



Volume III Issue #35
Written by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

Parshas Pinchas, 19 Tamuz, 5783
July 8, 2023

On the Parsha

The second Passuk in this week's Parsha, states that Pinchas was the son of Elazar who was the son of Aharon HaKohain. Elazar has appeared in prior Pasukim where it was mentioned that he was the son of Aharon. Why is it mentioned again in this week's Parsha when discussing the lineage of Pinchas?

Rashi cites a Gemorah in Sanhedrim which tells us that the other Shevatim (tribes) were denigrating Pinchas's killing of Zimri by claiming that his motivations were not pure. They claimed that the emotional force behind Pinchas killing Zimri stemmed from Avodah Zarah (idol worship) that was inherited from his mother's side who was a descendent of Yisro (who worshiped idols prior to his conversion). This was not the case – Pinchas's motives were pure. Therefore, Hashem put a stop to this denigration of Pinchas by mentioning again in this week's Parsha that Elazar was the son Aharon when discussing Pinchas's lineage – effectively saying that Pinchas comes from Aharon who represents the Kehunah (priesthood) – the purest of the pure and his motivation in killing Zimri was pure as well.

Rav Yoseph Sorotzkin ZT"l, in his Meged Yoseph, writes that this was also alluded to in the previous Parsha. At the end of Parshas Balak (BaMidbar 25:7-8), the Passukim state, "Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aaron the Kohen saw this, arose from the congregation, and took a spear in his hand. He followed the Israelite man into the chamber and **stuck** both of them; the Israelite man, and the woman through her stomach, and the plague ceased from the children of Israel." Rav Sorotzkin notes that the word "**stuck**" is employed rather than the word "killed." The Passuk does not tell us what happened to them other than to say that they were stuck [with the spear]. Rav Sorotzkin writes that the Torah specifically employed this term to tell us that there was no motivation of killing involved here – rather the motivation was pure – zeal for the protection of Hashem's honor.

Please also take note that in the Passukim that Rav Sorotzkin quotes above, the Passuk once again traces Pinchas's lineage back to Aharon. We thus have a total of three separate times (two times where his lineage is

traced back to Aharon, and an additional instance where the Torah uses the word "stuck" rather than "killed" as outlined above) when Hashem ensures that everyone is clear that the motives of Pinchas were pure.

Hashem's signet ring is Emes (truth). The Gemorah in Shabbos tells us that just as Hashem is compassionate, so too must we be compassionate. Just as Hashem is merciful, so too must we be merciful. Rav Yisroel Salanter ZT"l once said that we should emulate Hashem in all matters that we can – particularly when we see an aspect of Him in the Passukim of the Torah.

Standing for truth is a Torah value that we should never abandon. Sometimes, we do not involve ourselves in sensitive, ethical situations and stand up for what is right or if we do, we say what we need to say, and leave because we feel uncomfortable or awkward. We rationalize to ourselves that we already told someone once that a given course of action is wrong and that we shouldn't belabor the point. We see from the clearing of Pinchas's name, that standing up for Emes must not be done just once. When someone is suspected falsely of something, as Pinchas was, we should go out of our way to remove the suspicions that surround him or her. We learn this from Hashem, as He attested to the pure motivations of Pinchas no less than three times as outlined above.

Halacha – Jewish Law

QUESTION: There is a college professor who is known to bully his graduate school students. His students conduct research and publish papers in pursuit of their PhDs. The professor thinks of an idea for a research paper and then directs them to research and write the paper. He concludes his instructions to his students by saying, "You will add my name to the paper as a co-author, correct?" So essentially, the students do all the research and the writing, and the professor takes much of the credit. If the students balk at his request, he responds with, "The topic of the paper was my idea and I will help edit the paper." On the rare occasion that he does edit the paper, his edits are superficial and typically consist of a review of the paper's grammar and spelling. I assume the professor's behavior is problematic from a



Halachic perspective. What specifically are the Halachic concerns?

