

# **PENINIM ON THE TORAH PARSHA BOOKLET**

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## ***PARASHAT PINCHAS***

*Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael when he zealously avenged Me among them. (25:11)*

Rashi explains that the tribes jeered at Pinchas, saying, "Have you seen that ben Puti, whose mother's father fattened calves for idolatry, yet, has killed a prince of the tribe of Yisrael?" The Torah, therefore, declares that his lineage descends from Aharon HaKohen. This is a remarkable statement. After all, even if Pinchas' mother was Yisro's daughter, his father was still Aharon's son. If, despite all of this, the people decided to ignore his father's lineage and focus only on that of his mother, what does the Torah accomplish by delineating his father's pedigree? It was his mother's ancestry that they were mocking.

Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, quotes the following explanation. When Klal Yisrael observed Pinchas commit what seemed to be an act of wanton murder, their immediate reaction was that the ability to act in such an appalling manner could only have been inherited from his mother's family. As former idolaters, their family was surely tainted by various degrees of bloodshed. Murder was in Pinchas' DNA from birth. Clearly, it could not have been a family trait from his father's side of the family. Surely, the grandson of an individual who was the quintessential ohev shalom v'rodef shalom, "loved peace and pursued peace," would not be capable of committing such a heinous crime. His mother's side had to be the source of his corruption.

The Torah responds to this accusation by asserting Pinchas' lineage and tracing it to Aharon HaKohen. The Torah's message is: There is no taint from either side. In fact, his father's side specifically contributed the qualities that empowered him to slay Zimri. In a tradition attributed to the Chasam Sofer, it is suggested that when Chazal describe Aharon as one who "loved peace and pursued peace," they mean that, at times, if one seeks to achieve peace, the only option he may have is to pursue it, like a rodef, with fury and intent, in hot pursuit of his intended victim. Indeed, there are instances in which only the antithesis of peace catalyzes peace.

This is consistent with Chazal's statement in Sanhedrin 71b, "Dispersion, when it relates to the wicked, is good for them and good for the world." This is the case, because when they disperse, they cannot take evil counsel together and help each other. Thus, they are prevented from continuing in their sinful behavior. It is good for the world, because peace and quiet reign supreme.

When Yaakov Avinu left this world, he requested that his name not be mentioned in connection

with Zimri's sin and the rebellion of Korach. These two descendants of the tribes of Shimon and Levi, respectively, do not reflect positively on the Patriarch, Yaakov. They are, however, linked to Shimon and Levi. Yaakov sought to emphasize that the violence that Shimon and Levi exhibited when they killed the men of Shechem was not a product of the spiritual heritage he bequeathed to his children. They had developed this reaction on their own, as a part of their relationship with one another. The rage which prompted them to destroy a city was not an attribute they inherited from Yaakov.

This very idea begs elucidation. Why is Zimri's ancestry traced to Shimon? Did he learn his degeneracy from Shimon? Indeed, the Midrash notes the glaring disparity between the act of immorality committed by the grandson, Zimri, and Shimon's zealousness against immorality. Chazal referred to Zimri as an individual who breaks down the fence which his father has erected.

Something is not right. On one hand, his ancestry from Shimon is a reason to censure Zimri. On the other hand, however, we just indicated that the mention of a grandfather indicates the ancestor's motivating effect on the actions of his descendant. Is Shimon in some way responsible for Zimri's immorality, while simultaneously serving as an example for him to emulate? How are we to reconcile these two disparate ideas?

Rav Bergman explains why the Torah records Shimon as Zimri's ancestor, although Zimri's action was in total contrast with Shimon's own conduct as was evinced by his zealous response to immorality. When we analyze Zimri's actions, we note two mutinous infractions. Zimri did not just go off to a side to commit his repulsive act in private. No! In a shocking act of brazenness, he took his paramour and brought her directly before Moshe Rabbeinu and the elders at the Ohel Moed, declaring, "Moshe! Is this one forbidden or permitted? And if you say 'forbidden,' then who permitted Yisro's daughter to you?"

This was chutzpah at its nadir. He committed an act of immorality and compounded it by denigrating the gadol hador, leader of the generation! It was this second act of impropriety that might have its murky roots in an earlier indiscretion on the part of his ancestor, Shimon. When the two brothers zealously waged war for the sake of maintaining the moral purity of their family, they erred in one area: they did not consult with their father, the Patriarch Yaakov. They should have asked daas Torah, the wisdom of Torah, before entering into a decision that would have such enormous ramifications. When someone of Yaakov's caliber is available, we ask. We do not act on our own. Indeed, Pinchas approached Moshe before acting zealously. It was only after Moshe agreed with the halachah that Pinchas moved to eradicate the evil. He demonstrated a respect for propriety and, thus, was able to portray a shining example of acting with devotion to carry out the will of Hashem. He displayed no act of personal ostentation, no desire to achieve personal praise or fame. He simply acted as Hashem required him to act - without other motivation or embellishment.

It happens. We think that we are acting appropriately, that we are doing exactly what is expected of us, and, without realizing, a scintilla of the yetzer hora, evil-inclination, invades our behavior, destroying the purity of even the best of deeds. The novelty is, if the yetzer hora creeps in, it is reason enough to compare this deed to the worst of deeds. Why? Because when a deed of righteousness is admixed with the yetzer hora, it distorts the deed's legacy, creating a future effect that might go in either direction: good or bad. Both elements can find their expression in one's descendants. Zimri is held accountable for not following in the lofty ways of his ancestor, Shimon. On the other hand, the egotism and belligerence manifested by Zimri is attributed to a tinge of impropriety on the part of Shimon.

*Reuven, the first born of Yisrael - the sons of Reuven: of Chanoch, the Chanochi Family: of Palu, the Pallui family. (26:5)*

Moshe Rabbeinu and Elazar conducted a census following the plague that decimated 24,000 Jews as punishment for their illicit behavior with the Moavite and Midyanite women. Interestingly, in listing the names of the families, the Torah adds two letters to each surname - a yud and a hay. Each family's name is preceded with a hay and followed by a yud at the end of the name. The only family in which this did not occur was Yimnah, who already had these two letters as part of his name. Rashi comments that these letters together comprise Hashem's Name - Yud, Kay- thereby alluding to Hashem's testament on behalf of the moral purity of Klal Yisrael.

One wonders about the need to bear testimony. The Midrash Shir HaShirim explains that the nations of the world mocked us, asking, "How could the Jews trace their pedigree according to their tribes?" The Egyptians controlled the Jewish bodies through the physical bondage that they imposed upon them. Certainly, they were able to violate their wives as well! To circumvent this disparagement of the Jewish People, Hashem testified to the veracity of their lineage by appending His Holy Name to theirs. This was sort of a public declaration: "The Jews are morally chaste and pure."

In Rabbi Sholom Smith's latest anthology of the Rosh Yeshivah's shmuessen, ethical discourses, Horav Avraham Pam, zl cites Chazal in the Talmud Sotah 11b, who say that Klal Yisrael was redeemed from Egypt in the z'chus, merit, of the nashim tzidkaniyos, righteous women, of that generation. He, therefore, suggests that this is the reason that Hashem's Name, which is usually spelled with the yud preceding the hay, is, in this case, reversed. Since the purpose of these added letters is to attest to the moral purity of the nation which is the direct result of the exalted level of the righteous women of that generation, it makes sense that the letters be reversed. Since the hay alludes to ishah, woman, and the yud alludes to ish, man, as noted in the Talmud Sotah 17a, the letter hay should precede yud.

The question that confronts us is: From where did the men and women of that generation derive the moral strength to defy all odds to refuse to defer to the constant temptations, to the almost ceaseless assault on their defenses, in a country that was known for its moral depravity, in a land where immorality and licentiousness was a way of life? The Rosh Yeshivah cites the Midrash in Vayikra that attributes their strength of character to two individuals who preceded them: Sarah Imeinu and Yosef HaTzaddik. When Avraham and Sarah descended to Egypt, Sarah protected her purity despite the fact that she was unwillingly taken into Pharaoh's palace. She maintained her moral stamina and withstood the challenge.

Yosef was a young teenager when he was forcibly taken from his home and thrust into the spiritual filth of Egypt. Most boys his age-- and even adults-- crumble under the blandishments to their inclination. The assault on their moral defenses would be too compelling for even a "seasoned" adult, let alone a young impressionable boy. Yet, Yosef prevailed, despite constant inveiglement of a master seductress who even felt she was motivated by a feeling of l'shem Shomayim, acting for the sake of Heaven. It took superhuman strength, but he triumphed at the very last moment when a vision of his saintly father appeared to him, warning him that the momentous privileges of having his name engraved on the Kohen Gadol's Choshen, Breastplate, would be revoked, if he gave into the woman's enticements. This encouraged Yosef to prevail, emerging victorious in his battle with the yetzer hora, evil-inclination. This refusal earned Yosef the appellation of tzaddik, righteous one, a title which is as uncommon as the people who earn it.

Chazal teach us that the moral distinctions which Sarah and Yosef earned were not only

privileges that they earned for themselves, but they became a spiritual bequest for their descendants. As a result of this, the entire Jewish nation was able to withstand-- and triumph-- over the Egyptian onslaught on their morals.

When our ancestors prevailed over their adversaries, either individuals or circumstances, their victory comprised more than a personal conquest. Their ability to overcome these challenges planted seeds in the soil of the Jewish nation which transformed their DNA, giving them and their descendants a similar ability to overcome the myriad challenges to their faith which they have encountered throughout the millennia.

Rav Pam cites Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl, who would often relate the episode of a group of Jews being led to the gas chambers at Auschwitz. The last thing that any of them would think about was the fact that it was Simchas Torah. Yet, one of the group exclaimed, "Yidden, today is Simchas Torah! The Nazis have taken everything from us. We have no seforim, Torah volumes, and no Sifrei Torah, Torah scrolls. There is only one thing, however, they cannot take from us: Hashem. Come let us dance with the Ribono Shel Olam Himself!" This was their goodbye to each other and to this ephemeral world, as they were led away, dancing with superhuman joy, into the gas chambers.

These were not roshei yeshivah, nor were they rabbanim or Torah scholars. They were simple, believing Jews. From where did they derive the fortitude, the unbelievable strength of character and deference to the will of Hashem, to proceed to their deaths with joy? This, explains the Rosh Yeshivah, was their yerushah, "inheritance" from their Zaide, grandfather, Avraham Avinu, who went with simchah, joy, to offer his son, Yitzchak, on the Akeidah. That solitary act of consummate emunah, faith in the Almighty, planted the seeds of faith for generations of his descendants.

We live in a generation whose moral pollution has reached epidemic proportion. Decadence is shameless and debauchery is rampant. Society venerates perversion, and our secular leaders are walking advertisements for profligate hedonism at its nadir. Why are Torah-oriented Jews able to withstand the forces of evil, the shocking lifestyles of the "world out there"? How is it that there are Torah-loyal Jews who still aspire to a life of moral purity and spiritual ascendancy, continuing to raise their children in the time-hallowed tradition of tznius, modesty, kedushah, sanctity, and taharah, purity? We are not talking about those who are fortunate enough to segregate themselves geographically from society to live an insular life dedicated to Torah and mitzvos without the incursion of society's morality challenging them on an almost constant basis. No, we are referring to the Jew who lives in mainstream America, who works in and confronts the culture on a regular basis. How do they aspire for spiritual freedom and integrity? Rav Pam explains that it must be in the z'chus, merit, of Yosef HaTzaddik and the generations of Jews who lived in Egypt and survived spiritually as a result of their mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice, to triumph over the forces of spiritual impurity. Those generations inoculated Klal Yisrael with spiritual antibodies, capable of protecting the Jewish nation from incursion. Our ability to prevail over the moral pollution which confronts us at every corner is part of our DNA, a gene that has been bequeathed to us from generations of righteous Jews who themselves prevailed over these forces.

*May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly... and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd. (27:16, 17)*

When Moshe Rabbeinu entreated Hashem for a successor, he added an analogy that seems superfluous: "And let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd." Why does

Moshe add this? The purpose of this analogy is to explain why the request is essential. This applies only to a human being, who might need some sort of an explanation, an encouragement, to act upon the request of the supplicant. This certainly does not apply to Hashem, Who knows everything and who is clearly aware of the need for continued leadership.

Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, explains that Moshe's analogy is not presented for the purpose of "convincing" Hashem of the significance of Klal Yisrael's need for a leader, but rather, to inculcate Moshe himself with the importance of leadership. Prayer is accepted by Hashem only when it is expressed with integrity. Karov Hashem l'chol kor'av, l'chol asher yikra'uhu b'emes, "Hashem is near to all those that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth." One must call out to Hashem with veracity amid a powerful belief in the absolute necessity of his supplication. In order for his prayer to be truthful, he must convince himself of the need for a leader and the negative effect of being without a leader on the future of Klal Yisrael.

All too often, we pray to Hashem for things that we think we need without applying ourselves to their real significance. We must ask ourselves: Do we really need what we are requesting? Why do we ask Hashem for health, livelihood, and welfare? Is it for personal reasons, or do we have a higher purpose in achieving these goals? Will it make serving Hashem easier, or will it make life easier for ourselves? We must pray with an emes, a sense of integrity. When we are truthful with ourselves, we will be truthful with Hashem, and we will present our prayers in the proper context. This will provide greater opportunity for Hashem to answer them to our satisfaction.

*"Take to yourself, Yehoshua bin Nun, a man in whom there is spirit. (27:18)*

Ruach also means wind. Thus, Horav S. R. Hirsch, zl, explains when the Torah uses the word ruach in the connotation of "wind," it denotes a force that is invisible and can be recognized only by its effect as an active, moving force. When the Torah uses it in reference to man, it connotes the human faculties of perception and volition. Every human being has within him a moral and spiritual force. If Hashem is to select Yehoshua to be the leader, it is because he possesses a higher measure of these qualities. He exemplifies a man of perception, one who moves others.

Perhaps we can apply the aforementioned analogy to wind as an invisible force to be recognized only by its effect on the rebbe/talmid, teacher/student relationship. An effective teacher-- and, for that matter, a parent-- should inspire by "ruach," by being an invisible force that moves the student/child forward, without being overpowering, without being overtly noticed. Only after the effect of their guidance has taken place, do we note the input. We now realize that the student/child could not have reached this point without being "moved" by an "invisible" rebbe/parent. This allows for the student/child to experience a sense of independence, while his mentor simultaneously inspires him.

In Shemos 33:11, the Torah delineates another leadership quality Yehoshua possesses. "His servant, Yehoshua bin Nun, a lad, would not depart from the tent." In his commentary to Pirkei Avos, Rashi explains that Yehoshua was selected over Elazar, Pinchas and the seventy elders due to his extreme devotion and dedication both to Torah and to his rebbe, Moshe. He did not leave Moshe's tent, always seeking to learn more and more. Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita explains the word naar, youth, as an enviable quality, which denotes that Yehoshua was always prepared to learn more, to delve deeper. He never felt that he knew it all. He viewed himself as a youth whose desire for knowledge was never satisfied.

These are the qualities of a Torah leader. Yehoshua remained a naar, youth, even after he became a leader. I do not think that this description applied to him only prior to his ascension to his position as Klal Yisrael's leader. He was always ready to learn more. He never thought that he possessed all of the knowledge and wisdom. A desire to learn, coupled with a sense of humility, qualified Yehoshua as Moshe's successor. He stood in the background, invisibly guiding and inspiring the people to move forward.

*Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael. (25:11)*

Who was Pinchas, and why was he selected for the distinct honor of receiving the covenant of peace from Hashem? When one considers that it was Moshe Rabbeinu who stood at the front line during the incident of the Golden Calf and that Aharon came forward during the Korach rebellion, it is surprising that they were not accorded any special "thank you" for their efforts, while Pinchas achieved great distinction for his actions. Horav Zalman Sorotzkin, zl, attributes this to the unique subtlety of Pinchas' personal history. When we think about it, until this very moment, we had not heard from, or about, Pinchas. When the Kohanim were anointed, he was not included. When the Princes of Shevet Levi were enumerated, he was not included. Pinchas happened to be a simple, common Jew, just doing his job and maintaining his spiritual well-being. Until this point, he had not excelled in any area. He was not outstanding - just a common Jew. Therefore, when he took a stand for the honor of Heaven, at a time when Moshe and Aharon and Klal Yisrael's leadership had been frozen, it was an act of great significance. A simple Jew saw the travesty of an insolent Prince of the tribe of Shimon denigrating Hashem's name, while no one was taking a stand to react to him. He felt the imperative to act in response.

Surely Pinchas' inclination attempted to dissuade him. "Why you? The entire Jewish leadership is there. Let them react. Who are you to dare to make such a move against a Prince of Yisrael?" Pinchas, however, was not deterred. He saw what had to be done, and he acted accordingly. This is perhaps why Pinchas is spelled with an added small yud- to emphasize that, until this point, Pinchas had been a small, simple Jew of whom no one had heard. This is what distinguished him from anyone else: his simplicity, his personal insignificance. To come from nowhere and act as he did merits the reward that he received.

We can derive a powerful lesson from here. How many of us "put our money" on the brightest student, the most charismatic student, the "loudest" student - only to be wrong? Let us look around, and we will notice the quiet one who subtly remained at the back of the line, who did not seek all of the fanfare, who diligently plugged away quietly and, with determination, made it to the forefront of leadership of the Jewish community - everywhere. Let Pinchas serve as a lesson for all of us: Let no child be left behind. Let no child be ignored. The student in the back might be our rav, our rosh yeshivah, our lay leader one day.

*When he zealously avenged My vengeance among them. (25:11)*

Rashi explains this pasuk to mean: when he avenged that which had to be avenged for Me,

when he expressed the rage with which I should have been enraged. He adds that any form of the word kinah, jealousy, refers to one who settles a score, to avenge the vengeance of a matter. This is a great chidush, novel idea. Every act of jealousy is an act of vengeance. While this is understood in circumstances surrounding a zealous outburst, as was evinced by Pinchas, how does this fit in under "normal" circumstances of jealousy? One is jealous because he envies the other person or his possessions. How is this connected to revenge?

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, explains that Rashi is revealing to us an important principle concerning the kochos ha'nefesh, human nature, of a person. What causes a person to envy his fellow? When we think about it, we realize that kinah, jealousy, is a strange character trait. Other character traits are motivated by desire and passion, a deep inclination for something that is often out of bounds. This passion is powerful and conjures up images of success as if the person has consummated his desire. Jealousy, however, is a sense of pain and misery for something that one does not have. The greater the envy, the stronger is one's pain. Yet, this pain does not deter him from increasing his jealousy.

This envy does not develop overnight. It is a gradual process that seethes as long as the individual sees his friend achieve success or increase his possessions. At first, it does not bother him. Until now, he had no need for this possession. After awhile he says, "Why not me? I also want such a possession or to achieve this success." Then it begins to gnaw at him. He no longer would like to have it; now, he must have it. After all, he deserves it more than his fellow. It gets to the point that he begins to feel that his friend took it from him. His friend has what rightfully belongs to him. He is a ganov, thief! He begins to feel justified in taking nekamah, exacting vengeance, against the individual for taking what is rightfully his.

Kinah, is thus, an emotion, a feeling that does not allow one to tolerate what his friend possesses, or the success that he has achieved. It is rightfully his, and his friend stole it from him! Jealousy is not focused upon the possession, for even when an individual succeeds in having his desire achieve fruition, and he has in his possession the item that he had so badly desired, he is still not calmed; he is still not happy. He hates the person who had it; he wants to take revenge on him. He took what belonged to him! Envy does not make sense. Yet, it destroys a person and drives him to act in the most perverse manner to satisfy his desire for vengeance.

How does one save himself from falling into the abyss of envy, from falling prey to the self destructive attitude it generates? Rav Matisyahu feels the only way one can save himself from this destructive trait is by developing a sense of histapkus, contentment and satisfaction, with life in general and everyday challenges in particular. One whose ayin ra, evil eye, dominates his vision, creating a myopia in which everything he sees is negative and jaundiced, will fall prey to kinah. He will always think that what his friend possesses should really be his. The mistapek, one who is always satisfied, has no worries. He is not missing anything. Whatever he possesses is what he needs, and what he does not have, he obviously does not need. Otherwise, Hashem would have provided him with it. Thus, he has no reason to view his fellow's possessions or success through a spectrum of resentment and spite. He is content with what he has and pleased for his friend for what he has achieved.

The Mashgiach substantiates this with a pasuk in Bereishis 41:12, where Rashi -- in his interpretation of the description of the healthy cows in Pharaoh's dream -- says, "Yefos mareh," beautiful appearance. This is a sign of good times, days of plenty, when people look favorably upon one another. It is axiomatic that, although greed is rooted in human nature, people are less likely to resent one another during times of prosperity and when everyone is prosperous. Let us think for a moment. If we were to ask anyone, "What is the symbol of years of plenty," the answer probably

would be, brios basar, healthy of flesh, when the animal appears satiated and well-fed. Yefos mareh, beautiful appearance, implying a content appearance, is not necessarily the first thing for which one looks. Rashi is, therefore, telling us that a well-fed animal does not imply that times are good. Perhaps the owner has money, and he is able to purchase the necessary foods on the black market. It is only when people are not envious of each other, contentment and satisfaction reign, when no individual feels that he is losing out because of someone else, when everyone has an ayin tovah, good eye, are we living in good times.

The bitterness and resentment that we cause ourselves as a result of our lack of histapkus is, at times, overwhelming. It destroys lives and families. People feel inadequate and dissatisfied; they complain about everything and everybody. Probably the greatest loss from such an attitude is the loss of opportunity. One could do so much for others if he would only refrain from wallowing in bitterness. By doing good, one feels good, and, by feeling good, one views everything in a positive light. Why not try it?

The mantle of kanaus, true zealousness, is one that must be earned. While many have attempted to place this crown on their heads, only the few and the sincere are truly deserving of this exalted position. One of those unique individuals who fought for truth and morality, dedicated to the Torah way, was the Brisker Rav, zl. When he felt that the issue regarding autopsies and the desecration of graves in Eretz Yisrael was becoming a public travesty, he came to the fore in leading the battle to protect this sacrilege. Piles of bones that had been dug up during archaeological digs were thrown away as refuse after the laboratories were finished with them. It is beyond the scope of this paper to outline the horror and indecency that was perpetrated in the name of science, sanctioned by the secular government. Indeed, even after long years of protests and demonstrations, followed by diplomatic maneuvering, significant numbers of bones remain unburied to this very day.

In 1956, the archaeologists began digging up the graves of Tanaim and Amoraim in Beit Shearim. They also desecrated graves in the ancient Teveria cemetery near to the grave of the Rambam. This profanity prompted the Brisker Rav to spearhead a campaign against the excavations. He called together the sages and leaders of Yerushalayim for a meeting. They signed a statement prohibiting these excavations, warning the populace of the grave sin of not complying with the demands of the Torah. The Brisker Rav cried bitterly while writing and signing this statement. His daughter later bemoaned the fact that none of those who were to read the proclamation would be aware of his copious tears. That night the Brisker Rav could not sleep. His son, Rav Raphael, zl, noticed that in the morning his pillow was drenched with tears. His father had cried all night.

There is so much more to write about the Brisker Rav's battles to maintain the moral purity of our Holy Land. I am recording this episode to demonstrate true kanaus. The Brisker Rav cried in response to the tragedy of chillul Hashem, desecration of Hashem's Name. The Brisker Rav cried because of the actions that he was obligated to take. The Brisker Rav was mekaneh for Hashem, but he cried the entire time! It was not something he wanted to do. It was something he felt he had to do. That is the difference between those who are kana'im and those who are rabble rousers, slanderers, who, in the name of zealousness, have no compunction about destroying innocent lives.

Zealousness can turn ugly, especially when one is motivated by inappropriate impulses. When one does not act with the Torah as his guide, with the fear and trepidation that was demonstrated by the Brisker Rav's tears, he acts instead with malicious arrogance, with one purpose in mind - to hurt and destroy anybody who stands in his way. How many of us can say that our motives are pure, that they are free of any vestige of personal aggrandizement and self-serving objectives? There are many reasons today for one to raise the banner of zealous offensive against some of the injustices that have been

perpetrated within the Jewish community. Whistle blowing that achieves nothing more than defamation of character, exhuming the dead for the purpose of burying them once again, destroying one's descendants because of the sins of the fathers, is not zealousness. It is murder.

*And the name of the slain woman was Kasbi bas Tzur, he was head of peoples/ (25:15)*

Later on, in (31:18), we read that Midyan had five kings. Tzur was the most prominent of them all, as he is referred to here as rosh umos, head of peoples. There, however, he is counted as third. Rashi explains that since he debased himself by allowing his daughter to participate in harlotry, the Torah lists him as third. Does this really make a difference? He is either the head or he is not. Just because the Torah lists him as third does not detract from the esteem in which he was held in the eyes of the Midyanites. Veritably, he was still the head. As far as he was concerned, that is all that counts. Horav Shimshon Chaim Nachmeini, zl, in his sefer, Zera Shimshon, explains that a person merits monarchy for one of three reasons: he is in the family, descending from kings and princes; he is especially wise and intelligent, rendering him a prime candidate for guiding the country successfully; he is extremely wealthy, able to purchase the position, as did Achashveirosh.

Clearly, the individual who ascends to the throne as a result of his purchasing power will not be as respected as one who earns the position through pedigree or astuteness. At first, Tzur had it all. He had family, as he was a descendant of the previous monarchs. He was also a smart man, eminently capable of guiding the country. Wealth was also no drawback, since he had no shortage of funds. It all changed, however, when he foolishly denigrated his daughter and, consequently, himself. His hatred of the Jews destroyed his ability to think rationally. He was still king because he retained his wealth, but the honor that was originally his was no longer. His actions deprived him of his honor after what he had done. He was king only due to the third reason - money. Thus, he is listed third in the order of monarchs.

Smart people sometimes act foolishly, often out of anger or fear. While they may still retain their position of power, they no longer earn the respect of the people. Leadership demands respect, but it is a response that one must constantly earn and one of which he must be worthy. It just takes one foolish move, one deference to the yetzer hora, evil inclination, to destroy so much for which one has worked. It would be so much more beneficial if we would just stop to think for a moment concerning the ramifications of our actions. It might save us and our families so much heartache.

May Hashem G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly...who shall go out together, and come in before them, who shall take them out and who shall bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd. (27:16,17)

Hashem had told Moshe Rabbeinu that he was not going to enter Eretz Yisrael. He turned to the Almighty to request a replacement, someone who would assume the mantle of leadership. This was not a simple request. As Rashi comments, Moshe said to Hashem, "Master of the world! The personality of each individual is revealed before You, and they do not resemble each other. Appoint a leader who can put up with each individual according to his personality." The Berdichever Rebbe, zl, says in his inimitable manner, "Select a leader that will always be melamed z'chus, find merit and seek to justify the people's actions, just as You, Hashem, always finds a positive side to our actions."

In his Derashos El Ami, Horav Amiel, zl, writes that a leader does not necessarily have to find favor in the eyes of the people. Leadership is not a popularity contest. He need not concern himself

with the psychosis of the people. He must lead, and they must follow, otherwise, he will end up following the people. The leader must be in front of the people - not behind them.

"Who shall take them out and who shall bring them in." A leader must not only lead in time of war. He must know when to take them out of the environment of battle and bring them back to peaceful life. The battlefield is filled with blood that is spilled often carelessly and needlessly. This plays havoc on one's emotions. A leader must know how to guide his people back and teach them how to appreciate and live peacefully together. All too often, soldiers bring the battle back home with them, suffering from various syndromes and emotional outbursts. A leader must help his people adjust to an orderly, normal life-- or else it is as if he has lost them on the battlefield.

A community is composed of many individuals with distinct personalities and a multiplicity of family, personal and economic issues. A leader must remain focused on the diversity of his community, on the needs of the young versus the old, the wealthy versus those facing economic challenges and the multiformity of religious observance - both real and imaginary. Everybody needs his leader, usually at the most inconvenient times. That is the essence of leadership.

A leader must "take them out and bring them in." He should not contend that they are his responsibility in shul, but what they do outside of the boundaries of the synagogue is of no concern to him. He must take them out and care about their lives outside of the confines of the halls of prayer. We must also bring them back in, seeing to it that what is picked up outside of the community stays outside and its influence not be allowed to penetrate the sanctity of the community. Above all, the leader must care about the needs of every member of his community, even if they are imaginary. To ignore a person's perceived needs is to ignore the person.

*Pinchas... turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael... so I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My vengeance. (25:11)*

At the time that Pinchas jumped into the fray, striking down Zimri and his pagan partner and halting the plague that was destroying Klal Yisrael, the people had already sunk to the nadir of depravity. Lust, idol worship, and a complete lack of control reigned throughout the camp. Thousands were dying, with no end in sight, until Pinchas arrived on the scene and everything reverted to normalcy. Hashem was appeased, and the decree of grave punishment was arrested. It was not that this was a reward for Pinchas' act. Rather, Pinchas' act of zealotry catalyzed an awareness of the obligation of the Jews to Hashem, catalyzing them to do teshuvah and repent from their iniquity.

We wonder what about Pinchas' act convinced them to do teshuvah when the presence of all of the death surrounding them was unable to do so? When people are dying all around you, it makes sense that one begins to wonder, "Why is this happening?" This introspection should lead the individual to repentance, but, it did not occur this way. It was Pinchas' act that engendered this awareness. Why?

Horav Baruch Sorotzkin, zl, explains that when Klal Yisrael is absorbed in the spiritual filth of immorality, they cannot perceive the truth. It can be staring them right in the eyes and it will elude them. Even when a plague strikes them down, they will attribute it to everything but the truth. They will not see G-d's hand. Only after they see a man arise from their midst and risk his life for his convictions, demonstrate a willingness to die for Hashem, will they suddenly wake up and repent. Through the mirror of Pinchas' greatness, they were able to realize their own insignificance. When they saw the incredible and noble accomplishments of this one individual, they were able to realize their

iniquity. Sometimes one individual's actions can transform a world. Pinchas had that privilege.

*Of Shefufam, the Shefufamite family; of Chufam, the Chufamite family. (26:39)*

This pasuk contains six words, each of which contain the letters "pay" and "mem." One word has the letter "pay" twice. The Sefer HaRokeach writes that the stone of Binyamin which was on the Eiphod was the yeshpah stone. The letters yeshpah, yud, shin, pay, hay, connote the words, yesh, peh; "There is a mouth, but he knows how to keep it sealed." In other words, Binyamin was blessed to have among the members of his extended family individuals who knew how to control what exits their mouths. They understood when to keep quiet. The following six people related to Binyamin each had a peh, mouth. Because they remained silent at critical junctures in their lives, they merited the status of malchus, monarchy (mem).

