



Parashat "Pinchas"

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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A Paradigm Incident Which Teaches: The Ribono Shel Olam Has a Grand Plan

Parshas [Pinchas](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The *pasuk* at the beginning of Parshas Pinchas says: “And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood, because he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for the Children of Israel” (Bamidbar 25:13). As we learned in last week’s parsha, Pinchas did not tolerate the travesty of a *nasi* (prince) of a *shevet* (tribe) in Yisroel brazenly committing a public act of immorality with a Midyanite Princess. He took a spear and killed them both, based on the *Halacha* of “A person who commits public immorality with a female from Aram, may be smitten down by a *kanai* (religiously zealous individual).” As a result of that act of zealotry, he was rewarded with an eternal covenant of *Kehunah* (Priesthood).

Rashi raises the obvious question: As a grandson of Aharon, was Pinchas not already a *Kohen*? Rashi answers that even though the *Kehuna* was already granted to Aharon’s children, Pinchas was **not** a *Kohen* prior to this incident. The reason for that, Rashi says, is that *Kehuna* was only granted to Aharon and his sons and those descendants of these original *Kohanim* who would be born later. This did not include the grandchildren of Aharon who were already alive but were not anointed with Aharon and his sons, such as Pinchas son of Elazar. (Zevachim 101b)

This is an example of the exquisiteness of *hashgocha* (Divine providence). Consider the following: Up until this point in time, Pinchas was just a regular Levi, not a Kohen. Every single day, Pinchas saw his father serve as a Kohen. He saw his grandfather serve as a Kohen. He saw his uncle serve as a Kohen. He even saw his cousins (who were born afterward) serve as *Kohanim*. Pinchas, however, because of an accident of birth and this quirk in the *Halacha* of who is a Kohen, was **not** a Kohen. He could have been asking himself: What did I do wrong? Where is the justice in all this?

Remember, this went on for forty years. Aharon and his four sons became *Kohanim* at the beginning of the forty years in the *Midbar*. The incident with Zimri and Kozbi occurred at the end of their time in the *Midbar*, forty years later. For forty years, day in, day out, Pinchas saw this going on. Perhaps he was stewing in his juices. What is the meaning of this?

The holy Zohar says, "No. This is all part of the *Ribono shel Olam's* grand plan." If the *Ribono shel Olam* had let it happen that Pinchas had already been a Kohen—either because he had been born to Elazar after Elazar had received the *Kehuna*, or because he had been included in the original anointing—he would have lost his *Kehuna* at this juncture. When the incident with Zimri and Kozbi occurred and Pinchas picked up his spear and killed them, Pinchas—if he had already been a Kohen—would have invalidated himself from the *Kehuna*. The *Halacha* is that a Kohen who has killed someone (even unintentionally) is not allowed to 'raise his hands' (to offer the Priestly Blessing). (There is a dispute among

the *Rishonim* as to whether this excludes him from all of the *Avodah* done by a Kohen, but he is certainly not allowed to '*Duchen*').

Thus, the Zohar says, the reason the *Ribono shel Olam* did not make Pinchas a Kohen up until this point is because He wanted Pinchas to be a Kohen for the rest of his life. Not only that, but Tosfos (Zevachim 101) says that there were 80 *Kohanim Gedolim* in the first *Beis HaMikdash* and 300 *Kohanim Gedolim* in the second *Beis HaMikdash* who were all descendants of Pinchas. All of that was possible because Pinchas did not originally become a Kohen. Any observer might have asked, "Where is there justice in the world?" and "Why was Pinchas dealt this raw deal and this bad hand?" Now we can understand that it was because the *Ribono shel Olam* knew what was going to happen. It was all part of His grand plan to specifically make Pinchas and his future descendants *Kohanim* and *Kohanim Gedolim*.

The Zohar continues – isn't it ironic that Moshe Rabbeinu, who knew almost every *Halacha* without exception, suddenly forgot the *Halacha* by Zimri and Kozbi, and did not know what to do. Why didn't Moshe Rabbeinu know what to do? It is for the same reason. If Moshe Rabbeinu knew what to do, Pinchas would not have done what he did. This was all part of the grand plan.

