



UNEQUIVOCAL FAITH SUSPENDS THE PROJECTILE

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Pinchas

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Obliterating The Silence Of The Condoned

1. *Zimri*, Prince of the tribe of *Shimon*, cohabits with a Midianite Princess publicly – causing a plague to ensue.
2. There were 24,000 casualties due to the public desecration of G-d's name.
3. *Pinchas'* act of zealotry, spearing them at the point of cohabitation, ceased the plague.
4. If not for *Pinchas'* act of zealotry the Jewish People would have been consumed by G-d's wrath.
5. *Seforno*: The liability of the Jews was that they remained silent during the desecration of G-d's name.
6. The silence was considered a condonation.
7. Remaining silent when *Pinchas* avenged G-d's vengeance was a correction on the original silence.
8. *Seforno*: The liability of the Jewish People at the time of the golden calf was their silence allowing the calf to be built and worshipped.
9. Their correction was their silence when *Moshe* summoned those who are for G-d to kill the idolaters.
10. Although *Levy* was the smallest of the Tribes, they did not interfere.

Once Breached, Integrity Must Be Certified

Unequivocal Faith Suspends the Projectile

1. "*Pinchas* has withdrawn my wrath from the Jewish people due to avenging my vengeance in their midst."
2. *Rashi*: He avenged my vengeance and was enraged with my rage.
3. *Pinchas* internalized G-d's pain due to the extreme desecration of His name.
4. Due to *Pinchas'* zealotry, the plague that consumed the 24,000 ceased.
5. *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh*: The concept of supplication is rooted in the attribute of mercy.
6. When the Attribute of Justice is unleashed, there is no place for mercy.
7. *Midrash*: *Pinchas* planned his attack against *Zimri*; his intention was to kill and be killed.
8. Only selfless dedication and faith is able to quell the attribute of Justice.
9. G-d told *Moshe* to tell the Jewish people: Only due to the zealousness of *Pinchas* for the sake of My honor, did I retract my wrath (Justice).

Weekly Video: Assuaging One's Guilt by Minimizing Another

Weekly Torah Commentary Series: Pinchas



Yitzchak's Words to His Son Esav, "By the sword you shall live"

"Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: *Pinchas*, son of *Elazar*, son of *Aaron* the Priest, turned back My wrath from the Children of Israel..."

Rashi: Why does the *Torah* need to trace *Pinchas'* lineage back to his grandfather, *Aaron* the High Priest? It is because after *Pinchas* killed *Zimri*, he was ridiculed by the tribes of Israel for killing a Prince. They said, "How can a person who descends from a grandfather (his maternal grandfather was *Yisro*) who fattened calves for idolatry have the audacity to kill a Prince of Israel?"

The *Torah* needed to trace his lineage to *Aaron* the High Priest in order to reveal his prestigious pedigree to quell the claim of the Jewish people against *Pinchas*.

"*Pinchas* son of *Elazar*, son of *Aaron* the Priest, saw, and he stood up from amid the assembly and took a spear in his hand...and pierced them both (*Zimri* and *Cozbi*)."

We see that even before *Pinchas* killed *Zimri*, the *Torah* traces his pedigree back to *Aaron* the High Priest. If the reason the *Torah* traces *Pinchas'* lineage back to *Aaron* after he killed *Zimri* was to quell the ridicule of the tribes, why is his lineage traced back to *Aaron* the High Priest before he killed *Zimri*?

The *Torah* states explicitly that had it not been for *Pinchas'* act of zealotry, G-d would have destroyed the entire Jewish people. What is the basis for the criticism of *Pinchas* for killing a prince of Israel, when his act of zealotry spared them from total annihilation?

One would have thought that he would have deserved to be praised for his courageous act. His pedigree seemingly has no relevance to the context of his action. Why was *Pinchas* seen in a negative light, deserving this degree of ridicule?

Zimri, the Prince of the tribe of *Shimon*, had committed a public desecration of G-d when he publically cohabited with *Cozbi*, the Midianite Princess. The entire Jewish

people were aware of his disgraceful behavior. If so, why didn't they react as zealots like *Pinchas*?

