



# דרכים בפרשה

פנחס



ויקם מתוך העדה

***And he stood up from amid the assembly.***

The plague was devastating killing 24,000 in a short time span. In an act of selflessness, Pinchas rose up and killed Zimri thus bringing about its end. In appreciation, Hashem bestowed upon him His ברית שלום - covenant of peace.

Although much has been written in explanation of the nature of this reward, I would like to share with you the enlightening words of the *heiliger* Ishbitzer Rebbe, Rav Mordechai Yosef Leiner zt"l (Mei Hashiloach). He explains that Pinchas was not rewarded because he was courageous and brave, and also not because he displayed an incredible strength when he speared two people and lifted them up in one shot. His reward came because he did not think for even a second, calculating how others would react when they saw what he had done. He saw a wrong being performed and without hesitation, he ran to stop it. There was no mulling it over or contemplating; just pure righteous action.

Let us think for a moment here: The public would surely react angrily to his killing of one of the tribal leaders of Klal Yisroel. Furthermore, halachikally speaking, Zimri was even allowed to protect himself by killing Pinchas in self defense. This was so much more than just being "that guy" that annoyingly breaks up every *geshmakeh* conversation because it's lashon hara.

And yet, Pinchas did not buckle to societal pressure. The only thing that spoke to him was, "will this please Hashem or not?"

The Mishna in Avos (2:5) states: במקום שאין איש השתדל להיות איש - *where there is no man, try and be a man*. This is generally understood as teaching that when no one else is around, rise up and take responsibility.

The Midrash Shmuel adds another dimension here. It is during the times that no one is around, that we find out what we are truly made of; who we really are. Were we doing things all along just to impress others? Says the Mishna- when no one is around, try to be a man, i.e. do what is right even when no one is watching you. That same long shemoneh esrai that you daven when everyone sees you in shul should be done at home when there is no minyan to go to. If you behave in certain manners when within the community, the same behaviors must be present when there is no one there to take notice.

Rav Nachman Horedenker z"l offers another angle to this which takes it to an even deeper level. There is a private side to every person that really wants to do what is right but is at times scared of being judged by the "courtrooms of the street". Oy, they will say, "She is such a "frumie", or "why does he always have to be such a goody goody and spoil everything?"

Or perhaps, we may find ourselves agreeing in public to certain anti-Torah lifestyles

because we are worried what others will say. Says the mishna, במקום שאין איש - that person that you are in private, i.e. your true inner beliefs, השתדל להיות איש - try and always be that person, even in public. Don't live your life based on "likes" and who is "following" you. Be true to yourself.

But isn't finding favor in the eyes of "the people" important? In fact, the Mishna (Avos 3:10) teaches this very clearly: כל שרוח - הבריות נוחה הימנו רוח המקום נוחה הימנו - *all who find favor in the eyes of people find favor in Hashem's "eyes"*.

The Chovos Halevavos (Shaar yichud maaseh) explains that finding favor in the eyes of people does not mean running around like a politician telling everyone what they want to hear. To quote, "it is tough enough always trying to keep your spouse happy, so how can we possibly find favor with everyone else?" Rather, the Mishna means that if we find that we are indeed finding true favor in the eyes of others, it must be that we have found favor in Hashem's "eyes". How does one find true favor in people's eyes? When one is true to Hashem, a certain aura of הן will envelope the person thus causing others to respect you and want to be around you.

The fact is that while one may vote for a politician because he is claiming a certain view, 99% of the time, votes do not equal respect, especially when you know that tomorrow they may flip their views completely. Similarly when you know that a person will just say what you want them to, chances are you won't respect them. But someone that is unwavering and always remaining true to their beliefs will gain respect even if their view is an opposing one.

With such a person you can respectfully agree to disagree. And when the steadfastness is to Hashem, there will be no downside whatsoever. Hashem will see to it that we come out on top shining brightly.

I heard once from Rav A.C. Feuer shlita that the word בטחון can be rearranged to say הן טוב. When we go against our instincts and trust in Hashem, even when unpopular, Hashem showers the person with very good *chein*.

The greatness of Pinchas was that ויקם מתוך - *and he stood up from amid the assembly*. He was not a "yes man", saying what everyone wanted to hear. If something was wrong, or if there were words that needed to be said, he did not worry about the public opinion. Pinchas refused to judge himself through the lens of others. He left the judging to Hashem, and as we see, Hashem took care of him by giving him the *bris shalom*.

In *Shulchan Aruch* (y"ד 58), we find different ways to test an animal if it is fit for *shchitah*. We allow the animal or chicken to walk or swim. This demonstrates to us that there are no broken limbs otherwise rendering it a *traifah*. However, there is one catch to the swimming test. It is only valid when performed swimming against the current, because even a dead animal can be carried along with the tide. As yidden, it's not enough that we are doing what everyone else is doing. When necessary, we must be prepared to "swim against the tide". This was Pinchas' novelty.

**Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפלי**