The take-away lesson of this is that it is common in life to be perplexed and not understand why events occur. Things don't seem to make sense, and they don't seem fair. Many times, they seem a lot worse than not fair. This incident is a paradigm to demonstrate that the *Ribono shel Olam* has a plan.

I would like to share three different stories. I have first-hand knowledge regarding two of these stories. I heard the third story from a reliable source. I know the people involved in the first two stories, and I received permission from one of the people to mention his name. I have not been able to verify that the person in the other story would not object to my mentioning his name, so I will relate the story anonymously.

I know a boy who went skiing, had a skiing accident, and received a severe blow to the head. He underwent an X-ray and it was discovered from the X-ray that he had a tumor, which was at the stage where it could be removed by surgery. Had they not discovered this right then, it would have been inoperable.

Someone may think: Why did this happen? That is why it happened!

The second story is even more incredible. The fellow lives at the Yeshiva (Ner Yisroel, Baltimore, MD) and works there as the assistant alumni director. His name is Eli Greengart. Two or three weeks ago, they had a Shabbos Sheva Brochos in the mountains. His family went. On Friday afternoon, they realized they didn't know where his three-year-old was. Everyone was frantically looking for the toddler. Suddenly, they realized that the toddler fell into an area of the swimming pool that was ten feet deep. The child, who had apparently been in the water for four or five minutes, had already turned blue. They fished him out of the pool and helicoptered him to Westchester Medical Center. *Baruch Hashem*, they were able to resuscitate the child and he is now perfectly fine. This is amazing, if not a miracle.

Someone told me that both Eli Greengart and his wife are from Silver Spring, MD. Seventeen years ago there was a similar story in Silver Spring involving a two-year-old child who fell into a swimming pool. The outcome was not as fortunate. The child was in a coma for seventeen years. At the time, Eli Greengart was single and still in high school. For the four years that he was in high school, he went over to that family and gave showers to that child who was in a coma. Now, many years later, he had a similar incident and the *Ribono shel Olam* performed a *nes* for him! It is always tricky business to go ahead and assume "cause and effect." But we can wonder... There seems to be a connection between the act of *chessed* he did throughout high school with a child who fell into a swimming pool and the miracle that the *Ribono shel Olam* performed for him.

I heard the last story, which I verified this morning, last year when I was in Europe. I called the person who told me the story to verify the details. This is not a happy ending story, but it is an incredible *hashgocha* story.

There was a family in Lakewood that was sitting *shiva* for a little child who ran out into the street and was hit by a car and was killed, *lo aleinu*. Another family came to be *menachem avel* and told the parents of this little child the following story:

They were a couple involved in *kiruv*. They went to some off-the-beaten-path city to do 'kiruv work.' The city had no *mikveh*. They took it upon themselves that they would raise the money and see to it that a *mikveh* was built there. They did this with great self-sacrifice, to the extent that there were months that they did not

eat meat during the week to scrape together the money to finally build the *mikveh*. One night, when they were doing some work in the *mikveh*, they had a little child with them. They turned around. They didn't know where the child was, and to their horror, they discovered that the child fell into the *mikveh* and drowned.

The wife was inconsolable. No matter what anyone told her, she was inconsolable. They worked so hard, with such personal sacrifice, to build the *mikveh*. "This is Torah and this is its reward?" "No matter how many times anyone says that no one understands the ways of *Hashem*— how could it be?"

The husband had a dream. In the dream, the drowned child came to him and told him that he is the *neshamah* (soul) of a Jew who went through the Spanish Inquisition and was a martyr, who rather than be converted to Christianity was killed and was buried without the benefit of a *tahara* (ritual bathing performed on a dead Jewish body). He was in a high place in Gan Eden but he needed a *tahara* in a *mikveh* that was built *al taharas hakodesh* (in pristine purity) – the purest *mikveh* that could be built. His parents built that *mikveh*. That child with that *neshamah* had that *tahara* in that *mikveh*. That is why it had to happen. That was their consolation, and that is what this *kiruv* couple told the couple in Lakewood.

Does it always work out like that? Do we always find out in our lifetimes why things like that happen? No.

