

UNEQUIVOCAL FAITH SUSPENDS THE PROJECTILE

YadAvNow.com Weekly Video Series: Pinchas Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky

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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.

Unequivocal Faith Suspends the Projectile

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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 "Pinchas has withdrawn my wrath from the Jewish people due to avenging my vengeance in their midst."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 Torah Commentary Series: Pinchas



Pinchas, The Zealot

Torah: “*Pinchas*, son of *Elazar*, son of *Aaron* the *Kohen*, turned back My (G-d) wrath from upon the Children of Israel, when he zealously avenged Me among them, so I did not consume the Children of Israel with My vengeance.”

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “Why does the *Torah* need to trace *Pinchas*’ lineage back to *Aaron* the High Priest, his grandfather? It is because after *Pinchas* had killed *Zimri*, he was ridiculed by the tribes of Israel for killing a Prince. They had said, ‘How can a person who descends from a grandfather (his maternal grandfather was *Yisro*) who had fattened calves for idolatry, have the audacity to kill a Prince of Israel?’ Therefore, the *Torah* needed to trace his lineage to *Aaron* the High Priest in order to reveal that his pedigree was greater than that of *Zimri*.”

Torah: Had it not been for *Pinchas*’ act of zealotry, G-d would have destroyed the entire Jewish people. After *Pinchas* killed *Zimiri*, the plague that had taken 24,000 people came to an end. If in fact *Pinchas*’ act of zealotry saved the Jewish people from annihilation, what is the basis for the ridicule that he descends from one who fattened calves for idolatry? To the contrary, rather than ridicule, *Pinchas* deserved to be praised and extolled for saving the Jewish people through his act of zealotry.

The Jewish people did appreciate *Pinchas* for what he had done on their behalf and they were indebted to him; however, their criticism of *Pinchas* was directed at him as a person. They had claimed that it was only possible for one to act as a zealot and kill a prince of Israel, who was in another echelon of society, if he is a person who had no sense of appreciation or reverence of anyone of special status. If *Pinchas*

had appreciated and understood what it means to be a prince of Israel, he could have not been able to kill Zimri regardless of his disgraceful behavior. *Pinchas* was thus perceived as one who had no scruples and a person of uncouth character. Therefore, the *Torah* needed to trace his pedigree to *Aaron*, the High Priest in order to establish him as someone of greater pedigree for the Jewish people to understand why he was able to act as a zealot.

The Jewish people had witnessed the public desecration of G-d's Name, when *Zimri* had cohabited with the Midianite princess. Despite the degree of desecration of G-d's Name, they did not respond or react to this abominable behavior as *Pinchas* had. After *Pinchas* killed *Zimri*, the Jewish people needed to justify to their inaction to understand why they had remained passive while *Pinchas* acted as the zealot. In order to put themselves in a positive light and vindicate themselves, they saw *Pinchas* as a person who had descended from a pagan who had fattened calves for idolatry. He was someone who lacked caliber and thus did not have the capacity to appreciate one who is of status. The *Torah* identifying *Pinchas* as one with a greater pedigree than that of *Zimri* was in response to the perception of the Jewish people.

However, in truth, the impetus for *Pinchas'* act of zealotry was unrelated to his own special pedigree, seeing *Zimri* as a peer, but rather, it was because of his degree of reverence and love for G-d. He was not able to tolerate the public desecration that was taking place.

King Solomon in Proverbs: "There is no wisdom, there is no understanding, nor counsel in the face of G-d."

Gemara in Tractate *Shevuos* explaining this verse: If there is a desecration of G-d's Name, one's status, regardless of who he may be, has no relevance at that moment. All that matters is G-d's Glory. *Pinchas*, being the one who was imbued with reverence for G-d, responded to expunge the evil that was taking place at that moment. *Zimri*, and the Midianite princess with whom he had cohabited were totally negated subsumed in the presence of G-d's Glory. It is similar to what *Chazal* tell us regarding *Avraham*, our Patriarch when he had hitched his own donkey to go to the *Akeidah* - "Love disrupts all protocol." When one is consumed with love for G-d all that exists at the moment is His Will and nothing else.