The six are: Rachel Imeinu, Binyamin's mother, who kept silent when she gave the simanim, signs, to her sister Leah. Also, when Lavan asked her about the terafim, idols, she did not answer. Binyamin did not reveal to Yaakov Avinu, his father, any information about the sale of Yosef. Shaul Hamelech, did not reveal to anyone that he was to become king. Michal, his daughter, did not tell her father that she had hidden David. Yehonasan, his son, did not tell Shaul that David went to the Plishtim. Mordechai and Esther did not reveal their Jewish lineage.

Likewise, we find that Hashem repaid Leah for seizing the opportunity to give hodaah, pay gratitude, to Hashem with the birth of Yehudah. In turn, Hashem blessed Klal Yisrael with progeny that were known for their ability to be modeh, confess, and pay gratitude. Yehudah came forward and took responsibility for Tamar. David Hamelech exclaimed, Hodu l'Hashem ki tov, "Give thanks to Hashem that He is good." Daniel also offered his profound thanks to Hashem.

Hashem compensates everyone for his good deeds. Regardless of the kindness, how great or how minute, the individual will somehow be recognized by Hashem. The following story, related by Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, demonstrates this idea.

An elderly woman who lived alone passed away in Tel Aviv. Because of the quiet life she led, very few people attended her funeral. About twenty people accompanied the coffin to its final resting place. There was one strange occurrence that stupefied all the attendees at the funeral. A large flock of birds seemed to accompany the cortege from the moment it left the home until it arrived at the cemetery. Wherever it went, this flock of birds flew along, very low in the sky. The people could not figure out why this was happening.

On the return trip, her son remembered that his mother had an interesting practice: She would never throw away bread. Whatever crumbs remained after a meal, she would put in a glass jar. The next day, she would feed the crumbs to the birds. In fact, it was a daily ritual at his mother's home. She would go outside with her jar, and all the birds flocked to her as she spread the crumbs on the ground. "I grew up with this image in my mind," said her son. "I guess the birds were sent to pay her back for her kindness."

Pinchas ben Elazar, ben Aharon HaKohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael. When he zealously avenged Me among them. (25:11)

The term "war," by its very nature, conjures up images of evil and devastation. Peace is the relationship that seems to elude so many people, and nations. It is, therefore, difficult to understand that Pinchas' act of zealousness, his striking down a Nasi and his partner in a lewd act of defilement, should effect peace and halt a devastating plague. We are aware that Hashem dispenses reward and punishment on a middah k'neged middah, "measure for measure," basis. Pinchas basically declared war on the defilers. Why was a warlike act rewarded with eternal peace? Is this measure for measure? Are we to associate a kanai, zealot, with peace?

In an anthology of his lectures, compiled by Rabbi Boruch Leff, Horav Yaakov Weinberg, zl, teaches that wars are, at times, a necessary vehicle. Indeed, there is a notion of a "justified war." In Sefer Koheles 3:8, Shlomo Hamelech writes, "There is a time for war."

Pinchas' act of zealousness, his battle against the treachery of Zimri, his campaign against an incursion on morality, was not an act of war. It was an act of peace. Peace is not a passive refrain from war. Peace is a state of being in which a relationship is created, nurtured and solidified. It does not mean a state in which people stay away and do not bother one another. Peace is something two or more parties must work on. They must strive together to build a harmonious and unified relationship. Peace is a coexistence in which all parties complement one another. Those who simply do not fight with each other, but never speak to each other, are not necessarily at peace. They are not at war, but they may be relating to one another in a "passive-aggressive manner." Such a situation is a far cry from peace.

It is no different on the home front. A husband and wife who do not fight are not necessarily the paradigm of marital harmony. The fact that they do not yell at each other is not an indication that domestic tranquility reigns in their home. There must be a relationship in which both parties share in each other's successes, are sensitive to each other's pain, and strengthen each other when they are in need. Peace is an active force whereby the principals work at maintaining a harmonious relationship. Thus, any obstacle which might disturb this idyllic state must be immediately abrogated. This is where war is sometimes involved. At times, we must go to war in order to maintain peace. Pinchas' act of war, his zealous act of striking down a spiritual insurgent, was an act of peace. Through his violent act of war, he prevented the plague from spreading, bringing peace to Klal Yisrael.

We must sometimes take aggressive action in order to create a lasting peace. This does not mean that the end justifies the means. Rather, the means are in themselves an inherent component in achieving the end. It is necessary, and often the only way to accomplish the goal. One must remove the issues that cause tension and disrupt the harmony that can exist between people, if peace is to prevail and endure. This is not always possible to implement. You cannot deal non-violently with a terrorist or with one who is evil incarnate. Violence must be met aggressively; its source must be expunged in order for peace to exist.

In closing, we must realize that peaceful coexistence can be a reality only as long as all of the principals are willing to unify and live in harmony. Pacifism, however, cannot prevail if one or more of the parties create tension and urge discord. Then, they must be taken out of the playing field - by whatever means are available.

*Harass the Midyanites and smite them. (25:17)*

We cannot say that the enjoinder to harass the Midyanim was a call to war, because this did not occur until later in Parashas Matos when Klal Yisrael was instructed to "take vengeance for Bnei

Yisrael from the Midyanites" (31:2). The Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh distinguishes between the sin of immorality and other sins in the Torah. While the other sins leave a negative effect on a person's soul, the sin of immorality leaves an indelible imprint on a person's nature. It catalyzes lust within a person, a burning desire for sin. It distorts his ability to think rationally, driving him to fall into the abyss of immorality to the point from which he cannot extricate himself.

Those original sinners who fell prey to the women of Midyan and Moav had already perished in the plague that followed their transgression. Although the remainder of Klal Yisrael was not involved in the actual sin, they were, nonetheless, influenced by it. They developed hirhurei aveirah, sinful, lustful thoughts. Their minds became tainted. These individuals needed something to extirpate this spiritual contamination from their minds. It was necessary to do something that would cleanse and purify their thoughts, so that they could maintain their status as a holy and spiritual nation.

This was the purpose of the original command to harass the Midyanites. Human nature dictates that when a nation is at war with another nation, discord reigns and enmity is a natural consequence. The hatred permeates his entire being to the point that he wants nothing to do with his adversary at all. This contentious state is the byproduct of two nations that are in a state of war.

This was the purpose of the directive to harass the Midyanites. It was not a one-time command, but, rather, a steady, constant command to vilify everything for which the Midyanites stood. They represented the evil of immorality. It was necessary for the Jewish nation to harass them, so that the evil that they implanted in the Jewish psyche would be abolished.

We derive an important lesson from this thesis. It is not enough to simply distance ourselves from the opportunity to commit certain transgressions. With regard to immorality, which is probably a term we would use to describe contemporary society, it is essential that one develop a disdain and even an abhorrence for it. So many of the spiritual ills from which we and our children suffer can be linked to a society in which immorality is not only acceptable, but has become a way of life. This spiritual filth taints the mind and soul of our community unless we learn to view it for what it really is.

*The eighth day shall be a restriction for you. (29:35)*

During the entire festival of Succos, seventy bulls were offered on behalf of the seventy gentile nations, to protect them from affliction. Indeed, Chazal teach us that if the nations of the world would realize how much they benefited from these sacrifices, they would have sent their armies to surround Yerushalayim and guard it from attack. After the Yom Tov, when people who made their pilgrimage to the Bais Hamikdash were prepared to return to their homes, Hashem said to Klal Yisrael, Kasheh alai peridaschem, "It is difficult for Me your separation. Make a small banquet for Me, so that I can enjoy your company (exclusively)." So, too, following the offerings on behalf of the nations, Hashem longs for the company of His own nation. This is the significance of Shemini Atzeres.

Horav Yitzchak, zl, m'Boyan suggests an insightful homiletic approach towards the statement of Kasheh alai peridaschem. In the Talmud Sota 2a, Chazal say that Kasheh zivugo shel adam k'Krias Yam Suf, "It is as difficult to pair them (husband and wife) as the splitting of the Red Sea." Likewise, it says in the Talmud Pesachim 118a, Kasheh mezonosav shel adam k'Krias Yam Suf, "Providing man's sustenance is as difficult as the splitting of the Red Sea." How are we to understand these statements? Is there anything that is "difficult" for Hashem to execute?

The simple pshat, explanation, is that the word kasheh, difficult, is a metaphor to emphasize the significance and distinction of these two miracles. One should not think that finding a mate or earning a living are simple projects. They are both miracles of epic proportions of the caliber of Krias Yam Suf. The Boyaner Rebbe offers a different understanding of these statements. He explains that all of these statements are connected. Hashem is saying to Klal Yisrael: Kasheh Alai, "Concerning these" two phenomena (marriage and livelihood), about which I say that they are 'difficult' for Me, it is due to peridaschem, the fact that there exists within your ranks a pirud, separation. The discord that reigns among My People renders it difficult for Me to bless them with marriage and livelihood. When achdus, unity, prevails in Klal Yisrael, no difficulty stands in the way. When people think only of themselves, they create a situation in which Hashem finds it problematic to provide for them.

The success or failure of these two endeavors is based largely upon interrelationships. One who seeks to be successful in an area that demands tolerance, flexibility, and compromise must himself be an individual who gets along well with others. How can we turn to Hashem for Siyata Dishmaya, Divine assistance, in these areas, if we are not deserving of it? In other words, nothing is difficult for Hashem. We create the difficulty.

*Give us a possession (in Eretz Yisrael) among our father's brothers. (27:4)*

The five daughters of Tzlafchad came to Moshe Rabbeinu with a taanah, complaint. They understood from the law that Eretz Yisrael was being divided up among the males of each family. Since their father had died without leaving any male progeny, they were concerned lest they be deprived of securing a portion of Eretz Yisrael. Rashi explains that their request was not motivated by a desire for financial gain, but rather by a passionate love for the Holy Land. This is why the pasuk traces their lineage back to Yosef HaTzaddik, whose love for Eretz Yisrael was boundless. The meraglim, spies, stand in contrast to Bnos Tzlafchad; they slandered the land because they lacked that intrinsic love for the country.

When someone cares deeply about an object, a person, a mission, or an organization, he will move heaven and earth to assure its success. His love forms the basis for his perspective and, concomitantly, his reaction. The meraglim described Eretz Yisrael as they saw it. They saw a country that was heavily fortified, cities that were inhabited by powerful giants and fruit that was unusual in its size. Wherever they went, they noticed that funerals were taking place. Everything seemed to be against them. They also forgot that Hashem, Who took them out of Egypt amidst the greatest miracles and wonders, had promised them that they would conquer the land. Had their emunah in Hashem been on an appropriate level, it would have overwhelmed whatever doubts regarding the land that they might have harbored. Yehoshua and Calev, the two members of the spying mission who clung steadfast to their conviction, had no problem believing in the successful result of their quest to inhabit the land.

The result depends upon attitude. When one views the land with love, when he believes that it is good - as Bnos Tzlafchad did, then any challenge that surfaces can - and will - be dealt with successfully. If the love for the land is phlegmatic, however, then any challenge that arises will generate a sense of hopelessness. The meraglim's lackluster feelings towards Eretz Yisrael reflected a deficiency in their spiritual character that lay at the foundation of their sin.

Love conquers whatever ambiguities one might have in regard to an endeavor. Horav Avraham

Pam, zl, applies this concept to encourage bnei Torah to shteig, excel, and become great talmidei chachamim, Torah scholars. Many bnei Torah have the desire to achieve distinction in Torah erudition, whether it is in the area of harbotzas Torah, dissemination, or in psak, halachic arbitration. Regrettably, for many, these dreams remain nothing more than fantasies. What happens?

A young man assesses his capabilities and potential, realizing that he does not have what it takes to achieve greatness in Torah. He is confronted with uncertainties. He strives to teach and imbue others with a love of Torah, but, alas, he does not know if he has the necessary skills to perform this function. Will he find a decent position? Will he make a living, or will he have to scrounge from paycheck to paycheck? These and many other doubts enter the mind of a young person about to trek upon the path that leads to greatness in Torah. These ambiguities can depress him to the point that he may give up before he even starts. He might choose a more secure and comfortable vocation. Of course, he would love to devote himself to a life of Torah, but so much uncertainty stands in his way.

Rav Pam posits that the source of this attitude is rooted in a lack of true ahavas Torah, love of Torah. One who truly desires distinction in Torah, whose love and passion for Torah is unequivocal, will not be bothered by doubts. Even for one whose level of intellectual acuity is limited, his desire and commitment will merit him great Siyata diShmaya, Divine assistance, to realize his goal. Hashem grants wisdom to he who desires and strives for it.

Love of Torah conquers questions of parnassah, livelihood. This does not suggest that one who dedicates himself to Torah will prosper materially. It only implies that the usual issues of material sustenance will not plague him. Hashem takes care of His own, of those whose love for His Torah transcend their material needs.

Last, Rav Pam comments that this principle is not reserved only for Torah study. It applies to every area of spiritual endeavor. How often are we inspired to act on behalf of the community, in a spiritual endeavor, a tzedakah campaign, a neglected mitzvah awareness program, a chesed project, a kiruy, outreach, affair, only to be left with the inspiration and nothing else? We often perceive the need, and we have the tools and ability to carry out the task, but we renege at the last minute due to self-doubting. Will I succeed? Why has no one else undertaken this project? Will I receive community support? These and other doubts cross one's mind, and soon the self-doubting develops into a negative attitude, so that he rejects the plan. The fire of idealism has been extinguished by the feelings of ambiguity and uncertainty. Bnos Tzafchad teach us a valuable lesson: When one loves something - nothing stands in the way. When someone cares about Torah, about Klal Yisrael, about the Ribono Shel Olam, he doesn't just talk - he acts.

*May Hashem... appoint a man over the assembly. (27:16)*

It is related that when the rav of Slutzk, Poland, Horav Yaakov David Ridvaz, zl, was nearing death, the leaders of the community came to him to discuss the issue of a successor for the position of rav. After they left, his rebbetzin entered and implored him, "My dear husband, you are acutely aware that our financial straits are, at best, terrible. Please ask the leaders of the community to see to it that we receive a greater stipend. There is no way we can go on this way."

Rav Yaakov David looked up at his wife and said, "Should I be different from Moshe, whose primary concern prior to his death was for the community of Klal Yisrael - not for his family? We do not find Moshe supplicating Hashem for his personal needs - only for the needs of his flock."

His rebbetzin, who was a wise and learned woman, responded "Perhaps, that is why his grandson, Shevuel ben Gershom, ended up as a priest for idols." (This is a reference to Yonasan ben Gershom, who was later called Shevuel after he "returned to Hashem.") Prior to his repentance, however, he served as a priest, since he refused to accept charity and was willing to do anything to satisfy his desire for money. (Bava Basra 110a) When the Ridvaz heard this, he agreed with his wife and implored his lay leadership on behalf of his family.

