

Shiur L'Yom Sheni¹

[Monday's Study]

READINGS: **Torah Pinchas:** Numbers 25:10-18
 Haftarah: I Kings 18:46-19:2
 B'rit Chadasha: John 2:13-16

He was zealous for the honor of his Elohim.

[Numbers 25:13]

Today's Meditation is Proverbs 17:11-13;

This Week's Amidah Prayer Focus is Petition #13, *Modim Anachnu* [An Expression of Thanks]

Vayedaber Adonai el-Moshe l'emor – and the Holy One spoke to Moshe, saying ...
Pinchas ben-El'azar ben-Aharon ha-kohen – Pinchas, son of Elazar, and grandson of Aharon the kohen ... **heshiv et-chamati me'al B'nei-Yisra'el** - returned my zeal its place to among B'nai Yisrael Numbers 25:10a.

Our forefathers came to the brink of catastrophic failure three times in the course of our epic journey from bondage to freedom. The first such incident occurred at Sinai, in connection with *chet ha-egel* [the calf-sin]. It all started when we yielded to the temptation to design a deity we could control. We invented our own savior, and rewrote the Exodus narrative to put a god of our own creation at the middle of it. Then we appointed our own leader, and declared our own sacred day. The second episode of national collapse came at Kadesh-Barnea, in connection with *chet ha-meraglim* [the sin of the spies]. At that time all but a miniscule remnant of us succumbed to the negative energy of *lashon hara*. We rejected the great land and mission to which we are called, and chose slow death in the wilderness – complaining, *k'vetch*-ing, criticizing, accusing, and condemning one other, arguing over opinions and perspectives like buzzards and hyenas disputing over a piece of roadkill, and rebelling against every calling of the Holy One on our lives. The third episode of Covenantal failure occurred at *Ba'al Peor* – right across the Jordan Rift Valley from Jericho. In connection with *chet ha-b'not Midyan* [the sin of the daughters of Midyan], we abandoned our Covenant relationship with the Bridegroom-King to chase after the cheap, profane, and fleeting sensual and sexual pleasures that are incessantly being hawked to us by the trash-talking, seductively-dancing perverts and pagans of this world.

Each of these Covenant detour/departure episodes repeats itself each cycle of the sun. It is all a necessary part of our Covenantal 'Kingdom Ambassador' training program. Three times each year the Holy One allows us to experience a Covenant-

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survival crisis, just as they did. We have the same fleshly weaknesses they have. We are subject to the same temptations. So, we too experience golden calf infatuations. We too have seasons where negative emotion, negative speech, soapbox argumentation, offense-mongering, and outrage-normalizing take over our hearts, our homes, our communities, and our world. We too have our annual time of caving to fleshly temptations and seductions of this world. We are not, therefore, supposed to look back on the great failures of our forefathers and scoff at them. We are no better than those who came before us. We must never think ourselves above the weaknesses and temptations that distracted – and in some cases derailed - them. The study of the accounts of these great sin episodes each year, at the appointed time in which we are most vulnerable to the world’s influence, is supposed to drive us to weep before the Holy One, then engage in humble, passionate *teshuvah*, let Him discipline us as He sees fit, and wash us clean; then re-commit our troth, our energy, and our delight – not to mention our lives and our households - to the more fervent levels of pursuit our Bridegroom-King and to His Ways to which we are constantly being called. In so doing, we can then be free to take the ‘light yoke’ of His Torah upon our shoulders again; and to joyfully re-enter the realm of co-laboring with Him in His Grand Plan to redeem humanity as a species and restore Creation to its original, intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*.

His Mercies Overwhelm Us; His Love Constrains Us

The world tends to judge actors and their actions based solely on speech and outward behavior – and they do so through the freeze-frame lens of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The Holy One, on the other hand, examines and evaluates a person at his most revealing point – the secret place of unvarnished delight. He chooses to evaluate a person for promotion or discipline based upon viewing the motivations and meditations of that person’s heart² - and He does so as those motivations and meditations appear to Him through the potential-focused lens of the tree of life. He uses the Spiritual Eyes of a *Father-like mentor* – sifting through the dirt and filth, looking for that which is *good*, that which is *pure*, that which *He can nurture, water, cultivate, and make fruitful in season*. Thank Heaven that is the way our King chooses to look upon us, Beloved. Thank Heaven our Covenant Partner has the wisdom and patience to see us – and all men, including those we are tempted to judge harshly – from the end to the beginning, instead of the other way around. Thank Heaven He does not freeze-frame and fixate on any of our *ra* thoughts, words, actions, reactions, or behaviors. Thank Heaven He factors our covenant potential, the unique destiny for which He

² As the Holy One told the prophet Sh’muel [i.e. ‘Samuel’], at the time David was chosen to be king over all Israel, The Holy One ***does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Holy One looks at the heart.*** I Samuel 16:7.

designed and called us, and our passion for Him and His Ways into His assessment of us, all His thoughts and words about us, and all His actions toward us.

In the aftermath of the sin of *Ba'al Peor* the Holy One has demonstrated again His great mercy, lovingkindness and longsuffering toward us. He has restarted the conversation with us through Moshe. He wants the prophet of the Exodus to *relay an incredible message* to Aharon's grandson Pinchas³:

Lachen emor hineni noten lo et-briti shalom

Tell him I have given him My covenant of Peace, Security, Prosperity, and Blessing,

b'rit kehunat olam

a covenant of eternal priesthood

What a *b'racha* [blessing]! We stand wide-eyed and open-mouthed in wonder, and rejoice with young *Pinchas*. But we must ask *what exactly has brought about this auspicious blessing?* How has young *Pinchas*, grandson of Aharon, suddenly become the close companion of the Holy One – a priest of *shalom*, and a priest forever? What in the world is it that could possibly qualify this particular character, *Pinchas*, to be such a “friend of God”?

Wow! Truly our Divine Bridegroom's thoughts are not our thoughts. For certain His ways are not our ways.

Mi Zeh Pinchas? Who is Arising?

As we discussed at the end of last week's studies, when Zimri and Kozbi brought the lascivious ‘worship’ of the pagan deity known as *Ba'al Pe'or* into the sacred courts of the *Mish'kan*, and started to consort together in the perverse way of devotees of *that idol*, it was *Pinchas* who stepped into the breach. Faced with an untenable and dangerous situation, he stepped forward, grabbed spear in hand, and did what no one else – even the other priests who shared the ‘guardians of the *Mish'kan*’ assignment, would do. His ‘run-a-spear-through-the-bowels-of-two-intruders-at-the-same-time’ trick is not the kind of thing you want to try at home. It is not, for that matter, something you ever want to see repeated even once in your lifetime. But in context, it was what diligent service of the *Mish'kan*, and love for the Holy One and His Plan for Israel and the world, required of one man - *Pinchas*, the appointed watchman on the wall. His action stopped not only the invasion, but put an end to a horrible plague that was threatening the entire camp with annihilation. His spear snuffed out the lives of two radical spiritual terrorists, and would that their clearly anti-Torah, anti-Israel, anti-Covenant conduct had not made such drastic action necessary; but the spear saved the sanctity of the *Mish'kan*, and its courts, for multitudes, across multiple generations.

