

# OF ZEALOTS AND ERETZ YISROEL

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

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

It seems to be a historical reality. One person's zealot is another person's extremist. Another person's freedom fighter is another person's terrorist. In one country a particular act is considered heroic and worthy of praise, while in another country they would lock the person up and throw away the key for the same act.

It is no different in this week's parshah. The Midrash says that until G-d stepped in on behalf of Pinchas in this week's parshah, they wanted to lynch Pinchas right there and then for having killed a prince, Zimri. Never mind the fact that Zimri deserved to be killed for his sin; Pinchas was a virtual nobody at the time and his act of zealousness angered the masses.

What is quite amazing is that in this week's parshah all of the actors were Torah observant, Pinchas and the people who came for him. And, you can be sure that those who wanted to avenge Zimri's death thought that they were, in fact, the real zealots, punishing the murderer of a Jewish prince. They thought that they were the ones acting in the best interest of the Jewish people.

However, not only are all of the actors in today's crisis NOT Torah observant, but many of them are extreme left in their political leanings, and many others are gentiles who do not live in the Middle-East or accurately comprehend the Arab mentality. And this is in spite of how hard Divine Providence has tried to educate them otherwise through the attack on the Twin Towers, and the ongoing quagmire in Iraq.

Yet, they feel free to label the hold-outs in Gush Katif as extremists. They feel no shame in calling those who wish to hold onto beautiful homes they built with their own hands, and communities into which they have invested hundreds of millions of shekels, as fanatics.

Quite the contrary! They feel totally righteous in referring to those people who are holding on to a piece of Eretz Yisroel for dear life - land that with G-d's blessing they miraculously caused to bloom and prosper, as revolutionaries, even though the government has done little to duplicate their hard-earned lifestyles elsewhere in the country.

And the amazing thing is, how many people listen to and absorb the government definitions with

equanimity. It is truly wondrous how many people, living far away from the place of contention in cozy homes that are not being threatened, are only too happy to adopt the Israeli media's take on the situation, though the same media are clearly instruments for government opinion, or worst, their own left-leaning, self-serving perspectives.

And the truly tragic thing is, they are all willing to abandon the Gush, its agricultural miracles, and the heroic people who made it all happen, thinking that once the deed is done, brighter times in Jewish history are forthcoming. Although, that surely will not be the case. Yes, the events of this summer will hasten the Final Redemption, but it will not be in a pleasant way.

In 2001 it was the destruction of the World Trade Center and a series of devastating hurricanes off the coast of Florida. The ongoing war in Iraq must be taking a toll on President Bush. There was the bombing in Madrid, Spain years back, and more recently, the blasts in London, the tsunami and after-shocks in Indonesia, Earthquakes in California, and more hurricanes in Florida.

And hitnatkut (disengagement) creeps closer, as 5766/2006 looms on the horizon.

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

*Therefore, I give him My covenant of peace. The covenant of the priesthood will be his and his descendants forever because, he was zealous for his G-d and atoned for the Children of Israel."*  
(*Bamidbar 25:12*)

I have asked and have been told that at this stage of history it is not halachically correct to spill blood to save land. This means that refusing to leave Gush Katif is only halachically permissible up until it can result in the spilling of Jewish blood. It means that even if the government is wrong about its idea of hitnatkut, that it is far more wasteful to give it away to people bent on Jewish destruction (as is clearly evident from the Arab clergy and media) than it is to continue to protect the settlers living there. Still, the spilling of Jewish blood to reverse the decision is not permissible according to the Torah.

Even if the claims are true, that disengagement is totally the product of personal political agendas that have little if anything at all to do with the safety of this country, and if the army is still prepared to execute its orders to disengage from Gush Katif, physical confrontation between Jew and Jew must be avoided. It means that if the Jewish people today consist of those who can beat their own people into submission, and even make them bleed in the process, and that they are only too willing to do so (many policemen have volunteered for the "mission"), clashing with them must be avoided. Otherwise, remaining in the line of fire can make a person responsible for not taking care of his or her own health, as one is obligated to do according to the Torah.

Shortly after the government first proposed to act unilaterally and surrender land to the enemy, and the idea of disengagement began to settle in, there has been movement out of the Gush. Understandably, some people are simply not fighters and they made the decision early to switch

rather than fight. The entire future of children can be made or broken by the events of the next few months, and who wants to gamble with the future of their children, especially in such uncertain times?

However, the bulk of the settlers did not budge. So, the government intensified its bid to loosen the connection between the remaining settlers and the land into which they had sunk their roots into. Combining international and local pressure with military intimidation (including forcibly breaking up families who hold out until the end), while at the same time financially rewarding those who left early, has caused more apples to fall from the tree. The bulk has become smaller.

