

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 220

**Pinchas** | Self-Effacement and Humility: Keys to Leadership



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**

פרשת פינחס | אנגלית

# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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## **Parshat Pinchas**

### **Feelings of Inadequacy - From Pride or Humility ?**

The yeshiva hall, which had been filled with dozens of young men bent over their Gemaras, gradually emptied, and the thunderous sound of Torah learning that had resonated in the Beit Midrash slowly faded away.

The late hour nudged the students one by one to their rooms, and now, only a small number remained in the large hall — those who would dedicate their entire Thursday night to study.

They sat scattered across the room, deeply immersed in their studies.

Aharon was among these students. He cherished these hours and the stillness of the night.

The words of our Sages (Eruvin 65a), "The night was created only for study," resonated deeply with him. The nighttime hours were his most

cherished and productive. All week, he awaited this night when he could permit himself to forgo sleep and devote himself entirely to learning.

More than anything, Aharon loved the early hours of the morning when the hall was entirely emptied and silence settled within its walls.

When, for one reason or another, the remaining students did not hurry to leave the Beit Midrash, Aharon secretly wished and waited for their swift departure.

When he realized this inner selfish awareness, he would reprimand himself for having preferred his personal quiet over the collective study of Torah. Yet, if they had heard his plea, the students would soon begin closing their Gemaras one by one, and within moments, Aharon would find himself alone

in his corner of the study hall once more. Thus, his cherished time once more would arrive.

On this night, he was surprised by his scattered thoughts. He had never before encountered issues concentrating on his studies during such hours; this time, however, he couldn't get himself to focus.

As long as the sound of Torah learning had echoed in the hall, he was carried away and immersed in his studies, but in the undisturbed silence, he began to feel that his mind was ill at ease.

Several times, he tried to overcome this feeling and return to the subject matter that he was studying, but within minutes, he found himself staring into space, his thoughts entirely elsewhere.

A sense of discomfort began to fill him, and suddenly, a sense of suffocation enveloped him.

He could no longer sit in his place in the Beit Midrash. An inner, deep need filled him and beckoned him to go outside, into the fresh air and open spaces.

He straightened up quickly and rose from his seat, closed his Gemara with a sharp motion, and, with brisk steps, left the hall.

He needed to be alone with himself to organize his thoughts.

The cool night air that hit his nostrils as he stepped outside invigorated him. He inhaled the clear air deeply, and it calmed him a bit.

A sense of relief passed through his body, but the confusion in his mind still lingered.

His eyes searched for some hidden corner where he could be alone, with himself and his thoughts.

His feet led him to the field behind the yeshiva, and he walked slowly until he stumbled upon a large stone that lay in the shade of an ancient olive tree.

He sat on the stone, glanced at the yeshiva buildings, which now appeared distant and small, and sank deep into thought.

"What's happening to me?" he asked himself silently.

**Parshat Pinchas - No Entry to the Land For Moses and Aaron**

'I study and pray, avoid transgression to the best of my ability, and fulfill many commandments, yet I still feel ashamed of myself.'

'I am far from perfection,' he continued to think, 'and many times I miss spiritual opportunities. Often, I don't pray properly, don't study the Torah as required, and miss many opportunities to act with kindness and to give honor and appreciation to others. Moreover, each time this happens, I am filled with a terrible sense of shame, feeling empty and distant from holiness.'

Master of the Universe, where does this feeling of inadequacy come from, pride or humility?'

Is it the feeling of pride beating within me, unwilling to accept my failures, or does it stem from a sense of humility because I am lowly in my eyes, and I, therefore, always feel distant.

What is the truth? Where can it be found?<sup>1</sup>

In an attempt to provide relief to Aharon and insight for him to reflect on, the following booklet has been written.

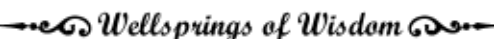
**No Entry to the Land For Moses and Aaron**

Parshat Chukat is the Torah portion that begins the 40<sup>th</sup> year of the Jewish people's sojourn in the desert, a year that began on the first of Nissan in the year 2488 to creation.

Ten days later, on the tenth of Nissan, Moses' sister, Miriam the prophetess passed away,

and following her death, the wellspring that provided the Jewish people with water ceased.

As the Torah states: "Miriam died there and was buried there, and there was no water for the congregation, and they assembled against Moses and Aaron" (Numbers 20:1-2).



1. This passage is an excerpt from 'Neshamah Im Atzmah' (p. 11).

## Parshat Pinchas - No Entry to the Land For Moses and Aaron

The lack of water threw the Jewish people into great turmoil, and they began to quarrel with Moses: Why have you brought the congregation of G-d into this wilderness to die there, we and our cattle? And why have you brought us up out of Egypt?" (Numbers 20:3-5).

Moses saw the immense distress of the Jewish people and prayed to G-d.

G-d said to him: "Take the staff and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and speak to the rock before their eyes" (Numbers 20:8).

The desire of G-d was for Moses to speak to the rock to give its water, and thereby, the Jewish people would be inspired to serve G-d with enthusiasm and fervor.<sup>2</sup>

However, in practice, Moses did not speak to the rock but

struck it, as it is written: "Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock with his staff twice, and abundant water came out, and the congregation and their livestock drank" (Numbers 20:11).

Because Moses struck the rock instead of speaking to it, G-d was displeased and said to him: "Because you did not believe in Me, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the Jewish people, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them" (Numbers 20:12).

As a result of the sin of striking the rock, it was decreed that Moses and Aaron would remain in the desert and not merit to enter the Promised Land.

