

IF THE BURDEN FITS, BEAR IT

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

FRIDAY NIGHT:

G-d told Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the priest, stopped My anger . . . Therefore, I give him My covenant of peace. (Bamidbar 25:11-12)

Question: Who were Eliyahu HaNavi's parents?

Answer: He didn't have any.

Rather, as the Ba'al HaTurim points out at the beginning of this week's parshah, Eliyahu was really Pinchas, who was transformed into Eliyahu as a reward for his zealous act at the end of last week's parshah. As to how that can happen, it is a simple case of simply receiving an additional soul for Pinchas, and voila! Instant prophet and future herald of the Final Redemption.

Next Question: How many Eliyahus are there?

Answer: Two.

Well, not exactly "two" in the conventional sense, as the Arizal explains:

In the case of a soul that comes b'sod ibur after birth, like the Nefesh of Nadav and Avihu that came to Pinchas, another spark must accompany it. Furthermore, this spark must be new to the world and not a reincarnation. Such a spark joined with the Nefesh of Nadav and Avihu which came b'ibur, to unify it with the Nefesh of Pinchas, which was an actual reincarnation. Therefore, another new soul had to come b'ibur in Pinchas called "Eliyahu HaTishbi" from the inhabitants of Gilad, and from the root of Gad, which was a new soul at that time. This was in order to combine the Nefesh of Nadav and Avihu with the Nefesh of Pinchas, a gilgul from the time of his birth. He also required an additional new soul in order to unite the new soul called "Eliyahu HaTishbi" with the rest of the older souls, that is, the Nefesh of Pinchas and those of Nadav and Avihu. Therefore, he received an additional soul called "Eliyahu" from the root of Binyomin, mentioned in Divrei HaYomim in the posuk, "And Ya'areshyah, Eliyahu, and Zichri were the sons of Yerucham" (I Divrei HaYomim 8:27), as Eliyahu himself wrote to the Chachamim, "from the children of the children of Rachel" (Bereishis Rabbah 71:12) . . . Thus we find that four levels were in Pinchas. The first was that of the Nefesh of Pinchas with which he was born, a single soul even though it was the combination of two drops, one from Yosef and one from Yitro. The second level was the Nefesh of Nadav and Avihu, which came b'sod ibur and was also called "one soul," as is known from the Zohar: Nadav and Avihu were two

limbs of one body (Acharei Mos 57b). The third was a Nefesh called "Eliyahu HaTishbi" from the root of Gad, and the fourth level was "Eliyahu" from the root of Binyomin. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 32)

What a transformation! As the Arizal explains, it is possible to become "impregnated" (b'ibur) with additional souls during one's lifetime, and upon receiving an additional soul, one is dramatically changed. To what extent the change occurs depends upon the greatness of the soul sent to the person. Usually it is the soul of some righteous person from the past (or even from the present, once they have finished their lower level soul), but in the case of Pinchas it was a brand new soul called "Eliyahu."

However, the problem with an "ibur," a soul that can come during one's lifetime, is that it can also go away during one's lifetime. So, though many people know that Pinchas became Eliyahu, fewer people know that he went back to being Pinchas for a while, as a result of a mistake he made:

Later in history, when the incident of the daughter of Yiftach HaGiladi occurred, they (Eliyahu and Yiftach) were both punished. For, as Chazal say, Yiftach was a judge and he did not want to come to Eliyahu to cancel his vow, and Eliyahu did not want to come to him, for he said, "The one who is suffering must come to the doctor", and thus, between the two of them, the daughter of Yiftach went. Yiftach, who was directly involved in the incident was punished, and as a result everywhere he went he lost limbs, as it says, "They buried him in the cities of Gilad" (Shoftim 12:7) - in the plural. Eliyahu was punished by the departure of the Shechinah, as Chazal say (Bereishis Rabbah 60:3) on the posuk, "And Pinchas the son Elazar had been the supervisor over them in former times, for G-d was with him, (I Divrei HaYomim 9:20), which is talking about Pinchas. Thus, it seems that he had been the "supervisor" over them, and all of a sudden, no longer. After the Nefesh of Nadav and Avihu that had been in him b'ibur was removed from him, it later reincarnated into Shmuel HaNavi, as we will explain. This is the sod of what Chazal say: The "Vav" of "Briti Shalom" (Bamidbar 25:12) is cut. They also say in the Zohar (Acharei Mot), that the "Yud" of "Pinchas" is small (Bamidbar 25:11). Thus, in the incident with Zimri he merited the ibur of Nadav and Avihu, as mentioned in the Zohar (Pinchas 217a), but he lost the ibur as a result of the sin from the daughter of Yiftach. This is why the Vav is "cut," to represent the sefirah of Yesod, which is called "Briti Shalom." It was actually "cut" when he lost the Shechinah and the ibur of Nadav and Avihu. Thus, from that time onward all that remained was the spark from the root of Yosef . . . After this, his name changed to "Eliyahu HaTishbi." Nadav and Avihu had not been rectified in him, and Pinchas, himself from the side of Yitro, had been involved in the sin of the daughter of Yiftach. Eliyahu from the tribe of Binyomin and had only been in him b'ibur in order to join together the other souls. Thus, what remained as the main part was Eliyahu from the root of Gad, and therefore he could no longer be called "Pinchas," but rather, "Eliyahu HaTishbi," alluding that his soul was from the tribe of Gad. (Ibid.)

However, as one would suspect, there is a happy ending to the Pinchas- Eliyahu story, since we open the door for Eliyahu each Pesach, and he also comes to each and every brit.

SHABBOS DAY:

And he saw, and he arose and went for his life. (I Melachim 19:2)

Most great people who fall from glory never recover. How much more so was this true for Pinchas, alias Eliyahu HaNavi, since the main element that had transformed him had moved on to another great Tanach personality: Shmuel HaNavi. However, Pinchas seemed to have at least one thing working in his favor, and that was time, for he outlived Shmuel HaNavi, and thus:

Prophecy returned to him after he was called "Eliyahu HaTishbi," and after Shmuel had died so that Nadav and Avihu could return to him again b'ibur during the incident of Mt. Carmel. At that time, the people fell on their faces and said, "Hashem is Elokim" (I Melachim 18:20-29). When they said, "Hashem is Elokim," they [Nadav and Avihu] were forgiven for their sin of "cutting off their plantings" when they blemished the Divine Presence. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 32)

That is when they brought their "unauthorized fire" and were killed by G-d as a result. Therefore, while they were inside the body of Eliyahu at the incident of Mt. Carmel when he pulled the people away from the Ba'al brought them back to G-d again, this was also a tikun for their sin.

Furthermore, they [Nadav and Avihu] had sinned in the beginning when they glanced at the Shechinah at Har Sinai, as it says, "They saw the G-d of Israel" (Shemos 24:10). However, they underwent rectification when they (i.e., the Jewish people) fell on their faces in order to avoid seeing the fire that descended from Heaven. (Ibid.)

In other words, when Eliyahu summoned a fire from Heaven to burn up the sacrifice he had prepared to disprove the Ba'al, the Jewish people, in awe, fell on their faces and did not look. This was considered a tikun for Nadav and Avihu who, upon accompanying Moshe Rabbeinu up the mountain in Parashat Mishpatim, did glance at the Divine Presence, something they should not have done.