Do we always connect the dots? Is it a smart idea to try to connect the dots? Not necessarily.

But the story of Pinchas—especially in light of what the Zohar and the Rishonim say—demonstrates that the wheels

of *hashgocha* grind extremely slowly but they also grind extremely finely. The *Ribono shel Olam* has His calculations. “The Rock, perfect is His work, for all His ways are justice; a G-d, faithful without iniquity...” (Devorim 32:4).

Tzelafchad’s Daughters Were Motivated By The Land, Not The Money

Parshas [Pinchas](#)

Rabbi Yissocher Frand

The daughters of Tzelafchad came to Moshe to ask for their deceased father’s portion in the Land of Israel, since their father had died without sons to inherit his portion.

In tracing the lineage of the daughters of Tzelafchad, the Torah seems to provide redundant information. The pasuk says that they were “the daughters of Tzelafchad, son of Chefer, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Menashe” and then that they were “from the family of Menashe son of Yosef” [Bamidbar 27:1]. Why was it necessary to emphasize the fact that they descended from Menashe son of Yosef twice?

Rashi asks this question and answers that the emphasis indicates that love of Eretz Yisrael is genetic. Yosef loved the Land of Israel and insisted that his bones be returned there. This love for Eretz Yisrael ran in his family such that his descendants (Tzelafchad’s daughters) insisted that they be given their fair portion in the Land.

The wife of the Sefas Emes asked her son (the Imrei Emes) a question on this Rashi: What is the proof that the daughters of Tzelafchad loved the Land of Israel? Perhaps they were just interested in their inheritance as a monetary matter.

The Imrei Emes gave his mother a very good answer. There are two opinions regarding the identity of Tzelafchad. One opinion is that he was the chopper of wood [Bamdibar 15:32]. Another opinion is that he was from the group who tried to force their way into Canaan after the decree of the spies [Bamidbar 14:40]. Either way, Tzelafchad died in Parshas Shlach, prior to beginning of the decreed 40 years of wandering. His death occurred some 38 years prior to the events in Parshas Pinchas. If Tzelafchad's daughters were interested in their father's estate from a strictly financial perspective, why would they have waited 38 years to ask for it? Inheritance is not limited to land. What about his cattle? What about his other property? Apparently, they were not interested in that. It was only now, when they were on the doorstep of Eretz Yisrael that they came pressing their claim for inheritance of their father's portion. This is the demonstration of their love for the Land. They were silent regarding the cash and moveable property. However, their inheritance in the Land of Israel mattered greatly to them. They inherited this affinity to the Land from their great grandfather, Menashe son of Yosef.

The Shame and Disgrace of The Fact That "Yehoshua Was Like The Moon" —————

In this week's parsha, Yehoshua was designated as the heir to the position of leadership of the Jewish nation. He had the task and the privilege of leading Klal Yisrael into Eretz Yisrael.

Moshe was told "Take Yehoshua son of Nun... and place some of your majesty upon him so that the entire assembly of Israel will pay heed" [Bamidbar 27:18-20]. Rashi emphasizes that the instruction was to place SOME of your majesty – but not ALL of it upon him. Yehoshua bin Nun was not Moshe Rabbeinu.

The Talmud expresses this idea very sharply: "The elders of that generation bemoaned the fact that the face of Moshe resembled the sun (in its radiance), while the face of Yeshoshua (only) resembled the moon. Woe to us for the embarrassment; woe to us for the shame and disgrace." [Bava Basra 75a]. (Yehoshua was also on a very high level, but he still could not be compared to Moshe.) The sun is too bright to look at on a clear day, whereas we have no difficulty staring straight at the moon. The moon is not the sun. That was the difference between Moshe Rabbeinu and Yehoshua bin Nun.

But why did the elders refer to it as a 'disgrace'? What was the disgrace? The disgrace was that Moshe Rabbeinu was not the type of leader that comes along once in a lifetime. It is not true that every generation has a 'Moshe Rabbeinu'. No! A leader and prophet like Moshe came along only one time in the history of the universe. No one was ever or will ever be his match.