This paper is not here to discuss the propriety of her claim. Rather, this story is meant to point out that our spiritual leadership also has needs. A rav has a family, a rosh yeshivah has a wife and children. All too often, we think only of ourselves and the spiritual leader's obligation to serve us. Do we ever think about his family and his needs? We turn to them for advice regarding family situations, shidduchim, livelihood issues, problems with our children. Yet, do we ever stop to think that they also might have issues on their mind? To whom do they turn for advice, solace or a shoulder on which to cry? Do we ever take into consideration that the rebbe who teaches our children also has a family, and perhaps he has a situation at home that is taking its toll on him? The answer to all these questions is probably no. The reason is that we think that our spiritual leadership is here to serve us, and their circumstances are not our concern. While this is regrettable, it is probably true.

On second thought, getting back to the Ridvaz, he really should not have had to turn to his lay leadership for assistance. Had they been proper leaders, they would have cared enough about their rav to offer help on their own. I guess things have not changed much over the years.

*Who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd. (27:17)*

The Kesav Sofer explains the distinction between a shepherd who shepherds sheep and a spiritual leader whose only focus is the welfare of his human flock. A shepherd has one goal - himself. Everything he does is done so that his flock retains its current value. His flock is nothing more than a means, a vehicle, to increase the shepherd's material wealth. The roeh Yisrael's, Jewish spiritual leader's, mindset is focused only on his people, their physical and spiritual welfare, their families and their concerns, both personal and general. The Torah leader is prepared to sacrifice his life for his people. He goes out before them, as he leads in times of danger. Unlike the shepherd - who, upon seeing a wolf runs for his life, leaving his flock open to danger - the Torah leader stands resolute and fearless in the face any viscitude which confronts his people. He goes before them and remains with them throughout their challenges.

Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl, the venerable Rosh Hayeshivah of Pre World War II Baranovitz, exemplified this calibre of leadership. His devotion to Klal Yisrael in general, and his yeshivah community in particular, was legend. Rav Elchanan spent a good part of 1938 in America on behalf of his yeshivah. During this time, he crisscrossed the country reaching out to Jews, inspiring and encouraging them to strengthen their ties with Hashem Yisborach. The political situation in Europe was rapidly deteriorating. As Rav Elchanan packed his bags to return to Europe, the black clouds of war were ominously approaching. In this dangerous atmosphere, friends approached Rav Elchanan and implored him to stay in America. Perhaps he should even bring over his two sons who remained in Europe. Rav Elchanan rejected their plea, countering, "I do not have only two sons. I have four-hundred; all of the yeshivah bachurim are my sons. How can I leave them?" The Rosh Hayeshivah had decided that it was his moral obligation and duty to return to Poland, despite the imminent danger -

even at the expense of his life. He would not listen to the many arguments that encouraged him to stay - for America's sake.

His rejoinder was simple, "I am a soldier; I have to go to the front." He changed planes in England, where the great sage Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl, futilely attempted to convince him to stay in England. Even as he was boarding the plane, Rav Elyah begged Rav Elchanan to stay. Rav Elchanan answered with resolve, "We shall all have to endure chibut hakever, buffeting the grave. I want to suffer this together with my students."

The account of Rav Elchanan's last moments and that of the Baranovitch community have become the paradigm for mesiras nefesh, self-sacrifice. The Lithuanian terrorists entered the house where Rav Elchanan was hiding, searching for the rabbis who were "collaborating with the communists." Rav Elchanan was engrossed in learning together with his chavrusa, study partner. The terrorists then searched and humiliated him.

Rav Elchanan was fully aware of what was in store for him. Instead of fear and anxiety, his face brightened, exhibiting what could best be described as an angelic expression. The Jews who saw him then were later to describe his countenance and demeanor as that of a great Torah leader preparing to give up his life Al Kiddush Hashem, to sanctify Hashem's Name. Even the two savage Lithuanians who were his guards were struck by his visage and were inspired with dread and awe. One of them was prepared to release the Rosh Hayeshivah. His partner, regrettably, refused, insisting that he be taken to the seventh fort together with the others.

While he was being led away, Rav Elchanan told his fellow captives, "Apparently they consider us tzaddikim, righteous people, in Heaven, for we have been selected to atone for Klal Yisrael with our lives. If so, we must repent completely, here and now. We must realize that our sacrifices will be more pleasing if accompanied by teshuvah, repentance, and we shall thereby save the lives of our brothers and sisters in America."

He then exhorted them that martyrs must, in their last moments expunge any impure thoughts from their minds, lest the sacrifice which they represent become invalidated. Hence, he focused on repentance and total devotion to Hashem. Twenty-four hours later, the entire group was machine-gunned to death. It was a holy brotherhood - a community with its yeshivah - led by their beloved Rosh Hayeshivah, who would not leave them. As he lived with them - he died with them, exemplifying a leader who goes out before them and comes in before them. As he cared for them in this world, Rav Elchanan accompanied his community into the World to Come.

*You shall place some of your majesty upon him. (27:20)*

In the Talmud Bava Basra 75a, Chazal derive from the word meihodcha, some of your majesty, that only a portion of Moshe Rabbeinu's majesty was being transferred to Yehoshua, but not all of it. They relate that when the zekeinim, elders, of that generation contemplated the difference between Moshe and Yehoshua, they would say that the face of Moshe was like the sun, while Yehoshua's face was like the moon. Chazal conclude with the statement, "Woe, for that shame! Woe for that disgrace!" What is the meaning of "that" shame and "that" disgrace? To what are Chazal referring?

The Chida, zl, gives a practical and timely answer to this question. Yehoshua merited to become Moshe's heir apparent and the next leader of Klal Yisrael, because he would arise early every morning

and organize the benches in the bais hamedrash. He would place the mats in their proper place in the morning and do this once again at the end of the day. He was the first to arrive and last to leave, making sure that the menial labor involved in presenting a clean, organized bais hamedrash was carried out personally by him. The elders, who probably were not prepared to do this menial labor at the time because it was not dignified, now regretted their earlier decision. What they then thought was humiliating, they now realized was a source of distinction. They now regretted "that" shame and "that" disgrace which they had refused to exhibit.

The Tanna in Pirkei Avos 4: says: "Whoever honors the Torah, will himself be honored by people." Otzros HaTorah infers from here that one who disgraces his honor, who is willing to humiliate himself for the sake of the Torah, will, in turn, achieve honor and esteem in the eyes of his fellow man. Indeed, Chazal teach us that King Achav merited to reign over Klal Yisrael for twenty- two years, because he accorded honor to the Torah which was given to Klal Yisrael through the medium of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

It is related that Rashi's grandfather merited to have such a grandson that would light up the world with his commentary on Torah, because he used his beard to wipe off the dust in front of the Aron Hakodesh, Holy Ark. The Tashbatz would always make a point to dust off the seforim in the bais hamedrash. It is told over that it was revealed to him from Heaven that the seforim which he himself had authored, would never decay. Indeed, Horav Chaim Kanievski, Shlita, attested that he once found an original copy of the Tashbatz, and it was in perfect condition.

Horav Michel Yehudah Lefkowitz, Shlita, relates that he once went to be menachem aveil, comfort the bereaved, at a home where an elderly father passed away and left over a family of sons who all were great talmidei chachamin, Torah scholars. He queried the sons concerning to what they attributed their father's incredible zchus, merit, to leave over such distinguished offspring. They replied that their father was a simple carpenter, who would go to the bais hamedrash and fix whatever benches or furniture needed repair, during his free time. Apparently, this man was no simple craftsman. His appreciation of Torah earned him the ultimate Torah nachas.

*When he zealously avenged Me among them. (25:11)*

Kanaus, zealotry, is truly a noble trait - albeit a dangerous one. Quite often, the well-meaning zealot gets caught up in his enthusiasm, forgetting his original goals and objectives. He forgets that while his adversary is wrong, he is still a human being with feelings and emotions. To say one does not care about the person is to defeat the objective of his actions. The kanai, zealot, is guided by considerations of avodas Hashem, service to the Almighty, and not by any negative spiritual flaw that he might possess. This is most often indicated by the following manner in which he seeks to achieve his goal, by his reaction if things do not go his way; his attitude to those with whom he is in dispute.

Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, was such a person. Although he was a zealot who was uncompromising in his devotion to raising the banner of Torah, he nevertheless, went out of his way to provide humanitarian assistance - even to his adversary. He never responded in a manner unbecoming a person who was the epitome of Torah refinement as evidenced by the following episode.

Rav Yosef Chaim sustained many personal tragedies that would have destroyed a lesser person. When his son Rav Shmuel Binyamin was stricken with typhus, Rav Yosef Chaim sat by his bed day

and night, reciting Tehillim. The pain was overwhelming. To stand by, helpless, watching his beloved son's terrible convulsions was too much to handle. He remarked that he was no longer able to bear the sight of his son's excruciating pain and suffering. He closed his Tehillim and rose from his seat. At that moment, Rav Shmuel Binyamin returned his holy soul to its Maker, as Rav Chaim recited Shema Yisrael in a heart-rending voice. His loss was especially painful to Rav Yosef Chaim, because it followed by just eleven weeks the death of a younger son, Rav Moshe Yehudah, and just a few short years after the passing of his brilliant son, Rav Avraham Aharon, at the age of thirty-four.

It was Erev Shabbos, and there was no time to arrange a funeral. They arranged for people to sit with the body for Shabbos. Rav Yosef Chaim braced himself to keep the tragic news from his family in order not to destroy the sanctity of Shabbos. In reply to their anxious inquiries, he only responded, "May Hashem have mercy." He then dressed for Shabbos and, with a radiant face, he wished his family "Gut Shabbos," and left for shul.

Throughout Shabbos he greeted his congregants with a smile, reflecting the love and good cheer that was his hallmark. Indeed, no one suspected the terrible tragedy that had just taken place. After the conclusion of Maariv on Motzoei Shabbos, however, Rav Yosef Chaim was no longer able to hold back the pain over his beloved son, and he fainted. This was the seventh child that he had offered up as a sacrifice to the Almighty.

Word spread quickly throughout a stunned Yerushalayim. The sudden death of their beloved rebbe's son in the midst of a very active life, left people trembling. At the height of these troubled times, the Angel of Death had struck down one of their great and dear.

Bereaved and broken-hearted, a small party of mourners wound their way down the narrow streets of the Old City to the home of the deceased. Suddenly, at the entrance to one of the alleys, stood the arrogant figure of one of Yerushalayim's "enlightened" Jews. One of the lost souls who had long ago reneged against the religion of his ancestors, his hatred of religious Jews sizzled within him like a viper's poison. With a mocking smile he stopped squarely in front of Rav Yosef Chaim and wished him a cheerful, "Shavua Tov." He waited a moment, then added, "Well, Rav Yosef Chaim, I guess Heaven has punished you for your vehement opposition to us."

How low can a person descend? This was the nadir of callousness! The entire party was aghast at the vulgar joy of the rebel. Unwavering in his faith in Hashem, Rav Yosef Chaim straightened himself up and responded in a steady and controlled voice, "You are correct. Heaven punished me for my laxity in battling those who would violate the Covenant and destroy the faith and especially for my tardiness in entering the battle against those who undermine the Torah. From now on, I will strengthen my resolve and devote all of my strength to this sacred war."

I have stretched out this story in order to emphasize the frame of mind that Rav Yosef Chaim might have manifested. Yet, throughout his overwhelming travail, he maintained the clarity of vision and the presence of mind to respond as a gadol baTorah, Torah leader, whose commitment to the ideals of Torah were uncompromising and unwavering. He saw himself on a mission for Hashem, a mission which overrides all else - even personal pain and grief.

*The daughters of Tzafchad drew near...and they stood before Moshe. (27:1,2)*

The Yalkut Shimoni gives a powerful insight into the episode with Bnos Tzafchad. Every adam

kasheir, pious individual, who stands up for what is right and true, especially during a time - or in an environment - that is antithetical to Torah, will earn the reward for all the members of his milieu. Noach took a stand during the generation of the flood: he merited their reward. Lot stood up to the evil citizens of Sodom: he received their reward. Likewise, the righteous daughters of Tzafchad stood up for their beliefs at a time when there were those in Klal Yisrael who clamored, "Give us a new leader, and we will return to Egypt!" They rightfully deserved to receive the reward intended for those who had sought to undermine Klal Yisrael's leadership.

What a profound lesson can be derived from the Yalkut. Horav Mordechai Ilan, zl, explains that a person's actions are not measured only according to their own value, but also in light of when and where they are executed. The generation, the society, the environment, the circumstances under which they take place determines the significance of the action. One's ability to overcome the winds of apathy, the waves of assimilation and the sea of venom that is leveled against he who stands up for what is right, decides the reward that he will receive.

Throughout Jewish history, individuals have stood their ground and fought for Torah - under the most difficult conditions and backdrop. Yet, they persevered and stood their ground. In their merit, the Torah reigns supreme as it grows stronger and greater each day.

Horav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz, zl, the architect of Torah in America, is a clear example of an individual who stood resolutely against the flood of assimilation that had engulfed America. He came to a land where, to paraphrase him, "Eretz lo zeruah," the lo/no was planted. Everybody said no. We cannot fight. We cannot keep Shabbos. Torah has no chance. It was a land where apathy and negativism deluged everyone. It was "Eretz ocheles yoshvechah," a land that devoured its inhabitants. It destroyed their spiritual component, leaving them spiritually sterile.

True, there were many scholars and rabbis of stature that had arrived here before him. Of these individuals, even if they had saved themselves, only a few were successful in saving their children. For sure, none of them were able to reach out and save others. The self-confidence that the contemporary Orthodox Jew takes for granted was a rarity in those days. Rav Shraga Feivel would not accept a no. While others were prepared to accept America assimilation, Rav Shraga Feivel considered it to be a challenge that he needed to overcome. He was a revolutionary who battled the status quo of apathy. He made up his mind to do whatever was in his power to save his fellow Jews in America from spiritual demise.

While space does not permit for a full appreciation of his accomplishments or the challenges of the times during which his efforts received successful fruition, he deserves that a few vignettes of his achievements for Torah in America be mentioned.

Just to give a perspective of the spiritual panorama of the times, we cite from the famous observation made by Horav Yaakov David Wilovsky, zl, the Ridbaz, one of the great European scholars to come to America. As a consequence of the halachic standards of kashrus that he attempted to impose in Chicago, he eventually had to flee for his life. He writes in his introduction to his Nimukei Ridbaz, "In America, Jews have gathered from all corners of the globe, and, as a result, no one knows anyone, or what was his position in his native city. Many who were outcasts and derelicts in Europe have become leaders in this country. They give public sermons that any priest, lehavdil, could also give in his church. Here, however, they are called rabbis.

"Likewise, many evil-doers in their hometowns have come here and entered the meat business, calling themselves 'kosher butchers.' They are neither butchers nor kosher. They have joined forces with the chameleon rabbis, and together they are feeding treifah, non-kosher, meat to unsuspecting

Jews. Even the shochet, ritual slaughterer, spends his Shabbos kodesh at the theater."

Rav Wilovsky went on to decry the spineless attitude of those who should do something about the sad state of kashrus in America. America had become a place where the spirit of Judaism had dried up, and the Jews were overcome by a lust for everything that was abominable to their religion.

