the easier part.

The second request – for someone who would “lead them out and bring them in” – is harder. A leader can be so far out in front that when he turns round he sees that no one is following. He or she has gone out “before” the people, but has not “led them out.” He has led but people have not followed. His courage is not in doubt. Neither is his vision. What is wrong in this case is simply his sense of timing. His people are not yet ready.

It seems that at the end of his life Moses realised that he had been impatient, expecting people to change faster than they were capable of doing. That impatience is evident at several points in the book of Numbers, most famously when he lost his temper at Merivah, got angry with the people and struck the rock, for which he forfeited the chance of leading the people across the Jordan and into the promised land.

Leading from the front, all too often he found people not willing to follow. Realising this, it is as if he were urging his successor not to make the same mistake. Leadership is a constant battle between the changes you know must be made, and the changes people are willing to make. That is why the most visionary of leaders seem, in their lifetime, to have

failed. So it was. So it always will be.

But in truth they have not failed. Their success comes when – as in the case of Moses and Joshua – others complete what they began.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

How Pinchas Achieved Peace by Zealous Action

“Therefore tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace; and it shall be unto him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous for His God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.” (Numbers 25:12–13)

Fanaticism, particularly when garbed in the accoutrements of extremist fundamentalism, hardly evokes in us a sympathetic bent. How could it, given its association with uncontrollable zeal and violence for the sake of heaven?!

But when we turn to the opening of this portion, the Torah lauds Pinchas for zealously killing a Jewish man and a Midianite woman in the very heat of their sexual passion as they recklessly defied God’s command. For responding so quickly and decisively, albeit without “due process,” we read that God spoke to Moses, saying, “Pinchas, a son of Elazar and

grandson of Aaron the priest, was the one who zealously took up my cause among the Israelites and turned My anger away from them... Therefore tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace (Numbers 25:10–12).

The biblical summation is certainly one of praise and approbation. Indeed, Pinchas’ full genealogy is presented in this sequence; we are also given the name of his father as well as of his grandfather, Aaron the High Priest, indicating that the Torah wants to underscore his linkage to Aaron, “lover and pursuer of peace” (Avot 1:12). Moreover, both grandfather and grandson succeeded in stopping plagues sent by the Almighty to punish the Israelites. Aaron was instrumental in stopping the plague that broke out after the Hebrews raised angry voices against Moses and Aaron when Korach and his rebels were swallowed up by the earth (Numbers 17:6–11), and Pinchas’ act of zealotry arrested the plague which had destroyed twenty-four thousand Israelites who engaged in immoral sexual acts with the Midianites (Numbers 25:9).

When all is said and done it would appear that the Torah wants us to look upon Pinchas not only as Aaron’s grandchild but as his direct spiritual heir. And when Pinchas received the

divine gift of a covenant of peace, it is clear that he was being marked eternally as a leader who fostered peace and well-being, rather than fanaticism and violence.

How do we square this with what appears to have been a flagrant act of zealotry?

In order to really understand the true significance – the purpose and accomplishment – of Pinchas' act, it is necessary to view it within the precise context and situation of its perpetration. I would submit that had it not been for his quick response, nothing less than “war” would have broken out – and civil war against Moses at that! Pinchas' aim was not only – or even chiefly – the righteous punishment of flagrant sinners; it was first and foremost the salvation of Moses and Torah as the guides of the Israelites!

The Israelites had begun consorting with the Moabite women (Numbers 25), with harlotry leading to idolatry. They justified their actions philosophically and theologically by claiming that whatever is natural, whoever gives physical relief and “good feeling,” was proper and laudatory. This is the idol called Ba'al Peor, who was served by performing one's natural functions before the idol, testifying to a lifestyle which

justifies any and every physical expression. At this point, God commanded Moses to “take the leaders and impale them publicly before God” (Numbers 25:4). Only the leaders were targeted, but their death was to be vivid and painful, hanging in the hot sun.

What we have here on the part of the Israelites is a repetition of the Golden Calf debacle – but forty years later and in a far more grievous package. Then it was a panicky return to the comfort of Egyptian idolatry, a search for a Moses substitute; now it was glaring repudiation of both nationality and morality. Nevertheless, the previous time, at the dawn of Israel's freedom, Moses lost no time in exacting punishment. He took the idol of the Golden Calf, ground it to powder, and called for volunteers to execute the ringleaders. The tribe of Levi killed three thousand Israelites on that day. Moses had only to send forth the clarion call – “Whoever is with God, stand with me” – and all of the Levites rallied to his side. Moses was clearly the leader of the Israelites. Indeed, the sinful idolatry at that time was even understandable. It had only occurred because of the people's fear as a result of Moses' absence; they felt like children bereft of their earthly father – and in their despair they turned

to the Egyptian father-in-heaven-idol of a Golden Calf.

