



# Parashat "Pinchas"

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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## Torah-Sanctioned Zealotry

Parshas [Pinchas](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

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 “*kana*”. 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 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 YOSHUVI” (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.

## Revenge of A Talmid Chochom / Thinking Differently / Rewarding Effort

Parshas [Pinchas](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The Revenge of A Talmid Chochom Must Be Like A Snake

The parsha begins: "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: 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 25:10-11] Rashi wonders why the Torah needs to restate the genealogy of Pinchas, given that we know it already from what we read just three pesukim earlier, at the end of Parshas Balak.

Rashi explains: "Because the tribes were humiliating him, saying 'Did you see this son of Puti whose mother's father fattened calves for idolatry, yet he killed the prince of a tribe of Israel! This is why the Torah traces his ancestry to Aharon.'" Murmurers and critics within Israel chastised Pinchas for his "unmitigated chutzpah". He dared to kill the prince of the Tribe of Shimon even though Pinchas himself descended from Yisro who at one time in his life was a priest of idolatry. Therefore, the Torah goes out of its way to reiterate that we should trace Pinchas' lineage through his father's

side back to Aharon haKohen (rather than through his mother's side back to Yisro).

Rav Yisrael Grossman wrote an article in the Yeshurun publication that adds a bit of a commentary to this Rashi. He writes that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik had a life-long inquisitive inquiry (chakirah) that he never resolved. The chakira was as follows: When a fellow gets up in shul and reads the Torah (leins) and he makes a mistake and everyone pounces on him – how do we interpret this scenario? Is it because we were all there at “ma’amad Har Sinai” [the presentation of the Torah on Mount Sinai] and we heard the Torah from the Almighty with perfect clarity, so we became hard-wired such that our spiritual DNA needs to hear Torah correctly and when we hear Torah misread it goes against every sinew of our spiritual essence? Is that why we (for example) protest loudly “No, you read the word without pronouncing the dot in the Hay at the end of the word!” Is that why we do it?

Alternatively, do we interpret this like a game of chicken? Got yah! Perhaps we simply do not like the Baal Koreh (He leins too fast or too slow or we do not like his trop or we do not like his voice.) or we want to show how fast we are (at catching errors) or how smart we are or if we just like to “win”. None of the reasons in this second group of possibilities is good.

In short – is it because we can't suffer hearing Torah read incorrectly (like a perfectionist musician who hears someone playing a violin off key) or is it because of hatred, jealousy, machlokes, or whatever other unseemly motive? Rav Yisrael Grossman writes – this too is what happened in the Torah's narrative with Pinchas.

Pinchas got up and killed Zimri. He was a zealot, fighting the “Battle of the L-rd”. However, the people were cynical. “Agh! This was not a case of ‘Battling for the L-rd’. This does not come from a good

place. Pinchas is a murderer. He has these negative traits in his genes because his grandfather was an idolater. This was his opportunity to murder someone ostensibly for the 'right reason'. G-d responded, "I am able to read people's hidden thoughts. I know the person who killed Zimri is Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the Priest. His zealotry was purely for My sake. The genes that were active in carrying out this act of zealotry are those of his grandfather Aharon who was a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace. Wanton murder is not in his DNA at all! We witnessed a function of his devotion and zealotry for Me."

Rav Grossman buttresses his point with a Gemara [Yoma 23a] "Any Talmid Chochom who does not seek revenge and bear a grudge like a snake is not a Talmid Chochom." This Talmudic passage needs explanation, but the simple reading is that there are occasions when a Talmid Chochom needs to take revenge. We are not talking about petty matters. Rather, sometimes a person needs to be put in his place. There are occasions where even a Talmid Chochom needs to carry out acts of revenge.

It is noteworthy that the Gemara uses the simile "like a snake".

What does that represent? Why does it not say "Any Talmid Chochom that does not take revenge like a lion...?" Rav Grossman offers a beautiful insight. The Gemara [Arachin 15b] says that all the animals went to the snake and argued with him as follows: "We understand why a lion kills – a lion kills to eat. We understand why a wolf kills – a wolf kills to eat. Virtually all rapacious animals kill to satisfy their hunger. However, what kind of pleasure do you, Mr. Snake, get out of biting someone?"

