

פנחס

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This week's *Parashah* opens with Pinchas' reward for his courageous act of killing Zimri. Our Sages teach that *Bnei Yisrael* criticized Pinchas; in contrast, the Torah records, *Hashem* praised him, as we read (25:11), "He zealously avenged Me among them, so I did not consume *Bnei Yisrael* in My vengeance." In the toxic environment created by those who made a great *Chillul Hashem* / desecration of G-d's Name, Pinchas made a *Kiddush Hashem* / sanctification of G-d's Name, writes R' Menachem Ben-Zion Sacks z"l (1896-1987; rabbi and pioneering educator in Chicago).

Nevertheless, continues R' Sacks, as great as Pinchas' merit was, *Hashem* saw fit to reward him with His "covenant of *Shalom* / peace." *Hashem* was emphasizing that zealotry has a place, and Pinchas did a great thing, but zealotry must not become a way of life. Zealotry must be exercised only within the framework of *Shalom*.

*Midrash Rabbah* teaches: "Great is *Shalom*, which was given to Pinchas, for the world operates only with *Shalom*." We read (*Mishlei* 3:17) about the Torah itself, notes R' Sacks, "Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its pathways are *Shalom*."

R' Sacks concludes: The last prophet, Malachi, defines the covenant of *Shalom* as follows (*Malachi* 2:5-6), "My covenant of life and *Shalom* was with him . . . The *Torah* of truth was in his mouth, and no injustice was found on his lips; he walked with Me in *Shalom* and fairness, and he turned many away from sin." Those are the hallmarks of *Shalom*. (*Menachem Zion*)

## Shabbat

*Midrash Rabbah* teaches: *Hashem* says: "Do you think I gave you *Shabbat* to your detriment? I gave it to you for your own good!" How so? Rabbi Chiya bar Abba explained, "Sanctify *Shabbat* with food, drink, and clean clothes, and enjoy yourself, and I (*Hashem*) will give you reward." [Until here from the *Midrash*]

Commentaries ask: Could one possibly think that *Hashem* gave us *Shabbat* to harm us? Of course not! R' Eliyahu E. Dessler *shlita* (*Mashgiach Ruchani* of the Ponovezh Yeshiva in Bnei Brak) explains:

R' Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn z"l (Grodno, Belarus; died 1862) writes that the *Midrash* is contrasting *Shabbat* and other *Mitzvot*. Most *Mitzvot* are meant to temper or weaken man's physical drives, to fight the material urges that drag a person down and prevent him from reaching lofty spiritual realms. *Shabbat*, in contrast, sanctifies those same physical drives, allowing us to serve *Hashem* through the urge to eat, drink, wear nice clothing, and enjoy other physical pleasures. The *Midrash* should be understood, therefore, as expressing wonder that *Shabbat* calls upon us to serve *Hashem* in a way that is counter-intuitive.

R' Dessler continues: R' Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik z"l (1820-1892; rabbi of Brisk, Belarus; author of *Beis Ha'levi*) writes similarly that there are two types of *Mitzvot*--those meant to break nature's hold on man, and those meant to sanctify nature. *Shabbat* is the latter type of *Mitzvah*. But why must we sanctify nature? The *Beis Ha'levi* answers: Since *Shabbat* testifies that *Hashem* created nature, including man's natural urges, its observance necessarily must involve sanctifying nature and using those natural urges to serve Him. Only in this way do we declare that there is none but *Hashem*, R' Dessler elaborates. Only in this way do we reveal Him to the world, which is the ultimate *Oneg Shabbat* / Sabbath pleasure.

R' Dessler adds: It follows that there is a fundamental difference between how we serve *Hashem* on *Shabbat* versus on weekdays. All week long, our focus must be on rising above nature and connecting to higher spiritual realms--for example, not letting our rush to get to work detract from the time and attention that prayer deserves. On *Shabbat*, in contrast, we serve *Hashem* with our physical nature, but we sanctify it.

(*Sha'arei Ha'zemanim: Shabbat* p.48)

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**“Command *Bnei Yisrael* and say to them, ‘My offering, My food for My fires, My satisfying aroma, you shall be scrupulous to offer to Me in its appointed time.’ And you shall say to them, ‘This is the fire-offering that you are to offer to *Hashem*--*Kevasim bnei shanah* / male lambs in their first year, unblemished, two a day, as a continual *Olah*-offering. The one *Keves* / lamb shall you make in the morning, and the second *Keves* / lamb shall you make in the afternoon . . . It is the *Tamid* / continual elevation-offering. . .” (28:2-4, 6)**

The *Mishnah* (*Ta’anit* 4:6) teaches that five calamitous events occurred to our forefathers on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of Tammuz. One of these was that the bringing of the *Tamid* was interrupted by the Romans, and it has not been reinstated since.