Pinchas' Zealotry, a Reflection of His Father and Grandfather

Torah: "*Pinchas*, son of *Elazar*, son of *Aaron* the Kohen..."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The reason the *Torah* traces the pedigree of *Pinchas* to his grandfather *Aaron* the Kohen (which is something that the *Torah* usually does not do), "It is so that his forefathers should be remembered for the good." In addition, he explains that when the Jewish people wanted to make the golden calf, *Aaron's* participation was purely for the sake of delaying them. He attempted to follow a process that would ultimately reveal that *Moshe*, his brother was still alive and would return. His attempt failed and the Jewish people participated in the golden calf. Consequently, there was a plague and many Jews died. After the Jewish people were reinstated, *Aaron* was viewed by many in a negative light because of what he had caused. Therefore, the *Torah* traces the pedigree of *Pinchas* to *Aaron*, his grandfather, for the Jewish people to understand that had it not been for *Pinchas* there would be no Jewish people. They would have been consumed by G-d's Wrath.

Reb Meir Simcha of Dvinsk: The *Torah* traces *Pinchas'* pedigree beyond *Elazar* his father in order to reveal that the characteristics that *Pinchas* possessed were inherited from his father and grandfather.

Torah: When *Aaron* passed away, the clouds of glory, that protected the Jewish people were dispersed and the Jewish people were attacked by their enemy.

Rashi citing the Jerusalem *Talmud*: When the clouds of glory dispersed, the Jewish people revolted and wanted to return to Egypt. *Elazar*, the father of *Pinchas*, summoned the Levite families to battle those who were attempting to return. In the course of this confrontation, several of the Levite families were killed. Although the Levites were the smallest tribe in the Jewish people, *Elazar* was willing to put himself and his tribe in danger for the sake of G-d. *Pinchas* inherited this trait from his father. He was willing to put his life in jeopardy for the sake of G-d's Glory as was demonstrated when he zealously killed *Zimri*, the prince of the tribe of *Shimon*.

Torah: *Pinchas* had pierced *Zimri* together with *Cozbi*, the Midianite princess with whom he had cohabited.

Gemara in Tractate *Sanhedrin* and the *Midrash*: He had lifted both of them upon the spear in front of the entire Jewish people to show them the disgrace of what they had done. At that moment *Pinchas* realized that the plague that was raging would consume the entire Jewish people. He thus cast down their remains to the ground and confronted G-d in a direct manner saying, "How could You destroy the Jewish people because of the behavior of these two people?"

Midrash based on the words of Psalms: *Pinchas* had taken G-d to judgment. If one does not have a valid claim and brings G-d to judgment he puts his own life and spirituality into jeopardy.

Gemara: The reason *Aaron* participated in the golden calf was because he wanted to spare the Jewish people. He had seen that the Jewish people had killed his nephew *Chur* for attempting to interfere with the golden calf. *Aaron* understood that if he were to oppose them, he too would be killed. If that were to happen, the Jewish people would be culpable for killing a prophet and *Kohen*, which the *Talmud* tells us, cannot be atoned for.

Since *Aaron* was both a prophet and a *Kohen*, he said, "It is better that I be found guilty, then to put the Jewish people into a state in which they would never be atoned." *Aaron* was willing to sacrifice his share in the world to come for the sake of the Jewish people. *Pinchas* demonstrated that he possessed this characteristic when he took G-d to judgment. He risked his share in the world to come for the sake of the survival of the Jewish people. Thus, the characteristics that *Pinchas* possessed are attributed to *Elazar* and *Aaron*. With this, we can understand the interpretation of the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* on an even more profound level.

The claim of the Jewish people against *Aaron* was that he was responsible for the plague that had killed thousands of Jews after the golden calf. The impetus for *Aaron's* participation in the golden calf was his willingness to put his share in the world to come for the sake of the Jewish people. When *Pinchas* had brought G-d to judgment for the sake of the Jewish people he too was willing to put into jeopardy his share in the world to come for the sake of the Jewish people. It was only because of the utilization of that characteristic that the plague ceased and the Jewish people were not destroyed by G-d's Wrath. Thus, the characteristic that was the motivating factor for

Aaron's participation in the golden calf was the same characteristic that allowed *Pinchas* to take G-d to judgment on behalf of the Jewish people.

