

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



עֵלֵי דֵשֶׁה

AL EI DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"za of Gur

Going Through the Motions

וַיֵּרָא פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקַּם מִתּוֹךְ
הָעֵדָה וַיִּקַּח רֶמֶס בְּיָדוֹ

Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the Kohen saw, and he stood up from amid the assembly and took a spear in his hand.
(Bamidbar 25:7)

The Sfas Emes¹ notes that the word בְּיָדוֹ – *in his hand* – seems entirely superfluous.

When we must call out wrongful behavior, we should fight with our lips only. Inside, we must cherish love for every Yid.

What is the lesson in this extra word?

Besides killing Zimri and Kazbi, Pinchas also davened for the plague to end, as is written (Tehillim 106:30), וַיַּעֲמֹד, *And Pinchas arose and prayed,*² and the plague was halted. Some people believe – says the Sfas Emes – that these two events were

separate. First, Pinchas lifted the spear and with all his might, with all his heart, stabbed the evildoers. Then, he turned and davened for the plague to end. But the pasuk teaches us otherwise. Pinchas took the spear בְּיָדוֹ – *in his hand only*. He did not seize it and thrust it with all his enthusiasm; he only lifted it with his hand and did what had to be done. While performing the act, his mind was focused on davening to Hashem to end the *mageifah*.

There is a lesson here relevant to all of us. We do not stab people, *chalilah*, nor do we ever lift a hand against another. But occasionally, one might dispense a stab of the tongue. With it, one's deep feelings gush forth, stinging the other with the full thrust of one's emotions. *Halevai* that our Torah learning and davening would be with such feeling. As Pinchas attacked the wrongdoers with his hand only, we, too, when we must call out wrongful behavior, should fight with our lips only. Inside, we must cherish love for every Yid.

פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הֵשִׁיב אֶת
חֲמָתִי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאָתִי בְּתוֹכְכֶם,
– *Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the Kohen turned*

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Zealotry of Love

וְהָיְתָה לוֹ וּלְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו בְּרִית כְּהֻנַּת עוֹלָם תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר
קָנָא לְאַלְקָיו וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal kehunah, because he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for Bnei Yisrael. (Bamidbar 25:13)

Pinchas received the great reward of *kehunah* because he spared Bnei Yisrael from facing Divine wrath – תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר קָנָא. There is a beautiful message within these words, with the introduction of an insight from R. Henoch of Alexander.

R. Henoch of Alexander explains the pasuk in the *Tochachah* (Devarim 28:47), תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב – *Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart.* How can a lack of joy in *avodas Hashem* incur such terrible punishments as those described in the *Tochachah*?

R. Henoch answers that תַּחַת doesn't only mean *because*; it also means *under*. The Torah means that it isn't the lack of joy per se that is the issue, but what is hiding beneath it. By nature, a Yid is overjoyed when he is *zoche* to serve Hashem. What went wrong with this fellow who lacks this joy? He traded eternal pleasures for transient ones, thus drying out his appetite for the true delight of *avodas Hashem*. This underlying fault is why he is punished with the *Tochachah*.

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¹ 5644 s.v. *Heishiv*

² See Berachos 6b, 26b

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back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them, so I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My vengeance (25:11).

Rashi³ cites Chazal: “Because the *shevatim* would humiliate Pinchas – ‘Have you seen this *ben puti*, whose maternal grandfather fattened (פיטם) calves for *avodah zarah*, who now killed the *nasi* of a *shevet*?’ Therefore, the pasuk outlines his lineage from Aharon HaKohen.”

The Chasam Sofer⁴ describes the scene: Pinchas had just avenged the honor of Hashem, thus aborting the *mageifah* and saving countless lives, and now the people gather around and poke fun at him. This should have been cause for strict punishment from Hashem, to defend the honor of the man who had defended His honor. But in his piety and humility, Pinchas ignored the mocking entirely, forgiving his antagonists and even davening for their wellbeing. Because of this, they were spared punishment. This, too, is meant by the words *Pinchas... turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael... so I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My vengeance*.

Pinchas earned the great reward of אֲשֶׁר קָנָא לְאֵלֹהֵינוּ וַיִּכְפֹּר עָלֵינוּ – *My covenant of peace* (25:12) for his two-fold act of על וַיִּכְפֹּר עָלֵינוּ – *he took vengeance for his G-d, and he atoned for Bnei Yisrael*. Firstly, *he took vengeance for his G-d*, by killing the sinners, and secondly, *he atoned for Bnei Yisrael*, by forgiving the mocking of him.

