



CIRCLE TIME

AT YOUR

Shabbos Table

... FOR A Meaningful and Entertaining SHABBOS WITH YOUR CHILDREN ...

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DVAR TORAH IN A STORY >>

COURTROOM OF THE HEART

The Minchas Chinuch was studying Torah in his study. It was the week of *Parshas Pinchas*, and he was reviewing the weekly Torah reading, as is the halachah.

When he reached the part of the *parshah* in which the daughters of Tzelafchad approach Moshe and ask for an inheritance in Eretz Yisrael, the Minchas Chinuch read:

אָבינו מֵת בְּמִדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעָדִים עַל ה' בְּעֵדַת קָרַח

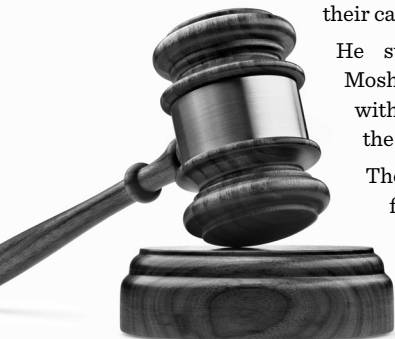
“[Tzelafchad’s daughters told Moshe:] ‘Our father died in the *midbar* [because of his sins, but] he was not [part of] Korach’s group.’”

A question struck the Minchas Chinuch. What does the fact that Tzelafchad didn’t join Korach’s group have to do with anything? The women were asking to inherit a share of Eretz Yisrael; who cared why their father had died?

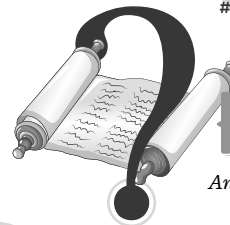
The Minchas Chinuch continued reading: וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת מֹשֶׁה בְּרִישׁוֹ, “Moshe brought their case before Hashem.”

He stopped again. Why did Moshe feel the need to consult with Hashem on this one? Was the halachah not clear?

The Minchas Chinuch finished the *parshah* and closed his *Chumash*. With the questions still bothering him, he prepared for bed and



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>



PARSHAH RIDDLES

Answers to this week’s riddles will appear in next week’s issue.

- 1 **Where in the Torah does a *parshah* (paragraph) end in the middle of a pasuk? (two places)**
- 2 **Where in the Torah is there a broken letter? Why (see *Ba'al Haturim*)?**
- 3 **When the Torah describes the *korbanos* for the various days of Sukkos, it uses identical sets of words for each day, with three exceptions—three words have an extra letter. What are the extra letters? What word do they spell? To what is it hinting?**
- 4 **Why are Bnei Yisrael counted again in this week’s *parshah*?**

GEMATRIA

מְחֻלָּה נִשְׂחָה מְחֻלָּה מְחֻלָּה וְתִרְצָה (במדבר כז:א) רש"י: מגיד שכולן שקולות זו כזו, לפיכך שנה את סדרן

The Torah does not list the daughters of Tzelafchad in the same order each time it mentions them. Rashi explains that this is in order to teach us that they were all equal to each other.

The *gematria* of the names of the five women equals 1,050, the same as the *gematria* of Rashi’s comment כולן שקולות זו כזו (with the *kollel*)!



CHOLENT STORY

A story told in parts, designed to get children to come back to the table for the main dish!

Recap: Reb Shimon disappeared after threatening to “do something” about the church across the street from the shul. Thomas, the church guard, has come on a clandestine visit to the community leaders.



he young Rav Yonasan Eibschutz looked from the tall man with the black cloak and crucifix to the *rav* of the city to the *parnass* of the community and then to several other community leaders and activists. His gaze moved back to the tall man. The picture was so incongruous...

The *rav*'s voice broke the stillness. “Thomas, would you care to repeat what you have just told us?”

“Certainly, rabbi.” The church guard’s voice was high and cold. “I was guarding the grounds of St. Michael’s Cathedral last night, as I usually do. I had set out to circle the grounds when I heard a mighty crash. I ran to the front of the building and saw that the gigantic cross from the steeple on the roof of the building had fallen to the ground. I didn’t know what to make of it, but then I spotted a man climbing over the fence of the grounds. He was hooded and masked and wearing all black.

