

BS"D Parashat Pinchas 5782

The Great Message of the Pinchas Episode

For the most part, these weekly messages are directed to our brothers and sisters in chutz la'aretz with the call that now is the time to return home. But now, I wish to direct my thoughts to a specific group who could correctly be described as the "chosen of the chosen" – the kohanim, to consider their exclusive status in earnest and to draw the obvious and necessary conclusions.

What was the historic role of the kohanic family, and what is it today?

The answer is in the episode of Pinchas.

Pinchas was not a hero of the people. Rashi states that after killing Zimri ben Salu, Pinchas was condemned by "the tribes" for unlawfully killing the head of one of the major families in the tribe of Shimon, and many even called for severely punishing him.

But the rules of conduct and values we human beings set for ourselves and the way we view and judge what we see, have no relationship with the way HaShem, in His absolute truth, judges us.

Not only was Pinchas not punished nor even condemned by HaShem; he was granted what no other Jew has since merited. He became a kohen when HaShem "closed the books" on new kohanim after appointing Aharon and his four sons to be kohanim.

When Zimri was engaging in his publicly acknowledged sin, he

had to be stopped at all costs. Pinchas took the dramatic step of killing Zimri, though it placed his own life in jeopardy. In addition, while Moshe, Yehoshua, and the entire Sanhedrin stood by paralyzed at what was transpiring before their very eyes, Pinchas alone acted in accordance with what he had learned – that a Jew of any rank who is involved publicly or publicly known to be having sexual relations with a gentile woman must be killed, on condition that it be done only during the time of the actual sin.

Pinchas had personally nothing to gain from what he did. On the contrary, he could have very easily been killed in the attempt. And acting according to his conscience, even when the leaders were standing passively by, was a rare act of courage.

What led Pinchas to act was the welfare of Am Yisrael and its continuity as God's chosen people.

Had Pinchas not killed Zimri, the wrath of HaShem would not have been contained, resulting in the most tragic punishment of the Jewish people. For this, Pinchas was rewarded with a kohanic neshama that would be passed on from him to his descendants.

Kohanim were always in the forefront of our nation's causes, despite the fact that kohanim make up no more than 5% of the nation.

The Kohen Gadol served as the spiritual head, the Mashiach Milchama (the kohen who was appointed to speak to the troops before going out to battle). Ezra the Scribe was a Kohen, as were the prophet Yirmiyahu, the preferred members of the Sanhedrin, the Maccabim and so many of our leaders in all generations.

The essence of the kohanic personality is to be responsible for the nation, overriding his personal interests.

Dear fellow Kohen,

If you earnestly believe that the Bet Hamikdash will once again adorn the Temple Mount, then your place is here and now to begin preparing in Eretz Yisrael. But, if the Bet Hamikdash is just a joke in your life – something you refer to in the prayers, but in reality is only equal to the wonderland of Alice – then you're correct in staying where you are.

The Holy Temple was entrusted to our kohanic ancestors, who in the Second Temple period did not acknowledge their preferred status and corrupted the holiest precinct in the world. Is it not our responsibility, as the continuation of the kohanic lineage, to correct that which was so perverted?

There is no more appropriate time than now, between the 17th of Tamuz and Tish'a Be'Av, to make the decision to come home where you belong.

Have a meaningful fast.

To all my brothers and sisters in the galut (exile) – a piece of non-rabbinic financial advice:

I realize the difficulties of leaving the lands of your birth, your family and friends, your mother tongue etc., but take a giant step to guarantee your welfare in the cloudy future. It is a fact that when nations encounter serious economic downward spirals, one of the first things they do is to prohibit the exit of money from the country.

The US economy is "brittle" and "fragile" to say the least, as are the economies of other countries. I would seriously advise sending a major part of your savings to Israel and purchase land or an apartment. I would go so far as to suggest selling your, for now, expensive homes and transferring the money here. Many small investors in Israel have become very wealthy here.

The Final Crescendo of History

To my brothers and sisters yet in the galut,

It is impossible for humans to determine the formula that HaShem chose to abide by in his relations with Am Yisrael. (I don't deal with the gentile world.) There are too many variables where each one can affect a different outcome. However, when viewed with a wide brush, our 3000 plus years of history as HaShem's chosen people exhibits an interesting phenomena. Every giant leap in our history was preceded by a period of low spiritual despair, hopelessness, and desperation. Then HaShem intervened in the "normal" processes of human behavior and set aside the laws of nature that He Himself embedded in the world which He had created.

We had descended to the 49th level of tuma with one foot in the 50th when HaShem miraculously plucked us out from Egypt. And very quickly, in 50 days, ascended to the glorious heights of a chosen people when receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

After 40 years of wandering in the dessert of Sinai, terminating in the disappointing spiritual debased conduct at Bet Peor, HaShem opened for us the gates of Eretz Yisrael, and we liberated the holy land.

After an inglorious 400 years of the period of Judges which saw the nation adopting idolatrous ways of the goyim, and fear of the many surrounding gentile nations, HaShem intervened through Kings David and Shlomo to erect the first Bet Hamikdash.

After the order was proclaimed to murder every Jew in the 127 regions in Achashverosh's kingdom, the Jews saw no way to escape the "final solution" of these long-ago Nazis. HaShem intervened and brought about the miraculous delivery of Purim,

paving the way for the rebuilding of the second Bet Hamikdash, by Zerubavel, Ezra and Nehemiah.

The destruction of the second Bet Hamikdash by the Romans and the termination of our majority presence in the holy land ushering in the 2000 years of exile and suffering, led to the heinous Shoah and its dire effect on the spiritual level of our nation. When the full extent of what we had lost became known, there descended on the remnants of the Jewish people the fear that HaShem had abandoned and forsaken us. Then three short years after the defeat of the German Amalek HaShem re-appeared in our national life and brought about the miraculous and unprecedented advent of Medinat Yisrael.

As we draw closer to the pinnacle of our national renaissance – the advent of the Mashiach – large segments of our nation are assimilating through inter-marriage because they see no future for the Jewish nation. We are heading towards a period when we will see great dangers threatening the Medina. Friends and allies will desert us, leaving our small Medina to fend for itself. It will be a period of great division between those who cling to HaShem no matter the facts on the ground, and those who will part from the Jewish nation hoping the goyim will accept them. The number of conscience Jews could dwindle to historic lows.

Then HaShem will reappear in the final crescendo of History, far beyond our greatest imaginations.

President Biden's arrival in the Holy Land

I rarely sit before a TV screen except when there is a very meaningful event for the Medina or for Jews; however, I did so today in order to see the truly impressive honors bestowed

upon the American President. Not because the last time I voted in America (in 1960) was for a Democratic president (who was subsequently assassinated), but in keeping with the Gemara (Tractate Brachot 58a) that quotes the suggestion of the illustrious Rabbi Yochanan, as explained by Rashi. That one should run to perceive the honors given to a king (leader) of Israel and the more impressive honors bestowed on a king (leader) of the gentile nations. So that if he should merit to live in the days of the Mashiach he will discern that the honors bestowed on Jews who are diligent in observing the mitzvot are greater and more impressive than the honors bestowed on gentile leaders in our times.

Israel rolled out the prominent "red carpet" for Mr. Biden and smothered him with compliments and expressions of friendship reserved for a chatan and kallah at their wedding.

I fear that his farewell from Israel will be far more enthusiastic than his arrival.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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