Yosef's Attachment to the Land

Torah: "The daughters of *Tzelofchad*, son of *Chefer*, son of *Gilead*, son of *Machir*, son of *Menashe*, of the families of *Menashe* son of *Yosef* drew near...saying... Give us possession among our father's brothers." Since *Tzelofchad's* daughters were his only heirs they came to claim his portion in the Land. The daughters of *Tzelofchad* merited that the laws of inheritance should be communicated to *Moshe* as a result of their request for a portion in the Land.

Midrash: "Why does the *Torah* trace the pedigree of the daughters of *Tzelofchad* back to *Yosef*, the Patriarch of the Tribes of *Ephraim* and *Menashe*? Since the verse identifies them as the descendants of *Menashe*, why is it necessary to mention that *Menashe* was the son of *Yosef*? The *Torah* needed to trace the genealogy of the daughters of *Tzelofchad* back to *Yosef* because he had a special love for the Land (of Israel) '*chibas haaretz*'. Where do we find that he had a special love for the Land? The verse states, '(Yosef said to his brothers) When G-d will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land (Egypt)...then you must bring my bones up out of here with you (to the Land of Israel).' Just as *Yosef* had a special love for the Land, so too did the daughters of *Tzelofchad* love the Land as it states, 'Give us a portion...' The daughters of *Tzelofchad* desired a portion in the Land, not for its material value, but only because of their special love for the Land Israel.

Before *Yaakov*, our Patriarch passed away, he requested that his son *Yosef*, who was the Viceroy of Egypt not bury him in Egypt.

Torah: "...Please place your hand under my thigh... please do not bury me in Egypt." When *Yosef* was about to pass away, he too requested of his brothers that he did not want to be buried in Egypt. Since he was not in a position of power because he was about to pass away, he himself would not be able facilitate his own burial outside of Egypt. He needed to rely in his brothers to carry out his request. He thus asked them, "When G-d will bring you up out of Egypt, you must bring my bones up out of here with you." Every

one of the Tribes had their remains removed from Egypt by their descendants at the time of the Exodus. Since every one of Yosef's brothers wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt, why was Yosef's request an indication that his love for the Land was greater than theirs? In addition, one could say that Yosef wanted his remains to be removed from Egypt so that he should not be deified, which was one of the reasons cited by Chazal that Yaakov did not want to be buried in Egypt.

It is because of the incident of the daughters of Tzelofchad that the Torah reveals that the reason Yosef wanted to be buried in Israel was because of his special love for the Land. The reason the Torah traces their lineage back to Yosef is to reveal that the daughters of Tzelofchad inherited the special love of the Land from Yosef.

Torah regarding the request that Yosef made to his brothers to take his remains with them: "...You must bring my bones up out of here (*mee zeh*) with you."

Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh: The numerical value of the word "*zeh*" is twelve, which corresponds to the twelve tribes of Israel. When the brothers of Yosef distanced themselves from him they caused a disruption of the completeness of the twelve tribes. In order for the Jewish people to function properly there needs to be a unification and cohesiveness in all of its twelve aspects. Thus, in order for the brothers of Yosef to correct this disruption of function that they had caused in the twelve tribes, they needed to bring his remains with them "*zeh*".

This was the manner in which the twelve would be reestablished. Therefore, one could say that the reason Yosef wanted his remains to be taken out of Egypt was to reestablish the completeness of the twelve tribes so that the Jewish people should function within the context of "twelve." Maybe his request was unrelated to his love of the Land. Why was it necessary that Yosef request from his brothers that they should guarantee that his remains should be removed when he could have asked his two sons *Ephraim* and *Menashe* to remove his remains at the time of the exodus?