We see from this Gemara that a snake does not bite for his own pleasure. The snake is not doing it to fulfill its own need. That is what this Gemara means. Any Talmid Chochom who does not take revenge like a SNAKE, is not a true Talmid Chochom. When a

Talmid Chochom takes revenge, it is NOT for his own pleasure. It must be LIKE A SNAKE, altruistic. Just as a snake does not derive pleasure or benefit when it attacks, so too the “revenge” of a Talmid Chochom must be one from which he derives no pleasure or benefit. A Talmid Chochom may only seek that kind of revenge. This was the zealotry of Pinchas. It was not a result of bad character traits, but was strictly for the Sake of Heaven.

### **It is Normal for People to Think Differently**

Later on in the Parsha, Moshe asks Hashem to appoint an appropriate successor: “May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly...” [Bamidbar 26:6]. Rashi alludes to the Medrash Tanchuma, which comments, “Just as the faces of no two people are alike, so too the thought processes of no two people are alike – everyone has a mind of his own.”

The Medrash wonders why Moshe refers to the Almighty here as “G-d of the spirits” (Elokai haRuchos). This is a very rare expression for referring to the Master of the Universe. What does it mean?

The Medrash explains: Moshe, as the time of his death approached, turned to the Almighty and said “Master of the Universe it is known and revealed to You that everyone has a mind of his own, with different wants and needs. The Jewish people need a new leader, but You know as well as I do that they are a tough crowd. They are very opinionated and everyone has their own philosophy. They need a leader who can relate to every single person, to each individual and to his or her own way of looking at life.” This is why Moshe refers to G-d as Elokai haRuchos. You, who know the spirit of every person and how different they each are, please appoint a leader who is able to deal with the different spirits of people.

The Medrash began by saying “Just as their faces are not alike (so too their opinions are not alike).” Reb Bunim Eiger asks – why does the Medrash start out like that? We all know that people do not look alike. Why not just come right to the point: “People’s opinions are different from one another; their philosophies are different.” Why do we need the preamble “Just like their faces are not alike...?” Reb Bunim Eiger answers (with a question): “Did it ever bother you that the person sitting next to you does not look like you?” Look around this room. No two people look the same. Does that bother anyone? The Gemara states that it is one of the wonders of creation that of all the billions of people born since the beginning of time, no two people look exactly alike. It does not bother anyone one iota.

The Medrash is saying “It does not (and it should not) bother anyone that his face is not like anyone else’s face, so why when people think differently and look at life differently do people find it so bothersome?” Why is it that we feel ‘If you do not see it my way, you are an idiot?’ The Medrash is teaching that it should NOT bother us that people think differently from one another.

### **He Who Guards The Fig Tree Shall Eat Its Fruit**

The sefer Chashukei Chemed on Maseches Sukkah quotes a very interesting halachic novelty from the Aderes (Rav Eliyahu Dovid Rabinowitz Tumim; the father-in-law of Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook).

Rashi says that when Moshe heard the Almighty say “Give Tzelophchad’s inheritance to his daughters”, Moshe said, “The time has come that I should claim what I need (i.e. – that I should think of my family) that my sons should inherit my high position.” The Holy One, Blessed is He, said to Moshe, “This is not what has entered My mind. Yehoshua is worthy of taking reward for his

service for 'he would not depart from within the tent'."

The Medrash applies the pasuk "He who guards the fig tree shall eat its fruit" [Mishlei 27:18] (i.e. – he who keeps watch over his master shall be honored).

Yehoshua bin Nun who was so faithful, who put in the time, who did everything for his master – he is the person deserving to become the successor of his master.

The Aderes writes the following halachic chiddush [novelty] addressing the case where one has Yahrtzeit for his grandfather and wants to daven for the amud, but there is no minyan present. (The rule is that strictly speaking a grandson is not a 'chiyuv' [one with primary responsibility] to 'daven at the amud' [lead the prayer quorum] on his grandfather's Yahrtzeit. However, if there is no other 'chiyuv' present, it is a nice thing to do for the grandson to lead the service.) The grandson goes outside and announces to passersby "Mincha! Mincha!" He still cannot get a minyan together. He goes to people's houses and knocks on the doors. Finally, he gets a minyan together. He is about to go to the amud and a new fellow walks into shul who announces, "I have Yahrtzeit for my father. I have priority for davening at the amud."

