

PARSHAS PINCHAS

by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari

Part of the revolt of Phsyscha against the popular and mass orientated Chassidic movement was focused on the role of the Rebbe. They saw this role as primarily one of a teacher and spiritual leader, rather than the widespread concept of satisfying the material needs of the people and praying for their welfare. As a result they also downgraded the role of a miracle maker. There was also a keen discussion as to whether the leader chose his flock or whether they chose him. This is an important part of the teachings of the Masters of this school--The Yehudi HaKadosh, Simcha Bunem and Menachem Mendel of Kotsk--so it is not surprising therefore, to find in the Shem Mi Shmuel references to the role of the leader and his function. He brings such references in his comments to this week's Sedra.

'Let God, appoint a leader over the congregation' (26: 16). To this request of Moses God replied, 'Before you demand that I act for My sons, demand that My sons act for Me'. The question arises why should the demand of Israel to bring sacrifices that follows in our parshah, be the answer to the request for a leader who would take the people into Israel after Moses. A Jewish leader is required to be able to transform the individual abilities and needs of each person to weld them all into one united purpose. This is similar to the role of a general who knows the abilities and weaknesses of each soldier and unit, yet is able to allocate his resources in such a way as to create an efficient fighting unit. So too in spiritual matters and Divine worship, since although each person wishes to achieve the same goal, nevertheless each one has his own concept of how this is to be done. So the leader in Israel needs to guide each person according to the source of their souls, yet within a community of purpose. However, this can only be done if they all have the same end or purpose in mind, otherwise the leader can do nothing to help them. The ability of the Rebbe to guide them is dependent on and determined by, this characteristic of the chassidim. If they lack a common religious and spiritual goal, the Rebbe can achieve nothing.

His father, the Avnei Nezer, explained that this is why the daily sacrifices in the Temple [Tamidim] were offered from sheep and not cattle that are considered to be superior offerings. The midrash explains that sheep have only one voice and, so too Israel has only a united heart to serve their Father in Heaven.

This is why Moses asked HaShem not to accept the offerings of Korach and his followers, as he knew that they have a relationship to the temidim [congregational] offerings. Their purpose was the opposite of the three-game Korach and his congregation wished to bring disunity and separation

into Israel and this is contrary to the purpose of the Temidim. That explains why Moses, who was filled with Ahavat Yisrael and always prayed for their welfare, nevertheless did not pray for Korach and his followers. After all, the power of prayer comes only from the communal and national aspects, and the individual's prayers feed into the communal ones; when one prays for a sick individual for example, it is together with all the sick of Israel.

This communal nature of the Temidim can help us to understand why there are no Chatat sacrifices on Shabbat, like there are on every other festival. Sin comes because a person has been separated from this communal/ national source and so evil thoughts and actions can attach themselves to him. On the Shabbat there is no possibility for such actions to attach themselves to us since it is a day permeated with the Torah of Israel. All the judgments and conflicts of our life are pushed aside, so therefore there is no need for the Chatat. We see that when the sanctuary was at Shilo kodshim kalim could be eaten as long as one was insight of the sanctuary. As the sanctuary was in the tribal area of Joseph who possessed the ability to keep the covenant irrespective of the pressures and temptations placed on him, there was no necessity to erect walls around it as in the case of Jerusalem. The unity of purpose in the Temple, enclosed within the walls of Jerusalem, was manifest in the fact that there never was any one who sinned within those walls. So the individual should make every effort to keep themselves away from the thoughts that lead to sin and to keep the covenant, irrespective of the pressures and temptations.

Menachem Mendel of Kotsk taught that Pinchas would have succeeded Moses if he had been suitable. Moses indeed considered Pinchas to be suitable to succeed him, because of his actions with Zimri. The letter 'Yud' in HaShem's name represents a unity or a perfect state. At Shittim Israel deformed the 'Yud' when they rejected the Covenant, and Pinchas redeemed that letter. The Zohar relates the 'romach', spear, that Pinchas took to kill Zimri to the 248 words of the Shema, that correspond to the numerical value of those letters. Peace is the fusion of two negatives so Moses thought that since God had rewarded him with the covenant of peace, Pinchas would be able to combine the two contradictory roles of King and Priest, even as he himself had done.

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