It is necessary for the brothers of Yosef to bring his remains out of Egypt because they were the ones who disrupted the twelve. They thus needed to be the ones to reunite the "twelve" and correct their initial error. Regarding Yosef's special love of the Land, it is

only indicated through the incident of the daughters of Tzelofchad because the Torah traces their lineage back to Yosef.

The Wife an Integral Component of Spirituality

Torah: "The daughters of Tzelofchad...drew near...and they stood before Moshe...saying...Give us possession (of the Land) among our father's brothers."

Midrash: "In that generation of the desert, the women secured/protected what was breached by the men. At the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, Aaron had asked that the Jewish people give their gold rings (for the sake of building the Golden Calf); however, the women refused and protested against their husbands' participation. The women did not have a share in the sin of the Golden Calf. And regarding the sin of the spies, the women did not participate. When the spies returned with their slanderous reports about the Land, they said, 'We cannot ascend...for it is too strong for us.' The men believed their false reports but the women did not. As a result, G-d decreed that the Jewish people should wander the desert for 40 years and over that period all men between the ages of 20 and 60 would die, never to enter the Land.

However, the women who lived during that generation, did enter into the Land. Therefore, the Torah tells us that the daughters of Tzelofchad drew near to Moshe and requested their portion in the Land. Why is the portion of the daughters of Tzelofchad juxtaposed to the portion of the passing of Miriam? It is because after the passing of Miriam the men began to complain that they were going to die in the desert due to a lack of water. This was the beginning of the breach; however, the women had faith and secured what was breached by the men."

It is interesting to note that Chazal tell us that a woman has *mitzvos* that are personal to her. For example, kindling the lights for Shabbos and Yom Tov and the *mitzvah* of tithing the dough (taking *challah*), although the male is obligated to kindle the lights and tithe the dough, nevertheless the woman has the priority to perform these *mitzvos* on behalf of the family.

Midrash: The reason the woman has priority regarding these two *mitzvos* is because "she (*Chava*/the wife

of Adam) had extinguished the light of the world.” Before Adam had eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge he had radiated holiness that was a semblance of G-d’s Radiance. The angels in heaven had mistaken his radiance with that of G-d’s and sang songs of praise to him. As a result of eating from the Tree, he was spiritually diminished and no longer radiated as he had before.

The diminishment of Adam’s spirituality is the equivalent of extinguishing the light of the world. Because Chava had compelled Adam to eat of the fruit of the Tree, she is culpable for his spiritual diminishment. Therefore every woman has a responsibility to rekindle the light of existence, through the Shabbos and Yom Tov lights. Before Adam had eaten of the fruit of the Tree he was an entity of holiness, being the handiwork of G-d. There was nothing holier in existence than Adam. He was the equivalent of the *challah*, which is inherently holy (it is the tithe that is only permitted for the *Kohen* to eat).

However, after eating of the Tree, which was a result of his wife’s request, he became contaminated through the impurity that he had ingested. Chava thus contaminated the *challah* of the world, the holiest entity that existed. She therefore must reinstate a holy object that is the equivalent of Adam’s holy status. Thus, she was given the responsibility to take *challah* from the dough as her personal *mitzvah*.

Gemara in Tractate *Avodah Zorah*: After the Jewish people had unequivocally accepted the *Torah* with the declaration of “*Naaseh V’nishma* – we will do and we will listen,” they were reinstated to a level of spirituality that had existed before the sin of Adam. Before Adam had partaken of the Tree of Knowledge, he was not subject to death. The Jewish people at *Sinai* became eternal beings.

The Jewish women understood that the impurity and spiritual diminishment that was introduced into existence as a result of Chava’s demand, was corrected. They had appreciated the dire consequences of her mistake and thus they would not do anything that would diminish or jeopardize the spiritual standing of the Jewish people. They thus did not contribute their jewelry for the Golden Calf. Whatever the men had breached, they insulated and protected because of their understanding of the irreversible consequences. Similarly, when the men did not want to enter into the Land due to the slanderous reports of the spies, the women maintained their faith.

