

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Pinchas

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Call me by my rightful name

Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig

While Shakespeare may have questioned the significance of a name, numerous examples in our tradition demonstrate how important names can be. The Torah clearly describes the meaning of nearly all the names of our biblical ancestors. Take Avraham and Yaakov as examples: Avraham is a contraction of *av hamon*, a father of multitudes. (Bereshit 17:4), and Yaakov is based on the word *ekev*, heel, for he grasped his brother's heel at birth. (Bereishit 25:26). The significance of names extends even beyond those of people; we use the Babylonian names of the months of the year to commemorate our redemption from Babylon. (Ramban to Shemot 12:2) The tragedy recorded at the end of last week's parshah and concluded at the beginning of this week's parshah adds another nuance regarding the importance of a name.

Rashi is troubled by the Torah's presentation of Pinchas' full lineage at the start of Parshat Pinchas, in light of the fact that this had just been recorded a few verses earlier. (Bamidbar 25:7) Citing the Talmud (Sotah 43a), he explains that following Pinchas' killing of Zimri, the prince of Shimon, for engaging in illicit relations with a Midianite woman, members of the various other tribes attacked Pinchas, saying, "Have you seen this son of *Puti*! His mother's father fattened cows for idolatry and now he's killed a prince of Israel!" *Puti* was an insulting reference to Yitro, Pinchas' maternal grandfather. Before coming to Judaism, Yitro was an idolatrous priest, who raised cows to be slaughtered to idols. (Rashi to Shemot 6:25) The act of fattening the cows in

preparation for their being offered was called *pitum*, from which the nickname "*ben Puti*" was derived.

However, Rabbi Natan Gestetner brings this midrashic understanding of the entire episode into question. Why should lineage be of any significance? Was he not acting within halachah? Rabbi Gestetner explains that the tribes suspected that Pinchas had not killed Zimri out of any earnest religious convictions, but rather as the result of deep-seated bloodthirst that he had inherited from his grandfather, Yitro. To present this argument, they coined a nickname referencing his idolatrous ancestry. In response, the Torah makes note of his illustrious lineage, thereby demonstrating that Pinchas had actually inherited the traits of his father Aharon: he loved peace and pursued it.

From this episode, we can gain powerful insight into the Torah's view on derogatory nicknames, like the one given to Pinchas by his detractors. The Torah's emphasis on stating the lineage of Pinchas in spite of its redundancy makes clear that this issue has priority. Why is that? What exactly is so heinous about a nickname?

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 58b) teaches that there are three who descend to *Gehennom* and do not rise back up: an adulterer, one who humiliates his fellow in public, and one who creates a derogatory nickname for his fellow. At first glance, the last two in the list appear to be in very much the same category. The Talmud itself is sensitive to this, asking: what is the distinction between humiliating another person and calling them by a derogatory

nickname, which is surely a form of humiliation?

The Talmud replies that the severity of using a derogatory nickname still applies even if it has become well-used and the victim is accustomed to it. As Rashi explains, this familiarity doesn't change the malicious intent of the speaker. In his book, *The Right and the Good*, Rabbi Daniel Z. Feldman further clarifies that, "Beyond embarrassment, a further level of emotional violation is present. A person's name is his connection to his sense of identity, to his awareness of his own existence as an independent individual. Indeed, the rabbinical sages considered names to be deeply indicative of one's inner character." The detractors committed this exact violation when they called Pinchas "*ben Puti*."

As Rabbi Feldman puts it, even if Pinchas wasn't embarrassed for having done what was just, the use of a nickname was nonetheless a trampling of his rightful identity. Using a name in such a manner most certainly doesn't follow the precedent set for us by the Torah through the names of our ancestors, the names of our months and countless other examples. Instead, by eschewing the use of derogatory nicknames and using a person's rightful name, we can aid them in maintaining and strengthening their personal identity. Let us take this opportunity to properly respect and honour the inner character and existence of others through the use of their rightful name.

