

A PARASHA THOUGHT

Live and Let Live! (But Sometimes Don't)

RABBI
YOSEF MEIR
KATZ



One of the claims to fame that Cincinnati has is the fact that Reb Yissochur Dov Illovy, ז"ל, a *talmid* of the Chassam Sofer who received *semicha* from him, was a Rov here in town and is in fact buried here as well. There is a fascinating *sefer* titled *Milchemes Elokim* which is a compilation of some of Rav Illovy's writings. In the back of the *sefer* there is a poem of his, written in *Lashon Hakodesh*, wherein he juxtaposes the two very different forms of *kinah* that we find in the Torah. One form

of *kinah* is, simply put, jealousy, which the Mishna in *Avos* (4:21) teaches, removes its harbinger from this world. The other form of *kinah* is zealotry for the honor of Hashem's name, which we find in this week's *parasha* Pinchos being lauded and rewarded for possessing and acting with. The *kinah* that is jealousy results from an unwell soul and is unholy and immoral. The *kinah* that is zealotry for Hashem's honor results from a healthy soul and is holy and is greatly moral. In his poem, Rav

Illovy is imploring others to ignite that holy zealotry in themselves and fight, as he so strongly and relentlessly did, those that were out to ruin Judaism and act disgracefully towards Hashem and His Torah.

Let us try and understand how these two very different forms of *kinah* meet. Both zealotry for Hashem's honor and jealousy are forms of involvement in other people's matters, making them as one's own and thereby being fired up about what one perceives as not being right (see Rashi 25:11). Normally, we as Jews believe in the dictum live and let live. Therefore, jealousy is a terrible trait, as it stems from a feeling that we should really have what someone

THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

THIS WEEK WITH
RABBI YITZCHOK PREIS

Q. *Bamidbar* 26:1 reads as, "And it was after the plague ¶ And Hashem spoke to Moshe and to Elazar,..." How are we to understand a *parsha* / paragraph-like-break in the middle of a *posuk* (verse)?

A: The Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh explains that the preceding verses described Hashem imploring us to view Midyan as an enemy. This was intended to disconnect and distance us from the Midianite influence. Having heeded this commandment, we were no longer cursed with the plague; we achieved "after the plague" status and the "Midianite chapter" came to a close. Hence the *parsha*-break. But the same "post-plague" reality set the stage for the next topic as well. The census that follows is a reaction to the plague. Hence, "...after the plague" serves as a preamble to Hashem's addressing Moshe and Elazar regarding the census, and the plague and census are linked by being contained in one *posuk*.

The Ohr Hachayim adds another layer to the linkage of the census and the opening of the *posuk*, focusing on the opening word – "Vay'hi / And it was." "Vay'hi" is generally associated with distress. The setback caused by Midyan, and the challenge it raised to our claims of morality and pure lineage, were certainly distressful. The census, and particularly its highlighting our

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE →

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THE RABBI WAS ASKED ON THE PARASHA

CONTINUED

untainted lineage, was a tool provided by Hashem to counter our distress and “Se’u es rosh” (take a census / more literally: lift the head/restore the pride) of Israel. 🕊

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week’s)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A PARASHA THOUGHT

CONTINUED

else has, when truthfully it is none of our business what others have. Why should someone else’s success or good fortune be of bother to me; it’s his and has nothing to do with me. Sometimes, though, we believe in the less popular dictum of live and don’t let live. That is when the honor of G-d and His Torah are at stake. If that is the case, then don’t let live; sometimes figuratively and sometimes, as we find by Pinchos, even literally. The root of the word נִסְיָן is נִסְ, which also spells out נֵס – one nest. The jealous individual is involving himself in his friend’s “nest” as if it were his own as well. The zealot, too, involves himself in what his friend is doing in his “nest” and does not allow a public disgrace of Hashem and his Torah to ensue from there.

