

עֵטְרַת הַשָּׁבוּעַ

A Weekly Torah Publication from the Students of Mesivta Ateres Yaakov
Ruth & Hyman Simon High School

פרשת פנחס
ט"ז תמוז תשס"ה
July 23, 2005

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| Candle Lighting: | 8:03 |
| First קריאת שמע זמן: | 8:50 |
| Second קריאת שמע זמן: | 9:23 |
| Latest שחרית: | 10:36 |
| Earliest הבדלה: | 9:14 |

The Fast Begins Sunday Morning at 4:05 AM

This week's edition of
ATERES HASHAVUA
is sponsored
לע"נ צבי יהודה
בן אברהם יצחק זצ"ל
לארך ימים ושנים טובים

A KILLER KINDNESS

Josh Wyner, Mesivta Alumnus

Throughout the years, whenever I hear someone mention the name *Pinchas Ben Elazar Ben Aharon Hakohen*, the adjective of zealousness has been used to describe him. Pinchas refused to stand by and watch Bnei Yisroel act with defiance against their Creator, and acted swiftly and strongly, lashing out and murdering those who defiled Hashem's Holy Name. Although I never questioned the greatness of Pinchas, I was always troubled by the forcefulness and vengeance that he proceeded with when killing Zimri and Cozbi. It wasn't that I thought he should have used a different method such as asking nicely to stop, since this obviously would have accomplished nothing. Rather, my difficulty existed in the understanding of how the actions of Pinchas could be applied to us living in the world today. Is it possible for the people of contemporary times to be as passionate and aggressive in their service of Hashem? It is difficult enough to find people who are willing and able to speak up against *Chillul Hashem*, let alone take such powerful action for the sake of the Almighty. In order to figure out how this story of greatness should change who we are as Jews and people, we need to look deeper into the unbelievable *tzidkus* of Pinchas.

Firstly, we need to realize that Pinchas was not a mean, angry or vicious person by any means. He was a *tzaddik* with a tremendous desire to perform *chesed* and bring *shalom* to the world. Rashi explains that Pinchas was not some murderer who went into a fanatical tirade; he was the grandson of Aharon Hakohen who represents peace and tranquility. Pinchas's intentions were pure and untainted in that he realized the need for something forceful to be done and he was equal to the task. Even though the act that was required was violent and against Pinchas's moral standard, his desire to bring peace was so much greater. His ability to comprehend the seriousness of

(Continued on page 2)

THE TOUGHER THE GREATER

Reuven Davies, Mesivta Graduate

In the history of the Jewish People, it is evident that whenever we are at the verge of something truly great, the *yetzer hara* tends to get busy. At every great moment in time, friction is built in a constant battle of either side. When Adam and Chava ate from the *Eitz Hadas*, the Chachomim tell us that it was a mere few hours before Shabbos, and had they lasted that long our history would be much different. On this note, The Chofetz Chaim tells us that every person should be careful not to get into fights, especially before Shabbos - it seems that's when friction tends to happen.

Shabbos is our goal; it is a place of peace and happiness. However there are many dangerous things hoping to take a bite out of it. When the Bnei Yisroel were about to receive the *luchos*, the *eigel hazahav* jumped out of nowhere and cost us till this very day. The Meraglim came back with terrible news on the eve of entering Eretz Yisroel, thus setting us back forty years and a whole generation.

In this week's *sedra* we are preparing again to enter. A people who left the greatest nation on earth in ruins are hit with yet another blow. What happens? The *Mamleches Kohanim* - a nation of angelic Tzaadikim are easily seduced by Midianite women to worship Baal Peor, an idol where worship was carried out by relieving oneself in front of it! Indeed, this seemingly ridiculous idea becomes an epidemic leading to a prestigious *Shevet* leader openly committing an *aveirah* and twenty four thousand people dying in a plague before Pinchas puts an end to the entire situation - as easily as it began, and altogether in one blow.

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the situation that Bnei Yisroel was locked into, allowed him to perform even the malicious deed of murder.

