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 in memory of Ann's mother מרים בת איסר ע"ה
 and Henry's grandmother חיה בת אפרים פישל ע"ה



A couple of weeks ago I commented to Althea that for me, the dominant scent of this coronavirus period is that of Glen 20. Somewhat surprised, she asked me why and I responded that it is because of the strong smell of Glen 20 that hits you every time you enter Shule. It was only after further questioning that Althea understood that Glen 20 is the name of a disinfectant spray, and not the name of a whisky.

Since Shule reopened, our cleaning staff have worked around the clock to disinfect every surface in every Tefilla space after every use. They have assisted in checking temperatures, providing hand-sanitiser, guiding participants to the correct entrances and exits, and have been full partners in the Tefillot we were able to share, and B'Ezrat Hashem will return to sharing when it is safe and allowed to do so.

I was particularly taken aback when one of our cleaning staff mentioned how much they miss having children in Shule on Shabbat morning. Where in the world do cleaners complain when children do not come to Shule? In addition to reflecting the extent to which our staff are partners in our communal vision, it is an expression of the centrality of children to the complete Shule experience.

Shules need children and children need Shule. B'Ezrat Hashem it will not be too long before we once again inhale the fresh smell of Glen 20, and not too long after that before we can welcome every person of every age back to Shule.



Rabbi Mirvis

"And Hashem spoke to Moshe, as follows: 'Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the Priest turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel when he zealously avenged My vengeance amongst them, and (therefore) I did not consume the Children of Israel in My vengeance. Therefore say, 'Behold I give him My covenant of peace'" (Bemidbar 25:10-12).

This week's Parsha continues directly from the end of last week's Parsha, where we read how in the midst of a deadly plague, caused by harlotry with the daughters of Moav, Pinchas arose from the weeping crowds to kill a prominent Israelite who publicly flaunted his illicit relationship with a Midianite woman:

"And Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the Priest saw, and he arose from amid the assembly and took a spear in his hand. And he followed the Israelite man into the tent, and he pierced them both, the Israelite man and the woman into her stomach, and the plague was terminated from upon the Children of Israel" (Bemidbar 25:7-8).

Pinchas' heroic act halted the plague, thereby saving tens of thousands of lives, if not more. Whilst it is clear that Pinchas' actions found favour in the eyes of Hashem, at first glance, his reward seems somewhat inappropriate – "Behold I give him My covenant of peace". Why was Pinchas' murderous (albeit justified) act of vengeance deserving of a peace prize? Is this how one enters Hashem's covenant of peace?

The Netziv explains why this was indeed a fitting reward:

"For the act that Pinchas committed – to kill a person with his hand – naturally leaves angry feelings in the heart. However, seeing as his intention was for the sake of Heaven, he was blessed that he should always be relaxed and with the trait of peace" (Ha'amek Davar, Bemidbar 25:12).

Any act of violence or murder, however justified, will naturally leave a mark on a person's behaviour and character traits. Seeing as Pinchas was purely motivated and only acted in order to defend the name of Hashem, he was rewarded with the blessing that his murderous act would not leave a negative impact on his personality.

We are a people that loves peace, pursues peace and prays numerous times every day for peace. Nevertheless, there are extreme circumstances where we are called upon to act in non-peaceful ways. Whilst these actions may be fully justified, we must remember that they are far from ideal and do everything we can to make sure they do not leave a negative impact on our ethical sensitivity. We hope and pray that any necessary violence will ultimately lead us to the day when "nation will not lift sword against nation and they will no longer study warfare" (Isaiah 2:4).



Reb Leor Broh

Riddle for Pinchas:

Can you name 9 women who appear in Parshat Pinchas?

Answers to Riddles for Last week:

Chukas

I appear three times in Chukas. Two of those times in connection with other nations. What am I ?

The sword appears 3 times:- the first time in the laws of Tumat Met 19:16 בחלל-חרב, a second time with Edom 20:18, a third time with the Emorites 21:24

Balak

How many weapons appear in Balak? What are they?

4 weapons appear. A sword 22:23; A stick 22:27; Arrows 24:8; A spear 25:7.



