

THIS WEEK'S EDITION IS DEDICATED BY ABE AND CHAYA GOTTESMAN OF TORONTO IN MEMORY OF ABE'S FATHER: PINCHAS BEN HARAV AHRON ARYEH HALEVI, ZT" L

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# Torah sweets

## **PINCHAS INSIGHTS – DON'T GO LOOKING FOR TROUBLE**

*Johnny raises his hand in class and asks, "Teacher, do you think someone should get in trouble for something they didn't do?"*

*The teacher responds, "Of course, not!"*

*Johnny says, "Oh good, because I didn't do my homework."*

Some people are easy-going – either by nature or by working on themselves - which makes them a pleasure to be around. Others, however, act as "troublemakers," which is often a coping mechanism to mask deep-seated insecurities, unresolved trauma, or a lack of control in their own lives. In the most mature iteration, they claim that they are simply challenging the status quo and complacency. However, by stirring up trouble and creating chaos, they often seek attention, a false sense of empowerment, or a distraction from their own struggles. Knowing this background, though, doesn't really make most of their targets sympathetic or amenable to being around them.

This week's Parsha, Pinchas, tells us about one of the greatest figures in the Torah. Pinchas was the great-grandson of Aharon Hakohen and a *kanoi* (zealot for the honor of Hashem). **Rav Chaim Soloveitchik**, ZT" L, teaches that there are two ways to be a zealot: the cat-approach and the homeowner approach. Let's understand with an analogy: If there's one pest that is almost universally unwelcome and unwanted in people's homes, it's the mouse. If you think about it, a mouse really has two primary enemies. One is a homeowner (specifically a housewife), and the other is a cat. These two mouse enemies have two different mindsets. A cat wishes it had access to a mouse and craves confrontation. It's looking forward to meeting a mouse, so he can make it into his next meal. On the other hand, a housewife wishes it had no contact with the mouse. It's not looking to target it outside the home and has no problem with the mouse on the street.

In a similar vein, there are some people who are always looking for problems, looking to stir controversy in the community, in their family, and in their surroundings. Such people are like the cat, looking forward to the problems. Then, there are people who, like the homeowner, don't want any confrontations in the first place. **Rabbi Ilan Meirov** teaches that this idea applies to many aspects of life, especially Shalom Bayis. How many husbands come home from work, and when they open the door, they're looking around the house for trouble? They're inspecting the cleanliness of the house and the readiness of dinner, and sure enough, find imperfections that they can now take issue with. Then, there are husbands who walk into the house with a big smile; they greet their wife and kids, and when they see an issue, they won't point it out right away. They might wait for the right time, but they're not looking forward to finding a problem. It goes both ways, as wives also need to look for the good in their husbands and not try to find complaints or be critical about minor imperfections. A wise wife finds the right time and the proper words to influence her husband, as it states (Mishlei 14:1): *"the wisdom of women builds the home."*

In all relationships, when we accentuate the positive and compliment instead of confronting or looking for issues, the trust and connection is reinforced between the parties, and when there is something major that needs to be dealt with, one will be dealing with a far more respectful audience. Any successful leadership or teaching role hinges mostly on building others and not pouncing on every mistake another person makes. Let's learn from Pinchas to 1) act when no one is standing up for an injustice and 2) not be on the lookout for problems or nitpicking to generate some excitement and purpose. Most of us have plenty to work on within ourselves. **DEAR READERS: FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, WE ARE PRINTING A SPECIAL SHABBOS NACHAMU EDITION AND WE NEED YOUR HELP. PLEASE REACH OUT TO THE EDITOR, MENDEL BERLIN, AT 718-675-9370 TO CO-SPONSOR THE EDITION.**



