

NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM
THE TEACHINGS OF **RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l**

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF **נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה**
MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM
FROM THE PARSHAH

The Jewish People's Married Name

פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הִפְהִין הַשֵּׁיב אֶת חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאָתִי
בְּתוֹכָם וְלֹא כָלִיתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאָתִי: (במדבר כה, יא)

Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon Hakohen turned back My anger from upon the Jewish people by acting zealously on My behalf in their midst. Thus I did not destroy the Jewish people in My zealalousness. (*Bemidbar 25:11*)

The Jewish people sinned many times during the forty years they were in the *Midbar*.

וַיִּנְסוּ אֹתִי זֶה עֶשְׂרֵי פְעָמִים – They tried Me these ten times.¹

Despite all these mishaps, they were always saved in the end.

The first sin was making the *Eigel*. As the *Kuzari* explains, this was not a simple act of idolatry. Nevertheless, in this context, we will view this sin from a simple perspective. The Jewish people took a golden calf and said about it **אלהיך ישראל** – “These are your gods, O Israel.”² Consequently,

Hashem sought to destroy them. However, *Hashem* hinted to Moshe that if he will pray for them, this will save them. And so it was.

Then came the sin of the *Meraglim*. Again, *Hashem* sought to destroy the Jewish people. Again, Moshe prayed for them, and this saved them.

And so it was with Korach’s rebellion. *Hashem* sought to destroy the people, and here again, *Hashem* gave them a chance to avert the disaster. *Aharon Hakohen* stopped the Angel of Death, and most people were saved.

There was one sin that was different. When the Jewish people sinned with the women of Moav (as per the wicked plan of Bilaam), *Hashem* was going to wipe out the Jewish people right then and

¹ *Bemidbar 14:22.*

² *Shemos 32:4.*

there, without waiting for prayer, without speaking to Moshe and Aharon. Only the quick action of Pinchas stopped this.

פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֵלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הִכְהֵן הַשֵּׁיב אֶת חֲמָתִי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאַתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא כָלִיתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאַתִּי – Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon Hakohen turned back My anger from upon the Jewish people by acting zealously on My behalf in their midst. Thus I did not destroy the Jewish people in My zealotness.

Pinchas acted out the zealotness that *Hashem* was going to. Had Pinchas not done so, it would have been the end.

Why was this sin so very severe? Why was it worse than the sin of the *Eigel*?

Let's say there is a fight in the family. One spouse acts wrongly toward the other, and a fierce quarrel breaks out. They might even break windows in their rage. But in the end, they make up and things quiet down again. Even if it doesn't happen immediately, when Erev Yom Kippur comes, they will work things out and life will go on. The sin of the *Eigel*, the rebellion of Korach and the faithless report of the *Meraglim* were all serious sins. But *Hashem* forgave us nonetheless. This is how it is when things stay inside the family.

The sin with the women of Moav was a totally different story, It was not "within the family." It was an act that entailed leaving the Jewish home. Going out of the family circle. This was an unforgivable sin. This is why Pinchas needed to act out *Hashem's* zealotness. If Pinchas had not picked up the spear to do what he did, *Hashem* would have needed to act, and it would have been the end.

This is because a Jew is not someone who puts on *tefillin*, or even someone who has *yiras Shamayim*. A Jew is like *Hashem's* wife, so to speak. [And if the wife leaves home to go to someone else, the damage is irreparable.]

This explains another point as well. After the story with Pinchas, *Hashem* gave a new name to the Jewish people.

חֲנוּךְ מִשְׁפַּחַת הַחֲנוּכִי לְפִלּוּא מִשְׁפַּחַת הַפְּלֹאִי
– Chanoch of the Chanochi family, Palu of the Palui family.³

Hashem called them by His own name, so to speak. Every Jewish family got a *yud* and the end of their family name, and a *bei* at the beginning, to show that they are clean and pure. ה"י is one of *Hashem's* Names.

Let's say a woman from the Stein family marries a man from the Gold family. Before she marries she is "Chani Stein." After she marries she is called "Chani Gold." She is "Mrs. Gold" now. This is how it was with the names of Chanoch, and Palu, and all the others. Before the Giving of the Torah, they were called the Chanoch family and the Palu family. But after the Giving of the Torah, when the Jewish people became like *Hashem's* wife, so to speak, He called each family by His Name.

This is also the meaning of the words we say in *Tefilah*: – ושמך הגדול והקדוש עלינו קראת: "You called Your great and holy Name upon us." The name יהודי, "Jew," is the four letters of *Hashem's* Name, plus the letter *daled*, which represents דלות, "meagerness." [We make ourselves small and "meager" in relation to *Hashem*.]

³ Bemidbar i26:5.



The literal translation of the name יהודי, “Jew,” is “Mrs. *Hashem*.”

What does this mean?