The reason why Yehoshua merited leadership was not because he could match any of Moshe's attributes. The Medrash [Bamidbar Rabbah 21] gives an analogy to explain how Yehoshua merited

being Moshe's successor, based on the pasuk, "The protector of a fig tree will eat its fruit and the guardian of his master will be honored" [Mishlei 27:18]. Yehoshua succeeded Moshe because he was Moshe's talmid muvhak [prime disciple]. Yehoshua waited on Moshe hand and foot. He never departed from Moshe's tent. Our Sages speak of him spreading out the mats and the benches in Moshe Rabbeinu's study hall for people to sit on.

Our Sages are teaching us that if we cannot aspire to be a Moshe Rabbeinu, we can at least aspire to be dedicated servants to our superiors in the same sense that Yehoshua was dedicated to his master.

The disgrace was the fact that there was only one Yehoshua bin Nun! There were certainly other people capable of cleaning up the Beis Medrash and turning the lights on and off as did Yehoshua. But although "somebody had to do it" only one person actually did it.

There are some people who we cannot aspire to become. They are too brilliant. But there are other people to whom we look up that we certainly can aspire to be like. Many people accomplish things that I may not accomplish, but I COULD accomplish if I really applied myself. It often does not take brains, it takes effort and time and determination. These are attributes that are within the reach of many of us.

The Elders realized that they too had the same attributes that Yehoshua had. They could have exerted themselves and had the same loyalty and faithfulness to Moshe as did Yehoshua. But they did not do so. As a result of this fact they now bemoaned, "Woe to

us for our shame and disgrace. Woe to us that out of all Klal Yisrael only Yehoshua made this effort.”

“Moshe’s face was like the sun and that is not always attainable. Not everyone can be a sun. But Yehoshua’s face was like the moon. That certainly was attainable, had we made the effort. We should be ashamed for not having made that effort.”

Don’t miss out

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

And you shall place from your splendour upon him in order that the whole congregation of the Children of Israel will heed (27:20)

The Gemora tells us that when Moshe and Yehoshua were together, the Elders of the generation said “The face of Moshe is like the face of the sun, whereas the face of Yehoshua is [only] like the face of the moon. Oh the embarrassment, Oh the shame”[1]

Many commentators explain that the Elders who cried out “Oh the embarrassment, Oh the shame” were despairing for Yehoshua’s embarrassment that the holy radiance of his face did not reach the level of Moshe[2]. But according to this, why would Yehoshua be so embarrassed that he was not as great and holy as Moshe. The Torah itself tells us that no prophet of Israel was and ever will be as great as Moshe, since Moshe “knew Hashem face to face[3]”?

Rav Itzele Volozhin explains the Gemora completely differently.

The phrase “Oh, the embarrassment, Oh the shame” that we had previously attributed to the Elders, commenting on the embarrassment of Yehoshua, was in fact said at their own embarrassment for not attaining what Yehoshua achieved.

Reb Itzle illustrates this with the following analogy: *One day a rich merchant passed through a poor city. In need of workers, he offered the people of the city the opportunity to work for him, and he would support anyone who joined him. No one agreed to join the merchant except for one poor man. After some time, the merchant and his worker returned to the city of his worker, and they were both now very rich. When the worker's friends saw their 'poor friend' who was now very wealthy, they hid their faces in embarrassment.*

"Why are you embarrassed before me?" He asked, "If it is because of my wealth, my boss is many times richer than me!"

His ashamed friends replied "Your boss comes from a family which Hashem has always blessed with great wealth. What are we paupers, who have lived in poverty all our lives to be embarrassed by him? But you, you were one of us, you were as poor as us, and we had the same chance you did to become rich. But you took that chance and we squandered it! That is why we are embarrassed in front of you."

So too, the Elders were saying to Yehoshua 'It is not for us to be embarrassed in front of Moshe, for his greatness comes from Hashem and cannot be reached by us. But you, Yehoshua, attained greatness because of your dedication to Moshe at every moment. For this we are embarrassed because we too had the opportunity to achieve greatness like yours, but we squandered our chance.'^[4]

[1] Bava Basra 75a

[2] For instance, see the Shita mikubetzes, Ri Migash and Rabbeinu Gershon.