The Aderes ruled that in such a case, the grandson gets priority to lead the service since he is responsible for there being a minyan. The Aderes applies the principle that "He who guards the fig tree shall eat its fruit". Even though strictly speaking the Yahrtzeit for one's father is a "bigger chiyuv", but that does not push away someone with a "smaller chiyuv" who went to great trouble to make the minyan possible.

The Magen HaElef on the Mateh Ephraim cites another scenario we also see frequently. The custom is that when we there is a public Torah reading, the Baal Koreh [one who read the Torah] recites the Kaddish after the Torah reading. If a person, who has

Yahrtzeit, wants to say Kaddish as many times as he can, he might say to the Baal Koreh "I want to say the Kaddish after the Torah reading". The Mateh Ephraim writes that the Baal Koreh has no obligation to give up the privilege of saying Kaddish after the Torah reading. He leined, so by right that Kaddish goes to him! Here again, we apply the pasuk "He who guards the fig tree shall eat its fruit."

שְׁמֹעַל הַרְבֵּה מִלְּפָנָיו וְלִפְנֵי הַמַּלְאָכִים

Written by Rabbi Aryeh Dachs

As was the custom of the Rebbes before him, the fourth Grand Rebbe of Chabad the Rebbe R' Shmuel (Mahrash) would hold Yechidus, one on one sessions with his followers.

An audience with the Rebbe was a precious moment treasured by the chasidim, Remarkably, although the Rebbe met with many chasidim, the Rebbe took each of these meetings as seriously, if not more seriously, than the chasid he was meeting with. The meetings were intense; each meeting, the Rebbe's clothing would become soaked from perspiration and unwearable. His attendant would then have to fetch a fresh change of clothing for the Rebbe.

The story goes, the Rebbe's attendant complained, dealing with the Rebbes clothing was relentless. The Rebbe explained that he was also relentlessly busy fetching clothing! "When a chasid comes into the room for an audience with me, I need to understand him fully, to do this, I have to take off my 'garments' (my perspective) and put on his 'garments' (to see things from his perspective). Then, I must advise the chasid. To offer proper guidance, I must remove his 'garments' and 'don' my Rabbinical attire. Then, to effectively communicate my guidance back to the chasid I must of course, 'remove' my rabbinical attire. Is it any wonder I perspire so profusely during these meetings?! Fetching the right clothing and changing all the time

is tireless work, indeed!”

In parshas Pinchas, Moshe understands that he will not lead the people into the Promised Land. Moshe prays to Hashem to provide his people, the people of Israel, with a capable and worthy leader to succeed him. The request is fascinating. Moshe asks that Hashem provide a leader who would be able to tolerate each person according to their needs. Later, Hashem consents and instructs Moshe to appoint his faithful student, Yehoshua as the next leader. The reason? “he has spirit in him”. Explains Rashi, Yehoshua had the unique ability to contend with the spirit, the unique character and dynamic of each member of the community.

Communication is the bedrock of effective leadership. Breakdowns in communication are often simply due to people being so different from one another, they cannot communicate their positions or relate to the other’s perspective. The Netziv (R’ Naftali Tzvi Berlin, leader of the great Volozhin Yeshiva; (1816-1893) in his commentary Emek HaNetziv, explains, that Rashi’s interpretation fits with the words of the verse “he has ruach, spirit, in him”. The word, ruach, “spirit” here refers to a person’s weltanschauung, his unique perspective. Yehoshua had “spirit in him”, meaning to say, it was as if all the different perspectives were contained within him. Yehoshua had an uncanny ability to connect and understand others. His understanding of others was so deep, it was almost as if Yehoshua shared the same “spirit” weltanschauung as the person he was interacting with.

The Torah teaches that the primary qualification for a leader is his ability to understand, and relate to, different people. This attribute of Yehoshua was why he was chosen to succeed Moshe. Like the Rebbe R’ Shmuel taught, there is no limit to the energies we can expend changing our ‘garments’. The ability to understand another perspective, to see things from a different angle is not easy, but in our work influencing our families and our communities, it is essential. The value of this trait cannot be underestimated.



Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman

When Pinchas saw Zimri, the son of an important Jewish leader, publicly sin together with the daughter of a non-Jewish Midian prince, he meted out their punishment [1]. To be more exacting, he killed them both with his spear.

As a result he received ‘the Covenant of Peace’. Perhaps he deserved a covenant of law and order, or justice, but why a covenant of peace: he didn’t exactly act in the most peaceful manner!