If G-d's Name was being disgraced at the most extreme level, the people whose generation was qualified to enter into the Land should have interceded and stopped this unconscionable act. Why didn't they?

It was because they were intimidated by *Zimri's* status as a prince of Israel. In addition, the woman who he cohabited with was a princess. Because they were only of ordinary status, it was too difficult for them as commoners to reproach someone of such exalted status, although they understood that the Name of G-d was being desecrated.

They understood that they had failed; however, they did not understand why *Pinchas* was able to react and they were not. In order to relieve themselves of their guilt, they distinguished between themselves and *Pinchas*.

The Torah initially traces *Pinchas's* pedigree to Aaron the High Priest before he committed the act of zealotry in order to establish him as one with a holy pedigree, thus possessing exceptional clarity regarding his service of G-d. He was able to internalize the desecration of G-d to the point that he could not tolerate the disgrace of G-d. He thus reacted purely for the sake of G-d regardless of *Zimri's* status as a prince of Israel.

The basis for him not to be intimidated by *Zimri's* status as Prince was unrelated to his being a peer of *Zimri*, but rather he was a true servant of G-d who loved Him.

Gemara: When there was a desecration of G-d's Name, there is no wisdom or insight against G-d. In a setting of desecration of G-d, one does not display any honor for one of great status.

Before committing the act of zealotry, the *Torah* establishes and quantifies *Pinchas* as one who was imbued with holiness and clarity by tracing his lineage to his father *Elazar* and Aaron the High Priest. However, after killing *Zimri*, the *Torah* once again traces his pedigree back to Aaron in order to establish him in the eyes of the Jewish people as one of noble pedigree in order to establish him as a person who was not corrupted in his refinement, but rather as someone who was a peer of *Zimri*, regarding his status.

Creating a Natural Barrier to Evil

"G-d spoke to *Moshe* saying, 'Harass the Midianites and smite them; for they harassed you...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..."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: If the Jewish people were commanded at a later time to destroy the Midianites, why does the *Torah* mention at this time the reason to destroy them? What is the value at this point to mention what they had done to the Jewish people?

(Seemingly, the fact that they had caused the Jewish people to engage in illicit relations and idolatry which resulted in a plague coming upon them and causing thousands of people to die should be reason enough to avenge their death.)

The Midianites had intentionally brought destruction upon the Jewish people through the sexual enticement of their women in conjunction with the idolatry of *Baal Peor*. Although those who cohabited with the women perished in the plague; nevertheless, the Jewish males who remained alive were enticed by these women but did not succumb.

These men, although they did not engage in forbidden sexual relations with these women, were negatively affected because of what they had seen. A trace of desire remained in their hearts for forbidden sexual relations. As much as they understood the wrong of what had taken place, they were nevertheless spiritually tainted due to that experience. They could not purge this negative affect if their emotion and their minds were thus affected by this desire.

It was essential for the Jewish people to repent for what they had done. The repentance process cannot bring about atonement if the individual continues to desire what is forbidden. It is considered to be deficient.

As a human being, after being exposed to sin and being affected by that exposure, one will continue to have a desire for what is not permitted, regardless of one's intellectual understanding of its absolute wrongness. He needs to perceive and internalize that initial temptation in the most negative light in order to understand that it was something that could have caused his destruction. Only with this level of clarity, one is able to purge that temptation from his midst.

G-d told *Moshe* to tell the Jewish people, "You should harass the Midianites..." so that they should understand and appreciate the sinister intent of the individuals who were initially seen as desirable and attractive. It

was important for the Jewish people to appreciate that although superficially it seemed that these women were only offering themselves to the men to accommodate their desires, in fact the intent of the Midianites and Moabites was to destroy the Jewish people through their illicit behavior.

Chazal: Although *Bilam* had failed in his attempt to curse the Jewish people, he did succeed by tainting them. *Bilam* said to *Balak*, "The G-d of the Jewish people despises promiscuity..." Therefore, *Bilam* suggested that the way to bring about the destruction of the Jewish people was to draw them into having illicit relationships with the Moabite women. This would enrage G-d against them.