Dr Michal Kaufman, Rosh Midrasha

“Do Not Frighten Yourself”

I write this article as we are about to enter a second lockdown period. These are challenging times, filled with uncertainty. Just over a fortnight ago we reopened the Bet Midrash. While numbers were limited, it was wonderful to be back in the Midrasha, teaching and learning.

Today is 17th of Tammuz which marks the beginning of The Three Weeks. In Hebrew, it is known as *bein hametzarim*, or, literally, within the straits or within the borders. This name comes from a verse in the Book of *Eicha* (Lamentations) which is read on Tisha B’Av

גְּלַתָּהּ יְהוּדָה מֵעַבְדֵי, וּמֵרַב עֲבָדָה--הִיא יָשְׁבָה בְּגוֹיִם, לֹא מִצָּאָה מְנוּחַ; כָּל-רֹדְפֶיהָ הִשְׁיִגוּהָ, בֵּין הַמְּצָרִים. (איכה א:ג)
Judah has gone into exile because of affliction, and because of great servitude. She dwelt among the nations; she found no rest; all her pursuers overtook her within the boundaries (borders).

This idea of borders — or restrictions— alludes to the additional restrictions of mourning which are traditionally taken on during this period.

Rashi explains the phrase as being *between a field and vineyard*, in narrow places where there was no hope of fleeing. He then quotes the Midrash that reads *bein hametzarim* as between the two fasts, “during which bitter destruction is found”.

Rabbi Baruch Halevi Epstein (author of the *Torah Temimah* commentary on the Torah) explains *bein hametzarim* as the Jewish people’s inability to flee to safety from persecutors because they would always get caught on the border (the narrow place).

Throughout our long history of exile, the Jewish people often found themselves in “narrow places” with no place to go. It was the great Hassidic Master, Rebbe Nachman of Bratzlav who took this idea and added an element of hope.

שְׁהָאָדָם צָרִיךְ לַעֲבֹר עַל גֶּשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד מְאֹד וְהַכֵּלֵל וְהַעֲקֹר שְׁלֵא יִתְפַחֵד כָּלֵל (לקוטי מוהר"ן ב:מח)

When a person must cross an exceedingly narrow bridge, the general principle and the essential thing is not to frighten yourself at all.

These words, were slightly altered and have subsequently become a very a popular song, having often lifted the spirit of the Jewish people during times of crisis.

כָּל הָעוֹלָם כְּלוּ גֶשֶׁר צָר מְאֹד וְהַעֲקֹר לֹא לִפְחָד כָּלֵל

"The whole world is a narrow bridge, and the essential thing is not to fear at all."

Yom Kippur, 1973 - Egypt and Syria launched an attack on the State of Israel. Taking the Israeli Defense Forces by surprise, Egyptian troops swept deep into the Sinai Peninsula, while Syria attacked the Israeli forces on the Golan Heights.

On the 6th of October, Ariel Sharon was called back to active duty along with his assigned reserve armored division. Under the cover of darkness, Sharon's forces moved to a point on the Suez Canal that had been prepared before the war. Sharon's division crossed the Suez, effectively winning the war for Israel.

The following story was told by two acquaintances who were in the Tank Corps attack across the Suez Canal led by Ariel Sharon:

When Sharon began his advance toward the bridgehead on the canal, the Bratslaver song was suddenly broadcast from his command over the radios and intercoms of all the attacking tanks. This electrified their crews, who soon joined in the singing themselves as they headed for battle, until the song turned into a Tank Corps chorus and the atmosphere became one of riding to a celebration rather than to possible death or maiming. It was soon after that the song became number one on the unofficial hit parade, with people humming it to themselves everywhere. For at least a couple of years after that, no bar or bat mitzvah or wedding celebration was complete without it. (The Forward, February 21, 2003)

As we head back into lockdown during the period of the three weeks, I hope that we all can embrace the words of Rabbi Nachman. At present the world may feel like a very narrow place, the main thing *is not to frighten yourself*, together we will pull through!