³ *Pinchas* is *peh, yod, nun, chet, samech*, Strong's Hebrew word #6372, pronounced *peh-nehk-aws'*.

Please note, however, that the Holy One does not praise Pinchas for this *deed*. What the Holy One praises Pinchas for is what our English Bibles describe as his *zeal*. Zeal for what? Zeal *to do the Holy One's will*. As David wrote in Psalm 40:7-8, concerning both himself and Messiah: ***Then I said: Behold, I come in the volume of the book. It is written of Me, 'I delight to do Your Will, and Your Torah is in My heart.***

What Does Pinchas' Story Have to Do With Us – and The Choices That Loom Before Us in This Season?

Who indeed is Pinchas? Why does the Holy One bring his story up, and make it front and center in our consciousness, every year right around the Three Weeks? Is Pinchas a *prophetic* as a *historic* character – a Divine pattern of someone we will see again before the grand story of redemptive history concludes? Is Pinchas relevant to us – and our children - today? Consider the declaration of the Holy One concerning Pinchas in this week's opening aliyah. ***And unto his seed after him will be a brit kehunah olam [a covenant of eternal priesthood], for he was zealous and made atonement for B'nei Yisrael.*** Numbers 25:13. If the historical Biblical character of Balak was a prototype of the Anti-Messiah, of what prophetic figure might the historical character of Pinchas be a prototype?

Who is the passionate lover of the Creator – the zealous guardian of the holiness of the *Mish'kan* - that was introduced to us last week? Who is this dutiful *kohen* after the order of Elazar? Who is this mysterious character who suddenly – in one of our darkest hours as a people - leapt out of total obscurity onto the pages of Torah and therefore into the consciousness of the Redeemed People of all ages? What does his suddenly prominent appearance in the narrative of the latter stages of wilderness wandering bode for us? Perhaps most important, what exactly is *the 'zeal' of Pinchas*, that the Holy One praised it so – and caused to be memorialized in Torah for all generations? Is the *zeal of Pinchas* something our King wants us to embrace? If so, what is this 'zeal' exactly – and what is it *not*? What is its essence – and what are its limits? What is its depth, its breadth, its width, and its height? What is its root? What is its fruit? What is its *dark side counterfeit*? What is its *antithesis*? How can we recognize it, and its counterfeit, and its antithesis - in *ourselves* and *in others*?

Zeal, anyone? Careful now - I don't mean '*moral outrage*'. I don't mean '*indignation*'. I don't mean '*righteous anger*'. I don't mean '*vigilantism*'. I don't mean '*giving the infidels what they deserve*', or '*standing up for the Truth*' or '*crusading for*' what is '*right*'. All of those things are products of the human mind and its fallen condition. All of them are 100% *anti-Emunah*. Indulging any of them

is an act of sedition against the Bridegroom-King and an act of sabotage against His Kingdom Plan. Come, if you dare, and let us go to the Torah and explore together - and seek counsel from the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov concerning - what 'zeal' really means, what motivation lies at its essence, what its root is, of what its substance consists, and what Kingdom purpose it promotes.

Defining, Understanding, and Embracing True Zeal

What is this thing our English Bibles call 'zeal'? Zeal, enthusiasm, passion, engagement, and action make some people uncomfortable⁴. But consider the alternative. What is the opposite of - or state of a man lacking - zeal? All that is left is *apathy*. What is the opposite of - or the state of a man lacking - enthusiasm? What is left is *boredom* or *nonchalance*. What is the opposite of - or the state of a man lacking - passion? All that is left is *indifference*. What is the opposite of - or the state of a man lacking - engagement? All that is left are *aloofness* and *detachment*. What is the opposite of - or the state of a man lacking -action? All that is left is *inert idleness*. What do you get if you add all the 'oppo-definitions' we just listed together? You get lukewarmness - a loveless person who is neither hot nor cold, who joylessly a pseudo-intellectual life in an ivory tower of abstract thought and ideological ideas. Which side of the zeal vs. apathy continuum do you think is most fitting for sons and daughters of the Covenant?

The Hebrew word our English Bibles translate as 'zeal' in the context of the *Pinchas* narrative is *qana*. It is made up of the Hebrew letters *qof, nun, alef, and hey*, and is derived from an ancient verb root⁵ meaning to *become red* - especially *flush with excitement*. Figuratively it therefore has come to mean to become *engaged, passionate, and motivated to action*. What Pinchas is thus recognized for is *zeal, enthusiasm, passion, engagement, and a course of action consistent with all those things*. Zeal is not an emotion; it is instead a voluntary subordination of all fleshly emotions [i.e. all fear, all anger, all anxiety, all disgust, all surprise, and happiness] to a Higher Purpose - in our case, the Will and Ways of our Covenant Partner. Nor is zeal an attitude. It is a voluntary subordination of all attitudes and opinions to a Higher Plan - in this case, the Grand Plan of our Covenant Partner for the Redemption of Mankind as a Species and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended state of Beauty, Fruitfulness, and Shalom. Zeal is just an affirmative response to the passion and plan of God - an emphatic '*Amein*' expressed by action, and an impassioned '*Hallelu-yah*' expressed through conduct. Of course, one's zeal can be surrendered to, and be led and directed by, the Holy One - or it can be taken over by, and used by, the Adversary of our souls. Zeal can be a pure stream of Divine Light; or it can be a whirlpool of Serpent-infested darkness.

⁴ This may be, in part, due to a mistaken belief that 'zeal' and anger are one and the same. They are nothing alike. They are, in fact, totally incompatible.

⁵ The verb root is *qof, nun, alef*. It is Strong's Hebrew word #7065.