Bilam nearly succeeded had it not been for the zealotry of *Pinchas*, which caused the wrath of G-d to be retracted from the Jewish people. It was only after the Jewish people would be able to perceive the Midianites as their true enemy in every regard, (understanding that their initial intent was only to destroy them) that they would see in retrospect what was initially seen as attractive as detestable and revolting. This mindset in conjunction with their repentance would allow them to be fully reinstated to their former pure status.

G-d therefore commanded *Moshe* to share with the Jewish people the true intent of the Midianites before giving the order to destroy them so that ultimately when they would engage in battle, their repentance would be complete.

Gemara: "One should continuously enrage his positive inclination against the evil inclination." One should continuously be in a state of intolerance of the evil inclination.

Although the evil inclination attempts to convince and entice the individual to stray from the good path and justify the forbidden, one should dismiss the consideration to sin without hesitation and be in an agitated state regarding the inclination.

If one fully understands and internalizes that the seemingly positive advances of his enemy are only with the intent to distract and destroy him, it would cause one to be intolerant of him. Rather, one will despise and detest him regardless of the attractiveness of the enticement.

This is the mindset and posture one must continuously assume to counter the suggestions of the evil inclination. In order to maintain a sense of negativity towards the evil inclination, one must engage in *Torah* study and the performance of *mitzvos*.

Through the study of *Torah* and service of G-d, one will gain a sensitivity that will allow him to evaluate what is beneficial and what is objectionable. By appreciating the cost factor of engaging in the wrong, one will not transgress, and it will also cause him to despise the evil inclination that suggested the negative as an opportunity.

Chazal: The evil inclination initially comes upon the individual pretending to be his intimate friend, and ultimately after he has succeeded in causing him to fail and transgress, the evil inclination becomes his prosecutor.

Seeing G-d's Kindness on the Ultimate Level

"*Hashem* spoke to *Moshe* saying: *Pinchas*, son of *Elazar*, son of *Aaron* the Priest, turned back My wrath from the Children of Israel..."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: "The *Torah* traces the pedigree of *Pinchas* back to *Aaron* the High Priest in order to make peace between the Jewish people and *Aaron* because he had been involved with a great loss of life due to the plague that came upon the Jewish people as a result of the golden calf."

Aaron had participated to some degree in constructing the golden calf. As a result of the sin of the golden calf, thousands of Jews died in a plague and others were killed.

When *Moshe* descended from the mountain he declared, "Who is for G-d shall come with me." The entire tribe of *Levy* immediately responded to purge the Jewish people from those who had sinned with idolatry.

In addition, *Moshe* pulverized the golden calf into a powder that he mixed with water and made the Jewish people drink from it, similar to the water that is administered to the suspected adulteress to determine her guilt. If one did in fact commit idolatry, he died.

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The *Torah* traces the pedigree of *Pinchas* back to his grandfather *Aaron* to demonstrate that *Aaron's* grandson corrected the loss by saving the entire Jewish people. Had it not been for his act of zealotry, G-d would have caused the entire people to perish.

The Jewish people would now understand that had it not been for *Aaron*, there would have not been a *Pinchas*, thus correcting what had been brought about by *Aaron*, regarding the golden calf. Had the Jewish people not sinned with the golden calf, they would have lived eternally.

Gemara: After receiving the *Torah* at *Sinai*, the angel of death no longer had relevance to the Jewish people. They had reverted back to the status of *Adam* before the sin of the Tree of Knowledge. The perfection of all existence would have come about at *Sinai*.

However, because of *Aaron's* participation in the gold calf, the Jewish people were again subject to death, and the world would not reach perfection. *Aaron's* participation in the golden calf denied the ultimate sanctification of G-d's Name, which would have been the world recognizing Him as the Omnipotent Master over all existence.

Although *Aaron* was not actually involved to any degree in idolatry; nevertheless, he participated in something that caused unlimited loss and tragedy.

The prophet states, regarding the purpose of Creation, "For My Glory I created it (the world)." It is only the Jewish people who could bring about that glory to G-d, through their acceptance and fulfillment of the *Torah*.

If the Jewish people would have been annihilated due to the sin of *Baal Peor*, there would have no longer been any purpose to existence. The world would have come to an end.

