

# NOT SO SIMPLE, NOT SO MUNDANE

*by Rabbi Pinchas Winston*

## Friday Night:

G-d told Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the priest, stopped My anger towards the children of Israel because he was zealous on My behalf ..." (Bamidbar 25:10-11)

Well, that changes EVERYTHING. Had Pinchas been jealous on his OWN behalf, then, it is not so clear that G-d would have intervened on his behalf and saved him from the oncoming posse. Such is the power of 'lishmah.'

'Lishmah' translates as, "for the sake of the Name," that is, for the sake of G-d. It should also be the goal of every individual, to get to the point where he or she does what they do just for the sake of pleasing G-d. As mature as one may become, still, one must always focus on pleasing their Father in Heaven.

So central to life is that that the Talmud states:

All who perform 'lo lishmah' (i.e., for non-spiritual reasons) are better off never having been created. (Brochos 17a)

That is a pretty harsh statement for a world of people who have difficulty being one-hundred percent altruistic ... especially in a world that can be so pleasurable! If it were completely true, then, it would be a very lonely world for the very few who can serve G-d just to please him.

Fortunately, the Talmud adds in several places:

A person should always be involved with Torah and mitzvos, even if not for altruistic reasons, for this will bring him to lishmah. (Pesachim 50b)

However, this is not a 180-degree turn in the Talmud's way of thinking, implying that any kind of mitzvah performance is good enough for G-d. Rather, the concluding statement of the Talmud just quoted is what qualifies its opening sentence: lo lishmah is only acceptable as a means of bringing one in the direction of lishmah.

For example, there is a mitzvah to eat challah on Shabbos. Now, if a person makes the mistake of coming into Shabbos without an appetite, then, eating the Challah is less likely to satisfy his own

desire more than it will satisfy the legal requirement. On the other hand, if a person comes into Shabbos ravenous and anxious to eat, then, he may end up eating away the mitzvah while satisfying his own palate. This is why many people have the practice of saying, "This is to honor the holy Shabbos" before partaking of anything enjoyable on Shabbos.

Now, there is no sin to enjoy that which is permissible in this world. Just the opposite -- we will be asked why we DIDN'T enjoy that which we could have. Rather, the 'sin' comes from making PHYSICAL pleasure the goal in life, and SPIRITUAL success a by-product, when, it really should be the other way around.

In other words, eating challah and anything enjoyable in this world is an inevitable result of being made physical, and takes little, if any free-will at all to do so. You won't get to Heaven and be told, "Wow! That was amazing how you enjoyed that chocolate ice-cream cake on an empty stomach ... And, how noble it was of you to eat that hamburger and French fries after that fast day! Here is all your eternal reward for doing so!"

However, aligning one's intentions with G-d's intentions for something to be done, on the other hand, takes all the free-will with which we have been empowered -- especially when there are physical reasons to enjoy what we are about to do. It is for doing THIS that the angels roll out the red carpet for us once we get to Heaven, and for which we receive our portion in the World-to-Come.

No doubt Pinchas hated to kill anyone. No doubt Pinchas enjoyed righting wrong. However, no doubt that had Pinchas acted selfishly on any level he would have lost the merit of Divine protection, and, his act of zealousness would have been tarnished, just as had been the case of Shimon and Levi in Shechem (Bereishis 34:25).

It may be difficult to be altruistic in what we do, especially when so many good things come to us as result. For example, being a rabbi can sound so spiritual, but, it can also be very self-serving when one considers all the respect due to a person of this walk in life. Today, in some congregations, the salaries for rabbis can rival that of many top professions!

However, unless serving Hashem 'lishmah' is the immediate goal, then, a person will be doomed to stay on the level of 'lo lishmah,' and cease to justify his or her existence. It is one's drive to serve G-d for 'His sake' that acts as a spiritual foil for all we do, making us feel uncomfortable when our actions become self-serving and physical pleasure becomes a goal unto itself. Corruption can only follow, and with it, a very severe judgment from Heaven.

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## Shabbos Day:

*G-d told Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon... (Bamidbar 25:10)*

It is always amazing to see how Sod looks at a posuk. So many times, it seems as if a posuk has nothing more to teach than what it is saying on the pshat -- simplest -- level of understanding, until someone like the Arizal comes and shows us the deeper level.

For example, the posuk says:

G-d told Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon... (Bamidbar 25:10)

What more can this posuk be teaching us than Pinchas's lineage? According to Rabbi Chaim Vital, who learned it from his teacher and master, the Arizal, there is this to learn (my explanations are in parentheses):

"Regarding Eliyahu, my teacher said that he is alluded to in the posuk, 'If [one is drawn] to scoffers, he will scoff; but if to the humble, he will find favor' (Mishlei 3:34), since the head-letters spell 'Eliyahu chai' ('Eliyahu lives') ..."

(That is, in the original Hebrew verse, the first letters of the words of the posuk quoted, when combined, spell the Hebrew words, "Eliyahu chai." Thus, in this verse, which seems to have little to do with Eliyahu himself, hint to him, according to the Arizal.)