## **HAFTARAH HONEYCOMBS BY RABBI MOSHE KLEIN**

### **PINCHAS: THE SOFT VOICE OF REBUKE**

To understand the Haftarah, we first must get the backstory. For a period, there was a plethora of false prophets, while the righteous prophets were killed out by the evil queen Izevel. Eliyahu Hanavi decided that he had to stop the false prophets and warned her husband (Melachim I, 18:19). He instructed to summon all Jews to Mt. Carmel, along with 450 prophets of the idol Ba'al and 400 prophets of Asherah: *"He tells the people, 'How long will you continue to stand on both sides? If Hashem is the true G-d, follow Him, but if the Ba'al is, then follow him.' They took a cow and called Ba'al, and there was no response. Then, Eliyahu said, 'Aneinu - answer me, Hashem, answer me.' Then fire from Hashem descended and consumed the burnt offering... Eliyahu said, 'Seize the prophets of Ba'al, and he took them down to the Wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there.'"* (ibid. 18:37-40)

Ahav told Izevel all that Eliyahu did, and she sent a message that she was going to kill him. Eliyahu fled to the desert and sat underneath a tree, asking Hashem to kill him. An angel woke him up and told him to go eat, and he saw (and ate) some food and went back to sleep. Then, he went up for 40 days to Har Sinai. Hashem asked him what he was doing there, and he replied that the king and queen had forsaken Hashem's treaty, ruined the Mizbeach, killed the prophets, and were trying to kill him. Hashem told him to stand by the mountain, and a strong wind came, followed by a large noise (earthquake) and fire. Then, Hashem said that these were not the expressions of Hashem's Presence. Then came a quiet voice that praised (the Creator). What message was Hashem sending to Eliyahu Hanavi with this? (SEE PAGE 2 FOR CONCLUSION) →

The **Malbim** writes that this is all very Kabbalistic, but according to nigleh (the revealed Torah), Hashem was sending a message to Eliyahu that only with a small cry that He is accessed. This was also a message to all the prophets that the way to rebuke the Jewish people is not how Eliyahu did it – by wiping out fake prophets. They can be inspired through a soft voice/word and with ropes of love. We must ask: Eliyahu had to kill these prophets, so did he do anything wrong? He was zealous for Hashem!

The **Ralbag** explains that Hashem already made a drought for three years, and the people still didn't listen. There are times when people are stuck in their ways, and intense ways of dealing with them won't help them change. Hashem told Eliyahu that being very strong will not be what will inspire the masses, even if one had to take desperate actions to deal with the situation he was in. Whenever Moshe rebuked the Jews in the Midbar (desert), and they would get punished, they would understand what they had done wrong immediately. However, in the case of Eliyahu, the people had no clue why they were getting punished – this is how lost they were. To make a lasting impact, the people needed to be spoken to in a soft voice.

You cannot drown out a quiet voice because it stays present and consistent. Eliyahu's task was to help people improve through showing them love. At the end of Malachi (3:23-24), Hashem says that in the days of Moshiach, "I will send you Eliyahu the prophet before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem, that he may turn the heart of the fathers back through the children, and the heart of the children back through their fathers." Ultimately, Eliyahu's impact will change the Jewish people, not with an act of zealousness but with acts of peace.

The Mishnah (Eduyos 8:7) states Eliyahu will come to make peace in the world, for it is said, "*Behold I send to you Eliyahu the prophet*". This should give us pause that sometimes we have to give Mussar – if we do it in a harsh way, we can make a short-term impact, but long-lasting change can only be achieved with words of love and peace.

**SUGAR RUSH ON 613 MITZVOS BY RABBI ELI REIT**

**MITZVAH # 219 – MEFATEH**

If a man seduces a girl who was a virgin, then he must pay a fine to her father, or he must marry her, as the Pasuk (Shemos 23:15) says, "*if a man seduces a virgin...*". He can only marry her if she and her father want it. These laws are only applicable if the girl was between three years old and twelve and a half years old. If the girl doesn't have a father, then there is no fine. This Mitzvah is not applicable nowadays. The fine is fifty silver coins and money for her embarrassment and damage.