Indeed, about 110 days after the striking of the rock, G-d informed Moses: The time has come to pay for the sin of striking the rock.

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

2. As Rashi comments (Numbers 20:12): [If Moses had spoken to the rock, the Jewish people would have said] "If this rock, which neither speaks

nor hears and needs no sustenance, obeys the word of the Omnipresent — how much more so must we."

**Parshat Pinchas - The Inheritance of the Daughters of Tzelofchad**

Go and accompany Aaron to his resting place on Mount Hor, and appoint his son Elazar in his place, as it is stated: "Take Aaron and Elazar his son and bring them up Mount Hor. Strip Aaron of his garments and put them on Elazar, his son, and Aaron shall be gathered and die there" (Numbers 20:25-26).

From Mount Hor, the Jewish people continued their journey to

the Land of Israel, and along the way, they defeated Sihon and Og, were saved from Balak and Balaam, and arrived near the border.

The Jewish people now prepared to enter the Land, and Moses prepared for a farewell from his beloved people, for it was decreed that he would not enter.

It was at this point in time that they were commanded regarding the division of the Holy Land.

**The Inheritance of the Daughters of Tzelofchad**

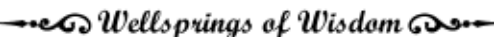
Initially, G-d had commanded Moses to count all males among the Jewish people from twenty years old and above.

The count revealed there were "six hundred thousand and one thousand, seven hundred and thirty" (Numbers 26:51) — males over the age of twenty.

G-d then told Moses: "To these shall the land be divided as

an inheritance according to the number of names" (ibid. 26:53) — thus, those who had been counted would inherit the land.<sup>3</sup>

Among those who heard this command were the daughters of Tzelofchad.<sup>4</sup> When they heard these instructions, they looked at one another and said, "According to these words of Moses, our family will not receive any



3. We have explained this according to its simple meaning; see Tractate Bava Batra 117a for a detailed discussion on this topic.

4. See Otzar Aggadot HaTorah, Part III (p. 217).

## Parshat Pinchas - The Inheritance of the Daughters of Tzelofchad

portion of the land since our father died without a son, leaving only five daughters, and daughters do not inherit."

Since the Land of Israel was very precious to them, they decided to approach Moses.

One day, while Moses was in the study tent teaching the laws concerning levirate marriage, the daughters of Tzelofchad determined it was the right time.

They approached the chiefs of tens and presented their claim: "Give us an inheritance among our father's brothers, but if you claim that we don't inherit as sons would, then let our mother enter into a levirate marriage, despite having daughters as offspring."

The officers of tens listened and responded, "This is a matter of the laws of inheritance; we cannot judge regarding it. Proceed to those sages greater than us to have your case clarified."

From there, they approached the officers of fifties, who, seeing the respect that had been accorded to them by the officers of tens, replied, "There are greater authorities than us; go to them."

When the daughters stood before the officers of hundreds, they were sent to the officers of thousands, and the officers of thousands sent them to the tribal princes to decide their case.

However, the princes refused, saying, "Moses is greater than we are; go directly to him."

Thus, the daughters stood before Moses. Moses paused, thinking: "I surely know the law, but if no one else wished to respond and answer this query, shall I do so?"<sup>5</sup>

Thereupon, "Moses brought their case before G-d" (Numbers 27:5).

It was then that G-d conveyed the complete set of laws regarding inheritance to Moses.

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### Wellsprings of Wisdom

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5. To quote 'Tzeror HaMor' (Numbers 27:5): "It says, 'Moses brought their case before G-d.'

He did this so as not to place a crown of superiority over the Sanhedrin, even though he already knew the law.



**Parshat Pinchas - Qualities of a True Leader in Israel**

When the inheritance laws had been completed, G-d revealed Himself to Moses and instructed him: "Ascend this Mount Abarim and see the land that I have given to the children of

Israel; and when you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people" (Numbers 27:12-13).

Realizing that his time of departure from this world was near, Moses began to ponder.

**Qualities of a True Leader in Israel**

As is known, the first creation by G-d was the holy Torah, crafted with seventy facets and aspects.

Concerning each aspect of Torah, it is stated: "Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea" (Job 11:9), for each facet possesses infinite divine wisdom.

G-d wished to reveal all of the aspects of the Torah in the world and thus brought forth the seventy souls of Jacob's household that are listed in Parshat Vayigash,<sup>6</sup> assigning each soul one unique aspect of the Torah.

Each of Jacob's seventy souls grasped a distinct aspect, and our holy sages revealed that from these seventy souls descended all of the souls of the people of Israel, each receiving vitality from one of these original seventy souls.

Since each soul has its unique aspect and unique path, it follows that each Jew has a special portion of Torah that is uniquely theirs.

From these distinct aspects, seventy general paths in serving G-d emerged, each with unique spiritual desires, aspirations,

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As our Sages say, the daughters went before the officers of tens who said: 'These are the laws of inheritance and are not for us to judge.' Each court likewise sent them on until it reached Moses.

When Moses saw this, he said: 'I am not worthy of assuming this crown,' and so he referred the matter to the heavenly court."

**6. Genesis 46:8.**

yearnings, and longings that are specific to it.

Thus, the nation of Israel is exceptionally unique and composed of countless diverse traits.

To lead such a nation is undoubtedly challenging; a leader of the people of Israel must embody all seventy of these aspects, which is certainly no simple matter, for it involves multiple and numerous levels.