Now forty years had passed. Long gone were the grandiose hopes of an infant nation on the way to its Promised Land; such an exalted vision had been dashed upon the arid sand dunes of frustration and despair. The only thing this desert generation had to anticipate was dying in the desert! The bright Egyptian gloss on Moses' liberating tunic had become burnished by the hot desert sun and the nagging Israelite complaints. The various rebellions turned Moses' eyes downcast and made his shoulders sag; indeed, the would-be upstarts Datan and Aviram even refused to give the leader the courtesy of a meeting when they were summoned at his behest.

And now the disgusting Peor idolatry took place before Moses' very eyes, those holy eyes which had a closer glimpse into the divine than any mortal before or after. Moses apparently did not feel himself to be sufficiently in control as to be able to impale the rebel-leaders as God had requested. The best he could bring himself to do was direct the judges to take action. He also felt the necessity to change the divinely graphically described punishment of hanging the leaders in the sun to the more diplomatic but far less

aggressive command that “each of you must kill your constituents who were involved with Ba’al Peor” (Numbers 25:5).

And then, as a response to Moses’ orders, a devastating occurrence followed: “Behold, an important personage (ish) from among the children of Israel came and brought...a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of the congregation of the children of Israel” (Numbers 25:6). Moses declared punishment for the idolaters – and a Jew added insult to injury by publicly committing adultery with a gentile Midianite woman!

And who was this Jew who dared defy the divine decree and the authority of Moses? He is biblically identified as none other than Zimri, prince of the tribe of Simeon, second in line of the tribes, between Reuben, the firstborn, and Levi, the priests. He was obviously continuing the rebellion of Korach, demanding his rights as a descendant of the son of Jacob who was born before Levi; he was now claiming for himself an exalted position. Perhaps that is why he chose Kozbi, a Midianite princess – a woman with status and lineage in the gentile world. And even more to the point, he chose a Midianite because he wanted to embarrass Moses as effectively as possible.

It is as if he were daring Moses to stop his act of harlotry; after all, how could Moses criticize Zimri if the leader himself had a Midianite wife! No wonder Moses was paralyzed into silence and the people could only weep in impotence: “They were weeping at the Tent of Meeting” (Numbers 25:6). How else can we understand Moses’ lack of leadership, his inability to quell this rebellion against him and his God? As the sages of Talmud picture the scene, Zimri ran about taunting the venerated liberator of the Hebrew slaves: “How can he forbid sexual contact with Midianite women if he himself took a Midianite wife!” (Sanhedrin 82a).

Yes, the Israelite world had considerably changed from what it had been forty years earlier, during the period immediately following the Golden Calf. Now the Jews were no longer contrite in the presence of Moses. Everyone was demoralized and disappointed. Zimri now hoped to strike the death knell of Moses’ leadership by hitting below the belt, by taunting the supposed guardian of morality with the fact of his Midianite wife!

The Bible records: “And Pinchas saw” (25:7). What did he see? He saw the people rebelling and he saw Moses weeping. He saw the end of the

history of the children of Israel almost before it began, he saw immorality and assimilation about to smash the tablets of stone for the second time – but now without a forceful, fiery, and respected Moses with the capacity of restoring the eternal tablets of testimony once again.

This is when Pinchas stepped in. In killing Zimri and Kozbi in the midst of their immoral act in front of all of Israel, he was not merely fanatically punishing a sinner without the justice of due process; he was quelling a rebellion against Moses which would have resulted in anarchy at best. He reestablished Mosaic leadership and authority, he enabled Torah to remain supreme. Pinchas reinstated the covenant between God and Israel, and so he was truly worthy of the covenant of peace.

The Person in the Parsha **Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersch Weinreb** **Lessons in Leadership**

Too often, leaders cling to power. They are so intoxicated by the privileges of their position that they become blinded to their own vulnerabilities and even oblivious of their own mortality.