Pinchas, the grandson of *Aaron* the High Priest, brought about the ultimate sanctification of G-d's Name, giving existence purpose because he prevented the destruction of the Jewish people. He corrected the spiritual regression that *Aaron* had initially brought about.

It was due to *Pinchas's* act of zealotry that existence continues to bring glory to G-d through the Jewish people. Based on the Attribute of Justice, the Jewish people should have been destroyed after the sin of the golden calf.

"G-d said to *Moshe*, 'Allow Me to destroy them...'"

Gemara: Since G-d said to *Moshe* "allow Me," *Moshe* understood from G-d's words that he was given the opportunity to intercede on behalf of the Jewish people, so that they should not be destroyed. If G-d wanted to spare them with His infinite Mercy, He could have done so without alluding to *Moshe* that it was within his power to intercede on their behalf through his supplications.

It was because of the principle of "G-d brings merit to the meritorious" that He wanted *Moshe* to have the ultimate merit of saving the entire Jewish people through his

supplications. G-d wanted to accredit the existence of the Jewish people and the value of existence to *Moshe*. All the sanctification of G-d's Name and His Glory that has come about in existence and will come is attributed to *Moshe* due to his interceding on behalf of Jewish people.

Moshe is not only considered to be the greatest Jew to ever live because he was the one chosen to be conduit of *Torah*, but also for causing the Jewish people to be spared due to his supplication. *Moshe* was the one who secured the existence of the Jewish people.

Similarly, G-d wanted *Aaron's* lineage to have the merit of maintaining existence by saving the Jewish people. Therefore, *Pinchas*, *Aaron's* grandson was given the opportunity to save the entire Jewish people through his act of zealotry.

Rashi (Balak): "Moshe had forgotten the law regarding the one who cohabits with a non-Jewish woman should be killed through an act of zealotry. Why was this law forgotten by *Moshe*? It was to bring merit to *Pinchas*."

Why did G-d want to bring merit to *Pinchas*? *Moshe* already had the merit of saving the Jewish people through his supplications after the sin of the golden calf. G-d wanted *Aaron* to have the same merit and opportunity, so He allowed his grandson *Pinchas* to remember the law regarding the zealot being permitted to kill the perpetrator thereby killing *Zimri*. This resulted in the continued existence of the Jewish people.

Zimri's Transgression, the Most Heinous

Zimri, the Prince of the Tribe of *Shimon*, publicly desecrated G-d's name by cohabiting with *Cozbi*, a Midianite Princess.

Midrash: The *Torah* is taken aback by the behavior of *Zimri*, the son of *Salu*. King Solomon writes, "One who breaches a fence deserves to be bitten by a snake."

The forefather of *Zimri*, *Shimon*, was the first one to avenge promiscuous behavior. After *Dinah* had been defiled by *Shechem* the Prince of *Canaan*, *Shimon* and *Levy* killed all the males of the community (including *Shechem* and his father *Chamor*) to avenge the rape of their sister.

Rashi: The nations of the world took upon themselves to behave within a certain moral standard regarding sexual relations. However, *Shechem* chose to breach

those standards. Therefore, *Shimon* and *Levy* chose to destroy the community of *Shechem*. (The community was considered to be culpable because they remained silent and did not prosecute their prince.)

Midrash: When *Shimon* and *Levy* went to destroy the community of *Shechem*, they did so with confidence. They relied on the merit of their forefather *Avraham* to protect them from certain death. They were willing to put their lives in jeopardy to secure the breach in sexual morality that *Shechem* had breached.

When *Zimri* cohabited with the Midianite Princess, he breached the fence of sexual morality that his forefather *Shimon* was willing to give his life to establish. Therefore, the level of disgrace that *Zimri* brought upon his family was unconscionable. *Zimri* destroyed an area of conduct that was never violated by the Jewish people.

Chazal: Although the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt where they were the equivalent of the chattel of their masters, no Jewish woman was violated by an Egyptian male (except for the one incident when *Shlomis bas Divri* was defiled by an Egyptian.) Because the Jewish people maintained their moral code on an absolute standard, the purity of the Jewish people was maintained.