**THE LEARNING IN THIS MAGAZINE IS DEDICATED AS A COMPLETE AND SPEEDY REFUAH FOR LEEBA MIRIAM GEULAH BAS LEAH AND ALL WHO NEED IT.**



1) The twenty-one-day period between the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz (the day the walls of Yerushalayim were breached) and the 9th of Av (the day the Bais Hamikdash was set afire) is known as "Bein Hametzorim, between the straits", a reference to their being between two significant calamities. (Even though it is technically 22 days, see Gemara Yerushalmi Ta'anis [Perek 4 Halacha 5] where it says 21 days; possibly not counting Tisha B'Av itself. The reason for that is beyond the scope of this forum. This time is more commonly referred to simply as "the Three Weeks".

2) This solemn period in the Jewish calendar is a time for reflection on our relationship with one another, especially as it relates to "Sinat Chinam, baseless hatred", the sin that brought about the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash, the sin which the Gemara states is equal in severity to transgressing the three cardinal sins of idol worship, murder, and immorality/depravity. (Yoma 9b)

The **Netziv**, HaRav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (in Shu"t Mayshiv Davar Vol. 1 Siman 44) famously expounds upon this "baseless hatred" and explains that it was not just a hatred towards people for petty iniquities; rather, it included a hatred for any Jew who practiced their "Avodas Hashem" in a different manner than them.

If one saw another Jew relying on a Halachic leniency which was accepted in that person's community, but wasn't relied upon in their own circles, instead of accepting that "*Eilu V'Eilu Divrei Elokim Chaim*" (See Eruvin 13b), that person was deemed a heretic and was baselessly hated to the point that people were attacked or even killed for being different!

All Jews who long for the arrival of Mashiach and the rebuilding of the Bais Hamikdash - and the Jewish nation - to its former glory, should try to rectify themselves during this period, especially in this crucial area of Sinat Chinam. Let's overdose on "Ahavas Yisroel" and review the pertinent laws.

A) Swimming in a pool or lake is permitted during the 'three weeks' until Rosh Chodesh Av, at which time it is customary to refrain from swimming until after Tisha B'Av.

B) When swimming in the 'three weeks', extra care should be taken to avoid dangerous activity, as this period is predisposed to Sakana, danger. (See Halichos Shlomo; Bein Hametzorim Perek 14, Dvar Halacha 7)

C) Weddings are not celebrated for the duration of the 'three weeks' (See Rema, Siman 551:2). It is, however, permitted for a boy and a girl to become engaged for marriage during the entire 'three weeks', and they may even prepare a "Tenaim" or engagement Seudah, without music and dancing, until Rosh Chodesh Av. (Mishna Berura, Siman 551 S"K 19)

D) From Rosh Chodesh Av until after Tisha B'Av no engagement Seudah may be held, but a simple "Tenaim writing ceremony" with light refreshments may take place. (Mishna Berura Siman 551 S"K 16. Care should be taken not to clap or sing too lively lest it lead to dancing, which is forbidden. See **Halichos Shlomo**)

**PINCHAS – A TOWER OF STRENGTH**

*This weekly column draws from Rabbeinu Bachye's introduction to each Parsha, linking it to a verse in Mishlei, and offering practical insights and takeaways.*

*"Migdal Oz Shem Hashem, BoYarutz Tzadik V'Nisgav - The name of the Hashem is a tower of strength, the righteous runs towards it (literally: within it) and is elevated" (Mishlei 18:10)*

Feet Don't Fail Me!

Once again, we revisit the topic of Bitachon, focusing on a different facet. When you are running, you are depending on your own strength and stamina to prevent you from falling. A false step caused by even a slight failure of a muscle can result in tripping and ending up on the ground. At first glance, Shlomo HaMelech's metaphor of running within a tower seems incongruous. **Rabbeinu Bachye** explains that Yarutz Bo is going back on Hashem's Name, not the tower. When a Tzaddik runs with Shem Hashem, he can be confident he won't stumble, just as one in a fortified tower is confident that he will not be vulnerable to attack.

