



“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, 46 and upon finding a single pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Matthew 13:45

Pinchas: (Phinehas) 25:10 –30:1(29:40)

23rd July 2022 - 24 Tammuz 5782

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim, and welcome to this week’s Parsha Pearl ‘Pinchas’

Key Events:

Pinchas/Phinehas is rewarded for his act of zealotry in killing the Zimri a Simeonite Prince and the Midianite Princess.

YHVH grants Pinchas a covenant of peace and the position of Cohen.

A census of the people counts 601,730 men between the ages of twenty and sixty.

Moses is instructed on how the Land is to be divided by lottery among the tribes.

The daughters of Tzelafchad petition Moses to grant them the portion of the land belonging to their father.

G-d accepts their claim and incorporates it into the Torah’s laws of inheritance.

Moses empowers Joshua to succeed him and lead the people into the Land of Israel.

Listing of the daily offerings and the additional offerings brought on Shabbat and the feasts.

This Torah portion again bears the name of a person. The other names attributed to the portions are Noach, Chayei Sarah in the book of Genesis. Yitro/Jethro in the book of Exodus. Korach, Balak, and Pinchas in the book of Numbers.

Pinchas possibly means ‘dark or bronze skinned’ and may have Nubian or north African/Egyptian origins.

Zimri - unusually comes from the verb (zamar –Strong’s H2167) zamar: to make music (in

praise of God. The name is attributed to another four men in scripture. Cozbi comes from the word (kazab –H3576), meaning to lie or deceive.

The primary focus of this week's study centres on the zeal of Pinchas and how we can draw from his act specific responses that can often be demanded of us when we come face to face with blatant acts that confront the law of God. Though this portion is named after Pinchas, the reference to him comprises only three verses.

25:10 Adonai said to Moshe, 11 “Pinchas the son of El’azar, the son of Aharon the cohen, has deflected my anger from the people of Isra’el by being as zealous as I am, so that I didn’t destroy them in my own zeal. 12 Therefore say, ‘I am giving him my covenant of shalom, 13 making a covenant with him and his descendants after him that the office of Cohen will be theirs forever.’ This is because he was zealous on behalf of his God and made atonement for the people of Isra’el.”

To understand the story of Pinchas we need to look into the context and travel back a little into chapter 25, to last week’s Torah portion – Balak. Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the priest, grandson of Aaron, reacts with zeal in dispatching Prince Zimri and Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite chief.

In our previous parsha - Chukkat, we learned that Balaam could only pronounce the blessings of YHVH over Israel. He was unable to help Balak in his attempt to defeat Israel. However, Balaam was able to turn Israel away from YHVH as the Hebrew nation turned to the abhorrent practices of the Midianites and their worship of Baal Peor.

Despite the brevity of this passage, there is an incredible amount to be learned about: the man, about zeal, the law and the legal response and debate concerning his actions. The study is far too exhaustive to cover in this visit.

Let us begin with a revisit to chapter 25.

CH25 Isra’el stayed at Sheetim, and there the people began whoring with the women of Mo’av. 2 These women invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, where the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 With Isra’el thus joined to Ba’al-P’or, the anger of Adonai blazed up against Isra’el.

As a result of Israel’s disregard of YHVH’s law to remain separate from the practices of the pagan nations, their immorality and sexual depravity, YHVH commands Moses to have all the ringleaders publicly impaled before the Lord so that His wrath would turn away from Israel and the plague be removed.

Following the execution of the guilty, the nation weeps in front of the tent of meeting. The sudden emergence of Zimri, and Cozbi the Midianite on the scene, may confirm that they were unaware of the recent decision to execute those who had committed the idolatrous acts. However, there may be an element of defiance as Zimri returns, backed by the force of his band of men. On hearing of the couple’s entrance into the camp, Pinchas tracks them down and impales them personally.