Even our own Jewish history has many examples, some comparatively recent, of great leaders who failed to provide for their succession. Their deaths left a vacuum since they failed

to designate their choice of a successor in a clear and unambiguous fashion. In some cases, chaos and strife ensued.

Such was not the case with the greatest of all Jewish leaders, Moses. In fact, one of the defining factors of his greatness was his concern that a proper successor to him be named.

And it is in this week's Torah portion, Pinchas, that the story of Moses' search for an appropriate successor is narrated.

"Moses spoke to the Lord, saying, 'Let the Lord, source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community who shall go out before them and come in before them... so that the Lord's community may not be like sheep that have no shepherd.'" (Numbers 27:15-17)

Rashi draws our attention to the peculiar way in which Moses addresses the Almighty, "Source of breath of all flesh." Whatever can that mean? Why does not Moses address Him as "God of the heavens and earth", or some similar familiar appellation?

Rashi's answer yields a very important insight into Moses' concept of the nature of leadership. A leader must be able to tolerate the great differences that exist among individuals. Every human being

is different from every other, and a leader must be able to inspire diverse individuals, even individuals with contradictory ideologies and objectives. Only the Lord Almighty, "Source of the breath of all flesh," can identify a leader with the capacity of relating to "each and every person according to his personality."

So Moses was not only exemplary in taking the responsibility to find and to name a successor, but he was also careful to ask for divine assistance in locating a new leader with the capacity to deal with human uniqueness and individual differences. Moses knew from his long experience that a leader who expected uniformity and conformity was doomed to failure.

But there is another aspect to leadership that Moses did not seem to ask for, but which God provided for.

God does not only respond to Moses' request by naming Joshua as his successor. Rather, He insists that Joshua himself stand before and consult Elazar the Priest. The effective leader, nay the great leader, dare not think of himself as infallible, as the only source of intelligent leadership. Rather, he too must bow to a higher authority.

Hence "...he shall present himself to Elazar the Priest, who shall, on his behalf, seek the decision of the Urim before the Lord. By such instruction, they shall go out, and by such instruction, they shall come in... Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Elazar the Priest..." (Numbers 27:21-22)

Joshua was to be the undisputed leader of the Jewish people. Indeed, our sages see him as fulfilling the role of king. And he was chosen not just because he was a faithful disciple to his master, Moses, but because of the amazing skill he possessed to deal with a people as diverse and as fractious as the Israelites. Yet he too, from the very beginning, was made to realize that he had limitations, that he needed to depend upon others, and that, ultimately, he had to bow before "the Source of the breath of all flesh."

Whenever I read these key passages of our Torah portion this week, I cannot help but apply their lessons to the very many leaders across a span of history who began their careers with talents equal or perhaps even superior to Joshua's, but who ultimately failed utterly because they tried to "go at it alone." They yielded in their hubris to their inner conviction that they knew best, and that

consultation with others was a waste of time.

Failed leaders, leaders who do not look to the Elazars of their own times, are not just historical figures. Bechol dor vador, in each and every generation, ours too, leaders arise with God-given personal gifts and with great promise, but to our disappointment, they fail dismally. And, almost without exception, their failures can be traced back to their attempts to be a Joshua without an Elazar, a king without a conscience, an expert without a consultant, a wise man without an Urim, a human without God.

Torah.Org: Rabbi Yissocher Frand

Torah-Sanctioned Zealotry

In last week's parsha, Pinchas turned back Hashem's anger towards the Jewish people through his act of kanaus (zealotry). The Halacha states that – subject to very strict conditions – a kanai (zealot) may kill a “boel aramis” (a person who is engaged in a specific type of public sexual immorality). As a payment to Pinchas for his act, Hashem gave Pinchas His Brisi Shalom (Covenant of Peace). Many commentators are bothered by the appropriateness of this reward. A kanai is usually understood to be someone who engages in arguments and

controversy. Why is peace the appropriate reward?

There is an interesting Medrash that contains an implied criticism of Moshe Rabbeinu: “Since Moshe was passive during this incident, no one knows the location of his grave. This teaches us that a person must be as bold as a leopard, nimble as an eagle, speedy as a deer, and mighty as a lion to do the will of his Creator.” This Medrash indicates that the anonymity of Moshe's gravesite is a punishment for the very slight infraction of Moshe not performing this act of kanaus himself. The Medrash itself points out that this is an example of Hashem acting meticulously with the righteous, measuring their actions with precision.

