



The Amazing Tikun Afforded the Neshamos of Nadav and Avihu by Entering Pinchas when His Zealous Act Saved Yisrael from Extermination

This Shabbas Kodesh, we read parshas Pinchas. In a non-leap year, it always falls during the first of the three weeks of **Bein HaMetzarim**. During this period, every Jew mourns the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and Yisrael's state of galus. Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Megillah 31b) that Ezra HaSofer arranged all the weekly Torah-readings to coincide with the annual cycle of Shabbasos. Thus, it behooves us to establish a connection between parshas Pinchas and the period of **Bein HaMetzarim**.

As we have learned in the past, Ezra deliberately chose to begin the readings of **Bein HaMetzarim** with this parsha, because we learn at the beginning of the parsha that Pinchas is Eliyahu HaNavi, whom HKB" H granted eternal life. In the merit of saving Yisrael from extermination, he will be privileged to come and herald the future geulah. Here are the pertinent pesukim (Bamidbar 25, 10):

"וידבר ה' אל משה לאמור, פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתי מעל בני ישראל, בקנאו את קנאתי בתוכם ולא כיליתי את בני ישראל בקנאתי, לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום."

Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael, when he zealously avenged Me among them; so, I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My vengeance. Therefore, say: Behold! I give him My covenant of peace ("shalom"). The Targum YoNasan provides the following interpretation: **את בריתי שלום, האנא גזר ליה ית קימי שלם, ואעבדיניה מלאך קיים ויחי לעלמא, למבשרא גאולתא. I will establish My peace covenant with him by making him a living angel (messenger)**

who will live for all eternity; he will be the one to announce the geulah at the end of time.

At first glance, the comment of the Targum YoNasan is obscure. How do the words **"Behold! I give him My covenant of 'shalom'"** suggest that Pinchas is destined to be Eliyahu, who will announce the arrival of the geulah at the end of days? We find an explanation in the commentary of Rabeinu Bachayei: **"ושמעתי שהמילה נוטריקון של"א למו"ת, וזה מחזק קבלת רבותינו ז"ל כי פינחס זה אליהו. I learned that the word של"א is an abbreviation for (never dying); this supports the tradition (teaching) of our Rabbis of blessed memory that Pinchas is Eliyahu.**

Additionally, we can suggest that the remarks of the Targum YoNasan relate to the following teaching in the Yalkut Shimoni (Pinchas):

"לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום, אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש, פנחס הוא אליהו, אמר לו הקב"ה, אתה נתת שלום בין ישראל ובני בעולם הזה, אף לעתיד לבא אתה הוא שעתיד ליתן שלום ביני לבין בני, שנאמר הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליהו הנביא לפני בוא יום ה' וגו' והשיב לב אבות על בנים."

Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: Pinchas is Eliyahu! HKB" H said to him: You established peace between Yisrael and Me in Olam HaZeh; so, too, le'asid la'vo you will be the one to establish peace between Me and My children. As it says (Malachi 3, 23): "Behold, I send you Eliyahu HaNavi before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem. And he will turn back the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers."

This enlightens us as to why Ezra HaSofer instituted the reading of parshas Pinchas at the beginning of the three weeks of **Bein HaMetzarim**. Since this is a time for all Jews to lament the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and our prolonged state of galus, it is encouraging and uplifting to recall the zealous, heroic act of Pinchas. He was willing to sacrifice his own life to protect the honor of Hashem and to save Yisrael from extermination. By reading this parsha, we wish to arouse divine mercy in the hope that HKB”H will fulfill his promise to Pinchas/Eliyahu: **“Behold! I give him My covenant of ‘shalom’”**—that he will be privileged to come and announce to Yisrael the arrival of the complete geulah, swiftly, in our times. We will now endeavor to explain the reason that Pinchas merited to become Eliyahu, the herald of the future geulah.