Running and Walking

There is a well-known Pasuk in Yeshayahu (40:31): *"Yarutz V'Lo Yigau, Yeilchu V'Lo Yiga'u"*. Rabbeinu Bachye explains that the first phrase refers to Mitzvos that require a tremendous amount of effort and stamina to complete, such as rescue missions and lifesaving efforts. Those involved must push and push while Hashem gives them the adrenaline rush to renew their strength in the moment.

The next part of the Pasuk describes a Mitzvah that calls upon a different type of strength. These are activities that need determination and commitment to consistency. It's where we need to just keep walking - just show up every day. What keeps us in check is a sense of Yir'ah. We see this in the Targum of what was said to Yaakov - *"Hishalech Lefanai - Haloch B'Dachalti"*. When we show up consistently and make our effort in Yir'as Shamayim, we do not wear down.

Connecting to the Parsha

Pinchas displayed both Middos when he showed up heroically at the end of Parshas Balak. He put his life in his hands as he took on the ire of an entire Shevet who were reeling from the execution of their leader, along with a foreign princess. The Gemara tells us of many miraculous details that occurred when he took fierce action with great determination and commitment to uphold the Torah.

Takeaway: *Bitachon* (Trust in Hashem) gives us the strength to run when necessary and the endurance to keep walking when the journey is long.

Self-reflective questions: In which areas of life do we need courage to "run," and in which do we need discipline to simply keep "walking"?

**SHORT STORY BY YONI SCHWARTZ**

Years ago, a woman went around hospitals in Israel bringing joy to those who were struggling. She would organize delicious meals for the patients. Sometimes she would bring in other people, and other times she'd enter on her own, ready to do whatever the task called for, whether that was smiling and telling jokes or sitting there for hours listening to people pour their hearts out. She did, however, have one personal challenge that she wrestled with day in and day out. She and her husband were childless. She visited **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, ZT"l**, to discuss the matter. Expecting to hear sage words of wisdom and to be comforted, the Rav's response surprised her.

"Hashem does not owe you anything," he said. She was stunned. As she was processing his response, he continued, "However, if you do something extra for Hashem that you are not obligated to do, He will do something for you that He is not obligated to do." She left with a newfound strength and commitment to work even harder on her chesed missions in the hospital. She began putting in more hours, more emotional energy, and sacrificing much of the comfort and leisure she previously enjoyed, helping those who were in pain. One year later, she had twins.

*Comment: In this week's parsha, Pinchas, we learn about the reward Pinchas received for putting himself in a risky situation to fight for Hashem. Hashem rewarded this incredible sacrifice by giving him and his descendants eternal kehunah. Nowadays, it's far too easy to feel entitled; however, such thinking is frustration in the making. The next time we daven for something, let's take a moment to contemplate how we can give back to Hashem instead of simply asking Hashem to give to us.*

**MILK'N'HONEY FROM JERUSALEM BY RABBI JONATHAN TAUB**  
**PINCHAS – A HIGH PLACE IN GEHINNOM**

Concerning the rebellion of Korach, we read in this week's parsha, "But the sons of Korach did not die." Rashi comments: They were in the plot originally, but at the moment when the rebellion broke out, they had thoughts of repentance in their hearts; therefore, a high spot was fenced round for them in Gehinnom, and they stayed there. Two questions: Firstly, why does Rashi need to write so much? Instead of saying, "They were in the plot originally, but at the moment when the rebellion broke out, they had thoughts of repentance in their hearts," he could have been more concise and just written that they had thoughts of repentance in their hearts. We would infer that they were part of the rebellion. Secondly, why is there such a strange punishment? If they sinned, they should be in Gehinnom, and if they repented, why Gehinnom at all?

The Likutei Sichos gives a fascinating answer. Initially, the sons of Korach were full partners in the rebellion with the others. Then, they realized their terrible mistake. However, their repentance was lacking. Only in their hearts was there repentance. This was not followed up with action. They did not even say anything. They did not openly protest or condemn. Therefore, they received a punishment "measure for measure." They were swallowed up by the earth in the sight of the Jewish nation, together with those who rebelled against Moshe.

