Pinchas-Matot 5771

BS”D Pinchas and Matot 5771 and the 17th of Tamuz

The Jewish world is still reeling from the events in Boro Park. A nine year old boy went missing and several days later was later found hideously murdered. And in defiance of the logical, expected outcome of the case where the perpetrator would have been either a black, an Hispanic or an Islamic, as it turned out it was one of ours – a Jew!

This adds an additional sad dimension to our already unhappy sober mood today on the 17th of Tamuz, when this is being written.

I will return to this later.

The two leading personalities of last week’s parasha (Pinchas) are Moshe Rabbeinu and his nephew Pinchas, who is identified with Eliyahu Hanavi.

Despite the family kinship between these two great men, they were separated by great character differences.

1. When faced with the terrible spiritual rebellion led by Zimri ben Salu which threatened to bring HaShem’s awesome wrath down on the nation, Moshe did not act, whereas Pinchas did not hesitate to enter the forbidden tent and kill Zimri and his Midian princess partner.
2. In all the fearful, suspenseful meetings between Moshe and Paro, we do not find that Moshe ever addressed the evil dictator in a way he deserved. Whereas, Pincha-Eliyahu calls the evil Achav, King of the northern tribes of Israel, to his face, “ocher Yisrael” – the one who has made Yisrael ugly in the eyes of HaShem.
3. Moshe prays for the physical wellbeing of the nation, and was answered with the Manna, the transient well of water and the slav (quail). Whereas, Eliyahu brought

about the disastrous three year drought when innumerable Jews under King Achav suffered so much.

I suggest:

Moshe was more the diplomat than Eliyahu. Moshe was brought up in the palace of the king of Egypt and was aware of the responsibilities of a national leader. HaShem had prepared the young Moshe to be surrounded with the trappings of grandeur befitting the future redeemer of God's chosen people and the conduit through whom the Torah was to be given to Am Yisrael.

Moshe knew the importance of truth. But he was also aware of the implications that every decision made by a leader would have for the entire nation. To insult Paro, even when it was the honest truth would have been self defeating; so Moshe addressed Paro in the accepted diplomatic jargon of the times.

For Moshe to take a spear and kill the rebellious Zimri was the simple truthful thing to do, but it might have opened the flood gates of civil war, so Moshe desisted from that justified act.

Moshe prayed for the physical welfare of the nation, even when the evildoers were so many, because he took into account the future generations of God fearing Jews.

In contrast to Moshe, Pinchas-Eliyahu was free from the constraining chains of a national leader. He saw a situation; held it up to the pure perfect requirements of HaShem's Shulchan Aruch, and when he found the people involved to be less than textbook pure, reacted in a manner aimed at restoring the dignity of the God of Israel.

Zimri, and the Zimris of the world, lose the privilege of life. The nation under Achav, sinned because of their wealth and economic success, so a three year drought was brought to restore them to their Jewish senses.

Achav was not content in doing evil and perverting the Torah; he would not rest until all Torah true Jews and their prophets would be eliminated. So Pincha-Eliyahu stood in front of the man and in the spirit of the "King's clothing" told Achav that Jewish history would forever remember him for what he truly was – an "ocher Yisrael".

Pure truth is usually a distressful experience, as told in the following story:

There was once a man who sought the absolute truth. He traversed the globe looking for someone who could convey to him the truth of the world. It was his habit in every place he visited to ask if anyone knew the truth of life? One townsman replied that when he was a young child, his father had told him that on the mountain lived a woman who knew the truth. The man ascended the mountain where he saw a woman standing before a cave. She was the ugliest person he had ever seen. Her age could have easily been 120. Any beauty which might have been hers was long ago lost. She was a pitiful ugly sight. He asked her if she was the woman who knew the truth? She replied that she was the personification of truth in the world. The young man could not look at her, but he was so enraptured by the woman's wisdom and revelations on every subject, that he decided to stay. After several months, he informed her that he had to return to civilization. She agreed; and when he was just about to leave she said, "Young man, just remember to tell everyone **that I am young and beautiful**".