Zeal can be full of *shalom* [peace], *simchah* [joy], and *ahav* [love]; or it can be full of negativity. So just as important as it is to recognize what Pinchas – and his zeal – is known for, it is perhaps even more important to take note of what he is not known for. He is not known for arrogance. He is not known for self-righteousness. He is not known for irritability. He is not known for indulging offenses. He is not known for harsh rhetoric. He is not known for being argumentative, accusatory, or vindictive. He is not known for anger, frustration, temper, or outrage. He is not known for hatred. He is not known for looking for sin or immorality in, and then publicly criticizing and judging, others. He is not known for attacking people because he disagreed with their ideas, ideologies, or theology or because he disapproved of the behavior they engaged in anywhere but the *Mish'kan* – which he was assigned to guard against desecration. He is not known for being rude. He is not known for acting out or for being mean, combative, or in any way hard to get along with. He is not known for darkness, but for light. He is not known for what he was against, or who or what he hated; he is known for how passionately he loved. That is the kind of zeal we are called to understand and embrace.

The Line Between Qana of and for the Bridegroom-King and the Darker Varieties of Human/Profane Zeal

Where is the dividing line between *qana* that leads to life, health and peace and human zeal that leads only to death, destruction, and chaos? It is the thin line of '*not my will but Yours be done*'. When strong passion/zeal is self-centered or self-promoting, it is corrupted zeal, and it flows out of the influence and in the energy of the dark side. When strong passion/zeal is focused on theological principles instead of on Kingdom priorities, it is unclean zeal, and it contaminates rather than clarifies everything it touches. When strong passion/zeal is based centers around one's or one's culture's concept of 'good vs. bad', 'fair vs. unfair', or 'moral vs. immoral' vs. the Redemptive Plan of the Holy One, it is perverted and dangerous zeal. When the attention of strong passion/zeal is focused on punishing 'wrongdoers' rather than redeeming lives, it is ugly and ungodly. When passion/zeal talks or acts out of hatred or offense, it is an abomination. When passion/zeal focuses upon the wording of the Torah - especially as translated into English or a European language - but ignores either the Hebraic context in which the text was written or the protocols and procedural safeguards the text requires before human action is taken for the common good, it is the ultimate dark energy. When the issue over which passion/zeal arises is not a combination of the love of the Holy One and the love of our neighbor, such passion/zeal is a perverse counterfeit of the zeal of Pinchas to which we are called to aspire. When a word spoken or an action taken out of passion/zeal is not the most humane, least destructive, most God-honoring option available, it is the absolute antithesis of Pinchas' zeal.

The Bigger Picture – Seeing The Qana of Pinchas That the Holy One Recognized Operating In A Different Context

One cannot fully understand the ‘zeal of Pinchas’ unless one considers the whole story of what sacred writ tells us about this man and his legacy. The TaNaKh tells us about a lot more than one action. The main role that Pinchas was destined to play was not as an executioner, but as an agent of reconciliation. As we are about to discover in the course of readings in Torah, two of our tribes - Reuven and Gad - as well as half of the tribe of Menashe, are going to choose to settle in the Trans-Jordan region instead of residing the land of the Patriarchs with the rest of the Redeemed Community. During the days of Y’hoshua’s leadership the Trans-Jordan tribes are going to build a massive altar in their territory patterned after the brazen altar of the *Mish’kan*. When the rest of the tribes – those who were living in the land and worshipping at the *Mish’kan* [then at *Shiloh*] heard about it, they thought their Trans-Jordan brethren were forsaking the fear of the Holy One and the national identity established in Torah⁶. Concerned that the Trans-Jordan’s act of building this unScriptural, competing altar would cause the Holy One’s judgment to fall, the tribes mustered at the *Mish’kan* and prepared to go to war. Yehoshua dispatched Pinchas as head of a delegation to deal with the Trans-Jordanian Hebrews in relation to the controversy over this altar. When Pinchas and his delegation met with the leaders of the Trans-Jordan tribe, not only was a bloody civil war averted, but the bond between the tribes, and between the Trans-Jordanian tribes and the *Mish’kan*, was reaffirmed and strengthened. If you want to understand the ‘zeal of Pinchas’, you must see the story from the end to the beginning. And now let us move on from what may be a message of this parsha to what we know it is saying to us.

Oh, to be a friend of God!

Some men, Torah tells us, are especially blessed of and close in relationship with the Holy One. Noach was. Avraham was. Moshe, Sh’muel, David *Melech*, and Eliyahu *ha-navi* were. Kefa [Peter], *Yochanan* [John] and *Ya’akov* the “sons of Thunder” were. And so, we find out in today’s aliyah, was Aharon’s grandson *Pinchas*. Why? What is the “secret” of such men? It is not because such men are sinless or in any way “perfect” – Scripture makes this point unmistakably clear. So if it is not sinless perfection that moves the Holy One to deeper levels of relationship and personal affection, what exactly is it? Let us look at the lives of four of the men I have listed above and see what *characteristics* those men share with Pinchas. Let us consider what makes a man “a friend of God” – and his “priest” forever.

⁶ See Deuteronomy 12:10-14.

Noach – the Companion of God

Do you remember how we were introduced to Noach? It was in the sixth chapter of Genesis. The Holy One said in Genesis 6:9:

Noach ish tzadik tamim hayah b'dorotav

Noach was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his generation

Et ha-Elohim hithalech Noach

Noach walked [i.e. moved in rhythm and step] with God.

Step number one in friendship with the Holy One is to be *tamim hayah b'dorotav* - *blameless among the people of your generation*. What does that mean? It means choosing to resist, and refuse to participate in, either *the philosophies or the perversions that are prevalent in whatever generation* in which you live. Noach was not perfect you see. And neither are any of us expected to be. Perfection is not a prerequisite to friendship with God. But what *is* a prerequisite for intimacy with the Holy One is *the willingness to “think outside the box”* – and act “different” - from one’s society. A friend of the Holy One cannot allow his perspective for looking at and approaching life in the world the Holy One created be determined by the prevailing political, scientific, and religious eyes of the era in which one lives. Friendship with the Holy One requires the ability to hear His Voice, and to clearly distinguish His voice from - and to prefer it over - the competing *voices of human society*.

Serpent-Speak – and Its Sources In Today’s World

Let’s try a little intellectual/spiritual exercise. Imagine you are like Adam and the city/village/watershed in which you live is your assigned *garden of Eden* – *i.e. the sphere of influence it is your job to ‘tend’ [Hebrew abad, meaning to serve]’ and ‘keep’ [Hebrew sh’mar, meaning to delight in, to cherish, and therefore to guard and protect]*. Imagine that, as the Holy One communed with Adam, telling him what was good to eat and what was not, among other things, so the Creator has given you an instruction manual for life in your garden – that instructional manual being the Torah. You know what comes next, right? Just in case you haven’t figured out where I am going with this, here are a few subtle hints:

Hint #1: What creature slithers, slinks, and has a habit of sticking out its tongue?

