

(Dvar Torah continued from the front page...)

be a message within Pinchas that separates it above other parshiyot and elevates it to its status as the one read most often.

At the beginning of the Parshah, God promises Pinchas *"a covenant of eternal priesthood."* (Num. 25:13) Why is this necessary since the priesthood is already promised as an eternal lineage to Aaron's descendants, and Pinchas is Aaron's grandson? Concerning this verse, Rashi points out that Pinchas was born before the anointing of Aaron and his sons and had not yet been anointed. This idea is also recounted in the Babylonian Talmud. (Zevachim 101b)

Pinchas's character proves that each of us has the ability through our merit, through our actions, to earn our place as one of God's holy priests. *"You shall be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation,"* (Ex. 19:6) the Torah tells us. Why would the Torah say this if the priests were only a specific lineage not open to most of us Israelites? Because Pinchas proves that he can earn a higher status. Judaism teaches that we can improve our lots in life. And we develop our standing, and our family's standing, through the experience of the Jewish calendar. All of us know families who stand out when it comes to their incredible Shabbat dinners, or their ability to host fun Passover Seders. Those families raise their status through the calendar.

Pinchas symbolizes an instinct, a spirit, inside of every Jew to stand up and unapologetically express their Jewish identity. For some of us it's natural in our surrounding. For some of us it's less comfortable. For all of us it's necessary.

The Jewish Calendar affords us many opportunities to prioritize our Judaism over work, over hobbies, over the rest of our lives. And when we come together as a community, or as a family, whether it be on Shabbat or Chagim, we are exercising the Jewish muscle in our being. Let's make time this week to sit together with our loved ones on Shabbat. Let's call our loved ones and wish them all Shabbat Shalom. Let's build those times into our calendar routine. I promise it will make our lives more meaningful.

Some of us might be born into the priestly class. Some of us might be born as Israelites. Regardless, I'd argue that all of us have to earn our status as a holy nation. It begins with the way we treat our loved ones and our neighbors. It begins with the way we spend our sacred time. It begins with the memory of Pinchas.



Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center
Conservative Yeshiva

TORAH SPARKS

Pinchas

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Annual | (Numbers 25:10-30:1) Etz Hayyim, p. 918
Triennial | (Numbers 25:10-26:51) Etz Hayyim, p. 918
Haftarah | (Jeremiah 1-2:3) Etz Hayyim, p. 968

Pinchas and the Jewish Calendar

Rabbi Nolan Lebovitz, Adat Shalom, Los Angeles, CY Student 2013-2014

This week's Parashah of Pinchas contains the sections of Torah most often read during the year. It's description of the Jewish calendar is not only read this week, but we also read sections from Parshat Pinchas on every Rosh Chodesh (new month), and on most Chagim (holidays) during the year. The Jewish calendar sets the foundation for Jewish life during the year, and Pinchas can be found in almost all of it.

One can argue that Jews in Israel have the calendar woven into their everyday lives, which might make the calendar more meaningful, or might allow Israeli Jews to take the calendar for granted. On the other hand, Jews in the diaspora must consciously take time off of work to celebrate the Jewish calendar, constantly explaining to our neighbors the significance of these days. One can argue that these efforts make our appreciation of the holidays greater, or perhaps we are always trying to fit the round peg of our Jewish Holidays into the square hole of our diaspora culture.

However, there are other parshiyot that recap the holidays, such as Mishpatim and Emor. Why then is Pinchas read and reread so often during the year? There must

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D'var Haftarah: Vigilance for Truth

Rabbi Mordechai Silverstein, *From the Archives*

This Shabbat begins the first of three special Shabbatot which precede Tisha b'Av. These Shabbatot are known as the "Tlata d'puranuta – the Three of Punishment" because the haftarot speak of impending troubles that will come upon the nation. The haftarot warn that the nation and the people are heading toward their doom because of their disloyalty to God, their immoral behavior, and their injudicious relations with the surrounding powers. The rabbis assigned these particular haftarot to the Shabbatot before Tisha b'Av to give us the sense that actions and behavior have consequences, for good and for bad.

