

But there is more to the Three Weeks than fasting and lamentation. The prophet describes the fasts as "days of goodwill before G-d"-days of opportunity to exploit the failings of the past as the impetus for a renewed and even deeper bond with G-d. A sense of purification accompanies the fasting, a promise of redemption pervades the mourning, and a current of joy underlies the sadness. The Ninth of Av, say our sages, is not only the day of the Temple's destruction—it is also the birthday of Moshiach.

May we soon merit the fulfillment of the prophecy: "I will turn their mourning into joy and will comfort them and make them rejoice from their sorrow" (Jeremiah 31:12).

Live & Laugh

One night at the dinner table, the wife commented, "When we were first married, you took the small piece of steak and gave me the larger. Now you take the large one and leave me the smaller. You don't love me anymore."

"Nonsense, darling," replied the husband, "you just cook better now."

Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis 8:30 am; Shitl 8:45 am
- ◆ Shul Brocha in the Seeff Hall.
- ◆ **Smorgasbord of Shiurim.**
- ◆ Mincha: 4:55 pm
- ◆ Pirkei Avos: Chapter 1
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 6:07 pm
- ◆ Mincha next week 5:25 pm

- ◆ The **Scottish Leader Signature** whiskey at Shul is sponsored by **Distell** & available for purchase at **Norman Goodfellows**.
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of Ideal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances.**
- ◆ **Vehicles wanted. Any make, any condition. Best prices. Phone ARNOLD ORKIN 082 823 7826**
- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org
- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.

DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

◆ Sunday 6 August – **Siyum Sefer Torah: The Completion & Dedication Ceremony**
of the first New Sefer Torah to our Shul in decades.
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◆ Monday 7 August - **Ashley Blaker @ Emperors Palace**

◆ Wednesday 9 August - **An Evening of History & Destiny: Celebrating the Past as we Shape the Future**
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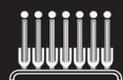
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Good Shabbos SYDENHAM!



15 Jul 2017 Parshas Pinchas 22 Tammuz 5777

What's Your Bottom Line? by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

This is the Parsha of Pinchas the Zealous. The courageous young priest stood up against idolatry and immorality and, in the end, saved Israel from a devastating plague.

While Pinchas' radical response made him a hero worthy of having a Torah section named after him, we wouldn't necessarily suggest to our children that they emulate his behaviour. Those were extraordinary times. Today, violence dare not become our norm. So, Pinchas - hero though he may be - cannot become our role model. At least not when it comes to the details of what he did.

Nevertheless, Pinchas does give us something very important to consider. What is it that would arouse **our** righteous indignation? What, in Jewish life today, would get us emotionally worked up? What would it take to galvanize us into action in defense of that which we consider sacred and inviolate? Is there something that would incense us? Anything?

I am reminded of a famous saying attributed to the previous Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson. He said, "A Jew is neither willing nor able to allow himself to become divorced from G-d." In other words, once a Jew becomes consciously aware that what he is contemplating doing will cause him to be alienated from G-d and that which is holy; he simply will not - and cannot - do it. Even if he is not remotely "religious," it is something which comes from his inner essence, his spiritual DNA. It is in his very being.

How many true stories we all know that validate this principle. One that springs to mind is of a Jewish actor during the Holocaust. In those days especially, the stage was not the place where one would find "nice Jewish boys," at least not nice, Jewish, **religious** boys. When the Nazis invaded the town, they desecrated the synagogues and - painful as it is to write these words - they unraveled the Torah scrolls and rolled them out in the gutter. To add insult to injury, they ordered this fellow, the actor, to urinate on the Torah. He was not at all religious. He probably hadn't looked into a Torah in many years. Yet, he could not bring himself to commit such sacrilege. He refused. The savage beasts killed him on the spot. He gave his life *al Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying the name of G-d and he went down in history as a holy martyr.

For the Jewish actor, that was his bottom line. What is ours? Religiously, is it Shabbos, Yom Kippur, Intermarriage? Marrying out on Yom Kippur with a pork chop reception? Morally, is it Insider Trading, Fraud, Murder? Nationally, is it Judea and Samaria, Jerusalem, or Tel Aviv? Where do we draw the line?

Our politically correct rules of etiquette promote such unparalleled tolerance that people's democratic right to do anything they may wish has become the defining principle of our generation. The Ten Commandments are obsolete. "Thou shalt not violate my democratic right" is the first and last commandment.

Of course, in any democratic country people may choose their own lifestyles as they wish. But when there is absolutely nothing that arouses our pas-

sion, nothing that raises our blood pressure, nothing that sparks any kind of protest, then we have become an insipid, innocuous, characterless society.

The story of Pinchas and his brave stand for G-d, Torah, and morality gives us cause to consider and an important point to ponder. You don't have to be a zealot to have a bottom line. What is **my** bottom line? What would **I** get passionate about? Is there **anything** in Jewish life that inspires me, excites me, or incenses me enough to take a stand?

You are invited to think about it and share your feelings. I would be happy to see your response.

Parsha Pointers

*Pinchas: Artscroll Chumash pg 876;
Living Torah pg 799*

Aaron's grandson, Pinchas, is rewarded for his act of zealotry in killing the Simeonite prince Zimri and the Midianite princess who was his paramour: G-d grants him a covenant of peace and the priesthood.