The moral of this story is that people seek to sweeten and beautify the truth when faced with facts which are unpleasant. The pure unadulterated truth of Eliyahu projected him into a role reserved for the very few.

In our lives, we experience Eliyahu in three ways. He is present at every brit mila, at every melaveh malka on motzei Shabbat and he visits our homes at the Pesach Seder.

The love of pure truth positioned Eliyahu as the ultimate witness before God and man, since truth is the essence of bearing testimony.

After telling HaShem at Mount Sinai (last week's haftara) that the Jewish people "had left the covenant", Eliyahu was commanded by HaShem to be present at every brit mila in the future in order to testify that we had not abrogated the holy covenant.

He is present at the end of Shabbat and at the Pesach seder in order to bear witness, before the holy throne, that the people of Israel have remained steadfast in their relationship with the Creator.

Tradition states that Eliyahu will usher in Messianic times. He will testify in truth to the evil perpetrated against God's chosen nation. And he will testify to those individuals who turned their backs on their fellow Jews by betraying the land of Israel.

He will inform us of our shortcomings which will have to be redressed before the Mashiach can appear.

Eliyahu, the man of pure truth, will cleanse our nation of all manner of non-Torah and anti-Torah ideas and ideologies, foremost of which is the school of thought that Jews must wait in the golden galut for the Mashiach to bring them to the promised land in limousines, as told to me by two Satmar chassidim quite in ernest.

Let's return to the tragedy that befell the Jews of Boro Park.

Now since I am very much aware of the thinking of the great majority of Jews in the galut, especially those in Boro Park and similar places, my understanding is as follows, with the hope that the reader will consider what I am saying.

In the neighborhood, there was an immediate sense of disbelief

that one of their own could have perpetrated such a sadistic, hideous act.

That was the initial reaction, but there are after shocks.

I would not be surprised if Eliyahu would come and disclose the real truth behind the outward appearance of distress.

Before the murderer was apprehended, the many people feared that if it was a black, then it would be impossible to have any relationship with blacks. They would no longer be welcome to clean the Jewish homes or to perform other menial low paying jobs.

If it turned out that the perpetrator was an Hispanic, then fear would have spread over the community and who could foresee the consequences?

And if it turned out to be an Arab or some other Moslem, then the wars of Medinat Yisrael would be carried over to 13th Avenue and surrounding areas.

But Baruch HaShem, the murderer turned out to be a Jew! So now we can continue to live in peace and tranquility in the galut, where blacks, Hispanics and Moslems will continue to be welcome in Boro Park, and life will continue to be sweet.

A short story:

> *Now it came to pass in a little shtetel in Russia, that a week before Pesach the murdered body of a young boy was found by the river.*
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> *The news spread quickly among the goyim, and their animosity towards their Jewish neighbors increased by the minute. The local priest warned the town's people to keep their children indoors because of the insatiable need of the Jews for gentile blood before Pesach. The Jews knew that the pogrom*

would come on the night of the seder; the feared pogrom which never failed to erupt in these circumstances.

The Rav commanded the entire community to pray for a miracle, because nothing less could avert the inevitable wild killing orgy.

On the night of Pesach, the entire community gathered in the bet knesset in agreement, that if to die, it would be better to do so together in that holy place.

Suddenly, as if by a great gust of wind, the doors of the bet knesset swung open. The shamash came running in, made a wild dash for the aron kodesh, and opened the doors to reveal the most holy Torah scrolls. He cried out, "God has performed a miracle. We are saved by the hand of God himself. Who could have predicted that from such a churban could come out such a great yom tov?"

The rav took hold of the hysterical shamash and screamed, "What happened? What miracle?" And the shamash barely able to control himself blurted out, "Rabbi, A ness. A miracle. A true miracle like we find in the Torah. We are saved – IT'S A JEWISH BOY".

This is the unfortunate reality of the Jews in the galut of America – their belief that their lives will forever be sweet, with the incidences of "discomfort" swept under the carpet of self denial.

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana
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