Historically, two righteous individuals are known to have fully attained this achievement of true Jewish leadership: Moses and King David.

Rabbi Yitzchak Ginsburgh explains:<sup>7</sup>

Precisely seventy times in the Torah, the verse states: "And G-d spoke to Moses, saying" — corresponding to the seventy faces of the Torah.

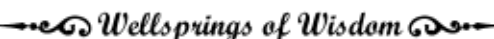
To attain a connection to all of these facets, the quality of true and utter humility is required, as is hinted by the fact that the word 'שפל' (humble) is an acronym for 'Seventy Faces of the Torah.'

Only two righteous individuals fully achieved this level of complete humility: Moses and King David.

Of Moses, it is said: "The man Moses was exceedingly humble, more than anyone upon the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3); as Rashi explains 'humble' as "lowly and patient."

Likewise, King David testified about himself: "I was lowly in my own eyes" (2 Samuel 6:22).

Thus, Moses reflected, given the complexity and the great challenge of true leadership, "After my departure, who will continue this sublime form of leadership?"



7. 'Shaashuim Yom Yom' (Vol. 1, p. 306)

## Moses' Concern for Jewish Leadership Continuity

Rabbi Ginsburgh continues:

Motivated by a sense of responsibility, Moses stood before G-d, pleading passionately for the Jewish people.

Moses's request to G-d was akin to the request of a "woman of valor"<sup>8</sup> seeking that her husband look after her legacy and appoint a worthy successor.

Moses reminded G-d, "When You sent me to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt, You said, 'I have surely remembered you and what was done to you in Egypt' (Exodus 3:16); now, please recall this merit: 'Let the L-rd, G-d of the

spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation' (Numbers 27:16)."

Moses' plea was made with deep devotion, elevating him to the infinite and most high source, which encompasses all seventy faces of the Torah, and from this elevated place, he succeeded in drawing down the spiritual power necessary for the appointment of a new leader, as we will explain further.

This elevation is hinted at the outset of his request: "And Moses spoke to G-d, saying" (Numbers 27:15), which, being the reverse order of G-d speaking to

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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**8.** To quote the Sifrei (Pinchas 142):

"To what can this be compared? To a king whose wife was dying, and she entrusted him to be responsible concerning their children, saying: 'I beg of you, be mindful of my children.'

He said to her: 'Rather than entrust me with our children, entrust our children

concerning me so that they do not rebel against me or treat me with disrespect.'

Thus said the Holy One to him: 'Before you place your charge upon Me concerning My children, place upon My children a charge concerning Me — that they not show Me contempt, nor trade My honor for that of foreign g-ds.'"

**Parshat Pinchas - The Choosing of Joshua, son of Nun**

Moses, this verse appears only once in the Torah, symbolizing the seventy-first level, and corresponds to the highest member of the Sanhedrin, and also reflects the mystery of "A woman of valor (Moses) is her husband's (G-d's) crown" (Proverbs 12:4).

Moses, having been elevated, prayed heartfully:

"Let the L-rd, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who will go out and come before them, lead them out and bring them in so that the congregation of G-d will not be like sheep without a shepherd" (Numbers 27:16-17).

"Master of the Universe," Moses pleaded, "You know the immense responsibility of a leader: to guide and elevate the people, to

be attuned to their troubles, and to advocate for their salvation, spiritually and physically.

A leader must sense the heart of his community, articulating their feelings even better than the people do themselves."

"You granted me this great level of leadership as a gift," Moses continued. "But now, after my departure from this world, who will continue this holy work?"

Please, compassionate Father, appoint a true leader who is ready to sacrifice himself for each and every Jew. Let not the congregation of G-d be like sheep without a shepherd."

G-d heeded Moses' request and replied, "Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lay your hand upon him" (Numbers 27:18).

**The Choosing of Joshua, son of Nun**

As stated, Moses asked G-d to appoint a fitting leader for the nation of Israel.

In truth, there were many candidates for this role: Elazar, the high priest who had

Parshat Pinchas - The Choosing of Joshua, son of Nun

continued Aharon's role; Itamar, Elazar's brother;<sup>9</sup> Pinchas, the son of Elazar, who refined the judgments and sweetened the forces of severity, and who also merited to receive the Torah from Moses (as noted in the Rambam's introduction to Mishneh Torah).

Moreover, within the nation of Israel, there were 600 'officers of thousands,' 6000 'officers of hundreds,' 12,000 'officers of fifties,' and 60,000 'officers of tens.'

Thus, in total, there were 78,600 officers who were great Torah scholars — and certainly, many among them were most worthy individuals.

Yet, remarkably, G-d did not choose any of them but none other than Joshua, son of Nun, and we need to understand why this was so.

If we look carefully at Parshat Shlach, this question becomes even stronger: It is stated there

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9. Itamar merited to hear directly from Moses every Torah subject 3 times.

As it says in the Talmud (Eruvin 54b):

“Our sages taught: What is the order of transmitting the Torah study?

Moses learned the Torah from the mouth of the Al-mighty.

Then Aaron entered, and Moses taught him.

Aaron moved aside and sat to the left of Moses, and Aaron's sons entered, and Moses taught them.

Then they moved aside — Elazar sitting to the right of Moses, Itamar to

the left of Aaron, and the Elders entered, and Moses taught them.

Then they moved aside, and the entire Jewish people entered, and Moses taught them.

Thus, Aaron heard every Torah passage four times, his sons three, the Elders twice, and the entire Jewish people once.

Moses then left, and Aaron taught them all once more.

Then Aaron left, and his sons taught them all another time.