Moshe Boudilovsky was born in Kiev. Although brought up in atheist Russia, after experiencing anti-Semitism in university and the army, he decided to find out more about Judaism.

A small group of students at the university decided to apply for a visa to exit Russia. They invited Moshe to a meeting where they decided to compose a letter to President Nixon. The meeting was scheduled for Yom Kippur and Moshe decided to go to pray instead at a clandestine service. That night he prayed like never before.

Miraculously, of all that group only Moshe, who incidentally held a sensitive position in the Russian military, making him the most unlikely candidate to succeed, received a visa. Eventually he became a Rabbi and indeed moved to Israel. Upon discovering Moshe’s success, the leader of the group broke down in tears, bemoaning, “I have been trying to get a visa for six years. I have actively sent letters all over the world to major politicians. But you have just appeared on the scene and have already got your visa!” R’ Moshe explained, “You have been sending your letters to the wrong address. You went to President Nixon, but I went to G-d”

Pinchas avenged G-d’s vengeance [2] – not for any personal considerations and not for any other consideration other than G-d’s vengeance. He didn’t consider any repercussions, or in other words lack of ‘peace’ that might result from any of the sentenced family members, even though they were important leaders. Subsequently, he was awarded with the Covenant of Peace because true peace – shalom – is only as defined by G-d alone without any other subjective or political considerations. More accurately, true Shalom (is

complete, ‘shaleim’, because it) has already taken all of these factors into consideration.

Shalom is one of the names of G-d. To avenge G-d means to reinforce His laws, which are the means to attain objective Shalom. And so, tit-for-tat Pinchas was awarded the Covenant of Shalom: Pinchas, who recognized this, along with his descendants, were the right address to be the ones to bless us with true Shalom.

Have a Shabbos Shalom,

Dan.

Additional sources:

Story: The Underground, Astor/Neustadt, p. 360

[1] Bamidbar 25:6-8

[2] Bamidbar 25:11

ד' אלהינו חיים.

Written by d fine

We are told that the result of Pinchas’s heroic act was that he was awarded with the Kehunah. What does the Kehunah have to do with what Pinchas did? One idea here is that, as the Maharal says, the key facet of the Kohen’s job is the creation of shalom. It is via the korbanos that the Kohen ‘makes shalom’ between HaShem and Klal Yisrael, and even the Sotah offering – which brings a husband and wife back together (if it goes well!) – is done via the Kohen. Thus, since Pinchas’s act both stopped the plague in Klal Yisrael and stopped the warring factions against Moshe, Pinchas was rewarded with ‘a covenant of peace’ (25:12) in the form of the Kehunah.

## Humor

Yqtnf 'Rlgeg

One evening, Sy Feldman and his friend John McConnell are at a restaurant for dinner. As soon as the waiter takes out two steaks, Sy quickly picks out the bigger steak for himself.

Sy: "If you had the chance to pick first, which one would you pick?"

John: "The smaller piece, of course."

Sy: "What are you so upset about then? The smaller piece is what you want, right?"

[ guj kxc'Hqqf

Dovid and Shlomo are older students at the Yeshiva and they decided that they were fed up with living in the dorms with the lousy Yeshiva food. So they decided to rent an apartment and cook food for themselves.

"Did you get us a cook book? Dovid asked.

"I did, but I don't like it," Shlomo replied.

"Why, are the recipes too hard?" asked Dovid.

"Exactly!" Shlomo replied. "Every recipe begins the same way, 'Take a clean dish and...'"

[ qw"Vj kpmOqpg{'I tqy u"qp"Vtggua

Moishie Rose had been asking his father for more and more spending money so his father finally said to him, "Moishie, do you think money grows on trees?"

"Yeah," said Moishie, always somewhat of a smart-aleck.

"Well, it doesn't," said Mr. Rose.

"So what is money made out of, Dad?" asked Moishie.

"Paper," Mr. Rose said.

"And what is paper made out of?" asked Moishie with a smile...

\ c f l g u ' C p e l g p v ' C t v h c e v

Little Moishie opened his Zadie's old Chumash that he was told had been in the family for years. With fascination he looked at the old pages as he turned them. Then something fell out of the Chumash and he picked it up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree. The leaf had been pressed in between pages.

"Zadie, look what I found," Moishie called out.

"What is it, Moishie?" his Zadie asked.

With astonishment in his voice, young Moishie answered: "It's Adam's suit!"