It was in such a spiritual wasteland that Rav Shraga Feivel set forth to make a change. He organized a small group of like-minded individuals to plan a newspaper to combat the filth and vitriol that was spewed out from the contemporary secular Yiddish press. He borrowed \$10,000, the equivalent of eight years salary in those days. Together with the renowned chazzan, Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt, who contributed \$25,000, he started "Dos Yiddishe Licht," the Light of Israel. They struggled for years to recoup their losses - but they made an impact; they created a dent in the spiritual status quo. His scathing editorials were eye openers to many people and inspired many to think about the path they were treading toward spiritual extinction. He neither minced words, nor feared accusing "rabbis" of turning a blind eye to the non-kosher practices of the day. He would say, "I have a burning within my bones; I am weary with containing myself." He knew that his rabble-rousing tactics might cause people to denounce him, but there was no other way. Regrettably, no one else was doing anything to challenge the establishment.

Yet, the pressure of public censure can destroy a person. How did he do it? How was he able to continue his battle and withstand the pressures of negative public opinion? He viewed himself as a shelucha d'Rachmana, an agent of Hashem. On any issue, he could be expected to present his own independent opinion without fear of ridicule or opposition.

Like Pinchas, Rav Shraga Feivel did not permit his zealousness to cloud his ahavas Yisrael, love for all Jews. Two directors of the Mesivta Torah Vodaath, Rav Shraga Feivel's yeshivah, approached the yeshivah's president to accept two boys who had been in a catholic orphanage for some time. The president, a fine G-d-fearing man, responded in the negative, claiming that boys who had previously been kissing a crucifix would have a difficult time accepting the Torah and mitzvos. In order to circumvent a dispute, both sides agreed to present the problem to Rav Shraga Feivel for his final decision. Rav Shraga Feivel ruled that the boys should be accepted. He contended "better they should be poshei Yisrael, sinful Jews, than sonei Yisrael, haters of Jews." The boys were accepted, and at least one of them later became observant.

Perhaps the world "zealot" should be exchanged for "idealist," for a true zealot is an idealist who is committed to his goals and ideals. He does not allow negativism and apathy to stand in his way. He does what must be done, and he acts where action must be taken. He fears only Hashem to whom he has the utmost allegiance. His commitment is unswerving, and his dedication is boundless. In every generation we have idealists who give their lives for the dissemination of true Torah ideals and the upholding of Torah and mitzvos. They are self-effacing, never seeking the limelight unless it is absolutely necessary in pursuit of their goals. They have made and continue to make the difference in the battle to preserve and spread the sanctity and purity of Torah true Judaism.

*Why should the name of our father be omitted from among his family because he had no son? (27:4)*

Parents need their children. Horav Avraham Berish Flohm, zl, a distinguished disciple of the Maggid of Dubno, gives the following explanation of this pasuk. A father and his son were traveling together on a long journey. It was a difficult trip, and the father went to great lengths to provide for his

son's comfort. He provided for all of his needs and protected him from the vicissitudes of the way. This added responsibility took its toll on the father, but what does a parent not do for their child? When they reached their destination, they discovered that the gates to the city were locked, and no one could enter or leave. The father searched the area and noted a small guard's hut alongside the outer gate. He peered through the tiny window and - to his delight - he saw the keys to the gate. The problem was how to enter the guard's hut. There was no guard, but the door was locked and the window was too small for him to enter.

The father turned to his son and said, "Until this point, I have attended to all of your needs. Now, I need your help. There is a little window in the side of the wall. It is just large enough for you to fit through. Go into the guard's hut and retrieve the keys to the gate, so that we can finally reach our destination."

This is the story of life. Parents worry and provide for all of their children's needs - both physical and spiritual. During the yemei Hadin, Days of Judgment, the parents have to face the Heavenly Tribunal and hope that they are given a chance for another year. Chazal teach us that the world is sustained through the hevel pihem, of tinokos shel bais rabbon, children who study Torah. Their merit is great and can make the difference. They can get through that "window of opportunity" that eludes their parents. Through their merit, their parents can achieve forgiveness from the Heavenly Father. Parents need their children. Now, if only the children would realize this.

*Behold! I give my covenant of peace. (25:12)*

This is the first time Hashem validates the act of taking another person's life. Pinchas acted with true zealotry. Every fiber of his body remained true to the ideal of serving Hashem. He did not murder; he carried out the halachah of kanaim pogin bo, "a zealous one may slay him." Let us analyze his actions and his motivations. Rather than ceasing to curse the Jews, Bilaam devised a foolproof method for turning the Jews away from Hashem. Indeed, Bilaam had the patent for destruction: "Their G-d abhors immorality." The key to destroying the Jew is immorality. Let us tell the Moavite girls to entice the Jewish men, and the rest will fall into place.

It happened as Bilaam foresaw. The simple men followed the blandishments of their yetzer hora, evil inclination, and fell prey to the enemy. While this in itself is a tragedy, something else occurred that warranted much greater concern. Zimri ben Salu, the distinguished Nasi, Prince, of the tribe of Shimon suddenly became an ideologue. He was not satisfied simply to wallow in the filth of immorality, to give in to his base inclination; he had to develop a shitah, ideology, to justify his lack of self-control. This was devastating, since it could erode the very structure of Torah leadership. As is usual, whenever a great breach occurs, everybody was in a state of shock - "What do we do?" The kanai, level-headed zealot, who had only one objective - kiddush shem Shomayim, sanctifying Hashem's Name - takes upon himself one thing: damage control. Pinchas understood the overwhelming responsibility of his next move. He was fully aware of the repercussions, but what else could he do? Hashem's Name was being blatantly denigrated in the most revolting manner! Someone had to take action! People questioned his act of taking a life. Some called him a murderer, noting that he was a grandson of Yisro, who once worshipped idols. This is always the response to the zealot who has the courage to act for Hashem. He is called names; his faculties are questioned, his motives are brought to task - everything is done to delegitimize his act. Why? Because people envy the zealot's courage and

commitment. They fear a movement of zealotry. They wonder, "Am I going to be next?" It is much easier to criticize the zealot than to punish the sinner!

Hashem agreed with Pinchas and blessed him with the covenant of peace. Why was it necessary to bless Pinchas with peace? He was a peaceful person who acted out of necessity. The Netziv, zl, explains that while Pinchas' act of zealotry was, without question, motivated by the lofty ideal of Kiddush Hashem, he still took a life. Since the very nature of this act leaves an everlasting impression upon one's psyche, there was a real fear that the gentle Pinchas would be forever tainted. His sensitive heart would become hardened, cold, as a result of his exposure to the act of taking a human life. Hence, Hashem conferred upon him the blessing of peace which guaranteed that Pinchas' sensitive nature would not change. He would always continue to be a gentle man of peace. The act was violent - although he himself was not.

*May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly. (27:16)*

Moshe Rabbeinu was faced with the reality that his days of leadership were numbered. He would not lead the people that he had shepherded throughout the wilderness into Eretz Yisrael. The time had come to search for his successor. Chazal teach us that Moshe's deliberations for the future were interrupted by the ruling that the daughters of Tzalaphchad would share in the land as if he were to have had sons. He figured that now it was time to think of his own sons. Perhaps, they should be his successors. Hashem responded that Moshe's sons would not succeed him. His successor would be Yehoshua, his trusted disciple who never left his side, who would daily see to it that the bais hamidrash where Moshe taught was prepared for him. He would spread the mats and arrange the chairs in their proper order. He would be the next leader, as Shlomo haMelech says in Mishlei 27:8, "He who watches over the fig tree shall eat its fruit."

There are a number of compelling lessons to be derived from the words of Chazal. Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, sees Hashem's response as establishing Heavenly criteria for defining the essence of a Jewish leader. One would think that a leader should primarily possess the qualities intrinsic for leadership: the ability to lead the people in battle, to adjudicate law, to deal with the various types of personalities that comprise his constituency. Quite possibly, if these were the criteria, Moshe Rabbeinu's sons would have passed the test. After all, who was closer to Moshe than they were? They were with him from "day one." They also inherited his Divinely inspired character traits and qualities. Yet, the Heavenly perspective did not deem them to be worthy to assume Moshe's position. They were lacking something, a necessary component in the makeup of a leader that only Yehoshua possessed.

What did Yehoshua have that Moshe's sons do not possess? He served Moshe, his Master, his rebbe, dutifully. He arranged the seats and the mats in the study hall. This total devotion prepared Yehoshua for leadership. Yehoshua was not being rewarded for his work. No! His work developed within him the requisite quality for leading Hashem's nation. Leading the people in to battle is an act of leadership. Klal Yisrael triumphs because Hashem battles their enemies for them. The Aron haKodesh is up there in the forefront of the battle protecting the people.

What are the intrinsic characteristics of a leader? A leader is one who values his rebbe. Moshe Rabbeinu was known by many titles. Prophet, king, leader, prince, scholar: all of these are true descriptions of Moshe. The most distinguished and significant title that Moshe Rabbeinu enjoyed was

that of "Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael," Moshe Rabbeinu, our teacher, the rebbe of all Klal Yisrael. Moshe's successor had to be more than a leader - he had to be able to assume the title of Rabban Shel Kol Yisrael. He had to be equipped to become the quintessential teacher of the Jewish People.

The lesson is penetrating! Moshe is our leader because he is our rabbeinu, teacher. The essence of leadership is the ability to guide, to teach, to mentor the nation. To become the teacher of Klal Yisrael one must possess utter devotion to his rebbe. He must serve him and see to it that the classroom where he teaches is prepared and ready for his lesson. He must show devotion towards the students, caring for them, arranging their seats, so that they can learn better. Yehoshua exhibited this quality of leadership in which he was unsurpassed. His total abnegation to his rebbe, to the subject, to the students, earned him the right to succeed Moshe Rabbeinu.

There is still a pressing question that must be addressed. Why did Moshe wait until now to address the issue of his sons succeeding him as leader of the nation? Surely, there must have been other opportunities when this issue could have been addressed. Indeed, the laws regarding yerushas ha'ben, a son's inheritance, preceded the episode of bnos Tzelaphchad. Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita explains that the laws concerning a son inheriting his father's possessions has at its foundation a strong case for the male offspring as being the sole - or primary - inheritor. A son carries on his father's legacy and name, while a daughter, upon marriage, now carries her husband's name. Her father's lineage is not manifest with her in the same manner as it is with her brother.

Consequently, had the Torah not taught us about the daughters of Tzelaphchad, we might not have known the laws of yerushas ha'bas, a daughter's inheritance. She does not necessarily follow in the footsteps of her father. Only after the laws of a daughter's inheritance were revealed, did Moshe realize that inheritance is available to everyone.

Moshe was acutely aware of his sons' abilities. He fully understood that they could not ascend to his position based upon their own qualities. When he saw that a daughter could inherit her father's possessions and continue his legacy despite her incapacity for fitting into her father's "shoes," he felt this concept would provide a strong argument for his sons' succeeding him.

Hashem responded that Yehoshua merited the position as a result of his service and stewardship. Torah is unlike other appointments and positions which one inherits. It passes on to the one who works hardest for it, who earns it by his toil and commitment. The crown of Torah does not just pass on to children as an inheritance.

Alternatively, Nachlas Tzvi cites Horav Mordechai Weinberg, zl, who explains that there are two concepts connected to Moshe Rabbeinu's leadership over Klal Yisrael. On the one hand, he was the Sar haTorah, Prince of Torah, Manhig and Rosh haSanhedrin, leader and head of the Sanhedrin, High Court. He was a judge whose halachic decisions equaled that of all seventy-one members of the Sanhedrin. He was also Klal Yisrael's melech, king. Moshe Rabbeinu understood that his position as judge and adjudicator of the law can only be granted to one who is the undisputed scholar of the nation. It is a position that demands erudition and wisdom. Thus, it can not be inherited. It must be achieved. His position as king, however, should be one that could be inherited by his sons. Why should it be any different than a possession that a child inherits? Hashem's response went to the core of his reign as the Jewish nation's monarch. He was the king because of his distinction in Torah. The two go hand in hand and can, therefore, not be passed on unless the beneficiary is worthy of both simultaneously: monarchy and Torah leadership.

*May Hashem, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly. Who shall go out before them. (27:16.17)*

Moshe Rabbeinu lists the qualifications inherent in the leader who would succeed him. The Piascesner Rebbe, zl, was a rebbe who was devoted to his flock to the extreme. If it ever occurred that a student of his was conscripted into the army, he would do everything possible to free him from the terrible spiritual and physical fate that awaited him. He would pray for him, entreating the Almighty with heart-rending prayers to spare him this fate. He raised money and resorted to all sorts of endeavors, even to the point of exhibiting his miraculous powers - all to save a Jewish soul. Indeed, the Rebbe did not rest until the young man was freed.

He was once queried by a chassid as to why he expended such superhuman efforts, to the point that he would become ill, just to save a single person. After all, is it worth all of this? The Rebbe responded, "Any rebbe who is not prepared to sacrifice his life on behalf of any member of his congregation is not a rebbe!" When Moshe Rabbeinu established the criteria for leadership, he said, "who shall go out before them," yeitzei lifneihem, who shall go out. This means, whose soul/life will go out for his flock. He should be prepared to give up his life. That is the criteria for Torah leadership."

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, related the following story concerning the Chafetz Chaim, zl, to emphasize this point. A young man with an incurable disease came before the Chafetz Chaim to ask for a brachah, blessing. The Chafetz Chaim listened intently to the young man's tragic story and responded, "I will advise you on the condition that you never reveal what I am telling you to anyone. You must go to a certain community to the home of a great talmid chacham, Torah scholar, and request his blessing. He will acquiesce to your request, and - with Hashem's help - you will have a speedy recovery."

The young man followed the Chafetz Chaim's instructions, and in a short time he was healed from the dreaded disease. Life went on, and he later moved away from Radin, the home of the Chafetz Chaim. In time, he married and set up a home. Twenty years went by, and tragedy struck again. The young man's brother-in-law was stricken with a disease similar to the one with which he had been afflicted years earlier. He did not utter a word. He adhered to the Chafetz Chaim's wishes that he never reveal the source of his own miraculous cure.

His wife remembered that he had once suffered from a serious illness and was miraculously cured. She begged him to reveal how he was cured. He remained impassive and would not relate the facts behind his cure. He refused to tell. His wife did not stop. She kept asking him, begging him, entreating him to please reveal how he was cured. Her brother's life was hanging in the balance.

He finally relented and decided to reveal what he had kept secret for over twenty years. After all, surely the Chafetz Chaim did not mean "forever" when he had instructed him never to divulge what had occurred. Perhaps his brother-in-law would likewise be spared.

A short while later, he began to feel sick. At first, it seemed like an innocuous illness. Then it progressed rapidly into a full-scale reproduction of his original illness. He became deathly afraid that his end was near. As a last resort, he decided to travel to Radin, to visit the aged Chafetz Chaim. Perhaps, he would help him- again.

The Chafetz Chaim recalled quite well their earlier meeting and what he had instructed him to do. The Chafetz Chaim turned to the man, and with a heavy heart, he said, "I wish I could help you. But, what can I do? The last time you were stricken with this disease I was much younger. I was therefore able to fast forty days and entreat Hashem in your behalf. Now, I have become old and weak

and no longer able to do so." We now have a glimpse of the character of a true Torah leader and to what lengths he would go to intercede in order to help a member of his flock.

*When he zealously avenged My vengeance among them. (25:11)*

Defining the word kinah, jealousy, righteous indignation, Rashi writes, "Any form of the word kinah in the Torah refers to the individual who settles a score to avenge the vengeance of a matter." Rashi is teaching us a profound lesson. The fact that all of the references in the Torah to the word kinah refer to vengeance, settling a score, implies that even when one person is jealous of another, when one neighbor has a nicer car than another, it is not just simple jealousy; rather, it is vengeance. How are we to understand this? What did my neighbor do to me that I would want to take vengeance? If anything, a person feels hurt, he feels pain, that he does not have what his neighbor has. How is this hurt transformed into vengeance?