Then his sons left, and the Elders taught the Jewish public.

Thus, everyone ended up hearing the Torah repeated four times."

that Moses chose twelve men — including Joshua, son of Nun — and sent them on the mission of spying the Holy Land. The Ba'al HaTurim reveals that these twelve men were all from among the 'officers of fifties.'

Thus, Joshua was merely an officer of fifty, of which there were tens of thousands, and

moreover, there were 6,600 candidates that were above him in the hierarchy of the system of judgment that Moses had set (600 officers of thousands and 6,000 officers of hundreds).

So why did G-d choose Joshua in particular from among them?

Before we answer, let us preface with yet another point.

### Uniting the Higher and Lower Worlds

In the holy Zohar (Tazria 48a), it is taught:

“On the sixth day, Adam was created, precisely when the heavenly throne was completed. It is called a ‘throne,’ as it is written: ‘The throne had six steps’ (I Kings 10:19), and therefore Adam was created on the sixth (day), for he was worthy of sitting upon the throne. We have also learned that once Adam was created, everything was set in order — everything above and below — and all were encompassed within Adam.”

From these words of the holy Zohar, it is clear that Adam's level was so lofty that he was fit to sit upon the heavenly throne.

Rabbi Yehuda Eichenstein explains as follows:<sup>10</sup>

“And this is the initial desire of G-d — that through us all the works of Creation be elevated and bound to the One, Unique, and Unified One. As the Zohar states (Tazria 48a): ‘Adam was created on the sixth day, for he was worthy of sitting upon the throne,’ and the term ‘throne’ (אִסְתָּא) generally refers to the

**Parshat Pinchas - Uniting the Higher and Lower Worlds**

linking of the lower realm with the higher realm.”

In other words, G-d created man and yearned that he sanctify himself to the point that, through the service of his Creator, he would connect and unify the lower world with the higher worlds. It is upon attaining this — that is, binding the worlds together — he becomes worthy of sitting upon the heavenly throne.

An aside: We, too, every day, merit accomplishing and attaining a level akin to this during prayer, each person according to his level of strength.

To bring an excerpt from my father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel ('Imrei Noam,' Tetzaveh, Discourse 3):

“It is known that the morning prayer is divided into four sections, corresponding to four worlds.

The first part of prayer begins from the 'Binding of Isaac' passage until 'Baruch She'amar,' corresponding to the World of Asiyah (Action).

The second part, from 'Baruch She'amar' until 'Yishtabach,'

called 'Pesukei D'Zimra,' corresponds to the World of Yetzirah (Formation).

The third part, from 'Yotzer Or' until the Amidah, including the Shema and its blessings, corresponds to the World of Beriah (Creation).

The fourth part, the Amidah, corresponds to the World of Atzilut (Emanation).

Rabbi Yosef Ohayon (in Avkat Rochel, p. 118) writes: "The essence of prayer is to rectify all of the worlds and to bind them to each other. Thus, until Pesukei D'zimra, one is engaged in rectifying the World of Asiyah, and there are particular divine Names one must intend for that world. The Kaddish between them is the pillar that connects the World of Asiyah with the higher World of Yetzirah. During Pesukei Dezimra, one makes use of G-d's Names associated with the World of Yetzirah, and the Kaddish afterward is the pillar that connects Yetzirah with Beriah, and so on (see further in Sha'ar

## Parshat Pinchas - Uniting the Higher and Lower Worlds

HaKavanot, "Discourses on the Morning Prayer," Discourse 1).

Generally, by means of prayer, each of the worlds is rectified in and of themselves, and these worlds become connected to each other, consequently bringing down bounty from the highest of

the high and the source of all sources."<sup>11</sup>

This also explains why G-d specifically chose Joshua to be Moses' successor: Joshua had attained the ability to connect the lower realms to the higher ones, as we shall continue to explain.

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*Wellsprings of Wisdom*

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**11.** Through the study of the Torah, we likewise have the power to connect the higher realms with the lower.

When the famed Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev first arrived in Hungary, he entered the city of Pressburg, where the renowned Gaon Rabbi Meir Barebi served as rabbi at that time.

Rabbi Meir was opposed to the ways of Chassidut and the Chassidic style of dress, and when Rabbi Levi Yitzchak entered, Rabbi Meir — who had been struggling to understand a passage in Tosafot for three days — greeted him somewhat coldly.

Upon seeing Rabbi Meir's difficulty with the Tosafot, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak asked: "What is challenging you about this topic?"

Rabbi Meir replied, "I can't understand the solution given by Tosafot."

Thereupon, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak began — according to his holy custom — to recite with overwhelming fervor the verse "A Psalm of David: The earth is the L-rd's and all that fills it" (Psalms 24:1).

He was aflame in his recitation — comparable to Rabbi Akiva of old, of whom it is said, "When he prayed, one could leave him in one corner and find him in another" (Berachot 31a), and when he finished reciting the psalm, they looked together once more at the Tosafot, and immediately, the Tosafot's words became entirely clear, to Rabbi Meir's disbelief.

At first, he had understood nothing; now, he could hardly recall what had been so difficult. He also could not fathom what this visitor had even done; what link could there be between that psalm in Tehillim and the puzzling words of the Tosafot? And what was the meaning of such intense fervor, the likes of which he had never seen?

The rabbi turned to him and asked, "What connection is there between Tehillim and Tosafot?"

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak replied: "Know, my beloved rabbi, that there were 150 Tosafists, and correspondingly, there are 150 psalms in Tehillim.



