



Parasha Pinchas

July 23, 2022

Torah: Numbers 25:10-30:1.

Haftarah: 1Kings 18:46-19:21

Ketuvim Shlichim: John 2:13-22

Shabbat Shalom mishpacha. Our *Torah* portion today is *Pinchas*. In *Parasha Pinchas*, Israel had been in the wilderness almost 40 years. Almost 40 years earlier, the first generation of Israelites who had come out of Egypt, rejected *ADONAI*'s plan to take them into the land of milk and honey and He condemned them to wander and die in the desert. At the time of this *parasha*, almost all of the first generation has already died. *ADONAI* had also judged Moses and Aaron for their lack of faith and obedience to follow His commands. At the time of the events of *Parasha Pinchas*, Aaron and *Miryam* have died and the first generation was quickly passing away. *ADONAI* had told Moses that he's not going any farther. In this *parasha*, we read: *12 Then Adonai said to Moses, "Go up this mountain of the Abarim range and look at the land that I have given to Bnei-Yisrael. 13 When you have seen it, you will be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother was gathered."* (Numbers 27:12-13 TLV). While it will be a few months before Moses dies, he has gone as far and as close to the Promised Land as he will go.

In last week's *parasha*, we were told that while Israel was camped at Shittim, the people began to have immoral sexual relations with women from Moab and began sacrificing to their gods. At this time, the leaders, Aaron and *Miryam*, have completed their tasks and Moses is nearing his completion. But now, someone we've not seen before, a future leader, comes on the scene. We see this in every society. Frequently there are those there who are unknown for many years and then rise to do great things for *ADONAI*. That is what happened with *Phinehas*, *Pinchas*, whose name is on this *parasha*. *Pinchas* was the grandson of Aaron the High Priest and the son of *El'azar* the priest, but he had not been heard from until right now. When we first hear about *Pinchas*, what we hear is shocking. He killed two people. We're not used to people being killed in the Israelite camp by Israelites.

The story begins with last week's *parasha*, *Balak*. *Balak*, the King of Moab, had paid the prophet *Bil'am*, Balaam, to curse Israel and his plan failed miserably. *Bil'am* obeyed *ADONAI* and blessed Israel rather than cursing them, which caused *Balak* to fail in his attempt to get rid of the Israelites. The last thing we are told in last week's *parasha* is that *Bil'am* left Moab and returned to his own place. But, as we find out later, he either left and returned or changed his mind and didn't leave at all. We also learn later that it was his advice which caused the Israelites to sin with Moab and Midian. Maybe he was paid by *Balak* after all, paid for his advice about how to tempt Israel.

Here is the backstory from *Parasha Balak* last week: *1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the people began to have immoral sexual relations with women from Moab. 2 Then they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, so the people were eating, and bowing down before their gods. 3 When Israel became bound to Baal of Peor, the anger of Adonai grew hot against Israel* (Numbers 25:1-3 TLV). *ADONAI* was so displeased with what was taking

place that He commanded Moses to seize all of the ringleaders and hang them in order to turn away His fierce anger. The seduction by the Moabite and Midianite women was working so well that many Israelites were even bowing down to and worshipping *Ba'al* of *Pe'or*, the local god of Mount *Pe'or*. It reached a point where the Israelites actually yoked themselves by oath to *Ba'al* of *Peor*. The Hebrew says *v'yitzamed*, **וַיִּצְמְדוּ**, meaning “and yoked themselves.” Very little is known about Baal of Peor, but it is suggested that the name means “Lord of the Opening.” Since Baal was a god of fertility, the implication is that “the opening” refers to human sexual openings. This was what the women were tempting the Israelite men with and many had succumbed to their temptation. Regardless of what the representation was, many of the Israelites had violated one of the first commands which ADONAI gave to Israel; 3 “*You shall have no other gods before me*” (Exodus 20:3 TLV) and contrary to His command, were bowing before a demon. ADONAI had also said: 7 “*They are no longer to offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons after which they play the prostitute. This will be a statute forever to them throughout their generations.*” (Leviticus 17:7 TLV). ADONAI was understandably furious with them.