Properly performing an act of kanaus is not something that just anyone can take upon themselves. The person must be at the highest spiritual level. But the Medrash here faults Moshe Rabbeinu in the context of Hashem measuring the acts of the righteous “by a hair's breadth.”

Rav Mordechai Gifter (Rosh Yeshiva, Telshe Yeshiva, Cleveland Ohio) emphasizes a very important point. The Torah describes Pinchas, or anyone who kills a person who is demonstrating this public

immorality, as a “kanai”. People tend to translate the word “kanai” to mean an “extremist.” Rav Gifter writes that this is incorrect. As the Rambam writes (Hilchos Dayos 1:4), Judaism does not appreciate extremism. The middle path, the “golden mean” is the way the Torah advises people to act. “Kanaus” is not extremism.

Quoting the Sifrei, Rav Gifter defines kanaus as the act of sublimating a person's entire self to the wants of Hashem, to the extent that the person is willing to give up his life, if necessary. That is why not all of us can assume the mantle of kanaus. Torah-sanctioned kanaus is reserved for those people who are willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for Hashem. When a personal agenda does not exist — when all that exists is Hashem's honor — then, and only then, do we consider a person's actions to be in the category of Torah-sanctioned kanaus. If a person's motives are not completely pure — if there is an admixture of other motives to the act of kanaus — then it ceases to be an approved act of kanaus.

Consequently, it is highly appropriate that the reward for this act is the Brisi Shalom. Shalom does not necessarily

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mean peace. Shalom means perfection, as in the word “shalem” (complete). When a person performs an act of kanaus, such that his will and Hashem’s will become one, then he has achieved shleimus (completeness) with his Maker. The gift of shalom, meaning shalem is thus highly appropriate.

The chachomim (sages) say that despite the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu erred — if we can even use that word — by failing to assume the mantle of kanaus, Moshe corrects this passivity in next week’s Parsha. In Parshas Mattos, Moshe is commanded to “Seek revenge for the children of Israel against the Midianites, then be gathered into your nation” (Bamidbar 31:2). The chachomim infer from this connection between seeking revenge against Midyan and Moshe dying that Moshe had the ability to extend his lifetime. His death was dependent on his first taking revenge against Midyan. Moshe, in effect, had a blank check. He could have taken two years or five years or ten years to seek revenge against Midyan. What did Moshe do? Moshe immediately proceeded to take revenge against Midyan, knowing full well that its completion would pave the way for his own imminent demise. Here, Moshe performed the ultimate act of kanaus.

Kanaus is completely sublimating personal desires to the point that the person is prepared to even give up his life for Hashem. That is precisely what Moshe Rabbeinu demonstrates in Parshas Mattos. This is why Chazal view that incident as a kaparah (an atonement) for his passiveness during the incident at the end of last week’s parsha.

The ‘Sin’ of the Father Passes Down to the Son to Demonstrate True Parenthood

There is a famous comment of the Da’as Zekeinim m’Baalei haTosfos that appears in Sefer Bereishis.

There is a census in this week’s parsha that enumerates the various families of the Jewish nation. One pasuk (verse) contains the phrase, “Yoshuv of the family of Yishuvi” (Bamidbar 26:24). Yoshuv was one of the sons of Yissocher. However, in Parshas Vayigash, where the descendants of the shevatim (tribes) who went down to Mitzraim are listed, there is no such son of Yissocher listed. However, there is a son of Yissocher listed named Yov (Bereishis 46:13).

The Da’as Zekeinim makes the following enigmatic comment. There is a controversy as to how the name Yissocher (which is spelled with a double letter

‘sin’) is pronounced. Do we pronounce both ‘sin’s (Yissoscher) or just one of them (Yissocher)? Prior to Parshas Pinchas, where Yissoscher’s son is always called by the name Yov (without an extra ‘sin’), we pronounce Yissascher with both ‘sin’s. Starting here in Parshas Pinchas, we pronounce Yissocher, as if it were written with only one ‘sin’. What happened?

The chachomim say that Yov complained to his father that he had the same name as an idol and he did not like the name. Therefore, his father took a ‘sin’ from his own name and gave it to his son, whose name became Yashuv. From this point forward, we read Yissocher’s name with a single ‘sin’.

Rav Gifter quotes a simple question (from Rav Chaim Elezari). Why was this necessary? We do not need a ‘donor’ in order to add a letter. Why couldn’t any letter or name be added without removing it from someone else?