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, posits that in order to understand Rashi's comment, it is necessary to delve into the human psyche, to examine the nature of an individual who is envious of another person. What motivates this jealousy, and how does it reach the point of envy?

First, we must take into account the anomaly that seems to stand out concerning the character trait of jealousy. In regard to every other form of lust or craving, one seeks gratification of this urge. If he does not receive this pleasure, he is disturbed. His distress, however, only concerns the pleasure which he did not obtain. As soon as this pleasure is availed to him, his mood reverts to its original state. Not so in regard to the character trait of jealousy. When one is jealous of someone for something that he possesses, the focus of his envy immediately transfers from the object he desires to the person who possesses it. He begins to envy and then hate him - even after he has also acquired the same object. He might now own the object, but the hatred that preceded this ownership is still dominant.

In other words, a number of steps establish the foundation of jealousy. First, one observes an object in someone else's possession for which he has a desire. He says to himself, "My friend has something that I do not have." Second, he says, "I also deserve such an item. He is no better than I." In the third step, he feels that, indeed, he is more deserving than his friend to own the item in question. Now that he feels that he is more deserving of ownership than his friend, he begins to imagine that, in truth, this object should have been his in the first place. He now wonders, "What is he doing with my object?" Finally, he gets carried away by his imagination and becomes angry that his friend "stole" his object. "What he has is really mine!" He now becomes enraged at the individual who "used to be his friend" and seeks vengeance - from him. This is the meaning of Rashi's statement: the word kinah, commonly translated as jealousy, contains in it an overpowering component of vengeance. This is human nature.

Horav Solomon notes that, regrettably, the nature of many people is to be contentious and vengeful throughout their lives. They want to be on top; they seek public acclaim. If someone else receives the public recognition they feel belongs to them, they become agitated and distressed. This leads to lashon hora, disparaging speech and slander. This is their revenge. This soothes their anger. Not only do they speak lashon hora, they want to listen to it - anything, as long as it belittles and disgraces the individual who is the subject of their envy. Envy is the root of lashon hora.

This is not a new phenomenon. There is nothing novel about this thesis. Probably, the only novel element about it is that someone had the courage to state it, to focus upon an ill that plagues our

society. Jealousy, hatred, slander, vengeance - all are expressed because our friend has something that we would also like to have. It never enters our mind that perhaps we do not deserve it, or that we did not work hard enough for it. No one ever looks at it this way. We always feel that everything either belongs, or should belong, to us. If someone else has what we feel we should have had, then they must have taken what is ours!

Is there a cure for the disease called envy? Orchos Chaim l'HaRosh writes that envy is a sickness for which there is no cure. Mesillas Yesharim writes that envy is the result of ignorance and foolish thinking. The envious person gains nothing; the person whom he envies loses nothing; the only one who loses out is the one who envies. Envy is particularly severe if one sees a competitor being successful. Envy is lethal; it is irrational. That fact does not seem to stop anybody.

The Ohr Yechezkel explains the seriousness of the ailment called envy by explaining that the individual does not realize that he is sick. The envy eats at him until he becomes filled with hatred. Is there no hope? There is one chance for a cure - emunah, faith in the Almighty. If a person infuses himself with the idea that whatever he will ever have is from Hashem and that no one can ever take away from him what is rightfully his, he will be cured of envy. Indeed, one who is envious of another person is, as Horav Chaim Vital zl, says, a moreid b'Hashem, one who rebels against the Almighty. He challenges Hashem's decision concerning who should have and who should not have. The Rambam writes that in the days of Moshiach there will be no wars, no hunger, no jealousy and no envy. There will be an abundance of good, and people will lack nothing. They will be involved in only one endeavor: to know Hashem, to develop a deeper knowledge of His greatness. How interesting it is, says Horav Solomon, that the only tikun, improvement, needed in the hearts of the Jewish people to bring about a period in which we will warrant that the world will be filled with a profound knowledge of the Almighty is to abrogate envy from our midst. Unfortunately, this "only thing" seems to keep eluding us.

*And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood, because he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for the Bnei Yisrael. (25:13)*

It is a well-known maxim that Hashem remunerates middah k'neged middah, measure for measure. This pasuk raises many questions. First, what is the relationship between Pinchas' act of zealotry and the blessing of eternal priesthood for his descendants? Second, when the Torah says "Pinchas saw," it seems to imply that Pinchas saw what no one else saw. Were they not all there to witness the dastardly act committed by Zimri? The previous Gerrer Rebbe, Horav Pinchas Menachem Alter zl, cites the Baal Shem Tov, who relates in the name of the Arizal, that Hashem shows a person only that which relates to him - either positively or negatively. Indeed, when the famous tzaddik Horav Zushe, zl m'Annipole, observed someone acting in a sinful manner, he would exclaim, "Oy Zushe, the sinner, oy Zushe, the sinner." In other words, he felt that Hashem was conveying a message to himself: if he saw a sin, then he himself was somehow tainted in that area. When the sinner heard Rav Zushe make such a startling statement, he realized that he should repent.

When Pinchas saw Zimri's immoral act, he wondered why he was witnessing it. He introspected into his own behavior and concluded that Hashem was not talking to him. He surmised that Hashem wanted him to see this act, so that he would react zealously and avenge the honor of Hashem and Klal Yisrael. Pinchas saw the Shechinah distancing Itself from Klal Yisrael. He acted immediately. Pinchas added kedushah, holiness, to the Jewish People.

He was not a Kohen, by design, so that he could receive his due. For contributing to the Jewish People's spiritual ascendancy, for adding kedushah, he was rewarded with additional kedushah for his descendants. Pinchas noticed a void, and he immediately filled it. This occurs in numerous instances in our lives, but as the old adage goes, "Some people make things happen, while others just stand there wondering what happened."

*Harass the Midyanim and smite them. (25:17)*

Hashem commanded Moshe Rabbeinu to do battle with Midyan because of that nation's malicious attempt to destroy Klal Yisrael's spiritual standing. Their attempt to corrupt the Jewish People warranted their destruction. This punishment is different than that which was meted out against the Egyptians. The Torah in Sefer Devarim 23:8 insists that the Egyptians not be rejected. Is this equitable? One would think that the nation that tried so hard to destroy us physically would deserve a more severe punishment than the Midyanim, who "merely" attempted to corrupt us. Chazal have a different perspective than we have. They view a spiritual threat as having greater significance, and potentially being more harmful, than the physical threat of the Egyptians. True, the Egyptians ruthlessly enslaved our People and cruelly killed our newborn infants. Yet, they are not to be totally rejected, because a physical threat - as painful as it may be - will not destroy our People. We have survived physical danger. A threat to our moral/spiritual future threatens the very essence of Klal Yisrael. We are a nation whose uniqueness is our moral fiber, our spiritual essence. To corrupt these virtues is to destroy Hashem's nation.

The Torah's perspective is different than that to which we have become accustomed to in contemporary society. Some of us think that while spirituality is definitely a primary component of life, along with other major ingredients, it does not yet comprise the major component in life. Our Torah - and, by extension, our entire religion - teaches us that spirituality comprises life. Indeed, it was necessary for the Torah to emphasize that one should transgress a mitzvah if one's life is in danger. Otherwise, one might have conjectured that martyrdom is required whenever there is a danger to one's spiritual dimension. This is true in the case of the three cardinal sins: idolatry, murder and adultery. These sins totally ravage one's spirit. In these cases life is not worth living, since the potential for spirituality has been so severely compromised.

We have to ask ourselves if we can integrate this crucial idea into our lives. We take every precaution to protect and enhance our physical welfare. Do we do the same for our spiritual well-being? We set up safeguards to eliminate any serious threat to our health. Are we just as careful in setting up a similar bulwark to avoid incursions that diminish our spirituality? We are bombarded daily by the perverse media. The mass media of today reflects the moral degradation of contemporary society. They communicate both graphically and verbally the ills that plague society - of course, presenting it all in a matter-of-fact manner, as if this is the standard of the way people live. While this might be the norm for the rest of the world, for us it is utter revulsion and an insult to us as human beings, particularly as Hashem's Nation. Do we protect our children and ourselves from the onslaught of today's media? Do we take as many precautions to protect our children from exposure to this mortal threat to our spirituality as we would if it endangered their physical well-being?

Regrettably, the contemporary parent, the observant included, tends to rationalize permitting his children's exposure to objectionable material. He wants his child to get a feel for the "real world." They should not be sheltered or raised in a vacuum. All of these statements are lame excuses for ineffective

parenting. The parent would not expose his child to a communicable disease, or radiation, or some of the physical ills of today's counterculture. Why is their child's spiritual safety any less important? The answer is that the parent unfortunately places greater value on the child's physical well-being than on their spiritual health. It is, therefore, no wonder that these children grow up into physically healthy, spiritually deficient, adults.

*He (Moshe) took Yehoshua and stood him before Elazar the Kohen and before the entire assembly.  
(27:22)*

The Yalkut describes the scene in which Yehoshua was "handed over" to the assembly, as Moshe Rabbeinu presented his successor to the nation. Moshe and the people lifted their heads to listen to Yehoshua. What did Yehoshua say? He said, "Blessed is Hashem Who gave the Torah to His Nation, Yisrael, through Moshe Rabbeinu." We all know that a leader's inauguration address sets the tone for his administration. His remarks are carefully weighed and articulated in the best possible manner. Ostensibly, Yehoshua was no different. He meticulously prepared his first major address, his acceptance speech, with care and deliberation. Why did he choose to include the fact that the Torah was given to Klal Yisrael through Moshe? He is about to commence a new reign. He is the new leader. Should he not emphasize his plans and aspirations for his leadership of the people?

In addressing this question, the Kesav Sofer first focuses on the distinction between Moshe and Yehoshua, noting their disparate approaches towards assuming the mantle of leadership. When Hashem first asked Moshe to lead the Jewish People, Moshe refused to accept the honor. Seven days went by, and each time Moshe told Hashem, "I am not worthy; I am not the appropriate person for the position." We should expect at least the same from Yehoshua. Should not the disciple follow in the footsteps of his great mentor? Yet, we find nowhere written that Yehoshua spurned the opportunity to become Klal Yisrael's leader. Why? Was Yehoshua any better qualified or suited for the position?

We assert that Moshe's position, his function as leader, was of a different nature than that of Yehoshua.

Chazal draw the distinction between the two leaders when they state, "Moshe's face is like the sun, while Yehoshua's face is like the moon." "Chazal are teaching a significant lesson," says the Kesav Sofer. When Moshe conceded to the power, he found nothing prepared. Klal Yisrael, as a nation, was at best a figment of the imagination. Moshe's leadership, his unique personality and sterling character, his ability to inspire and to infuse the people with Torah values and guide them towards observance, set the stage. Moshe was able to build, to create "yeish me'ayin," ex nihilo, something from nothing. Moshe was like the sun that illuminates with its own light. It does not draw its power from another source. It is the source. Moshe felt himself unworthy of this daunting position. He, therefore, rejected it.

Yehoshua, on the other hand, did not have such a tall order. He discovered a nation whose exposure to the Revelation of the Almighty was unprecedented. They were organized, complete and orderly, each man in his camp by his flag. Every Jew knew his place and what was demanded of him. Yehoshua's function was similar to that of the moon: to continue the sun's light; to carry it forth; to spread its illumination; to maintain its brilliance. This is how Yehoshua would lead the nation: he would carry; he would maintain his rebbe, Moshe's, legacy.

Yehoshua had no reason to defer. Nothing was expected of him that he could not achieve. This is what Yehoshua sought to emphasize when he related that Hashem gave the Torah to Klal Yisrael

through Moshe Rabbeinu. Yehoshua was telling them, "I do not intend to innovate. I will not append or amend the Torah that Hashem gave you through Moshe. My only purpose is to maintain, to guard that what was will continue, to see to it that the Torah that was given through Moshe will spread forth through all of Klal Yisrael." Indeed, this is the function of every leader, to maintain the heritage, to continue the legacy of the past, so that there will be a viable future.

*Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon Hakohen turned back My wrath when he zealously avenged My vengeance...Behold I give him My Covenant of Peace. (25:12,11)*

Kinah and shalom, zealousness and peace, vengeance and harmony, are terms that just do not seem to fit together. At first glance, one would think that they contrast one another. The Torah does not present it in this light. Pinchas acted zealously; he avenged Hashem's vengeance, and Hashem rewarded him with the Covenant of Peace. It was not, however, Pinchas' personal vengeance. Rather, he acted on behalf of Hashem. That makes a world of difference. Someone had to respond to the fact that Hashem's Name was being defamed. Pinchas saw the people's apathy. Everyone just stood by while Zimri acted in the most reprehensible manner. This was a gross chillul Hashem, profaning of Hashem's Name, which could only be ameliorated through a Kiddush Hashem. The perpetrator, regardless of his exalted position, must be stopped in such a manner that would shock the people back into reality. Pinchas returned the crown of peace to Klal Yisrael. He returned the shalom, peace, by bringing back Klal Yisrael's sheleimus, completion. Pinchas' act of kiddush Hashem healed the rift which the chillul Hashem had caused. Klal Yisrael was once again at peace.

Pinchas risked his life when he slew Zimri. It was worth it to avenge Hashem's Name. He was also prepared to relinquish his portion in Olam Habah, World to Come, in order to save Klal Yisrael from the plague. He "bargained" with Hashem, as he implored Him not to punish everyone in response to the sinners. The Meshech Chochmah explains that these two actions - avenging Hashem's Name; and renouncing himself on behalf of Klal Yisrael -- were rooted in his genes. They were character traits he inherited from his father, Elazar, and grandfather, Aharon. Nikmas Hashem, zealousness, vengeance on behalf of the Almighty, characterized Elazar. When Aharon HaKohen died and the Clouds of Glory were taken away, the Jews moved backwards; they did not want to go further. Elazar battled them to continue on. Selflessness, a willingness to renounce oneself for the good of the People, characterized Aharon. In order to delay Klal Yisrael's sin with the Golden Calf for one more day, he was prepared to make the calf himself. He said, "Let the onus of guilt be placed on me, so that Klal Yisrael will not be destroyed." Is it any wonder the Torah mentions Pinchas' father and grandfather in delineating his pedigree. He continued where they had left off.

Not every kanai, zealot, however, is a Pinchas. There are many who are motivated by their own interests, to further their personal gain. Pinchas is, indeed, in a unique class: the true zealot, the kanai l'shem Shomayim, for Heaven's sake. How are we able to discern between the true zealot and the chameleon, the one who surreptitiously acts in the Name of Hashem, but in reality is an agent of Satan?

The Baal Shem Tov distinguishes between the two kanaim that are mentioned in the Torah: Pinchas and Korach. Yes, Korach claimed the mantle of zealotry. He said that he represented the nation that was being "used" by Moshe and Aharon. They were being deprived of true leadership! What right did Moshe and Aharon have to take everything for themselves? What about the other Bnei Levi? Who said that a Kohen Gadol was necessary for a nation that was entirely holy? Yes, Korach presented himself as being sincere, as a true fighter for the honor of the people. In contrast, Pinchas acted with

vengeance; he was a zealot. Obviously, Pinchas was, while Korach was not. What did each do that determined his true character?

