



Parshas Pinchas 2021, courageous path

This week's Parsha Perspective is in loving memory of Rachel Bas Reuven, Shlomo Ben Edward, & Edward Ben Efraim. May their souls be uplifted & their memories a blessing for their families.

Our Parsha begins with Pinchas, the grandchild of Aaron, receiving a reward for killing Zimri, the head of the tribe of Shimon. Zimri was publicly consorting with a Midianite princess, so Pinchas took a spear and ended both of their lives.

The reward Pinchas received was the Kehunah, priesthood. The Talmud in Zevachim (101b) explains that when G-d anointed Aaron and his four sons to the priesthood, He said that this appointment was for Aaron, his sons, and the future generations. Since Pinchas was alive when they were anointed, he did not receive the priesthood.

As punishment for consorting with the Midianite girls, Jewish Supreme Court killed over 160,000 people. G-d then commanded Moshe to go to war and destroy the nation of Midian for sending their woman to trick the Jewish people into serving idols.

Moshe was subsequently asked to count how many Jewish people were left after all the executions; the total was just above 600,000. When Moshe finished counting the Jewish nation, G-d told him to go up Mt. Avarim and catch a glimpse of Israel's land. He would not go to the land, which was the only way to fulfill his dream of entering Israel.

Moshe then asked G-d who would be his successor? He thought that his children would succeed him as they did his brother, Aaron, the high priest. Before he went up the mountain to pass away, Aaron gave his special priestly garments to Elazar,

who succeeded him. But G-d had a different plan; He told Moshe that his most devoted disciple, Yeshua Ben-Nun, would take over him.

However, a question comes to mind: G-d chose Moshe's most devoted disciple to take over and lead the Jewish nation into the Promised Land. But why didn't G-d choose either Gershom or Eliezer, Moshe's two children, to succeed him? What would be Moshe's legacy if his sons couldn't assume his role?!

The Rabbeinu Bachya (*Rav Bachya ben Asher, a Spanish commentary*) answers this question by quoting Shlomo Hamelach in Mishlei (*Proverbs, 27:18*) "*He who tends to a fig tree will enjoy its fruit, and he who cares for his teacher will be honored.*" The Rabbeinu Bachya writes that G-d chose Yeshua as a reward for never departing from Moshe's immediate presence.

Furthermore, The Rabbeinu Bachya clarifies that Moshe's children did not reside with him for many years. Instead, they lived with their mother, Tzipora, and their grandfather, Yisro, in Midyan. As the Torah relates in Shemos (Yisro 18:2-6), "*Yisro, Moshe's father-in-law, took Tzipora, Moshe's wife. As well as her two sons, one called Gershom, and the other was named Eliezer, and began to travel to the Jewish camp in the desert.*"

The Rabbeinu Bachya explains that Moshe's children could not succeed and take him over because they were not with the Jewish people the whole time. They did not experience the same hardships and miracles as the rest of the nation. Since a true leader needs to be sympathetic and empathetic to the difficulties of his people, Moshe's children could not assume his role.

However, the Netziv (*Rav Naftali Tzvi Yeudah Berlin, a famous Polish Rabbi from the 1800s*) gives a deeper and more profound explanation. He writes that the main character trait of a true leader is their ability to be courageous, bold, and independent. Since a leader, director, or commander has to make tough decisions that affect many people, their ability to walk alone is paramount to their success.

The Netziv explains that we have two powerful examples of Yeshua's leadership capabilities. The first instance is by the sin of the Golden Calf. Moshe was sent down Mt. Sinai by G-d to see how Jewish people were serving the golden calf. As Moshe made his way down, he encountered Yeshua at the foot of the mountain

The Torah in Shemos recounts the unusual conversation that Yeshua had with Moshe when he met him. (32:17-18) *“Yeshua heard the roꝯdiness of the people, he turned to Moshe and said, there is a cry of war in the camp. Moshe responded to him, It is not the sound of triumph or defeat; It is the sound of song that I hear!”*

The Ibn Ezra (*the famous Spanish Rabbi, Avraham Ben Meir Ibn Ezra*) explains that Yeshua had no idea what was going on with the Jewish nation, so he thought it was a cry of war. Since Moshe, his teacher and leader, went up the mountain, he stayed at the foot of the mountain the entire time.

The rest of the nation went home when they could no longer see Moshe’s figure in the clouds. But, Yeshua remained and patiently awaited his master’s return. He did not follow the rest of the people; instead, he chose to stay alone.

The second example is the episode of the spies’ exploration of Israel. Yeshua was one of the twelve spies that Moshe sent to investigate and explore the land and its people. When they returned, ten out of the twelve spies reported a grim situation, people dying and giants guarding the cities. But Yeshua and one other spy took the opposite approach. They said that the land flowing with milk and honey and ready for the Jewish people to dwell in it.

The Netziv explains that Yeshua demonstrated his leadership abilities and connection to G-d in two significant and crucial points. This is why G-d chose Yeshua to lead the Jewish nation into Israel over Moshe’s children because he was ready to walk alone with G-d.

In our daily life, it is imperative that we understand that it takes nothing to stand on the sidelines with the rest of the masses. But it takes real courage and determination to defend your beliefs and values to an ever-growing opposition. But in those moments, your true self comes out, and your soul shines.

***“The secret to happiness is freedom,
and the secret to freedom is courage.”***

*Have a meaningful Shabbos,
Rabbi Sholom Yemini*