4 Adonai said to Moshe, “Take all the chiefs of the people, and hang them facing the sun before Adonai, so that the raging fury of Adonai will turn away from Isra’el.” 5 Moshe said to the judges of Isra’el, “Each of you is to put to death those in his tribe who have joined themselves to Ba’al-P’or.”

6 Just then, in the sight of Moshe and the whole community of Isra’el, as they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting, a man from Isra’el came by, bringing to his family a woman from Midyan. 7 When Pinchas, the son of El’azar, the son of Aharon the cohen, saw it, he got up from the middle of the crowd, took a spear in his hand, 8 and pursued the man from Isra’el right into the inner part of the tent, where he thrust his spear through both of them – the man from Isra’el and the woman through her stomach. Thus was the plague among the people of Isra’el stopped; 9 nevertheless, 24,000 died in the plague.

We can see that Pinchas’ approach in carrying out the ruling of YHVH found favour with the Lord. YHVH grants him ‘His pact of Friendship. From then on Pinchas is considered to be the first Zealot. Interestingly, we also know that it was the tribe of Simeon that saw the most significant fall in population among the numbering of the tribes in the census.

“Pinchas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priest, has turned My anger away from the Israelites by being zealous with My zeal in their midst so that I did not put an end to them in My zeal” (Num. 25: 11)

Centuries later Elijah reflects the same spirit of Pinchas. He tells God on Mount Horeb, “I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty.” (1 Kings 19: 14)

The Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Numbers 25:11-12 has this to say about Pinchas’ eternal spirit:

11 The zealous Phinehas bar Eleazar bar Aaron, the priest, has turned aside my anger from the Israelites because when zealous with my zeal he killed the sinners among them; and because of him I did not destroy the Israelites in my zealousness. 12 In an oath I say to him in my name: Behold, I have decreed to him my covenant of peace, and I will make him an angel of the covenant, and he shall live eternally, To announce the redemption at the end of days.

This covenant of peace is again made with Levi, Mal 2:4-7 4. **So shall you know that I have sent this command to you, that my covenant with Levi may stand, says the LORD of hosts. 5 My covenant with him was one of life and peace, and I gave them to him. It was a covenant of fear, and he feared me. He stood in awe of my name. 6 True instruction was in his mouth, and no wrong was found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and uprightness, and he turned many from iniquity. 7 For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.**

This passage in the Haftarah reveals to us the zeal of Elijah following the death of the 450 false

prophets and his subsequent flight from Jezebel.

19 Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets [of Baal] with the sword. 2 Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, “So may the gods do to me, and even more, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like the life of one of them.” 3 And Elijah was afraid and arose and ran for his life, and he came to Beersheba which belongs to Judah, and he left his servant there. 4 But he himself travelled a day’s journey into the wilderness, and he came and sat down under a juniper tree and asked [God] that he might die. He said, “It is enough; now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers.” 5 He lay down and slept under the juniper tree, and behold, an angel touched him and said to him, “Get up and eat.” 6 He looked, and by his head there was a bread cake baked on hot coal, and a pitcher of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 Then the angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, “Get up, and eat, for the journey is too long for you [without adequate sustenance].” 8 So he got up and ate and drank, and with the strength of that food he travelled forty days and nights to Horeb (Sinai), the mountain of God.

Elijah at Horeb

9 There he came to a cave and spent the night in it; and behold, the word of the Lord came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” 10 He said, “I have been very zealous (impassioned) for the Lord God of hosts (armies) [proclaiming what is rightfully and uniquely His]; for the sons of Israel have abandoned (broken) Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. And I, only I, am left; and they seek to take away my life.”

Jewish tradition equates Pinchas and Elijah as being one and the same, and thus granted Pinchas an extra-ordinary length of life. It may also refer to the spiritual anointing they both possessed.

Friends, we see in the life of these two men that the nation of Israel had come to the point of moral decline. An eschatological viewpoint to John the Baptist in the spirit of Elijah, brings the message of repentance and the warning that the Messiah would soon return. Moral decline is prevalent among all human culture. The western lifestyle highlights such a course as we see decisions taken to undermine and eradicate the precepts of a Christian faith in these nations. We have seen in recent times, marriage redefined , gender identity gaining ground in sexual orientation, and the inept inability within the Church of England to define what is a women, and of course, the continuing rise in recognising homosexual marriage amongst the clergy.