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The Living Tree: Studies in Modern Orthodoxy

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin
Maggid 2014

About the Author

My Rav and teacher, Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, is well-known as the rabbi who built the Lincoln Square Synagogue in New York, and as the founding and current Chief Rabbi of the city of Efrat, in the hills of Gush Etzion. He directs Ohr Torah Stone Institutions, operating a handful of yeshivot and seminaries in Israel, including a hesder yeshiva, a women's seminary that trains *yoatzot halachah* and two rabbinical training kollels.

Rabbi Riskin was a student of both Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveichik and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe. In all of his teaching he expresses their legacies, with an extreme commitment to learning and a loving personality.

While engaged in many different projects simultaneously, Rabbi Riskin always has time for his students and community. On top of his work building Torah institutions, he teaches daf yomi as well as multiple weekly shiurim at each of his institutions, works with

community groups, provides counselling for his constituents, and visits every Shabbat simchah in Efrat, which can mean at least an hour's walk in each direction.

About the Book

The Living Tree outlines Rabbi Riskin's general approach to Torah and the modern world, teaching how to engage with both and balance them harmoniously. Topics he discusses include the inclusion of science and philosophy within the Beit Midrash, halachic pluralism and the value of multiple opinions, and the claims of religious fundamentalism. Rabbi Riskin is always careful to be respectful of different approaches to Torah, even when his views are in stark contrast, and to be as inclusionary as possible.

Rabbi Riskin does not shy away from approaching many contentious contemporary issues. He engages in detailed discussion of the question of women serving as halachic authorities, and explores the matter of *agunot*. He also discusses politics, specifically regarding the modern state of Israel, the Torah view of democracy, and the mission of the Jewish people to bring the world to redemption.

Recommendation

This book is a "must read", regardless of one's level of observance or connection to Modern Orthodoxy. The book presents Rabbi Riskin's argument for merging the Torah world, including historical, cultural, and ideological foundations, with the modern western world and its sensibilities. He combines an intense passion for learning and analyzing our historical sources with a level-headed, easy-to-read format, appropriate for layman and scholar alike.

As a student of Rabbi Riskin, I could hear his voice speaking directly to me on every page, not only teaching me his ideas, but imploring of me to strengthen my own resolve and my own commitment to Torah and mitzvot, while deepening my connection to Hashem and the Jewish People.

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613 Mitzvot: #91, 449: Are Bikkurim a Korban?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Twice in the book of Shemot (23:19 and 34:26), the Torah tells the Jews to bring the first of the produce of their land to the Beit haMikdash. This is the mitzvah of *bikkurim* ("firsts"); when we have a Beit haMikdash, Israeli farmers bring the first wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and dates to the Beit haMikdash. Those who live closer bring fresh fruit; those who live farther away may dry them first. *Sefer haChinuch* lists this as the Torah's 91st mitzvah.

Ideally, the season's *bikkurim* are first brought on Shavuot. [One may dedicate them even earlier; Minchat Chinuch 11:3 discusses *bikkurim* that are chametz on Pesach!] The residents of Jerusalem greet parades of marchers, who bring their produce into the city in beautifully decorated baskets.

When the farmers bring their produce to the Beit haMikdash, they recite biblical verses (Devarim 26:5-10) summarizing Jewish history. The same passage appears, with amplification, in the Haggadah; according to some, the farmers include the Haggadah's additional material in their recitation. (Tzitz Eliezer 17:24) The *bikkurim* are then given to the kohanim, who eat them in Jerusalem.

Bikkurim seem to have a hybrid identity. On one hand, Vayikra 2:12 calls them a "korban", and they are brought to the Beit haMikdash like other korbanot. On the other hand, they resemble a gift for the kohanim; no part of the *bikkurim* is "given to G-d" in any way, and their separation is part of the required order of non-korban tithing (see Mechilta Shemot 22:28 and Mishnah Terumot 3:6-7). The *bikkurim*

resemble the gifts of *terumah* and *maaser*. Further, the rituals of the *bikkurim* are unlike those of a korban; no part of the *bikkurim* is placed on the altar or on any fire.

