

Pinchas 5773

BS"D Parashat Pinchas 5733

Written on the fast day of the 17th of Tamuz

THE GREAT MESSAGE OF THE PINCHAS EPISODE

These weekly messages are directed principally to our brothers and sisters in chutz la'aretz with the call that now is the time to return home. This week, I turn to a specific group who could correctly be described as the "chosen of the chosen" – 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, I believe, is found 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 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 after him merited. He became a kohen after not being born one.

When Zimri was engaging in his sin and the halacha was that he had to be stopped at all costs, Pinchas took the dramatic step to kill 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 – those people involved publicly, or publicly known to be, in indecent sexual acts must be killed.

Pinchas had personally nothing to gain from what he did. On the contrary, he could have very easily been killed in the attempt. And by 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 posterity.

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 anointed to accompany and encourage the troops as they went out to war. Ezra the Scribe was a Kohen, as were the prophet Yirmiyahu, the preferred members of the Sanhedrin, the Maccabim and so many of the leading rabbis 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 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 respect 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,

Nachman Kahana