## This Is the Way

In the Book of Job, in relation to Elihu's rebuke, it is written: "Bear with me a little, and I will show you; for there

is still more to say on G-d's behalf" (Job 36:2).

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov of blessed memory<sup>12</sup> explains that

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Each Tosafist has a psalm in Tehillim that corresponds to his soul, and when someone struggles to understand a particular passage in Tosafot, one must recite the psalm in Tehillim that is associated with that Tosafist and beseech him to come and explain his words.

Thus, the Tosafist is compelled to come from the Upper World and clarify his comment in Tosafot."

[Rabbi Chaim Elazar, the Rebbe of Munkacs ('Divrei Torah,' 8<sup>th</sup> edition, 32), explained that the psalms as a whole stem from King David — may his memory be blessed — who is rooted in the spiritual attribute of Malchut ("royalty"). Malchut corresponds to the realm of the Oral Torah, which primarily involves analysis, exploring fine nuances, and innovating, which is the path of the Tosafists: probing deeply into the Talmudic passages.

Thus, the root of their souls lies in the chapters of Tehillim.]

The rabbi was amazed and said to the tzaddik: "If you truly know how to connect Tehillim to the Tosafot and can summon them here, such that the

Ba'al Tosafot himself comes to explain his words — why, you could have been a rabbi in Lemberg, the largest Jewish community?!"

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak responded: "Does the honorable rabbi think that I seek authority or an official rabbinic post?"

Our holy master, the Ba'al Shem Tov, instructed us to journey from city to city and from village to village to show our fellow Jews the true path in Torah study.

It is not enough merely to learn so as to become a great scholar in Torah; we must forge a bond, through the Torah, with the souls of all of the Jewish people.

By attaching ourselves with the holy souls of the Tanna'im, Amora'im, and Tosafists, we become bound wholly — to G-d Himself, as it were.

Thus the verse is fulfilled in us: 'And you who cleave to the L-rd your G-d are all alive today' (Deuteronomy 4:4)" ('Kitzur Shulchan Aruch Im Sipurim Chassidi'im,' Part 4, p. 11):

**12.** Likutei Moharan (Part I, Teaching 6, Section 2).

the word "כתר" in this verse means to "wait," and this verse teaches us the pathway that awaits anyone who seeks to enter into serving G-d.

Sometimes, a person imagines that if he were to begin serving G-d — studying Torah and praying with intent — within a year or two, he will reach great and lofty levels, divine visions and comprehension, the power to sweeten harsh decrees, and so on.

The verse, therefore, comes and teaches us that this is not how it works.

One cannot enter into the realm of holiness quickly, in a single bound; rather, one must serve G-d day after day, year after year, with sincerity and faith — and throughout all of these days, one must wait and hope greatly, until they truly merit to enter the world of holiness.

It is only after long years of devoted labor, consistency, and self-sacrifice that a person merits that the gates of light are opened to him. But during all those years

of waiting, one must remember this verse: "Bear with me a little, and I will show you" — meaning, stand firm with patience and continue your divine service with dedication and perseverance.

Even if you may feel no personal advancement, you must not retreat but rather stand in waiting, watching and yearning, and cry out and long: "L-rd of the Universe, 'When shall I come and appear before G-d ?' (Psalms 42:3)."

Ultimately, all of those sincere desires and yearnings that emanate forth from a fiery heart will gather and unite until, suddenly, one day, all of the gates of holiness will be opened before him.

To emphasize this point, each and every individual possesses a unique 'personal strength' and something special that belongs only to them.

Over the course of one's life, one is tasked to uncover personality and latent character traits — and bring them out from potential into actuality.

Parshat Pinchas - This Is the Way

And corresponding to one's 'point' is the 'work' assigned to him from Heaven.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, since Joshua's unique 'strength' was to be Moses' successor, he was assigned the type of work that specifically matched that particular destiny.

More specifically, Joshua needed to be a leader, and to be a leader, one must "sit on the throne," meaning connect the lower world with the higher realms, and in Likutei Moharan (ibid. section 5), it is explained that the way to achieve this is by rectifying one's personal letter 'Alef.'

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

13. We bring an excerpt from a talk delivered by my father, Rabbi Yoram Abergel (B'tzur Yarom, Part 12, Chapter 48, p. 155):

When a person wants to sanctify himself, he will unavoidably face many challenges. Anyone who believes that serving G-d will come easily — and that he will automatically become a Torah scholar and automatically become holy without making any effort on his part — is merely “sowing the wind.”

Only someone who takes into account that he is going out to engage in a very, very difficult and protracted war against the evil inclination can succeed.

Therefore, Torah scholars who know what purity is and what holiness is — the evil inclination tries to trip them up over every minor thing.

As a result, they need great vigilance and constant work to stand up to the evil inclination.

This can be observed with ba'alei teshuvah (returnees to Judaism): often, after G-d granted them the great merit to draw near to Him, suddenly, all sorts of challenges arise in areas of holiness and the like. The reason is that once the person begins to approach holiness, the evil inclination notices that the person is distancing himself and says, "You ran away from me? Fine — now I will deal harshly with you."

Therefore, ba'alei teshuvah often face many trials; indeed, at the beginning of their journey — the first year or two — they might be energized to wake up early for prayer and be the first to do any mitzvah.

But afterward, in most cases, they experience a slack and gradual decline, and this is because the evil inclination sees that they have slipped away from its grasp, and it, therefore, intercepts them at every point of holiness: disturbing their prayers, interfering with family purity, undermining them in their eating habits and in

**Parshat Pinchas - This Is the Way**

maintaining pure thoughts. It "inserts itself" into every angle possible in order to drag them back to where they started.