This corresponds to the fact that externally, they were part of the rebellion. However, inside Gehinnom, out of sight, a high spot was fenced round for them in Gehinnom, since once out of sight, they did not go along with the rebellion. We learn that purity of heart does not justify being together with people who create disunity. If you know they are wrong, you must protest. Do not stay silent, as it can be perceived as acquiescence. We also see the value of each thought of repentance. Even though they did not follow through with action, the thought did not go unrewarded.

**SUGARY SAYING BY RABBI MENACHEM LOMNER**

***"When immoral thoughts knock on the door, don't let them in."***

In this week's parsha, Hashem counted the Jews once again. When counting, the Pasuk mentions their names in a special way. The name of Hashem surrounded their names to show that the mothers of Klal Yisroel were faithful to their husbands even though they were enslaved by the Mitzriyim (Egyptians). All children were born from special pure parents.

We know that the commentaries compare Pharaoh to the *yeitzer harah* (evil inclination), so why don't we see in the Pesukim anything about an attempt by the Egyptians to take the wives of the Jews? The answer is that if you don't let the *yeitzer harah* in, he will not force his way in. They closed out the Egyptians from their personal life so well that there were no attempts to infiltrate. We must use this tactic to keep immorality out of our circles.

## PINCHAS – USING CHALLENGES TO DEEPEN CONNECTION

*Summary: As we continue discussing the take of the Ramchal on the trait of humility, he has underscored the importance of not thinking too much of oneself and praised Moshe Rabbeinu's self-view of believing he is nothing. Now, the Ramchal gives us a perspective on what ideas to keep in mind that can help one stay away from the terrible trait of arrogance. The Ramchal writes: "All this because the man possessing a just heart does not allow himself to become seduced by any virtue which he comes to. This is due to truly knowing that because of this virtue, he does not emerge out of his lowliness, due to other defects inevitably within him. And furthermore, even in those Mitzvos themselves which he attained, he certainly has not arrived at their ultimate goal."* (Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 11)

This is a two-pronged approach. One is being able to stay grounded and not swayed to think highly of oneself due to one's talents, instead viewing them as loans from Hashem that we need to utilize. Two is to remember that we have failures and shortcomings that no one else knows about, and that we shouldn't buy the hype others make about us.

*The Ramchal adds: "Furthermore, still, even if he had no other deficiency than of being flesh and blood, born of woman, this would be more than enough of a lowliness and inferiority, so that he will not find it at all befitting to pride himself. For any virtue he attains is nothing but a kindness of Hashem on him, who wants to favor him despite the fact that by his nature and physicality, he is extremely lowly and insignificant. Therefore, he must only thank He who is so gracious towards him and always humble himself more and more."* (ibid. Chapter 11)

The fact that we are frail human beings born from a woman should be enough to fill us with humility. The great Mashgiach, **Rav Don Segal**, observed that when Moshe Rabbeinu received the Torah, the Gemara (Shabbos 88a) tells us that the melochim (angels) protested. They couldn't say Moshe was unworthy because he was the greatest man in the world. What was their argument against Moshe, then? They said, "What is one born of a woman doing here among us?" Being a mere mortal and having a finite life is a reason to be humbled. Pirkei Avos (3:1) urges individuals to reflect on how to avoid hubris and sin: "Where did you come from? From a tipah seruchah (putrid drop)." This refers to human conception. The intention is to remind us of our humble, physical origins so we do not become arrogant. Rav Segal says that contemplating our mortality is key. Another Gemara (Shabbos 25a) says, "Who is wealthy? One who has a good bathroom next to his dining room table". What a bizarre definition! **Rabbi Efreim Goldberg** wonders what that means.

