

Pinchas

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Illuy Nishmas **Shmuel ben Yitzhak Yaakov, a"h** whose *yahrzeit* is Tammuz 14 of this week. May his *Neshamah* have *aliyah* after *aliyah*, and may he be a *meilitz yoshar* for all of *Klal Yisroel*.

Continuity is an important idea in every society. There will always be people too selfish to care about the generations to follow, but they tend to be in the minority. Most societies seem to be willing to make sacrifices today for people who will live tomorrow.

At least that is the way it once was. The trend today seems to be going in the opposite direction. More and more people seem to be more concerned about making their own lives better regardless of the impact it may have on the lives of their children and their children's children, etc. It's basically the "eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may die" attitude all over again.

This also explains the diminishing birth rate. At this stage of history, most modern societies are having fewer children than necessary to keep their society going. The dwindling birth rates means that people have more disposable income to live as they please, and less responsibility at home to keep them pinned down, but it comes at the cost of the future of their people.

The sacrifice is... *from a body's point of view*. The only continuity a person's body cares about is its own, what is called "looking out for #1." Without a survival instinct a person can fail to sufficiently take care of themselves, but with a survival instinct a person can take care of themselves to the point of denying others the same right, going all the way back to when Kayin murdered his own brother to deal with his own pain

of rejection from God and jealousy of his brother.

Why should we care how our children fare, or how their children will fare, especially if we might not even get the chance to meet them? There are plenty of parents who love their children but who still feel that everyone should fend for themselves. Some parents who struggled to survive feel their children should as well, and sometimes do too good a job at letting them know that.

From a Torah perspective the answer is obvious. The very first *mitzvah* mankind received from God after being created was to make an effort to have children. The Gemora says that it is one of the six questions a person will be asked on their day of judgment: Did you try to procreate? (*Shabbos* 31a). Chizkiah *HaMelech* almost lost his life in this world, and his portion in the World-to-Come, for not fulfilling the *mitzvah*, even though he did it to avoid giving birth to a prophesied evil son (*Brochos* 10a). As the *Gemora* says, the world was made for *peru u'revu*, for propagating the species (*Gittin* 41b).

Shabbos Day

THE KLI YAKAR has an interesting take on the *mitzvah* (*Bamidbar* 11:1). He says it's not just about propagating the species and filling up the planet with people. It's about *Hasbras HaShechinah*, the dwelling of the Divine Providence, because the *Shechinah* does not dwell on less than 22,000 Jews. Procreating means increasing the population so that a certain minimum can be maintained for the sake of God dwelling amongst mankind.

Peru u'revu is a serious *mitzvah* in its own right, but the *Kli Yakar's* explanation adds a whole other dimension of seriousness to it, somewhat like building a temple for God to dwell within. This gives Pinchas' act of zealousness even more meaning because he wasn't just protecting the continuity of the Jewish people, he was protecting the continuity of *Hasbras HaShechinah*.

This fits in nicely with this:

"Pinchas ben Elazar the son of Abaron HaKohen has turned My anger away from the Children of Israel by his zealously avenging Me among them. . ." (*Bamidbar* 25:11)

The simple reading is that by stopping the sinning Pinchas avenged God, which is always true. But a little deeper it means that by stopping "intermarriage," Pinchas protected the continuity of the Jewish population, and therefore the dwelling of the *Shechinah* among them.

This idea of Jewish continuity is one that I have addressed in the past. It is the theme of the *parsha*, which is why Pinchas merited to never die. He just changed into Eliyahu *HaNavi* and eventually ascended on a fiery chariot to Heaven. He still makes regular visits and will be the one to herald the final redemption.

This is also the *parsha* that brings up the laws of land inheritance, thanks to *Bnos Tzelofchad* who had worried about what would become of their father's heritage since Tzelofchad died without any sons to inherit him. And this is followed by the *Korban Tamid*, the continual offering that was brought twice a day, everyday, and the sacrifices of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tovim*, days on which time seems to stop somewhat when treated properly.

