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Timely Torah Insights
by Rabbi Baruch Bodenheim
Associate Rosh Yeshiva



Pinchas

Acting Decisively for Peace

*This issue is dedicated in honor of the birth of our granddaughter **Ita Sontag**,
to our children, **Malka and Tzvi Sontag***

Harmony in the home leads to great blessing. Let's explore together.

A thirty-year-old Sefardi woman had been dating for many years without a match. She was a successful lawyer and decided to take a year off to spend with friends in Eretz Yisrael. She rented an apartment in Yerushalayim and one day a friend invited her for Shabbos in Tel Aviv. She was reluctant, but her friend was convincing. "It's nice here. Please come for Shabbos. I am sure you will be thankful for coming." She agreed. On Shabbos morning, the single lady remembered it was her grandmother's yahrzeit. "I have a custom to sponsor a *kiddush l'iluy nishmas* my grandmother on her yahrzeit. Can that be arranged?" They asked their shul's *gabbai* who readily agreed.

After Shabbos, the *gabbai*, who was single, inquired about the lady who sponsored the *kiddush* and asked if it would be possible to arrange a date. This was an Ashkenazi shul, but the *gabbai* was ...Sefardi. They went out and sure enough it was a match. Amazing! This lady had been dating for years in America and Hashem arranged for her to go to Tel Aviv for Shabbos, sponsor *kiddush* in an Ashkenazi shul and there meet the Sefardi *gabbai* who would be her match! Hashem puts us where we need to be.

In truth, every match works that way. Hashem puts people from different places together. In addition, if Hashem orchestrates the couple to meet and marry, then Hashem also wants them to stay together.

A healthy and happy Jewish marriage is a key concept depicted in Parshas Pinchas. When the Torah relates the zealous act of Pinchas killing Zimri and Kozbi, who brazenly consorted with Midianite women, it traces Pinchas' lineage to Aharon Hakohen. The Nesivos Shalom¹ explains that the Torah is emphasizing Pinchas was rooted in peace, like his grandfather Aharon.

But what was *peaceful* about Pinchas killing those two individuals?

I believe the answer lies in defining the nature of shalom/peace within Aharon. When Aharon died, the Gemara² tells us that eighty thousand children all named Aharon participated in the *levaya* (funeral.) They were named after Aharon for he was known as the peacemaker who was constantly helping married couples maintain harmony and peaceful relationships. If we make a calculation of forty years in the desert and 80,000 children, that means Aharon counseled between five and six couples a day! (Likely, there were many more, as the number doesn't include the baby girls...)

The brazen behavior of Zimri and Kozbi gave a stamp of approval for married Jewish men to have illicit relations with the Midianite women. That had to be stopped. A marriage is a sacred commitment, not a casual relationship. Zimri was initiating a total breakdown of the Jewish home and the future of *Klal Yisrael*. He was creating chaos. Pinchas acted decisively. He thus restored the concept of the sanctity of marriage and peaceful relationships, just like his grandfather Aharon. For this, he was blessed with peace.

Klal Yisrael enjoyed three special miracles each day in the desert. The *mun* was in the merit of Moshe, the wellspring of water was in the merit of Miriam, and the 'clouds of glory' were in the merit of Aharon because of his devotion to *shalom* in *Klal Yisrael*. Upon Aharon's death, the clouds of glory protecting the Jewish nation for forty years dispersed, leaving the nation vulnerable to attack.

At times, couples will disagree, but they must be very careful not to let it develop into a full-fledged argument. The Hebrew word for such an argument is *machlokes*. The Shelah³ expounds on the letters of *machlokes*: *mem*, *ches*, *lamed*, *kuf*, *tav*. These letters show us how arguments start and fester. Usually, arguments start with something small like the letter *mem* which is entirely closed and has only a little split on the bottom -- as arguments start with a little rift. If not stopped, arguments expand like the bottom of the letter *ches*, which is entirely open. They then develop into full feuds, as signified by the tall letter *lamed* - as the flames of argument go flying to the sky. Next is the letter *kuf* where the leg extends

¹ Parshas Pinchas

² Yerushalmi Nedarim

³ Parshas Pinchas

downward signifying that arguments bring us way down. The last letter is *tav*, which has two feet strongly standing on the ground, signaling an argument that is not going away.