Rav Gifter says that the answer is obvious. This is a father who is trying to protect his son. Has there ever been a father who spared anything to guarantee that his son was protected? That is what parenting is all about. Nothing concerns us like the welfare of our children. “I am not going to rely on just any old

‘sin’ from the Aleph-bais. I am not sure that just any ‘sin’ will do the trick. I am giving you MY ‘sin’. My name will be different. My name will be lacking something and so will I. But that does not concern me in the least – because I am a father and my son’s welfare is all that counts! I insist on giving you the very best letter – one that comes straight from my name – to make sure that you are protected.” That is a father and that is love.

The gematria (numeric value using system of ascribing numeric values to Hebrew letters) of ‘ahavah’ (love) is 13 (1+5+2+5). The gematria of ‘da’agah’ (worry) is also 13 (4+1+3+5). Ahavah = Da’agah (Love = Worry). Every parent can appreciate this gematria. Being a parent means losing sleep, caring and worrying. It means looking at the clock, going to the window, and pulling the curtain. Why aren’t they home yet? Why haven’t they called? Ahava = Da’agah. This is what parenthood is all about.

Dvar Torah: Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What’s the best way for us to make people to want to come to Shul?

In Parshat Pinchas, the Torah reveals to us details of the major festivals and the term that is

used for a festival is ‘Mikra Kodesh’.

Rav Shimshon Rafael Hirsch translates this term as being a call to holiness, it’s an invitation that Hashem extends to us, to engage with him in a spiritual and meaningful way.

I’m sure that you’re just like me, when an invitation arrives in the post, there is a sense of excitement.

You can see that the envelope suggests this must be an invitation, then you open it up and you reveal its content and indeed you are being invited to do something, to come along somewhere.

It is left up to you to send the RSVP and you’re looking forward to the occasion, when you have decided that you want to take advantage of the opportunity, to benefit from that experience.

That is how the Torah presents our engagement with our Judaism.

It’s not just the festivals, it’s not just attending Shul on a weekly or daily basis, it’s the performance of all our Torah and mitzvot, God has sent us a personal invitation.

You know there was a time when people would do the right

thing, out of a sense of loyalty, but today I think within our communities around the globe, most people will do the right thing because they’ve decided to of their own accord, not because they have been ‘coerced’, but because they find it appealing and it’s their decision.

We are so blessed because we have the ultimate product, it is a system of life, it’s a way of life authored by Almighty God himself, relevant to every single generation and all we need to do, is to answer that invitation in the affirmative – to pitch up, to engage.

And I promise you, it will give you phenomenal deep meaning and ongoing joy in life.

We’re so lucky, because it’s the best invitation you can ever get.

Let’s send our RSVP now.

O Leadership in Transition

Rivka Keller: Leadership in Transition

“And the Lord said to Moshe, ‘Go up to this mountain of Avarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. And when you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aharon your brother was gathered...’”

The above passage, which appears in the middle of the

portion of Pinchas, raises two questions:

The first concerns the placement of these verses in this particular portion. In the section preceding these verses, Moshe is engaged in taking a census of the Israelites in preparation for dividing the land among them, while addressing the case of the daughters of Tzelofchad regarding inheritance laws. Following the verses above, there is a detailed description of the daily offerings, as well as the special sacrifices offered on Shabbat and the festivals. It seems untimely, then, that the verses describing Moshe's ascent up the mountain to view the land of Israel, upon which he will never set foot, should be mentioned here of all places. Why does this passage appear here of all places?

The second question relates to Moshe's reaction. When God had initially decreed that Moshe and Aharon would not enter the land, their silence was quite notable. God was angry that they had struck the rock instead of speaking to it, and decreed that they would therefore not enter the land. Moshe and Aharon did not protest. A few verses later, Aharon ascends Hor HaHar where he dies in silence, still unprotesting. In a few weeks, we will read Parashat Va'etchanan where Moshe pleads with God to let him enter

the land. We would expect the plea to appear here in our portion of Pinchas, when he is told to ascend the mountain of Avarim to view the land he cannot enter. And yet Moshe's reaction is quite different. Upon hearing the decree once again, instead of pleading for himself, he asks for a leader for the people: "May the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation... so the congregation of the Lord will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

By reflecting on the preceding portions, we might find an answer to our questions.

The sin of Mei Merivah ["The waters of conflict"] comes immediately after Miriam's death, and Aharon dies shortly after. Aharon's son, El'azar, inherits the high priesthood and becomes Moshe's partner in leadership.

