

**Yad Avraham Institute**  
**Weekly Torah Commentaries Series**  
*The Portion of*  
**Pinchas**  
 July 17, 2008

**Presented By: Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, Shlita**

<b><i>Inside This Week's Edition</i></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
<b><i>1 The Importance of Pedigree</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>2. Yosef's Unique Love for the Land</i></b>	<b>2</b>
<b><i>3. The Wife an Integral Component of Spirituality</i></b>	<b>4</b>
<b><i>4. G'd's Focus on the Jewish People</i></b>	<b>5</b>
<b><i>5. The Jewish People, Reflecting the Profile of their Forbearers</i></b>	<b>6</b>

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**New York**  
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**B"H**

# Pinchas

*Presented by*

**Rabbi Yosef Kalatsky, *Shlita***

**Dean**

## ***1. The Importance of Pedigree***

The Torah tells us that Zimri, the Prince of the Tribe of Shimon, publicly desecrated G'd's Name by cohabiting with Cozbi, a Midianite Princess. Pinchas acted zealously to avenge G'd's Honor by killing Zimri and Cozbi. He pierced them both with a spear while they were engaged in their disgraceful sexual act. When the Torah identifies Pinchas it traces his lineage back to Aaron, his grandfather, as the Torah states, **"Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aaron the Kohen, turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel, when he zealously avenged Me among them, so I did not consume the Children of Israel with My vengeance."** Had Pinchas not acted as he did, the Attribute of Justice would have destroyed the entire Jewish people. As the Torah states, **"...He (Pinchas) pierced them both...and the plague was halted from the Children of Israel. Those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand."**

Rashi cites Chazal who ask, "Why does the Torah need to trace Pinchas' lineage back to Aaron, his grandfather? It is because after Pinchas had killed Zimri, he was ridiculed and disgraced by the Tribes of Israel for killing a Prince. They had said, 'How can a person who descends from a grandfather (maternal grandfather was Yisro) who stuffed calves for idolatry have the audacity to kill a Prince of Israel?'" Therefore, the Torah needs to trace his lineage to Aaron the High Priest in order to communicate his prestigious pedigree. How could the Jewish people ridiculed Pinchas when his act of zealotry had saved them from G'd's destruction? One would think that the Jewish people would have extolled and praised him for his selfless heroic act. In fact Chazal tell us that in order for Pinchas to have succeeded he had to have merited multiple miracles in order for him not to be killed. Despite all that had transpired, the Jewish people perceived Pinchas in a negative light and therefore ridiculed him.

It is true that Pinchas' act of zealotry had saved the Jewish people from G'd's destruction; however, their criticism of Pinchas was directed at him as a person. They claimed that if Pinchas, who was a commoner, could kill a prince of Israel it was an indication that he was a person who does not esteem or revere anyone of stature. Because if Pinchas in fact did, he could not have been able to kill Zimri, despite the heinousness of his behavior. He was thus categorized as a person who possesses an uncouth character. Therefore the Torah needed to trace his pedigree to Aaron, the High Priest in order to establish him as someone of prestigious pedigree so that he should be perceived for what he truly was.

Chazal tell us that many miracles were performed on Pinchas' behalf. Why did he merit such miracles? It is often that one merits miracles because of the special merit of his forbearers. When Pinchas set out to avenge G'd's honor, he understood that unless he would merit Divine Protection, he would be killed. He succeeded in his mission because G'd had protected him. In order for us to understand and appreciate the source of his merit, the Torah needed to trace Pinchas' lineage back to Aaron, the High Priest. Thus, Pinchas was not only unique because of what he had brought about, but also because of his special quality of pedigree.

## ***2. Yosef's Unique Love for the Land***

The Torah states, **"The daughters of Tzelofchad, son of Chefer, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, of the families of Manasseh son of Yosef drew near...and they stood before Moshe, before Elazar the Kohen...saying, 'Our father died in the desert, but he was not among the assembly that was gathering against Hashem in the assembly of Korach, but he died of his own sin; and he has no son...Give us possession among our father's brothers.'" Since Tzelofchad's daughters were his only progeny they came to claim his portion in the Land as his heirs. The daughters of Tzelofchad merited that the laws of**

inheritance should be communicated to Moshe as a result of their request for a portion in the Land.