However, until this historic moment and a return to Heavenly greatness once again, Eliyahu become Pinchas once again. This is not well known because he was never again called Pinchas once he assumed the role of Eliyahu HaNavi, and the Arizal explains there was another reason for this, and why this was the case:

This is the other reason why he is called "Eliyahu" and not "Pinchas": through this act he merited a name change, as we will explain later regarding the matter of Elisha HaNavi. Once Nadav and Avihu were rectified, they did not need to remain there and they were thus withdrawn. Now, Izevel, the wife of Achav, was a great sorceress; it says that she caused Israel to go astray through her magic. Through her magic she knew that Nadav and Avihu, of whom G-d declared, "Behold, I give to him Briti Shalom" (Bamidbar 25:12), which means eternal life, had been withdrawn from Eliyahu. Thus, she told him, "At this time tomorrow, I will make your life like the life of one of them" (I Melachim 19:2), since the decree of life and peace was removed from him. There is also a connection to Nadav and

Avihu who were burned by the fire of the Incense. This is the sod of, "like the life of one of them," and since Eliyahu felt that this gift had been taken from him, he became afraid and ran to Mt Chorev. This is what is written, "And he saw, and he arose and went for his life (nafsho)" (Ibid. 3). That is, he saw that he had only one soul and thus feared Izevel. (Ibid.)

Thus, becoming Eliyahu had not necessarily been a boon for Pinchas. If he ever in his wildest imagination had thought that killing Zimri and Cosbi had been a difficult turning point in his life, it was only because he had yet to confront the likes of the incredibly wicked Izevel. Because of her, the great prophet was forced to flee for his life, and later on he would outlive and outdo her. In the meantime, she caused him trouble to no end. However, everything is ultimately for the good, and:

He found respite in the cave at Har Chorev, until he went up in a storm wind to Heaven. It was Eliyahu HaTishbi from the tribe of Gad who ascended to Heaven, and he did not descend again. However, Eliyahu from the tribe of Binyomin, reincarnated into the one mentioned in the posuk, "And Ya'areshyah, Eliyahu, and Zichri were the sons of Yerucham" (I Divrei HaYomim 8:27). Later, when he died, he ascended to join Eliyahu HaTishbi who had previously ascended. (Ibid.)

So you see, there is a happy ending after all, even some hundreds of years later for the hero of this week's parshah.

SEUDAT SHLISHIT:

Behold, I send you Eliyahu the prophet . . . (Malachi 4:5)

Who is it that keeps meeting up with righteous people and helping them in a bind? For whom do we open our doors on Seder night? And, who is it that shows up at each brit? Truth be told, it is a good question:

At first, the Chachamim only knew that Eliyahu comprised four levels, but they did not know which level descended and ascended to speak with them. They differed in opinion, until he told them, "My rabbis . . . why are you disagreeing over me? I come from the children of Rachel, as it says, 'And Ya'areshyah, Eliyahu'." Thus, he revealed to them which level it was that spoke to them, which was the level of Eliyahu of Binyomin, which is joined together with the drop from Yitro that was given to Chiel Bait HeEli. After he had died, Eliyahu took it with him. It seems to me, the author (Shmuel Vital), that the two of them reincarnated into Eliyahu of Binyomin . . . It is Eliyahu from the tribe of Binyomin who ascends and descends constantly to perform miracles for the righteous, and to speak with them. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 32)

And that is the way it remains until this very day, although there aren't too many reports today of Eliyahu actually showing and teaching great leaders like in the time of the Arizal and Rav Yosef Karo.

Quite a history, isn't it? And to think that it all began because Pinchas, at the time a virtual nobody, zealously killed Zimri, a prince of the tribe of Shimon, and stopped the plague that had already killed 24,000 from the tribe of Shimon. In the meantime, 176,000 had already been killed by the Bait Din for

having worshipped Ba'al Peor after being enticed by the Midianite women. Pinchas' heroic act put an end to all of that and restored peace once again to the Jewish camp.

However, why should that draw the souls of Nadav and Avihu into Pinchas, and after that, the very holy soul of Eliyahu? Obviously, since G-d works measure-for-measure, there must have been something that sounds very Final Redemptionish about his act that made him ripe to become the one to herald in the Final Redemption. He went from being a virtual nobody that no one noticed, into a great somebody for whom everyone is waiting. The question is, what exactly did he do?