In truth, the farmer does bring a traditional *korban shelamim* (celebration offering) alongside the *bikkurim*; we see this obligation in the Torah's instruction to "rejoice before G-d" when bringing the *bikkurim*. (Sifri Reeh 64; Mishnah Bikkurim 2:4) However, Vayikra 12:2 identifies the produce itself as a korban; how are we to understand this? Where is the gift to G-d? (See, too, Rikanti to Devarim 26:2.)

Perhaps the gift aspect of the *bikkurim* is actually the farmer's declaration, recounting Jewish history and thanking G-d for the land and its bounty. This recognition of Divine benevolence and expression of gratitude is itself the greatest korban that the farmer can bring before G-d; at the height of his pride and personal accomplishment, the farmer acknowledges that his ingredients and his success were provided by Heaven.

So it is that the Torah prohibits the kohen from consuming the *bikkurim* before the farmer places the *bikkurim* in the Beit haMikdash and recites the formal declaration; this law is codified by *Sefer haChinuch* as the Torah's 449th mitzvah, based on Devarim 12:17. Just as one may not benefit from a traditional korban before its service is performed, so one may not benefit from the *bikkurim* before its korban rituals are complete.

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Biography

Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneersohn

Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

Rabbi Menachem Mendel, born in 1789 in Liozna, today Belarus, was destined for greatness from birth. A grandson to Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad Chassidut, and raised by him from the age of three, he was seen by many chassidim as a natural successor. Indeed, in 1831, after the passing of his grandfather and a short time later of his father-in-law, Rabbi Dovber Schneuri, Rabbi Menachem Mendel was crowned as the third Rebbe of Chabad.

Rabbi Schneersohn came to be known as "Tzemach Tzedek" ("Righteous Growth"), the title of a work of responsa he wrote. His complete mastery of halachah, visible on every page of the book, helped to bridge the gap that had opened two generations earlier between Chasidim and Mitnagdim. He became an ally of Rabbi Yitzchak of Volozhin, and together they sought ways to strengthen Judaism in the face of the rising Haskalah (Enlightenment) movement, which both saw as a grave danger to the nation.

Soon, Rabbi Schneersohn's activity went far beyond the borders of Chabad community. He was deeply involved in the attempt to rescue Jewish children who had been kidnapped to serve in the Russian army ("Cantonists"). He also engaged in an extended struggle to defend the Jewish school system from government intervention, usually catalyzed by "Maskilim" who tried to use the government as a device to force their own agenda on a resistant Jewish community. His position led him to collide with the Russian government, which arrested him more than twenty times. However, in the year 1844 Rabbi Schneersohn received a special honor title from the government, acknowledging his contribution to the country by establishing the city of Shchedrin with three hundred Chabad families. Rabbi Schneersohn's teaching, "Think good and it will be good", has become fundamental in Chabad, expressing the belief in the power of the human mind to change reality.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel was an exceptionally prolific writer, authoring voluminous books in diverse subjects – from halachah to philosophy, from Torah commentaries to kabbalah. The paragraph quoted in the accompanying Translation is from *Derech Mitzvotcha* ("Path of Your Commandments"), which discusses reasons for the mitzvot.

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Torah and Translation Loving Others

Derech Mitzvotcha, Mitzvat Ahavat Yisrael

Translated by Rabbi Baruch Weintraub

שלא לשנוא לחבירו, שנאמר לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך.

...כתב האריז"ל וז"ל כי כל ישראל סוד גוף אחד של נשמת אדם הראשון... וביאור דבריו הוא שאדם הראשון היה כללות כל הנשמות כולם שבישראל... מהם נתלים בראשו, מהם בזרועו וכו'...