However, regardless of how such decisions grate against us, we must realize that people have a choice. If you don’t want to live by YHVH’s laws, then you are free to do that. You are also free to practice what you believe is right in your own eyes. To lay the two lists of laws – secular and YHVH’s side by side, may not be right in an argument because belief is a personal one. Let me explain: all of us have grown up governed by secular law. That is the law of the land. But when we became believers, we took upon or agreed by covenant with God to walk in the Laws of God. This immediately throws us into conflict. As believers, we have the

right to compare the two lists because we now understand that we have erred and broken the divine laws. An unbeliever does not have that conviction and cannot accept the rules of someone they don't believe in. To them the commandments of God are irrelevant.

It is only by YHVH's grace that we are given the faith to believe. When we walk in that faith, we pursue a course of righteousness. The covenant of peace is granted to us —that's why sin is forgiven — to maintain peace and order. However, when we look at Yom Kippur, for instance, we notice that not only is forgiveness sought, but recompense made wherever possible.

YHVH knows that there are people that will never believe in Him even if He showed up in their living rooms. Even Yeshua speaks about how He sent the prophets to Israel, and how they killed them, and how even with the witness of Abraham they still did not believe.

The Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16: 30'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone is sent to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31 Then Abraham said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

When we see both unbelievers and believers mocking God, we can, and maybe should, react with zeal. Please note, I am not advocating the violence of Pinchas' act or to respond with extremism. Yeshua taught us to judge with love and grace but also with righteousness, not violence or evil.

On the day of Judgement — the sovereign decision, mercy, and compassion of God will activate.

Jeremiah cites YHVH's contention with Israel regarding the sending of His prophets explicitly.

Jeremiah 7:25. From the day your fathers came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have sent you all My servants the prophets time and time again.

Jer 44:3.. because of the evil they have done. They provoked Me to anger by continuing to burn incense and to serve other gods that neither they nor you nor your fathers ever knew. 4 Yet I sent you all My servants the prophets again and again, saying: 'Do not do this detestable thing that I hate.' 5 But they did not listen or incline their ears; they did not turn from their wickedness or stop burning incense to other gods.

Jeremiah 25:4

And the LORD has sent all His servants the prophets to you again and again, but you have not listened or inclined your ear to hear.

Maybe you can do a study on how YHVH sent His prophets and under what conditions they were sent. It will give you a good insight into the role and message of the prophet. On a side note: we can see that there are specific voices for the prophet.

There is the voice that shouts for repentance and brings warning of YHVH's judgement, and the voice that declares the way of the Lord. In parallel, we see this: One prepares the bride,

(repentance) and the other announces the approach of the bridegroom, (the coming day of Messiah's return).

As we approach the fulfilling of the preparation of the bride, both voices will resonate together.

In a marriage ceremony even though the bride may be ready, she still has to make the journey to her future husband. The bridegroom does not come to get her. It is the job of those that have made those essential arrangements to make sure she gets there.

The message goes down the line ensuring everything is going to plan.

Let us look a little closer at this process; ultimately, it is the bride who says she is ready. Her dressers and her preppers have done all they can, and finally the question 'are you ready' is asked. In nervous excitement, she says she is. Her process now begins in moving forward to meet her husband. The marriage of the Lamb of God and His bride can only occur when YHVH has sanctioned it. He alone will know when all is ready. Creation in sense, has prepared the supper, and the invitations have gone out, but who will attend?

Looking at this story in the life of Pinchas we witness the elevation of a man to the high priesthood. The book of numbers is a priestly book and outlines the roles and practices of the priests, fundamentally. Through Pinchas, a spirit of zeal is released, and in the coming days, it will become more active as true believers rise to defend the gospel.