Pinchas Only became a Kohen after the Neshamos of Nadav and Avihu Entered Him

Let us begin with a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 217a). We learn an amazing fact! It is written (Bamidbar 25, 7): **“ויקם מתוך העדה ויקח רומח בידו”—he stood up from the midst of the assembly, and he took a spear in his hand.** To avenge Hashem and to save his people, he zealously killed Zimri the son of Salu. Zimri’s shevet, Shevet Shimon, rose up against Pinchas. Due to his extreme fear, his neshamah left him; however, the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu came to his rescue. From the time of their demise, they had not found a resting place. Now, however, they entered the being of Pinchas. According to the Zohar hakadosh, this is the reason the Torah details his lineage back to Aharon HaKohen: **“פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן”—Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen.** In other words, until then, he had merely been **the son of Elazar**. At that moment, he actually became **the son of Aharon HaKohen**, since the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu, Aharon’s sons, had become part of him.

According to the Zohar hakadosh, this explains magnificently why Pinchas did not become a kohen until after he killed Zimri. In the words of the Gemara (Zevachim 101b): **“לא נתכהו פינחס עד שהרגו לזמרי”—Pinchas did not become a kohen until he killed Zimri.** In his commentary on the Torah, Rashi explains the

reason for this: **For even though the kehunah had already been given to the offspring of Aharon, it had not been given to anyone but Aharon and to his sons who were anointed with him, and to the progeny whom they would beget after their anointing. But Pinchas, who was born before then (before they were anointed), was not included in the kehunah.**

That being the case, why did he merit becoming a kohen after the incident with Zimri, even though he had not been anointed along with Aharon? The teaching of the Zohar answers this question. Seeing as the two neshamos of Nadav and Avihu entered him, and they had been anointed with their father Aharon, Pinchas became qualified for the kehunah through them.

It now behooves us to explain why the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu were afforded tikun specifically through Pinchas at the moment of his zealous act. Furthermore, how did that make amends for the fact that they offered a foreign fire without being authorized to do so? As it is written (Vayikra 10, 1): **“ויקחו בני אהרן נדב ואביהו איש מחתתו ויתנו בהן אש וישימו עליה קטורת, ויקריבו לפני ה' אש זרה אשר לא צוה אותם, ותצא אש מלפני ה' ותאכל אותם וימותו לפני ה'.”** **The sons of Aharon, Nadav and Avihu, each took his firepan, they put fire in them and placed incense upon it; and they brought before Hashem an alien fire that He had not commanded them. A fire came forth from before Hashem and consumed them, and they died before Hashem.**

A Tikun for Pronouncing a Halachah in front of Their Rav

We will now introduce a fantastic explanation from the sacred teachings of the Chasam Sofer in Toras Moshe (end of parshas Balak), and the Imrei Yosef (Pinchas). It is taught in the Midrash (V.R. 20, 6): **“לא מתו בניו של אהרן אלא על ידי שהורו הלכה בפני משה רבן”—the sons of Aharon died only because they pronounced a halachic ruling in the presence of Moshe, their teacher.** Apparently, this was their primary sin. This can actually be deduced from the wording of the passuk: **“אשר לא צוה אותם”—that he had not commanded them.** This can be interpreted to mean that Moshe Rabeinu had not commanded them.

Now, we have learned elsewhere in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 82a) that Zimri ben Salu brought Cozbi bas Tzur to Moshe Rabeinu and asked him in a confrontational manner:

”בן עמרם זו אסורה או מותרת, ואם תאמר אסורה בת יתרו מי התירה לך. נתעלמה ממנו הלכה, געו כולם בבכיה, והיינו דכתיב והמה בוכים פתח אהל מועד, וכתיב וירא פנחס בן אלעזר, מה ראה. אמר רב, ראה מעשה ונזכר הלכה, אמר לו אחי אבי אבא, לא כך לימדתי ברדתך מהר סיני, הבועל ארמית קנאין פוגעין בו, אמר לו קריינא דאיגרתא איהו ליהוי פרוונקא. ושמזאל אמר ראה שאין חכמה ואין תבונה ואין עצה נגד ה', כל מקום שיש חילול השם אין חולקין כבוד לרב.”