The Midrash asks, “Why does the Torah trace the pedigree of the daughters of Tzelofchad back to Yosef, the Patriarch of the Tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh? Since the verse identifies them as the descendants of Manasseh, why is it necessary to mention that Manasseh was the son of Yosef? The Torah needed to trace the genealogy of the daughters of Tzelofchad back to Yosef because he had a special love for the Land (of Israel) *‘chibas haaretz’*. Where do we find that he had a special love for the Land? The verse states, **‘When G’d will surely remember you and bring you up out of this land (Egypt)...then you must bring my bones up out of here with you (to the Land of Israel).’** Just as Yosef had a special love for the Land, so too did the daughters of Tzelofchad love the Land as it states, **‘Give us a portion...’** This is to teach us that all the daughters of Tzelofchad were righteous.” The daughters of Tzelofchad desired a portion in the Land, not for its monetary value, but only because of their special love for the Land Israel.

The Torah states that after the daughters of Tzelofchad brought their claim to Moshe, he presented it before G’d. Why was Moshe not able to respond to their request? Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “Although Moshe had known the laws pertaining to inheritance, it was concealed from him. Why did this happen? The Torah wanted the order of inheritance to be communicated as a result of the daughters of Tzelofchad’s claim to reveal the special love that they had for the Land. It was their love that motivated them to make the request.” What was the cause of their special interest in the Land?

The Gemara in Tractate Kesubos states, “One who lives outside of the Land (of Israel), it is as if he has no G’d.” Maharsha cites Ramban who explains that the Land of Israel is the only location on earth that is not under the dominion of one of the archangels of the nations of the world. The world was divided among the seventy root nations, each one of them having its own archangel. The blessing and sustenance that G’d provides for each nation is passed through that archangel for the people living in that particular location. However, the Land of Israel, which is the Land that was given to the Jewish people is overseen by G’d Himself. There is no archangel. The blessing and sustenance that is provided by G’d comes directly to those who live in the Land. Therefore, when one lives outside of the Land, it is as if he has no G’d. Meaning, his relationship with G’d comes about through an intermediary, which is not the case in Israel.

Yosef had a special love for the Land because he understood and appreciated its unique spiritual value. If one performs a mitzvah in the Land it’s innate spiritual value is greater than if one performs the same mitzvah outside of the Land. There are also mitzvos that are uniquely tied to the Land itself. Therefore, Yosef had asked of the Jewish people, that before they leave Egypt they must take his remains to the Land of Israel. Similarly, it was because the daughters of Tzelofchad, the descendants of Yosef, had appreciated and understood the spiritual value of the Land of Israel that they wanted a portion in it.

It is interesting to note that a convert does not have a share in the Land. One needs to be a descendant of one of the original Twelve Tribes of Israel in order to merit a portion. Although the Tribe of Levy did not have a portion in the Land, it was because as the Torah states **“G’d is their portion.”** They did not need a medium through which to have a relationship with G’d. However, the other tribes, being of a lesser dimension of spirituality, needed the Land as the medium for their special and unique relationship with G’d. The convert, not being a descendant of Yaakov, the Patriarch, needs the Jewish people themselves to be his link to G’d. Becoming part of the totality of the Jewish people allows the convert to be valued as the original Jew.

The Midrash tells us that we see that Yosef had a special love for the Land because he had requested, **“When G’d will bring you up out of Egypt, you must bring my bones up out of here with you.”** How do we see from this request that Yosef had a special love for the Land? Rashi cites Chazal who explain the words **“with you”** to mean, “When your children will take out your remains from Egypt, you must ensure me that they will remove my remains with them.” Every one of the Tribes wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt when the redemption would come about. Since every one of the Tribes wanted their remains to be removed from Egypt, why was Yosef’s request an indication that his love for the Land was greater than theirs? In addition, why was it necessary that Yosef request from his brothers that they should guarantee that his remains should be removed when he could have asked his two sons Ephraim and Manasseh to remove his remains at the time of the exodus? Why was it necessary for him to make the removal of his remains a prerequisite for the redemption of the Jewish people? If one desires something that he esteems, reveres, and loves at an unusual level, he will do everything that is possible to ensure that his request will be fulfilled and guaranteed. Because Yosef did not want to rely solely upon his children, as his brothers had done, it is an indication of his

exceptional love for the Land. This is the reason he made the request, "...**you must bring my bones up out of here with you.**" Why was Yosef the only one of Yaakov's sons who needed such a guarantee that his remains would be taken out of Egypt?

