

# Toronto Torah

Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Pinchas

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## Pinchas 3-D

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

In last week's parshah (Bamidbar 25:7), Pinchas was introduced with a mighty name, "Pinchas, son of Elazar, son of Aharon, the kohen." His paternal grandfather Aharon was the first kohen gadol (high priest). His paternal grandmother Elisheva was among the leadership of the royal tribe of Yehudah. His maternal grandfather, Yitro, was a celebrity in his own right and Moshe's father-in-law. His father was Elazar, was the leader of the Levites and the nation's second kohen gadol.

In the middle of a full-fledged rebellion against Moshe and Torah; as Jewish aristocracy and rank-and-file alike were rejecting Divinely legislated morality and entering the tents of Midianite women; as the leader of the mighty tribe of Shimon publicly flouted the law; up stepped this man with the magnificent name, Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the kohen. When Moshe failed to act, when Aharon failed to act, when the nation stood by and wept, one man abrogated the chain of judicial command, subverted the authority of his prophetic betters, and executed the leader of a tribe. Only a man of regal heraldry could have done this.

Despite his aristocratic heritage, though, Pinchas gained a new name via his vigilante justice. Quailing at his strength, fearing that he might turn against them next, the Jews labelled him *kana'i*, the Zealot. (Vayikra Rabbah 33:4) Worse, they called him

*ben Puti*, mocking Pinchas for the fact that his grandfather, Yitro, had once been an idolater who had fattened (*pitem*) calves for idolatry. (Sotah 43a) Despite Divine approval for Pinchas' actions, he gained a stigma among those who feared him.

And then the curtain rose on a third act: Pinchas persevered despite national opprobrium, entering Israel and embarking upon a new career as a prophet. (Seder Olam 20) Pinchas served as an ambassador of peace, halting a near civil war fourteen years after the Jews entered Israel. (Yehoshua 22) Pinchas was the prophet consulted by the Jews of a later generation, before launching a war against their own tribe of Benjamin. (Shoftim 20:27-28) According to the sages (Vayikra Rabbah 1:1), Pinchas came to a woman named Hatzleponit and told her that the baby she carried in her womb would grow up to be none other than Shimshon. In these roles, Pinchas became known by a new name: *malach Hashem*, an agent of G-d.

These three distinct roles were not mutually exclusive. Pinchas did not cease his outrage for G-d when he became *malach Hashem*, and he was still the child of leadership and privilege when he lashed out against immorality. Pinchas's path was not so much metamorphosis as it was accretion; each additional layer provided another potent weapon for his arsenal.

With these three dimensions, Pinchas fulfilled the words of an insightful midrash regarding the breadth of each human being's life: "A person is known by three names: One is the name which his father and mother call him, one is the name which others call him, and one is the name by which he will be known in the book of chronicles of his existence." (Vayikra Rabbah 7:3) We gain talents, skills and proclivities from three unique sources, and these are embodied in the names by which we become known.

Just as each name assigned to Pinchas was true and accurate, albeit incomplete, so our names represent non-exclusive facets of our own trifurcate identities. Our parents, the roots of our nature and providers of our nurture, establish our initial name. Our peers exert their social pressure, as role models, sounding boards and reality checks. Our actions provide a third dimension; we are blessed with an innate desire to rebel, and this desire to make our own way catalyzes a limited independence.

These multiple names can be confusing, leaving us wondering about our "real" selves. Am I my parents' child? Am I the person others perceive? Am I the identity I shape? Faced with these questions, we can learn much from Pinchas's experience. Each of our names is legitimate, and should be pursued. The names bestowed by our parents are justifiably powerful and durable. The names given us by our peers reflect the assessment of those who see us most clearly. The names we craft for ourselves reflect our deepest ideals and desires. We are a composite of all three, as Pinchas was a composite of all three; may we succeed in harnessing all of our names to the service of Hashem.

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### Two Golden Opportunities this Sunday

9:15 AM R' Ezra Goldschmidt

The Mission of the Exiled Jew

Breakfast & Beit Midrash, Forest Hill Jewish Centre

11:00 AM Mrs. Elyssa Goldschmidt

What is our service to Hashem during this time of year?

Lunch and Learn, Westmount, *women, \$18, RSVP required*

In *Out of the Whirlwind*, Rav Soloveitchik draws parallels between the periods of *bein hametzarim* in which we mourn for the Beit haMikdash and the periods in which one mourns for a relative. The start of the month of Av is equated with the year of mourning after a parent's death; the week of Tishah b'Av is equated with the *shloshim* month; Tishah b'Av is like the week of *shivah*.