Next is the story of Balak. In this narrative, Moshe's leadership is absent. The events of the story take place among other nations, such that it is not a story of the Israelites per se. And yet it is still a wonder that Moshe's name does not appear at all. Similarly, when the Israelites sin with the Moabite women, Moshe's leadership is absent once again. At the end of this portion, it is Pinchas who takes the lead, stopping the

plague that is raging through the camp of Israel by smiting with his spear, thus abating God's wrath.

Parashat Pinchas opens with God's approval of Pinchas' actions. For the first time since the exodus from Egypt, a complex problem within the Israelite camp is solved without Moshe's involvement.

Thus, Pinchas forges a special bond with the Almighty, and secures a place for himself in the leadership of the people of Israel, as is reflected by God's reaction to Pinchas' daring deed: "Behold, I give him My covenant of peace. It shall be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of everlasting priesthood."

Following this, a census of all Israelite men fit for war is conducted. Israel has transformed into a nation of warriors ready to conquer and inherit the land, as per their respective families. The daughters of Tzelofchad then demand their father's inheritance. Again, Moshe is at a loss, and God answers the query, granting the daughters their father's inheritance.

It appears from these descriptions that we are deep into a transitioning leadership, from the generation who wandered the desert to that of

the children and even the grandchildren. Miriam's well and Aharon's priesthood have already been passed on; now it is Moshe's turn.

Mount Avarim [עברים, which denotes "past" and "beyond"] perhaps hints at Moshe's place—in the past [עבר]. God gently directs Moshe to ascend the mountain of עברים and look beyond [מעבר], into the future of the people without being a part of it. The reason for this is that Moshe's leadership belongs to the עבר, the past. A glorious past, to be sure. A past in which the Israelites slaves were liberated from Egypt with great might and an outstretched arm; with a myriad of plagues, and no words. A past evolving around a generation that was redeemed from Egypt and had to be led through the wilderness, but one that would not enter the land. Therefore, you Moshe, the leader of this generation, must remain with them in the past, beyond the borders of the land, on the eastern side of the Jordan [עבר הירדן], and you shall not cross over [לעבור] the River Jordan and enter the new era with the new generation.

In the past, the people would drink from a miraculous well, Miriam's well, but after the sin at Merivah, they are capable of obtaining water themselves: "From there they went to Be'er, the well where the Lord said to

Moshe, 'Gather the people together so that I may give them water'" (Bemidbar 21:16). The Malbim explains as follows: "God gave them water directly without their having to ask, and without Moshe's intervention."

In the recent past, a priest was needed to stop plagues by Divine command with a censer and fire (as in the story of Korach), but now the people themselves, by the stab of a dagger, can halt a plague.

The people can now seek God's guidance directly through El'azar the priest: "And he shall stand before El'azar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the Lord; at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him." (Bemidbar 27:21).

This is a different kind of leadership than the one we have seen until now. It is more distant and less miraculous; however, it is far more autonomous.

The placement of the portion of Har Ha'avarim in the middle of Parashat Pinchas suggests that Pinchas, El'azar, and the daughters of Tzelofchad belong to the generation of the future. It signifies a transition of leadership from the generation that had left Egypt and

wandered in the desert to the one that will inherit and settle the land.

If this be so, we may just have found an answer to our second question. If, indeed, this particular portion appears here because the previous leadership has loosened its hold and the time has come for a new leadership to take its place, then Moshe's reaction is quite apt, for it conveys the need for a new and worthy leadership that will be suited to shepherd the people into the new land. Moshe's reaction is both noble and humble. He knows his place, and from a deep sense of responsibility to the people, he steps aside for his successor, who is also his disciple.

"And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord spoke by the hand of Moshe" (ibid. 27, 23). With both of his hands upon Yehoshua's head, and not as instructed, Moshe transfers his leadership to Yehoshua with generosity of heart, both his hands outstretched to hand over his greatness of spirit.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Ahron Lopiansky
The Lottery That Speaks

Tucked into a few verses in our parasha are the laws of dividing up Eretz Yisroel to the various shvatim. There seemed to have

been three different methods employed.

First of all, it says that they prorated the different parts of Eretz Yisroel so that the apportioned areas were all of equal value. They did not divide up based on square footage, but, as Rashi says, they divided it up based on value and ability to use the land productively. We would therefore describe this as human effort that divided up and apportioned Eretz Yisroel.