Chazal tell us that Yosef was a reflection of every aspect of his father Yaakov, our Patriarch. Therefore his grasp and understanding of spirituality was unique. His brothers did not have the same depth of understanding as Yosef had. This is the reason that he was the most loved by his father Yaakov. This was also the basis for his appreciation of the spiritual value of the Land.

Chofetz Chaim writes in his work *Shem Olam* that when one passes away and comes before the Heavenly Court, he needs an unusual amount of spiritual merit. It is because of the necessity of this merit that one should not leave the responsibility of managing the distribution of one's assets to charity solely to one's children. Because one's family does not fully appreciate and understand the dire need of merit that is required by the one who passed away, they will not sufficiently impart the funds to the proper causes. Therefore, one must set in motion the distribution before one passes away in order to guarantee that he will be the beneficiary of his own decisions. Similarly, Yosef, because of his dimension of spirituality, was able to internalize and grasp the value of his remains being taken to the Land of Israel. This was of such monumental importance that he would not allow the responsibility to rest solely upon his children, but rather he set it as a prerequisite for the redemption from Egypt.

### 3. *The Wife an Integral Component of Spirituality*

The Torah states, "**The daughters of Tzelofchad...drew near...and they stood before Moshe...saying...Give us possession (of the Land) among our father's brothers.**" The Midrash explains, "In that generation of the desert, the women secured/protected what was breached by the men. At the time of the sin of the Golden Calf, Aaron had asked that the Jewish people give their gold rings (for the sake of building the Golden Calf); however, the women refused and protested against their husbands' participation. The women did not have a share in the sin of the Golden Calf. And regarding the sin of the spies, the women did not participate. When the spies returned with their slanderous reports about the Land, they said, '**We cannot ascend...for it is too strong for us.**' The men believed their false reports but the women did not. As a result, G'd

decreed that the Jewish people should wander the desert for 40 years and over that period all men between the ages of 20 and 60 would die, never to enter the Land. However, the women who lived during that generation, did enter into the Land. Therefore, the Torah tells us that the daughters of Tzelofchad drew near to Moshe and requested their portion in the Land. Why is the portion of the daughters of Tzelofchad juxtaposed to the portion of the passing of Miriam? It is because after the passing of Miriam the men began to complain that they were going to die in the desert due to a lack of water. This was the beginning of the breach; however, the women had faith and secured what was breached by the men."

It is interesting to note that Chazal tell us that a woman has mitzvos that are personal to her. For example, kindling the lights for Shabbos and Yom Tov and the mitzvah of tithing the dough (taking *challah*), although the male is obligated to kindle the lights and tithe the dough, nevertheless the woman has the priority to perform these mitzvos on behalf of the family. The Midrash explains the reason the woman has priority regarding these two mitzvos is because "she (Chava/the wife of Adam) had extinguished the light of the world." Before Adam had eaten of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge he had radiated holiness that was a semblance of G'd's Radiance. The angels in heaven had mistaken his radiance with that of G'd's and sang songs of praise to him. As a result of eating from the Tree, he was spiritually diminished and no longer radiated as he had before. The diminishment of Adam's spirituality is the equivalent of extinguishing the light of the world. Because Chava had compelled Adam to eat of the fruit of the Tree, she is culpable for his spiritual diminishment. Therefore every woman has a responsibility to rekindle the light of existence, through the Shabbos and Yom Tov lights. Before Adam had eaten of the fruit of the Tree he was an entity of holiness, being the handiwork of G'd. There was nothing holier in existence than Adam. He was the equivalent of the *challah*, which is inherently holy (it is the tithe that is only permitted for the Kohen to eat). However, after eating of the Tree, which was a result of his wife's request, he became contaminated through the impurity that he had ingested. Chava thus contaminated the *challah* of the world, the holiest entity that existed. She therefore must reinstate a holy object that is the equivalent of Adam's holy status. Thus, she was given the responsibility to take *challah* from the dough as her personal mitzvah.