Rav Soloveitchik does not treat the opening days of the Three Weeks, before Rosh Chodesh Av, as a period mandating particular mournful activities. No such requirement appears in mishnah or gemara, and so he does not link this period to the framework of personal bereavement. Our practices of the first part of this *bein hametzarim* period are only the customs of Ashkenaz, mentioned by the Rama (Orach Chaim 551:2, 4), extending the prohibitions of the Nine Days into the early days of the Three Weeks.

In truth, the Rama only extended certain prohibitions of the Nine Days, but not others. Upon analysis, it seems that only unusual pleasures, marking extraordinary events – weddings, dancing, haircuts – were forbidden by Ashkenazim during the incipient stage of the Three Weeks. In contrast, during the Nine Days we prohibit routine pleasures – eating meat and imbibing wine, laundering and bathing. One may suggest that the goal of the prohibitions of the Nine Days is to arouse mourning and grief, but the goal of those earlier days is to reduce the escapism of unusual, extraordinary pleasures.

The Ashkenazi custom of avoiding unusually joyous events springs from the belief that our mundane lives are lacking and broken; our daily blissful

ignorance is a result of the joy we inject into our lives via special occasions, disrupting the grind of our troubles. Weddings and dancing create the illusion that we live in an ideal, whole, fulfilled world, a world in which the *Shechinah* is openly manifest, with G-d walking in the midst of our camp. Even the haircut demonstrates the wholeness of Man and his strength, expressed in his control over his appearance (as seen in the laws of tonsure for kohanim and kings). When these unusual events are withheld, we sink into dull, banal routine, and a sensitive person comes to sense the loss of the Beit haMikdash without need for the active mourning of the Nine Days. With the quieting of the escapist noise and bells, a feeling of displacement and exile is awakened within us. The daily korban is absent. Prophets are absent. The Davidic dynasty is absent. We are incapable of filling the role designated for us by G-d, the mission of becoming "a nation of priests and a holy people." Our identity is incomplete.

Above all, during *bein hametzarim* a vague longing fills the soul, a yearning for some distant land and dimly visible time, when day-to-day life was complete and meaningful without resort to noise and bells. This is the message of the period between the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz and Rosh Chodesh Av, a slowly building recognition of the gap between our lives as they are and as they are meant to be. With the onset of Rosh Chodesh Av this recognition brings about practical mourning for the destruction of the Beit haMikdash, which precipitated this gap. "Hashem, bring us back to You, and we will return! Renew our days as of old." (Eichah 5:21)

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## 613 Mitzvot: #184

### Familiarity Breeds Contempt

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

We are always encouraged to sanctify ourselves and to build our connection to holy places and pursuits, but the Torah voices concern that one who is too close to holiness might become de-sensitized.

This is one idea behind Mitzvah 184, which warns the kohen gadol not to enter the *kodesh kodashim* [Holy of Holies] other than to perform his annual tasks therein, and the kohanim not to enter the Beit haMikdash other than for the purpose of performing their tasks

therein. Although they have purified themselves and although they work in that area on a regular basis, the kohanim are thus prevented from becoming overly familiar and losing their respect for sanctity.

On a similar note, we do not enter a synagogue sanctuary other than for sacred purposes. If we were to chat, joke or manage our business in a shul, we would be most challenged in shifting our focus when it came time to use that same space for communication with G-d.

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## Hitoriri: Jewish Spirituality Swim Safely Hillel Horovitz

הגמרא במסכת בבא בתרא (ע"ג:) מביאה את אחת מאגדות רבה בר בר חנה. רבב"ח מספר כי הוא נסע בספינה באחד הימים ולפתע ראה אי יפה ועליו כרי דשא רחבים ונעימים. החליטו הוא והאנשים שבספינה לעגון באי ולנוח לזמן מה. ישבו האנשים ובישלו לעצמם ארוחה. לפתע התחיל לזוז האי ממקומו והסתבר שאי זה כלל אינו אי. היה זה דג עצום שהיה כל כך גדול שהיה נראה ממש כמו יבשה. כאשר הרגיש הדג את החום של המאכלים זז ממקומו, התהפך ואיים להטביע את כולם. מספר רבה בר בר חנה שבזכות העובדה שהספינה הייתה קרובה הצליחו האנשים להנצל ולעלות על הספינה במהירות לפני שיטבעו.