Hint #2: What source(s) in your society mockingly call into question whether God *really said* all the stuff you think he said?

Hint #3: What source(s) in your society cunningly suggest that *the things God says are good for you are not going to be nearly enough to satisfy your appetite*?

Hint #4: What source(s) in your society brazenly declares to you that *what God says is bad for you is actually very, very good*?

Hmmmmn. If your culture is analogous to the garden of Eden, and you are analogous to Adam [or Chava], and if the Torah is analogous to the basic instructional manual given by your Creator, then *where in this analogy is the serpent speak going to come from?*

Okay, let's look for *the mouthpieces of the serpent* in today's society, shall we? The serpent's mouthpieces will do the four things the serpent did in the Garden. *What on earth do I mean, you ask? I'll tell you exactly what I mean.*

First, the way of the serpent has always been, and still is, to *approach us boldly* in such a way that quickly *distracts our attention and divert our energy away from the mission to which the Holy One has called us.*

Second, as soon as he has distracted our attention away from our Divine mission, the way of the serpent has always been, and still is, to *bombard us with dis-information* in a way that effectively interrupts our communion with, and calls into question the quality of our relationship with, our Creator.

Third, the way of the serpent is and always has been to *cunningly suggest to anyone that will listen that the things God says are good for people are just not enough to satisfy or fulfill people's real needs and desires.*

Fourth: the way of the serpent is to *brazenly declare to anyone that will listen that at least some of the things that God says are bad for people are actually not bad at all, but are instead very, very good.*

The serpent in today's world is, necessarily, whatever follows the serpent's way, spouts the serpent's words, and does the serpent's work. Did you *really* think the serpent was just present in the Garden of Eden? Alas, it is not so. The serpent lives – and slithers and slinks and sticks out its slender tongue in your world and mine every day. Each generation, each political system, each ethnic group, each scientific community, and each religious organization has always had – and will always have - its own peculiar brand of “*Serpent-speak*” – its own set of societal voices which, like the Serpent in the Garden, *twist the words of the Holy One however necessary to suit their agenda, and ever call upon its adherents to misuse Creation in order to cater to their particular perverse appetite.*

Discerning the Substance of the Prevailing Messages of Serpent-Speak For Your Culture and Generation

Do you want to know what the particular *Serpent-speak* messages targeting your particular generation are? Do you want to know what the Serpent is saying to you

– so you can REJECT IT? If you really want to know what the Serpent’s message to your generation is, it is not difficult at all to find out. Just turn on your *radio* or *television*. Look at the headline stories on the home page of your ISP, or turn on CNN, or MSNBC, or FOX News. Just go to a popular *theatre* or *concert hall* and *watch a secular show* - or just rent almost any popular *movie*. Then ask yourself “What things do those sources identify as ‘*good*, as *pleasurable*, and as to be *desired*’. But don’t stop there. Start *paying attention* to everything that is going on around you in society. Check out what the ‘talking heads’ of the *political system* and the icons of the *entertainment* and ‘*news*’ industries are always talking about. Listen carefully to what the ‘*politically correct*’ people in your society are saying is *important*. Pay particularly close attention to what kinds of worldview and attitudes and actions those people demand everyone consider to be “*good*”, as well as what kinds of worldview and attitudes and actions they demand that everyone consider to be “*bad*”. Then, check out *the kind of lifestyles being lived by the people the world considers “successful”* [today, it is primarily professional athletes, entertainers/media personalities, millionaires, and politicians, but this group can also include religious personalities who become famous for saying what people want to hear]. Next, take a close look at the way the “beautiful people” of your day dress. You see Beloved, how any society chooses to dress/adorn itself says volumes about what it thinks is *important* – and, at the same time, about what it thinks is *trivial*. What do the ‘beautiful people’ try to *cover up* – and what do they purposely reveal? What do the ‘beautiful people’ deliberately try to *accentuate* – and what do they minimize? What kind of *image* do they seem to be trying to project – and what *aspect of sensuality* do they seem to be trying to appeal?

Consider which minority or fringe group’s exotic form of “culture” and self-expression is presently rising in popularity – and what that tells you about the direction your culture is heading. Meditate on the differences between what the society you live in considers ‘*old fashioned*’ and what they considered ‘*avant garde*’ or *chic*. Consider and meditate on the subtle messages and suggestions as to worldview laced in the lyrics of the *songs* of each of the various different genres of popular music being produced and marketed. Then listen to the oft-repeated clichés and buzzwords and ‘amen-trigger phrases’ the popular ideologues, demagogues, preachers, and mass-media televangelists are currently throwing around to energize their fan base and keep the money and idol-worship coming in.

The Serpent is still *quite a talker*, you see. And he still is *as adept as ever* at distracting people from their Divine mission, interrupting their intimate communion with your Creator, and making everything that God says is *bad* somehow start to look and sound very, very *good*. To understand this most clearly

however it is important that you not just listen to the ‘talking heads’ and prima donnas of the secular society around you. After all, as a Torah-conscious individual you may have learned a long time ago to be wary of and carefully parse what those folks have to say. So do not think your search for serpent speak is over until you *listen for a while to the words that come out of your own mouth*, Beloved. Listen attentively as you talk about life, about other people, about society, about Creation, and, yes, even about the Holy One. And be sure to listen, as well, to the non-verbal messages you send out every day as you declare what you really consider important and valuable by what you spend your *time*, spend your *energy*, and spend your *money* actually *doing*. Is what you talk about - and focus on – *revelation from the Holy One*? Or are you just another source of *Serpent-speak in your world*? Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks, Dear Reader.

Paulie’s Theme

Permit me to challenge you in this regard with a “test” you can apply to your speech. I watch a children’s movie called “*Paulie*” from time to time with my family. The movie is about a parrot that by the magic of Hollywood can not only speak but can actually *think for himself, carry on intelligent conversations, and even have meaningful relationships*. At one point in the movie Paulie meets another parrot – a *normal* parrot - and tries to start a conversation. After a short exchange Paulie cocks his head and looks carefully at the other parrot and inquires of the other bird: “*Are you talking – or are you just repeating?*” Good question! Here is the test: Listen to what comes out of your mouth. Are you talking – or are you just *repeating*? Is your conversation *the wisdom and revelation of someone created in the image of the Holy One* – or is it just the regurgitation of the Serpent-speak of your generation?