Excerpt from Rabbi Mirvis' Derasha in Beit Yehuda, 5779

In this week's Parsha, we read about the division of land of Israel between the tribes and families. In this context, the daughters of Tzlofchad approached Moshe and Elazar and the claimed:

במדבר פרק כז

(ג) אָבִינוֹ מֵת בְּמִדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא־הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ הַעֵדָה הַנוֹעֲדִים עַל־יְקֹוֹק בְּעֵדֹת־קָרַח כִּי־בִחְטָאוֹ מֵת וּבָנָיִם לֹא־הָיוּ לוֹ:
 (ד) לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם־אָבִינוֹ מִתּוֹךְ מִשְׁפַּחְתּוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֶּן תְּנַהֲלֵנוּ אַחֲזֵה בְּתוֹךְ אֲחֵי אָבִינוֹ:
 (ה) וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת־מִשְׁפָּטָן לִפְנֵי יְקֹוֹק: ֹ

“Our father died in the wilderness, and we was not among the assembly that gathered against Hashem in the assembly of Korach, for he died for his own sin, and he did not have sons. Why should our father’s name be omitted from among his family because he did not have a son? Give us possession among the brothers of our father. And Moshe brought their case before Hashem”

And Hashem responded: They are right – they should receive their father’s inheritance.

The Midrash praises the daughters of Tzlofchad, alongside a “Hall of Fame” or Biblical heroes.

ספרי זוטא פרק כז פסוק א

הא כל אדם כשר שעומד בתוך דור רשע זכה ליטול שכר כולו נח עמד בדור המבול זכה ליטול שכר כולו אברהם עמד בדור הפלגה זכה ליטול שכר כולו לוט עמד בדור סדום זכה ליטול שכר כולו **אלו עמדו בדור המדבר זכו ליטול שכר כולו**

*Any Kosher (good) person who stands up in an evil generation merits to take its (the generation’s) entire reward. Noach stood up in the generation of the flood – he merited to take its entire reward. Avraham stood up in the generation of the dispersion – he merited to take its entire reward. Lot stood up in the generation of Sedom – he merited to take its entire reward. **These (daughters of Tzlofchad) stood up in the generation of the wilderness - they merited to take its entire reward.***

While they were clearly deserving of praise, we can ask: How can you compare the daughters of Tzelofchad to these other Biblical characters?

Noach spent 120 years building a boat, whilst being ridiculed by those around him.

Avraham went into a fiery furnace for his beliefs

Lot remained righteous in the evil city of Sedom.

The daughters of Tzlofchad asked for an inheritance! They asked for property. They came along with a legal request. Is this deserving us such reward?

The answer comes in the continuation of the Midrash:

וללמדך באיזה שעה עמדו לפני משה
 בשעה שאמרו ישראל למשה נתנה ראש ונשובה מצרימה

And this comes to teach the time at which they stood before Moshe – at the time when the Israelites said to Moshe, “Let us turn around and return to Egypt”.

(We said these words 38 years earlier, but according to the Midrash we said it again after Aharon passed away towards the end of our sojourn in the Midbar).

ב"ה
אמר להן משה והלא כל ישראל מבקשין לחזור למצרים ואתנה מבקשות נחלה בארץ
אמרו יודעות אנו שסוף כל ישראל להחזיק בארץ ...

Moshe responded to them, "Isn't the whole (people) of Israel requesting to return to Egypt, and you are requesting a portion in the Land". They said, "We know that in the end, all of Israel will take hold of the Land.

And so we learn from the Midrash that the **בנות צלפחד** were not just making a financial claim. Their request was a strong statement of belief: Belief in Hashem, belief in the Land, and belief in Hashem's people that we would ultimately inherit the Land.

In this period of the three weeks, as we mourn the loss of our Batei Mikdash and bemoan our current state of exile, what better passage to read than that of the Bnot Tzelofchad - A passage about yearning for the Land, faith in Hashem and a strong belief that the time will come when all of Israel will settle in our Land.



Rabbi James Kennard

The parasha of Pinchas records some of the events of the last year of the wanderings in the desert and the preparation for entering Israel. In particular, a major theme is the forthcoming division of the land amongst the tribes and their individual families, which then leads to the daughters of Tzelafchad asking about their inheritance. Following this, Hashem reminds Moshe that he will not be amongst those entering the land, but instructs him to see the place from afar:

(יב) ויאמר ה' אל משה עלה אל הר העברים הזה וראה את הארץ אשר נתתי לבני ישראל.
(יג) וראיתה אתה ונאספת אל עמיך גם אתה כאשר נאסף אהרן אחיך.