Peaceful relationships give stability and joy to our lives. They do need purposeful nurturing and care. Hashem put us together and wants us to have *shalom bayis* - harmony in the home -- which will serve as the bedrock for a bayis ne'eman b'Yisrael - a happy home which is faithful to Jewish traditions.

Halacha in the Parsha – Parshas Pinchas

by Rabbi Moshe Silverstein

Maggid Shiur, Yeshiva Ner Boruch-PTI

Yaakov Avinu's fifth son's name is written in the *Torah* with a double *sh* as such - יששכר. How is the name pronounced when reading from the *Torah*?

1. The *Ibn Ezra*¹ writes that the repeated letter is silent as in other words in *Tanach* that have a repeated consonant, and it should not be read. Based on this, the proper way to pronounce the name would be *Yissachar*.² *Noda B'Yehudah*³ records that this was the practice in all areas in Poland, and it also seems to be the prevalent custom today.
2. *Daas Z'keinim MiBaalei Tosafos*⁴ gives a reason why the name is spelled with a double *sh*. When *Leah* named her son, she said נתן ה' שכרי, *Hashem* has given me my reward and therefore named him יששכר. However, the name also hints to the fact that *Leah* had "hired" *Yaakov* by trading nights with *Rochel* in turn for *Leah's* giving *Rochel* the fertility plants - כי שכר שכרתיך - reward and hire. However, it is not appropriate to pronounce the second *sh* as not to draw attention to the reference of *Leah's* paying to be with *Yaakov*. Based on this idea, the *Chasam Sofer*⁵ explains his *minhag* that throughout the *Torah* the doubling of the letter is not pronounced except for the first time, when the *Torah* records the name that was actually given, at which time it should be pronounced *Yissaschar*.
3. *Daas Z'keinim MiBaalei Tosafos* suggests another reason why the name is spelled with a double *sh*. *Rashi* in our *Parsha* notes that when listing the families of the tribe of *Yissachar*, there is a family called *Yoshuv*. However, in *Sefer Bereishis*, when listing the children of *Yissachar*, the

Torah calls him *Yov*. *Rashi* says that *Yoshuv* is in fact *Yov*. *Daas Z'keinim* explains that originally the name was *Yov*, as it is written in *Sefer Bereishis*. However, *Yissachar*, or his son, later determined that it was an improper name. *Torah Shleimah*⁶ explains that the name *Yov* was used for *Avodah Zarah*, idolatry. So that his son should not share the same name with an idol, *Yissachar* took one of the letters *sh* from his name and added it to his son's name; and *Yov* became *Yoshuv*. According to this, the name was originally *Yissaschar* and should be pronounced with the doubling of the *sh* throughout the *Torah* until *Parshas Pinchas* when the *Torah* refers to his son with the extra letter, implying the modification of *Yissachar's* name as well. All mentions of *Yissachar's* name henceforth should be pronounced with only one *sh*.

4. *Rabbeinu Hai Gaon*⁷ writes that the name should always be pronounced with the double letter as it is written. *Noda B'Yehudah*⁸ writes that this was the custom in "these" areas, presumably Prague and its surroundings.
5. Rav *Yaakov Kamenetsky*⁹ quotes a final *minhag*, albeit with unclear reason, to pronounce both letters throughout *Sefer Bereishis* and to switch when beginning *Sefer Shemos*.

¹ שמות א:ג

² מנחת ש"י בראשית ל:י"ח בשם הרמ"ה

³ אבן העזר מ"ת ס' ק"ז

⁴ בראשית ל:י"ח

⁵ תורת משה פרשת ויצא

⁶ תורה שלמה פרשת ויצא

⁷ תשובת הגאונים המובא בפרדס יוסף החדש פרשת פנחס

⁸ ע"ע שם בענין כתיבת השם בגט

⁹ אמת ליעקב פרשת ויצא

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