Following the Examples Given Us In Torah

The Holy One is a wonderful Teacher. Through the brilliant medium of the Torah He gives us both [1] instructions for how to live a well-lived life on earth and have a positive impact on our world and [b] real-life examples of His Way being lived out by people just like us. Noah, Avraham, Moshe . . . the list goes on. Not one of them was ‘sinless’. Their mistakes and failures and personality flaws are plainly revealed for us to see, lest we think them to represent an impossible level of spirituality. And yet, the overall theme of each of their lives is that, in the midst of overpowering negative cultural influences, they were able, by the Holy One’s covenant, to resist, and rise above, the tide of Godlessness, and reflect the Holy One’s Light into the world.

Before we go on, let’s meditate for a few moments on the lives and impact of these men - and how they related to both to the Holy One and to the Godless culture around them.

Noach – Blameless in his Generation

Noach, though far from perfect, did not allow his society and his environment, its passions and fashions and appetites, to win him over or change his perspective on the Holy One or creation. He *lived by the Holy One's Voice*. He *did not disregard the Holy One's instructions*. And did Noach do this in the midst of a spiritual world, where it was fashionable to live a Godly life? Hardly. Torah describes the culture of society in the days of Noach as a time when:

*The people on earth were very wicked,
And all the imaginings of their heart were always of evil only*

all living beings had corrupted their ways on the earth.

because of them the earth is filled with violence.

[Genesis 6:5, 12-13]

Torah tells us that somehow, in the midst of this world full of evil, an ordinary man named Noach '*found favor in the Holy One's eyes.*' Genesis 6:8. Who can explain the Holy One's 'grace'? No one, of course. But one can explain the appropriate *response* of a man to the Holy One's grace. Torah tells us that the outworking of the Holy One's grace in Noach's life was that: ***Noach was a man of righteousness, and blameless in his generation; Noach walked with the Holy One.*** Genesis 6:9. What does this mean in real-life terms? Torah tells us: ***This is what Noach did – He did all that the Holy One instructed him to do!*** Genesis 6:22, 7:5. Now look at the effect this had on Noach's family. By walking with the Holy One and doing '*all that the Holy One instructed him to do*' in response to the grace the Holy One lavished on him, Noach somehow convinced his wife and sons, and their wives [compare Lot] to remain above the culture, to cling to the Holy One's Words, and to carry the hope of Messiah into the next generation.

Follow the lifestyle of Noach. It is the appropriate response of man to the grace of the Holy One.

Avraham –The Trusted Servant of God

And do you remember how the Holy One described our ancestor Avraham? He said of him:

V'he'emin b'Adonai

He put his trust in the Holy One,

V'yachsheveiha lo tzedakah

and He counted it as righteousness.

[Genesis 15:6]

Avraham was born and raised in a perverse pagan society. He heard everyone's perspective on what was important in life. But he did not – when it counted most,

at least - put his trust in the voices he heard in society. He listened for, and responded to, the Voice of the Holy One. He structured his life around, and ordered his life according to, “*God encounters*”. As Genesis 18:19 tells us:

y'tzaveh et-banav v'et-beyto acharav
he will command his children and his household after him,

v'sham'ru derech Adonai
and they will keep the way of the Holy One

l'asot tzedakah umish'pat
doing righteousness and justice.

Avraham was just a man who founded his home upon the words He heard the Holy One speak instead of conforming to the cultural and religious Serpent-speak of his time. He looked for – and found - something *real*, and *meaningful*, to pass on to his children and his household after him.

Follow the lifestyle of Avraham, Dear Reader. It is what people in covenant with God were born to do.

Moshe – The Man With an Insatiable Appetite for God

And all of us remember Moshe. Where did Moshe come from? Moshe was born in Egypt. He was raised in the perverse world of Pharaoh's household, knowing all the excesses and indulgences of royalty. But once Moshe had heard the Holy One's voice and experienced the Holy One's Presence he became *incurably addicted* to both. He cried out to the Holy One:

*... if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways,
that I may know you; Oh, that I may find favor in your sight:*

"If your presence doesn't go with me, don't carry us up from here.

"Please show me your glory."

[Exodus 33:13-18]

Moshe had an absolutely *insatiable appetite* for the Holy One. The Holy One reached out and spoke to him, and chose him, and Moshe merely pursued like a moonstruck lover.

Time and space do not permit me to speak of men like *Sh'muel* [Samuel], or of David or of *Eliyahu* [Elijah] or of *Kefa* [Peter]. But are you beginning to see a bit of *a pattern* developing, Beloved?

The Torah Pattern – the Sh'ma Lifestyle

Those who become “friends of God” are not content to live out their lives according to the Serpent-speak of their generation. They trust only one Voice – His Voice - however unpopular its pronouncements. They are *addicted to*, and have an

insatiable appetite for, His Voice, and for His Presence – not for the “thrill” of the experience, or the spiritual “authority” His Voice and His Presence bring, but for the revelation and life it brings to ordinary people and to creation. And they recognize when the Serpent-speak of their generation is about to destroy it. With that introduction out of the way we now turn our attention to Pinchas, and his “elevation”.

The Context of Pinchas’ Elevation

What was it about Pinchas, you may ask, that brought about his stunning *elevation*? Inquiring minds *want to know*, right? Well, here is what the Holy One says about that in His very own Words:

Pinchas ben-El'azar ben-Aharon ha-kohen

'Pinchas (a son of Elazar and grandson of Aharon the priest)

heshiv et-chamati me'al b'nei-Yisra'el

was the one who zealously took up My cause among the Children of Israel

bekan'o et-qin'ati betocham

and turned My qanah away from them,

V'lo-chiliti et-b'nei-Yisra'el b'kin'ati

so that I did not complete/finish them in My qanah.

Lachen emor hineni noten lo et-briti shalom

Therefore, tell him that I have given him My covenant of peace.

Vehayetah lo ul'zar'o acharav brit kehunat olam tachat

This shall be a covenant of eternal priesthood to him and his descendants.

asher qinei l'Elohav

It is [given to him] because he zealously took up God's cause

v'yechaper al-b'nei Yisra'el

and made atonement for the Israelites.'

Do you remember reading near the end of last week’s parsha how in a shocking exhibit of brazenness a Hebrew brought his Midyani-princess paramour directly to Moshe and to the elders, at the entrance of the *Mish'kan*, and engaged in perverse forms of licentious *Ba'al Pe'or* influenced idol worship in public view? Do you remember that Pinchas was among thousands, or perhaps hundreds of thousands, of eyewitnesses to this couple's act of blatant disdain for the Holy One, for His Holiness, and for *the covenant* the Holy One made with Avraham and renewed and clarified with us at Sinai? Do you also remember that while thousands of the Holy One’s redeemed stood by and watched, and did nothing whatever to stop the debauchery, Pinchas leaped into action? Do you remember how, inflamed with zeal for the Holy One’s earthly dwelling place, the *Mish'kan*, he took spear in hand, eschewed the consequences, and did what modern media talking heads

would undoubtedly decry as *'the unthinkable'*?