For this reason, our Sages have said (Berachot 34b): "In the place where penitents stand, even the wholly righteous cannot stand."

The evil inclination gave up on those wholly righteous people a long time ago and does not deal with them — he cannot overcome them. Whom does he seek out? Those ba'alei teshuvah — people he already knows from earlier times who forsake him.

He challenges them with numerous trials and tests, and because of their ongoing war with the evil inclination, they ultimately merit rising to the loftiest of levels.

Hardships are essentially ladders; challenges are ladders and tests to overcome, and there is no other way to ascend spiritually except through ladders.

Even if our ladder seems crooked to us, that is the nature of spiritual ascent. "And there was light" — before the light, there always must be "vayehi," a term implying distress, contraction, and concealment; only thus is light born; only thus is light absorbed.

Each person has his own ladder; each person has a unique point through which he touches and connects to G-d.

When it is not difficult, it is not a test — if it is not a test, it is not a ladder. When we proceed without challenges or struggles, we are not moving forward but merely circling back to our starting point. We might think we are ascending, but we remain below — just as before.

Every challenge that comes to us from Heaven — and not, G-d forbid, something we bring upon ourselves — reveals the trust that G-d places in us and the strengths we possess.

When we see loving parents who want to develop their child's ability to walk, we notice that they distance themselves from the child and encourage him to walk on his own. We know these parents believe the child has the ability to walk; the challenge merely reveals the trust that they have in him.

In the same way, when G-d puts us to a test, it in truth, reveals His great love and trust in us.

Every challenge is a ladder for souls to ascend, and it also serves as a ladder that brings the divine Presence (Shechinah) downward into the lower realm.

When we have all erected and scaled our own personal and collective ladders, we will be able to draw the Shechinah down below, fulfilling the desire of G-d - to have a dwelling place in the lower world.

## Reflecting on the Letter Alef

It is known that the letter Alef is essentially composed of three parts: an upper Yud, a middle Vav, and a lower Yud.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov explains:<sup>14</sup>

The upper Yud represents Keter (the “crown”); the lower Yud represents Malchut (the “kingship”); and the Vav is the conduit that draws the divine flow from Keter (the upper point of Yud) down to Malchut (the lower Yud).

Hence, the primary mechanism of linking the “lower to the higher” takes place via the middle letter of Vav.

The letter Vav here hints to the firmament, the heaven *שמים* — which constitutes both fire and water.”

To clarify:<sup>15</sup>

In the Talmud (Chagigah 12a), it is explained that the word *שמים*

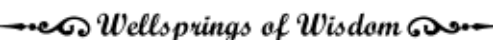
(shamayim, “heavens”) is formed from the words *אש* (fire) and *מים* (water).

The Maharsha on this passage explains that the “heavens” were created from two G-dly attributes: the attribute of judgment (referred to here as “fire”) and the attribute of kindness (referred to here as “water”).

In the Kabbalistic count of the Sefirot, the Sefirot of Ze’ir Anpin (the seven emotive attributes) encompass many hues — both judgment and kindness — and thus parallel the “heavens.”

Thus, the attribute of Ze’ir Anpin corresponds to the letter Vav in the Tetragrammaton, and consequently, it also corresponds to the heavens (the firmament).

Now, just as Ze’ir Anpin and the firmament correspond to the letter Alef, they also have a parallel in the human body: The brain is the upper Yud of the Alef;



14. Likutei Moharan (Part I, Teaching 6, Section 5).

15. ‘Ne‘imot Netzach (Part I, pp. 325 and 329).

**Parshat Pinchas - Purifying the Vav**

the heart, through which blood flows, is the lower Yud; and the lungs, through which air (ruach) passes, symbolize the Vav.

When a person's "Alef" is complete and his limbs become whole, he merits being called "Adam" — someone worthy of sitting close to the heavenly throne.

More specifically, a person's mission is to use his mind for Torah study and then bring that knowledge to be felt in his heart, such that his heart becomes a heart of Torah, as it is written, "You shall know today and take it to your heart" (Deuteronomy 4:39).

However, there is often a great problem in accomplishing this:

the passage between the mind and heart may be blocked by the coarse blood of the heart's left chamber, "For as of yet, the blood in the left chamber of the heart — where the evil inclination dwells, as it says, 'the fool's heart is on his left' (Ecclesiastes 10:2) — may still be quite strong and potent."

And because this passage is blocked, transferring inspiration and understanding from the mind to the heart can prove to very well be quite impossible.

Translating this from the analogy of the Alef, The transition from mind to heart, which is essentially the letter Vav, may need to be strengthened.

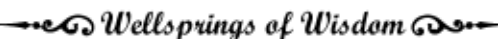
**Purifying the Vav**

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov continues to explain:

When a person purifies the blood of their heart's left chamber, they become worthy of

having the holy Name "Ehyeh" rest upon them.<sup>16</sup>

Conversely, as long as one has not purified that blood, the name "Ehyeh" will be hidden from



**16.** When G-d wished to reveal Himself to the nation of Israel, He revealed Himself through this divine

Name and said to Moses: "Thus shall you say to the children of Israel: 'Ehyeh' sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14).