ועל דרך זה יובן גם כן בנשמות ישראל שהם קומה שלימה ביחד דהיינו נשמת אדם הראשון שהיא כללותם. והגם שיש בה רמ"ח איברים מיוחדים, הרי הם כלולים זה מזה, וכמו על דרך משל בגוף אחד שהגם שהוא בהתחלקות ציור איברים, ראש ורגלים וידים וצפרנים, מכל מקום כל אחד כלול מזולתו, שביד יש חיות מעין הרגל על ידי הוורידים שנמשכו בו, וכן בשאר כל האיברים, וכנודע שמרפאים אבר אחד על ידי הקזה בחבירו...

וההתכללות הזאת באיברי הגוף ובחיות הנפש שבהם הוא מחמת כללות החיות שכולל כולם שהוא המאיר במוח שבראש שממנו נתפרדו כל אחד לעצמו והוא כולל כולם... ולכן המוח הוא המרגיש כל כאבי הרמ"ח איברים, וכאב היד עם הרגל שוים אצלו, אדרבה לפעמים ירגיש המוח יותר כאב מכה שבצפורן מכאב מכה שביד, כנראה בחוש. ועל דרך זה היה ההתכללות ברמ"ח איברי נפש אדם הראשון זה מזה מחמת מקור חיי נפשו, שהוא מבחינת חכמה עילאה...

אך אמנם לאחר שנתחלקה נשמת אדם הראשון לשרשים רבים, וכל אחד נחלק לענפים ולניצוצות רבות בגופות מיוחדות, הרי זה כמשל האיברים שנפרדו זה מזה ולא יכאב להיד מכה שברגל המופרדת ממנו וכיוצא, אמנם הפירוד הזה הוא רק מצד הגוף, אבל הנפש לא נפרדה באמת וכולם מתאימות... ויש לה כאב עצום ברוחניותה...

ולכן נצטוונו גם כן לאהוב כל אדם מישראל שהרי, כל אדם כלול מכל נשמות ישראל כנ"ל מן האיברים, והרי אם כן בו יש זולתו גם כן, ויאהב זולתו כמוהו.

It is forbidden to hate one's friend, as [the Torah] states, "You shall not hate your brother in your heart."

...The Ari z"l wrote: All Israel are, in a hidden way, one body for the soul of Adam the First... And the meaning of his words is that Adam included all of the souls of Israel... some of them rooted in his head, some in his arm etc....

In the same manner, it is also understood that all of the souls of Israel are one united figure, as all are part of Adam's soul, which contains them. And while it includes 248 separate organs, they also contain one another. As we see in one body, that while the shape of the organs can be differentiated – head, feet, hands and nails – they each still contain the others, for in the hand there is the vitality of the leg via the veins going through it, and the same applies to the rest of the organs, and as it is known that one organ is healed by taking blood from another....

This merging of the body's organs and the vitality that is in them comes from the one life force that contains all of them, that shines forth in the brain within the head. From it, they each separate, but it includes them all... Therefore, the mind feels the pains of all 248 organs, and the pain in the hand and foot are equal to it. Just the opposite – sometimes the mind will feel more pain from a broken nail than from a hand injury, as can be felt by [our own] senses. In the same manner, the 248 organs of Adam's soul are included in each other, stemming from the source of his soul's life, which is an aspect of the higher wisdom...

However, in truth, since Adam's soul was divided into many roots, and each one of them into many branches and sparks, in unique bodies, they are now similar to organs which have been separated from each other. There will be no pain for the hand when the leg hurts; but this separation is only in the body, as the soul was not truly separated, and all are mated with each other... and so the soul hurts tremendously...

Thus, we were also commanded to love every Jew, for each of us contains elements of all of the souls of Israel, as was explained with the organs. Therefore his fellow is included in him as well, and he should love his fellow as he loves himself.

