

Introduction to Parsha #41: Pinchas¹

READINGS: *Torah Pinchas:* Numbers 25:10 – 29:40
 Haftarah: I Kings 18:46 – 19:21
 B’rit Chadasha: John 2:13-22



He was zealous for his God

[Numbers 25:13]

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 Zealousness to its place among B’nei Yisrael **Numbers 25:10a.**

Just in time for annual prophetic season of tribulation the sages call *Bein ha-Metzarim* – i.e. ‘between Dire Straits’ – the Writer of Torah has just introduced a new prophetic character into the Grand Narrative. His name is Pinchas. Where has he been up to this point in our story? Before last week’s parsha Torah’s only mention of Pinchas was being named as a part of the genealogical line of Levi through Kohat, Amram, and Aharon. All we learned about him from that brief cameo appearance was he was born to the union of Aharon’s son Eleazar (who replaced Aharon as *Kohen Gadol*) with an unnamed ‘daughter of Putiel’. **Exodus 6:25.** Who could possibly have suspected that after decades of oblivion this man would burst onto the stage of our national history in such an unforgettable way?

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He Came in ... Like a Wrecking Ball

Up until the concluding aliyah of Balak Pinchas was apparently merely one of several non-descript ‘*doorkeepers in the house of the Holy One*’. As providence would have it, however, Pinchas turned out to be the novice-priest-in-training on duty at the Mish’kan when Zimri and Cozbi tried to bring the perverse Midyanite mixture of sexual indulgence and idol worship into the Tabernacle’s holy courts.

Zimri and Cozbi did not go to the Mish’kan that day to honor their Creator. They had no interest whatever in seeking intimate communion with the One True God, nor did they have one iota of respect for the Hebrew families who had gone to those sacred grounds to do so that day. They did not go there to pray. They did not go there to worship. They did not go there to learn. They did not go there to be changed, healed, forgiven, inspired, or enlightened. They also did not go there in the name of – or to celebrate - ‘love’. They could have chosen to act out their deviant fantasies in some secret place surrounded by dark shadows. But that would not do for them at all. They wanted to push a boundary. They wanted to prove a point. They wanted to make a statement. Zimri and Cozbi crashed the gates of the sacred chamber for one reason only - to desecrate the Sanctuary. They came to rededicate the earthly abiding place of the Most High God to a demon they called *Ba'al Pe'or* - i.e. the ‘master of the abyss’. This was not consenting adults caving in to fleshly desires in the privacy of their home; this was an insolent declaration of spiritual war. Zimri and Cozbi wanted to be known as the couple that desecrated the holiest place on earth with the most vile and disgusting of abominations. Alas, they quickly found out that they had picked the wrong day for their invasion. They made a critical – and deadly – mistake when they tested the duty-consciousness of the young priest-in-training who had been assigned to cover that fateful shift.

What Zimri and Cozbi did not count on was that the priest on duty that day was neither bored, lazy, weak of heart, or easily intimidated. Young Pinchas actually took his *shomer goy kadosh* [watchman/guardian of the holy nation] responsibility seriously. As soon as Zimri and Cozbi brought their desecration show into the Holy place, which was reserved for intimate communion with and service to the Holy One, he sprang into action like a first responder. He defended the sanctity of the Sanctuary – as he had been charged to do. Zimri and Cozbi were committing spiritual insurrection at the highest level, on his watch. The insurrection had to be stopped, lest it spread – so he stepped in and stopped it. As a result of his act of heroism, suddenly everybody knows about – and can’t stop talking about - *Eleazar’s kid ... and what he did*. Careful now – if we miss the point, and make Pinchas’ spear and Zimri’s and Cozbi’s blood the focus of our attention, we risk opening up a Pandora’s box containing all kinds of trouble. So let’s stay focused on who Pinchas was, and what his assigned task consisted of. Let’s stay focused on the responsibility of the *kohen*/priest on duty to protect the sanctity of the Mish’kan

and its courts. Let's focus on the WILL OF GOD – not on justifying fools who promote taking the law into their own hands, and indulge fleshly, vigilante-style vengeance.

Zeh ha-yom Pinchas – i.e. this is *the day of Pinchas!* Now is the appointed time for a man of Zeal for the Great King, His earthly abode, and His Covenant to rise up ... and inspire us all to do the Will of the Holy One – nothing more, and nothing less.

The Time Has Come for a Man of True and Honorable Zeal to Arise

What is up with Pinchas? Where has he been, and what has he been doing, prior to this? And what is his story? It is one of a very special kind of *zeal*. Before we go too much deeper, however, we really need to define that term Hebraically. *Zeal* – in Hebrew, *qana* – is NOT an emotion-driven state. It is not a visceral reaction of revulsion or rage. It is not a fit or a tantrum or a matter of either revulsion or pride. Neither is *qana*'s origin ideological, philosophic, or religious. It is most definitely not – though it has in the modern era often been confused with – human anger, offense, judgmentalism, social-justice obsession, or vigilante vengeance-fixation. Human anger, outrage, offense, judgmentalism, social-justice obsession, and vigilante vengeance-fixation are all 100% fleshly and temporal. They represent the 'counsel of the ungodly'. They take their stand in the 'way of sinners'. They emanate from those who have chosen to sit in the 'seat of the scornful'. They are chaff from which the wheat must be separated. *Qana*, on the other hand, is a 'light'-emitting outgrowth of the passionate movement of the Spirit of *Elohim* (see **Genesis 1:2-3**). *Qana* flows out of the Eternal One's Wise Heart and Brilliant Mind. Zeal is holy, *tahor* (i.e. leading to wholeness and fruitfulness) and *tov*; human anger, outrage, offense, judgmentalism, and vengeance, by contrast, are profane, *tamei* (leading to fragmentation, division, and dysfunction), and *ra* (i.e. all about self-will, serpentine rebellion, and narcissism). For a man or woman of the Covenant, speaking or acting out of human anger, outrage, offense, judgmentalism, and vengeance are all dangerous, unspiritual knee-jerk reactions – reactions that cut off any communication with, and put 'on-hold' any relationship with, the Holy One. *Qana* is not like that. *Qana* does not come on a person in a moment of passion. *Qana* does not flare up in an instant of strong emotion, then flame out. *Qana* is an *energy flow* that comes from walking with the Holy One through life-situation after life-situation, learning to put loving the Holy One with all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's strength, and loving one's neighbor, on the top of one's priority list - day after day, moon cycle after moon cycle, Torah cycle after Torah cycle, decade after decade. *Qana* is reverence for the Holy One as a Person, a Persona, and a King. *Qana* is steadfast commitment to preparing the way for the Holy One's Manifest Presence – whether as a watchman on the wall, a voice crying in the wilderness, or a tireless worker laying the foundations for a Royal