This explanation can give us an insight into how Pinchas himself was able to stand up and eradicate the defiance of Hashem's Will, yet it still wasn't clear to me how we can relate. Then, as I was looking for an answer I came across the commentary in the *Artscroll Chumash* that seems to explain this difficulty. It explains that the word "*besocham*; among them" in the second *pasuk* in the *parsha*, to be teaching us something extra. It is telling us that even when a person needs to execute an action that is cruel and somewhat merciless he must do so as one who is "*besocham*" - among them. The act should be accomplished only out of love rather than anger and brutality. Who was Pinchas showing love for during his act of murder? The Jewish Nation whom he saved from destruction and ultimate downfall. It wasn't easy for him to go forth and perform such a horrible act, but he was prepared to do whatever it took out of selflessness and kindness for Bnei Yisroel. Pinchas was a zealot, and a courageous man eager to bring peace to the world, yet he never let these strong feelings get in the way of his unwavering desire to be a kind and loving person. We can look at Pinchas and see a multitude of attributes which we can strive to emulate, none more than his boundless focus on the necessity for a person to act with kindness and love even in the worst of situations, even if it requires strong measures which seem to contradict these qualities. Perhaps in today's times we can look at Pinchas as a wonderful role model for delving deeply into our actions and trying to think about how we can act with more care and concern for others even when the situation isn't perfect.

STORIES OF TZADDIKIM

When Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky was in seventh grade, one of his classmates was frustrated at a difficult commentary that Rashi had cited. "I don't like this Rashi," quipped the student.



Rav Shmuel Dishon *shlit"z*
Mashgiach of the Stolín-Karliner
Yeshiva in Brooklyn speaking
to our Mesivta

The rebbe, Rav Shmuel Dishon *shlit"z*, stopped him short with a story that occurred to his friend Chaim. Chaim was on a tour of Paris' Louvre. On the tour was an elderly American woman, whose appreciation for art must have begun and ended with her grandchildren's works which hung proudly on her refrigerator. As the guide passed the Mona Lisa, the oohs and ahs of the crowd were drowned out by the cynicism of the woman.

"Is she smiling or not smiling? Can't DiVinci make up his mind?" she *kvetched*. The Rembrandts and Reubens did not forego her criticisms either.

When the guide began to explain the distinction of painting style, the differences of oils and brushstrokes and a host of other amazing facts and analysis, the women let out a sigh of impatience. "I really don't see what is so wonderful about these pictures! My gr..." The guide cut her short. In perfect English with a French accent, he began.

"My dear madam, when you go to the Louvre you must realize the paintings are no longer on trial. They have already been scrutinized and analyzed by those who have spent their entire lives studying art. Every stroke of the brushes has been praised and critiqued. What hangs here are the standard bearers for every generation of artists to come.

"No my dear," he continued, "at the Louvre, the paintings are not on trial. It is you who are on trial. The paintings have passed the test. It is you who have failed."

Needless to say, Reb Kamenetzky's classmate understood their Rebbe's point.

What was this tremendous attraction of the Baal Peor? The *gemara* informs us of the frailty of human nature - "The Jewish Nation never engaged in idolatrous behavior except as a way of allowing themselves forbidden relationships." That's how they were led into idolatry. Throughout life one of the most important moral traits we possess is something called 'a feeling of shame'. If we could glide through life without being taken note of, everybody would almost certainly take the liberty to commit a few perfect crimes. There is a strong entity of community and general fear of being caught that intercept this notion. There is also a natural feeling against breaking our own honor, a self monitored sense of shame that helps keep us from losing too much moral ground too

quickly. What Baal Peor trained a person to do is to lose all of this. In a prison one the most powerful things is the deprivation of private life. The bathroom is placed there in the middle of an open cell. Baal Peor opened the door to experiences by seeking to vanquish this most noble human characteristic. After a few brief studies in Baal Peor institute of knowledge, a new student is capable of tossing away his parents, even the teachings of Moshe Rabbeinu, his conscience and Hashem, for the twinkling eye of a Midianite woman.

What can a person do to prevent this easy descent? The answer lies within the savior of the *parsha*. What made Pinchas capable of going around this seemingly disastrous fate, and

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by Avi Lieberman

Rabbi Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky zt"l

Part II

The Steipler Goan

9 Tammuz 5659 / June 17, 1899 – 23 Av 5745 / August 10, 1985

- At the age of 19, Reb Yaakov Yisroel was sent by The Alter of Novardok to head a yeshiva in Rogatshov.