סיפור זה נראה תמוה מאוד כאשר מנסים להבין אותו כפשוטו, ואכן רבים וטובים מסבירים אגדות אלו של רבה בר בר חנה כמשלים הבאים להעביר לנו מסר חשוב. חיינו של האדם דומים לספינה המטלטלת בין הגלים. ישנם ימים רגועים בהם הים שקט והנסיעה נעימה ורגועה, אך לעיתים הים סוער וסערות ממשמשות ובאות. במשך חיינו לעיתים אנו רואים אי, יבשה, וממהרים לעלות עליה בחפזנו אחר יציבות ובטחון. מלמד אותנו רבה בר בר חנה שישנם "איים" שרק נראים יציבים. ישנם פעמים בהם יצר הרע או אנשים רעים מראים את עצמם כמלאי בטחון ושלווה ומבטיחים לאדם כי אם רק ירגע וישהה במחיצתם מובטחת לו שלוה אין קץ.

הדבר משתנה מן הקצה אל הקצה כאשר הדברים "מתחממים", כאשר יצר הרע רואה שהאדם מלתה ומתחמם ומתגבר בתורה ומעשים טובים מאיים יצר הרע להטביע את האדם. אותם "איים" של השקט ובטח לא יכולים לשאת בנטל הקדושה וההתקדמות של האדם. מורה לנו רבה בר בר חנה שבדיוק משום כך הספינה עוגנת קרוב לאי. חבל ההצלה שלנו אף פעם לא רחוק מדי מאיתנו, ד' נמצא לצידנו תמיד בכדי להציל אותנו מטביעה במימיו העמוקים של יצר הרע.

בימי בין המצרים יש שנוהגים שלא ללכת ולשחות במים משום סכנה. הגמרא אולי באה ללמד אותנו שלא רק במים רגילים צריכים אנו להזהר כי אם גם ב"מים" של חיי היומיום, בתנועה שלנו בין הזרמים ובין הגלים עלינו להזהר עד מאוד שלא נטבע ולוודא כי אנו נמצאים במקומות בטוחים והגונים שמתאימים לנו ולהשקפת עולמנו.

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**Torah in Translation**

**The Dangers of Translation**

**R' Yosef Chaim of Baghdad**

**Rav Pe'alim 56**

**Translated by R' Dovid Zirkind**

You, the questioner, can see with your own eyes how the great Sages trembled regarding translation of our religious texts into other languages, forbidding buyers from purchasing them. How much more so the words of the holy *Idra* (Zohar) which are entirely lofty secrets; even their revealed elements speak the language of the soul to attract the ear. Certainly, translating them into another language would be a serious transgression, because translation suggests to the reader that the revealed sections are the author's actual intent.

Know that three years ago one of the local teachers came and proudly told me how he had translated Song of Songs from Hebrew to Arabic, literally, beginning to end. Each of his students had copied his translation to study from it, and he was extremely pleased with this. I said that it was not appropriate to do this, and he was mistaken in implementing this novel idea, for it would not be appropriate to teach the verses of Song of Songs to children and simple people in their national language, translating literally. All of the verses of Song of Songs were not stated literally; all of them use parable, allegory and hints to the illumination of the *Shechinah*, while the literal words sound like a love song, G-d forbid. For those of small mind, like schoolchildren, when they are taught the verses in their national language then the words will be taken lightly by them. It will appear in their eyes like a love song, G-d forbid. Therefore it is not appropriate to translate the text literally into another language; Song of Songs is the holiest of the holy.

I brought him an absolute proof for this from the author of the Targum to Tanach; he was careful not to translate Song of Songs literally as he did with the rest of Tanach. For each verse of Song of Songs he rendered it as allegory, with its lesson, and he did not translate the words as they were written at all. His reasoning is clear and simple: The verses of Song of Songs have no meaning in their simple form, but all is allegory and hint... This can then prove our position regarding our question of translating the *Idra*, that there is great reason to prohibit its

Born in Baghdad in September of 1832, Chacham Yosef Chaim was the oldest of three children. His father, Eliyahu Chaim, was a Rabbi and community leader whose advice was sought after by numerous Middle Eastern Sephardic communities.