No human being directly stood up in Pinchas' face and ordered him to take a spear in his hand. Indeed if Pinchas had let the situation pass, absolutely nobody would have criticized him. Moshe didn't do what Pinchas did, and no one criticizes him. Nor did Pinchas' father, Elazar, the present High Priest, or his brother, Itamar. Neither did either Y'hoshua nor Kalev do what Pinchas did, and elsewhere in Torah they are said to have *'followed the Holy One wholeheartedly'*. To the human mind, the 'safe' course for Pinchas to take therefore was either to do nothing – and just watch in self-righteous horror as most of the people apparently did, or perhaps to fall on his face and pray as Moshe and Elazar did, or at the very most to rebuke Zimri [thus appearing to *sh'ma* and *sh'mar* the injunction of Leviticus 19:17(b)], and then to either establish a *beit din* [group of judges to consider formal indictment and punishment according to law] . . . or *just walk away*. But for some reason Pinchas decided to *take the riskiest kind of action possible*. Consumed with zeal for the sanctity of the Holy One's earthly dwelling place, this kohen-on-duty stepped forward, grabbed spear in hand, and thrust it clear through Zimri and Cozbi as they contaminated the *Mish'kan* with perversion. Concerning this act the Torah quotes the Bridegroom of Heaven as saying: ***Pinchas ... turned et-chamati from the children of Israel when he zealously moved with my zeal among them.*** Numbers 25:11.

Wow! Perhaps there is more spiritual substance and meaning to the downright scary physical actions of *Pinchas* than can be readily seen in the English translations of this passage. Let's investigate further, shall we?

The Shot Heard 'Round the World

Please think about what an *explosive situation* Pinchas' zealous actions on that fateful day created. First of all the relatives of the slain man – a prince of the tribe of *Sh'mon* [Simeon] - could be expected to react with outrage – perhaps instigating a civil war. Secondly, imagine the diplomatic nightmare Moshe – and all Israel – would face. The entire Midyani [Midianite] nation, to which the woman Cozbi, princess of Midyan, belonged could be expected to send forth a cry for blood vengeance, if not all-out 'holy war'. To them, you see, Cozbi was merely practicing her 'religion' [Ba'al worship], and was murdered for it – made a human sacrifice (they might argue) to Israel's God. So, taking up the spear and impaling the idolaters that profaned the *Mish'kan*, the camp of the Redeemed, and the Name of the Holy One of Israel, was definitely not a 'politically correct' thing to do.

So What Motivated Pinchas?

The Holy One, who knows what is in a man's heart, said that Pinchas' act was to *turn away et-chamati from the children of Israel. Et-chemati?* What is *that*? It literally means 'My heat'. Men – especially the men of Western-mindset

responsible for the translation of the Hebrew text of Torah into English - like to call this Divine attribute *anger*, or *wrath*. But can we talk about that? After all, *what do men know of the passions and motivations of the Holy One?* How do they get from 'heat' to 'anger' and 'wrath'? They project onto the Holy One their own fleshly sense of moral outrage. They tie the Holy One to the branches of their sacred tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Heaven forbid. Heaven help us.

The reality of the matter is that the Holy One is not a man, that He should become angry, wroth, or vengeful in the way of men. He is a Creator – not a killer. He is a Sustainer – not a destroyer. He is a Redeemer and Restorer of the Breach – not a spoiled child who cannot control his temper. He is a Wise and Faithful lover of humanity, with all its faults and foibles – not an shocked novice who frets over evildoers. He moves forward with, and pursuant to, a Grand Redemptive Plan. He is passionate for His Plan of Redemption and the Covenant People through whom He intends to execute it, but He is no not wounded, offended, anxious, frustrated, or in a bad mood. He understands the emotions of fallen human beings, but He does not indulge them. He understands what must be done for the common good, and to bring forth out of every situation good for all those who love Him, who are called according to His Purpose. **Romans 8:28.**

So if Pinchas felt the Holy One's passion and motivation – i.e. the Holy One's 'heat' – in relation to this incident, well ... what exactly did He feel? What did that 'heat' consist of? What was it not? Why did the 'heat' he felt translate into the action in which he engaged?

Pinchas *got the memo*. He *downloaded the software*. He alone seemed to understand what was *really* at risk when Zimri and Cozbi consorted according to the perverse manner of *Ba'al Pe'or* at the entrance to the *Mish'kan*. The specter of civil war, of all-out war with Moav – or with Midyan – or even with all the nations of the world gathered together – all of these were considered preferable by Pinchas to letting a plague continue to decimate Israel for one more instant. And feeling those things, he feared man – and what man could do to him or to his nation – much, much, less than he loved, revered, and honored the Holy One.

In every generation there is a Pinchas – a man, a woman or a child *who is jealous for the Holy One's honor with the same jealousy the Holy One is jealous for it*. Such a person is willing to surrender everything – even life itself – solely for the sake of the honor of the Holy One, and the continuity of His covenant with Israel.

But What Exactly Is A ‘Covenant of Peace’

Moshe is told to pass on from the Holy One to Pinchas the word that by reason of his selfless act of zealotry he has assured himself of being called an eternal ‘friend of God’. Here are the exact words the Holy One had Moshe relay:

hineni noten lo et-briti shalom

I have given him My covenant of Peace, Security, Prosperity, and Blessing
[Numbers 25:12]

What is the "covenant of peace"? In Hebrew, the word we translate as ‘peace’ is *shalom*. Each Hebrew consonant is also a number. An *alef* is also a 1. A *beit* is also a 2, etc. The sum of the consonants which form the Hebrew word *shalom* [*shin, lamed, mem sofit*] is 376 - is the same numerical value as the words "*zehu Mashiach*" - "*this is Messiah*." The Talmudic author known as the Rambam writes that in the days of Messiah there will be no hunger, jealousy or competition. See **Melachim 12:5**.

Hence the sages teach that the Holy One was alluding that Pinchas will be the forerunner of Eliyahu who will in turn be the forerunner of Messiah, and that through each of them the Holy One’s Redeemed Community will experience [in ever increasing magnitude] an era of the highest degree of *shalom*. An interesting side note to this is the curious fact that, in the original Hebrew texts, the letter *vav* [a *cholem vav*, making the vowel sound ‘o’], which is inserted between the second and third consonants of the word *shalom* in this passage is ‘mis-formed’ – *i.e.* instead of being a straight vertical line hooking slightly to the left at the top, there is a very clear *break* in the vertical line in all the texts. Imagine reading the word peace, but seeing it look like this: *peace*. Notice the odd horizontal line through the ‘a’ - the letter at the heart of this English word.