But there is something else special about continuity, and most people seem to know it. It's why having a heir to the throne is so important, whether it's a real throne or just a figurative one. People want to live forever, and they figure if they can't do it personally they can at least do it through offspring, or their names on the sides of buildings that will long outlive them. They just don't want to be forgotten.

What is interesting, though I cannot verify this, is that even people who say they do not believe in the World to Come seem concerned about this once death comes near. Do they sense there is more even after they die, or just hope it? Why does eternity seem so far fetched to some people while young, and increasingly more logical as many get older?

Seudas Shlishis

THERE IS A *midrash* that asks why *Zimri* did not try to defend himself against Pinchas? He didn't even scream or call for help, as many might have in such a situation.

The *midrash* answers that it was because once *Zimri* saw Pinchas with his spear in hand, he snapped into reality and realized what he was doing and what he was guilty of. He acquiesced to Pinchas and let him do what was the *balachab* in such a situation. Whether that is true *pshat* *doesn't* really matter since there are alternative answers. But the point is an important one that has something to say about life in general.

When a person ages, it is not the soul that gets older, but the body. While young, the body is agile and very much into immediate pleasure. It is easily excited by physical pleasures and often demanding to get them. A central trait of youth is the sacrificing of long-term gain for short-term thrills.

As a person gets older their body gets weaker, and though their *yetzer bara* may remain active it becomes harder for it to get the person to sin. The person is just too tired physically, mentally, or both to engage in whimsical activities anymore, which finally transfers some of the upper hand back to the soul. A person may not realize it, but they start to feel more spiritual because they start to feel more of their soul.

With that also comes a sense of eternity. While a person is overrun by the temporary body and *yetzer bara*, they only sense life in the here and now. Some people have epiphanies early in life and use their brains to navigate a more spiritual life before their bodies let them. But most people live a body existence until they can't any longer. It's just eat, drink, and be merry, or working hard in order to eat, drink, and be merry. They have no real sense of continuity.

Because that is what creates our sense of continuity, our souls. They give us that sense of something more than what we see everyday, and that we are missing out if we abandon it. This was something that the women of Midian were able to do when they invaded the Jewish camp at the end of last week's *parsha*.

In a sense then, Pinchas was like the soul that overcame the body and *yetzer bara* that was embodied in Zimri. He was the reality of soul continuity defeated the reality of abandonment to the temporal. As such, he was rewarded with continuity, as it says:

"Therefore, say, 'I hereby give him My covenant of peace. It shall be for him and for his descendants after him [as] an eternal covenant of kebunah. . .'" (Bamidbar 25:12-13)

Ain Od Milvado, Part 57

IT IS NOT easy to live with the reality of *ain od Milvado*. We want to and know we should, but fear of failing to reach such a level makes many people play it safe by working the world of *bishtadalus*—human effort. We listen to the news as if it is the only way to see the world, and respond to crises like anyone else would, while offering a prayer or two to hopefully increase our chances of success.

One of the reasons for this is because we have so few personal examples of people who lived like this with any real success. We might be willing to jump into the water, but only after someone already has without drowning. Until that time, we're more prepared to wait for the next boat.

That is the difference between a *kanoy*, a zealot for God like Pinchas, and the "average" Jew. That was never his calculation. Had it been, he would never have

responded to the call and taken the action he did. He knew that it would take miracles for him to succeed, and that there was no way to guarantee them in advance. Like Chananya, Azariah, and Mishael who had been told that they would not be miraculously saved from death but who entered the furnace nonetheless, Pinchas carried out the *balachab* fully aware he might die in the process.

It didn't faze him. He subscribed to *ain od Milvado*, meaning that any reality that interfered with his ability to feel and sense God was one that he could not live in. He had to either restore *Hasbras HaShechinah*, or go out trying to. *Ain od Milvado* didn't just mean that everything in life was *from* God to Pinchas. It meant that life *was* God, and that it felt like death when he could not feel God's Presence.

For that, God increased His closeness to Pinchas to such an extent that everyday was *Shabbos*, a time when we live on the level of *Gan Aiden*. This automatically made him more eternal, and God's personal *sbaliach* in history.