

Parshat Pinchas-Points of Perpetuity

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Zealousness usually connotes anger and force. Yet Pinchas, who displayed exceptional *kanaot* was rewarded with the diametric opposite, a covenant of peace. In addition, the Midrash says that just as Pinchas would bring peace in the desert, so too in the future would he bring peace between the Jewish people and Hashem. What was it about the act of Pinchas that led to his unusual reward?

There are people whose essence is *chesed*. They tend to see the positive qualities in people and are oblivious to any negativity. Then there are people who look at others with *gevurah*. They continuously latch onto what is wrong in others and are oblivious to what is good. Both of these approaches are wrong. The starting point to helping people improve is to discern their hidden purity. We get upset when we see people doing something wrong because deep inside we recognize that it isn't fitting for them. When we're able to see the

goodness within a person then we can tell him where he's gone wrong. Telling a child that he's a thief creates a negative reality. But telling that same child that he has a pure divine spirit inside him and therefore his act of stealing is beneath him, allows him to understand that he is inherently good but in this instance he acted inappropriately. When we really believe in a child he will feel our love and that inner trust will stay with him always. He will know that the times he gave in to his evil inclination are not a reflection of who he truly is.

This is what true *kanaot* (zealousness) is. On the outside it appears as if the person is filled with anger and hatred. But in reality it stems from love for Hashem and the Jewish people. A zealous *tzaddik* is really asking, "How can you act in a way that is so counter to your inner holiness?" *Kanaot* and *ahavah* work hand in hand and Pinchas epitomized this

perfect balance. The Torah says, "*Vayakum m'toch haeidah.*" Pinchas arose from among the congregation. *Haeidah* connotes Hashem's presence. Pinchos acted out of love. He arose from among a people of high caliber and holiness. He stood up to protect the sanctity of the Jewish people. His act was not only *gevurah* but ultimate peace. He restored *klal Yisrael* to its inherent righteousness. Death comes as a result of sin. Pinchas never died. This shows clearly that there was no aspect of sin in his act. Eliyahu who is Pinchas is called *zachor l'tov* to underscore that all that Pinchas did was meant for good.

The Talei chaim notes that a true act of *gevurah* is always connected with *chesed*. In fact it's even deeper than *chesed* because it strips away all the outer layers of negativity to reveal the inner soul shining through.

Achdut: The Prerequisite For Redemption

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isacson

In Parshat Beshalach, the Torah writes that when the sea split the waters formed like a *choma* (wall) around the Jews. The Meshech Chochma comments that the word *choma* is written twice. In one instance it is *maleh* (with the letter *vav*) and can be read as *choma*. In another instance it is *chaser* (without the *vav*) and can be read as *cheima* (fury). The Gra explains that when Nachshon ben Aminadav took that leap of faith and jumped into the sea, the waters rose up like a *chomah*. But there were Jews who waited on the sidelines. They lacked *emunah* and wanted to be sure they could cross safely. This raised the ire of the sea. The waters became filled with *cheimah* and wanted to crash down.

The Midrash tells how the Satan challenged Hashem at the splitting of the sea. Both the Egyptians and the Jews are idol worshippers. Why are the Jews being saved? The Meshech Chochma asks, why did the Satan wait to speak up now? Why didn't he do so during the plagues, when the Egyptians suffered and the Jews did not? He explains that when one studies the Jewish legal

system, if an individual sins *bein adam l'makom* (towards Hashem) he is punished very severely while sins *bein adam l'chaveiro* (between man and man) are let off more easily. But for a *tzibur* (group), sins *bein adam l'chaveiro* are more severe than *bein adam l'makom*. We see that the generation of *David hamelech* were righteous but because there was infighting amongst them they were defeated in war. In contrast, the generation of Achav were idol worshippers, but because they were united they were successful in battle. Similarly, the first *beit hamikdash* was destroyed because of sins *bein adam l'makom*. The second *beit hamikdash* was destroyed because of sins *bein adam l'chaveiro*. The first exile was only seventy years. The second exile still lingers on. When it comes to an individual perhaps one could argue that his prime *avodah* is *bein adam l'makom*. When he sins and creates separation between himself and his Creator, he destroys his essence. Therefore there are very defined, strict punishments for sins towards Hashem. But a *tzibur's* power is its unity. Therefore even when they sin, if they are *b'achdut* their

punishment is somewhat mitigated. But if they abuse their strength and become fractionalized, they lose their protection and all of their weaknesses are exposed. The Meshech Chochmah explains that in Egypt the Jews had a sense of *achdut*. It was their united Jewish identity which kept them safe. But at the Yam Suf, they were divided. Some wanted to go back to Egypt, some wanted to plough into the sea, while others wanted to fight back. At the Yam Suf, the Satan gained a foothold, the *choma* became *cheima* because they lost that strength of unity.

During the period of the counting of the Omer we mourn the students of Rabbi Akiva who died because they did not treat each other with respect. A communal flaw in *bein adam l'chavero* sealed their destruction. According to Jewish law one cannot get married during *sefirah*. Marriage exemplifies unity. It takes true *achdut* to bond two disparate individuals as one. During *sefirah*, we halt all marriages to indicate that before one gets married one must understand the lessons of Rabbi Akiva's students.