Based on this, we may understand why in response to the people’s derision

of Pinchas, the Torah shows his lineage from Aharon. Moshe said of Aharon (16:11), וַאֲהֲרֹן מִהָ הוּא כִּי תִלְיִנוּ עָלָיו, *And as for Aharon – what is he that you complain against him?* Aharon had no ill feeling toward anyone who spoke against him, as he felt he was even less worthy than their poor opinion. Pinchas followed in his grandfather Aharon’s way, and harbored no resentment at all toward the hecklers, since in his mind, he was less than their mockery.

This mindset of Pinchas – of deprecating himself while loving every Jew – is what made him worthy of *kana’us*.⁵ And this is why he was rewarded with בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם – for true zealotry is a recipe for peace.

All the *berachos* of *Shemoneh Esrei* are requests for important and positive concerns, except *V’lamalshinim*, where we daven for the utter destruction of wicked elements of society. This *berachah* was instituted after the rest of *Shemoneh Esrei*. The Gemara (*Berachos* 28b) relates that Rabban Gamliel asked the *Chachamim*, כלום יש אדם שיודע לתקן ברכת – *Is there anybody who can compose the berachah of V’lamalshinim?* Shmuel HaKattan stood up and composed it.

Why was Shmuel HaKattan the one to do it? There were other great sages present who could have certainly done it too. Because they understood that Rabban Gamliel meant, כלום יש אדם – *Is there anybody who considers himself as כלום, as nothing, who bears no feelings at all against another?* Only somebody who

held nothing against other Yidden could compose a *tefillah* for evildoers to be destroyed.

Shmuel HaKattan stood up. In *Maseches Avos* (4:19), Shmuel imparts the lesson from *Mishlei* (24:17-18), בְּנִפְל אוֹיְבֶךָ, אַל תִּשְׂמַח וּבְכַשְׁלוֹ אַל יִגַּל לְבָבְךָ, פֶּן יִרְאֶה ה' וְרַע – *When your foe falls, be not glad, and when he stumbles, let your heart not be joyous, lest Hashem see and it be displeasing in His eyes, and He turn His anger from him [to you]*.

Shmuel, like Pinchas, had a heart full of *chesed*, full of *ahavas Yisrael*. He was the one who could compose a *tefillah* for the destruction of the wicked.

The Gemara further relates that the following year, as Shmuel led the *tzibbur* in davening, he could not recall the *berachah* of *V’lamalshinim*. How could this be? After all, he himself composed it.

The answer is that in his essence, Shmuel HaKattan was a ‘Berditchever’; he saw only the good in Yidden. When circumstances demanded, he composed the *berachah* of *V’lamalshinim*. But that didn’t change him; he continued seeing people only in a good light. The tone of the *berachah* didn’t penetrate his heart. Thus, as time passed, the text of the *berachah* slipped his mind.

Our task during these days of *Bein Hametzarim* is to instill in ourselves real love for every Yid, so that we may judge every Jew favorably. In this merit, may Hashem judge us favorably as well.

(פיניחס תשכ"ג – ס"ג מאמר ג)

3 25:10

4 25:12 s.v. *Lachen emor*

5 See *Sfas Emes, Likutim, s.v. Heishiv* (2) and s.v. *Heishiv* (3), and *Sefer Hazechus*

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In this manner, as well, we may explain our pasuk. Whenever zealotry arises, we must determine whether it is pure *kana'us* for the sake of Hashem, or simply an expression of intolerance and bad *middos*. Pinchas was rewarded תחת אשר קנא לאלקיו – because of what lay *beneath* his zealotry. His *kana'us* was built upon a heart aflame with *ahavas Yisrael*. Because he loved every Yid dearly, he felt compelled to take action and spare them Hashem's anger. His *kana'us* was not *despite* his *ahavas Yisrael*, but *because* of it. The Sfias Emes⁶ puts it this way: “Undoubtedly, Pinchas fulfilled ואהבת לרעה before he acted.” This was why he merited his great reward.

The Arizal taught that one should accept upon himself the mitzvah of ואהבת לרעה before davening.⁷ But it cannot be left at that. It is told that before davening Shacharis, R. Yaakov of Pshevorsk would offer the itinerant guests a glass of tea and inquire after their wellbeing. He was asked whether this was appropriate; shouldn't one's focus then be on preparing oneself for *tefillah*? He replied that he felt it was preferable to *perform* ואהבת לרעה before davening, rather than just saying it.

