

Pinchas

THE WEISS EDITION

# *Light points*

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF  
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON THE  
WEEKLY TORAH PORTION

Lightpoints  
לזיכרון ולעילוי נשמת  
הרה"ח הרה"ת  
הר"ר ישעי' זושא  
ב"ר אברהם דוד ע"ה ווילהעלם  
גלב"ע ביום ד' שבט ה'תשפ"ב  
תנצב"ה



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# פנחס Pinchas

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כה:יא | 25:11

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פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הָשִׁיב אֶת חֲמָתִי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאַתִּי בְּתוֹכָם וְלֹא כִלִּיתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאַתִּי

Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Kohen,  
has turned My anger away from Bnei Yisrael by  
zealously avenging Me among them, so that I did not  
destroy Bnei Yisrael because of My zeal.

## Grassroots Initiative

A deadly plague was spreading among Bnei Yisrael, killing thousands of people.

Meanwhile, Zimri, the leader of the tribe of Shimon, publicly took a Midianite princess into his tent. Moshe, Elazar and the elders of Bnei Yisrael all witnessed Zimri's brazen act, but were at a loss how to respond.

Pinchas was neither a leader nor an elder of Bnei Yisrael (up until that point), but he remembered what Moshe had taught as the correct response to a situation like this. He brought the law to Moshe's attention, and Moshe urged him to

fulfill it: "Let the one who reads the letter be the agent to carry it out,"<sup>1</sup> he said. Pinchas entered Zimri's tent, witnessed him sinning with the non-Jewish woman and killed him, whereupon the plague miraculously stopped. G-d rewarded Pinchas for his zealotry with an eternal covenant of goodwill, and *kehunah* (priesthood) for him and all his descendants.

Commenting on this episode, Rashi remarks: "At the incident of the Golden Calf, Moshe successfully confronted six hundred thousand people... and here he was so helpless? Rather, this happened so that Pinchas would come and take what was suited for him."<sup>2</sup>

The story of Pinchas teaches us that there are times when we cannot look solely to our leaders for instruction. In this instance, the leaders' lack of clarity was Divinely orchestrated in order to allow Pinchas to take "what was suited for him." Likewise, when something on which you can have a positive impact comes to your attention, you must step up to the plate and get involved. The inaction of those responsible and the silence of the regular sources of inspiration are not an indication that you too can stand by idly. For every person is charged with a unique spiritual mission—part of the Divine plan that no one else in the world can fulfill. The inaction of others may be G-d's way of urging you to claim the moment that is rightfully yours.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 2, pp. 342–343

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1. Rashi, Bamidbar 25:7.

2. Ibid. 25:6.

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 כה'יא | 25:11
 

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## A Legacy of Love

A deadly plague broke out among Bnei Yisrael, punishing them for sinning with the daughters of Moav and worshipping their gods. Meanwhile, Zimri, the leader of the tribe of Shimon, publicly took a Midianite princess into his tent. Moshe and the elders were stunned. Pinchas, remembering what Moshe had taught about a situation like this, entered Zimri's tent, caught him sinning with the Midianite woman and killed him, whereupon the plague miraculously stopped.

What caused Pinchas, more than anyone else present at the time, to remember the law and implement it correctly?

The Torah explains by highlighting Pinchas's ancestry at the very beginning of the Parshah.<sup>3</sup>

Aharon, as we know, excelled in his love for his fellow Jews and persistently concerned himself with their wellbeing. Aharon "pursued peace and promoted love between disputing parties."<sup>4</sup> When Moshe and Aharon stood before Pharaoh and daringly demanded that he free the Jewish people from Egypt,

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3. Bamidbar 25:7.

4. Rashi, Bamidbar 20:29.

Aharon did most of the persuading.<sup>5</sup> Later, Aharon took the blame for the sin of the Golden Calf in an attempt to spare the people from G-d's wrath.<sup>6</sup> And it was in Aharon's merit that the Clouds of Glory protected Bnei Yisrael in the desert.<sup>7</sup>

As Aharon's grandchild, Pinchas inherited his love for his fellow Jews and his devotion to their wellbeing. As the plague took one Jewish life after another, Pinchas frantically searched for a way to stop it. His desperate desire to save his fellow Jews led him to recall a law that everyone else had forgotten, and motivated him to risk his life to implement that law in order to stop the plague.

The Torah therefore reiterates that Pinchas was "the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Kohen." For the source of Pinchas's profound love for his people, which dictated his thinking process and drove him to absolute self-sacrifice, was his direct lineage from Aharon.

—Toras Menachem 5748, vol. 4, pp. 71–75

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5. See Shemos 6:27 and 7:1–2, and Rashi ad loc.