Midrash: After the giving of the *Torah* at *Sinai*, the nations of the world came to G-d with a claim, "Why did You give the *Torah* to the Jewish people and not offer it to us?" G-d responded, "Can you establish your pedigree as My children have established theirs through their documents of pedigree?"

The nations of the world could not respond. They understood that due to their promiscuous behavior, which included incestuous relationships and adultery, they and their progeny were illegitimate. They did not possess the purity that was needed to become G-d's people.

When the nations of the world became aware of the purity of the Jewish people, they were astounded and began singing their praises. "*Kamu vaneha vayashruha* - her children had risen and praised her." (Proverbs)

When *Zimri* cohabited with *Cozbi*, he breached a fence that his forefather had established that maintained the purity of the Jewish people, which was a prerequisite for them to become the nation of G-d. Therefore, his action is considered to be the most unconscionable.

The Portion of the curses (in the Portion of *Bechukosai*) is read in an undertone. However the verse, "I will remember

My covenant with *Yaakov* and also My covenant with *Yitzhak*..." is read at a regular audible level.

One could say that since it is something that is positive, it is read aloud as any other reading. The *Maggid of Dubno* explains this differently with an allegory.

The son of a tailor and the son of the Rabbi of the community were partners in crime. After they were caught, they both went before the judge. The son of the tailor was the first to receive his sentence, which was 100 hours of community service.

The Rabbi's son, seeing the leniency of the sentence, believed that the judge was truly merciful. However, the judge sentenced him to 25 years of hard labor. The son of the Rabbi attempted to appeal the harsh ruling. Despite all of his pleas the judge would not change his verdict.

The judge explained to him, "The son of the tailor was raised in a home where he did not have role models to understand what was inappropriate and unacceptable. Therefore, he was drawn into this criminal behavior. My ruling for him was therefore lenient.

However, you were raised by your father who is a rabbi. He taught you what is appropriate and what is unacceptable. Therefore, your crime is severe and the verdict appropriate."

Similarly, the nations of the world violate everything that G-d had forbidden them to do including the three cardinal sins. G-d does not punish them harshly.

In contrast, when the Jewish people violate to a lesser degree, they are severely punished. Why is this so? It is because they are the descendants of the most holy people who ever lived, the holy Patriarchs who established the standard of behavior. Thus, the liability of the Jew is to a greater degree.

When *Zimri* cohabited with *Cozbi*, he not only violated the sexual moral laws of behavior that were accepted by society and were central to the purity of the Jewish people, he violated the fence that his forefather *Shimon* sacrificed for and established. His sin is therefore seen as the most severe.

The Far Reaching Consequences of Moshe's Statement

The daughters of *Tzelofchad* approached *Moshe* with a claim to their father's inheritance, as he had died with

no male heirs. They posed the question of inheritance to him since at this time it was thought that a daughter was not a qualified heir. *Moshe* was not able to respond.

“*Moshe* brought their claim before G-d.”

Rashi: The law pertaining to the order of inheritance was withheld from *Moshe*. After the hierarchy of the judicial system (higher and lower courts) was established because of *Yisro*’s suggestion, *Moshe* had said, “The most difficult issues you will bring to me.”

Despite the fact that *Moshe* was the most humble person who ever lived, since he expressed himself in this manner, *Chazal* explain, “he had taken the crown (of glory), therefore G-d withheld the law of inheritance from him.”

Since *Moshe*’s statement could be construed to mean that he had a unique ability, which was attributed to himself, G-d punished him by withholding from him the law of inheritance (when a daughter is a legitimate heir).

The incident regarding the daughters of *Tzelofchad* was not the only situation in which the law was concealed from *Moshe*.

Midrash: At the time of the incident of *Zimri*, *Pinchas* approached *Moshe* and asked, “What action should be taken regarding this situation?” *Moshe* did not know how to respond; he had forgotten the law.

Pinchas continued to question his teacher *Moshe* by saying, “Did you not teach us that in the case where a Jew openly cohabits with a gentile woman, if one were a zealot, he has the right to kill the perpetrator?” *Moshe* said to *Pinchas*, “Since you recalled the law and I did not, you should carry out the *mitzvah*.”

Chazal do not attribute *Moshe*’s forgetting of this particular law as punishment for “taking the crown of glory” - “The most difficult issues you will bring to me...”