Hashem said to Moshe, "Go up into this mountain of Avarim, and see the land which I have given to the children of Israel.

When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was gathered. (Bemidbar 27:12-13).

We are familiar with the recounting of Moshe's ascent of the Har Nevo (which all commentators agree is the same as Aviram - see Rashi on Bemidbar 21:11) which we read on Simchat Torah (Devarim 34:1-6). Yet we are also aware that the actual ascent took place at the very end of the Torah and at the very end of Moshe's life. We have more than a Chumash to go and many other mitzvot for Moshe to fulfil before that point. Why then does the Torah record Hashem's instruction to him to do this so long before the command was carried out?

Rashi (11th century France) asks “why is this section (of Moshe being commanded to climb the mountain) juxtaposed to this one (the daughters of Tzelafchad)?”. He answers that when Moshe began to deal with issues of inheritance he thought that maybe the decree against him entering Israel had been cancelled, and that he too would inherit part of the land. Hashem therefore disabused him of this notion by explicitly stating that he would only see the land from a distance and not enter it.

The **Mizrachi** (15th century Turkey) generally explains that Rashi only asks the question of “why is this section juxtaposed with the previous one” when the latter piece is, by some criteria, in the “wrong” place. Mizrachi applies that principle in this case, since we would have expected the command to climb the mountain to immediately proceed its fulfillment - hence the need for Rashi to explain the placement.

The **Ramban** (13th century Israel) rejects the premise of our question. After Moshe is commanded about the future division of the land, he needs to be told that he will not himself be involved in the actual event, because he will have died beforehand. Therefore, at this point of the Torah, Moshe is not being *commanded* to look over the land of Israel and then die; Hashem is *informing* him that this will be his fate at some time in the future.

Rav Hirsch (19th century Germany) takes a similar approach, and adds that Hashem informed Moshe of his impending demise, which would take place soon, but not immediately, in order to remind him that the time he had left was limited. In particular this encouraged Moshe to ask Hashem to appoint his successor to ensure that his mission - to bring the people to their land - would be fulfilled. Therefore the very next episode in the Torah is the nomination of Yehoshua as the next leader.

The **Abarbanel** (5th century Portugal) disagrees strongly with this approach. He asks why the Torah would write at this point about an event belonging to a different period, and that the Torah will describe again, when it actually happens? Why should the Torah write at the end of this section (27:22) that “Moshe did all that Hashem commanded” if the commandment was not fulfilled at this time? (Others would respond that “Moshe did” refers to appointing Yehoshua, and not to climbing the mountain). How could Hashem say that Moshe’s death will come after he ascends the mountain, and in 31:2 also say that Moshe will die after taking revenge on the Midianites? Finally, how can Hashem command Moshe’s death at this point, when the next parasha will bring many more mitzvot for Moshe to fulfill, such as setting aside Cities of Refuge and the cities to be given to the Levi’im?

To answer all these questions, the Abarbanel brings his own radical interpretation of this section. Hashem was not saying to Moshe that he should climb the mountain now in order to die now, but rather he should ascend the mountain now in order to see the land, and that this ascent will be the first of many, but his death will follow the last climb.

So Moshe in fact climbed the mountain many times (although the Torah does not mention the other occasions) in order to satiate his great love for the land.

Thus the Abarbanel ingeniously answers each of his own questions: Devarim 34 is not a repeat of our section since it describes another climb. The Torah says “Moshe did all that Hashem commanded” because the command was to ascend the mountain on this occasion, which was fulfilled at that time. His death would come later, after he had completed his other tasks, including war against Midian.

This interpretation paints a picture of Moshe, crushed by his inability to enter the promised land, but nevertheless consoled by many opportunities to see it from the mountain top. By comparison, how fortunate are we, given the opportunity not only to visit Israel as often as we are able (at least in more normal times), but also, if we so choose, to make it our home.