For that matter, acting friendly isn't that hard either. Our focus must be on truly feeling a love for every Yid.

The pasuk says in Tehillim (106:30), ויעמד – *And Pinchas arose and prayed, and the plague was halted*. My father, the Pnei Menachem, pointed to the Gemara (Eruvin 65a) that relates that R. Nechunya would not daven on a day he felt anger. How, then, could Pinchas daven on this day, when he exhibited such fiery *kana'us*? My father explained that Pinchas' actions were not an expression of anger,

but of love. He sought the wellbeing of Bnei Yisrael, and was angry only at the evil itself.

During these days of *Bein Hametzarim*, as we mourn the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, we must ponder the reason for its destruction, so that we may rectify it. As the Gemara (Yoma 9b) teaches, it was because of *sinas chinam* – an atmosphere of rivalry and jealousy among Yidden. Let us explore several relevant *ma'amarei Chazal*.

The Gemara (Kesubos 111b) states, טוב המלבין שינים לחבירו יותר ממשקו – *It is better to show another one's white teeth than to give him milk to drink*. It is a greater act to smile at another person than to give him to drink.⁸ Why does the Gemara employ the unusual expression of *to show another one's white teeth*, and not simply say *to greet another with a smile*?

One's teeth are not only used for smiling, but for biting as well. The Gemara means that to transform the damaging power of a bite into the positive power of a smile – that is a greater act than giving milk to drink. Pasting on a smile when one feels bitterly toward another is no *kuntz*. The trick is to strip one's teeth of their biting power so that they can genuinely smile. That is a great level of *ahavas Yisrael*, a true fulfillment of ואהבת לרעה כמון.

The Gemara (Bava Metzia 30b) teaches that מפני שהעמידו דין תורה, ולא עבדו לפני משורת הדין – *because they established their judgments [strictly] upon the law of the Torah, and they did not act beyond the letter of the law*. Simply understood, these are two sides of one coin: their judgments were according to the strict confines of the law and not beyond it. But we may explain that שהעמידו דין תורה refers to an entirely different shortcoming.

At times, a person acts wrongly toward another, driven by hatred, revenge, jealousy, or bias. But when confronted, he is uncomfortable revealing the motivation for his actions, sometimes even to himself. Instead, he *establishes his judgment upon the law of the Torah* – he demonstrates learnedly how his deeds were dictated by the Torah. It is then impossible to rebuke him or reason with him – after all, he is fulfilling the Torah's will. Such conduct led to Yerushalayim's destruction.

Chazal relate the stories of the *Churban* in Masseches Gittin. Tzaddikim taught⁹ that the placement of every *sugya* and teaching of Chazal carries meaning. Perhaps the *Churban* was placed in Masseches Gittin to stress that its cause was the dissociation that Yidden felt and practiced with one another at that time.

In the Rebbe R. Elimelech's *tefillah*, we ask שנראה מעלת חברינו ולא חסרונן – *that we may see the virtues of our friends, and not their deficiencies*. Why don't we simply ask for friends with no *chisronos*? That way we could truly love them! The answer is that that would be a *tefillas shav*, a wasted *tefillah*, because such a person does not exist. Hashem creates every person with positive and negative traits. Our task is to *see their virtues and not their deficiencies* – to pay no heed at all to others' shortcomings. In this manner, we can live together with love and unity.

This cannot be limited to our good friends. Even those different from us, even those who wronged us – we must toil to love every Jew. This is the call of *Bein Hametzarim*, when we must follow in the path of Pinchas and fulfill ואהבת לרעה כמון to its fullest.

(בנאות דשא – פינחס תשפ"ב, פינחס תשפ"ג)

⁶ Likutim, s.v. Heishiv (2)

⁷ See Magen Avraham, beginning of siman 46

⁸ See Rashi and Maharsha, s.v. V'achvi

⁹ See Yisrael Kedoshim, no. 6 s.v. V'nikva'u

כָּן בְּנוֹת צֶלַפְחָד דִּבְּרֹת

The daughters of Tzelafchad speak properly. (Bamidbar 27:7)

Chazal expound:¹⁰ “[Hashem said,] ‘The claim of the daughters of Tzelafchad is correct; such a *parshah* is written before Me in Heaven.’ Fortunate is he whose words Hashem agrees with... Similarly, it is written (Bamidbar 14:20), וַיֹּאמֶר ה' סְלַחְתִּי כְּדִבְרֶךָ, – Hashem said, ‘I forgive, like your words.’”