The Gemara in Tractate Avodah Zorah tells us that after the Jewish people had unequivocally accepted the Torah with the declaration of "**Naaseh V'nishma – we will do and we will listen,**" they were reinstated to a level

of spirituality that had existed before the sin of Adam. Before Adam had partaken of the Tree of Knowledge, he was not subject to death. The Jewish people at Sinai became eternal beings. The Jewish women understood that the impurity and spiritual diminishment that was introduced into existence as a result of Chava's demand, was corrected. They had appreciated the dire consequences of her mistake and thus they would not do anything that would diminish or jeopardize the spiritual standing of the Jewish people. They thus did not contribute their jewelry for the Golden Calf. Whatever the men had breached, they insulated and protected because of their understanding of the irreversible consequences. Similarly, when the men did not want to enter into the Land due to the slanderous reports of the spies, the women maintained their faith.

G'd created man so that he should perfect his spirituality. He created for him the woman as his "helpmate" so that she should assist him in his spiritual mission throughout his life. This was the initial intent of the wife that G'd had provided for Adam. However, Chava failed in her role. It was only when the Jewish people assumed the status of Adam, at Sinai, did the women assume their role as the spiritual helpmate to assist their husbands to succeed in their purpose.

#### 4. G'd's Focus on the Jewish People

The Torah states in the Portion of Emor, "**When an ox or sheep or a goat is born...**" These are the only three species that qualify to be brought as an offering. The Midrash states, "The species that qualify to be brought as offerings were chosen in the merit of the Patriarchs. The ox was chosen in the merit of Avraham. As it states regarding Avraham's hosting of the angels, "**Avraham ran to the cattle, took a calf tender and good, and gave it to the youth who hurried to do it...**" The sheep was chosen to qualify as an offering in the merit of Yitzchak. As the verse states regarding the Akeidah (binding of Yitzchak), '**And Avraham looked up and saw- behold a ram – after it had been caught in the thicket...**' (The species of the ram reminds G'd of the special act of the Akeidah, which was Avraham's ultimate sacrifice. G'd valued Avraham's ritualization of the ram as if he had sacrificed his son Yitzchak.) The goat was chosen to be an offering in the merit of Yaakov. As the Torah states (when Rivka, our Matriarch, told her son Yaakov to go and receive the blessing from his father Yitzchak), '**So now, my son, heed my voice to that which I command you. Go now to the flock and fetch from there two good goats...**" The concept of sacrifices exists only within the

context of the Attribute of Mercy. By bringing the sacrifices that correspond to each of the Patriarchs, the Jewish people remind G'd of the Holy Patriarchs and are thus able to evoke the Attribute of Mercy in their merit.

The Gemara in Tractate Berachos cites two opinions as to why there are three prayer services every day – *Shachris* (morning service), *Mincha* (afternoon service), and *Arvis* (evening service). One opinion states that the three prayer services were enacted to correspond to the daily communal offerings that were brought in the Temple. *Shachris* corresponds to the "*Tamid shel Shachar* – morning communal offering," *Mincha* corresponds to the "*Tamid shel bein ha'arbaayim* – closing afternoon communal offering," and *Arvis* corresponds to the, "*Eivarim and pedarim* - the burning of the limbs and the fats during the nighttime period." Another opinion states that the basis for the three services is linked to the holy Patriarchs. They established the three services, as the Gemara states, "Avraham established *Shachris*, Yitzchak established *Mincha*, and Yaakov established *Arvis*." Thus, the three services correspond to the Patriarchs who had established them. The holy Patriarchs opened the pathways through which the Jewish people are able to pray to G'd. Because the Patriarchs had a special relationship with G'd, when one prays during the times that they had, G'd is attentive to the prayer because it reminds Him of the Patriarchs. Chazal tell us that the reason that the Patriarchs and Matriarchs were barren was because "G'd desires the supplications of the righteous (tzaddikim)." Because G'd had a special love for the Patriarchs, anything that reminds Him of them, will evoke His Mercy for their descendants.

The Torah states in the Portion of Pinchas, regarding the Continual Daily Offering (*Olas Tamid*), "**It is the continual elevation offering that was done at Mount Sinai, for a satisfying aroma, a fire offering to Hashem.**" It would have been sufficient for the Torah to state the components of the communal Daily Offering. Why is it necessary for the Torah to inform us it was done at Mount Sinai? Sforno explains, "It should be the burnt offering that was brought before the sin of the Golden Calf. Prior to the sin of the Golden Calf, the burnt offering was effective independent of the wine libations that were later required after the sin of the Golden Calf." G'd wants the Jewish people to bring the communal offering in a manner that will remind Him of their most advanced spiritual status before the sin of the Golden Calf. This would evoke a special love for the Jewish people from G'd and thus allow them to merit His Mercy. This is similar to what is recited in the Musaf Service of Rosh Hashanah in the portion of *Zichronos* (Remembrances), we

cite a verse to remind G'd of His special relationship with the Jewish people for what they had done in the past. The verse states, **“G'd says, ‘I remember for your sake the kindness of your youth...how you followed Me into an unplanted desert.’”**

G'd wants to remember the Jewish people in the most positive light so that they should be the greatest beneficiaries of His Mercy. This special love is reflected in the infrastructure of the prayer services as well as the offerings that were brought in the Temple.