The Torah sums it up in one line:

G-d told Moshe, "Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aharon the priest, stopped My anger towards the Children of Israel because he was zealous on My behalf, which prevented Me from destroying them because of jealousy." (Bamidbar 25:10-11)

He stopped the anger of G-d. He was zealous on G-d's behalf. He prevented the destruction of the Jewish people by G-d. No small feat. Indeed, it is the very basis of having a part in the whole idea of redemption. In the world of Mitzvot "Bein Adam L'Makom," commandments between us and G-d, the biggest mitzvah of all is to recognize that we have no power, and that there is only the will of G-d. Everything, no matter what, is always only for the good. In this "world," even in the VERY worst of times, one could, theoretically, stand back and simply accept the situation by doing nothing other than saying, "All that G-d does He does for the good," and "Many are the thoughts of man, but it is the will of G-d that prevails in the end."

However, there is another world as it turns out, the world of "Bein Adam L'Chavero," a world in which we find ourselves confronted by the problems of others, and with the potential to help with those problems. If in the world "Between Man and G-d," we are forced to confront the full extent of what it means to be a lowly human being, in the world "Between Man and Man," we are allowed to feel the full extent of what it means to have been created in the image of the Creator. It is a world in which we are given the opportunity to "be" G-d, inasmuch as we are able to take responsibility for other people as if we ourselves created them.

It turns out that at a time that most of us were living in the former, Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen made the leap from it to the latter, acting on behalf of G-d, and saving the day as if it depended upon him to do so.

MELAVE MALKAH:

Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aharon the priest, stopped My anger towards the Children of Israel because he was zealous on My behalf, which prevented Me from destroying them because of jealousy. (Bamidbar 25:10-11)

It is an easy statement to make, but a very difficult one to live up to: take responsibility for the world. It is incredible that, by killing two people, one Jew and one gentile involved in a tremendous

profanation of G-d's Name, Pinchas saved millions of Jews, and for that matter, the entire world. If he had done the act as matter of personal anger, then it would have destroyed the world. Rather, he gave himself completely over to G-d, acting as if there was no G-d, as if the future of the world depended upon him, forgetting for the moment that really everything is a function of G-d's will.

However, there are times in history when G-d steps back, so-to-speak, and opens windows of opportunity to give people an opportunity to temporarily step into His role. That's what the posuk is literally saying: "Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen acted on My behalf. Like Miriam in her time, Pinchas in his time took responsibility for the Jewish people as if I wasn't there, G-d forbid, to save the day. " As a result, G-d says, "I was able to act through him to do what had to be done, without interfering in history more than necessary."

For this he merited to become Eliyahu HaNavi. And, on the occasion that he did not act in this way by not saving the daughter of Yiftach, he temporarily lost that right, but he gained it back later in Achav's time.

We are now in the Three Weeks, which began with the fast day on which the golden calf was destroyed by Moshe Rabbeinu, and which will end with Tisha B'Av, that Day of Infamy created by the Spies who spoke loshon hara about Eretz Yisroel. In every generation, it is a time to recall what we lost once the Temple was destroyed, and in more recent times, we watch the world continue to walk down a dark path once again, even though we're unsure as to where it will lead us. The prospects are indeed grim.

It may not even be the darkest of times - yet, but they are far from being bright.

"Where is G-d at a time like this?"

Some answer this question by acting as if G-d is not around, answering spiritual darkness with more spiritual darkness. Others take responsibility and try to do what seems right at great personal risk. And some fall somewhere between both categories. One thing is for certain: as the sun sets on history, it rises for the zealot, and everyone has to ask himself or herself two questions:

1. What can I do on behalf of G-d?
2. Can I do it without doing it for myself?

The role of Eliyahu HaNavi has already been filled. But to become a partner with G-d in the Final Redemption process is something that is open to just about everyone, if such a person is truly working on behalf of G-d and His Torah.

Have a great Shabbos,
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