The Torah answers our question "b'kano es kinaasi b'socham" "as he zealously avenged My vengeance among them." Pinchas did not make a new monument. He did not separate from the nation to create a new splinter group, as Korach did. Pinchas did what had to be done. Korach needed the support of an entire movement. Korach sought to undermine, to destroy, to uproot the leadership of Klal Yisrael, so that he could assume power. Not Pinchas: he saw a moral outrage, and he immediately responded. He cared about peace; he remained b'soch ha'eidah, among the people.

Kanaus catalyzes divisiveness; zealotry severs relationships; If the situation destroys the harmony and unity of a community, it is not kanaus: It is glorified machlokes, controversy. It is the Korachs of each generation who wrap themselves in talleisim of techeles and expound their love of Torah and mitzvos. The talleisim only serve to conceal their real malicious intentions.

We note another distinction between Pinchas and Korach. Pinchas acted alone. He saw an incursion into the moral fabric of Judaism, and he responded immediately. That is kanaus. Korach deliberated and campaigned, going from place to place to gather a group of supporters who would stand by him. That is not kanaus. The kanai acts alone. He acts with urgency and immediacy. He does not search for supporters. He observes a chillul Hashem, and he acts. Korach cared about himself. He was not going to risk losing. He sought support. Pinchas' goal was l'shem Shomayim. Korach's goal was to benefit Korach.

*The name of the slain Israelite man who was slain with the Midianite woman was Zimri, son of Salu, Prince of a father's house of (the tribe of) Shimon. (25:14)*

Is it necessary to tell us the name of the Jewish perpetrator as well as to mention his illustrious lineage? Is there any purpose served by announcing that the one who has publicly debased himself, who flagrantly desecrated Hashem's Name, was a Nasi, a leader of shevet Shimon? Rashi states that since the Torah traces the ancestry of the tzadik Pinchas for the sake of praise, it delineates the ancestry of the evil one for disparagement. Indeed, Pinchas' act of vengeance becomes greater, his courage more significant, when we take into consideration whom it was that he killed. We still wonder whether it is necessary to include Zimri's ancestors. They are not the guilty ones. Let Zimri himself, not his ancestors, answer for Zimri.

Horav Yechezkel Levinstein, zl, feels that the Torah teaches us a profound lesson. Despite the degradation inherent in the sin, we must account for every aspect of the evil. Zimri perpetrated a terrible sin. He publicly profaned the Name of Hashem in an act that was both despicable and immoral. He will be called to task for this. He will also have to answer for besmirching his family name. He carries the onus of guilt for not living up to the position of Nasi. This is consistent with the Rambam's position in his Igeres Ha'Shemad in which he writes that Yaravam ben Nevat, the infamous choteh u'machati -- who himself sinned and caused others to sin, who split Klal Yisrael -- will have to answer to Hashem for his evil, as well as for not sitting in the sukkah. One would think that the importance of such a sin would be minimized in the light of his other, more exotic, transgressions. Not so.

There are those who think that once they have transgressed a number of serious offenses, they

automatically become members of the "select" group of porkei ol Torah, those who have rejected the yoke of Torah. They assume that they will be responsible only for the "big" sins, but not for the "little" ones. They are, however, categorically wrong. Hashem will hold them in contempt for everything: from chillul Shabbos; to eating unkosher food; to wasting their time when they should have been studying Torah.

This idea disputes the position which many alienated Jews hold: that one either performs "everything" or "nothing." The Heavenly Tribunal will address the big issues, not the small ones. One who rejects everything sacred to the Jewish People, from Shabbos to tefillin, from kashrus to fidelity in marriage, does not have to concern himself with bentching after his meal. Regrettably, this form of misguided hashkafah, philosophy, has plagued many a Jew, initiating him on a course that distances him further and further from Torah Judaism. One should never absolve himself of his lesser infractions, maintaining that they are overshadowed by the much greater ones.

The Gaon M'Vilna once walked by a house where he heard singing. He entered the house - and, to his chagrin -- he discovered a young man who had left the faith singing together with a gentile girl. The Gaon turned to his student and said, "This rasha, wicked one, will one day answer to the Heavenly Tribunal for all of his sins: from his rejection of our faith to the reason that he did not study the secrets of the Heavenly Chariot. It will not happen immediately. He will undergo significant hardship and suffering until he reaches the level of purity, when the only criticism against him will be his lack of studying kaballah, mysticism." This is the depth of Heavenly Judgement to which we are all vulnerable.

*The sons of Gad according to their families: to Tzephon, the Tzephonite family; to Chagi, the Chaggite family. (26:15)*

What seems to be an innocuous pasuk detailing members of shevet Gad is rendered homiletically by the Bobover Rebbe, Shlita, to be communicating a profound lesson. He cites the Maor Va'Shamesh who says that the two letters of the name Gad -- gimel, daled -- allude to the mitzvah of tzedakah, charity. The letters are a "notreikun," acronym, for two words -- "gomel dalim," - he who benefits the poor. There are two aspects to the mitzvah of tzedakah: There is the individual who gives his money quietly, without fanfare and publicity. He does not seek recognition or acclaim for his charitable deeds. There is another type of gomel dalim; he who publicizes his charitable deeds, seeking notoriety for whatever good he does.

Each of these forms of tzedakah has an advantage and a disadvantage. The former has the benefit of "hatzneah leches im Hashem Elokecha," "walk humbly with Hashem your G-d." (Michah 6:8) Privacy, humility, self-effacement: These are qualities that elevate the act of giving charity. The downside of "quiet" giving is that the individual cannot serve as a paradigm for others to emulate. People follow the example of others. It would be helpful if others could follow his good deed - if only they knew. The latter individual, who gives publicly, seeking attention for his acts of kindness, will at least inspire others to follow in his path. The disadvantage of his public act is, of course, the arrogance that goes to his head -- demeaning the nobility and beauty of his act of kindness.

This is the pasuk's message: The sons of Gad - gimel, daled - hinting to the gomel dalim, has two aspects. The first is Tzephon, which in Hebrew means concealed, is a reference to the one who camouflages his act of giving. The second is Chagi, whose name is a derivative of the Hebrew word "chag," festival. His name refers to the one who gives tzedakah openly, conspicuously, for all to see and talk about. Since both names are derived from forms of the word charity, one might conjecture that they are equally in good standing. The Torah, however, places Tzephoni -- representing the inconspicuous donor who does not wish to call attention to himself - first, to teach us which one of these two forms of charity takes precedence over the other.

Moshe spoke to Hashem, saying, "May Hashem, G-d of the spirits, of all flesh, appoint a man over the Assembly, who shall go out before them. And come before them, who shall take them out and bring them in; and let the assembly of Hashem not be like sheep that have no shepherd. Hashem said to Moshe, "Take to yourself Yehoshua, son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit. (27:16,17, 18,19)

Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to Hashem. He asked for a leader to succeed him in shepherding the Jewish People. Moshe did not simply ask; he more or less demanded a leader, so that the people should not be left alone as sheep without a shepherd. Moshe understood the nature of leadership. After all, he was the consummate leader. He knew that a leader must be patient; he must be able to be "sovel," tolerate/bear, the Jews. Moshe understood the people. He knew they could not be left alone, without guidance, without direction, without leadership. He could not leave this world until Hashem had named his successor. Ostensibly, Moshe could not pick his own successor. He felt himself to be incompetent for this selection. This act required Hashem himself, "b'chvodo u'batzmo," in His Glory. Hashem knew who could tolerate Klal Yisrael, who could patiently bear their burden, who could advise each individual Jew.

Horav Matisyahu Solomon, Shlita, explains that savlanus, patience, is not a simple character trait to master. Rashi comments on the pasuk in Bamidbar 12:3, "And the man Moshe was exceedingly humble." This means "shafel, v'savlan," humble and long-suffering. Moshe's patience was exemplary. He cites Horav Yerucham Levovitz, zl, who adds that Rashi does not mean that shafel v'savlan is the result of anivus, humility and long-suffering. Tolerance, patience, forbearance, equanimity - these are the qualities that comprise the middah, character trait, of anavah.

This was Moshe's request of Hashem. The people needed a leader who could be sovel, tolerate, each and every Jew. Moshe, the "anav mikol adam," the most humble/tolerant man on the earth, knew what he was asking. He continued by asking for a leader "who shall go out before them and come in before them." He then seems to repeat himself when he asks, "Who shall take them out and bring them in?" Why does he make this redundant request? Horav Solomon cites the Vilna Maggid, Rav Zalmen Leib, zl, who, in his eulogy for Rav Akiva Eiger, zl, said that there are leaders who lead by virtue of their "going out before them and coming in before them." Their total demeanor in the way they act, how they "go in and go out," serves as a paradigm for others to emulate. There is also another aspect of leadership: knowing how to "take people and bring them in;" the ability to advise people how to act, how to live. Moshe asked Hashem for a leader who was patient and tolerant, who would lead by example and who could advise on, and respond to, the problems facing each individual member of his flock. Klal Yisrael should not be left as sheep without a shepherd, because it was crucial that they have a leader that met the requisite criteria.

Hashem responded to Moshe with one name: Yehoshua, "ish asher ruach bo," a man in whom there is spirit. The Alter m'Novordok, zl, explained the key for finding the individual who fit the bill, who exemplified those areas of conduct, character refinement and aptitude, one who could succeed Moshe at the helm of the Jewish people. He was to look for someone who possessed "ruach bo," the

one "in whom there is spirit." Only someone who has mastery over himself can inspire and lead others. The Jewish leader must first be able to lead himself before he can lead others.

Horav Solomon sums up his thesis on leadership, noting that Moshe Rabbeinu's prayer, "And let the assembly of G-d not be like sheep that have no shepherd," was not an appeal merely for that generation. Moshe Rabbeinu implored Hashem for every generation; Klal Yisrael should never be left bereft of leadership, a leadership that is "ish asher ruach bo." This is the criterion: We have to pray that we are worthy of it.

*Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon Hakohen, turned back My wrath from you Bnei Yisrael. When he zealously avenged Me among them. (25:11)*

Pinchas acted on behalf of the Almighty. He reacted with jealousy and with vengeance, as he witnessed Zimri publicly desecrating Hashem's Name. Rashi emphasizes the word, "kinaasi," "My jealousy/wrath". Pinchas reacted in the same manner that Hashem would have. He became angry as Hashem would. Hashem's anger was his anger; he accepted Hashem's "hurt" as his own hurt. Horav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita, delves into the concept of "kinaasi" in an attempt to explain its significance. We find that Rashi previously had mentioned that the tribes, especially Shevet Shimon, were criticizing and demeaning Pinchas for his descent from a Midyanite priest, namely Yisro. They would say, "Look how this one, whose grandfather fattened calves for idolworship, has had the audacity to slay a Nasi." For this reason, the Torah traces Pinchas' lineage back to Aharon, underlining his holy pedigree. We may wonder why they focused on the "pitem," fattening of the calves? What about the other aspects of avodah zarah, idol worship, areas that are more involved with the actual worship? Why did they pick on an area of worship that for the most part is only a hachanah, preparation, for the real thing?

Horav Ezrachi explains that they sought to demean Pinchas even more. Not only did his grandfather worship idols, his devotion and love for them was overwhelming. He even fattened calves, so that they would be a better sacrifice. His commitment to idolworship was to the point of zealouslyness. Those who denigrated Pinchas were emphasizing a point. Pinchas' zealouslyness was an inherited trait. This was a family characteristic. His maternal grandfather possessed a similar sort of zealouslyness - for idols.

Hashem writes in His Torah that, while Pinchas did inherit an overwhelming sense of commitment to a goal, his objective was different from his grandfather's: his zealouslyness was for "kinaasi", "My jealousy". Pinchas was totally committed; he was zealously devoted - to Hashem. The zealouslyness itself is not significant. Rather, the importance lies in the ideological posture behind it. There are all types of zealots; their goal determines the holiness of their mission. Hashem attested to the integrity of Pinchas' objective.

*Therefore, say "behold, I give him My covenant -- the peace." (25:12)*

Pinchas received his reward from Hashem - the covenant of peace. He represents peace. Chazal tell us that Pinchas is Eliyahu Ha'navi, the harbinger of Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Pinchas' bold action on behalf of Hashem earned him the privilege of becoming the bearer of the Divinely inspired peace on

earth. We are taught that the "vav" in the word shalom is broken in half, so that it must be written in two parts. Horav Shlomo Breuer, zl, interprets this as a characterization of the lofty task of every Jewish leader, whose goal in life is to bring about the peace for which Hashem yearns.

In the account of Creation, regarding the second day, the Torah says, "There should be a spreading sky in the midst of the water, and it should divide between water and water." Upon the completion of every other phase of Creation, the Torah says "And G-d saw that it was good." Regarding the second day, it does not say "ki tov," "It was good." Why? Chazal explain that on this day the concept of separation was established. A day which brought division -- and the possibility of contention -- into the world cannot be described as "ki tov." This is enigmatic. Did not a division take place also on the first day, as Hashem separated between light and darkness? Yet, the "ki tov" imprimatur was in effect. What is the difference?

Horav Breuer explains that on the second day the division was of greater significance than on its predecessor. On the second day, the division occurred between water and water, two like-substances, identical in both character and nature. Although this division was essential and constructive to the process of Creation, the Divine record omits the "ki tov," for a separation between "water" and "water" -- as applied to human beings -- can never be a positive occurrence. Two like species, two people of similar backgrounds, should not be divided. Such an act can only bring negative results. A division between light and darkness, however, which is ordained by the Creator, is labeled with the "ki tov" stamp. Relating to our lives, this qualification intimates a powerful admonition. When light and darkness, truth and falsehood, are unified, when they are indiscriminately mixed together, it is a grave cause for concern. Indeed, at such a juncture, a clear separation, in order to preserve the light and to salvage the truth, becomes a moral obligation of the greatest urgency.

A Jewish leader is one who fights for peace. He exerts all of his efforts to combat the forces of darkness who would undermine Hashem's truth. Only then is he acting in the spirit of Pinchas.

The fight of the Jewish leader must have one overriding goal - to achieve the peace - a shalom, peace, whose "vav" is broken, written in two pieces. The vav connects, but it also divides. While there is nothing as desirable as unifying all factions of the Jewish people, a separation of sorts is essential when the unification of conflicting philosophies can be achieved only at the expense of the Divine truth. Shalom must never be permitted to jeopardize the sheleimus, harmonious totality, of Jewish life which can only be effected under the direction of the Torah. He who seeks to promote true peace must be prepared to fight for the supremacy of Torah. Ultimate peace can, and will, only be achieved when we have the courage to stand resolute and unwavering against those who abuse and deny the veracity of Torah dictate.

The lack of harmony among our own people is nothing short of tragic. Unity requires true leadership, the leadership of a Pinchas/Eliyahu whose mandate it is "to return the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers." To effect a lasting unity among the various segments of Klal Yisrael requires an individual with courage, with resolution, with love for every Jew, regardless of his or her background or affiliation. Simultaneously, it takes enormous courage to close the door on those whose sole intent it is to undermine and destroy Torah Judaism. Only then will the covenant of peace become a reality.