A census of the people counts 601,730 men between the ages of twenty and sixty. Moses is instructed on how the Land is to be divided by lottery among the tribes and families of Israel. The five daughters of Zelophead petition Moses that they be granted the portion of the land belonging to their father, who died without sons; G-d accepts their claim and incorporates it into the Torah's laws of inheritance.

Moses empowers Joshua to succeed him and lead the people into the Land of Israel.

The Parshah concludes with a detailed list of the daily offerings, and the additional offerings brought on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh (first of the month), and the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret.

The Big Little Voice

By Rabbi Shlomo Yaffe

In our *haftorah* this week we read how a respondent Elijah describes to G-d the terrible spiritual wasteland of the Northern Kingdom

of Israel, home of the Ten Tribes. G-d brings Elijah back to Mount Sinai, where the Torah was given, and then He appears to Elijah in the following manner:

And He said: "Go out and stand in the mountain before G-d, Behold! G-d will pass." And a great and strong wind splitting mountains and shattering boulders before G-d, but G-d was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake—not in the earthquake was G-d. After the earthquake fire, not in the fire was G-d. And after the fire a still small sound. And as Elijah heard, he wrapped his face in his mantle, and he went out and stood at the entrance to the cave, and behold a voice came to him and said: "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

All of the above – the wind, earthquake and fire – were miraculous and astounding phenomena, so why did G-d choose to appear in the small voice?

A possible answer is that Elijah was looking for a sudden large-scale transformation of the people of Israel.

G-d's response was:

"My voice will begin to be heard and effect change in very quiet and small things..."

"The return to Sinai happens with little things first..."

"Don't look for sudden and total return to G-d all at once—look for people to hear G-d's voice in the little things, a *mezuzah* here and *tefillin* there, an act of selfless love somewhere or a charity box in a home..."

These are not little things, because the full presence of G-d speaks through each one of these events.

If we can hear, and get others to hear, the small voice, and respond—we will then be attached to the full power of G-d, and a full revival will indeed happen.

Leadership By Example

By Rabbi Zalman Posner

Moses' life is drawing to a close. The devoted leader is concerned about his successor in whose hands the future of Israel is to be entrusted. Moses' successor, of course, was not Joshua alone, but all those who affect Israel's fate, all who presume to lead Moses' people, through all generations. In his prayer Moses expresses the qualifications of Israel's leader in simple yet all-inclusive terms. (See Numbers 27:15-23)

Moses prays that G-d appoint a man for the congregation who will "go forth before them." It is a platitude to describe a leader as one who inspires others to follow, that Israel's leaders are to show them the paths of righteousness. Moses is not satisfied however with superficial leadership. He demands of his successor the traits that enabled him to mould a mass into a nation, a slave-mob into servants of G-d. He pointedly doesn't mention eloquence and fiery sermons as prerequisites of the leader.

The man who occupies Moses' position must "go before the people," he must set a personal example to be emulated. He must personify Jewish living through his conduct, and by going first he will inspire others to follow. As Rashi says, he will not send his people off to battle while he remains behind. The cynical "do as I say, not as I do" is repudiated, forbidden in the lexicon (spoken and implied) of those who stand at the head of the people of the Torah. The man who will be followed is not the one who speaks best (perhaps Moses was tongue-tied to show that he swayed Israel through his deeds, not his speech), but the one who lives by the ideals he preaches, who teaches by doing and not by talking.

Three Weeks Laws and Customs

A 21 Day Period of National Mourning

For eight hundred and thirty years there stood an edifice upon a Jerusalem hilltop which served as the point of contact between heaven and earth. So central was this edifice to the relationship between man and G-d that nearly two-thirds of the mitzvot are contingent upon its existence. Its destruction is regarded as the greatest tragedy of our history, and

its rebuilding will mark the ultimate redemption—the restoration of harmony within G-d's creation and between G-d and His creation.

A full three weeks of our year—the three weeks "between the strictures" of Tammuz 17 and Av 9—are designated as a time of mourning over the destruction of the Holy Temple and the resultant Galut—physical exile and spiritual displacement—in which we still find ourselves.

In this period, many calamities befell the Jewish people throughout the generations. It was during this period of between the straits that both the first and second Temples were destroyed.

During this period, we lessen the extent of our rejoicing. We don't:

- Conduct weddings. (Engagement parties – without music – are allowed until Rosh Chodesh Av.)
- Play musical instruments or listen to music.
- Recite the *Shebecheyanu* blessing. Thus, we do not wear new clothing or eat fruit which we have not yet eaten this season so that we will not be required to recite *Shebecheyanu*. Take a haircut or shave. (Speak to your rabbi if there are extenuating circumstances that prevent you from observing any of the above customs.)

Determination to Rebuild

Aside from the aforementioned "technical" rules and restrictions, during this period we spend extra time contemplating the less-than-perfect state the world is in now and what we can do to improve it by increasing in deeds of goodness and kindness.

The Rebbe urged that the Three Weeks should be a time of increased Torah study and giving of charity—in keeping with the verse, "Zion shall be redeemed by law, and her returnees by charity." Particularly, the Rebbe requested time and again the study of those portions of Torah that deal with the building of the Holy Temple.

It is our generation in particular, that stands on the threshold of Redemption, that must study these laws with the awareness that these laws will be quite practical in the imminent future!

From Destruction to Renewal

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