Secondly, Rashi also says that Elazar the Cohen would be dressed with the urim v'tumim, and he would proclaim with the Divine spirit upon him: "if the following tribe comes up in the lottery, then this will be the land he gets". In other words, it was heavenly ordained.

But the primary mechanism for dividing the land to the tribes is, as is written in the parsha, through a lottery. Rashi adds that when the lottery was finally drawn, it would proclaim, "I, this land, belong to the following tribe".

The different types of methods used to divide the land could be categorized as: a) human effort and a rational apportioning, referring to the evaluating the different portions of Israel and seeing what is similar in terms of value, b) a Divine commandment by the means of

the urim v'tumim, where the cohen told us what each tribe is supposed to get, and c) the lottery, which in the parsha seems actually to be the most important of the three. This is strange, because a lottery seems to imply neither a human thought process nor a clear directive of G-d. What is the point of the lottery? Why is it the core method used for dividing up the land of Israel?

The settling of the land of Israel represents a new phase in the development of the Jewish nation. During their sojourn in the desert, they really were living in a Divine bubble. Nothing of the physical world really meant much to them. They were in an uninhabitable desert, with no natural means of survival. Their primary staples were all miraculous - the water from the well that travelled with them, the manna that served as their food, and the Divine clouds that served as shelter. This was a mode of life that represented the purely spiritual. In Eretz Yisroel, however, they would have to connect to the land and be able to express their spirituality through the physical world. The division of the land into different types of terrain meant that they would begin to notice specific talents that each one had which were relevant to the physical world. The different personalities of a person who is a farmer, a merchant, or a

soldier all emerged in the Land of Israel; in the desert no one had to farm, no one had to do business, and only very few times did they have to fight. In Eretz Yisroel however, each group had to find its role and fulfill it successfully.

This is the deeper understanding of the division of Eretz Yisroel. The land has many different attributes - there are lakes and rivers, deserts, fertile land, and land that borders on enemy territory. The land that each tribe was given was the land that was most uniquely suited to their talents and hence their mission.

When we each ask ourselves, "what is my personal mission?", the best guide to discovering the answer is taking stock of our resources and talents and the needs of the world around us. The Gr"a (Mishlei 16:4) states that it was the task of a prophet to instruct people as to what their mission in life was. When we don't have a prophet to tell us what our mission life is, we need to take a look at our personal resources and extrapolate as what must be our mission. For instance, a person who has musical talent obviously has a mission in line with that talent. It may or may not be readily evident what it is, but the fact that these are his resources tells him that this must be his mission.

The lottery is a complex device. On the one hand, it is not a rational human endeavor as was the conscious dividing up the land. On the other hand, it wasn't an open commandment of God; after all, it simply was the drawing of a card. But the lottery "expresses itself", in that each lot that came up in the lottery proclaimed that "such and such a tribe is designated for me". In other words, the piece of land, the resource itself, indicated which tribe should get it.

The lottery was therefore the procedure that most clearly expressed the essence of Eretz Yisroel. The lottery is not physical cause and effect, nor is it a clear Divine statement. Rather, it starts as a physical fact; one piece of paper came out and then another piece of paper matched up with it, and that's "merely" chance. But then the lottery itself proclaims that, "I belong to a certain tribe", it means that this is what Hashem had in mind for it all along. Eretz Yisroel is the place with this type of Divine Providence, where the physical realities are expressing Hashem's will. Eretz Yisroel is the place where each tribe finds its physical and spiritual niche. It's the place where each tribe is given the resources it needs to fulfill its unique mission.

Even today, when we do not have the old divisions of Eretz Yisroel, and we don't know - as far as the majority of us are concerned - from which tribe we descend, we still can examine the resources Hashem has given us and extrapolate from there what must be the mission that HKB"H intended for each of us.

**Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam**

Eisav and Shalom

"Therefore say, "Behold! I give him My covenant of peace!" (Bamidbar 25:12)

Admittedly, I don't understand how Gematria (the numerical value of words) works. For example, here is a puzzling pair. The Gematria of SHALOM is 376 but so is the name Eisav. How could that possibly be!? Perhaps if we understood the true meaning of SHALOM then we might be able to make some sense of it. SHALOM is not passivity and it is not merely the absence of war. It is the harmonious resolution of conflicting elements. How can there be a greater conflict and clash of agendas than the "Odd Couple" that resides within and compromises each and every one of us; the physical body and the G-dly Soul! How can they possibly "get along" together harmoniously?! Here are four classic and universal approaches to this ubiquitous challenge built into the human condition.