*Therefore say, "behold, I give him My covenant -- the peace. (25:12)*

The Targum Yonasan says that Hashem granted Pinchas transcendence over death. He was transformed into Eliyahu Ha'navi, who will be the harbinger of the Final Redemption. Indeed, the Zohar Hakadosh writes that the Angel of Death has no dominion over he who is for the Name of Hashem, as he does over the average human being. Obviously, this statement has a deeper meaning than meets the eye. Why was Pinchas selected for this unique position? Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita, cites a pasuk in this parsha (27:16) in which Moshe asks Hashem to appoint his successor, "May Hashem, G-d of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in." What is the meaning of the phrase, "Who shall go out before them, and come in before them?" In the Sefer Bais Yitzchak, the author cites Rabbi Moshe Mendel who explained this according to an interpretation of Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl, regarding the Talmudic dictum : "the generation during which Moshiach will come, (will be one that) young people will humiliate their elders,... and the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog." In other words, in the "end of the days," people will manifest a lack of respect for those who deserve respect. What is the meaning of the analogy "to the face of a dog"? Rav Yisrael explained that usually when a caravan travels along a new route, or when someone must go on a trip along an uncharted path, he/they will select a guide to lead them, to show them where to go. The guide will travel in front, followed by the caravan. A dog also runs before his master, even though he does not know in which direction his master is going. He will , therefore, always look back to see if he is "leading" along the correct path. The guide knows where he is going, and the people follow. In contrast, the dog does not really lead, since he always looks back to see if he is going the way his master wants.

Jewish leaders should determine the correct path for their congregation, without seeking confirmation. They decide, and the people should follow. Otherwise, they are not leaders. They are similar to the dog who runs forward, always looking back for approval, making sure he his going the right way. Moshe Rabbeinu asked Hashem for a leader who would "go out before them," "who would take them out." He sought someone who was not afraid to make a decision, who would not vacillate indecisively waiting for his lay leadership's confirmation of "his" decision. He sought a leader who would lead, who would guide, who would teach and direct Klal Yisrael along the correct path.

Hashem responded with one name, "a man in whom there is spirit," one in whom there is the spirit of G-d, who will know how to treat each person according to his own spirit. He would be a man who possesses a strong spirit, who would not concern himself with the various trends and social issues that would not necessarily coincide with Torah perspective. He would stand prepared to defend the Torah against usurpers and have the courage to uphold its precepts regardless of the opposition. This man was Yehoshua.

Pinchas possessed a similar character. His devotion to Hashem was uncompromising; his determination to uphold the Torah was resolute. When an incursion against Hashem took place, he did not care who acted in rebellion, what was his social standing, the degree of his support, his family pedigree, personal wealth, or erudition. Pinchas cared not what they would say about him at the time, whether he would be scorned or humiliated: nor did he concern himself with what they would later write. He cared not for his personal safety or well-being. His overriding concern was the truth -- the truth of Torah. Such a person would be the appropriate leader, to serve as harbinger for Moshiach Tzidkeinu and the Final Redemption.

Otzar Chaim sites Rav Mendel M'vitebsk, zl, who makes an intriguing statement. When Moshe saw the incredible reward that Pinchas received as a result of his kanaus, zealousness, he was concerned that zealousness was to become the criteria for leadership. He, therefore, requested of Hashem, "You are the G-d of all spirits - those generations of Jews yet to be born. There will be so

many different types of people during various stages of our People's development. There will be various cultures, social scenes, internal and external pressures, which will affect our people. Please, Hashem, choose a leader who will be sensitive to these issues and to the different personalities. Choose a leader who will understand the nature of the sinner, who will not grab a spear and destroy someone the moment he sins." These are powerful words.

Indeed, the Midrash implies that Yehoshua was chosen because of his conciliatory ability. Does this mean that kanaus, zealotry, is inappropriate -- while passiveness and conciliation are appropriate? Are we to disregard flagrant incursions against our Torah and its disseminators? Is this a suggestion that we are to scrutinize -- even criticize -- Pinchas' courageous act? Did Pinchas lack sensitivity? We suggest that in no way is Pinchas's act to be critiqued. There is definitely a time and place for kanaus -- which is something to be determined by a gadol, preeminent Torah scholar and leader. When an act of denigration of such magnitude occurs, and its perpetrator is none other than a Nasi, Prince of Klal Yisrael, a leader of a tribe, where the possibility of creating a terrible influence exists, kanaus is the only recourse. Pinchas averted the tragedy of a nation which accepted, and was influenced by, Zimri's public defamation of Hashem's Name. When leadership sins, when leaders make a travesty of Hashem's Torah, they must be stopped. They must be exposed for what they really are. While the kanai will certainly be criticized, his courage will put a halt to the poison spewed by the "Zimris" of their generations.

*The name of the slain Yisrael man who was slain with the Midyanites was Zimri ben Salu, leader of a father's house of the Shimoni. (25:14)*

Interestingly, in the previous parsha, when the Torah narrates the actual episode and Zimri's flagrant act of licentiousness, it does not mention the identity of the perpetrators. Only now -- after Pinchas acted and Zimri has been executed -- is the identity of Zimri publicized. Why is this? Why is it that after Zimri has been slain, and Pinchas has received his reward, the Torah reveals who Pinchas killed? Rashi seems to address this question by saying that when the Torah records the name of the tzaddik, Pinchas, for praise, it also mentions the name of the evil perpetrator -- for shame. This still demands explanation. What relationship is there between the humiliation of the sinner and the glorification of the saint?

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh addresses this question, and responds that the Torah conveys to us the dictum, "A Jew, even if he has sinned, is still a Jew." The name Yisrael, the appellation that denotes membership in the Chosen People, does not dissipate as a result of sin. This concept is indicated by the words, "the name of the slain Yisrael" - emphasizing his nationhood. Every Jew has a spark of kedushah, holiness, emanating from Above, the Source of all kedushah. Although one sins, the spark of kedushah is never severed from its source. It has to be cleansed; the taint must be expunged. The kedushah, however, remains intact. By slaying Zimri, Pinchas eradicated the taint on Zimri's soul, allowing for his death to serve as his penance. He was now once again an "ish Yisrael." This applied only after he received his punishment. His name is mentioned in Parashas Pinchas, the parsha that follows the sin - and its consequences.

*Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon Ha'kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael. (25:11)*

Upon consideration, did Pinchas really have to act in such a drastic manner? He is lauded for avenging the honor of Hashem. Was there no other way to prevent Zimri from performing his reprehensible act of rebellion against Hashem? Could Pinchas not have chosen a less "final" -- and perhaps more conciliatory -- solution for the "Zimri" problem? This is the type of question that plagues those who do not quite understand the meaning of the term "kanai," zealot. Pinchas was not a reactionary who unleashed his uncontrollable anger, killing innocent people. He was not a religious maniac whose lack of discipline provoked him to resort to murder. No, Chazal teach us that "he saw the action (Zimri's act of harlotry) and (immediately) remembered the halachah that one who cohabits with a gentile, a zealous one may slay him." Pinchas viewed every question in life, every incident he confronted, through the eyes of halachah. He was a rational, peace-loving, man who responded to an incursion into the fiber of Judaism.

Conciliation and compromise do not comprise the halachic response for a bo'el Aramis, one who is intimate with a gentile. Had there been another approach, a less extreme punishment, something which would have satisfied all involved, Pinchas would clearly have taken such a route. Halachah, however, dictates death at the hands of a true zealot--and only at the hands of a true zealot.

Pinchas was an upholder of peace. We attribute this trait to him despite the fact that his action caused bloodshed. Peace with Hashem cannot be established upon the foundation of compromise or retreat. A responsible leader must confront, and subsequently, overcome all obstacles to peace. If this confrontation entails intervention on his part which might be characterized by some as intolerant or troublesome, then so be it. If people would only have greater insight into and respect for halachah, they might appreciate the actions of those who defend the purity of the Torah.

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon Ha'kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael when he zealously avenged Me among them...Behold! I give him My covenant of Peace...And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood. (25: 11,12, 13)

Pinchas receives the ultimate reward--Kehunas olam--eternal priesthood. This blessing of everlasting priesthood was not bestowed upon anyone else. It was not bestowed neither upon Moshe the lawgiver, nor Aharon the Kohen, who was the paradigmatic peacemaker. Horav Moshe Swift, zl, notes that the blessing of continuity, the concept of uninterrupted service to Hashem, was neither a product of the service in the Mikdash nor the teaching in the Bais Ha'midrash. While these contribute to future development, they do not actually forge the links in the chain of continuity. They do not create a "lo ul'zaro acharav" for him and his offspring after him. That emanates from the morality, the purity and the integrity of the home.

Pinchas was aware of Bilaam's subterfuge. Bilaam was no fool. He realized that cursing the Jew, attempting to destroy him through hatred and persecution, has no lasting effect. Indeed, the uncouth gentile's virulent, blatant anti-Semitism frequently has a revitalizing effect on the Jew. Suddenly, everybody is proud of his heritage. Individuals who have not been inside a shul since they became bar mitzvah become the spokesmen for the entire Jewish people. The community rallies together in support and solidarity. Judaism is once again acceptable.

No, Bilaam knew that in order to destroy the Jew, he must focus on the home. A home that is spiritually destroyed has a lasting effect upon its inhabitants. A shul that is gutted only encourages greater participation. A home that is religiously burnt out, is one in which children are raised ignorant of their noble heritage. They are exposed to the filth that dominates our secular society and are permitted -- and at times even encouraged --- to maintain friendships with those of another faith. Their exposure to intermarriage, impurity and immorality does not receive vehement resistance. This is a

home that will not produce everlasting Jewish offspring.

Bilaam understood this. He advised Balak to give the Jews the pagan girls to expose them to immorality, cognizant that idolatry would follow shortly thereafter. Bilaam was clever. He did not focus on the simple Jew, he did not bring his harlotry to the masses. He sought out Klal Yisrael's leadership. Once the leaders had fallen victim to the desires of the flesh, who would teach the masses? When the leaders are involved, who will reach out to the common Jew?

This type of sin that Bilaam propagated was unique in the sense that the punishment for its perpetration is not meted out by a court of law. This sin, this type of immorality, is so foreign to Jewish family life that its punishment is to be executed by zealots. The pious ones are those who are totally devoted to Hashem; those who understand the gravity of this brazen sin. These individuals realize that this incursion into the fiber of Jewish family life is not a sin against man or the community -- it is a sin against Hashem. Morality distinguishes the Jew from the rest of the world. To break down the purity of Jewish family life is to declare war on Hashem.

Pinchas cried out to the people, "How can you sin against Hashem?" He was jealous for Hashem's sake. Pinchas fought for family purity, for the morality and integrity of Jewish family life. He fought for Hashem. He was the man of peace. The covenant of generations of committed Jews is awarded to the one who fought to uphold the purity and chastity of Jewish family life.

Pinchas was the true man of peace. Sometimes in order to create peace, one must fight. The ever-ready peacemaker, the one who is accessible to all, who is tolerant and pliable, is not the one who is guaranteed peace. Tolerance has its shortcomings; peace has its price. The true peacemaker does not fear a fight when his conscience dictates it. Peace does not come from surrendering one's ideals or values in the name of unity. Everlasting peace, peace that is handed down from generation to generation, is one for which people are willing to fight. Peace takes courage, not cowardice. Peace takes firmness and stalwart commitment to ideals, not wavering, ineffectual commitment. How regrettable it is that some of us have confused tolerance with submission, flexibility with concession, and peace with surrender.

*He was zealous for My sake in their midst...Because he was zealous for his G-d and made atonement for the Bnei Yisrael. (25:11,13)*

What is the significance of the fact that Pinchas performed his act of zealousness "in their midst"? Sforno comments that Pinchas avenged Hashem's honor in the sight of all. Although they had originally seen Zimri's despicable act, and they did not protest, they could find atonement for not protesting against Pinchas. What Sforno is saying is that the masses were guilty of apathy. They witnessed blatant acts of harlotry and idolatry, yet they failed to object or to intervene. Their atonement would now be attained by permitting Pinchas to publicly carry out his act of zealousness. Sforno teaches us that apathy is almost as bad as the actual sin. When we permit others to flagrantly desecrate our heritage, to publicly debase the Torah and its mitzvos and to ridicule its disseminators, we are lending our support to their transgression. While it was not the masses who were guilty of the actual sin, they were, nonetheless, held in contempt for their indifference to the perpetrators. They received atonement by demonstrating that same "indifference" to Pinchas when he slew Zimri. One inaction atoned for another inaction.

We infer from here how far apathy can progress. It is one thing to look away from a sinner, but

it is an entirely different matter to suppress he who is zealous enough to challenge those who desecrate the Torah. We offer various excuses. We are concerned about public opinion. It might be viewed as a chillul Hashem. We must make attempts at conciliation...The list goes on. Acts of zealousness are not appropriate for everyone to undertake. We must respect and applaud the work of those who are truly sincere and virtuous in protecting the Torah.

Once Horav Amram Blau, zl, who was the head of the Neturei Karta in Eretz Yisrael, went out on Shabbos to protest a soccer game that was being played in defiance of the holy day. People were desecrating sanctity of Shabbos; someone was obligated to take action to stop this public profanation of Hashem's Name. Alas, all Rav Amram received for his troubles were the bruises he suffered at the hands of the people he attempted to stop. Afterwards, he complained to the Satmar Rebbe, zl, regarding the small group of people that showed up for the protest, "Surely, had a larger group of Jews turned up to protest, we might have achieved greater success." The Satmar Rebbe responded jokingly, "You are lucky that your own compatriots did not come out against you." He cited the Sforno that demonstrates Klal Yisrael's apathy during the sin of Pe'or. A kanai must do what is right, but he should be aware that support for kanaus is very difficult to bolster. People tend to follow what is in vogue--even if it is wrong.

*Yocheved, daughter of Levi, who was born to Levi in Egypt. (26:59)*

Yocheved was counted among the original seventy souls that accompanied Yaakov Avinu as he went down to Egypt. Horav Eli Munk, zl, in his commentary Kol Ha'torah, notes that Yocheved was placed at the core of this genealogy. He attributes this honor to her exceptional destiny. She married her nephew, Amram, a union that was legitimate only because the Torah had not yet been given. When Pharaoh decreed that all new-born Jewish boys be put to death, her husband divorced her. At the time, she was three months pregnant with Moshe. Her daughter Miriam, inspired by Ruach Ha'kodesh, convinced her father to remarry their mother. This guaranteed that Moshe would not be born into a broken home.

Yocheved died at the age of two hundred and fifty, shortly after she entered Eretz Yisrael. She had the nachas of watching her three children serve in leadership roles for Klal Yisrael. The dynasties of Kehunah and Malchus descended from her. Why? Why did she merit so much? We are taught that her merit was a result of her supreme devotion to her people when she and her daughter Miriam served as midwives for the early Jews in Egypt. They did not listen to Pharaoh's cruel decree to kill the baby boys. They risked their lives, courageously succeeding in foiling Pharaoh's decree.

If we just take a moment to think about this considerable reward, we will realize that this reward reflects the significance of the deed. The midwives risked their lives to bring Jewish children into a world that was cruel and dangerous, probably into a life of slavery, misery and persecution. Yet they received the greatest reward. We infer from this the enormous responsibility one has to bring Jewish children into the world--regardless of one's financial or social standing, whether one has a job or is still in school. Why is it that some of us place our trust in Hashem only when we think we have no alternative? What will wake people up to the realization that Hashem is there--always--for everything--regardless of the situation? Let us learn a lesson from this Jewish mother regarding a Jew's obligation to have a Jewish family and raise it according to Torah standards.

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