[3] Devarim 34:10

[4] Peh Kadosh Hashalem

I got YOU here!!!

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

... And Dosson and Aviram — the same Dosson and Aviram the chosen of the assembly, who incited against Moshe and Aharon ... (26:9)

Dosson and Aviram had a long history of trouble-making. They were the ones who told Pharaoh that Moshe had killed an Egyptian;^[1] they campaigned against Moshe when he came back to redeem the Jewish People;^[2] they did not leave Egypt with the rest of the Jewish People — only after they saw that Egypt had been defeated.^[3] They were the ones who hoarded the *mannah* and attempted to disprove Moshe who said that there would be no *mannah* found on Shabbos.^[4] In short, as the Gemara says, “they were evil from their beginning to their end.”^[5]

Despite all of this, the verse calls them “chosen of the assembly”— a term of praise awarded to those who sat with Moshe and Aharon and received advice and assistance.^[6] One would have expected that these two would have been sent away a long time ago; or at the very least, not be welcome in the presence of Moshe and Aharon. Yet, not only are they not being banished, they are receiving advice and support from them?!

Although there are circumstances when certain people *do* need to be sent away, the Chofetz Chaim notes that Moshe and Aharon felt that in this case, doing so would have caused greater damage. As such, Moshe and Aharon understood that their role was to help Dosson and Aviram and encourage them to mend their ways despite the personal vendetta Dosson and Aviram held against them.^[7]

In life, we often have to face difficult people or challenging circumstances. Often, we feel that the best thing for *us* is to escape the situation by ignoring the person or to hide ourselves away from the challenge we are facing. There are times when this is the right thing to do, but we learn from Moshe and Aharon to put our personal feelings aside as much as possible and look at the wider picture. Specifically, we must realize that Hashem is directing everything we experience in life, and each challenge we face is another

opportunity to grow. This is most keenly felt when it comes to helping difficult people. We often feel that we are giving to them, but in truth, we are gaining so much more. This can be demonstrated using the following parable: *Reuven and Shimon met in Heaven: In life, Reuven was very needy, his observance was shaky and he required a lot attention. Shimon was a dedicated and religious Jew and spent a lot of energy keeping Reuven afloat. When they met, Shimon was delighted and exclaimed, “Reuven, I’m so glad that I got you here!”*

“Actually,” replied Reuven, “it was me who got you here!”

[1] Rashi, Shemos 4:19.

[2] Rashi, Shemos 5:20.

[3] Targum Yonasan, Shemos 14:3.

[4] Rashi, Shemos 16:20.

[5] Megilla 11a.

[6] Chofetz Chaim Hachadash Al HaTorah, p.471 (Based on the Emek Davar, Bamidbar 16:2.)

[7] Ibid.

There Are Two Ways To Count

Written by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick

It was after the plague — and Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Elazar the son of Aharon HaKohen, saying, “Take a census of the entire Jewish People . . . (26:1-2)

By instructing Moshe to take a census of the people right after mentioning the plague that killed so many of them, Hashem is compared to a dedicated shepherd who counts his remaining flock after they are slaughtered by a pack of wolves.^[1]

One could ask, though, there are two ways to know how many people were killed: one could count the remainder of the people — as we see from our verse; or one could simply count the number of victims. Why did Hashem tell

Moshe to count the entire Jewish People in order establish that there were 24,000 victims of the plague,[2] why not just count the victims? Surely, counting 24,000 people instead of over 600,000[3] would have been a far less arduous task!

Perhaps one could answer that rather on focusing on the negative actions of the Jewish People — namely their sins which brought on the plague — Hashem instead wanted to focus on their virtues — namely that the remainder of the People would merit to enter into Eretz Yisroel.[4] Therefore, despite being a more cumbersome count, the lesson we learn is that even when it is more difficult, it is always better to focus on the good of others instead of their failings.

This message was brought to light in a very beautiful way when *Chaim Sher** met his former *cheder rebbe* at a teacher's conference. After introducing himself, *Chaim* told his former teacher that it was because of the following incident that had made him decide to be a *cheder rebbe*.