- On Pesach of that year, Reb Yaakov Yisroel was literally pulled away from his gemara by Russian officers who were grabbing recruits for the army. Through all the cries of his talmidim, but mostly his own pleading, Reb Yaakov Yisroel was granted permission to take with



- him his tefillin, a Maseches Succah, and a *sefer Machaneh Yisroel* (halachic requirements of a Jew coerced into the army; written by the Chafetz Chaim).

- Reb Yaakov Yisroel insisted on wearing a summer uniform in the winter since there was no worry of it containing *shatnes*.

- In his later years, Reb Yaakov Yisroel turned to a piece in his *sefer Kehilos Yaakov* and stated, "I composed this during my year in the Russian Army."

- He refused to eat any of the Army's food, and would receive a loaf of bread from a kind Jew in Moscow every few days.

- To this day, his family possesses beautiful poetry written in Hebrew from Reb Yaakov Yisroel's time in the Russian Army, expressing his unbreakable *emunah* (faith) in Hashem at all times, in every situation.

- Reb Yaakov Yisroel was released from the army after more than a year's time, and eventually made his way to Bialystok, where he joined the remainders of the Novardok Yeshiva.

- In 5685 (1925), Reb Yaakov Yisroel published his first *sefer Shaarei Tevunah* on intricate areas of

shas. This work caused big stirs in the Torah world, as everyone spoke of the great 'Reb Yaakov Steipler' (from Hornisteipl).

- Reb Avraham Yeshayahu Karelitz; The Chazon Ish, was so impressed with this *sefer* and apparent level of *yiras shomayim* that he proposed Reb Yaakov Yisroel marry his sister.

- After the wedding the Steipler served as Rosh Yeshiva of the Navaradok Yeshivos in Semiatitz and Pinsk.

- The Steipler said of the Chazon Ish that till his very last day, he noticed something completely amazing – he forgot nothing. It seemed as if he was in the midst of any topic being discussed, no matter what it was.

- The Steipler and his Rebbetzin were blessed with one son and two daughters while in Pinsk. His son Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim was named after the Steipler's father and father-in-law.

- While growing up, The Steipler's children were taught and educated with charts that showed the names of every *sefer* found in Tanach, gemara, halacha, as well as which *sefarim* were authored by various *Rishonim* and *Acharonim*.

- During this time between both world wars, poverty was rampant. The Steipler was so affected that when the Chofetz Chaim passed away in 5693 (1933), he could not even afford to buy a train ticket to travel to the funeral. When mentioning this in later years, his pain was obvious.

- In the spring of 5694 (1934), Rav Kanievsky, along with his family, emigrated to Eretz Yisroel. Soon after, the Chazon Ish also came to the Holy Land, and settled in Bnei Brak.

Continued next week!

REUVEN DAVIES (continued from page 2)

performing the act that needed to be done? The answer is the same thing everyone else was doing. Indeed the Jewish people now had no shame; they did as they pleased as if no one was watching, and acted without any permission or reference from the people around them. Pinchas saw this and used this to his advantage. He asked no one an opinion of his plan as he charged at it with full force (literally) and ended the disaster swiftly. He took the same poison that bewitched Klal Yisroel - that of acting despite the opinions of others - and used it to cure them all. Action needed to be taken, words where no longer of any use. Just as the Klal Yisroel didn't care about anyone around them, Pinchas took no heed of their evil notions as he did what was needed to be done. A person can speak from dawn to dusk about action and do nothing, yet Pinchas went straight into action.

Here again in this episode we are shown the "border line". In all situations there are two sides of the coin. Had Adam and Chava made it to Shabbos without conflict, they would have made a great Kiddush Hashem. Had the *eigel* been cast down by Klal Yisroel, it would have been a victory. Every situation that can achieve greatness has a huge gate of peril in between. We must realize that in any bad moment it may be a chance to shine. Yes, the *aveira* may seem enticing, but the more the enticement the bigger the mitzvah. We can learn from Pinchas that although we can easily fall into a trap, it is just as easy to pull ourselves out! May we be *zoche* to truly realize our potential and strive for greatness, truly meriting the *geulah shleimah, bimheirah biyameinu amen*.