Visitation. *Qana* is devotion to the protocols of the Covenant. *Qana* is *indistractable focus on doing the Holy One's Will* as revealed 'in the volume of the Book'. See **Psalm 40:6-7; Hebrews 10:7**. *Qana* is *unwavering dedication to the King's agenda, mission, assignment, strategy, timing, and instructions*. *Qana* is *unselfish loyalty to the King in the face of every challenge*. *Qana* is *calm, practiced discipline*. *Qana* is *humble, selfless service*. *Qana* is *choosing self-denial as opposed to self-promotion*. *Qana* is *perseverance*. *Qana* is *determination*. *Qana* is *integrity*. *Qana* is *vision*. *Qana* is *perspective*. *Qana* is *the Divine spark that drove Avraham to Mount Moriyah*. *Qana* is *what drives a person who lives in a constant flow of communion with the Holy One*, who sees his King high and lifted up, seated on His Throne, surrounded by *cherubim, serafim*, and living creatures; who has heard the King's Voice thunder with the sound of many waters, and has trembled at the majesty of His Words; who traffics daily in the Beauty Realm atmosphere of the King's Courts; who therefore has a vantage point from which to see what the Holy One is doing and hear what the Holy One is saying; and who therefore does what the Holy One decrees must be done for the sake of the Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind as a species, bloodline by bloodline, and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*.

The *qana* of *Pinchas* – which is designed to provide the model for us of Messiah's 'zeal' - thus bore no resemblance whatever to the shallow, selfish variety of youthful emotionalism and excitability common to this generation. *Pinchas* was not zealous for thrills, for possessions, for money, for respect, or for finding a 'tribe', community, gang, organization, movement, or clique to belong to. Neither was his zeal for romance, for sensual pleasure, for sexual gratification, or for any form of self-actualization, self-expression, or self-promotion. He was not out to make a name for himself, or attain any level of fame, fortune, or glory. He was not zealous for any idea, any ideal, or any ideology. He was by no means an 'activist'. He was neither *pro-* or *anti-*, much less either triggered or intimidated by, any slogan. He had not allowed himself to be seduced by a sense of self-importance into the quagmire of pseudo-intellectual folly where one looks at everyone (except himself and those he sees as being like him, of course) critically, viewing them through the '*darkened eye*' lenses – *i.e. derogatory label, ethnicity, skin-color, socio-economic class, physical appearance* (especially sexual attractiveness), *political/ideological affiliation, age, and/or popular reputation*. He had not been manipulated by propaganda masquerading as 'education', 'entertainment', 'news', 'activism', organized religion, or weaponized forms of 'pseudo-science' and 'pseudo-medicine' to look at every situation through the dehumanizing lens of *abstract concept dichotomies* like '*right/wrong*', '*moral/immoral*', '*fair/unfair*', '*just/unjust*', '*good/evil*' – or, of course, the ubiquitous '*cool/uncool*'. *Pinchas*' zeal was not offered to or wasted on any political, ideological, moral, or 'social justice',

or other utopian movement. Neither did he act out of passion/enthusiasm for a theological position or a doctrine, or even for the Torah as a body of truth.

So ... if Pinchas' zeal was not for any of the things the people of the world get all up in their emotions about – then what kind of zeal could it possibly be? Ah, Beloved, that is the 'wondrous thing' the Holy One wants to open our eyes to see in Torah this week! The *qana* of *Pinchas* was not a passion for truth, you see; it was an all-out surrender of his will to the will, the ways, and the wisdom of His King. Pinchas' zeal was the same kind of zeal in which Messiah Yeshua walked – a zeal to stay in the Presence and Persona of the Holy One [see **Psalm 27:4; 84:2**], and to co-labor with the Holy One to see that His Will is done, and His Kingdom comes, on earth as in Heaven. As it is written: ***Zeal for your house/household/kingdom consumes me!*** See **Psalm 69:9a; John 2:17**.

The zeal that Pinchas is bringing forward on the great stage of Torah to model for us at this time is *qana* for his duty as a guardian of the portal of the Holy One's Presence – i.e. the *Mish'kan* (KJV 'Tabernacle') – the sacred piece 'holy ground' where the Holy One sits enthroned between the wings of the cherubim, and in the chambers of which He issues decrees, receives courtiers, and welcomes visitors. Pinchas, along with the entire line of *kohanim* (KJV, 'priests') had been assigned the non-delegable duty to take/bear responsibility for maintaining the *kedusha* - i.e. the holiness-exuding potential - of the *Mish'kan*, its courts, its furnishings, and its *avodah*. Pinchas' 'zeal' was not for abstract concepts of 'what is right', or 'what is true'; much less was it against 'what is wrong' or 'what is false'. The Zeal of this wholly surrendered, fiercely dedicated *kohen*-in-training was for the Persona, Personality, and Honor of the One Who had redeemed him and his family from bondage, Who had shown him great love, Who had called him to co-labor with Him in His Grand Redemptive, Restorative Plan, and Who dwelt in Manifest Glory mere feet away from his assigned post. Pinchas' zeal burst forth from humble reverence for, and an overwhelming sense of gratitude toward, his God, Redeemer, Friend, and King. His honor – and thus his zeal - was to defend the earthly embassy of the Kingdom of Heaven from invasion by enemy forces intent on desecrating and profaning it. The *Mish'kan* was Pinchas' post – and it was under attack. Zimri and Cozbi, consorting as enemy consorts, invaded the courts of the *Mish'kan*, desecrated them, and would neither stop nor leave. The protocol had been announced, and was understood. See **Leviticus 15:31 and Numbers 18:1 and 7**. The blatant act of rebellion had to be dealt with swiftly and effectively. The threat was real, and was present – and had to be neutralized.

Mi zeh Pinchas – Who is Pinchas?

At the time of this parsha, Pinchas' father, Elazar, was serving the Holy One and the Redeemed Community as High Priest. While we are not told Pinchas' age, we

know that he was a member of the clan and household that the Holy One had assigned to safeguard the holiness of the *Mish'kan* [See **Numbers 18:1(a)**]. We can clearly see that he took that assignment very, very seriously. When confronted with an all-out spiritual assault on the holiness of the *Mish'kan*, he did exactly what his family's *guardians-of-the-holy-things* assignment required. ***He rose from among the witness throng and took a javelin in his hand; and he went into the Tent of Meeting after the man of Israel— see Numbers 25:6 - and he thrust both of them through. Thereby was the plague among B'nei Yisrael stopped.*** Numbers 25:7-8.