When a woman is called “Mrs. Gold” it means that even if she works and even if she has a good position in the company, the center of her life is her husband and children. She goes to work in order to support the family. The real center of her life is the

home.

So it is with a Jew. His life is one of partnership with *Hashem*. He gets up in the morning and goes to sleep at night with *Hashem*. He eats with *Hashem*. And so with everything he does. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is like our “husband,” so to speak. He is the center of our life. ●



Going to the Source

הַנְּנִי נֹתֵן לוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם. (במדבר כה, יב)

Behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace. (*Bemidbar 25:12*)

Chazal say that Pinchas did not become a *kohen* until he killed Zimri.¹ He merited becoming a member of the *Kehunah* as a reward for this great deed.

The Seforno writes that Pinchas thereby merited longevity as well:

[Pinchas was granted] “peace” from the angel of death, in accordance with, “He makes ‘peace’ in His lofty heights.” This is because damage occurs due to conflict between opposites [and ‘peace’ signifies the lack of such conflict]. This was the case with Pinchas, who lived much longer than all the people of his generation. And surely it was the case according to the view that Eliyahu is Pinchas, and he is still alive and well.²

The Seforno is saying that all illnesses result because the elements and forces in the body are not properly balanced. Pinchas was granted the blessing of *shalom*, of harmony, so all his internal forces were balanced and properly integrated with one another,

and he thus lives on and on.

Let’s understand how a person becomes a *kohen*. The structure of the world is such that there are roots and there are branches, and each branch draws nourishment from the root that precedes it. However, this root is actually a branch that grew from an earlier root. Now, a branch cannot draw nourishment from the original root, only from the root immediately preceding it. That root is a branch in relation to the root that came before it, and is nourished from it, and so on, until the chain reaches the first Root of all roots, which is *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

Nevertheless, there are certain special cases in which the closer root is skipped over, and the branch draws directly from the original source.

Pinchas was a *talmid* of *Moshe Rabbeinu*. Once it happened that a certain *halachah* was hidden from Moshe, and Pinchas brought it back. But where did Pinchas get that *halachah* from? His whole root in Torah was Moshe. If the *halachah* was not accessible to Moshe, who was the root, it should have been hidden also from Pinchas, who was the branch. *Chazal* say that everyone there started crying when Moshe was

¹ *Zevachim* 101b.

² *Seforno, Bemidbar 25:12*.

not able to access the *halachah*,³ because if it is hidden from Moshe, it is hidden from all his *talmidim*.

At that point, Pinchas opened a new door to Torah. He went straight to the original Source of Torah and brought the *halachah* back. Thus Moshe said to him:

He who reads out the letter should be the one to fulfill it.⁴

Pinchas read out the “letter,” [which is a metaphor for the Torah,] he was connected to the “letter,” so it was only proper for him to be the *shaliach* to carry out what it says.

Pinchas went past his own root and connected to the original source. This explains why he merited becoming a *kohen*. It was *midah k'neged midah*.

The *Kebunah* has an immediate root, which is *Aharon Kohen*. And Aharon received from *Hashem*. Under normal circumstances, a person cannot not come along and receive *Kebunah* directly from *Hashem*; he needs to receive it from Aharon, the immediate root. Pinchas did not and could not receive *Kebunah* from Aharon because he was born before Aharon became a *kohen*. So if Pinchas didn't receive *Kebunah* from Aharon, where did he receive it from?

It was a matter of *midah k'neged midah*. In Torah, Pinchas connected himself to the original Source, so a new door opened from him. Thus he connected to a new root of *Kebunah* that was special for him.

This also explains his longevity. Everyone else in the world receives life from the immediate root that *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* embedded within the natural world. But a new door opened for Pinchas and connected him to the very Source of life. Anyone who draws his vitality from there will surely live forever.

Skipping over the immediate root is an expression of *kana'us*, of the trait of zealousness, which Pinchas displayed when he killed Zimri. Everything in the world has its *modus operandi*, its normal way of working. The *kannai*, out of his overwhelming love of *Hashem*, skips over all this. He jumps out

of his place and goes straight into action. *Kanna'us* is at its height when it is done with *mesirus nefesh*. Because the rule is that nothing stands in the way of *pikuach nefesh*. This means that *pikuach nefesh* has its own order and *modus operandi* that overrides the standard order of things, and the *kannai* comes and overrides even this exceptional order.

Rav Papa asked Abaye, “What was different about the Sages of earlier generations, that miracles occurred for them, and miracles don't occur for us? If it was because of the breadth of their knowledge, in the time of Rav Yehudah their whole study was in *Seder Nezikin*, whereas we learn all six *Sedarim* of the *Mishnayos*.... But when Rav Yehudah would just take off one shoe [in preparation for a fast decreed due to drought,] the rain would come. Whereas we afflict ourselves, we cry out and cry out, but we are not noticed.”