King Balak had allied himself with Midian and there were Midianites among the Moabites who were involved in the sexual seduction. 6 *Then behold, a man from Bnei-Yisrael came and brought a Midianite woman to his brothers before the eyes of Moses and of the whole assembly of Bnei-Yisrael, while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting* (Numbers 25:6 TLV)! Think of the audacity of this man! While all of Israel was in front of the Tabernacle weeping, praying that ADONAI’s plague would stop, this Israelite man openly brought a woman into the camp to have sexual relations with her. This is where we first meet Phinehas, *Pinchas*. 7 *When Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the kohen saw it, he arose from the midst of the assembly, took a spear in his hand, 8 and went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced them through—both the Israelite man and the woman's belly. Then the plague among Bnei-Yisrael was stopped* (Numbers 25:7 TLV). Righteous anger rose up in *Pinchas* as he saw this man having sexual relations with this idol worshipping woman at the same time that all of Israel was on their faces in prayer before the Tabernacle. Righteousness rose up in *Pinchas* and he responded by running a spear through the back of the Israelite man and into the stomach of the Midianite woman as they were engaged in sexual intercourse, killing them both. And the plague was stopped.

What do we know about *Pinchas*, the one who stopped ADONAI’s anger? To this point, in Scripture, very little. This we know. When the seduction and the plague began, although he was the grandson of Aaron, *Pinchas* was not identified as a *kohen*; just another Levite. His father, *El'azar*, a son of Aaron, was a priest, and at this moment, he was the High Priest, having recently succeeded his father Aaron. That’s strange. If *Pinchas*’s father *El'azar* was a *kohen*, why wasn’t his son? *Rabbi Shlomo Ytichaki*, the medieval French rabbi of the 11th century known as *Rashi*, wrote about this situation. He said that the reason that *Pinchas* was not a priest was because he had already been born at the time that his father was appointed to be a priest. And, that is true. The rule was that only a son born to a priest “after his appointment as priest” would become a priest after him. Even before leaving Egypt, right after Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh the very first time, this ancestry was given: 25 *Eleazar, Aaron's son, married one of the daughters of Putiel and she bore him Phinehas.* (Exodus 6:25b TLV). *Pinchas*, the son of *El'azar* had already been born and he came out of Egypt in the Exodus. That left him out of the priesthood.

Our *parasha* today begins with this: 10 *Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, 11 “Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the kohen has turned away My anger from Bnei-*

Yisrael because he was very zealous for Me among them, so that I did not put an end to Bnei-Yisrael in My zeal." (Numbers 25:10-11 TLV). ADONAI said that He was so angry that He was going to put an end to the sons of Israel, but because of *Pinchas's* zeal to serve Him and for righteousness, His anger was turned away. *Pinchas* actually saved the people of Israel from ADONAI's wrath. And, because of his response to the emergency, ADONAI rewarded him with a covenant of *shalom* and a covenant of everlasting priesthood for his family. He said: 12 "So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of *shalom*! 13 It will be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei-Yisrael" (Numbers 25:12-13 TLV). *Rashi's* explanation seems to be correct, but there is another possibility. *Pinchas* was not a priest before because he was the grandson of the High Priest. Now, he is the son of the High Priest and therefore a priest. Regardless of which of these possibilities is true, ADONAI was pleased with *Pinchas's* actions and gave him and his family after him, special honor.

The next time we see *Pinchas*, it is in Numbers 31 with regard to the battle in which the Midianites were defeated. 6 *Moses sent them into battle, 1,000 from each tribe, and with them Phinehas son of Eleazar the kohen, who took with him articles from the Sanctuary and trumpets for signaling* (Numbers 31:6 TLV). At this point in time, we see *Pinchas* identified as a priest and doing the work of a priest, leading the troops into battle. After the battle, we read this: 8 *Among the slain they also killed the Midianite kings: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba, the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword* (Numbers 31:8 TLV). After the battle, *Bil'am's* treachery was revealed: 16 *Why, they are the ones—because of Balaam's advice—who caused Bnei-Yisrael to be unfaithful to Adonai in the matter of Peor, so that the plague was on the community of Adonai* (Numbers 31:16 TLV).