If one is contaminated from the dead, he is disqualified from bringing the Pascal offering. When the Pascal offering was brought in the desert, two individuals had been contaminated by the dead. They approached *Moshe* and asked, “Why should we be excluded from bringing the Pascal offering?” *Moshe* was unable to respond. He needed to present the question before G-d.

There is no mention of this as an example of *Moshe* being punished by G-d for expressing himself inappropriately - “The most difficult issues you will bring to me.” Why?

It is because the law of *Pesach Sheini* was not communicated to *Moshe* prior to this moment. There are two examples in which the law was hidden from *Moshe*: regarding the laws of inheritance and the issue of how to respond to *chillul Hashem*. Yet *Chazal* tell us that the punishment for “taking the crown of glory for himself” only manifested itself regarding the law of inheritance.

Why was *Moshe*’s forgetting the law regarding the act of zealotry not considered another manifestation of punishment?

Moshe was the most humble person who ever lived. When he said regarding the judicial system, “The most difficult issues you will bring to me (and I will personally adjudicate them),” he did not do so because of a lack of humility. Yet *Moshe* was faulted as it is stated, “he took the crown of glory for himself.” Why was he culpable?

Despite that fact that G-d had said to *Moshe* at *Sinai*, “The Jewish people will believe in you forever,” *Korach* attempted to usurp his authority and undermine his credibility as G-d’s spokesman.

Until *Sinai*, all of the miracles that had transpired through *Moshe* could have been attributed to sorcery or something other than *Moshe* acting as G-d’s Agent. It was not until *Sinai* when the entire Jewish people witnessed G-d speaking to *Moshe* as His agent that it was confirmed that he was in fact G-d’s spokesman.

If this was so, then how could *Korach* and his community who witnessed *Sinai* have questioned the authenticity of *Torah*?

Korach and his community had questioned the source of *Torah*. It was understood that G-d had a special relationship with *Moshe*. Thus, the question was- Is the *Torah* that is being presented by *Moshe* his word and being endorsed by G-d? Or was the *Torah* that was transmitted by *Moshe* truly the Word of G-d (independent of *Moshe*)?

Korach, because of his self-interest and lack of humility, believed that the only reason he was rejected as the High Priest was because *Moshe* had chosen his brother Aaron to assume that role. *Moshe* suggested his brother to be the High Priest and it was fully endorsed by G-d. *Korach* believed that the essence of the *Torah* was only G-d’s endorsement of *Moshe*’s own agenda.

When *Moshe* decided to strike the rock rather than speak to it as G-d had commanded him, he was

punished by not being allowed to enter into the Land. Because he chose not to publicly sanctify the Name of G-d by speaking to the rock, he was destined to pass away before the Jewish people would enter the Land.

Although G-d had commanded *Moshe* to speak to the rock, he chose to strike it because he believed that the Jews were only worthy of witnessing a miracle that did come about through human intervention (which is a lesser miracle). G-d punished *Moshe* in this manner and was not willing to accept *Moshe's* supplications to annul the decree so that *Korach's* claim should be refuted beyond any doubt forever. The integrity of *Torah* should never be questioned.

For someone of *Moshe's* dimension of spirituality and intimate relationship with G-d to say, "The most difficult issues you will bring to me" could have been misconstrued to mean something similar to *Korach's* understanding – that *Moshe* would be the one to decide what *Torah* should be. G-d needed to demonstrate to the Jewish people that *Moshe* was not acting independent of Him, rather he was only the conduit between G-d and the Jewish people.

In order to correctly understand the statement of *Moshe* "The most difficult issues you will bring to me," G-d needed to deny him clarity regarding the laws of inheritance, which pertained to receiving a portion in the Land.

It is interesting to note that the same individual who was denied entry into the Land for acting in a manner that could distort the reality of *Torah* is identified with the law that pertains to a woman being a legitimate heir to inherit- thus being deserving of a portion in the Land.

It will be known forever that the statement of *Moshe* "The most difficult issues you will bring to me" does not mean that he will decide what *Torah* should be, but rather *Moshe* is only transmitting the word of G-d.