Parshat Pinchas - Purifying the Vav

him: "for he has not yet prepared himself to truly 'exist' in the world, and thus, the revelation of the name of "Ehyeh" which equals the numerical value of "dam" (blood), is not present.<sup>17</sup>

The remedy is to turn the blood (dam) into dom (be silent) — to be among those who 'hear themselves disgraced and do not respond,' and not to be strict about one's own honor. When he fulfills 'Be silent to G-d,' then G-d casts down many 'slain' for him, as it is written: 'Be silent to the L-rd and wait for Him' (והתחולל לו) (Psalms 37:7) — which can be interpreted as 'He will cast down [chalalim] for you' (Gittin 7a).

This is what King David referred to when he said, 'My heart is slain within me' (Psalms 109:22), meaning that by this

self-effacement, the blood in the left chamber is diminished, and this is akin to slaughtering the evil inclination.

It is then that a person attains divine honor, as it is written: 'He who sacrifices a thanksgiving offering honors Me' (Psalms 50:23), which our Sages (Sanhedrin 43b) expound upon and connect to the concept of slaughtering the evil inclination."

In other words, when a person receives insults and remains silent — out of honor for G-d, not out of fear or helplessness — this silence diminishes the power of the coarse blood that is in the heart's left chamber, and it weakens and metaphorically "slaughters" the evil inclination.

An important clarification:<sup>18</sup>

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**17.** The divine name of Ehyeh (spelled Alef-Heh-Yud-Heh) has the numerical value of 21.

However, just like every other one of the divine names, it can be spelled out in various ways, including 'backward,' meaning that

at each step, one spells the letters cumulatively:

Alef; then Alef-Heh; then Alef-Heh-Yud; then Alef-Heh-Yud-Heh. Spelled in this manner, this name has the value of 44, as above mentioned.

**18.** 'Ne'imot Netzach' (Part I, p. 297).

**Parshat Pinchas - Purifying the Vav**

Sometimes, a person feels a deep humiliation but says nothing because he is left speechless, because he knows that answering would just invite more scorn, or because, at that moment, silence is the best tactic. However, such silence is not necessarily the true and genuine silence that we have described here.

The genuine, required level of silence inside one's heart is an inner feeling of genuine lowliness and humility.

After this lengthy explanation, we arrive at a central and crucial point:

When we hear the word "humiliation," we often imagine a pitiable individual standing on a stage while people throw rotten tomatoes at him.

Yet the truth is that it's not at all certain that this scenario would be considered a humiliation.

Someone with a heart like a lion might not be bothered in the least by being insulted by a crowd; on the contrary, he might

fold his arms and look down on them with disdainful eyes.

True and proper modesty and humility are only when a person feels within himself and realizes and senses just how distant he is from the holiness of G-d.

When one does personal accounting, he may realize with dismay that he is far from everything: he has no continuity in his studies and that his Torah learning is full of pride. His prayer is superficial — "With his mouth and with his lips he honors Me, yet his heart is far from Me" (Isaiah 29:13). As for genuine kindness — giving focused attention, respect, and true love — he's not even close to where he should be.

At such a moment, an overwhelming shame will fill his entire being, and it is this true shame that refines and properly creates the letter Vav, which is the pathway that leads from the mind to the heart.

And it was Joshua, son of Nun, who felt this deep sense of



**Parshat Pinchas - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

humility and shame before G-d every day of his life,<sup>19</sup> and that is what ultimately made him a person worthy of sitting on the throne.

Aharon's quivered as thunder struck. He rose up from the

large stone under the ancient olive tree.

He smiled happily and said to himself, "I understand. Feeling shame is neither pride nor humility — it is a ladder to ascend."

**Summary and Practical Conclusions**

1. At times, a person may think that if they begin to serve G-d — studying Torah and praying with concentration — within a short time - a year or two they will attain lofty spiritual levels: divine "sight and sense of hearing," along with the power to sweeten harsh judgments.

It does not work this way; one cannot enter the realm of holiness swiftly and all at once.

Rather, one must serve G-d for many days and years with sincerity and faith.

Throughout these years, one must wait and hope to merit to truly enter the realm of holiness.

Only after long years of wholehearted effort, persistence, and self-sacrifice does a person merit that the gates of light open for him.

2. Every individual has unique strengths, and one's life's work is to discover one's own personality — the personal point — and bring it from potential into actuality.

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**19.** To quote the words of Likutei Halachot (Laws of Marriage, 4:19):

"Whoever does not wish to deceive himself, and who truly contemplates his eternal goal, will never turn back emptyhanded, no matter what happens.

Rather, he will sit and wait and remain by the entrance for many days — no matter how long — as long as they still do not let him enter inside, despite the heat of the day that scorches him terribly.

Even so, he does not leave his place but waits by the doorway of the tent of the righteous and upright until Heaven has mercy upon his soul.

This is the meaning of 'Joshua son of Nun was a youth' (Exodus 33:11): Even when he was in a state of youthfulness, a state of underdeveloped deeds, nevertheless 'he did not depart from the tent' — he remained by the entrance for as long of a time as it took, until he pressed his way inside the tent and never left it."

**Parshat Pinchas - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

In line with the specific strengths one is meant to uncover, so too are the specific “tasks” assigned to them from Heaven.

3. When someone wishes to sanctify themselves, they must recognize that they may encounter many spiritual trials.

Anyone who thinks that serving G-d comes easily — and that they will “automatically” become a Torah scholar and “automatically” become holy without exerting great personal effort — will discover that they are merely “sowing the wind.”

Only one who takes into account that they will face a very, very difficult battle against the evil inclination can ultimately succeed.

Those those who are immersed in the Torah — and who know what purity and holiness are — are the ones the evil inclination tries to trip up.