As a young boy, Yosef Chaim was playing with his sister when he tripped and fell into a deep well. Members of the community were able to retrieve the boy and carry him home, but his breathing had completely stopped. The family sat in prayer as the doctors worked on the young boy, and eventually he was revived. Although Yosef Chaim did not remember the events of that day, upon hearing the details of his near death experience he decided to commit his life to Torah. When Chacham Eliyahu Chaim died, the community appointed his 25-year old son Yosef Chaim to fill his position, and he served for fifty years.

The published works of Chacham Yosef Chaim, which cover the areas of halachah, aggadah and responsa, are central in Sephardic literature to this day. Many of his books take their names from a biblical description of King Solomon's loyal aide, Benayahu the son of Yehoyada (Shemuel 2 23:20), "Benayahu the son of Yehoyada, the son of a valiant man of Kabtze'el, who had performed mighty deeds."

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translation to another language. It may be logically inferred, and the intelligent will understand this on his own and there is no need to expound on this further.

Regarding that which the questioner wrote in his question, that the translator of the *Idra* to Arabic objected that there is no prohibition in doing so, saying, "Just as we trust when we learn it in its original language that the words should not be taken literally, so we trust those who learn it in Arabic that it is not to be taken literally." Know that aside from the corruption which will emerge from this edition, this Arabic edition will fall into the hands of non-Jews who understand Arabic and their mouths will blaspheme when they see the [seemingly] mundane matters ascribed to the heavens, and there will be further bad results which I cannot explain here. In truth, even for the people of the covenant, Jews who know the words should not be taken literally, it will be a great stumbling block, mistake and heresy when they recite these words in Arabic as translated in front of them.

**Ha'Aretz**

**מעלות Ma'alot**

**Yair Manas**

Ma'alot, located in the Galil, was established in 1957 as a town for Moroccan and Iraqi immigrants. In 1963, it merged with the nearby Arab town of Tarshiha, and currently houses approximately 20,000 residents. It was officially recognized as a city in 1997. Ma'alot is located 20 kilometers east of Nahariya, and 45 kilometers northeast of Haifa.

Many residents work in the Iscar Metalworking plant, which is located nearby. Iscar, an Israeli tool-making company, was acquired by Berkshire Hathaway in 2006. Warren Buffet purchased an 80% stake in the company for \$4 billion, the first time that he had purchased a company located outside of the US. Warren Buffet described the company as "a dream deal," and in 2012 he wrote that the managers are "brilliant strategists and operators."

The residents of Ma'alot have many options for recreation, including a new, state-of-the-art fitness center, an ice skating rink, and multiple Olympic-size pools. There is also a beautiful manmade lake with kayak and pedal boat rentals. In January, 2008, Ma'alot hosted the Israel International Chess Championship, and there is an annual International Sculpture Symposium.

Ma'alot is perhaps most well-known for a tragic massacre perpetrated in the Netiv Meir elementary school on May 15, 1974. Three terrorists affiliated with the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a member organization of the PLO, infiltrated Israel from Lebanon on May 13. The next day, on their way to the school in Ma'alot, the terrorists shot and killed six people. The terrorists took about 115 people hostage, most of them students, and demanded the release of 23 terrorists. An elite Israeli unit stormed the building, but tactical errors caused the operation to go awry. 25 hostages were killed, including 22 high school students. According to a 2007 article in Haaretz, American filmmakers are planning to film a documentary on the Ma'alot massacre.

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### Why are the fates of Korach's children listed in the lineage of the tribe of Reuven? (Bamidbar 26:9-11)

**Ibn Ezra** explains that although everyone from Dan and Aviram's families perished, Korach's children did not perish. This teaches that the wickedness of Dan and Aviram surpassed that of Korach.

**Ohr HaChaim** explains, along the same lines as **Ibn Ezra**, that it is meant to teach us that Korach's family suffered fewer losses than Dan and Aviram's due to the latter's exceeding wickedness. He also explains that the Torah cites this story to highlight that Dan and Aviram were the ones who instigated the whole rebellion against Moshe.

### Pinchas was a descendant of Aharon; why did he need special induction into the kehunah? (Bamidbar 25:13)

**Rashi** states that the hereditary nature of the kehunah was only for Aharon and his sons, and those born after they were anointed as kohanim. Pinchas, who was already alive at that point, was therefore not a kohen.