The scribes who recorded the scrolls were *extremely* meticulous; hence irregularities like this are almost certainly intentional, and are usually interpreted by the sages as something akin to ‘coded’ messages from the Holy One. The sages who have investigated this particular irregularity have located ten other instances in Torah when a scribal irregularity involves a *vav* – specifically, the name of *Eliyahu* (Elijah) is written five times in the Torah without its usual *vav*, while the name of *Ya’akov* (Jacob) is written five times with an extra *vav* added. The Talmudic commentator known as Rashi posits that Ya’akov took the *vav* from Eliyahu as a pledge that he will herald the coming of Messiah to the world.

What does this have to do with Pinchas and his *covenant of shalom* with the irregular *vav*? The sages say that the *vav* in *shalom* was intentionally made incomplete by the scribes by the inspiration of the *Ruach HaQuodesh* [Holy Spirit]

in order to testify that the *shalom* the Hebrew people will know will remain incomplete *until Messiah comes*.

Taking Names

On a number of similar occasions in the past, the Torah has gone to great lengths to protect the identity of a specific sinner – the most obvious case that immediately comes to mind is that of the *M'koshesh Etzim* (the man found gathering wood on the Shabbat. **Numbers 15:2-36**. Though Torah records that this man was stoned to death for an act of desecrating the Holy One's *Shabbat*, he was nevertheless left in anonymity to protect his name and his family's prestige.

The Holy One has mercy even on the wicked - so what do we gain by divulging the names of the guilty parties at the closing of the episode? The *Or Hachaim* opines that the identity of those involved in this case is of specific importance to us because it gives us an important insight into the level of dedication Pinchas had towards the Holy One. It is not just anyone, you see, who will be honored by the Holy One for executing even the most horrible of sinners. Only someone like Pinchas *whose motivation is completely beyond question*.

Consider that even had the people involved in the events in question been normal run-of-the-mill individuals, the act of Pinchas would have involved great danger and required great courage. Pinchas by-passed the normal *chain of command* – Moshe, Elazar, Y'hoshua and the Sanhedrin – and acted at his own peril.

Moreover those slain by Pinchas were very important individuals. Zimri was a leader in the tribe of *Sh'mon* (Simeon), and Cozbi who was in fact a Midyani Princess. The potential consequences of killing such influential persons were dire indeed. By killing a head of a tribe, Pinchas essentially became the enemy of that tribe in its entirety, and by killing a princess of Moab, at a time of "official peace", Pinchas became an assassin in the eyes of the Midyani.

Pinchas was prepared to accept upon himself the dire repercussions of his actions whatever they would be – including, more likely than not, death. As Yeshua of Natzret would later say "***No greater love has any man than this: that a man would lay down his life for his friends.***"

In addition, there is a special relevance that comes forth considering the particular tribe of which we are told that the perpetrator was a leader – the tribe of *Sh'mon* (Simeon). In this event, the main actors involved are representatives of two tribes who were once seemingly inseparable - Pinchas is from the tribe of *Levi*; Zimri is from the tribe of *Sh'mon*. These two tribes were the ones who, in Genesis 34:25, joined together in a conspiracy in order to avenge the honor of their sister Dinah, by destroying the city of Shechem. Moreover, Rashi and other Talmudic writers

blame Sh'mon and Levi for the plot of the brothers to kill Yosef. This is supposedly why Yosef separated Sh'mon from Levi when the brothers met with him for the first time in Egypt. Sh'mon was kept in Egypt in Yosef's custody, while Levi and the other brothers were dispatched back to Eretz Kena'an to fetch Binyamin.

What began as a partnership for evil between the tribes of Sh'mon and Levi effectively ends in our parsha, when *Pinchas* [representing Levi] kills *Zimri* [representing Sh'mon]. By naming Zimri and his tribe, the Torah makes it clear that Sh'mon and Levi's past '*coalition of convenience*' is now officially over.

Dealing With the Discomfort of It All

Does this all make you a little uncomfortable? I hope so, Dear Reader. As we have discussed, it is not that Zimri and the Midyanite princess Cozbi were innocents. They came to the tent of meeting for one purpose, and one only – to challenge the God of Israel, and to encourage others to depart from true worship. They were doing the exact opposite thing done by Eliyahu (Elijah) on Mount Carmel. Eliyahu went into Ba'al's 'turf' and brazenly challenged the prophets/priests of Ba'al by openly insulting Ba'al. Zimri and Cozbi, on the other hand, went into the Holy One's turf and brazenly challenged His prophets/priests by insulting the Holy One.

Just as the prophets/priests of Ba'al were deserving of death, so were Zimri and Cozbi. But ... *aren't we all?* Aren't all the abortionists, and adulterers, and fornicators, and rapists, and liars, and gossips – and a host of other sinners – in our midst *all* deserving of death? Why not grab a spear and just start impaling every person we see breaking Covenant with the Holy One? [Please note that Pinchas most definitely did NOT do this!]. When you think about it, however, aren't we *all* deserving of death? If it was okay – indeed, considered commendable – for Pinchas, what about for us? Pinchas did not follow the standard execution procedure the Holy One had decreed in the Torah (two witnesses who had first warned the wrongdoer and given the opportunity for repentance, followed by a trial, and eventually, if conviction came without repentance, death by stoning outside the camp).

So why was Pinchas not a *murderer*? I believe that the answer to these questions is found in [a] *who Pinchas was* and [b] *the location at which the sin of Zimri and Cozbi the Midyanite took place*.

Remember that after the plagues that issued from the *chet meraglim* (sin of the spies) and the rebellion of Korach, the Holy One had told Aharon and his sons and his father's family the Levi'im they were to "*bear the responsibility for offences against the sanctuary*". **Numbers 18:1**. Zimri's offence was clearly an "offence

against the sanctuary”. While Moshe and the assembly of repentant Israelites were gathered at the Tent of Meeting, weeping before the Holy One over the sins of the people and the plague which had struck the camp as a result of that sin, Zimri came right up to the Tent where the repentant were weeping and mocked them, and dishonored the Holy One, by bringing his sin right to the door of the Tent of Meeting. Pinchas was the son of Elazar, son of Aharon, and within the class of those who were to “*bear the responsibility for offences against the sanctuary*”.