### **5. The Jewish People, Reflecting the Profile of their Forbearers** *(from Balak)*

The Torah states when Bilaam went to bless the Jewish people, **“He (G'd) perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no sin in Israel....”** How is it possible that G'd did not see the iniquities of the Jewish people, if in fact they had sinned multiple times. They had sinned with the Golden Calf and with the spies. Rashi cites Chazal who explain, “When they transgress His words, He does not scrutinize their actions and is not exacting in His gaze upon them. This is an indication of His special love for the Jewish people.” Baal HaTurim explains the meaning of the words **“He (G'd) perceived no iniquity”** by citing the Jerusalem Talmud, “The Hebrew letters *“ches”* and *“tes”* (which together spell *“chet (sin)”*) do not appear among the names of the twelve Tribes of Israel.” If in fact the Jewish people did sin, what relevance does the fact that the sons of Yaakov, who were their forbearers, do not have the letters *“ches”* and *“tes”* among their names?

The Portion of Vayechi, because of its paragraph structure is classified as a “sealed” Portion. Rashi cites Chazal who explain that the reason the Portion is sealed is to allude to the fact that Yaakov, our Patriarch wanted reveal to his sons, the end of time (ketz) when Moshiach would come. However, G'd concealed it from him so that he should not reveal it. Rabbeinu Bachya cites another Midrash that explains that Yaakov initially wanted to reveal the end of time to his sons. He initially hesitated to do so because he was concerned that they may be flawed because of sin and thus not worthy to receive this information. However, when he realized that that the letters *“ches”* and *“tes”* were not present in their names, he understood that they were in fact pure. Nevertheless, Yaakov chose to withhold this information from them because he realized that the letters *“kuf”* and *“tzadie”*, which spell *“ketz”*, also did not appear in the names of his

children. This confirmed for him that the end of time should not be revealed.

The fact that the letters *“ches”* and *“tes”* do not appear in the names of the Tribes of Israel is an indication that the essence of the Jewish people is pure and has no relevance to sin (*chet*). Repentance for a Jew brings about two consequences. Firstly, he is forgiven and thus will not be subject to the Attribute of Justice. Secondly, it brings about a spiritual rehabilitation. Whatever level of spiritual diminishment that was caused by the sin will be rehabilitated as a result of the repentance. However, a non-Jew only has relevance to the first aspect of repentance – that he is forgiven not to be punished. As we see with the community of Ninve. Yonah the prophet was sent to forewarn them that they must repent. If they did not, they would be destroyed. As a result of Yonah's rebuke, the community of Ninve repented and were thus not destroyed. They were forgiven.

Maharal of Prague explains that sin is attributed to the physicality of the human being. Sin does not emanate from one's spiritual essence. The Jew, whose essence is spiritual, when he sins it is considered to be incidental emanating from his physicality. Because sin does not touch upon the essence of the Jew, he has relevance to spiritual rehabilitation. However, the non-Jew, whose essence is not spiritual, when he fails and sins it is not considered to be incidental because it emanates from his physical essence. Therefore, he has no relevance to spiritual rehabilitation. The sin for the non-Jew is thus considered to be terminal and something that is beyond recovery.

When Bilaam said, **“He (G'd) perceived no iniquity in Yaakov, and saw no sin in Israel....”** he was referring to the fact that the terminal consequence of sin (*chet*) has no relevance to the Tribes of Yaakov as is indicated by the fact that letters *“ches”* and *“tes”* do not appear in their names. Because the Jewish people descend from the holy Tribes, their make up and profile is spiritual. Therefore, their essence cannot be tarnished by sin. When G'd gazes upon the Jewish people, the Attribute of Mercy is upon them because their sin is only considered to be something of a superficial nature for it does not emanate from their core being, which is spiritual and pure.