Pinchas was neither a *self-righteous vigilante* nor a moral *crusader*. He did not react out of *anger* or '*righteous indignation*'. He did not 'take matters into his own hands' or 'do what he thought was right' in his own eyes. He was a duly appointed, trained, and commissioned first responder, responding to a catastrophe that had already taken 14,000 lives. Think about that – *fourteen THOUSAND* sons and daughters of the Covenant had already perished - and the tally was mounting, moment by moment. Something had to be done – and it was *Pinchas' watch*. He was fully deputized and authorized not only to patrol and protect the *Mish'kan*, but also to assure the safety and purity of all those who went there to meet with the Holy One. He did not react out of abhorrence of something he chose to perceive as 'evil'; he responded out of love for His King, for his people, and for the holy sanctuary he had the privilege of serving. What he had been commissioned to do, for the sake of the *Mish'kan* and its purpose on the earth, he did. He did it without malice. He did it without anger. He did it without any desire for glory, honor, or promotion. It was just his job. He was the ranking watchman on the wall of the holy place at a time when a pair of brazen intruders with mayhem on their minds chose to breach the perimeter. He did not panic. He did not protest. He did not post pictures, or rant and rave, on social media about how horrible and outrageous it was. He did not condemn Zimri, nor did he spew hate or racial approbation at or about his Midyani consort Cozbi. He had a job to do, and though it was unpleasant – indeed broke his heart ... he did it. He put his life and destiny on the line. He ran into the breach. Once he got there, he did exactly what he was called and trained to do. And immediately when he did, the dying stopped. He was the *first responder* of the *Mish'kan* security force that day. When a first responder's job is done right, lives are saved, crises are averted, people and situations who pose a direct threat to the community are eliminated, and *peace is restored*. That is exactly what happened through the 'first responder intervention' of Pinchas. *Selah!*

Welcome to the prophetic week of *dutiful watchmen arising*, and of *dedicated, disciplined servants faithfully discharging their assigned Kingdom duties*. Let's scout ahead, and see what kinds of things we might expect to encounter this week – in our *Torah readings*, in our *world*, and in our *lives*.

A Pinchas Travelogue

The Holy One will begin the parsha/week with a God-encounter. *Out of eternity* His Voice will ring out. *Out of infinity* He will crystallize His message into the beautiful shape of Hebrew letters, words, phrases, and sentences that pulsate with life. *Out of invisibility* He will appear, and *out of incorporeality* He will make His Presence felt. Oh the wonder of the opening phrase: ***Vayedaber Adonai*** – *Then the Holy One spoke*. Take a deep breath, Beloved - our Bridegroom-King is with us – and He has something important to say. Who will *sh'ma*?

The first thing the Holy One wants to talk about in connection with this particular God Encounter is a *Brit Shalom* - *i.e.* a *Covenant of Wholeness, Wellness, Blessedness, and Peace*. He promises to establish such a Covenant eternally with one of the men and bloodlines in our camp. Who is the man? It is none other than *Pinchas*. Why him? ***Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful – but his delight is in the Torah of the Holy One ... Psalm 1:1-2. Blessed is the man who fears the Holy One, who delights greatly in His Mitzvot! Psalm 112:1.***

What is the special role of Pinchas mini-covenant within the framework of the Greater God/Man Covenant that the Holy One has been bringing forth in the earth? The *Brit Shalom expansion* is all about encouraging ‘zeal’ – *i.e.* the embracing of one’s calling and mission from Heaven; the showing of steadfast faithfulness to the King in the face of great dangers, distractions, and challenges; the demonstration of unshakable dedication to appointed territory and assigned task; acting wisely and decisively out of an enthusiastic commitment to keeping the prescribed portal for the life-giving holiness of the Presence of the Creator/King on earth open and functioning; and exhibiting the passion and skill necessary to see that the way of redemption and atonement remains open and inviting for all who hunger for and seek such things.

When Genocidal Enemies Refuse to Coexist, The Options are Limited

The second thing the Holy One wants to talk about this week is a *coming season of intense warfare*. At the outset of last week’s parsha, Balak of Moav stated his intentions regarding B’nei Yisrael very clearly: ***... that I may strike*** [*Hebrew nakah, meaning to inflict violent injury*] ***them, and that I may drive*** [*Hebrew garash, meaning to forcibly remove*] ***them from the earth ...*** Numbers 22:6. Midyan, ever the earth’s kingpins of social manipulation and human trafficking, opportunistically embraced Balak’s plan to rid the world of Hebrews. This was not a ‘*Make Moav and Midyan Great Again*’ movement. It had nothing to do with making Moav or Midyan better – it was just about destroying as many Hebrews as possible. The Moavi/Midyani conspiracy was nothing short of “*We will not rest until we have driven those*

people into the sea” declaration of genocidal intent. This is motivated by *abject hatred*. It is not some vague innuendo taken out of context by media types, hyped by agenda-driven demagogues, and twisted into hate speech by propaganda-spewing entertainers, attention-seeking athletes, event organizers, and pseudo-educators; this is real, murderous Anti-Semitism. This is what real racism consists of. This is what actual hate speech looks like. Balak’s hatred of People of the Covenant - which Midyan bought into in hopes of advancing their own world-domination agenda – poisons everything it touches. People who cannot see through the hype and the hate and the opportunity to profit from it tend to get caught up in genocidal mania – and that, unfortunately, always ultimately takes the Holy One’s much preferred ‘*peace option*’ off the table. The Holy One knows that it is impossible for His Covenant People – who are the light of and hope for the world - to coexist with someone who wishes to do them violence, and drive them from the face of the earth. The Psalmist expressed it this way: *Deliver my soul from lying lips, from a deceitful tongue My soul has been dwelling too long with him who rejects shalom. I am for shalom; but when I speak, they are for war.* Psalm 120:6-7.

Moshe is going to be instructed to *prepare the Camp – and the people - for an imminent campaign*. This will be the *first offensive campaign ever ordered by the Holy One*. Avraham undertook one of his own volition. Moshe ordered one after the debacle of *chet ha-egel*. B’nei Yisrael mounted one to recover the captives stolen away by the raiders of Arad. But the Holy One is not much on instigation of armed conflicts. He wants to be sure that this one is very limited in scope. It is to consist of only a small strike force and a series of quick, surgically precise strikes. This offensive campaign will be designed simply to eliminate the dangerous renegade Bila’am and his incorrigible Midyani co-conspirators before they can inflict any more *sabotage* on the Kingdom Mission. As you should recall, the Kingdom Mission Bila’am and Midyan have attempted to *sabotage* is a glorious one – i.e. [a] to redeem mankind from the destructive effects of ingestion of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge and good and evil, and [b] to restore Creation to its intended Edenic level of beauty and fruitfulness. People and nations interfere with that great mission at their own peril.