This same theme was taken up by the opening drashah in a collection of drashot called Pesikta d'Rav Kahana. The derashah opens with a verse from the book of Isaiah and winds its way back to the opening verse of the haftarah, the first verse of the book of Jeremiah: "Rabbi Abba bar Kahana opened with the verse: 'Cry aloud. O daughter of Gallim (the name of a place, here understood to mean "ocean waves")! Listen, O Laish (here understood to mean "lion"), Answer her [Aniah], O Anathoth (the city where Jeremiah was born)" (Isaiah 10:30) [This sage then goes on to interpret this verse in creative ways.] "'Cry aloud' – [means:] raise your voice; 'daughters of Gallim' – just as waves stand out in the ocean, so, too, your patriarch stood out in the world; Another interpretation: 'daughters of Golim (read here as "exile") – namely, the daughters of those who went into exile. For example: 'daughters of Abraham' [who went into exile in Egypt because of famine, 'daughters of Isaac' [who went into exile in Gerar]; 'daughters of Jacob' [who went in to exile in Padan Aram to escape Esau.]; 'Listen' – Harken to My commandments, hearken to the words of the Torah, hearken to the words of prophecy. And if you do not, 'Laish' – a lion will rise up against you. [Who might that be?] This is Nebuchadnezer. 'Answer her [Aniah] – [read here as 'poor'] – poor in righteous ones, poor in words of the Torah, poor in commandments and good deeds. And if this is the case, then 'Anathoth', namely, a man from Anathoth will come and prophecy against you words of rebuke. This is why Scripture needs to come and say the words of this week's haftarah which open with the words:] There are the words of Jeremiah son of Hilkiyah, one of the priests at Anathoth of Benjamin' (Jeremiah 1:1).

The point of this midrash is to illustrate that those who did not heed the earlier prophet, Isaiah, and his warnings concerning the behavior of the people, will be faced with the rebuke and punishment dished out in Jeremiah's prophecy. The Jewish tradition never ceases to remind us to be aware that all things in life bear consequences. The good life requires vigilant regard for this truth.

At the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem, we offer students of all backgrounds an opportunity to engage with Jewish texts in a dynamic, inclusive, and

Who Should Inherit the Corner Office?

Vered Hollander-Goldfarb, *CY Faculty*

Text: Bamidbar 27:15-23

(15) And Moshe said to the LORD, saying, (16) "Let the LORD... appoint a man over the community... (17) who shall go out before them..." (18) And the LORD said to Moshe, "Take for you Joshua son of Nun... and lay [vesamachta] your hand upon him. (19) And you shall stand him before Elazar the priest and before all the community, and you shall command him before their eyes..." (22) And Moshe did as the LORD had commanded him, and he took Joshua and stood him before Elazar... and before all the community. (23) And he laid his hands upon him and commanded him as the LORD had spoken...

- Who do you think Moshe had in mind as his heir? Why does he not specify who that should be?
- Why has this not been discussed until now (unlike Aaron, whose sons were working at his side, learning the priesthood)?
- Who was chosen? Why? How will Moshe mark this chosen person? How do you understand the meaning of the various components of the ceremony, including the Smicha (laying hands)?

Commentary: Rashi Bamidbar 27:16

Let the LORD ... appoint – Moshe ... said to himself, "The time has come that I should ask for my affairs – that my sons should inherit my high position". God replied to him, "Not thus has entered My mind; Joshua deserves to receive the reward of his ministrations, because "he has never departed from out the tent" (Exodus 33: 11).

- What internal conflict does Rashi/the Midrash identify in Moshe's vague request regarding his heir?
- Rashi explains why Joshua is qualified. If so, why were Moshe's sons are not qualified? How did Moshe differ from Aaron?

Commentary: Rashi Bamidbar 27:23

And he laid his hands – generously (in full measure), even more than he had been commanded, for the Holy One, blessed be He, had said, (v. 18) "Lay thy hand [upon him]", but he did this with his two hands and filled him generously with his own wisdom.

- What small difference between the instructions and the execution pointed suggested to Rashi that Moshe did more than instructed?
- Think about the relationship of Moshe and Joshua. How does Joshua feel at this moment when he is told that he was chosen to take over after Moshe? How does Moshe feel about Joshua? How might he feel about him in this new role?

- What does Moshe do for Joshua when he lays both hands upon him, and does it publicly?