

Pinhas - Selected Shorts - Number 37
Rabbi Eliot Malomet 23 Tammuz 5781 July 3, 2021

במדבר כ"ה:יא

(יא) פִּינְחָס בֶּן־אֶלְעָזָר בְּן־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הֵשִׁיב אֶת־חַמְתּוֹ מֵעַל בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְיָאָו אֶת־קִנְיַתִּי בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא־כִלִּיתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְיַתִּי:

Numbers 25:11

(11) *"Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned My venomous-anger from the Children of Israel in his being-zealous with my jealousy in their midst, so that I did not finish off the Children of Israel in my jealousy.* Pinhas impaled the Israelite man and the Midianite woman while they were engaged in their idolatrous act. Can we ever justify Pinhas' act? The inclusion of this narrative in the Torah alarms us to the risk of self-appointed zealots who want to emulate him. But if the Torah had "cancelled" Pinhas, ie. edited this story out of the book, it would have omitted a difficult truth concerning human nature and the religious personality. The Torah includes it; it's up to us to debate it and indeed, agonize over it.

במדבר כ"ה:יב

(יב) לָכֵן אָמַר ה'נָנִי נָתַן לִּי אֶת־בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹמִי:

Numbers 25:12

(12) *Therefore say: 'I give him My covenant of shalom.* Notice, it doesn't say, "Say to him." The declaration of this covenant is made indirectly. We are in a gray zone: yes, he performed an act of zeal; yes, he stepped over the line; yes, he apportioned to himself a divine prerogative; yes, he stopped the plague; but at the same time, his action was dangerous. He gets a "covenant of peace" but it's delivered to him via a third party, not directly. Subtlety is key: for God to have delivered it to him personally, directly, God would have accorded Pinhas total legitimacy. Many commentators point out that the "covenant of peace" is a form of sequestration. Pinhas is too dangerous to be out among the people; he needs to reside in the sanctuary. And other commentators point to the broken 'vav' in the word שלום in the written text. It's a broken peace.

במדבר כ"ה:יג

(יג) וְשֵׁם אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמְּכֹה אֲשֶׁר הִכָּה אֶת־הַמִּדְיָנִית זִמְרִי בֶן־סֻלֵּימָה וְשֵׁם בֵּית־אָבִי לְשִׁמְעוֹן:

Numbers 25:14

(14) *Now the name of the man of Israel, the one struck-dead, the one struck-dead with the Midyanitess was Zimri son of Salu, chieftain of a Simeonite ancestral house.* Why are they named? To indicate how important they were.

במדבר כ"ו:יא

(יא) וּבְנֵי־קֹרַח לֹא־מָתוּ: {ס}

Numbers 26:11

(11) *The sons of Korah, however, did not die.* Located in a genealogical passage, this is an important footnote to the Korah rebellion. As opposed to the children of

Dathan and Aviram who were punished alongside their fathers, Korah's sons were not punished because they were not guilty of any violation. Readers of Psalms will note that a few Psalms are ascribed to them.

במדבר כ"ו:י"ט

(י"ט) בְּנֵי יְהוֹדָה עָר וְאוֹנָן נִמְתָּ עַר וְאוֹנָן בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן:

Numbers 26:19

(19) *Born to Judah: Er and Onan. Er and Onan died in the land of Canaan.* The Torah stitches the genealogy here to the stories of Bereishit. Read it closely and you will get a snapshot of how the traumas of ancestors imprint themselves on their descendants.

במדבר כ"ו:מ"ו

(מ"ו) וְשֵׁם בַת־אֲשֶׁר שָׂרָה:

Numbers 26:46

(46) *The name of Asher's daughter was Serah.*— One of the rare mentions of a daughter. Serah, a legendary figure in rabbinic literature, is the bearer of family memory. Archetypal, matriarchal, she, like so many important women of history is entrusted with the transmission of narrative and family lore. She knows where all the bones are buried. Literally. Legend has it that she lived long enough to tell Moses where to find Joseph's bones so that he could reinter them in the Land of Israel.

במדבר כ"ו:נ"ו

(נ"ו) עַל־פִּי הַגּוֹזֵל תִּחַלַּק נַחֲלָתוֹ בֵּין רַב לְמַעֲט: {ס}

Numbers 26:56

(56) *Each portion shall be assigned by lot, whether for larger or smaller groups.* An interesting item which, upon reflection, makes perfect sense: in order to rebut any potential charge of favoritism, this tribe got a better tract than that tribe, the land is allocated by lot, ie. by the will of God. The development of the economy and culture of the tribe is tied to a lottery ordained by God.