As the target date for hitnatkut approaches one can expect it to become increasingly smaller. The resolve of one soldier is rarely the same as the resolve of his comrade, and crises are a test of resolve. And, as the group becomes smaller, faces that were once lost amongst the crowd will become increasingly more obvious, more personable, perhaps even known and identifiable by name, something the army will do everything it can to avoid so that such people do not earn hero status.

There will be some who will be relieved to disengage themselves based upon halachah, though they do not cherish the prospects of where they are going to be instead. However, given the choice of starting all over again as a complete family versus going nowhere as a broken family, the latter makes far more sense.

There will be others who will not find any relief in the halachah of avoiding physical confrontation, but will, begrudgingly, follow it anyhow. Had the halachah allowed it they might have been willing to lie down and die for their right to remain in Gush Katif, just as they would have to maintain their right to live by Torah. It would have been a mitzvah.

Then there is a group that will not pay attention to the halachah, for one reason or another, perhaps simply because they disagree with it. They might be religious or they might be secular, but either way they are prepared to go the distance to not participate in disengagement in any conscious way. It will take wild horses to pull them from their holy piece of holy land, and they are prepared to suffer the consequences, perhaps even death, G-d forbid, if necessary.

And if and when that happens, G-d forbid, we'll all be forced to evaluate these people once again, to label them in order to make sense of what they did. For, when people fight for something we ought to care about, it makes us question our own sense of self-sacrifice. For, even should their halachic approach be questionable, their burning love of Eretz Yisroel is not, and we will automatically be forced to hold up their willingness to sacrifice for our cause as a measuring stick to see whether or not we sacrificed enough for the same cause.

And then it will become painfully clear how many of us hid behind mis- definitions to distance ourselves from people who all along felt the way we should have. Our version of a fanatic, and certainly that of the Western world and Israeli media, might be, at the end of the day - no, more than

likely IS - Heaven's idea of zealot.

### **SEUDOS SHLISHIS:**

*G-d told Moshe, "The land will be divided among the people according to the number of names. To the numerous you will give a larger inheritance and to the few you will give a smaller inheritance. To each, the inheritance will be given according to those counted with him. Nevertheless, inherited properties shall be given to paternal families by way of lottery. Regardless of whether the group is large or small, the inherited property must be divided by way of lottery." (Bamidbar 26:53-56)*

The status of Pinchas in the eyes of others is not the only issue in this week's parshah that is relevant to today's ongoing crisis. For, it is in this week's parshah that the Torah speaks about the division of Eretz HaKodesh (the Holy Land).

Not that such information makes a difference to those who do not believe Torah has a Divine source. However, it is this information that helps a Torah-believing Jew better appreciate the value of what is at stake. Amazingly, Jewish history is coming down to a tug of war over a piece of Israel that many think isn't actually part of the Biblical inheritance of the Jewish people. However, the Torah begs to differ (in Parashas Massei):

Your southern side shall be from the Wilderness of Tzin at the side of Edom, and your southern border shall be from the edge of the Salt Sea to the east. The border shall go around south of Ma'aleh-Akrabbim, and shall pass toward Tzin; and its outskirts shall be south of Kadesh-Barnea; then it shall go out to Chatzar-Adar and pass to Atzmon. The border shall go around from Atzmon to the Stream of Egypt, and its outskirts shall be toward the Sea. The western border: It shall be for you the Great Sea and the district; this shall be for you the western border. (Bamidbar 34:3-6)

Joining the dots shows that Gaza falls within the territory of land given to the Tribe of Yehudah. It is clearly part of the Biblical inheritance of the Jewish people, and apparently remained so even after the destruction of the First Temple, after Ezra and Nechemiah returned from Persia to re-build the Jewish community of Eretz Yisroel:

"It is very difficult to determine accurately the boundary of Palestine from these data, since they appear mostly to be merely isolated places. It is at all events certain that the northern boundary line did not extend far beyond the Banias, and on the sea-coast not farther than Al Zib (Chezib); and at the present day, also the Wady Kasmaia (Leontes) and the river Chasbeya are regarded as the western boundary of the present Palestine. Some maintain that even the Arabic name of Kasmaia is derived from the circumstance of its signifying 'the separating,' the dividing, or here, the river which separates Palestine, and determines the boundary line. Southward, however, both boundaries, to wit, that given in Numbers 34:4, and the other marking the possession of the Israelites under Ezra and Nehemiah, are very nearly the same, since we find in the latter Rekam Gaayah, which is Kadesh-Barnea, and the environs of Ashkalon. The extent of Palestine, however, according to these data, is considerably less than that which was determined by divine command in the thirty-fourth chapter of

Numbers."