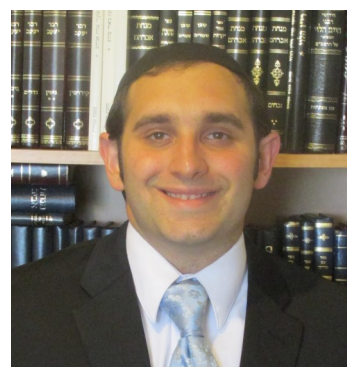
Introducing: Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, our new Sgan for 5776

Rabbi Jonathan Ziring grew up in Staten Island, NY. After high school he attended Yeshivat Har Etzion (Gush). He received his B.A. from Yeshiva College in Philosophy and Jewish Studies, his M.A. from the Bernard Revel Graduate School in Jewish Philosophy, and *semichah* (ordination) from Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS), all of Yeshiva University. Following his studies in YU, he returned to Yeshivat Har Etzion as a member of the Kollel Gavoah, where he also taught and functioned as a Shoel Umeishiv (rabbinic resource) for the overseas students.

During his years in YU, Rabbi Ziring taught regular classes in NYU's Bronfman Center, the Columbia Hillel, and multiple schools and synagogues. He also was a fellow in Yeshiva University's Center for Jewish Law and Contemporary Civilization at Cardozo Law School, in Yeshiva University's Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, and in the Tikvah Fund. In the latter, he developed an extensive theory of journalistic ethics from a halachic perspective. He also worked for Yeshivat Har Etzion as the recruitment representative in North America. For years, he was a fellow, and later Shoel UMeishiv at the Center for Modern Torah Leadership's Summer Beit Midrash in Sharon. He was editor of YU's Magazine of Jewish Thought, Kol HaMevaser, and editor in chief of YU's Torah journal, Beit Yitzchak.

Rabbi Ziring specializes in teaching about the Halachic

Process, tracing the underlying assumptions of authorities from the Talmud through the present, and has taught a series on the topic in Yeshivat Har Etzion. Many of these classes, as well as his classes on Tanach (the Haftarat), Talmud, Halachah and Jewish Philosophy are disseminated through YUTorah.org. He blogs some of his Torah thoughts at *Shaashuim*. He has also edited for Maggid, Yeshivat Har Etzion's Virtual Beit Midrash, and Torah in Motion.



Rabbi Ziring is married to Ora (Shore), a Toronto native, who will be teaching at Ulpanat Orot, and launching a Beit Midrash for university women under the joint auspices of the Beit Midrash, JLIC, and Ulpanat Orot. Ora has spent the last two years teaching Gemara and Halacha at Emunah V'Omanut and studying to be a Yoetzet Halacha at Nishmat's Keren Ariel program. They have one son, Meir.

We look forward to Rabbi Ziring's arrival in Elul! Rabbi Ziring can be reached at jziring@torontotorah.com.

Weekly Highlights: July 11 – July 17 / 24 Tammuz – 2 Menachem Av

Most of our classes are now on hiatus, but opportunities remain!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
July 10-11				
After hashkamah	Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig	Manuscripts in Halachah	Clanton Park	
After hashkamah	R' David Ely Grundland	Modern Religious Zealotry and Heresy	Shaarei Shomayim	
Before Pirkei Avot	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Daf Yomi Nedarim 48	BAYT	
After minchah	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Gemara Avodah Zarah: Nicknaming Idolatry?	BAYT	
Sun. July 12				
8:45 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachic Issues	BAYT	
Wed. July 15				
10:00 AM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Jewish Medical Ethics 101 Week 4: Community	Yeshivat Or Chaim	
8:00 PM	R' Mordechai Torczyner	Tishah b'Av and the Importance of Empathy	TCS Aish Thornhill	<i>For Singles with Sasson v'Simcha</i>
Fri. July 17 Rosh Chodesh Av				
10:30 AM	R' Josh Gutenberg	Tishah b'Av Which Falls on Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	

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