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When we have a sense of *achdut*, when we care about others both on an individual and communal level, then there's no room for our enemies to penetrate. Our *tikun* must be to

foster more *achdut* and brotherhood among our people. The *parshiyot* of our *tefillin* contain verses that express our faith in the oneness of Hashem. Hashem's *tefillin* expresses his faith

in the oneness of the Jewish people. "*Mi k'amcha yisrael goy echad b'aretz*" (Who is like the Jewish people, one nation upon the earth).

Megilat Eicha: The Bereft Widow #1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Megilat Eicha is the story of failure. Had we not failed it wouldn't have been written. So why I fact was it written? What is the point of going back to failure again and again every year? When the sages saw a fox emerging from *har habayit*, Rabbi Akiva laughed. He said if the curses have come true then I know the promises will come true too. We failed and we had to bear the consequences. But the fact that there's the possibility of failure means that there's the possibility of success. The statements of failure must be refocused to possibility. Our long history of suffering tell us that Hashem's commitment to us is enormously deep. The *megilah* tell us that this is what the destruction was and that it only happened because we were destined to live. In the end there is hope.

The megilah begins, "How does she sit alone, the city that was once full of people." The heavenly Yerushalayim built through our *mitzvot* was abandoned as we pursued other things. *Yerushalayim* was like a widow whose husband left her. In marriage, a man provides on all levels and a woman builds with it. Hashem's constant providing stopped and this meant we couldn't build anymore. We were like widows. We had to go back to the beginning and reestablish a relationship. Hashem stopped giving us because we were using everything he gave us to destroy. Rashi points out that it says *k'almanah* because she was comparable to a widow whose husband abandoned her and went across the sea. Perhaps he was alive but he wasn't there for her. Similarly Hashem is always there but he makes his presence so distant and unobservable that we feel as though He has departed.

Yerushalayim even in exile is still on a higher level than any other place in the world. But it's still empty of divinity and of each of us seeking Hashem there. Our culture has become human driven like the other nations.

There's no higher authority or striving for more than one's ego and desire fulfillment.

"She weeps at night and the tears linger on her cheeks." Crying evokes a sense of mourning. We've grown up in exile and we've forgotten that feeling of loss. In the first *beit hamikdash* we lost our sense of mission, with the second we lost our sense of being a people. In essence we are so broken that we're comparable to a body that's bleeding from so many wounds that the medical personall don't know where to start.

The *beit hamikdash* was destroyed at night. The physical reality of darkness was actually a parallel to our spiritual reality. With light you can see the meaning and purpose of things. In the dark you are just groping around. In exile, we're blind. We have no prophecy, no sense of what to do. This goes back to the night the Jews wept in the desert when the meraglim brought back their report about Israel. The meraglim should've said we will never conquer the land without Hashem's help. The critical exclusion of Hashem from our lives is what living in the dark is about. When people use words like incurable or unsolvable, Hashem is not in the equation. Putting Hashem back is like putting the light on again. Everything becomes possible. Rashi quotes the Gemara that when you hear someone crying at night you feel like crying along. There's such despair. This alludes to us. When we mourn at night, Hashem hears our cries and mourns with us. *Tikun chatzos* is an especially auspicious time when one can open doors that can't be opened at any other time.

The tribe of Yehuda was expelled from poverty. On a simple level this means, the people were starving. They were exiled and they had no strength to fight anymore. On a deeper level it says there's no poverty like the poverty of the mind. The physical poverty was a tragic

consequence of what we had become in our minds. "All those who pursued her caught up to her during the time they were besieged." Rav Tzvi Meir Zilberberg quoting kabbalistic sources explains that all those who pursue the *Shechina*, who want to find Hashem, can find him during the period of *bein hamitzarim*, a time of *hester panim*. When you feel the pain of exile then you can ask Hashem to save you and He will listen. "The ways that lead to Yerushalayim are desolate and full of mourning." Long before the destruction people stopped coming on *aliya l'regel*. It would take weeks to get to *Yerushalayim* and people were afraid to leave their homes and to stop working. People would neglect this *mitzvah* and that feeling of excluding Hashem and losing track of what gives simcha and what doesn't was there.

There were thirteen gates to the *mikdash*, one for each tribe and a general gate for everyone. Each tribe was unique and had their own approach but the gates were destroyed because we lost touch of our individuality and did not respect one another. "The *kohanim* groan and the maidens sigh in despair." Yirmiyahu rebuked the women about their noisy scented shoes. Having an identity in which innerness means more than outerness is what modesty is about. The times were such that we were losing our inner lives more and more. Sometimes we reach a point where our relationship to Hashem is so superficial that we think that by observing the *mitzvot* Hashem is robbing us of our autonomy and identity. This is tragic. The will for *tzniut* wasn't there. This is what we have to reclaim.

Rashi says shaming Torah is the root of suffering. The repetition of the same sin creates this heavy burden. The rule is if you want to change something change a habit.