

Perceptions • Tammuz 23, 5785 • July 19, 2025 • Issue #2105

# Pinchas

I must have been a teenager when I first saw the movie: 2001: A Space Odyssey. No, dinosaurs were already long gone, but it was decades ago. It was quite spectacular for its time, and its message was quite prescient, but there was also so much I just didn't get.

Then I read the book years later. I was amazed at how much I didn't pick up while watching the movie, and how much the movie failed to convey. I learned at that time how easy it is to think that what you see is all there is when, in fact, there is so much more to know to properly understand a story. That is certainly the case with this week's *parsha*.

There is a joke about a man who goes to an Orthodox rabbi whom he asks to make him a *koben*. "I'm even willing to pay," he tells the rabbi, who refuses the money saying, "The *kebunah* is not something you can buy into." Undeterred, the would-be *koben* goes to a less scrupulous rabbi and makes the same request, but this time his request is granted and the money is paid. Upon concluding the transaction and the fake ordination, the "rabbi" asks the man, "Tell me, why is it so important for you to be a *koben*?" The man sighs heavily and answers, "My father was a *koben*, and so was his father before him. So, I want to be a *koben* too!"

The joke is that he already was a *koben* because his father was one. But, in the case of Pinchas, it was no joke. Pinchas's father had been a *koben*, but that did not mean that Pinchas could be one as well. Only children born henceforth from kohanim automatically became *kobanim*, which excluded Pinchas who had already been born at the time.

Not to worry. Pinchas found a workaround when he killed Zimri in the middle of a sin, though he had not known it at the time. He had only been avenging God when he dispensed with Zimri at the end of last week's *parsha*, and only found about his

reward of becoming a *kohen* after the fact at the beginning of this week's *parsha*. As the expression goes, "It ain't over until it's over."

That's the story. Now, what's the story *behind* the story?

It's like archery. Sometimes you can only figure out what the archer was aiming for after they hit their target. Likewise, if we know the end of the story about Pinchas, we can better understand why he had to "earn" his way into the *kehunah*.

The Ba'al HaTurim provides that information at the beginning of this week's *parsha* by pointing out that Pinchas was Eliyahu *HaNavi*, or more accurately, became Eliyahu *HaNavi*. He doesn't explain how he knew this, or why he was compelled to mention it here, but the Arizal did generations later in *Sba'ar HaGilgulim*. That is where we find out that Pinchas began his transformation to one of the greatest prophets to have ever lived and herald of the final redemption the moment he put everything on the line and put an end to the Zimri-Cozbi fiasco.

The Torah only speaks about his visible reward, which was becoming an active *kohen* and getting *Bris Shalom*, God's "Covenant of Peace." What was not visible was the drawing and absorption of the souls of Nadav and Avihu, which gave Pinchas prophecy. This led to the addition of two more souls, one called "Eliyahu *HaTishbi*," and "Eliyahu *HaGiladi*," to make the transformation from "only" Pinchas to Eliyahu *HaNavi*.

None of this had been incidental. All of it had been planned, beginning with Pinchas not becoming a *kohen* with the rest of his family, which was a part of his personal development to become the heroic Pinchas at the end of last week's *parsha*. The Zimri episode occurred to bring all that out of him to fashion him into the proper vessel to receive the necessary levels of Divine light to become the prophet he became, and angel he is now.

This was true of Pinchas, and it is true for all of us as well. Our personal lives may seem somewhat random, but Divine Providence is working behind the scenes to help us reach our final destinations. Successes and adversities are Divinely planned to help us become better vessels for the light of God, which we need to reach higher levels of ourselves, something only God knows in advance.

If you want to know about this in more detail, and you have to if you want to leave this world satisfied with what you became, take a look at my new book: *Vesselate: A Book About Perfecting Body and Soul*, either on Amazon or my own site, [www.thirtysix.org](http://www.thirtysix.org).

The Three Weeks have begun. This is the time that we focus on what has been lost, but also on what needs to be found. Anti-Semitism is becoming ferocious, and histo-

ry is looking darker by the day. But that also creates opportunity for each of us to go a few steps higher in our personal development and become something greater than we ever thought we could. But first, you have to want to, and that's what was the beginning of Pinchas's rise to center stage of history.

**New Seminar: Kabbalah & Tisha B'Av, Tuesday, July 22, 8:30 PM (Israel time), NIS 36.00. Register [here](#).**

Last week's seminar, Unlock The Gates, can be purchased by writing to [pinchasw@shaarnun.org](mailto:pinchasw@shaarnun.org).

Have a great Shabbos,

Pinchas Winston

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