The Season of Awakening Zeal is Also A Season of Lifting the Head

The Holy One will instruct Moshe to *lift the heads of the men in the camp of an age to go to war*. Each household, each clan, and each tribe will be mustered. The total number of potential soldiers [not including Levi’im] available for the impending mission will be determined to be 601,730. The Holy One will then announce that *it is going to be according to this number of names that the land of Eretz Yisrael will be divided*. Each tribe will be responsible for the development and cultivation of a specific portion of the whole. Within the tribal allotment, each family represented

in this particular census will be entrusted with a parcel to steward for the Holy One and make fruitful for the world. The total number of assigned parcels will be 601,730 – one for each person counted in this all-important *prepare-for-all-out-war* census. We will then be reminded that except for Kalev and Yehoshua all the men counted in the previous *lifting of the heads* since the Exodus have now died in the desert. The Holy One’s Voice will then fall silent long enough to let the Words He has spoken be shared, processed, internalized, and responded to.

Our Introduction to the Feminine Side of Zeal - the Daughters of Tzelofechad

The *mixed historic/prophetic narrative* aspect of Torah will then resume. We will be told a beautiful historic/prophetic story involving *five daughters of a man named Tzelofechad* - literally meaning *a fragment (tzelof) of the unified whole (echad)*. This man, a descendant of Menashe, came out of Egyptian bondage with Moshe and all the rest. As had all his generational peers besides *Kalev* and *Yehoshua*, he had died in the desert. Because he left no son to carry on his name, Tzelofechad’s five daughters - named *Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah*, respectively - will approach Moshe with a bold petition. They will respectfully request that they, though women, and therefore not numbered among those who lifted their heads announcing their readiness to go to war, nevertheless be allowed to serve as the stewards of their late father’s share of land in Israel. This was the first – and the true, healthy, and honorable kind of – ‘*me too*’ movement. It was not about victimization or blame; it was about seeking the Kingdom, and volunteering for the Kingdom’s associated responsibilities. Assuming responsibility for making a parcel of land belonging to the King attain to its maximum level of productivity, for the sake of the Kingdom, was a major undertaking. These young women were not seeking a gift or a free ride – they were volunteering for one of the most challenging jobs in the Universe!

What will Moshe do in response to their petition? Having recently learned a hard lesson from the ‘striking the rock’ incident, Moshe wisely choose not to form or speak his own opinion on this matter. He will reject the temptation to apply ‘principle’ or ‘logic’ – much less his own cultural predispositions - in forming a response. He will, instead, humbly go and inquire of the Holy One concerning the Holy One’s will. *Bravo, Moshe! Selah* - may we all learn to follow this wise yet humble approach to every challenge of life!

The Holy One will respond to the zeal of the daughters of Tzelofechad enthusiastically. He will direct that the responsibilities relative to Tzelofechad’s allotment indeed be assigned to *Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah*. He will then declare as a *chok olam* – *i.e.* a ‘statute’ forever - that if any man of any tribe has died or hereafter dies leaving no son, his allotted parcel of the land is to go to

his daughter(s). While at it, the Holy One will clarify what is be the rule of succession if a man of the Covenant dies having neither sons *nor daughters*.

Moshe's Glimpse of the Land of the Patriarchs

The Holy One will then *instruct Moshe to go to the top of the mountain and view the land* He is getting ready entrust to the Redeemed Community. Moshe, of course, is going to die before the sons and daughters of the Avrahamic Covenant return to this land. Moshe's deeply ingrained rage and narcissism, which keep manifesting at the most inopportune times in the most Kingdom-defeating ways. It happened first with the Egyptian taskmaster incident. It resurfaced with the '*kill every man his kinsman and his neighbor*' declaration in the throes of the golden calf debacle. And it recently resurfaced again with his enraged and violent outburst at *Meribah*. As David, a man with blood on his hands, could confront Goliath, lead his people to unite under one banner, establish a temporary tabernacle on earth, and raise up a generation of great men, but could not build the Holy Temple, so Moshe, a man unable to stay calm, at *shalom*, and faithful to His Calling in the midst of life's toughest challenges, could confront Pharaoh, lead the nation and a mixed multitude out of bondage, build a temporary tabernacle on earth, and raise up a generation of great and faithful men, but could not preside over the settling of the Holy Land.

The Stage is Set for the Baton of Leadership to Pass to Y'hoshua

The Holy One will therefore instruct Moshe to *commission Y'hoshua, son of Nun, of the tribe of Efrayim, to take over leadership of the nation*. Following this will come a lengthy set of instructions in which the Holy One will tell Moshe which specific approach-surrogates are to be presented at the altar of the *Mish'kan* by the Community not only on each day but also on:

- a. each Sabbath
- b. each *Rosh Chodesh* [new moon]
- c. each *Pesach* [Passover]
- d. each *Shavuot* [Pentecost]
- e. each *Yom T'ruah* [Trumpets]
- f. each *Yom Kippur* [the day of Atonement]
- g. each day of *Sukkot* [Feast of Tabernacles], and
- h. each *Shemini Atzeret*.

Knowing – And Living In Awareness Of – the Prophetic Times and the Seasons of Our King

The Holy One has established, and incorporated into the God/Man Covenant, an annual calendar designed to reveal to the world His beautiful matrix of redemptive events. He started this in motion on the 4th day of Creation week, when He arranged the illumined celestial bodies in the Heavens to serve '*for signs, and for*

seasons, and for days and for years.' Genesis 1:14. He brought this Plan into the next phase after the Flood, when He added to the mix *annually recurring rhythms* of seedtime and harvest, darkness and light, and growth, decay and revitalization. Then He specifically told Moshe and Aharon when, for Kingdom of Heaven purposes, the passion play of redemption is to begin – with the beginning of the moon cycle in which He wrought redemption from Egyptian bondage for His Covenant nation. In the days since that redemption He has revealed how we as His Representatives on the earth are to act – and how the world around us can be expected to react to our presence - at each season, and indeed during each week, of the year. So, some may ask, where are we in the Kingdom Calendar now? We are now in the throes of the '*Three Weeks Between the Straits*'. And, more specifically, we are in the appointed week of the re-awakening of zeal for our Bridegroom-King and His holy places, people, things, appointed times, and purposes Gird up your loins, Dear Ones – this is our season of intense – but calm, humble, disciplined, and spiritually responsible - warfare.

A Short Primer on the 'Three Weeks'

What exactly are the '*Three Weeks between the Straits*', you ask? The '*Three Weeks*' are the twenty-one-day interval beginning each year on the 17th day of the fourth Biblical month [which since the days of the Babylonian captivity is commonly called *Tammuz*] and continuing through the setting of the sun on the 9th day of the fifth Biblical month [commonly called *Av*]. During this three-week interval the city of Jerusalem has twice been invaded and ransacked - and the Holy Temple destroyed - by pagan armies of the Maniacal One-World-Order Empire of the day². During the same 21 days the Covenant People are annually subjected to threats, pogroms, attacks, and the most severe manifestations of anti-Semitic hatred, enslavement and holocaust. There seems to be something about this season each year that stirs up and whips into a frenzy the unclean passions of the boastful beast of the nations. But for us? For us this season just stirs up *zeal* – zeal for the Holy One and the place He has chosen for His Manifest Presence to dwell. We *weep* for the Jerusalem we have lost; and we take comfort in the prophetic vision of the Jerusalem that the Holy One is rebuilding to serve as the capitol of His Kingdom.