“Son of Amram, is she prohibited or permitted? If you say that she is prohibited, then who permitted the daughter of Yisro to you?” The halachah—that zealots may kill one who cohabits with an idolatress—temporarily escaped him. The people wept loudly; this is implied by that which is written (Bamidbar 25, 6): “And they were weeping at the entrance to the Ohel Mo’ed.” Then, it is written (ibid. 7): “Pinchas the son of Elazar saw.” What did he see? Rav said: He saw the incident, and he recalled the halachah. He (Pinchas) said to him (Moshe), “Brother of my father’s father, did you not teach me upon your descent from Har Sinai: One who cohabits with a gentile woman, zealots may kill him?” He (Moshe) responded to him, “The one who reads the document, deserves to be the one to execute the verdict.”

And Shmuel said: Pinchas saw and considered the meaning of the passuk (Mishlei 21, 30): **“There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Hashem,”** which he interpreted to mean: **Wherever there is a desecration of Hashem’s name, one does not (wait to) show respect to the teacher.** In those situations, one need not consult his teacher, but must immediately proceed to right the wrong that is transpiring. Therefore, he took the spear and took immediate action. Rashi explains that based on this passuk in Mishlei, Pinchas pronounced the halachah in the presence of his teacher without waiting for Moshe’s permission. Since there was a clear, obvious “chilul Hashem,” the situation was urgent. He acted so that the onlookers would not learn mistakenly to permit cohabitation with a gentile woman.

Shmuel’s statement concurs with a teaching in the Gemara (Eiruvim 63a) that although it is prohibited to render a halachic ruling in the presences of one’s teacher; nevertheless, it is permissible to do so **to prevent a transgression**—”לאפרושי מאיסורא”. In other words, if someone is about to commit an aveirah and there is not sufficient time to consult with one’s teacher. This is the implication of the passuk: **“There is neither wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against Hashem”**—in these situations involving a “chilul Hashem,” it is permitted to take the initiative without deferring to the teacher. This was clearly the situation with Pinchas. He witnessed Zimri’s despicable act, a blatant “chilul Hashem,” and took the initiative to prevent the rest of the people from committing a similar aveirah. He rendered the halachic ruling in the presence of his teacher, Moshe, that it was justified to kill Zimri, in keeping with the ruling: “הבועל ארמית קנאין פוגעין בו”.

Thus, it turns out that both Pinchas and Nadav and Avihu rendered halachic decisions in the presence of their teachers. Pinchas, however, was justified in doing so, because he witnessed a flagrant “chilul Hashem” and acted to prevent others from following suit. Nadav and Avihu, on the other hand, were not justified in doing so. Their situation did not involve a “chilul Hashem” nor was it aimed at preventing someone from committing an aveirah.

This explains very nicely why the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu entered Pinchas when he acted zealously to avenge Hashem. This constituted their tikun for rendering a halachic ruling in the presence of Moshe Rabeinu without proper justification. They became one with Pinchas who rendered his ruling to prevent the people from performing a prohibited act. By becoming part of Pinchas, they became kohanim serving Hashem once again. This concludes the sacred explanation of the Chasam Sofer.

A Fantastic Insight from the Great Rabbi of Rimanov concerning the Principle of “Halachah L’Moshe MiSinai”

As a loyal servant in the presence of his masters, I would like to embellish their sacred explanations regarding the reason it was arranged from above for

the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu to receive their tikun by entering Pinchas when he slew Zimri. We have learned in the Gemara (A.Z. 36b): **“ישראל הבא על העובדת”**—**the prohibition regarding a Jewish man who cohabits with an idolatress is an “oral law transmitted to Moshe at Sinai.”** For the master said: **If one cohabits with an Aramis** (a gentile woman or an idolatress), **zealots may kill him.** It behooves us to explain how the sages in the Gemara deduced that this was a **“halachah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai”** from the master’s statement: **“Zealots may harm him”**?