Why is this important to know? Because, although we know what the Western world thinks about Gaza, and how the Palestinians (sounds a lot like Philistines, no?) feel about it, and even how the Israeli government looks at it, we have to ask ourselves, how does G-d feel about it? Therefore, the Jews are fighting to keep it. What is the Hashgochah Pratis behind all of what is going on today?

If the land does not belong to the Jewish people, and if it is not part of their G-d-designated inheritance, then why would Heaven allow it to become such a major issue at this late stage of history, drawing into the fray so much of the world? Just knowing that Azza is in fact part of Eretz Yisroel proper, it is understandable why, at this late stage of the redemption- game it is becoming such a controversial piece of real estate, not to mention all the irony surrounding the entire hitnatkut process.

For all we know, the scandal involving Prime Minister Sharon that some say drove him to "boomerang" from being anti-disengagement to pro- disengagement occurred just to throw Gush Katif into the historical spotlight. Divine Providence works that way.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*The daughters of Tzelofchad - the son of Cheifer, the son of Gilad, the son of Machir, the son of Menashe, from the family of Menashe, the son of Yosef - approached. These are the names of his daughters: Machlah, No'ah, Chaglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. (Bamidbar 27:1)*

FROM THE FAMILY OF MENASHE, THE SON OF YOSEF: Why did it have to mention this, since it already said "the son of Menashe"? To tell us that Yosef loved the Land, as it says, "Bring my bones up" (Bereishis 50:25), and that his "daughters" also loved the land, as it says, "Give us our possession" (Bamidbar 27:4). (Rashi)

After years of researching books dealing with the concepts of Moshiach and the Final Redemption, I have seen only one that deals thoroughly with the concept of Moshiach Ben Yosef: Kol HaTor, a sefer with an interesting history, to say the least:

The original text of Kol HaTor was kept in the manuscript by the Rivlin family, descendants of Rabbi Hillel Rivlin, for over 200 years. In 1947, Rabbi Shlomo Rivlin, with the advice of the great Kabbalists of Jerusalem, decided to publish an abridged version of this lengthy and difficult treatise keeping the Kabbalistic terminology as simple as possible so that it could also be studied by non-Kabbalists. Therefore, the printed Kol HaTor is not the original text. In 1968 it was reprinted again by two different editors (unknown to each other), Rabbi Menachem Kasher and Rabbi Chaim Friedlander (Committee For The Dissemination of Kol HaTor). Rabbi Kasher omitted the chapter on the confluences of Kabbalah and science called Sha'ar Be'er Sheva (Gate of The Seven Fields of Wisdom). The B'nei Brak edition, which did contain this chapter, was out of print for over twenty years, thus making this "lost doctrine" of the GR"A totally unnoticed by scholars and the public. Only

recently a new print has appeared in Jerusalem with the Sha'ar Be'er Sheva. (Sparks Of The Hidden Light, 1996, Footnote #14, p. 24)

However, anyone familiar with the way the Sitra Achra works, this is not only surprising but obvious. For the Sitra Achra, the Final Redemption is the end of history - his history. However, talking about redemption doesn't bother him that much, nor does dreaming of Moshiach Ben Dovid concern him. For, as he knows only too well, both are on the other side of a bridge called Moshiach Ben Yosef. THAT is what he cannot afford, for Kol HaTor to become a topic of interest among Jews.

Kol HaTor is a missile between his eyes, so he fought back by keeping it away from the masses of Jews. It traces a path from the Vilna Gaon's time to the arrival of Moshiach, a time that can be made early if the work of Moshiach Ben Yosef is expedited, primarily with the ingathering of the exiles from the four corners of the world, and with the planting of the Land of Israel. It is an avodah that grows out of Yosef's extreme love of Eretz Yisroel.

And, as the Talmud points out, and the Arizal echoes, Pinchas, the zealot in this week's parshah who fought on behalf of G-d, also emanates from Yosef HaTzaddik. Thus, as it turns out, the same zealousness that Pinchas had to risk his life for to stop Zimri from profaning the name of G-d (in last week's parshah), is the same streak of zealousness that brought Tzelofchad's daughters to Moshe Rabbeinu in search of a piece of Eretz Yisroel.

And, it is the same zealousness that Eliyahu HaNavi, who was transformed from Pinchas, used to end the profanation at Mt. Carmel in his time.

It will be, without a doubt, the same streak of zealousness that will be used by Moshiach Ben Yosef in our final battle to rescue Eretz Yisroel from the hands of Amalek as we cross that bridge from exile into the Final Redemption and Yemos HaMoshiach.

May it happen in our time. And many today think it will.

Have a great Shabbos, PW

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