Pinchas in his decision to execute Zimri and Cozbi, became unclean too. He was willing to pay that price. He went against the priestly prohibition but found favour with YHVH because he did what was right in agreement with Him.

If there is a lesson to be learned, it is that often zeal for a cause is not a good leadership quality. Leaders must be patient and observant of the all the various landscapes and outcomes of the many decisions that must be taken. They too, must have zeal and vision, but in their desire to get things done, they must exercise discipline and patience to receive the task the Lord will have them do.

Pinchas or Phineas, went on to play an essential part as high priest. More is written about him in Chapter 31.

Numbers 31 (CJB)

Ch31 Adonai said to Moshe, 2 "On behalf of the people of Isra'el, take vengeance on the Midyanim. After that, you will be gathered to your people."

3 Moshe said to the people, "Equip men from among yourselves for war. They are to go and fight Midyan, in order to carry out Adonai's vengeance on Midyan. 4 You are to send to the war a thousand men from every one of Isra'el's tribes." 5 So out of the thousands of people in Isra'el, a thousand armed men from each tribe, 12,000 altogether, were mustered for war. 6 Moshe sent them, a thousand from each tribe, to the war; he sent them and Pinchas the son of El'azar the cohen to the war, with the holy utensils and the trumpets for sounding the alarm in his care.

In Joshua 22, Pinchas emerges again to confront the tribes of Reuben and Gad who have taken it upon themselves to build a high altar. Pinchas brings to remembrance the sin at 'Peor.'

11 And the children of Israel heard say: "Behold, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh have built an altar over against the land of Canaan in the borders of the Jordan, at the passage of the children of Israel."12 And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered themselves together at Shiloh to go up to war against them.13 And the children of Israel sent unto the children of Reuben and to the children of Gad and to the halftribe of Manasseh into the land of Gilead, Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest14 and with him ten princes, of each chief house a prince throughout all the tribes of Israel; and each one was a head of the house of their fathers among the thousands of Israel.15 And they came unto the children of Reuben and to the children of Gad and to the halftribe of Manasseh, unto the land of Gilead, and they spoke with them, saying,16 "Thus saith the whole congregation of the Lord: 'What trespass is this that ye have committed against the God of Israel to turn away this day from following the Lord, in that ye have built yourselves an altar, that ye might rebel this day against the Lord.17 Is the iniquity of Peor too little for us, from which we are not cleansed until this day, although there was a plague in the congregation of the Lord.

Friends, like Pinchas we may be called to approach and confront awkward moments that may be a little too close for comfort. Pinchas approached a very intimate moment when he found Zimri and Cozbi entwined. This passage speaks frankly and provides some gruesome detail. However, it may seem that this was not an impulsive act, but a response based on a law that is also referred to in the Talmud Sanhedrin that allowed such acts of zeal to be enacted out against those who blatantly broke the law.

Pinchas remembers the law. 'When a Jewish man cohabits with a heathen woman, zealots have the right to strike him dead [while he's in the midst of the act].''

"Let the one who reads the letter be the agent to carry it out," Moses replied. Talmud Sanhedrin.

It is fundamental in the extreme. But we must realize that the law of God is not the law of men, and there must be a severe distinction which can only highlight the sovereignty of God. A true zealot is not one who is inclined to violence but seeks the heart of God and pines for righteousness — looking to the safety of the whole community.

The sadness of the whole venture and as we reach the end of the book of Numbers, is how many actually made it to the border crossing and never crossed over. The Israelites were taught the law of YHVH for forty years. If ever a conversion could have happened to a people it should have been at this time but what history shows us is a people struggling with themselves and with the old order. That is the constant conflict between the nature of man and the super-nature of God. We as believers have taken, hopefully to heart, and accepted a better and new way. Sometimes the weight of the burdens we carry slow us down or dampen our zeal for the Lord. Maybe they are just too heavy.

Our encouragement comes in knowing that the burden of the Lord is light. Perhaps we need to make some adjustment.