In *Chaim's* class, there was a wealthy boy who received an expensive watch as a gift. No one had such watches at such a young age, and so, this watch was quite an attraction to his classmates. After everyone's initial excitement, the boys went to recess and the watch was left on the table... until someone took it. The *rebbe* was informed that one of the classmates had stolen the watch and when no one volunteered to return it, he told everyone to line up against the wall with their eyes closed and he would check their pockets. *Chaim* explained that the *rebbe* checked everyone's pockets one by one until he came to his, where he immediately found the watch. *Chaim* was terrified. But nothing happened. A few minutes later the *rebbe* sat down at his desk with the watch in front of him. No one had seen where the watch had been found and the *rebbe* announced that the watch had not been "stolen" by a bad boy, rather it had been taken by a good boy who was struggling with his *yetzer hara*, and no more was said about the incident. *Chaim* explained that he was still terrified that the *rebbe* would punish him privately, but when the *rebbe* never said anything to him, not that day or any other, he realized that he had been saved from severe embarrassment; and said to himself, if this is what it means to be a *rebbe*, then I want to be one too.

Chaim finished his story and sheepishly said to the *rebbe*, that *rebbe* was you. “But please tell me,” asked *Chaim* “how was it that you never looked at me any differently after you found the watch in my pocket? I never sensed any disappointment or frustration from you. How did you do it?”

His former *rebbe* looked at *Chaim* and said, “I never knew it was you, for I too did the search with my eyes closed.”^[5]

[1] This follows *Rashi*’s first interpretation; in conjunction with the *Sifsei Chachamim*.

[2] *Bamidbar* 25:9.

[3] *Ibid.* 25:51.

[4] See the *Chikzuni*.

[5] Related in the name of Rav Shlomo Levenstein.

Humor

A Perfect Ten

Shulem and Pessy Schechter were parents in a typical Chassidic family with many children. They had ten kids, thank God, six boys and four girls. One night, Shaindy, their oldest, was chatting with her mother about how their parenting style had changed from the first child to the last. Pessy answered that she had mellowed a lot over the years:

"When your oldest sister coughed or sneezed, I called the ambulance. When your youngest brother swallowed a nickel, I just told him it was coming out of his allowance."

The Marriage Seminar

Rabbi Applebaum thought it would be a great idea to hold a marriage seminar at his congregation and sure enough, many of the couples showed up. The therapist was focusing on communication and

Moishe and Miriam Silverman were listening as the therapist declared: "It is essential that husbands and wives know the things that are important to each other."

He addressed the men: "For instance, gentlemen, can you name your wife's favorite flower?"

Moishe leaned over, touched Miriam's arm gently and whispered, "Pillsbury All-Purpose, isn't it?"

Miriam, Moishe and Marriage

Miriam and Sarah were having one of their deep chats during one of their regular Thursday coffee outings when Miriam sighed and said, "You know, Sarah, if something every happened to my Moishe, I don't think I could ever marry again." Sarah nodded sympathetically. "I know what you mean," she said. "Once is enough for me too."

Moishe and the Case of the Forgotten Car Keys

As Moishe left a board meeting at shul, he desperately gave himself a personal TSA pat down. He was looking for his keys. They were not in his pockets. A quick search in the meeting room revealed nothing. Suddenly he realized that he must have left them in the car. Frantically, he headed for the parking lot.

Moishe's wife, Miriam, had scolded him many times for leaving the keys in the ignition. Moishe's theory is that the ignition is the best place not to lose them. Miriam's theory is that the car will be stolen. As Moishe burst through the doors of the shul, he came to a terrifying conclusion: Miriam's theory was right. The parking lot was empty. He immediately called the police. He gave them his location, confessing that he had left the keys in the car and that it had been stolen.

Then Moishe made the most difficult call of all. "Honey," he stammered. He always calls her "honey" in times like these. "I left my keys in the car, and it has been stolen."

There was a period of silence. Moishe thought the call had been dropped, but then he heard Miriam's voice. "Moishe!" she barked, "I dropped you off!"

Now it was his time to be silent. Embarrassed, he said, "Well, come and get me."

Miriam retorted, "I will, as soon as I convince this policeman I have not stolen your car!"