“I called to him to stop, but he ran for it. I chased him and caught him a few blocks away. I hauled him back to the church, locked him in one of the cells in the dungeon, and called the priests of St. Michael’s.”

“Why did you lock him up?” Rav Yonasan interjected. “The only evidence you have against him is your having witnessed him trespassing on your property. You can’t incarcerate a man for that!”

“We searched the man,” Thomas said evenly. “He was carrying a hacksaw, hammer, and several climbing tools. The teeth of the saw matched the cut we found in the base of the cross that had fallen from the roof. There is no doubt that this man is guilty of destroying church property and desecrating our holy symbols.”

The *rav* spoke up. “Did you identify the man? Do you know his name?”

“Name? We don’t care about his name.” Thomas snickered. “He stands just under one meter eighty and has an average build. He has bright orange hair, about a three-inch beard, and sidelocks.”

A sharp intake of breath was heard from the people assembled in the room. There was no doubt that the captive was none other than their beloved Reb Shimon Rosen, Rav Yonasan’s *chavrusa*.

“What will happen to him?” the *parnass* asked.

Rav Yonason thought of Reb Shimon’s young children and the fear and tears with which the man’s wife had come to look for him at the *beis midrash*.

“The church leaders met today and held a trial. Your friend was immediately found guilty.”

“What!” Rav Yonasan exclaimed. “You can’t take the law into your own hands! There are courts!”

Thomas looked at the young man, his face wreathed in pity. “Do you really think the courts have any power over the church? Don’t you know who really runs this city? No politician would dare interfere with ‘internal church matters.’ Besides, what are you going to do about it? Whom are you going to call? By the time you get anyone to listen, the priests will have carried out their sentence.”

“Sentence? What sentence?”

Thomas’s voice dropped a notch. “The punishment for vandalizing holy church property is death by fire,” he said softly. “Your friend is sentenced to be burned at the stake in two days’ time.”

TO BE CONTINUED...

LITVAK, CHASSID, SEPHARDI

Three different angles on a *dvar Torah*, one each from Litvish, Chassidic, and Sephardic sources. Can be split between the three *seudos*.

פִּינַחֵס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אֶהֱרֹן הִנְהוּן הַשִּׁיב אֶת חֲמָתִי מֵעַל
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת קִנְאָתִי בְּתוֹכָם

“Pinchas...removed My anger from Bnei Yisrael by his fanaticism for Me in them.” (*Bamidbar* 25:11)

What could the word בְּתוֹכָם, “in them” possibly mean in the sentence?

REBBE LEVI YITZCHAK MIBERDITCHEV:

Klal Yisrael made the *Egel* with very good intentions—to create a place for the *Shechinah* to rest among them. Shortly afterward, they were commanded to do just that: to build a *Mishkan*. They used one face from the *Kisei Hakavod*, the ox, while the *Keruvim* had a different face from it. The only problem with what they did is that they weren’t told to do so! They made their own calculations.

The *parah adumah* atones for the *Egel* and has no explanation—it atones precisely because it has no explanation! The *teshuvah* for making calculations and inventing mitzvos is doing mitzvos without understanding the reasons.

CHASAM SOFER:

Where did Pinchas find the courage and the nerve to arise and attack Zimri and Kazbi, a *nasi* and a princess? From the *resha'im* themselves! Pinchas saw the unbelievable *chutzpah* that the sinners had. They had marched right up to the *Mishkan*, made fun of Moshé, and proceeded to do an *aveirah* in front of the whole nation. Pinchas thought, *If they can be so brazen for the sake of an aveirah, I can be brazen to defend Hashem’s honor*: He got his fanaticism *from in them*—he learned it from within the sinners!