Friends, the days ahead and the rise of the antichrist spirit will see many of us struggle in the faith. Pressure from our unbelieving loved ones and friends may cause us to flag in the midst of the storm. We may find our zeal burns cold as many in our company make unprecedented decisions to turn or walk another way. The way we continue to stand and be resolute is to serve the Lord as Joshua declares. Fighting makes us strong. A troop that continually trains and engages in battle become formidable.



Let us pray that the Lord will ignite our zeal for Him. Let us not give up friends.

Numbers 6:

24 'Y'varekh'kha Adonai v'yishmerekha.

(May Adonai bless you and keep you)

25 Ya'er Adonai panav eleikha vichunekka.

(May Adonai make his face shine on you and show you his favour.)

26 Yissa Adonai panav eleikha v'yasem l'kha shalom

(May Adonai lift up his face toward you and give you peace)

Glossary

*Midrash: In Judaism, the **Midrash** is the genre of rabbinic literature which contains early interpretations and commentaries on the Written Torah and Oral Torah (spoken law and sermons), as well as non-legalistic rabbinic literature (Aggadah) and occasionally the Jewish religious laws (halakha), which usually form a running commentary on specific passages in the Hebrew Scripture (Tanakh)*

*Targum: **Targum Onkelos** (or **Onqelos**), is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum (Aramaic translation) to the Torah. However, its early origins may have been western, in Israel. Its authorship is attributed to Onkelos, a famous convert to Judaism in Tannaic times (c. 35–120 CE)*

*Targum Jonathan: **Targum Jonathan**), otherwise referred to as **Targum Yonasan/Yonatan**, is the official eastern (Babylonian) Targum to the Nevi'im/Prophets. Its early origins, however, are western (i.e. from the Land of Israel), and the Talmudic tradition attributes its authorship to Jonathan ben Uzziel of Jerusalem in the time of King Herod*

Tannaim: Tannaim were the Rabbinic sages whose views are recorded in the Mishnah, from approximately 10-220 CE. The period of the Tannaim, also referred to as the Mishnaic period, lasted about 210 years.

*Talmud: The **Talmud** means "instruction, learning", "teach, study") is a central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The term "Talmud" normally refers to the collection of writings named specifically the **Babylonian Talmud** (*Talmud Bavli*), although there is also an earlier collection known as the Jerusalem Talmud (*Talmud Yerushalmi*) or Palestinian*

The Talmud has two components:

1. The Mishnah (c. 200 CE), the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law;

2. The Gemara (c. 500 CE), an elucidation of the Mishnah and related Tannaitic writings that often ventures onto other subjects and expounds broadly on the Hebrew Bible

Talmud Sanhedrin - Talmudic tractate that details the laws applicable to the hierarchal Jewish judicial system, as well as the various penalties.

'Antiquities of the Jews' 1st century historian Flavius Josephus wrote around AD 93 or 94. The 20 volumes contain an account of history of the Jewish people.

Jubilees: The Book of Jubilees claims to present "the history of the division of the days of the Law, of the events of the years, the year-weeks, and the jubilees of the world" as revealed to Moses (in addition to the Torah or "Instruction") by angels while he was on Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights. The chronology given in Jubilees is based on multiples of seven; the jubilees are periods of 49 years, seven "year-weeks", into which all of time has been divided

Vulgate: This is the Latin Bible. Translated from the Hebrew and Aramaic by Jerome between 382 and 405 CE, this text became known as the 'versio vulgata', which means 'common translation'.

Rashi, whose real name is Shlomo Yitzchaki was born in France in the 11th century. Rashi wrote a comprehensive commentary on the Talmud and commentary on the Hebrew Bible.

Moses ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides became better known by the acronym Rambam. He was born in 1138 in Cordoba, Spain. He was a Sephardic Jew and influential philosopher. He is considered to be among the greatest of Torah Scholars.

Nachmanides - 13th century French Jewish Philosopher, commonly known by the acronym; Rambam.