As it has been for our forefathers, so it shall be with us. Please do not enter this season unaware, unrepentant or unprepared! This is not a time for boredom, distraction, apathy, or nonchalant acceptance of the *status quo*. Nor is it a time for anger, offense, wrath, rants, or rage. It is not a time for disgust, disdain, criticism, for complaint, judgment, or condemnation. It is not a time to focus on what we are against – but upon Who we serve and why we are here. This is a time for the

² In 586 BCE the invading army was that of the vast Babylonian Empire. In 70 CE the invading army was that of the Roman Empire.

rekindling of passion for our King and zeal for that which pertains to and testifies of Him. This is a season of *zealous watchmen arising!* This is a season for calmness with an edge of steadfast devotion. This is a time to drink deep of the wells of joy, then follow it with a chaser of perseverance in the face of trial and tribulation. This is a time to be like a tree planted by the rivers of living water, which brings forth its fruit in its season; whose leaf shall not – will not under any circumstance - wither. This is a time when *a table is set for us* – but alas, that table is *set in the presence of our enemies*. It is a time when evildoers come at us to eat up our flesh; when a host encamps against us, and when war rises up against us. Stay calm. Stay focused on the King. Remember who – and WHOSE – you are. Remember the great mission of redemption and restoration to which you have been called – and the part you have been assigned to play in that great endeavor. Stay on task. Stay on time. Stay in ranks. Wait for instructions. Go only where you are told, say only what our King gives you to say, and do only what He instructs you to do. Be alert. Be humble. Be willing. If at all possible, to the extent possible, be the adult in the room. Be calm. Be true. And whatever happens to you or to your family or friends, do not surrender to hate. Never cave into the unholy trinity of fleshly, ‘fruit-of-the-tree-of-knowledge’-based deceptions the world calls righteous anger’, ‘moral outrage’, and ‘holy indignation’. Don’t render evil for evil, or insult for insult. In your ‘zeal’ for the Holy One, do not judge men. In your passion for holy things and places and times, do not show wrath or inflict suffering on the ignorant. Be careful not to cause collateral damage. Fear the Holy One. And make sure to leave the world a better place than you found it – not because of what you opposed, condemned, or destroyed, but for how you served, how you blessed, and what you built.

Recognizing – and Preparing to Face and Overcome - The Schemes of ‘the Boastful Beast’

Last week in the course of our studies the Holy One revealed to us the unnerving impact our presence - especially in any significant numbers - has on the psyche of people and nations who do not understand, and therefore have no wish to participate in, the God/Man Covenant and the Grand Redemptive and Restorative Plan out of which that Covenant was conceived. We therefore spent almost the whole week of *Balak* studying the attitudes, conversations, and activities in which pagans engage regarding us this time of year when they do not think we – or the Holy One - can see or hear them. That was what the Balak/Bila’am and *b’not Midyan* narratives of last week’s parsha were all about.

Some think the beast of *Balak is the donkey of Bila’am*. That is incorrect. The beast of this season is the raging, scheming, primal animal that dwells in the hearts

of men who know not the Holy One - and who therefore cannot see the blessing He is offering them through His Covenant People's activities in the earth.

***Why do the nations rage, and the peoples devise a vain scheme?
The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together,
against the Holy One and against His Anointed.***

[Psalm 2:1-2]

Our Bridegroom-King sees it all. Our Bridegroom-King hears every whisper. Our Bridegroom-King knows every secret thought. Our Bridegroom-King therefore warns all who have eyes to see and ears to hear:

***Kiss the Son, lest he anaf [purse His lips and blow heavily], and you perish in the way
when His af [i.e. His bull-like snort of warning] flares His nostrils but a little.
Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him***

[Psalm 2:12]

Our Bridegroom-King does not want us to expect to be welcomed by the nations with open arms. He wants us to know that there are some very, very dark forces and very, very *tamei* spirits at work in this world. He does not want us to give our hearts to either this world's charismatic prophets, its exotic beauties, or its showy, sensual forms of spirituality. He does not want us to be deceived by a few smiling faces or by what seems like a season of 'peace' with our pagan neighbors. He does not want us to let down our guard or be lulled into a false sense of wellbeing.

Out of love, therefore, just in time for our annual season of '*Three Weeks Between the Straits*', the Holy One pulled back the curtain on the pagan mind for us in parsha *Balak*. He had done something similar for Ya'akov in Charan and at Shechem and for Yitzchak in the land of Gerar. He is faithful to reveal to us – if we will but *sh'ma* - what the nations of the world really think of us. He showed us how frustrated and angry people outside the Covenant get over our presence in their world. We got a birds-eye view of their willing enslavement to *tumah*³. We got a bitter taste their insatiable appetite for sensual and occult perversions. And we got a behind-the-scenes expose of their irrational fear, frustration, and paranoia regarding – and therefore their deep-seated hatred toward - us.

The Shepherd of our Souls does not want us to be ignorant of the challenges we will face on our journey through this world – especially during the pagan nations' annual cultural 'seasons of rage'. From springtime through summer of each year – i.e. from *Chag Ha-Shavuot* in the third Biblical month through the High Holy Days

³ *Tumah* usually translated into English as 'uncleanness'. It is the state of being attracted to, immersed in, and impacted negatively by the realm of that which the Holy One identifies in Leviticus as *tamei* [i.e. Biblically *unclean*]. See II Peter 2:9-10: "*The Holy knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of and/or for uncleanness [i.e. *tumah*] and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries.*"

of the seventh Biblical month. He wants us to know we have been sent into the world as sheep among wolves, and are to be wise as serpents but harmless as doves in their midst. **Matthew 10:16.**

Lessons We Are Supposed to Be Learning

For almost two entire weeks now the Writer of Torah has been focusing our attention on people and nations who choose to fear and hate us. The Holy One has laid bare for us the inner fears and conspiracies our presence brought forth from the nations. First we met the Edomi. Then came the Aradi. Then the Emori attacked in two waves. Then we were introduced to the conspiracy of the Moavi and the Midyani. Sheep among wolves indeed! What lessons have we learned by reason of these things? Well, first of all we now understand a little better the kind of extreme dark energy challenges of the heart, mind, and emotion that those conceived, born and raised *outside the Avrahamic Covenant* must deal. We got a glimpse of what it is like to not to be numbered among the ‘chosen people’. We learned a little about the frustrations of life outside the covenant – about the anxieties and vexations that attach to life *outside the shalom of the pathways of Torah*, to minds *untouched by the glory of the Holy One*, and to hearts held in *bondage to the fear of man*.