To explain the matter, let us recall what Pinchas said to Moshe: **“Brother of my father’s father, did you not teach me upon your descent from Har Sinai: One who cohabits with a gentile woman, zealots may kill him?”** Why did Pinchas choose to refer to Moshe as the **“brother of my father’s father,”** indicating that Moshe was the brother of his grandfather Aharon? Why didn’t he simply say: **“Rabeinu, isn’t this what you taught me”**? Additionally, why did Pinchas emphasize the fact that Moshe had taught him this halachah **upon his descent from Har Sinai**?

To unravel the enigmatic words of our sages, I had a wonderful inspiration. We learned in the Mishnah (Eduyos 8, 7): **“אמר רבי יהושע, מקובל אני מרבן יוחנן בן זכאי, ששמע מרבן ורבן מרבן, הלכה למשה מסיני, שאין אליהו בא לטמא ולטהר, לרחק ולקרוב, אלא לרחק המקורבין בזרוע, ולקרוב המרוחקין בזרוע.”** **Rabbi Yehoshua said: I have received a tradition from Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, who heard it from his teacher, and his teacher heard it from his teacher, as a halachah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, that Eliyahu will not come to pronounce unclean (“tamei”) or to pronounce clean (“tahor”), to drive away or to bring near, but to drive away those brought near by force and to bring near those driven away by force.** In other words, Eliyahu will fulfill his mission, prior to the coming of the Mashiach, by driving away the unkosher families who have joined the ranks of the Jewish people by employing violence. Simultaneously, he will draw near Jews who have drifted apart and afar by imbuing them with a sense of brotherly love. The commentaries on the Mishnah are perplexed by the assertion that this

was a **“halachah l’Moshe miSinai.”** After all, this concerns what Eliyahu is destined to do in anticipation of the future geulah; it does not appear to concern a halachic ruling.

Let us introduce a wonderful principle presented by the great Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, zy”a, in the sefer Agra D’Pirka (219) in the name of his teacher and Rav, the esteemed Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Rimanov, zy”a. He teaches us that whenever a particular halachah is professed to be a **“הלכה למשה מסיני”**, it implies that HKB”H transmitted it to Moshe as he was descending from Har Sinai. Here are his sacred words:

“שמעתי בשם כבוד אדמו”ר מוהרמ”מ זצוק”ל, הלכה למשה מסיני, לא אמרו רז”ל שתם שהוא תורה שבעל פה, וגם אמרם מסיני” הוה להו למימר בסיני, ואמר אדמו”ר זצוק”ל, שאותן הדינים נאמרו לו למשה בעת הליכתו מסיני, היינו בסוף ארבעים יום שכבר פנה ללכת מסיני אמר לו השי”ת אותן ההלכות, והוא כדמיון האדם אשר העניקוהו רבו בכל טוב, להיות לו לצורך בדרך אשר ילך, ובעת אשר כבר הכין עצמו ללכת אמר לו הרב, קח נא גם את זה, כי גם זה יהיה לך לצורך בעת המצטרך, וזהו הלכ”ה למשה מסיני, שכל זה מן הגאמרים למשה בעת הליכתו” מסיני, כך שמעתי.”

He questions why the blessed sages called it a **“halachah l’Moshe miSinai”** rather than simply calling it a teaching from Torah she’b’al peh. He also scrutinizes why they said **“miSinai”** rather than **“biSinai,”** which would seem to be more correct. He deduces that these laws were transmitted to Moshe as he was leaving Sinai, at the conclusion of his forty days on the mountain; hence, the term **“miSinai”—from Sinai.** He compares it to a person who was taking leave of his Rav, who had given him everything he would need for his journey. But, as he was ready to leave, the Rav said, **“Take this also; this will also come in handy in a time of need.”** Thus, these laws are referred to as **הלכ”ה למשה מסיני**—indicating that they were transmitted to Moshe as he was going—**הליכתו**—away from Sinai—**מסיני**.

