

Pinchas

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"l

MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Observing Mitzvot for the Sake of Heaven

"Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the Kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them, so I did not consume the Children of Israel in My vengeance" (Bamidbar 25:11)

Chazal say on this verse, "Hashem said, it is correct that he [Pinchas] take his reward [G-d's covenant of peace]" (Bamidbar Rabba, 21:1). This seems hard to understand since Chazal say elsewhere (Kiddushin 39b), "The reward for a mitzvah is not given in This World." If man receives reward for mitzvot only in the Next World, how could it be that Pinchas was rewarded now?

Another difficulty: When Pinchas killed Zimri son of Salu, leader of the tribe of Shimon, he brought an end to the plague that raged among Am Yisrael. Had he not done so, the plague would have continued to cause many deaths and possibly even wiped out the entire tribe of Shimon. The plague may have even spread to the other tribes, for when the accuser has control, even tzadikim who have never sinned may be punished for the sins of the public. So how can we possibly conceive Pinchas's enormous reward for preventing all this? And how is it at all possible to reward in This World for an act that saved the entire Klal Yisrael?

A further question can be asked: The verse tells us Am Yisrael must harass and hate the Midianites because they caused Am Yisrael to transgress the sin of immorality. "Harass the Midianites and smite them; for they harassed you through their conspiracy that they conspired against you in the matter of Peor, and in the matter of Cozbi, daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was slain on the day of the plague, in the matter of Peor" (Bamidbar 25:17-18). Many of the world's nations are afflicted with the plague of immorality yet we are not commanded to harass them for we have no dealings with them; we let them do what they want. Seemingly, we should also not harass the Midianites, for Am Yisrael was guilty for being pulled after their wicked ways. Why are the Midianites held accountable for this?

We will also try to understand how the leader of a tribe, a great Torah scholar, fell to such a low status and publicly committed this terrible sin.

The explanation could be according to the Gemara (Sanhedrin 106a) which writes on the verse "Israel settled in Shittim and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav" (Bamidbar 25:1): "What is the meaning of 'Shittim'? Rabbi Yehoshua said, they engaged in matters of shtut-nonsense and this was immediately followed by 'and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moav.'" It is clear from the Gemara that they were first involved in nonsensical matters which led to immoral conduct. This is in line with the Chazal (Sotah 3a), "A person does not sin unless a spirit of nonsense enters him first." We will clarify the 'nonsensical matters' with which Yisrael were engaged, which led them to the severe sin of immorality.

A person may study Torah and observe many mitzvot, but he does so for personal gain and not for the sake of Heaven. He learns so as to receive a Torah position, he does

chased so people will thank him and praise his deeds, and so forth. In this way his entire spiritual life is insincere; his true desire is to glorify his own name. This leaves him empty of substance and with a feeling of monotony, for the moment the praises disappear, he is left with no benefit from the deed. Chazal have told us (Ketubot 59a), idleness leads man to immorality.

This is what happened to Am Yisrael when they came to Shittim. They continued to study Torah and observe the mitzvot, but their study was devoid of toil and not for the sake of Heaven. So automatically they became involved in matters of nonsense and this is what led them to the sin of immorality. Similarly, despite being a tribal leader and great in Torah, Zimri ben Salu's Torah study was insincere; it stemmed from his desire for glorification. Therefore, despite his greatness and distinguished personality, he was drawn to this sin and transgressed it publicly without embarrassment or fear.

When the people saw Zimri's act, they did not know what to do and began crying, as it says (Bamidbar 25:6), "Behold! A man of the Children of Israel came and brought a Midianite woman near to his brothers in the sight of Moshe and in the sight of the entire assembly of the Children of Israel; and they were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting." They reacted in this way because they too were afflicted with this plague of not acting for the sake of Heaven, and because of personal involvement, were uncomfortable expressing their opinion. Only one person did what had to be done without fear and calculations – Pinchas, son of Elazar, and with his act he atoned for Am Yisrael's sin.

In addition, the reward Pinchas received was not a material reward, since reward for a mitzvah is not given in This World. Rather, Hashem appointed him as a Kohen who serves in the Beit Hamikdash and lives in a miraculous fashion, sustained by the hands of Hashem.