**Da'at Zekeinim** presents two approaches: Pinchas was a kohen, but now he and his descendants would carry the role of the *mashuach milchamah*, the kohen who leads the nation into war. Alternatively, as Rashi suggested, Pinchas was not yet a

kohen. This may explain why Pinchas was not concerned lest he become *tamei* when he killed Zimri.

**Ibn Ezra** explains that the blessing from Hashem refers to Pinchas's descendants becoming kohanim gedolim, but he certainly was already a kohen.

**Ralbag** suggests a practical approach, explaining the words to mean that Pinchas will always have male descendants, and therefore there will always be kohanim in his family. Alternatively, he adopts the position of Ibn Ezra and claims that this is the true approach.

**Chizkuni** also explains the pasuk as Ibn Ezra does, and he cites Divrei HaYamim I 5:30 as proof.

### Why is the goat offering of Rosh Chodesh called a "goat for G-d" ? (Bamidbar 28:15)

**Rashi** explains that all of the goat offerings of mussaf were meant to atone for those who defiled the Mikdash and its sacred offerings through *tumah*, but only this one is called "a goat for G-d" because it atones even for those who were unaware of their transgression, which is something that only G-d knows about. He then presents an alternative, midrash-based explanation, that the korban actually serves as an atonement for Hashem having reduced the moon's size [see Rashi to Bereishit 1:16, and Chullin 60b].

**Chizkuni** argues that since this is the first musaf offering of the month, the Torah says "for G-d" to teach that this musaf, as well as all others, must be offered with proper intent to serve G-d.

**Meshech Chachmah** offers an explanation for why the reduction of the moon's size relates to the korbanot. He states that the disparity of size between the sun and moon is what causes idolaters to worship them, and it is for catalyzing this idolatry, by creating a large and small luminary, that Hashem seeks atonement. We, the descendants of Avraham, whose mandate is to rid the world of idolatry, attribute the function of the heavenly luminaries to The Creator, and as such we offer korbanot to Hashem, whose presence is manifest in the Mikdash.

### For children: Why is the story about the daughters of Tzela Chad mentioned here? (Bamidbar 27:1)

**Rashi** claims that the story's placement here is to show that just as Yoseph loved the land of Israel, so did his descendants, the daughters of Tzela Chad, who petitioned Moshe for an inheritance in the land.

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## Highlights for July 14 - July 20 / 24 Tammuz - 2 Av

*Many of our shiurim are now on summer hiatus, but opportunities remain!*

### Shabbat, July 14

**7:45 AM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Rav Kook, Or Chaim *not this week*

**10:20 AM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Parshah, Clanton Park

**75 minutes before minchah** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Daf Yomi: Niddah 54, BAYT

**After minchah** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Will Everyone Become Jewish? Gemara Avodah Zarah, BAYT

### Sunday, July 15

**9:15 AM** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, The Mission of the Exiled Jew, **Breakfast and Beit Midrash**, Forest Hill Jewish Centre

**9:15 AM** Hillel Horovitz, Parshah, Zichron Yisroel, Hebrew

**11:00 AM** Mrs. Elyssa Goldschmiedt, What is our service to Hashem during this time of year? **Lunch \$18**, Westmount, *women, registration required*

**6:00 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic considerations in actual questions in Israel: The Refugee Crisis, **Hebrew**, 4 Tillingham Keep

**40 Min Before Minchah** R' Baruch Weintraub, Halachic considerations in actual questions in Israel: The Refugee Crisis, **Hebrew**, Clanton Park, *men*

### Tuesday, July 17

**1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Trei Asar, Shaarei Shomayim, *on summer hiatus*

**7:15 PM** R' Ezra Goldschmiedt, Get more out of the Parshah, BAYT, *on summer hiatus*

**8:00 PM** Hillel Horovitz, Book of Joshua, Part 3, Bnai Torah

### Wednesday, July 18

**1:30 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, IPEME, Mount Sinai Hospital

**8:00 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Living Midrash: The Final Letters, BAYT, *women*

**8:30 PM** R' Baruch Weintraub, Hilchot Melachim: Royal Courts?, Shomrei Shabbos, *men, on summer hiatus*

### Thursday, July 19

**10:15 AM** R' Mordechai Torczyner, Practical Shabbat, BAYT, *collegiate women*

### Sunday, July 22

**8:00 PM** R' Mordechai Torczyner (A Groundbreaking Approach to Geulah) and R' Mordechai Scheiner (Navigating the Social Tensions of Jewish Life), Pre-Tishah b'Av Program at BAYT