G-d created man so that he should perfect his spirituality. He created for him the woman as his “helpmate” so that she should assist him in his spiritual mission throughout his life. This was the initial intent of the wife that G-d had provided for Adam. However, Chava failed in her role. It was only when the Jewish people assumed the status of Adam, at *Sinai*, did the women assume their role as the spiritual helpmate to assist their husbands to succeed in their purpose.

The Jewish People, Reflecting the Profile of their Forbearers (from Balak)

Torah: When *Bilaam* went to bless the Jewish people, “He (G-d) perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no sin in Israel...” How is it possible that G-d did not see the iniquities of the Jewish people, if in fact they had sinned multiple times. They had sinned with the Golden Calf and with the spies.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: “When they transgress His words, He does not scrutinize their actions and is not exacting in His gaze upon them. This is an indication of His special love for the Jewish people.”

Baal HaTurim: Explaining the meaning of the words “He (G-d) perceived no iniquity” by citing the *Jerusalem Talmud*, “The Hebrew letters “ches” and “tes” (which together spell “chet (sin)”) do not appear among the names of the twelve Tribes of Israel.” If in fact the Jewish people did sin, what relevance does the fact that the sons of Yaakov, who were their forbearers, do not have the letters “ches” and “tes” among their names?

The Portion of *Vayechi*, because of its paragraph structure is classified as a “sealed” Portion.

Rashi citing *Chazal*: The reason the Portion is sealed is to allude to the fact that Yaakov, our Patriarch wanted reveal to his sons, the end of time (*ketz*) when *Moshiach* would come. However, G-d concealed it from him so that he should not reveal it.

Rabbeinu Bachya citing another *Midrash*: Yaakov initially wanted to reveal the end of time to his sons. He initially hesitated to do so because he was concerned that they may be flawed because of sin and thus not worthy to receive this information. However, when he realized that the letters “ches” and “tes” were not present in their names, he understood that they were

in fact pure. Nevertheless, *Yaakov* chose to withhold this information from them because he realized that the letters “*kuf*” and “*tzadie*”, which spell “*ketz*”, also did not appear in the names of his children. This confirmed for him that the end of time should not be revealed.

The fact that the letters “*ches*” and “*tes*” do not appear in the names of the Tribes of Israel is an indication that the essence of the Jewish people is pure and has no relevance to sin (*chet*). Repentance for a Jew brings about two consequences. Firstly, he is forgiven and thus will not be subject to the Attribute of Justice. Secondly, it brings about a spiritual rehabilitation. Whatever level of spiritual diminishment that was caused by the sin will be rehabilitated as a result of the repentance. However, a non-Jew only has relevance to the first aspect of repentance – that he is forgiven not to be punished. As we see with the community of *Ninve*. *Yonah* the prophet was sent to forewarn them that they must repent. If they did not, they would be destroyed. As a result of *Yonah*’s rebuke, the community of *Ninve* repented and were thus not destroyed. They were forgiven.

Maharal of Prague: Sin is attributed to the physicality of the human being. Sin does not emanate from

one’s spiritual essence. The Jew, whose essence is spiritual, when he sins it is considered to be incidental emanating from his physicality. Because sin does not touch upon the essence of the Jew, he has relevance to spiritual rehabilitation. However, the non-Jew, whose essence is not spiritual, when he fails and sins it is not considered to be incidental because it emanates from his physical essence. Therefore, he has no relevance to spiritual rehabilitation. The sin for the non-Jew is thus considered to be terminal and something that is beyond recovery.

When *Bilaam* said, “He (G-d) perceived no iniquity in *Yaakov*, and saw no sin in Israel...” he was referring to the fact that the terminal consequence of sin (*chet*) has no relevance to the Tribes of *Yaakov* as is indicated by the fact that letters “*ches*” and “*tes*” do not appear in their names. Because the Jewish people descend from the holy Tribes, their make up and profile is spiritual. Therefore, their essence cannot be tarnished by sin. When G-d gazes upon the Jewish people, the Attribute of Mercy is upon them because their sin is only considered to be something of a superficial nature for it does not emanate from their core being, which is spiritual and pure.



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