Just a short time after we first saw him, *Pinchas* was functioning as a *kohen* even though nowhere in *Torah* before Numbers 25 was *Pinchas* listed as a priest. His priesthood seemed to be a special appointment by ADONAI. His father *El'azar* as High Priest led Israel into the land of Caanan. *Pinchas* succeeded his father and became the third High Priest of Israel. It seems that all of this happened to *Pinchas* because he was faithful to the vision which ADONAI had initially given to all of Israel. He did not succumb to the weakness of the flesh but continued to faithfully follow after the G-d of Israel.

Today as we look at our nation and the world and see the moral collapse of our society we also see the signs of the times which *Yeshua* spoke of taking place in the world. He said: 6 "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must happen but it is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places." (Matthew 24:6-7 TLV). War is going on now in Ukraine and the perpetrator of that war, Russia has just further allied itself with Iran, a rogue nation which has vowed to destroy Israel. Rumors of wars most recently say that China will overrun Taiwan now that Russia has invaded Ukraine without a strong world response.

Today we face some of the same challenges which Israel faced in *Pinchas's* day as they were getting ready to fight the battles necessary to possess the land of Israel. They were going in to Caanan to do battle with a people who rejected G-d's authority, a people who followed other gods, a people who sacrificed humans, especially babies, to their gods, and a people who used sex in their pagan religious rites. These were people who were doing things which ADONAI called abominations. All of those abominations and more are prevalent in our

society today. One of our political parties even champions the killing of babies and homosexuality.

But, ADONAI hasn't called us to kill those who don't follow Him. On the contrary, Yeshua has told us that we are to love those who reject ADONAI. In spite of their rejection of Him He loves them just as much as he loves us. We are engaged in a great spiritual battle and every follower of Yeshua is called upon to have the devotion of *Pinchas* to ADONAI.

In our *haftarah* portion for today, we read about Elijah fleeing from Jezebel, fearing for his life. The mighty man of G-d who had just faced down and defeated 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel was now fleeing in fear. Earlier, in bold spirit, not unlike *Pinchas*, Elijah had bravely faced the enemies of ADONAI. But now, because of Jezebel's threat on his life, he had run like a scared child for forty days and nights many miles and hidden himself in a cave. What took away his fear and brought him to his senses? It was the still small voice of ADONAI. *13 ... Then all of a sudden, a voice addressed him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"* (1Kings 1:19 TLV). He immediately responded. We get fearful too. But, that same still, small voice is also speaking to us. It's so soft that we often cannot hear it because of the noisiness of our minds. When we have a need, we have an advocate who pleads for us: *26 In the same way, the Ruach helps in our weakness. For we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Ruach Himself intercedes for us with groans too deep for words.* (Romans 8:26 TLV). We have the *Ruach* ADONAI, the Spirit of G-d within us. If we will but listen, we will hear His Spirit speaking to our spirit. Even Elijah got fearful and we should not be ashamed that sometimes we do too. It is this connection through the Spirit to our Father and His Son which encourages us when we are down and also gives us our marching orders. Listen for the still, small voice of the *Ruach*!

In our reading from the *sh'lichim* today, we read about Yeshua overturning the tables of the merchants and money changers in the Temple. His disciples later remembered something David had said: *10 "For zeal for Your House consumed me— the insults of those who insulted You have fallen on me"* (Psalm 69:10 TLV). Yeshua was zealous for His Father's house. He is our example regarding our houses of worship. He always worshipped ADONAI on Shabbat. *16 Therefore say, thus says Adonai Elohim, "Though I removed them far away, among the nations, though I scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I was a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone."* (Ezekiel 11:16 TLV). We no longer have a Temple, but we do have "little sanctuaries," places where we gather to worship ADONAI. We should have Yeshua's zeal in our approach to our places of worship and every *moed*, every festival, and most of all for the weekly gathering, the *Shabbat*. David says it best: *1 ... I rejoiced when they said to me, "Let us go to the House of Adonai."* (Psalm 122:1b TLV). It's not only a joy to worship together but a privilege. We take it for granted, but those in China, North Korea, Iran and many Muslim countries do not have the privilege of worshipping G-d openly and are arrested, imprisoned and sometimes executed when caught.