I once travelled from London to Zurich to meet a wealthy person, intending to ask him for a donation to support our holy institutions. Throughout the journey I deliberated on the best way to approach him, how it would be worthwhile to begin the conversation and what to mention later on etc. As soon as I arrived, the philanthropist began talking about his many endeavors, and every time I wished to open my mouth and say something I had prepared in connection with the donation I was expecting from him, he continued speaking about his associated business affairs. The meeting eventually ended without my managing to slip in even one word about the donation.

As I left his home I felt the visit had been in vain. But after some soul-searching I consoled myself by thinking, I did not wish to ask for a donation for personal concerns, but for the sake of spreading Torah and supporting our institutions. If my deeds are truly for Heaven's sake, what difference does it make if I made my speech or not? I did what I could and Hashem will do the rest, as it says (Yirmiyahu 17:5), "Accursed is the man who trusts in people and makes flesh [and blood] his strength and turns his heart away from Hashem."



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Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoan Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

New and Improved

In Adar 2000, Mr. Tzvi was working in his store when he had a sudden heart attack. An ambulance was immediately summoned and paramedics began working on him. But it looked like his heart refused to continue beating and he was almost pronounced dead. However, the Hatzalah members repeatedly tried to revive him and shocked him with nine electric shocks, which unfortunately had no effect. The doctor turned to Mr. Tzvi's wife and suggested she contact the chevrah kadisha, for these were seemingly her husband's last moments.

Mr. Tzvi was rushed to the hospital in one final effort to save his life. In the ambulance, apart from his heart attack, he suffered a stroke, which only complicated his condition. When they arrived he was left in the emergency room, not even rushed into intensive care, for there was seemingly nothing left to do.

Meanwhile, his family was not giving up so fast. They demanded he be taken to intensive care but there too he received no medical care since the doctors considered him dead. Meanwhile, they called me up to receive my blessing for a refuah sheleimah for Tzvi ben Chana. I immediately sent them a letter delineating which areas to strengthen to grant him the merit for recovery. This letter provided his family with encouragement that with Hashem's help, his condition would improve.

After two hours, Mr. Tzvi's heart began showing signs of life. The doctors, who had already given up on him, were worried about brain damage. But there was none. Slowly, he began moving his body, until he opened his eyes and even clearly recognized everybody present. He started speaking and became more alert from one minute to the next.

When the doctors saw this 'revival of the dead' they were amazed. "We have encountered many medical miracles, but a miracle like this is beyond description. This man came back from the dead!"

The Haftarah

"The words of Yirmiyahu" (Yirmiyahu 1)

The connection to Shabbat: The Haftarah speaks about the prediction of calamity prophesized by Yirmiyahu HaNavi, concerning the destruction of the Holy City of Yerushalayim and the exile of Am Yisrael. It is the first of the three special Haftarot read during the three weeks preceding Tisha B'Av.

Guard Your Tongue

Expressing Appreciation and Concern

It is forbidden to criticize someone behind his back while condoning his behavior in his presence. Actually, flattery is never permitted, much more so in such a case.

The solution is to show respect and concern for the person, but explicit objection to his behavior.

One is obligated to rebuke the person and try and convince him to rectify his ways. If after several attempts one's rebuke goes unheeded, one is exempt of the obligation.



In Our Father's Path

he Yeshiva Students Are as Precious to Me as My Own Children

The central quality required of a communal leader is an attribute which appears in this week's Parshah: "a man in whom there is spirit."

Many descriptions have been offered in trying to define this attribute; all are appropriate and necessary assets for a leader. We would like to focus on one of them, an attribute which HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Torah Or in Yerushalayim, personified.

This is what his son-in-law, HaGaon Rabbi Chaim Dov Altusky zt"l, related:

I once accompanied Rabbeinu to the home of a certain wealthy person. This philanthropist generously stated that he wishes to assist this important cause and thereby raise the glory of Torah. He asked Rabbeinu to delineate the Yeshiva's chief expenses, for this is where he would like to contribute. Rabbeinu considered the matter and answered, dormitory and catering expenses (this was just after the new dormitory had been built). The philanthropist responded: "I have a wonderful solution for you for these two matters! A solution explicitly defined by the Mishna (Avot 6:4): "Eat bread with salt, drink water in small measure, sleep on the ground." Since Chazal say these are conditions for growth in Torah, why not use this model of behavior with your talmidim?"