With this in mind, the Agra D’Pirka adds a phenomenal chiddush: All of these halachos were purposely transmitted to Moshe Rabeinu only when he was leaving Har Sinai as a **tikun for the “cheit ha’eigel.”** **Therefore, they were not transmitted until after the sin.**

“You taught me when you descended the mountain” a Halachah that Was a Tikun for the “Cheit HaEigel”

We can now begin to appreciate with elation the wonders of Chazal’s teachings. They revealed to us via their “ruach hakodesh” what Pinchas said to Moshe Rabeinu upon witnessing Zimri’s despicable act with Cozbi, the Midianite woman: **“Brother of my father’s father, did you not teach me upon your descent from Har Sinai: One who cohabits with a gentile woman, zealots may kill him?”**

He cleverly referred to Moshe Rabeinu as the **“brother of my father’s father.”** In this manner, he hinted to Moshe indirectly that he was the brother Aharon, who had fashioned the “eigel” for Yisrael. Then, he reminded Moshe that he had taught him the halachah: **One who cohabits with a gentile woman, zealots may kill him only “upon his descent from Har Sinai”—i.e., after the “cheit ha’eigel”—proving that this halachah was a tikun for the “cheit ha’eigel.”**

Let us elaborate. The root cause of the “cheit ha’eigel” was the fact that Yisrael fraternized with the Erev Rav and followed their advice. As it is written (Shemos 32, 7): **“ויאמר ה' אל משה לך רד כי שיחת עמך אשר העלית מארץ מצרים—Hashem spoke to Moshe: “Go, descend; for your nation that you have brought up from Mitzrayim has acted corruptly. Rashi comments: It does not say “the nation has acted corruptly,” but rather, “your nation”—the Erev Rav whom you accepted on your own and converted, but you did not consult Me, and about whom you said, “It is good that converts should cling to the Shechinah”; they have acted corruptly and caused corruption in others. It was for this reason that HKB”H transmitted this halachah to Moshe as he was descending the mountain: “הבוועל ארמית קנאין בוגעין בו”**—because it is a fitting tikun for the “cheit ha’eigel” caused by the fraternization of Yisrael with Eirev Rav. Hence, the tikun and remedy is to refrain from relationships with the forces of tumah of the nations of the world.

Let us embellish this thought. Pinchas reminded Moshe of this halachah when he was coming down from the mountain, because he intended to reconcile an

astonishing phenomenon. How is it possible that the greatest minds in Yisrael, the seventy elders, Shevet Levi who indulged in Torah-study, and even Moshe Rabeinu, forgot this halachah? And, yet, only Pinchas remembered it. Therefore, Pinchas reminded Moshe that he had taught him this halachah when he came down from the mountain after the “cheit ha’eigel.”

As we know, when Moshe came down from Har Sinai and saw the “eigel,” he shattered the luchos. As a consequence, forgetfulness prevailed over Yisrael, as they taught in the Gemara (Eiruvim 54a): **“מאי דכתיב חרות—על הלוחות, אלמלי לא נשתברו לוחות הראשונות, לא נשתכחה תורה מישראל”**—**what is the meaning of that which is written (Shemos 32, 16): “Etched on the luchos”? Had the first luchos not been shattered, the Torah would never have been forgotten by Yisrael.** Therefore, it was arranged from above that all of Yisrael would forget this halachah except for Pinchas. Thus, he would be the agent to enforce this halachah by killing Zimri ben Salu who cohabited with a Midianite woman.

This concurs magnificently with Moshe Rabeinu’s response to Pinchas: **“The one who reads the document, deserves to be the one to execute the verdict.”** Since you were the only one deemed worthy to remember this halachah, it is a sign that it is incumbent upon you to enforce it.