When Hashem forgave Klal Yisrael for the sin of the *meraglim*, it was, *k'veyachol*, a reversal of His former position. Initially, Hashem told Moshe (14:12), אֶכְנֹו בַדֶּבֶר, וְאוֹרֶשְׁנוּ – I will smite them with the plague and annihilate them – but after Moshe pleaded on behalf of Bnei Yisrael, Hashem said סְלַחְתִּי כְּדִבְרֶךָ. In that case, it could certainly be said, “Fortunate is he whose words Hashem agrees with.” The case of the daughters of Tzelafchad, however, does not seem as remarkable. When somebody makes a just claim, it is only expected that it will be agreed to.

Chazal¹¹ reveal what drove the Bnos Tzelafchad: “Just as Yosef cherished Eretz Yisrael, so did the daughters of Tzelafchad cherish Eretz Yisrael.”¹² That is why they wished to inherit their father’s portion in the land. No one other than Hashem could know that this was their motivation. What seemed to be a pursuit of mitzvah, to fulfill *yishuv Eretz Yisrael*, could just as well have been a quest for material assets and wealth. It often is the case that seemingly lofty actions conceal unholy intentions.

In a similar vein, in a special *tefillah* recited on Yom Tov, we request, שתזכנו

לעשות מעשים טובים בעיניך, וללכת בדרכי ישרים לפניך – *May You grant us the merit of performing actions that are good in Your eyes, and going in ways that are straight before You.* Why must we say, “actions that are good in Your eyes,” and “ways that are straight before You”? Could there be good actions, or straight paths, that are not such in the eyes of Hashem?

The answer is that what seems good and proper in the eyes of man may not be so before Hashem, Who sees into the deepest recesses of the heart. Therefore, we ask that our actions and way of life should be proper in truth, in Hashem’s eyes.

When Chazal say of the Bnos Tzelafchad, “Fortunate is he whose words Hashem agrees with,” this means to highlight that their intentions were pure — as testified by Hashem, Who declared, “Such a *parshah* is written before Me in heaven.”



אֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֶּקֶר וְאֶת הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים

The one lamb you shall make in the morning, and the second lamb you shall make in the afternoon. (28:4)

The Gemara (Megillah 28a) relates that R. Akiva once asked R. Nechunya HaGadol, “במה הארכת ימים – In what merit did you have length of days?” R. Nechunya’s servants, thinking that R. Akiva was upset about R. Nechunya’s long life, began to attack R. Akiva. R. Akiva fled and took refuge on a treetop. R. Akiva called out to R. Nechunya, “Rebbi, why does the pasuk say *the one lamb*, and not simply *the lamb*?” Recognizing that he was a *talmid chacham*,

R. Nechunya instructed his servants to leave him be. He then answered R. Akiva, “*The one implies the best of its flock.*”

On a simple level, R. Akiva’s question revealed that he was learned. But on a deeper level, he was communicating to R. Nechunya the deeper intent of his original question, “*In what merit did you have length of days?*”

The Imrei Emes once remarked that his father, the Sfas Emes, had *arichus yamim*, length of days. Those present wondered out loud, “*Arichus yamim?* The Sfas Emes lived only to 58!” The Imrei Emes explained that some people have length of years but shortness of days; although they live a long life, their days are inadequately used. My father, he said, was just the opposite. He did not merit long years of life; but each of his days was long, as every moment was used to the utmost.

R. Akiva meant to ask R. Nechunya: *How did you manage to attain such arichus yamim, to maximize your days to such an extent?* He hinted to this with his next question, “Why does the Torah state *the one lamb*?” Typically, an activity repeated day in and day out tends to lose vigor; people come to perform such mitzvos habitually and without due thought. The *Korban Tamid* is offered not once but twice daily. Here the Torah emphasizes *the one lamb* – meaning *the best one in its flock* – to teach that even with oft-repeated mitzvos, we must exercise enthusiasm and freshness. Each day and its potential for *avodas Hashem* must be appreciated as unique, and utilized to the max.

(בנאות דשא – פינחס תשפ"ב)

10 Sifri
11 Ibid; cited by Rashi, 27:1
12 See Bamidbar Rabbah 21:10