Rabbeinu replied: "Would you do this with your own children? Never! I consider the Yeshiva students as my children; the Yeshiva is like their private home. Therefore, I want them to be as comfortable as possible."

One of his well-known customs was that every day he would come to the busy shtieblach of the 'Shomrei Shabbat – Anshei Sfard' Beit Haknesset on 13th Avenue, Boro Park, where his talmid, HaRav Singer, was Rav. For several hours he would stand by the entrance, collecting money for his Yeshiva. Every so often he would circulate among the worshippers, asking them for a donation. Sometimes he used his overturned hat as the collection box for the money.

It was a rare sight. An exceptional Talmid Chacham, one of the Gedolei Hador and great marbitz Torah, personally asking the masses to support his talmidim! He clearly had special considerations in doing so. Some thought Rabbeinu wanted to degrade himself for the sake of the Torah and its scholars, since he was accustomed to quoting the words of the Holy Zohar (Chelek 2, pg. 166) who explains that Yechezkel HaNavi merited the name 'Ben Buzi' because he achieved perfection in the merit of biza – humiliating himself – for the sake of Torah and mitzvot. Others heard him explain that he specifically stands in this spot and collects tzedakah from individuals to merit Am Yisrael with supporting Torah, for it is not the dominion of the rich alone. It was something so important to him that even on Chol Hamoed Pesach, when he was staying in Monsey at the home of his daughter, Rabbanit Rosenberg, he would travel specially to those shtieblach and remain there, collecting tzedakah, until the afternoon.



Pearls of the Parsha

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagoon
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A Mitzvah as a Reward for a Mitzvah

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

The Midrash writes concerning Pinchas, "It is correct that he takes his reward." The Chatam Sofer zy"l asks, why is this the case? Isn't there a rule in Chazal, "The reward for a mitzvah is not given in This World?"

The Chatam Sofer answers: The reason why there is no reward for a mitzvah in This World is because the reward for a mitzvah is another mitzvah. Meaning, a tzadik who serves Hashem does not seek any reward at all. He only aspires to merit performing this mitzvah once again.

Here with Pinchas, his mitzvah was that he killed someone who had relations with a non-Jew. Pinchas certainly did not wish for this mitzvah opportunity to present itself once again, and that is why "It is correct that he takes his reward" since the rule "The reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah" is not applicable in this case.

The Greatness of Appropriate Tzedakah

"The sons of Gad according to their families: of Tzephon, the Tzephonite family; of Chaggi, the Chaggite family; of Shuni, the Shunite family" (Bamidbar 26:15)

The sefer Maor V'Shemesh explains this verse as an allusion to the mitzvah of tzedakah:

"The sons of Gad" hints to the mitzvah of tzedakah as the Gemara explains, "The letters gimel and daled refer to gemol dalim – bestowing on the poor." This verse wishes to bring our attention to three points that must be carefully considered when giving tzedakah:

First of all, tzedakah must be given secretly so as not to embarrass the poor.

The second quality is to give charity with joy and a pleasant countenance, "Let your heart not feel bad when you give him."

Thirdly, Chazal expound on the words "You shall surely give him": One should give and give again.

This verse hints to these three areas: "The sons of Gad" hints to gemol dalim – bestowing on the poor. "Of Tzephon, the Tzephonite family" means one should give in secrecy, tzaphon meaning hidden. "Of Chaggi, the Chaggite family" is an expression of chag – festival, meaning the charity should be given joyfully. Finally, "Of Shuni, the Shunite family" refers to giving repeatedly, Shuni from the term 'yeshaneh – repeat'.

There is no Holiness Like the Holiness of the Torah

"Of Puvah, the Punite family" (Bamidbar 26:23)

The Holy Ohr Hachaim writes: The pious one wrote that the mouth of a Torah scholar has the law of a serving vessel which is used for holy things, for there is no holiness like the holiness of the Torah. Due to this one may not use one's mouth to discuss secular matters, even though it is not considered as a forbidden form of speech.

This is what 'Puvah – פוה' alludes to: the פה – mouth that toils in Torah where half the Name of the Almighty rests. 'The Punite family' means one must empty one's mouth of everything besides Torah utterances, and this is one of the forty-eight qualities with which Torah is acquired, among them 'limited conversation, limited laughter, limited pleasure' and other examples that are considered as luxuries.