1-What we'll call the far eastern way is an ideal that the soulful portion dominates the physical body. The successful practitioner finds him-self atop a mountain-aloof. His physical needs have been thoroughly quieted. He feels almost no pain. He can sleep on a bed of nails and fast all day. He is divorced from his body. Having trained himself to not to hear the whimpers of his own physical being or the temporal world around him, he meditates in that state and transcends the mundane but fails to engage life.

2-The second we can refer to as the far western approach. Here the immediate needs of the body drown out the voice of the soul until it is a frail and thin voice, an afterthought called conscience. With plenty of continued practice that voice can be almost entirely annihilated.

It is recorded how the Nazis were sick to their stomachs the first time they carried out the brutal murder of Jews but after a while they could go home and eat dinner as if nothing had happened. The callousness that develops with deeds that violate the sensibilities of the human soul grows thicker and darker with each repeated action. Eventually the body is divorced from its soul- Kores- cut off.

3- A third possibility encourages both spiritual and material indulgence but alternately. This “solution” is not a solution. In fact, it complicates the human experience. The Talmud says pithily, “Oy li M’yotzri, Oy li M’yitzri”- “Woe to me from my Creator (or) Woe to me from my desire!” (Brochos 61A) Either the conscience will ache when violated or the body will rebel when deprived.

A professor Meier from Michigan University was able to induce neurosis in rats. How? One door offered a food prize and the other a shock. Once the rat figured out which was which, the psychologist switched them. Now the rat crept cautiously from door to door uncertain whether it would receive a delight or an electric shock. At some point the rat parks himself equidistant from both doors and chooses to starve to death rather than risk getting a shock. OY! It’s not easy being a laboratory rat or a person that plunges dramatically and often from heights of the spiritual spectrum into the abysmal abyss and back again, like a yoyo.

4-The 4th- the middle-east emphasizes the spiritual but without negation of the physical. A fellow asked his friend, “Why are you busy caring for your horse all day?” He answered, “He’s a dumb horse and I’m a smart person.

He needs me!” His friend then replied, “If he’s so dumb and you’re so smart, why don’t you get him to do things for you!?”

If the soul can learn, somehow, to discipline the body in a sensitive and caring way, then a peace plan can be brokered between these two giant competing forces. A person can happily navigate between the temporal and the eternal in a joyous way. King Solomon had said about the Torah, “Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace.” (Mishlei 3:17)

Without the guidance of Torah, Eisav was never able to successfully negotiate peace between his animalistic nature and his G-dly soul, but SHALOM, peace was always possible and within reach. This may help explain the numerical equivalency between Eisav and Shalom.

Mizrachi Dvar Torah

Rav Doron Perez

How to Argue for Heaven’s Sake

The essence of the spiritual impediment, the failure which led to the destruction of the Second Temple, which we are currently mourning in the Three Weeks, is ‘sinat chinam’. Our Sages point out how in interactions between people there was baseless hatred. There was an inability to legitimize the

view of others, or to accept on any level any legitimacy of others.

We know in Israel, there are tremendous arguments at the moment – politically, religiously – and in communities and governments around the world there is so much debate and divisiveness.

The Kli Yakar asks how can we create unity? Using the word for heaven – ‘shamayim’. The Mishnah in Pirkei Avot says an argument that is for the sake of Heaven, ‘lesheim shamayim’, will endure. What is ‘shamayim’? He says the word is made up of the words for fire, ‘eish’, and water, ‘mayim’. No two elements could be more confrontational and divisive – water extinguishes fire, and fire vaporizes water.

However, in heaven, these two elements come together and create peace – ‘oseh shalom bimromav’, “He who makes peace on High.” It brings together all the opposing spiritual forces in the world, all are legitimate. That is what an argument for the sake of Heaven is: argue, yes. Vociferously, yes. Totally differing views, yes. But always remember ‘lesheim shamayim’. G-d brings the most contrasting views, not to be only in conflict but to be complementary in ways which bring together.

In our arguments and in life,
may we all be able to do it
'lesheim shamayim', for the
sake of Heaven – and see the
legitimate view, to find ways to
bring these together that the
contrast should ultimately be
one which is complementary.