We've been faithful, but now is the time for us to be "super faithful." Now is the time for us to increase our witness of *Yeshua* to others. Now is the time for us to increase our prayer. *Olam hazeh*, this world, is dying. Lawlessness is all around us. We are in the midst of the great rebellion, the great falling away. *Sha'ul* wrote: *1 But understand this, that in the last days hard times will come— 2 for people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 hardhearted, unforgiving, backbiting, without self-control, brutal, hating what is good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to an outward form of godliness but*

denying its power. Avoid these people! (2Timothy 3:1-5 TLV). That is a very accurate picture of what is happening in the United States today. Just this week, a man running for governor of New York was attacked by a man with a knife as he stood on a podium before several hundred witnesses. Thankfully, he was not harmed. After the man was arrested and arraigned for his crime, he was released from jail without bond by the district attorney. We see this all over our nation, those charged with serious crimes turned out to do it again, particularly in some of our states. The officials charged with upholding the law there are the ones who are allowing criminal activity to continue. Criminals commit crime without fear because they know that in certain states, they will not be held accountable.

Regarding *Pinchas*, ADONAI said: 12 “So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of *shalom*! 13 It will be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—because he was zealous for his God and atoned for *Bnei-Yisrael*” (Numbers 25:12-13 TLV). Now is the time for the *Pinchas*’s of this generation to be revealed. When *Yeshua* cut the New Covenant with His own life, the Levitical priesthood of Aaron became inoperative. *Yeshua* is now the *Kohen Gadol*, our High Priest, the legal High Priest of the Commonwealth of Israel. We are citizens of that commonwealth. *Shimon Kefa*, Simon Peter, has told us that we don’t have to be from the Tribe of Levi and descended from Aaron to be a *kohen*. Under *Yeshua*, each of us, Jew and Gentile who follow Him, have been made priests. Just as ADONAI ordained *Pinchas*, we have also been ordained. *Kefa* said: 4 As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah *Yeshua* (1Peter 2:4-5). We, Jew and Gentile, male and female, who follow our High Priest *Yeshua*, are ADONAI’s priesthood in each generation. In our priesthood, just as in the priesthood of Aaron, we are required to distinguish between clean and unclean, holy and common, and not to approach ADONAI in our uncleanness. To avoid that, we must be in a continual state of cleanness which requires continual repentance for sins. We cannot approach a holy G-d in uncleanness. *Sha’ul* wrote: 11 Trustworthy is the saying: If we died with Him, we will also live with Him; 12 if we endure, we will also reign with Him;.. (2Timothy 2:11-12a TLV). Because we will rule and reign with *Yeshua* for eternity, our priesthood is also an everlasting priesthood as we will continue to serve Him in the new heavens and new earth, the *olam haba*, the world to come.

Just as ADONAI made a covenant of *shalom* with *Pinchas*, we also have His *shalom*. *Sha’ul* said: 7 “And the *shalom* of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah *Yeshua*” (Philippians 4:7 TLV). He was quoting Isaiah who said: 3 “You keep in perfect peace one whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. 4 Trust in Adonai forever, for the Lord Adonai is a Rock of ages” (Isaiah 26:3 TLV). The Hebrew says שָׁלוֹם, שָׁלוֹם, *shalom shalom*. The *shalom* of G-d which surpasses all understanding spoken of by *Sha’ul* is the perfect peace of Isaiah 26. We who trust in *Yeshua* have that *shalom shalom* because our mind is stayed on ADONAI. Perfect peace is a covenant benefit of our covenant with *Yeshua*. ADONAI said that He would never leave us nor forsake us: 6 *Chazak! Be courageous! Do not be afraid or tremble before them. For Adonai your God—He is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or abandon you.*” (Deuteronomy 31:6 TLV). (See also Hebrews 13:5). “*Chazak*,” be strong and be courageous, is encouragement for us. We have been chosen and given the privilege to live in these last generations. It will require special strength and courage. ADONAI will not fail us or abandon us; leave us nor forsake us. His Son, *Yeshua* our Messiah is coming soon! *Hallelujah!* Blessed are You, O L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who in goodness gives goodness to all, and will continue to benefit us with goodness and gifts for all time and make us worthy of the return of the Messiah and

the life of the world to come. May He who causes peace to reign in the high heavens, let peace descend on us and all Israel. Amen. *Shabbat shalom!*