
Treasures of the Torah

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

‘ We have to stop this, Now! ‘



Pinchas: (Phinehas) Numbers 25:10 –30:1(29:40)
8th July 2023 19th Tammuz 5783

Shabbat Shalom Talmadim, and welcome to this week's Parsha.

Key Events:

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

YHVH grants Pinchas a covenant of peace and the position of high priest.

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 a 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. Yisro/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 origin.

Significant others:

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 zealotry 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, references to him consists of only three verses.

v25:10 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 context and travel back a little into chapter 25 to last week's Torah portion – Balak. Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the priest, reacts with zeal in dispatching Prince Zimri and Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite chief.

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

Let us begin with a re-visit 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, immorality and sexual depravity, YHVH commands Moses to have all the ringleaders publically impaled before the Lord so that His wrath would turn away from Israel and the plague 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. (Maftir) 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 [d]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." 11 So He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord." And behold, the Lord was passing by, and a great and powerful wind was tearing out the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, [there was] an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. 12 After the earthquake, [there was] a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire, [there was] the sound of a gentle blowing. 13 When Elijah heard the sound, he wrapped his face in his mantle (cloak) and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 14 He said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts (armies), because 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 the same.

This may refer to the spiritual anointing they both possessed or to the fact that Pinchas was granted life.

Friends, we see in the life of these two men that the nation of Israel had come to the point of moral decline. There is an eschatological viewpoint to John the Baptist in the spirit of Elijah bringing the message of repentance and the warning that the Messiah would soon return. In this sense Pinchas, Elijah and John the Baptist share similar spirits. 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. In recent times we have seen how marriage and gender, for example have been redefined.

Such redefining of YHVH's laws and image should send us into tribulation. We realise, however, that people have a choice. If you don't want to live by YHVH's laws, then you are free to do so. You are also free to practice what you believe is right in your own eyes. The personal beliefs or practices of an individual does not however make their inclinations right when it goes against a moral or even a sacred precept.

To lay the two lists of laws – secular and YHVH's, side by side is of course contentious. All of us have been educated to obey secular law – that is the law of the land. When we became believers, we took upon or agreed by covenant 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. The law of the land is their guide - freedom and prohibition are defined by it.

It is only by YHVH's grace that we are given the faith to believe that His laws are right and true and it is to them that all authority must yield in submission. His laws define our

moral compass which interns directs us as we pursue the course of righteousness. The covenant of peace is granted to us in return as sin is forgiven. The forgiveness of sin, which is denying YHVH's sovereignty and operating outside His rule of law, 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. Yeshua speaks about how He sent the prophets to Israel, and 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.' 31Then 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.'"

The following passage points out that Pinchas descended from idol worshippers. Why does G-d refer to Pinchas as "the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron"? Because the tribes of Israel were mocking him, saying, "Have you seen this son of the fattener, whose mother's father (Jethro) fattened calves for idolatrous sacrifices, and now he goes and kills a prince in Israel?" Therefore, G-d traces his lineage to Aaron. (Talmud, Sanhedrin 82b)

Pinchas never led the nation of Israel into the promised land, though he played 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 half tribe 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 half tribe 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 parsha speaks openly and provides some gruesome detail. What Pinchas did was not an impulsive act, but a response based on a law and which is 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 realise that the law of God is not the law of man, 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 yet 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. This nature is reflective in the narrative of the prophets. It 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. Are they perhaps a little too heavy? Then we must take encouragement from the words of our Messiah " My yoke is easy and my burden is light". Matt 11:28-30. We are never given more than we can bear.

Our encouragement is 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 anti-christ spirit will see many of us struggle in the faith. Pressure from our unbelieving loved ones and friends may cause us to flague in the midst of the storm. We may find that our zeal becomes a little cooler as we see many in our company make unprecedented decisions to turn or walk another way. We must remain resolved to stand despite the threats and conflicts ahead. Fighting makes us strong. A troop that continually trains and engages in battle becomes formidable one.

Let us pray that the Lord will reignite our zeal for Him. Let us not give up, friends. Ask, and we shall receive. This is a season for asking.

Numbers 6:22 Adonai said to Moshe, 23 “Speak to Aharon and his sons, and tell them that this is how you are to bless the people of Isra’el: you are to say to them,



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.]

Until next time.

Shabbat Shalom

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Haftarah Pinchas: Jer 1:1 - 2:3. B’rit Hadashah John 2:13-22

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)

Mishnah: A collection of Oral Traditions and Rabbinic literature. Circa 3rd century.

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

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.