This provides us with a better understanding of the Gemara cited above: **“The prohibition regarding a Jewish man who cohabits with an idolatress is a “halachah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai.” For the master said: If one cohabits with an Aramis (a gentile woman or an idolatress), zealots may kill him.** Let us explain. Since this oral law was transmitted to Moshe Rabeinu when he descended from Har Sinai, it is referred to as a **“הלכה למשה מסיני”**—as explained above—and it was aimed at remedying the cause of the “cheit ha’eigel.”

By Remediating the Cheit HaEigel Pinchas also Rectified the Neshamos of Nadav and Avihu

We can now appreciate why Pinchas deserved this incredible reward—to become Eliyahu HaNavi, who would come and announce the future geulah. As

explained, in preparation for the geulah, he will first ferret out the impure families with false lineage who do not belong among the people of Yisrael and drive them away. Thus, they will no longer be able to corrupt Yisrael with their negative influence. Clearly, this exemplifies the principle of “midah k’neged midah.” After all, Pinchas endangered his life by killing Zimri ben Salu who caused Yisrael to sin by consorting with the daughters of Midian.

With this understanding, we can better understand the teaching of the Mishnah: **Rabbi Yehoshua said: I have received a tradition from Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai, who heard it from his teacher, and his teacher heard it from his teacher, as a halachah transmitted to Moshe at Sinai, that Eliyahu will not come to pronounce “tamei” (illegitimate) or to pronounce “tahor” (legitimate), to drive away or to bring near, but to drive away those brought near by force and to bring near those driven away by force.** We have learned that Pinchas, who is Eliyahu, was designated to remember the halachah that was transmitted to Moshe “**as he was coming down from Har Sinai**” after the “cheit ha’eigel”: **If one who cohabits with a gentile woman, zealots may kill him.** As such, this law is classified as a “**halachah l’Moshe miSinai**”—an oral law transmitted to Moshe as he was leaving Sinai. By fulfilling this mitzvah which he was taught when Moshe returned from the mountain, Pinchas saved the people of Yisrael from annihilation. In that merit, he is destined to become Eliyahu and to lay the groundwork for the future geulah by cleansing and ridding Yisrael of the offspring of the

Eirev Rav who still remain among them and exert a deleterious influence on them.

In this manner, we can explain the reason the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu received their tikun—for delivering a halachic ruling in the presence of Moshe—by entering the being of Pinchas. Let us refer to the following passuk (Devarim 9, 20): **וּבֹאֲהָרִן הִתְאַנֵּף ה' מֵאֲדָר לְהַשְׁמִידוֹ וְאֶתְפַּלֵּל גַּם בְּעַד אַהֲרֹן בְּעַת הַהִיא**—**and Hashem became very angry with Aharon to destroy him, so I also prayed for Aharon, at that time.** Rashi explains: **“To destroy him” connotes the annihilation of children. “So, I also prayed for Aharon”—and my prayer effectively atoned for one half; two sons died, and two sons remained.** This implies that the deaths of Nadav and Avihu were Aharon’s punishment for his part in the “cheit ha’eigel.”

Now, Pinchas remedied the cause of the “cheit ha’eigel” by sacrificing his life to kill Zimri. Thus, he enforced the mitzvah that Moshe taught him after he came down from Har Sinai. Therefore, the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu, who died as a punishment for Aharon on account of the “cheit ha’eigel,” were afforded their tikun by entering Pinchas at that precise moment. It was truly as if they had been resurrected. This is the implication of the teaching in the Zohar hakadosh above. When the passuk says: **“Pinchas the son of Elazar”**—it is inferring that until that moment, he was only the son of Elazar; however, as a result of that incident, he actually became **“the son of Aharon HaKohen,”** because the neshamos of Aharon’s sons, Nadav and Avihu, had become a part of him.

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