R’ Zvi Yisrael Thau *shlita* (founder of Yeshivat Har Ha’mor in Yerushalayim) writes: From amongst the many *Korbanot* / sacrifices that were offered in the *Bet Hamikdash*, the *Tamid* stands out in its centrality and importance. The *Tamid*, which was offered every day, was the foundation for all other sacrificial offerings. The daily service began with the morning *Tamid* and ended with the evening *Tamid*. Thus, the *Tamid* framed all the other *Korbanot*.

R’ Thau continues: The Jewish People aspire to elevate nature--to refine it and sanctify it. For the most part, nature is consistent and cyclical, as we say in *Kiddush Ha’levanah*, “He gave them a law and a schedule, that they not alter their assigned task.” The *Tamid*, which was offered with unrelenting regularity, sanctified the Jewish People’s routines and ensured that they did not devolve into being just another part of nature.

(Kovetz Sichot L’bein Ha’metzarim: Avodat Ha’*Tamid*)

R’ Yitzchak Drohobycer *z”l* (one of the earliest disciples of the *Ba’al Shem Tov*; died 1750) observed: People usually hold on to their anger at other people until *Erev Yom Kippur*, when people appease each other. That is not proper, however. Rather, before one goes to sleep each night, he should forgive anyone who wronged him during the preceding day. If someone wrongs him at night, he should forgive that person before morning, says the *Zohar*.

This is alluded to in our verses, says R’ Yitzchak: This is the offering that will be a “satisfying aroma,” *i.e.*, that will be pleasing, to *Hashem*. Take your anger, which is “*Kevasim bnei shanah*” / pent-up (“*Kavush*”) within you for a whole year, and address it properly twice daily instead.

(Imrei Yechiel)

**“May *Hashem*, *Elokim* of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly . . . and let the assembly of *Hashem* not be like sheep that have no shepherd.” (26:16-17)**

*Rashi* *z”l* explains: Why is the expression, “*Elokim* of the spirits,” used? Moshe said to *Hashem*, “Master of the Universe! The dispositions of everyone are known to You, and You know that they are not like one another. Appoint a leader for them who will bear each person according to his disposition.” [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Yissachar Shlomo Teichtal *z”l Hy”d* (1885-1945; rabbi and *Rosh Yeshiva* in Pieštany, Czechoslovakia) writes: A rabbi’s primary responsibility is to the masses and the children, for the learned congregants will figure out on their own how to fear *Hashem* and observe the Torah. The unlearned are the “sheep” of whom Moshe speaks in our verse, as we read (*Yechezkel* 34:31), “Now, you are My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, you are man.” Commentaries explain: Now, when you are unlearned in Torah, you are like sheep, but in the future, when (*Yeshayah* 11:9), “The earth will be as filled with knowledge of *Hashem*, as the water covering the seabed”--then you will be “man.”

Naturally, writes R’ Teichtal, a Torah scholar would rather keep company with people like himself. In contrast, it is hard for a Torah scholar to find common ground with an unlearned person. How can he succeed? If he can “bear each person according to his disposition,” *i.e.*, if he can lower himself to his audience. We read (*Tehilim* 29:4), “The voice of *Hashem* [comes] in power,” and *Midrash Rabbah* notes that it does not say “His power.” Rather, the Torah can be understood on each person’s level, and so a teacher of Torah must speak.

R’ Teichtal adds: We read (*Shmot* 34:29-34), “Moshe did not know that the skin of his face had become radiant when He had spoken to him. Aharon and all *Bnei Yisrael* saw Moshe . . . and they feared to approach him. Moshe called to them . . . he would command them regarding everything that *Hashem* had spoken to him on *Har Sinai*. Moshe finished speaking with them and he placed a mask on his face. When Moshe would come before *Hashem* to speak with Him, he would remove the mask until his departure; then he would leave and tell *Bnei Yisrael* whatever he had been commanded. When *Bnei Yisrael* saw Moshe’s face, that Moshe’s face had become radiant, Moshe put the mask back on his face.” Moshe’s level was much higher than *Bnei Yisrael*’s, and his mask was a reminder of the vast gulf between them. By removing his mask until he finished speaking to *Bnei Yisrael*, he indicated that he wanted to speak to them on their own level.

(Mishneh Sachir)