Rav Segal explains that one's table could be a place one becomes filled with arrogance, especially if one has fine silverware and gourmet food and drink. Delicacies and fine company breed a feeling of self-importance. So, Hashem tells us the very food that can make us full of ourselves will make us humble because soon after we eat a bathroom is needed. An animal must relieve itself, and a human can feel the same pressure and immediacy. A wealthy person is referring to spiritual terms, "who is well-grounded?" While you're sipping the fancy drink and partaking in a fabulous spread, you remember that it won't be long before you will need the facilities, which makes one humbler and more balanced.

The Ramchal concludes: *"This is like a pauper who receives gifts as a chesed and cannot help not feeling shame. The more kindness he receives, the more shame he feels. So too is this matter akin to every man whose eyes are opened and can see himself when he attains virtues from Hashem, blessed be He. As Dovid Hamelech said: 'What shall I repay Hashem for all His kindness to me?'"* (Tehillim 116:12)." (ibid. Ch. 11)

The right mindset is not to swell with pride but to be grateful to Hashem for giving us all success and attributing it to Him only. Instead of pride, one feels shame – a feeling of not being deserving of all the good that one has received. This is precisely what Dovid was saying in Tehillim. All that he has is not due to his own merit, but out of pure G-dly kindness. None of what we have was earned or deserved in any way, as Hashem owes us nothing. If anything, all the resources and talents He bestows on us place us in serious debt to Him. We can never really pay our debt back to Hashem, but at the very least, we should be compelled one to utilize them for proper and holy purposes, by doing Mitzvos and making the world a better place. *More to come next week, B'eH.*

In this week's Parsha, we read about the reward Pinchas received for rising to a challenge. At the end of last week's parsha, Pinchas witnessed a terrible breach in Klal Yisrael. His response was one of action; he refused to be a bystander. Because he was able to face this challenge and think on his feet, Hashem rewarded him. The Torah says (Bamidbar 25:12-13): "Behold, I have given him my covenant of peace; it should be for him and his offspring after him a covenant for eternal priesthood, because he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for the Bnei Yisrael."

**Rashi** explains that a covenant of peace is something that is given when one feels thankful to someone who does him a favor. Hashem was declaring his feelings of friendship to Pinchas. Pinchas was Aharon's grandson. Why wasn't he already a Kohen? Pinchas was left out because Pinchas was born before the Kehunah was given to Aharon and his children. Pinchas could have felt terrible about himself. Watching his father, his younger brothers, his uncle, and his grandfather all serving in the Mishkan could have given Pinchas a low sense of self-esteem. This could have prevented him from zealously guarding the honor of Hashem the way he did. Instead, Pinchas rose to the challenge and trusted Hashem, and his own personal set of circumstances did not negatively affect his attachment to Hashem. On the contrary, it spurred his love for Hashem and empowered him to act against the terrible Chillul Hashem that was taking place. What message can we take to apply to our marriages?

The perfect couple is not the couple who has no challenges, but rather who preservers and becomes closer through challenges. This could be why Hashem sends us challenges in our marriages all the time! When spouses face challenges with their children, or challenges with elderly in-laws, or financial challenges, it has the power to bring them closer than ever before. How can we become closer? When we open up to each other, express our feelings of disbelief, anxiety, or angst, and our spouse can listen, validate and help us process our feelings, this brings us closer to our spouse.

For example, if a couple spent Shabbos somewhere far from their home, and on the way back, their car starts to overheat, they can support each other through the challenge. The wife can refrain from blaming her husband instead of saying, "I told you to fix the car before we left!" She can express how this situation is making her feel nervous and upset. Her husband can validate her by telling her he understands why the situation they are in is making her feel that way, and then encourage her. He could tell her, "Look how much Hashem loves us. We made it to the gas station and now I can buy coolant. I am sure Hashem is going to help us get home."

This scenario can play itself out in many ways; yet, if we can look at our challenges as opportunities for growth as Pinchas did, we will be able to use them to grow our love and connection with each other. The situations Hashem designs for us can become a catalyst for Shelaymus. May Hashem bless our efforts to be able to recognize the good in our challenges and shine the Shalom Bayis light into our homes!