Abaye answered him, “Those of the earlier generations had *mesirus nefesh* for sanctifying *Hashem's* Name. We don't have *mesirus nefesh* for sanctifying *Hashem's* Name.

“For instance, Rav Ada bar Ahava once saw a non-Jewish woman wearing an improper article of clothing in public, and he thought she was a Jewess. He went and tore it off her. It turned out that she was not Jewish, and a fine of four hundred *zuz* was placed on him. He asked her, ‘What is your name?’ She answered, ‘Matun’ [which is similar to the Aramaic word for two hundred]. He said to her, ‘Matun, Matun is worth four hundred *zuz*.’”⁵

Working miracles entails overriding the system of the natural world. The Sages of earlier generations were zealous for *Hashem's* Name and jumped into action without regard for normal protocol, showing *mesirus nefesh*. Thus, *Hashem* did miracles for them. He granted them rain immediately without following the usual procedures of Heavenly judgment. ●

³ Sanhedrin 82a.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Berachos* 20a.



Three Times Peace

הַנְּנִי נֹתֵן לוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם. (במדבר כה, יב)

Behold, I am giving him My covenant of peace. (*Bemidbar 25:12*)

***Hakadosh Baruch Hu* spelled out His “peaces” to him. (*Rashi*)**

River, Bird and Kettle

Chazal say there are three types of *shalom*.

There are three [dreams that foretell] peace: a river, a bird and a kettle. [Someone who sees one of these in a dream can expect peace.] A river, as it says הַנְּנִי נֹתֵן אֵלַיָּהּ שְׁלוֹם כְּנַהַר – “Behold, I am turning to Yerushalayim like a river of peace.”¹ A bird, as it says כְּצִפְרִים עֹפוֹת כִּן יִגֵּן ה' צְבָקוֹת – “Like flying birds, so *Hashem* of H-sts will protect.”² A kettle, as it says ה' תִּשְׁפֵּת שְׁלוֹם לָנוּ – “*Hashem*, set up peace for us [as one sets up a kettle].”³

These three dreams represent three different types of peace. The *Vilna Gaon* explains:

The first type of peace is described as a “river.” When a person plows a field, someone might come along and claim that the path he is using to plow is causing damage to the public domain. This is not peace. A river, too, is a public domain, and anyone can traverse the river, but there is always peace; one person doesn’t bother the other. The path of this person in the river doesn’t damage the path of that person because once the boat passes by, the “furrow”

it made in the water immediately disappears. The water returns to its place as it was before. So when the next person’s boat comes along, he finds a fresh, undamaged section of water to travel through. This is peace on a low level. It doesn’t entail people working together. It is just “live and let live.” People might say hello to each other, but no more than that.

The second type of peace is that of a kettle, a pot. Water and fire are two opposites, and the kettle makes “peace” between them, so to speak. The metal of the kettle separates between the fire and the water, and they thereby work together. The fire provides heat, and the water heats up.

This is a new kind of peace that is created by means of a partition. Sometimes people are able to work together but only because a partition separates between them.

The third type of peace is that of a bird. Birds were created not from earth alone and not from water alone but from *רקק*, marshy land, which is a mixture of earth and water.

A bird can’t live only in the air; it needs to rest on the ground from time to time. On the other hand, a bird can’t stay on the ground all the time. It also needs to fly in the air. This is a wonderful combination of two contrasting qualities in one creature. This is the loftiest type of peace.

These are the three types of peace.

¹ *Yeshayahu* 66:12.

² *Ibid* 31:5.

³ *Ibid* 26:12.

Mitzvos are the First Level

According to this, we can say that there are three different levels to a Jew's connection with *Hashem*. Sometimes the relationship is like a river. Each attends to his own business. The person keeps *mitzvos*, but it is lacking in relationship with *Hashem*. Then there is a connection to *Hashem* that is like a kettle. There is relationship, but there is also division. And then there is connection like a bird. This represents a perfect relationship without barriers and divisions.

These three types of connection to *Hashem* are attained by *mitzvah* observance, *Tefilah*, and Torah learning. *Mitzvah* observance is like a river. *Tefilah* is like a kettle, and Torah learning is like a bird.

We will explain.

The most importance peace in the world is the peace and connection between *Hashem* and the Jewish people. In *Shir Hashirim*, this connection is compared to the relationship between husband and wife.

There are various forms of love and connection. There is the parent-child relationship, the relationship between siblings, the relationship between friends, and so forth. But unique among relationships is that between husband and wife. They are spouses for a lifetime. Every moment of their lives they are aware that they are married. The husband may not stay home all day, and the wife may not stay home all day, but even when they are out of the home, their marital status is not something that they forget about.