"The Zohar says (Ray'ah Mehemna, Bereishis 25b; 253) that, though Moshe Rabbeinu was the teacher of all of Israel, his interpreter was Aharon HaKohen, as it says, 'He will be a mouth for you' (Shemos 4:16), since Moshe had a 'heavy mouth' and 'heavy tongue.'"

(As the Torah states, Moshe received the prophecy from G-d, but, it was Aharon his brother he told it to Paroah in Egypt.)

"In the 'End of Days' in the generation of Moshiach, Moshe will return to teach Torah to Israel, and will still be of 'uncircumcised lips.' However, Eliyahu, who will 'chai,' will be his interpreter ..."

(This is hard to believe, since one would expect Moshe's stutter to have been rectified by the Days of Moshiach. However, if one understands Moshe's 'problem' as being that he was on too high a level to communicate with the lowly Paroah -- which is how Kabbalah understands it -- then, it would make sense that in Yemos HaMoshiach, he would be on an even higher level and thus in need of an interpreter even in Yemos HaMoshiach.)

"... And this is the sod of the posuk, 'Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon HaKohen' (Bamidbar 25:11)."

(That is, Pinchas, who later became Eliyahu the prophet, will later be Moshe's interpreter as Aharon, he ancestor was.)

"This is as it is written, 'If [one is drawn] to scoffers, he will scoff' (Mishlei 4:37): when they will need a translator for Moshe, Eliyahu who will be 'chai' will translate and be Moshe's interpreter." (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Chapter 36)

(The word 'yalitz' can mean 'scoff' or 'interpret,' and thus the posuk from Mishlei not only alludes to

Eliyahu through its letters, but, in its deeper meaning as well.)

Thus, the first verse of this week's parshah not only hints to a much deeper meaning, but, it also alludes to a vision of the future as well. When Moshe Rabbeinu will return to his people once again (elsewhere the Arizal states in the body of Moshiach, that is, the body will 'ben Dovid's,' but, the soul will be Moshe's), and continue teaching the Jewish people.

It only goes to show you once again that you can't judge a posuk by its simple meaning, nor a person by their outward physical appearance. And, the events of history are about as random as single notes on the sheet music of a Beethoven symphony -- and even less so when it comes to Divine Providence.

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### **SEUDAH SHLISHI:**

... *A convocation it will be to you. (Bamidbar 29:35)* The Midrash explains:

All the days of the holiday they offered sacrifices corresponding to the Seventy Nations. When they were about to leave, G-d told them, "I request from you that you make me a small meal for Me to enjoy from you." (Rashi)

This is why, explains the Midrash, that the holiday of Shemini Atzeres comes on the heels of the seven days of Succos, and why, for the seven days we bring a total of seventy sacrifices while on the eighth day, we bring only on behalf of the Jewish people.

It also teaches you something very important, and that is, before we, the Jewish people, can enjoy a quiet and peaceful relationship with G-d, we have to first bring peace to the world. The beautiful thing about Temple times was that we could do THAT without even having to leave our land, indeed, even Jerusalem! Sacrifices brought on behalf of the Seventy Nations was enough to keep mankind at bay, and leave the Jewish people free to pursue higher spiritual planes.

Ironically, it is just the opposite today. Rather than the Jewish people working on behalf of the nations, the nations are working on behalf of the Jewish people (or so they claim, sometimes). And, rather than first bring peace to the world so we can learn Torah in peace in Eretz Yisroel, they are trying to first bring peace to Israel so they can do their own thing in their lands.

It is not a coincidence, either. It is as the Talmud says and the Rambam reminds: If the Jewish people pursue spiritual goals, then, The Holy One, Blessed is He, will take care of our physical well-being. If we become overly involved with our physical well-being, especially to the exclusion of spirituality, then, the system breaks down and even reverses itself, as it has done.

Not only this, but, there is no special 'atzeres' for the Jewish people either. Shemini Atzeres is called the 'Eighth Day,' even though it is an independent holiday, because it is, conceptually at least,

attached to the holiday of Succos. In other words, our accomplishment on Succos is what makes the endearment of Shemini Atzeres a reality. We may still observe the holiday as usual, but, it is more a reminder of what is supposed to be, than what actually is.

For our generation, this is hard to relate to. We are used to being a tiny little nation that makes up about one percent of the world's population. We are used to being less respected than the rest of the Western World, like a rambunctious child that has to be monitored and told how to behave on an ongoing basis. And worse than this, we are looked upon as the bully on the block when we have been trying to be anything but that.

This is one of things that we can look forward to once the Third and Final Temple arrives, a rectification of the order of protocol. First, the Jewish people as a whole will redevelop their yearning for Torah and spiritual values. Then, we will grow in wisdom and unity and gain the respect of the nations once again. When this happens, they will realize that peace in the world depends upon service of G-d in the Temple, and, performing this service will restore peace to the world.