Secondly, we got a taste of what it is like – and why it is so dangerous - to *travel on the ‘dark side’ of spirituality*. The whole ‘Bila’am episode’ suggested this to us strongly; the stunning narrative at the conclusion of the parsha describing both the physical and spiritual seduction of *B’nei Yisrael* by the daughters of Midyan confirmed it. The way of spiritists and mediums and wizards and fortune-tellers and gurus is the way of trafficking in death – and brings about nothing but frustration, fragmentation and destruction in every human soul it touches.

The ways of the nations are not for us. They never have been, and they never will be. We have access to superior sources of knowledge. We have access to vastly greater reservoirs of wisdom, of understanding, of counsel, and of might. We have an open invitation into a realm of infinite pleasures and delights that is far, far superior to anything the nations, kings, or wizards of this world could ever imagine, much less offer. We have the exquisite honor and inestimable privilege of actually knowing – and walking through life in Covenant With, and thereby learning the secrets and possibilities of life from – the Creator of Heaven and Earth. And with that honor and privilege comes a corresponding responsibility of humility, gratitude, graciousness, and zeal - for our King, and for the implementation of His Grand Plan for the Redemption of Mankind and the Restoration of Creation to its Edenic level of beauty and fruitfulness.

The Primary Themes of the Parsha – and the First Full Week of ‘Dire Straits’

There are five primary focuses in this parsha this week. I personally identify each of these focuses with a slightly different call of the Bridegroom of Heaven to His Bride. I therefore sometimes refer to *Pinchas* as *the parsha of the Five Great Bridal Callings of the Generation of the Return*. In the first few verses of the parsha the focus of the narrative is upon the special covenant relationship the Holy One established with Elazar’s son *Pinchas*, whose act of zeal stopped a plague and brought about atonement for a great national sin. I call this part of the parsha the Great Call to Zeal for the Bridegroom’s Chambers.

In the next portion of the parsha the focus of the narrative shifts to preparing the camp of the Redeemed for an imminent and bloody war. I call this part of the parsha the *Great Call of the Bridegroom for His Bride to Take up Arms and Battle Stations*.

The focus of the parsha then shifts to the building hunger of those in the Camp to claim their inheritance in the land of the Patriarchs. I call this part of the parsha the *Great Call of the Bridegroom for His Bride to Cherish and Possess the Land*.

The next focus of the parsha will be upon the transition from the leadership of Moshe to the leadership of Y’hoshua. I call this part of the parsha the *Great Call to Let Go of the Past and Embrace the Bridegroom’s Plan for the Future*.

And the last part of the week the focus is going to shift to the Divine Bridegroom’s protocols for His Betrothed to make special intimate approaches to Him at designated times of the day and days of the week, at critical changes of natural cycles, and at special Divine Appointments. I call this part of the parsha the *Great Call to Intimacy on the Bridegroom’s Terms*.

The Great Call To Zeal for the Bridegroom’s Chambers

How is your current *level of godly ‘zeal’*? What – and Who – are you ‘zealous’ for? Are you consumed with passion for the Holy One and with zeal for the preservation, sanctity, and availability to all seekers of holiness, of Bridegroom-King’s His earthly dwelling place?

Concerning *Pinchas* the Bridegroom of Heaven testifies: ***Pinchas ... turned back my heat from B’nei Yisrael when in his zeal he stirred up My Zeal within 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?

Two verb phrases are used by the Holy One to describe the effect of Pinchas' ultimate act of zealous intercession. In English they read:

1. he *turned back et chamati* [i.e. *My heat*]; and
2. [he] *zealously expressed my zeal*.

In the Hebrew text of Torah the first verb phrase used by the Holy One is ***heshiv et-chamati***, literally meaning he *turned away the heat I* [i.e. *the Holy One*] *felt*. The second phrase in the original Hebrew text is ***lo-chiliti ... bekin'ati***, literally meaning *he carried forth to completion the zeal or passion which I* [i.e. *the Holy One*] *felt*. In other words, Pinchas actually got all his emotions 'in touch' with the heart of the Divine Bridegroom. He began to feel within himself the very emotions – even the temperature - of the Holy One. And He actually let the Holy One's passions take over, and direct his actions. That is pretty amazing stuff.

Alas, most human beings have, quite frankly, not proven to be even particularly trustworthy *discerners*, much less good and faithful *stewards*, of Divine emotion. Sure, many of us have experienced the phenomenon of sensing feeling in our own hearts the tender *love* and *affection* of the Holy One for something or someone in His Creation. But to first *experience* and then actually *allow our actions to be controlled by* the Holy One's wrath, indignation, rage, and displeasure? Wow! Can human being really be trusted to be good stewards of intense Divine emotions like burning zeal for His House? Can we temper our actions, even in moments of intense emotion, with the perfect mix of wisdom, passion, patience, long-term perspective, and restraint the Holy One employs? Can ordinary people like Pinchas – and you – and me - really be trusted to *do the will of the Holy One in times of wrath and judgment* without inflicting horrible qualities of *collateral damage*?

Ah, now do you see it. That is the point. Not only must we prepare our *camp* and our *armaments* for war. The *most important kind of preparation for war we need to make* is the preparation of our *hearts*. Indeed, we must never go to war unless and until our hearts are complete surrendered to and in perfect harmony with both the emotions and perfect will of the Holy One. If we were all to be truthful we would admit that our minds cannot *fathom* such a level of oneness with the Divine Heart and Will. But somehow, in the midst of crisis and impending war for the sake of Heaven's Grand Redemptive Plan Pinchas, an ordinary man like us, *managed to pull it off*. He moved the Heart of the Bridegroom-King on behalf of his generation. And in this hour of crisis and war I suspect it is the will of the Holy One – and the greatest need of our generation - that we learn to move His Heart as well.

Oh Bridegroom-King of Heaven, we give you our hearts, our minds, our mouths, and our members. We yield our thoughts and emotions – as well as our wills and our passions - to Your Superior Ways. Empower us to be good stewards of all your thoughts and emotions, and enable us to flow consistently and abide steadfastly in Your wisdom and compassion as well as Your zeal for Your House.