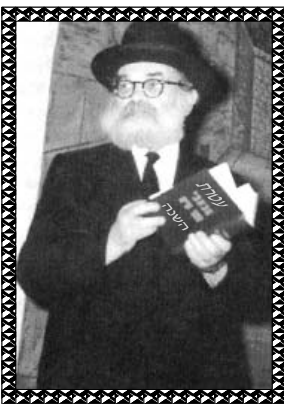
אמת ליעקב

Weekly Insights from Moreinu HoRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l

פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֵלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הִשִּׁיב אֶת חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קְנָאתִי בְּתוֹכָם [כה:יא]
 PINCHAS THE SON OF ELAZAR, THE SON OF AHARON HAKOHN HAS TURNED AWAY MY ANGER FROM AGAINST BNEI YISROEL, BY AVENGING MY HONOR AMONGST THEM

Rashi on this *pasuk* explains that certain members of Klal Yisroel were skeptical of Pinchas's righteousness, as some of his ancestors had worshipped *avodah zarah*. They could not believe that such a person had the audacity to murder one of the *nessiim* of Klal Yisroel. As such, the Torah stresses the fact that Pinchas's *yichus* came from none other than Aharon HaKohen.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky zt"l explains this Rashi in the following way. At times, it is necessary for a person to have the *midah* of jealousy. When something that is holy is in danger of being profaned by an outside force, a person must show *kinah* in protecting it. However, whenever someone displays extreme jealousy in guarding what is right, there is always



R' Yaakov zt"l at a Torah Vodaas graduation

some suspicion that these actions stem not from righteousness, but rather from his innately evil desires. While such a person knows that certain actions are forbidden, he longs to do them, and when presented with the opportunity to perform these actions in a permissible way, he will jump at the chance, and enjoy it. As such, after Pinchas killed Zimri, there was some speculation as to Pinchas's true intentions. While on the surface, this seemed to be a courageous stand in defense of *kevod Shomayim*, others suggested that in truth this was nothing more than the act of someone with an inclination to kill. In that case, while Zimri was indeed deserving of the death penalty, this action would not have been *l'shem Shomayim*, rather tainted by the joy that Pinchas felt in satisfying his own lust to kill. This speculation intensified

as a result of Pinchas's somewhat dubious *yichus*. In order to quell this discussion, the Torah stressed that Pinchas's true *yichus* came from Aharon HaKohen, the ultimate *rodef shalom*. Surely a person with such a *mesorah* of *ahavas Yisroel* would not desire to kill a fellow Jew, and would feel no joy in seeing another Jew being punished. Upon hearing this, everyone agreed that Pinchas must have acted totally *l'shem Shomayim*. The Torah concludes by rewarding Pinchas with a "ברית שלום, A covenant of peace." This reward was given *midah k'neged midah*, and served as a further testament that Pinchas had acted purely, and without an iota of joy, with nothing other than the purest of intentions.

May we be *zoche* to emulate Pinchas's *midos* and strive to perform our actions completely *l'shem Shamayim*, and in this *zechus*, may we merit to the ultimate *bris shalom* for the entire world.

Rav Levi Yitzchak M'Berditchev teaches that we must try to emulate a baby in three ways:
 When something hurts a baby, he cries to his father
 Toddlers are always busy; they never sit with empty hands
 When a baby falls, he *always* gets up

Someone once walked into a store and saw bushels of luscious grapes. "Do they taste good?" he asked the clerk, as he pointed to the barrel. "Find out for yourself," the clerk replied as he offered a grape to the man. After tasting the grape, the man was amazed that indeed, the grape was amazingly succulent and delicious! "Can I have some more?" he asked in anticipation. To this the clerk responded, "One grape is a freebee, but the rest you'll have to pay for."

Rav Moshe Wolfson *shlit"a* explains that this applies to our own *avodas Hashem* as well. We may have an amazing davening one day, or unexpectedly overcome a difficult challenge, but that is only so we will see the pleasure one gains from doing so. Yet while the first time was a "freebee," to achieve this again requires work and effort. *Just imagine how amazing it will feel when we ultimately succeed after working towards it!*

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We would like to thank
Franklin Printing

for printing this week's
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 Ateres HaShavua.

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