ANSWER: It would appear that taking the credit for another's research paper is comparable to the case of one who takes the credit for the Torah Chiddushim (novel Torah ideas) of another. The author of the Machane Efraim (responsum CM 49) writes that taking the credit for another's Torah Chiddushim is a violation of Genaivah (theft) and Hasagas Gevul (encroachment on the domain of another) because one is stealing their ideas and encroaching on the domain of another by taking credit for their intellectual property. The Maharam Shick (responsum YD 156) writes that one would transgress Midvar Sheker Tirchak (distance yourself from a lie) and Gneivas Daas (do not deceive). The Maharam Shick does not believe that it is forbidden on account of theft, because he believes that one cannot steal an intangible (i.e. a Torah Chiddush).

However, in the case of the research paper, there is an additional consideration. The "H-Index" is a metric that measures how many articles a person has published and how many times their articles are cited by others. Since people in the science fields are often hired by their H-Index scores, the practice of taking credit for other students' research papers may increase one's H-Index score. If one were to be hired due to an artificially inflated H-index score, the employer may be paying his new hire based on a false pretense. Therefore, in our case, the Maraham Schick may agree with the Machane Efraim that taking credit for another's research paper may be full-fledged theft.

This is akin to Rav Moshe Feinstein ZT"l's responsum (Igras Moshe CM Vol. I #30) that cheating, in effect, steals from a student's future employer since that employer assumed he earned his grades and passed his courses honestly and would therefore be paying his new hire under false pretenses.

Chizuk - Inspiration

Rav Shraga Feivel Frank ZT"l, a student of Rav Yisroel Salanter ZT"l, was a very wealthy leather and skin dealer who lived in Alexut, a suburb of Kovno. He left in his will that his four daughters should marry Torah scholars. They did, and their descendants became the progenitors of the leading Yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael and America. Their descendants established Lakewood, Ner Yisroel, Chevron and Slabodka (Bnei Brak).

Once, an out-of-town businessman came to Rav Shraga Feivel's factory and was interested in purchasing a large order of skins but asked for a heavily discounted price. Reb Shraga Feivel felt that his prices were very competitive already so he refused to negotiate with the businessman. The businessman decided to take his business elsewhere. He thanked Rav Shraga Feivel for his time and left.

The businessman proceeded to visit other dealers and discovered that, in fact, Rav Shraga Feivel's prices were significantly less than those of his competitors. He returned to Rav Shraga Feivel's factory and told him that he had decided to purchase the skins at the original price that Rav Shraga Feivel had quoted him. Rav Shraga Feivel responded that after he had left, he reexamined his profit margins and decided to give the businessman the order at the discounted price he requested, should he decide to return to his store. Since he committed in his heart to give the businessman the discounted price, he refused to take the original, higher price the businessman was now willing to pay.

Mussar – Introspection

We continue with our translation of the fifth chapter of the Chofetz Chaim's Sefas Tamim.

"In truth, man must teach himself to emulate the character traits of our forefathers, A'H... We find that even though Yaakov Avinu, A'H, was the son of Yitzhak Avinu, A'H, who was fabulously wealthy, and even wealthier than Avimelech, king of the Pelishtim, as the Torah states, still, he only asked Hakadosh Boruch Hu for some bread to eat and clothing to wear. The Torah says (Genesis 28:20) 'If Hashem will be with me and give me bread to eat and clothes to wear.'

Now, although the words "to eat" and "to wear" might seem to be superfluous [bread is obviously given to eat and clothes are obviously given to wear], in fact, they are appropriate as it is commonly known that when wealthy people sit at a meal they behave highhandedly, and waste more food than they eat. So too, regarding the clothing that they wear, that some of their clothing is bought to wear and some of their clothing is bought as a show of their wealth in affluent circles... However, Yaakov Avinu, even though he grew up in the house of Yitzhak Avinu, who was extremely wealthy, did not ask for anything from Hashem Yisbrach except for the basic necessities - bread to eat and clothes to wear, and nothing more."