And finally, at long last, we will be free once again to learn Torah and pursue a deeper relationship with G-d, without distraction and interference.

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## **MELAVE MALKAH:**

### Part Six: Yemos HaMoshiach, Continued

As mentioned last week, the focus of Yemos HaMoshiach, once evil has become a thing of the past, is purification of the bodies. The reversal of the sin of Adam HaRishon means moving spiritually upward and becoming more light-like than physical. It is to go from Kesones Ohr (AYIN-vav-raish) to Kesones Ohr (ALPEH-vav-raish) -- from bodies made of skin to bodies made from light.

This is an automatic result of the increasing Presence of G-d in reality. As G-d allows the spiritual veils that 'hid' His face for millennia from most men to spiritually dissolve, His light that nourishes and sustains creation will become increasingly obvious and permanent.

What is actually happening is not as it sounds. It sounds as if creation is remaining stationary, and, the Divine Presence is descending closer to us. In fact, in reality, just the opposite is happening, and THAT is the true reversal of the sin of Adam HaRishon.

In other words, the lowest Sefiros in the chain of Ten Sefiros -- Malchus (Kingdom) -- having been 'built' and rectified through Moshiach and the transformation of mankind to a much higher level of spiritual recognition, begins to ascend in the direction of the light of 'Ain Sof' (literally, 'Without End'), the highest emanation of G-d's light to which we attach a Name.

As a result, though, in the beginning of this period we will function quite normally, that is, as we did prior to Moshiach's arrival, as the Sefiros move upward and creation becomes more spiritual, bodily

functions will cease to have importance. This is the level to which Moshe Rabbeinu himself reached when G-d 'passed by' him on Har Sinai, while he hid in the cleft of the rock (Shemos 33:22). This is what allowed the rays of light to emanate from him.

The rabbis say that when Moshe reached this level of spirituality, he became part angel, and, as a result, no longer had to eat food. It was not that he did not require nourishment. Rather, like the rest of us, he DID require sparks of holiness to keep his soul and body together. However, unlike the rest of us, he did not have to work through the physical word (food) to receive them, but, had direct access to the necessary sparks as if they were in the air all around him.

That is the level to which those living in Yemos HaMoshiach will reach, and, as a result, more than likely bodily organs will begin to disappear. Who will need them when food becomes manna-like, never requiring digestion or rejection of any of its parts?

Those whose pleasure comes primarily through the physical world may be alarmed by this new spiritual reality. They will wonder, if one's ability to 'interact' with the world around on a physical level is reduced and then removed, what pleasure can life thereafter provide.

The answer, of course, is that physical pleasure is one of the lowest levels of pleasure that exist. However, it is also the only one with which we are most familiar; true and ultimate pleasure resides beyond the imagination of most people, especially at this very late and quite sensuous stage of history.

However, as the prophets teach, the world will become filled with much greater and higher levels of understanding. Just like the path of the 'Ba'al Teshuvah' (literally, 'Master of Repentance') changes dramatically as his knowledge of Torah increases, and, his priorities in life become altered as his feeling for spirituality is enhanced, so much more so will this be the case for all who merit to live in the period of Moshiach.

In fact, not too long ago I overheard a conversation about a young boy who was about to have an operation to allow him to hear. Born with the problem, he has never been able to hear and differentiate more than two tones. However, G-d willing, after the operation, he will be able to hear a whole spectrum of tones that most of us take completely for granted, and finally learn how to hear, and, b"H, speak!

Those listening in were straining to try to relate to what it will feel like for this boy, who, for two decades, never really understood how many sounds exist in creation. We marveled at the technological breakthrough, but, we marveled more at how the boy's life, b"H, and his ability to enjoy will be so greatly enhanced.

Surely his amazement of the new world he will discover and begin to understand will take him away from many of the pleasures he used to occupy his time with, given his limited ability to enjoy life. In fact, a simple conversation with someone he can hear and talk to may be the highlight of his day for

weeks, if not months!

This is what will happen in Yemos HaMoshiach, and then some. The world will simply taste better, on its own. Our ability to 'taste' it will become greatly improved. However, more importantly, spiritual abilities we never knew we possessed will begin to surface and dominate our lives and perspectives. We will become psychic, but even that will only be the beginning, for, in its wake will return prophecy, and man will once again talk directly to G-d.

I often ask my students (and myself) on occasion, "What would be different about your life and the way you live it if you could talk with G-d on a somewhat regular basis"

There is usually a period of silence, followed by answers that seem to flow from a deeper part of the person, not from their bodies but from their souls. And, for the period of time the discussion lasts (and maybe some time after), all mundane activities and distractions become things of the past, and a new 'energy' can be felt amongst people that might even still be strangers to one another. It is an energy that elevates and excites on a spiritual level, and, one which results in feelings for unity and higher purposes in life.

Unfortunately, at this stage of history, the energy is quickly zapped upon returning to the 'outside world.' However, just imagine what it will be like when the 'outside world' finally becomes the same as in the inside one ...

Have a great Shabbos  
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