Pinchas was not a Vigilante Fueled By A Sense of Moral Outrage, But a Faithful Guard on Duty

Pinchas did not lie in wait for sinners and search them out stealthily. He did not go looking for them where they were. He did not stalk them. He did not wage campaigns of slander against them. He did not embark on a crusade against idolaters, or target any person based upon his or her ethnicity, or even declare war on all backslidden Israelites. Thousands sinned with Ba'al Pe'or, yet Pinchas stepped forward and killed only *two people*. He took no action at all other than to *guard the Sanctuary of the Holy One* – the place where the Holy One had consented to meet with Israel through a prescribed protocol of Betrothal period interactions.

The guarding of the *Mish'kan* was, you see, his responsibility. Its perimeter was breached, and it was invaded, on *his watch*. He did what a guard on duty is supposed to do - even at great risk of his own life and future. It was for *this* selfless act of devotion to the Holy One – *not* for murder – that Pinchas was rewarded by the Holy One with an ‘eternal priesthood’ and a ‘covenant of *shalom*’. This distinguishes Pinchas’ act of zeal from modern day acts of religious vigilantism such as the bombing of abortion clinics, the gunning down of abortionists, so-called ‘honor killings’, wars in the name of religion [i.e. Jihad].

Elazar's Son

As mentioned in the Introductory Study for this parsha, this will not be the last time in Scripture we will hear about *Pinchas*. In Joshua 22 his name will arise in connection with a situation where some men from the tribes of Reuven and Gad have committed a grievous violation of the Holy One’s instructions – specifically, building an altar for *korbanot* [surrogates of approach] on the West bank of the Jordan River⁷. The entire community arose to make war on these men. Surprisingly, it was through the mediation of one Pinchas, son of Elazar - the same zealot who killed Zimri and Cozbi - that war was *averted*. At the peaceful resolution of that dispute (the altar was dedicated as a memorial only, not to be used for worship) Scripture says:

⁷ See Joshua 22:10 for the details. Of course, per Deuteronomy 12 the act of establishing an altar for *korbanot* anywhere but at the place designated by the Holy One was a serious violation of Torah.

The people of Israel blessed God, and said no more about going to wage war on the descendants of Reuven and Gad and destroying the land where they live.

[Joshua 22:33]

So gentlemen let's resolve to consider the altars of false worship our brethren have erected on every other street corner as subjects of intercessory prayer instead of objects of civil war. The Holy One will deal with them as and when He deems appropriate. Meanwhile, let's put down our swords and spears, opinions and dogmas, and go back to the ancient pathways of Torah where we belong. It is the time for "friends of God" to arise. And perhaps one day soon it will be time for us to experience a *covenant of peace* like unto that of Pinchas.

Questions For Today's Study

1. Here are a few basic questions to get us started on this week's study .

[A] What is the Hebrew name for this week's Torah parsha?

[B] What is the English meaning of that Hebrew name?

[C] Look up the Hebrew word and its root in Strong's and Gesenius and write the definitions you find there.

[D] How does the man whose name becomes the name of this week's parsha live up to his name?

2. At the beginning of this week's parsha Moshe tells us that 24,000 members of the Covenant people died in what he refers to as a plague.

[A] What brought on this plague?

[B] What does this passage say stopped the Holy One from doing away with all of Israel at this time?

[C] How does the death total from this plague compare with the death total after Korach's rebellion?

[D] For what was Pinchas "zealous"?

[E] Look up the word "zealous" in Strong's and Gesenius. Write the Hebrew word and its definition.

[F] In verse 12, what kind of covenant does the Holy One say He is making with Pinchas?

[G] In verse 13 how does the Holy One describe the covenant He is making with Pinchas and his descendants?

[H] Who was Pinchas' father?

[I] Who was Pinchas' grandfather?

[J] Read Psalm 106:28-31. What was credited to Pinchas for righteousness?

[K] What gave Pinchas the right to kill another Jew? Why was this not murder? Should we likewise kill abortionists and other sinners? Explain in a one-page essay.

[L] It is clear that the young women of both the nations of MOAV and

MIDYAN participated in seducing Israeli men. In Numbers 25:16-18 however the Holy One instructs us to attack only the MIDYANITES, and not Moav. Why?

3. In the Haftarah reading for today we will see another “friend of God” – *Eliyahu* – in action and in apparent danger. This all occurs in the immediate aftermath of Eliyahu’s the dramatic confrontation with the prophets of Ba’al on Mount Carmel. *Izevel* [Jezebel] was definitely NOT HAPPY!

*... and the hand of the Holy One was on Eliyahu;
and he girded up his loins, and ran before Ach'av to the entrance of Yizre`el.
Ach'av told Izevel all that Eliyahu had done,
and how he had slain all the prophets [of Ba`al] with the sword.
Then Izevel send a messenger to Eliyahu, saying, “So let the gods do to me, and more also,
if I don’t make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.”*
[I Kings 18:46-19:2]

[A] What man of zeal is the subject of today’s verses?
[B] How did Eliyahu run faster than Ahav’s chariots?
[C] From where to where did Eliyahu run?
[D] In verse 1 of chapter 18 Ahav reports to Izevel “all that Eliyahu had done”. Imagine you are a servant of Ahav and he told you to write this report to give to Izevel. List the things you would put in the report [**Hint**: you will have to read I Kings 17:1 - 18:46 to get this information].

4. In the B’rit Chadasha passage selected for today Yeshua confronts spiritual pollution in courts of the Holy Temple. He is thus facing a situation much like that once faced by Pinchas. Here is how the inspired chronicles describe the situation Yeshua faced:

*The Pesach of the Y’hudim was at hand, and Yeshua went up to Y’rushalayim.
He found in the temple those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves,
and the changers of money sitting.
He made a whip of cords, and threw all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen;
and he poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew their tables.
To those who sold the doves, he said, “Take these things out of here!
Don’t make my Father’s house a marketplace!”*
[John 2:13-16]

[A] What man of zeal is the subject of today’s verses?
[B] What behavior – and at what location – cause His “zeal” to arise?
[C] Where did this occur? Could it have happened anywhere else and been the will of the Holy One?
[D] How long do you think it took for Yeshua to piece together a whip of cords?
[E] How many people did Yeshua kill – or even strike - with the whip of cords? Does the text indicate that Yeshua yelled or raised His Voice at the sellers and moneychangers?

[F] Does the text of this passage say that Yeshua was angry? Why, then, do you think some people think/teach that He was?

*May you be zealous for the Holy One,
without doing violence to His Torah.*

The Rabbi's son

Meditation for Today's Study

Proverbs 17:11-13

*An evil man seeks only rebellion;
Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.
Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly.*

*Whoever rewards evil for good,
evil shall not depart from his house.*