RAV YEHUDAH TZADKAH:

Pinchas avenged Hashem’s honor in the midst of all the people—*within them*—even though they were all against him and would likely kill him. Pinchas didn’t keep his righteousness hidden inside himself or in a corner; he was brave and unashamed and acted publicly. That is the only kind of holiness that can save others, and that is why it was able to protect the Jews from Hashem’s anger. *Hidden* righteousness doesn’t protect the public, only *public* righteousness can do that. (We find a similar concept regarding the potential of *tzaddikim* in *Sedom*—had there been any—to save it, while Noach could not save the world. See *Kli Yakar* and *Ibn Ezra* there.)

PERSONAL GROWTH AVODAH OF THE WEEK

This section views the procession of parshiyos and Yamim Tovim as a ladder for personal growth. It identifies a theme in the parshah and a related area that needs growth, and assigns a weekly mission based upon it.

PARSHAH SUMMARY

Parshas Pinchas shows us many examples of the importance of defending someone who has made a mistake. Even one who sinned deserves love and care, especially if he is repentant.

This Shabbos is also the first Shabbos of Bein Hametzarim, the three-week period of intense mourning for Eretz Yisrael and the Beis Hamikdash, lost because of our squabbles with one another. As we begin to mourn the terrible results of our sins, Hashem sends us an early consolation, a *parshah* teaching about defending and understanding even one who erred.

The *parshah* opens with Pinchas's reward for saving *Klal Yisrael*—although the very people he saved were angry at him and threatened to kill him. Hashem then defends the Jewish people, ordering a campaign to punish Midyan for causing them to sin. Hashem lovingly counts the people, savoring those who survived the plague. The Torah lists the name of every family in *Klal Yisrael* and then adds the letters *yud* and *hei*—Hashem's Name—to defend the people against accusations that the Egyptians contaminated their families (see *Rashi*).

Tzelaftchad's daughters present their case, defending their father as a man who sinned but does not deserve to lose his portion in Eretz Yisrael. *Rashi* explains that this *parshah* defends these women, and all women, teaching that they were not part of the sin of the *Meraglim*.

The Torah later defends Moshe and Aharon, explaining that they died because of the sin of *mei merivah* but did not have any others (*Rashi*).

Moshe speaks up for the people, asking Hashem to provide a replacement leader who will understand and be tolerant of them.

Finally, Hashem lists the *korbanos* for every special day of the year, most of which include special public *Korbanos Chatas*.

AVODAH FOR THIS WEEK:

The Three Weeks are a time to work on our *ahavas chinam*, unjustified love. Defending one who is downtrodden or struggling, whether they deserve it or not, builds *ahavas chinam* in the world and ourselves.

- 1. This week, find two incidents in which someone needs to be defended, whether from bullies or peers or just because they got into trouble. Respectfully and kindly speak up on their behalf.**
- 2. Do a random act of kindness for someone who hurt you *without* drawing comparisons. Notice how good it makes you feel.**

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S RIDDLES:

- 1.** Where does the Torah mention the appearance of a *malach*? (seven answers) **Twice appearing to Hagar, at the Akeidah, Yaakov's two dreams in Vayeitzei, at the Sneh, at the Yam Suf, appearing to Bilam and the donkey**
- 2.** Which *pasuk* would be very hard to say for one who cannot pronounce the letter *lamed*? Can you find a *pasuk* in which 15 out of the 18 words contain a letter *lamed*?
וַיֹּאמֶר בְּלֶק אֶל בְּלָעָם הֲלֹא שְׁלַח שְׁלַחְתִּי אֵלֶיךָ לְקַרְא לְךָ לְמָה לֹא הִלַּכְתָּ אֵלַי הֲאִמְנָם לֹא אוֹנֵל כְּבִדְךָ (במדבר כב:לז)
- 3.** Which three things in the Torah are called "*shirah*"? ***Shiras Hayam, Shiras Habe'er, Ha'azinu***
- 4.** Whose name is also the name of a type of creature? **Tzippor (Balak's father), Chamor (Shechem's father)**

Did you notice that the story of the haftarah, besides relating to the depth of the parshah or day, usually sounds like it is right out of current events?