'Of Yashuv' is an allusion to increasing one's study (yeshiva) which should not be a temporary concern. It is also necessary to ponder every single detail of the Torah, until one comprehends its essence, as is required for understanding the halachah. This is the 'main requirement of Torah' and another section of the forty-eight qualities – 'yishuv – deliberation'. 'Thinking deliberately in his study, asking and answering, pondering over what he has learned etc.' Also listed as part of these essential qualities is 'listening, articulate speech and intuitive understanding', among other similar matters in the section of intellectual understanding.

'Of Shimron, the Shimronite family' hints to extra guarding, which obligates a ben Torah more than the masses.

The Ohr HaChaim zy"l adds: From here one can derive to what extent a ben Torah must preserve all details of the mitzvot, and Chazal said (Chovat Helevavot, sha'ar 7) that the early pious ones were careful with fifty gates of permissible behavior so as not to stumble with something forbidden, and this is the meaning of 'Shimron, the Shimronite family'.

Unlimited Elevation

"Hashem said to Moshe, 'Take to yourself Yehoshua son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lean your hands upon him'" (Bamidbar 27:18)

Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem to appoint someone in his place after his death, a man with the ability to lead the congregation even when they complain and sin, "a man with spirit", meaning someone patient and modest who has the patience to bear each of them at all times. So Hashem commanded Moshe to appoint Yehoshua bin Nun as his successor. What was special about Yehoshua bin Nun that he was specifically chosen by Hashem, out of a generation blessed with so many great and special personalities, such as Pinchas son of Elazar who was zealous for his G-d, among others?

The answer could be that Yehoshua was prominent for his attribute of modesty and submission. Even as a veteran talmid of Moshe Rabbeinu, he never thought he already knew everything. When Moshe Rabbeinu went up to Heaven to receive the second set of Luchot, Yehoshua did not take a vacation but pitched his tent at the foot of the mountain so he could continue learning from Moshe Rabbeinu as soon as he would descend. Throughout his life he felt like a talmid standing in front of his Rebbe, still having so much to add in his avodat Hashem and Torah study, to the extent that the Torah calls him 'the servant of Moshe' (Bamidbar 11:28), because he actually felt like a servant before his master.

Only a person who possesses humility and is able to show submission before every person, can lead and understand the heart of each individual. He is the one who is given the mantel of leadership.

One who constantly submits himself to his master also possesses another quality: he never stops elevating himself in his avodat Hashem, for he doesn't feel he arrived at the peak; he always seeks to rise higher and higher.

Immediately following the section of appointing Yehoshua son of Nun, the Parshah details at great length all the daily offerings and the additional offerings offered on the festivals. This is surprising since Sefer Vayikra is the book in which all the offerings are detailed. So why does Parshat Pinchas (in Sefer Bamidbar) mention the details of the tamid and mussaf offerings?

According to what we explained above, one can say the additional festival offerings allude to the fact that while there are offerings offered daily in the Mikdash, it is possible to add to them, just like the mussaf offering. Therefore, detailing the offerings immediately following the appointment of Yehoshua as leader of the people, teaches us that this was his notable attribute; constantly adding to his Avodat Hashem, Torah study and mitzvah observance.



A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Why Did the American President Change the Broadcasting Schedule?

Each of us has areas we would like to change; whether in our personal life, the way we interact with our family and friends, or even pertaining to public affairs. For example, most people are aware of a certain change they would like to make in their personal life, either spiritual or material, adding hours of Torah study, or lehavdil, increasing their income. Yet despite knowing the change is good and beneficial for them, they do not take steps to implement it.

In this week's Parshah, points out HaGaon Rabbi Asher Kovleski shlit" a, we read about Pinchas son of Elazar, for whom, the Midrash tells us, miracles were performed, without which he would not have succeeded in being zealous for G-d's Name. If so, what in fact did Pinchas do?! Why did he deserve such a great reward if all he did was some small step and his mission was in fact completed with miracles?!

The Holy Alshich reveals an awe-inspiring idea: Pinchas merited reward for taking the first step! Everything a Jew does, Hashem in fact does for him. All that we merit, we receive as a gift. All that is required of us is the first step, to jump into the water, to begin the process. This is what Pinchas did and that is why he merited reward, for taking the first step which led to a turnaround!