Consequently, they must exercise great caution and constant effort to withstand the evil inclination, and this is what makes them truly holy people.

4. Ba’alei Teshuvah (returnees to Judaism) face many trials.

Indeed, at the start of their journey — in the first one or two years — they may have great inspiration and energetically rise early for prayer and

are the first to do every mitzvah. But afterward, they often experience a spiritual decline.

How does this happen? It is because the evil inclination sees that these individuals have slipped out of its grasp.

Therefore, it stands in their way at every point of sanctity: it disturbs their prayer, interferes with their observance of family purity, disrupts their eating habits, pollutes their thoughts, and finds its way into every possible nook to drag them back to where they started.

Hence, we say: “In the place where penitents stand, even the wholly righteous cannot stand.” This is because the evil inclination already gave up on the wholly righteous a long time ago — having no sway over them — whereas it invests tremendous effort to harass the newly observant, whose reward for withstanding these trials is consequently doubled over many times.

5. One must be extremely wary of false lowliness and false humility.

As is known, “G-d has made this corresponding to that,” meaning that for every sacred feeling of purity and holiness, there is a parallel feeling of impurity.

**Parshat Pinchas - Summary and Practical Conclusions**

Opposite genuine and holy humility lies a false sense of humility, a feeling of lowliness rooted in impurity, and this feeling is the mystery of the evil idolatry called 'Ba'al Pe'or.'

When this impurity appears in a person's heart, he may feel that he has no importance or significance whatsoever, and as a result, his divine service begins to weaken.

He may say things like "What am I, and what is my life?" — words of confusion and nonsense, and in this way, he fails to believe and utilize the enormous powers within him, thereby distancing himself from serving G-d.

6. False lowliness causes a person to become apathetic.

He will then have no energy to get up and initiate anything worthwhile in life; he will be indifferent, sunken in a false sense of lowliness.

This cannot be called truly living; life will pass him by as he stands on the sidelines with feelings of detachment, laziness, and indifference.

In other words, when an opportunity for uplifting acts of spirituality arises — Torah study, prayer, and fulfillment of the commandments — he will quickly succumb to laziness and become unwilling to act.

Even if he musters the strength to act, he will do so half-heartedly, at the same time that worldly matters that come his way — eating, business, or traveling — he pursues with enthusiasm, eagerness, and vitality.

7. On the other hand, with holy humility, when a person feels reverent shame before G-d, whose glory fills the entire earth — he merits that Torah mysteries be revealed to him, and he becomes worthy of leadership.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



B"H

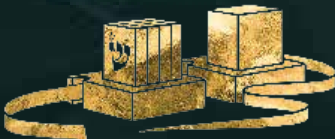


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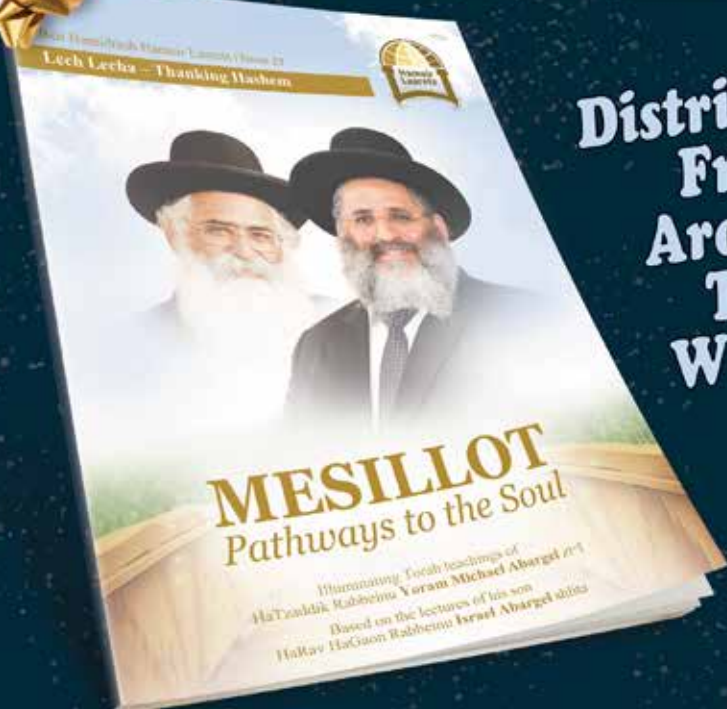
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New York	8:06 pm	9:11 pm	9:35 pm
Miami	7:55 pm	8:51 pm	9:25 pm
Los Angeles	7:46 pm	8:46 pm	9:15 pm
Montreal	8:19 pm	9:31 pm	9:48 pm
Toronto	8:36 pm	9:45 pm	10:05 pm
London	8:50 pm	10:14 pm	10:19 pm
Jerusalem	7:29 pm	8:19 pm	9:14 pm
Tel Aviv	7:26 pm	8:17 pm	9:11 pm
Haifa	7:27 pm	8:21 pm	9:15 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:25 pm	8:21 pm	9:11 pm

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**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*The character trait of patience is important on its own, and endears one before G-d.*

*Joshua, Moses' disciple, was patient and would do all things thoughtfully and with perseverance. He merited to serve Moshe and was uniquely the one to receive the leadership of the Jewish people from Moses.*

*There may have been others who were more deserving, but before G-d what was decisive was his steadfastness and endurance as a 'student who did not leave the tent' of Moses.*

*One who wishes to cleave to G-d must take on the trait of patience and not rush or act with pressure or haste.*



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