במדבר כ"ז:ג

(ג) אֲבִינֹהָ מֵת בַּמִּדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא־הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעֲדִים עֲלֵיהָ בַּעֲדַת־קֹרַח כִּי־בִחֲטָאוֹ מָת וּבָנָיִם לֹא־הָיוּ לּוֹ:

Numbers 27:3

(3) *"Our father died in the wilderness. He was not one of the faction, Korah's faction, which banded together against the LORD, but died for his own sin; and he has left no sons.* How many different stories are in this verse? How did Tzlofhad die? What was his sin? Why do the daughters mention this? Were they the only family of daughters in such a large population? The rabbis identify Tzlofhad as the person who gathered wood on Shabbat. In this instance we get a picture of a legal system in its early stages: a circumstance not covered by law needs adjudication. As a legal system, the Torah's laws evolve in real time.

במדבר כ"ז:כ"ג

(כג) וַיִּסְמְךָ אֶת־יָדָיו עָלָיו וַיִּצְוֶהוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה: {פ}

Numbers 27:23

(23) He laid his hands upon him and commissioned him—as the LORD had spoken through Moses. God told him to lay one “hand”. Moses lays both his “hands”. The laying of a single hand is a legal designation. The laying of both hands here is understood as an additional symbolic gesture of legitimization. Succession is one of the most perilous moments in political life. Leaders can undermine their successors by denying them legitimacy; successors can undermine their predecessors by displays of contempt.

במדבר כ"ח:ד'

(ד) אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַקֶּר וְאֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִי תַעֲשֶׂה בַיּוֹם הָעֶרְבָיִם:

Numbers 28:4

(4) You shall offer one lamb in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight. The Maharal of Prague explained that this was the most important verses in the Torah because it emphasized consistency. Study, performance of mitzvot, worship of God is not contingent on a particular mood or state. It is a daily feature of life; a constant presence in our self-awareness. The infographic below illustrates the variety of sacrifices and a few interesting patterns.

Shabbat Shalom!

במדבר כ"ז:י"ג

(יג) וְרֵאִיתָה אֹתָהּ וַיִּנָּסֶפֶת אֶל־עַמִּיד גַּם־אֹתָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר נָאֶסַף אֶהְרֹן אֶחָיד:

Numbers 27:13





















































































(13) When you have seen it, you too shall be gathered to your kin, just as your brother Aaron was. Moses is granted a view of the land, unlike Aaron. This is a consolation. But what does *just as your brother* mean? Every death is different; Aaron’s death was ceremonial – unfrocking of Aaron and investiture of his son. Moses’ death will be private. God will attend to Moses’ burial Himself. The disparity between their deaths will be noted in the description of the way the people mourn. For Aaron *the whole House of Israel wept*. For Moses (just) *the Children of Israel wept*. Speculation: Aaron was loved. Moses was feared.

במדבר כ"ז:ט"ז

(טז) יִקְדֹּךָ ה' אֱלֹהֵי הַרְוֵחַת לְכָל־בָּשָׂר אִישׁ עַל־הַעֲדָה:

Numbers 27:16

(16) “Let the LORD, Source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community. “Good leaders create followers. Great leaders create leaders.” Jonathan Sacks. A moment of humility, devotion, and full apprehension of a leader’s role. In light of the opening of this parasha, it would have been plausible to offer the leadership to Pinhas. But the selection of Joshua proves a point: a zealot can’t be a leader. The wrong leader has disastrous consequences. Joshua I the right leader, with the right spirit, for the right time.

Type	Animal	Daily	Shabbat	Rosh Hodesh	Pesach	Shavuot	Rosh Hashanah	Yom Kippur	Sukkot	Shmini Atzeret
Burnt Offering	Cow 			2  	2/day  	2  	1 	1 	Day 1:13, day 2:12, day 3:11 etc. until day 7:7 Total: 70  ...	1 
	Ram 			1 	1/day 	1 	1 	1 	2/day  	1 
	Sheep 	1 a.m. 1 p.m.  	2 additional  	7 additional        	7/day additional        	7 additional        	7 additional        	7 additional        	14/day additional            	7 additional
Sin	Goat 			1 	1/day 	1 	1 	1 	1/day 	1 