***The Great Call of the Bridegroom
For His Bride to Lift Our Heads, Take Up Arms,
Accept Assignments, and Man Battle Stations***

Sound the shofar! Assemble the tribes! Spread the news throughout the Camp! *War is imminent.* This is your call to arms. Whether we like it or not the inescapable truth is that just around the corner looms for us a ‘*time for war*’. Hence the Holy One Himself is going to tell Moshe in no uncertain terms this week in Torah: ***Tzaror et-haMidyanim*** – *i.e. besiege the Midyanites!* And if that were not enough He will then drive the point home by directing Moshe: ***v’hikitem otam*** – *i.e. and smite them!* In connection with *this war* – which Midyan’s actions have made the only possible course of action consistent with the Grand Redemptive Plan of the Holy One for mankind and Creation - here is to be *no negotiation*. There is to be *no appeasement with those who will not – because they refuse to - be appeased.* There is to be *no compromise* with those who only see compromise as a means to keep their fixation upon genocide alive while they retool their arsenals. In this particular, unique situation, the instructions of the Holy One are as straightforward as they can get: *besiege them and smite them.*

War is most definitely not a thing we look forward to. Indeed war is one of the *last things* those of us in covenant with the Divine Bridegroom even want to *talk about* – much less *prepare for* or *participate in*. But the Torah as well as the writer of Ecclesiastes teach us clearly that in the wisdom and timing of the Holy One there is ***a “time for war”*** as well as a ***‘time for peace.’*** War? Really? Is there no other way? Cannot the Bridegroom of Heaven tread the winepress alone? Apparently sometimes – in certain difficult seasons of life like the ‘Three Weeks’ - in dealing with certain intractable foes in the throes of their seasons of rage, the inconvenient truth of spiritual life is that only an *aggressive campaign of all-out war* can bring *true and meaningful shalom.*

The call to war is most assuredly not business-as-usual for us. This is serious stuff. Whom can we send, and who will go for us?

How Did We Sink This Low, This Fast?

At the very end of last week’s parsha we read to our horror that, acting upon the council of Bila’am, the leaders of two nations - Moav and Midyan – conspired to

send beautiful women into the Camp of the Redeemed to distract and entice and seduce as many Hebrew men as they could to the worship of Ba'al. It was an act of spiritual warfare, following on the heels of an unsuccessful attempt to have Bila'am the prophet curse us.

Here is the grim truth with which we now have to come to grips. The people who hired Bila'am to curse us will never accept the fact that we have a covenant with the Creator of Heaven and Earth and a right to be in the world. They will never even accept the fact that we have a right to exist. They do not only want us *all gone from their sight – they want us all dead*. They did not send the beautiful princess Cozbi and the other daughters of Moav and Midyan into our camp in a religious fervor to proselytize for the false god *Ba'al Pe'or* – they did it solely *to soften us up by inflicting as much damage to the Hebrew nation as they possibly could* in preparation for an all-out assault thorough which they planned to drive us all - man, woman, and child - into the Sea. The blatant human trafficking of their young women was designed to accomplish *indirectly* - through prurient seduction - what they had failed to do directly - through the curses they had not been able to convince Bila'am to pronounce on the Hebrew people.

Alas, the devious plot our enemies concocted *worked like a charm*. Thousands upon thousands of Hebrew men *succumbed to the seduction*. Myriads of our best and brightest allowed themselves to be enticed by these strange and beautiful women away from Ya'akov's "*lovely dwellings*" and Yisrael's tabernacles, away from the wives of their youth, away from the precious children with whom the Holy One had blessed them, away from the Torah lifestyle, away from their divine purpose and destiny and calling in life, and what is worse - dare we say it – *away from the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven Himself* to the worship of worthless idols. Numbers 25:1-3 tells us the sad story:

And Israel sat comfortably in Shittim, and the people began to commit harlotry [Hebrew זָנָה (zanah)] with the daughters of Moav. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the af – i.e. warning snort - of the Holy One rose up in relation to Israel.

The war we are going prepare this week is not going to be a war with Moav. The nation – or should I say spirit - with which we will have to fight this week is Moav's co-conspirator, *Midyan*. Why? What was qualitatively different about our interaction with Moav on the one hand and our interaction with Midyan on the other that necessitated that we ignore what Moav did and go to all-out war against Midyan? First of all, it should be noted that what Moav did at the counsel of Bila'am was merely to *invite our men 'to the sacrifices of their gods'*. Our men *chose of their own free will* whether they would go to those sacrifices and feasts or

would not. Many chose to go, to their own disgrace and destruction, and not only to step onto the slippery slope of idolatry but once there to add adultery to the list of sins they committed against the Divine Bridegroom of Heaven. But one thing Moav did not do was to bring its perversion onto ‘our turf’ and rub our faces – and besmirch the holiness of our camp – with same.

It was horrific that Hebrew men who should have known better chose to exchange the glory of the Holy One for worthless idols, the pure and holy marriages they had contracted in the camp of the Redeemed for illicit lovers, and the truth of Torah for the spiritual deception of Moav. But for all that Torah tells us that the anger of the Holy One burned *against Israel* for this sin, and not against Moav. How was what Midyan did qualitatively different? Torah tells us:

*one of the children of Israel came
and presented to his brethren a Midyanite woman in the sight of Moshe
and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel,
who [were] weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting.*

*the name of the Midyanite woman . . . [was] Cozbi the daughter of Zur;
he [was] head of the people of a father's house in Midyan.*

It is one thing for pagans to do dark and perverse things on their own turf, among their own people. That is their choice; and that is their business. It is, however, something very different when pagans bring their perversion into the holy *Mish'kan* of our King. There are watchmen on duty there. And they know full well what they have to do – and why - if pagans invade and try to desecrate the Holy Courts *on their watch*.

Leave a Tender Moment Alone

At a very tender moment, as corporate repentance before the Holy One was in progress in the camp of the Redeemed, even as people were ‘weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting’ over *chet-ha-Ba'al b'Peor*, and restoration looked to be taking place, Midyan sent one of its princesses of Midyan into the camp to disrupt the process. And this princess of Midyan, unlike the women of Moav, did not just invite her Hebrew target to come out of the camp to one of Ba'al's feasts – she went right into the midst of the Camp, to the Tent of Meeting, to the very place the *teshuvah* (i.e. turning back to the Person and Covenant of the Holy One) was occurring, and completely disrupted it.

The way of Bila'am as applied by Moav consisted of an open invitation to leave the camp and indulge fleshly desires to our destruction; the way of Bila'am as applied by Midyan was to invade the Camp with the worst and most sensual kind of perversion and interfere with those from among the Hebrew people who were trying to make *t'shuvah*. The Divine Bridegroom will not tolerate such arrogant

interference in His most tender moments with His Beloved. The Holy One knows that we cannot live in peace with an enemy who is willing to sacrifice its own princesses' virtue – and throw away those precious daughters' lives like so much refuse – in order to get in between Him and the People He has betrothed unto Himself.

What did the Midyani do? They responded like sharks that smell blood. They forsook human instinct of parental love in favor of the basest of animal instincts. They launched an elaborate campaign of spiritual warfare. And we have just buried 24,000 men as the result. There is no going back now. There is too much blood crying out from the ground. Diplomacy is not an option. War is inevitable. The only questions to be decided are *who will launch the first attack*, and *who will – and will not – walk away when the fighting is done*.