Because success in any area, for any person, starts with one step. Sometimes small, almost inconspicuous, but it is the most decisive, dramatic step, the one that has an effect and the power to change the world. All we need to do is the first step, with all our strength and intensity, without being afraid. And then Hashem will assist us in arriving at our destination, in actualizing our aspirations!

The thirty-third American president, Harry Truman, will be remembered in the pages of history as president of a turbulent period, who effected many changes in the policies of security, foreign and interior affairs; changes that had an effect on the entire world. He was the one who made the decision to use a nuclear bomb, the only time in history, which

he dropped on Japan and thereby ended the Second World War.

Naturally, the president's dealings and actions during that fateful period were of great interest to the American citizens. Since they were curious about his plans, deliberations and strategies, it was decided that the president would deliver a weekly speech to the nation which would be broadcast in the media, delineating a summary of the previous week's activities and announcing his plans for the coming week.

Specialists and professionals were called upon to calculate the most preferred day and time for this lecture. They arrived at the conclusion that the best time for the president's speech would be Friday evening at 8 pm prompt. It is a time when people are at home and relaxed, so the speech would draw the highest number of listeners!

Almost all the citizens welcomed the news with joy. Only a small minority – religious Jews – were painfully disturbed by the announcement. So many Jews found it difficult to observe Shabbat according to the law, and now their challenge would only increase. Who knows if they would succeed in surmounting this test? In addition, among the media personnel and president's employees were quite a few Jews, and now they would have no choice but to desecrate the Shabbat!

All the Jews sighed at the news but one Jewish lady, Mrs. Berel a" h, could not make peace with the idea. "Master of the World," she cried out, "This is mass desecration of Shabbat! How many Jews who really want to observe Shabbat will stumble? How many employees, who would love to be at home making Kiddush for their families, will have to show up for work because of the president's speech! It is simply heart-breaking!"

Mrs. Berel sat down, took a pen and paper, and began writing a letter to the president:

To the distinguished Mr. Harry Truman, honorable President of the White House, Washington.

First of all, I would like to thank you for your wonderful leadership of our country. I am a loyal citizen and wish for the country's success with all my might. I was happy to hear that you intend to give a weekly speech and I would definitely want to listen to your words and feel part of the nation...

But, since I, and other thousands like me, are Shabbat observant Jews, the timing of the lecture does not allow for this. We cannot use any electrical devices on the

Holy Shabbat, therefore we will be unable to listen to your valuable weekly speech. Therefore, I ask that the speech be delivered at a different time.

Thanking you in advance,

Mrs. Berel

She signed the letter, addressed it to the White House and sent it off...

The White House mail box receives thousands of letters every day and about 95% of them are sent to the nearest trash bin without a further glance. Bored citizens from around the world send letters to the American President and it is quite simple to presume that most of them are ignored...

The chances that Mrs. Berel's letter would receive a different fate were nil. Nevertheless, she decided to send the letter. One small step, something that was in her power to do, for the sake of the holiness of the Shabbat so it should not be publicly desecrated!

A week passed and to her great shock and surprise, she found an envelope from the White House in her mail box! Inside was a short, matter-of-fact letter, confirming that the president had read her letter and was considering the request with due seriousness. Only three weeks passed and in his weekly speech the President announced that from now on the speech will be delivered on a different day and not on Friday night!

How unbelievable! The facts are clear: one unassuming, ordinary woman, with a short, simple letter, managed to change the time of the American President's speech and merited preventing hundreds of Jews from steady Shabbat desecration!

The conclusion: It doesn't matter what transformation you wish to implement. It may be in your personal life, public affairs, or community concerns. Everything begins with one small step, and even if it seems unlikely, insignificant, or minimal, that small step is capable of effecting tremendous change, of transforming the world, leading to your longed-for goal! Let us not be afraid or anxious; all we have to do is our bit, the first step, and then Hashem will shower us with His assistance!

Let us say good-bye to predictions and perils, rational considerations and deliberations, and simply go ahead and act! One small step, a step that can bring about change and create transformations. Our small step is all that is required. The rest Hashem will do, completing the mission in a magnificent fashion!