Chazal (Targum Yonasan 25:12, Tanchuma Pinchos 1, Pirkei D’Rebbi Eliezer 47) tell us that

Eliyahu Hanavi is in fact Pinchos himself. Most meforshim (see Sforno 25:12) seem to take this Chazal literally and say that Pinchos lived a super long life spanning from the time of Yetziyas Mitzrayim to the times of Eliyahu Hanavi during the first Bais Hamikdash (mentioned in Melachim I Perek 17 and onwards). Eventually, even when referred to as Eliyahu Hanavi, Pinchos does not die a regular death but rather goes up to heaven alive (Melachim II Perek 6). Even from then onwards he does not cease to exist in this world entirely and he frequently appears in body form (see Shu”t Chasam Sofer vol 6 siman 98) as recorded in the Gemara (see Bava Metzia 114b) and throughout the ages up even up to times not too long ago (see Kovetz Sichos Mamar Mordechai 66). Pinchos, who heroically acted with the kinah that is zealotry for Hashem’s honor, essentially has never left the world since. Contrast this with the kinah that is jealousy, about which as we mentioned earlier the Mishna says that it removes one from this world. This means that even the life that he is living here in this world is not a life, as he is always wanting what he doesn’t have.

Both zealotry for Hashem’s honor and jealousy are emotions that completely overtake a person. About jealousy the posuk in Mishlei (14:30) says that it rots one’s bones, meaning that

jealousy is an emotion that strikes at the deepest depths of a person and seeps into his entire being. The Torah views zealotry favorably only when it is totally sincere without the slightest bit of personal bias or fakeness (Sichos Mussar Sharei Chaim 27 and 85, Igros Moshe Ev’h 1 37 in the name of Reb Shlomo Heiman, ז”ל, based on Rashi Sanhedrin 81b). Genuine love for Hashem must engulf the person entirely, dictating his actions of zealotry. When jealousy envelops a person it eats away at him, causing the very life that he is living to no longer be a life. However, when zealotry for Hashem’s honor envelops a person, it purifies him and uplifts him, as was the case by Pinchos where it purified him so much that it allowed him and even his physical body to live on forever. May we be zocheh to eradicate from within us all jealousy and be overtaken by love of Hashem, bringing forth the greatest honor to Hashem with the coming of Moshiach heralded by Eliyahu, i.e Pinchos, BB’A! 🕊



TRIVIA

RABBI GAVI KADISH

Is there a source for not cutting one’s hair or nails on a regular motzai Shabbos?

There are those who have suggested that cutting one’s hair on motzai Shabbos constitutes a bizayon or denigration to the honor of Shabbos. In other words, if one shaves and appears groomed before Shabbos one accords the proper honor and respect to Shabbos, and if one doesn’t shave before Shabbos one will appear unkempt entering Shabbos. Therefore, waiting constitutes a denigration in kavod Shabbos. Rav Shmuel Kamenetzky (Kovetz Halachos, Minhagai Sefira, page 97), is adamant that there is no source in halacha for such an idea, and we should not manufacture stringencies which aren’t sourced in the poskim. The author of the sefer also mentions that he searched far and wide and has not found a source. Notwithstanding that, perhaps there is a source for this notion from Rav Shlomo Kluger (OH - 493:2). He writes that if Lag b’Omer falls out on Sunday one would be permitted to cut one’s hair on Erev Shabbos and not wait until Sunday. Why? “And particularly that it is a bizayon to Shabbos – that for Shabbos one will not cut his hair but on yom rishon (first day after Shabbos) he will cut his hair.” Rav Chaim Kanievsky is quoted in Kuntros Ezras Eliezer (page 47) as saying that it is “eino raui,” or not proper, to cut one’s hair on motzai Shabbos, even if it is in deference to the honor of yomtov which falls out on Sunday night. The sefer Minhagai Mahari”tz HaLevi quotes that the minhag in Frankfurt and most Ashkenazic circles is to not cut one’s hair or nails on motzai Shabbos. Rav Yona Merzbach, ז”ל (who was a Rosh HaYeshiva in Kol Torah in Yerushalayim), echoes the same sentiment – that this is in fact the minhag of Ashkenazic Jewry. Good Shabbos! 🕊