This brings us to the essential difference between a Jew and a non-Jew. Once I met a convert to Judaism and I asked him what brought about his change in life. He answered, "Now that I am a Jew, I pray to the true G-d."

I said to him, "My friend, you could pray to G-d even when you were a non-Jew."

כִּי מִמִּזְרַח שֶׁמֶשׁ וְעַד מְבֹאוֹ גְדוֹל שְׁמִי
בְּגוֹיִם – From east to west, My Name is

great among the nations.⁴

Everyone in the world prays to *Hashem*. Every US dollar bill says on it, "In G-d we trust." You don't need to be a Jew to know that G-d exists and that you can pray to Him.

The thing that makes a Jew special is that he has 613 *mitzvos*. He has 248 positive *mitzvos*, corresponding to all his limbs and organs, and 364 negative *mitzvos*, corresponding to all his nerves and sinews.

Mitzvos fill a Jew's life and he is obligated to observe them twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. He is a Jew not just when he is in *shul* and not just on *Shabbos*. Every moment of his life, he is connected to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. A non-Jew goes to church on Sunday and feels that this is his connection with G-d. On another day he can do what he wants and go where he wants, and he is disconnected from G-d.

A Jew is a Jew in the kitchen, in the living room and in every other room. He is a Jew when he puts on his shoes, because there are *halachos* governing that, too. There are *halachos* governing our behavior everywhere and at all times. I said to that convert, "You know why you became a Jew? So you will know how to put on your shoes."

A Jew is a Jew from head to foot. He lives every moment with *Hashem*. Every part of him broadcasts *kevod Shamayim*. We live our whole life with *Hashem*, as a married couple lives their life together. This is what makes Judaism special.

Yet, this kind of connection is that of a "river." We go on our own way, and though we do think of *Hashem* and His *mitzvos*, just performing *mitzvos* is not really a relationship. We are not actually communicating with *Hashem*.

This is the first level of peace between us and *Hashem*. We don't have our minds on *Hashem* all the time. But we are accustomed to keeping His *mitzvos*.

⁴ Malachi 1:11.

Tefilah is the Second Level

The second kind of connection to *Hashem* is that of the kettle. This is achieved by means of *Tefilah*, which is actually communicating with *Hashem*, by speaking to Him. Thus the formula of our *berachos* is *Baruch Attah...* “Blessed are You....” We speak directly to *Hashem*.

Now, a person could potentially reduce *Tefilah* to the level of practical *mitzvos*, and do it without really thinking about *Hashem* while *davening*. But this does not represent the level of relationship that is *Tefilah*.

This level of peace with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is at its height when a person lives his life with *Tefilah*. He turns personally to *Hashem* twenty-four hours a day; he doesn't just recite the fixed prayers and that's all.

In married life, the most important thing is to talk to one another. Applied to our relationship with *Hashem*, this means if there is a problem, talk to *Hashem*. He is close to you. Of course, *Hashem* is in the heavens above and we are down here on earth, meaning that there is an enormous distance between us and *Hashem*. This is true. But when a Jew cries out, “*Hashem*, save me!” *Hashem* is closer to him than is the breath in his own nostrils.

ואני תפילה – living life with *Tefilah* – is a way of life with *Hashem*. Whenever a problem arises, turn to *Hashem*.

Torah is the Highest Level

The third type of connection is that of the bird. This is connecting to *Hashem* through Torah learning.

I cannot even begin to describe the immense power that Torah learning contains, but *Chazal* say:

A person should always consider himself as if Holiness is within his innards.⁵

This means that when a person learns Torah, *Hashem* is within him, so to speak. Heaven and earth become as one, and the person transforms into fire, so to speak.

Torah learning is an absolute connection with *Hashem*. It is the highest level of *shalom*. Just as birds were created from earth and water, and are able to walk on earth and also to fly, so when a person learns Torah he becomes as one with *Hashem*. This is a connection and relationship comprising twenty-four hours a day.

When a person acquires Torah knowledge, he acquires *daas Torah*, which is the ability to understand things the Torah way. So to speak, he has gained *Hashem's* understanding. We all make thousands of decisions a day, and when a person has *daas Torah*, all his decisions are according to Torah.

I heard from a *talmid* of R. Aharon Kotler *zt"l* that once he was asked a question regarding public affairs and he didn't know what to answer. He walked back and forth in his room and asked himself, “What would the Chasam Sofer do in such a case?”

Someone who learns Torah is actually asking himself: What is *Hashem* telling me to do? A Torah sage is preferable to a prophet.⁶ *B'nei Torah* are those who have absorbed the Torah's outlook.

In short, the three levels of connection to *Hashem* are attained in the following three ways. *Mitzvah* observance, which means living like a Jew. *Tefilah*, which means to talking to *Hashem*. And Torah learning, which means understanding things the Torah way. ●

⁵ *Taanis* 11b.

⁶ *Bava Basra* 12a.