6. See Rashi, Shemos 32:5.

7. See Rashi, Bamidbar 20:1.

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 כה'יא | 25:11
 

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## An Eternal Reward

Pinchas's heroic actions averted G-d's anger from Bnei Yisrael. In reward, G-d granted Pinchas *kehunah* (priesthood) "for him and his descendants after him."<sup>8</sup>

Moshe, too, protected Bnei Yisrael from G-d's wrath on numerous occasions, but we do not find that Moshe was rewarded with any similar "hereditary" reward. In fact, even when Moshe requested that his children inherit his position, he was explicitly refused by G-d.<sup>9</sup> Why, then, was Pinchas's reward so great? What was so unique about his actions?

Moshe saved the Jewish people by beseeching G-d to forgive their sins and to retract the harsh punishments that they faced. In contrast, Pinchas saved the Jewish people through his actions. He heroically killed the sinful prince of Shimon, and by sanctifying G-d's name before all of Israel (and inspiring them to repent), he stopped the deadly plague. Whereas Moshe saved the Jewish people by intervening on high, Pinchas saved them through his efforts to elevate them "from below."

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8. Bamidbar 25:13.

9. See Rashi, Bamidbar 27:16.

In the same vein, Moshe put his spiritual life on the line to save the Jewish people: he challenged G-d to forgive the people, and “if not, erase me now from Your book which You have written.”<sup>10</sup> Pinchas, however, risked his physical life in order to stop the plague. He exposed himself to mortal risk, entering the encampment of the tribe of Shimon and killing their beloved leader.

The underlying uniqueness of Pinchas’s efforts was his focus not on assistance and illumination “from above,” but on transforming and elevating the darkness itself—in himself, by harnessing even his physical body as a “chariot” to the Divine will; and in others, by inspiring them to transform their lives and return to G-d in repentance. In this way, Pinchas not only saved the Jewish people in that moment of wrath, he brought about permanent and lasting change in the Jewish people and their relationship with G-d.

Accordingly, since his efforts were uniquely “grounded” in their nature and in their effects, his reward too was an eternal covenant, firmly established “for him and his descendants after him” for all time.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 18, pp. 344–347

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<sup>10</sup>. Shemos 32:32.



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 כה:יג | 25:13
 

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וְהָיְתָה לוֹ וּלְזֶרְעוֹ אֶחָדוּ בְרִית כְּהֻנָּה  
עוֹלָם תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר קָנָא לֵאלֹהֵיוֹ

An eternal covenant of kehunah (priesthood) shall be for him and for his descendants after him, because he was zealous for his G-d.

## A Breach of Nature

Zimri, the leader of the tribe of Shimon, sinned with a Midianite princess. Pinchas, knowing the law that Moshe had taught regarding such a situation, courageously entered Zimri's tent and killed him. G-d rewarded Pinchas with kehunah (priesthood) for himself and his future descendants.

The Torah states that Pinchas was rewarded so greatly “because he was zealous for his G-d.” As Rashi explains, this means that “he raged G-d’s rage and avenged G-d’s vengeance.”<sup>11</sup> This implies that the sin Pinchas avenged is considered an affront to G-d Himself—more so than any other transgression. Why?

Chassidus explains that when a Jew transgresses any of the Torah’s commandments, the soul-faculties that he employs in committing that sin are in a state of “exile,” vested against their will in an act defying G-d’s will. This exile of the soul is even greater when one sins with his reproductive abilities, since reproduction draws from the very fabric of human life and the essence of the living soul. Even so, the sinner remains a Jew, and his G-dly energies remain holy—albeit in a state

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11. Bamidbar 25:11.

of exile and captivity until he repents. Even if a child is born from that prohibited union, the illegitimate child (whose soul draws its life from the souls of those who conceived it) is still Jewish—provided the child's mother is Jewish.



A child born from a non-Jewish woman, however, is not a Jew. Hence, a sin such as Zimri's causes the essential material of a Jewish body and soul to lose its Jewishness entirely, breaching the inherent distinction that G-d created between Jew and gentile.

This explains why G-d rewarded Pinchas with kehunah (priesthood). Kehunah is a reality of nature; Rashi compares it elsewhere to the unchangeable realities of day and night.<sup>12</sup> Because Pinchas was zealous for G-d, avenging Zimri's attempt to breach nature's distinction between Jew and gentile, G-d rewarded him commensurately with a breach of nature as well—He granted him kehunah.

—Likkutei Sichos, vol. 8, pp. 153–157



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12. See Rashi, Bamidbar 16:5.





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קרינסקי  
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