A Brief Look at Haftarah Pinchas

I Kings 18:46 – 19:21

V'yad Adonai ha-eytah el-Eliyahu – *And the Hand of the Holy One was upon Eliyahu ...*
vayeshanes motnav – *and he girded up his loins ...* ***vayarotz lifnei Ach'av*** – *and he ran before Ahab* **I Kings 18:46a.**

During the week of *Pinchas* we supplement the study of the Torah with readings about the great character and spirituality challenges that Eliyahu faced in the aftermath of his dramatic confrontation with the prophets of Ba'al at Carmel. After that incident, we are told, *Yizavel* [KJV 'Jezebel'] – the queen of the Northern Kingdom and a supporter of the priests Eliyahu had ordered killed – vowed to end Eliyahu's life. Eliyahu chose to respond to this threat by fleeing for his life. First, the prophet fled *Yizavel's* jurisdiction, to the Southern Kingdom – Judah – where he camped temporarily in the ancient Avrahamic city of Be'er-sheva. Eliyahu's fearful flight did not stop there, however. He fled yet another full day's journey southward into the depths of the desert. There he was strengthened by an angelic visitation. He then traveled 40 more days and nights, finally reaching Mount Horev – *i.e.* Sinai. There, the rejected prophet followed the pattern of Lot and his daughters, and hid in a cave.

The Holy One has plans for Eliyahu – plans that do not involve him living out his days sulking in a cave. The Creator and Sustainer of the Universe – Author of the Glorious Plan for the Redemption of mankind as a species and for the Restoration of Creation to its intended state of beauty, fruitfulness, and *shalom*, was not about leave His prophet to sulk – or tremble in terror of *Yizavel's* decree - in a cave for the rest of his life. The Holy One broke the finity barrier and visited Eliyahu personally. He communed with him intimately. He introduces Himself to Eliyahu in ways the prophet had never imagined. He confronted him as a man confronts his

friend. He rebuked him gently, but firmly. He pierced Eliyahu's thin veneer of flesh emotion and pseudo-intellect, and awakened his *neshama* [God-breathed spirit]. He breathed upon the dying embers of the zeal that He had placed in Eliyahu in former days - infusing that zeal with a whole lot more focus, maturity, and wisdom this time. He then sent Eliyahu right back to the Northern Kingdom – to the point of Yizavel's spear - with a new commission. He provided his prophet not only inspiration but *specific instructions* as to what he was to do. He empowered Eliyahu to do a whole lot more than kill prophets of Ba'al. He sent him out to change the course of world history forever. He turned Eliyahu's focus from *what he was against* - i.e. the perverse ways of the prophets of Ba'al - to *what he was for* – i.e. the Grand Redemptive plan of the Holy One for mankind and Creation. Until we learn this '*lesson of the Cave*', our impact upon the world will be very, very limited, and the legacy we leave will always be one of condemnation and death instead of one of restoration, healing, deliverance, and abundant life.

A Look Ahead to the Apostolic Readings for the Week

John 2:13-22

Then as the time drew near when those of Yehudah observe Pesach, Yeshua went up to Jerusalem. In the Temple He found men selling oxen and doves, and he also saw moneychangers seated at ease. John 2:13-14.

The focus of our B'rit Chadasha readings this week will be on *the cleansing of the Temple* by Yeshua. Please note that the episode we will read starts with the declaration of Yochanan that the Passover was at hand, and that it was for that reason that Yeshua went up to Yerushalayim. **John 2:13.** The operation of zeal for the Holy One is always connected to *His Calendar - not man's*. True zeal requires surrendering all our agendas, timetables, and plans to His Agenda, Timetable, and Plan - and with acknowledging and actively promoting that which the Holy One has called *kadosh*.

Following the prototype of, yet perfecting the approach of, Pinchas, Yeshua will show us what it looks like to flow perfectly in tune with the Holy One's zeal for the holy things of God. What Yeshua does in response to a desecration of the Holy Place will far surpass in inspirational quality what Pinchas did. That is not an indictment of Pinchas; it is simply an acknowledgement of Yeshua's superiority. So, unlike the Pinchas narrative, don't look for casualty reports in this narrative – there won't be any. Not ONE! Don't project rage. Don't expect bloodshed. Don't fantasize destruction. Without killing, injuring, or even striking anyone, but instead applying a *perfect balance of wisdom, perspective, compassion, and zeal*, He will defend the kedusha of His Father's House as did Pinchas – but He will do in away that models the Holy One's more excellent, far less violent, Way. The Rabbi from Natzret will stop and stand in the place where the desecration of the Temple is

happening, spend a few moments calmly plucking hair from one of the oxen, then braiding those hairs into a makeshift whip. He will then look the buyers, sellers, and moneychangers in the eye with the piercing gaze that – and like scared rabbits those interlopers will take off running for the hills as fast as they can move, leaving all their loot behind. Yeshua will then carry the booths and tables out of the Temple, dispose of the coinage, and drive away the livestock in order to make room for the pilgrims from all nations who were even then in the process of joyfully ascending Tziyon’s hill to celebrate Passover as the Torah instructs. Please understand that you, the reader, will have to add into this story any anger, outrage, or offense that you think Yeshua felt or expressed – because the narrative will not contain any reference to any of those things. And consider the possibility that if you insist on seeing Yeshua as angry, offended, outraged, or wrathful as He was calmly going about doing what He was put on earth to do, perhaps it says more about you, and the impact your fleshly emotions are having on you, than upon what really happened here. Divine zeal and fleshly anger are two very different – and, indeed, mutually exclusive - things. As Yeshua’s brother Ya’akov – called ‘James’ by most English-speaking people these days – put it: *So then, my dear beloved brothers, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger – for the anger of man cannot produce the righteousness of God.* James 1:19-20.

May our hearts be submitted to the Holy One this week after the pattern and to the extent modeled for us in this week’s readings by Pinchas, Eliyahu, and Yeshua.

The Rabbi’s son

Amidah Prayer Focus for Week

Petition # 13: Modim Anachnu [A Thanksgiving]

Modim anachnu lach Shoato hu

We gratefully thank You for it is You,

Adonai Eloheinu v’ Elohei Avoteinu l’olam va’ed

O Holy One our God, and God of our ancestors, forever and ever.

Tzur chayeinu mogen Yeshuaeinu

Rock of our lives, shield of our salvation

Ato hu l’dor v’dor

You are He – from generation to generation

Node leicha u’nasefer t’hiloteicha

We will thank you and publish Your praise

Al chaiyeinu hamasurim b’yodeicha

For our lives, which we have entrusted to Your Hand

V’al nish’mateinu hf’kudot lach

And for our souls, which You keep secure.