HAFTORAH FROM THE HEADLINES

The next twelve haftaros are not directly related to the *parshah*. The haftaros of the Three Weeks are warnings for *Klal Yisrael* in advance of Tishah B'Av, the following seven are consolation for the nation, and the final two before Rosh Hashanah exhort us to do *teshuvah*. This week, we read the haftarah of *Mattos* because the Three Weeks have already begun. It is not surprising, however, that the haftarah still bears strong resemblance to the *parshah*.

SUMMARY:

The haftarah is from the opening chapters of *Sefer Yirmiyahu*. It introduces us to Yirmiyahu, whose entire *sefer* is devoted to warnings of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and Yerushalayim.

The haftarah opens with Hashem's appointment of Yirmiyahu to speak to the people. He encourages Yirmiyahu, telling him not to fear them, and promises to protect him. The Navi is then shown two private visions, after which he is given his first message to the people.

The first vision is of a stick of wood, which Yirmiyahu correctly identifies as almond (טָשׁ). This symbolizes that Hashem is rushing (טָשׁ) to punish the Jews. There is also a message of hope: the reason Hashem is rushing is so that the nation does not sink to too low a level. The branch also hints at the ultimate sprouting and rebirth of the people. Hashem tells the Navi, "I am appointing you over destruction...and replanting."

Yirmiyahu's next vision is of a boiling pot with steam escaping northward. The pot is the city of Yerushalayim, which is strong and fortified, but the contents will burn anyway when it is besieged by fire. Hashem will bring nations from the north who will surround Yerushalayim and wait to pick it apart like a pot of food.

Yirmiyahu's first actual message to the Jews is then relayed, and it is one of consolation and love. Hashem remembers the love the Jews showed in the *midbar* in the "good old days" and promises to eventually punish the nations who destroy them.

CONNECTION TO THE PARSHAH:

The primary message of the haftarah relates to the period of the Three Weeks. It teaches that the tragedies were brought by Hashem, none other, and that the fault lies with the sins of the Jewish people.

The haftarah also teaches that Hashem loves and defends the Jews even though they sin, which is a major theme in the *parshah* (see "*Avodah* of the Week"). Each terrible vision contains hints of love and defense. In fact, Hashem speaks of the love He had for *Klal Yisrael* in the desert, and early in the *parshah*, Hashem expresses love for the people despite their sins with *bnos Moav* and subsequent punishment.

RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES:

As the coronavirus resurges in some states and countries, political leaders are worried about trouble being imported from one place to another. Some have taken steps to ban travel from other areas.

Hashem tells Yirmiyahu that trouble will be imported from the north, but stresses that trouble does not come randomly or without cause. Therefore, it cannot be fought with travel bans. It is carefully brought on and orchestrated by Hashem based on our choices—and our choices are all that can turn it around.

>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tried to sleep. He had a big *din Torah* the following morning, and he needed to be well rested so he could give a clear, accurate *psak*.

The next morning, the Minchas Chinuch sat in judgement. Each of the two people who had come to him for the *din Torah* presented his case. He listened carefully to both sides of the argument. There was a lot of money at stake, but the men were respectful. Although it was a complex case, the Minchas Chinuch felt that he had a clear direction. He thought he knew what his *psak* would be, when one of the litigants approached.

"The Rav's father was an acquaintance of mine," the older man said conversationally. "He was the *mesader kiddushin* at my wedding!"

The Minchas Chinuch froze. Suddenly, he wasn't sure about his *psak*! He felt differently about the case; all of a sudden he felt compelled to reexamine the issue!

Quickly, he turned to the other party. "Tell me," he said, "was my father the *mesader kiddushin* at your wedding as well?"

The other man shook his head. "No, I didn't know the Rav's father at all."

The Minchas Chinuch stood up. "I'm sorry to have wasted your time, gentlemen," he said, "but I cannot rule in this case."

"What! Why not?" Both men were clearly shocked and upset.

"You see, as soon as I heard that one of you was close to my father and the other was not, I felt an internal shift in my thinking, and that was purely based on one litigant's closeness to my father! That is pure *shochad*, bribery. I can no longer think fairly in this case, and I am *passul* from ruling either way!"

The Minchas Chinuch returned to his study and picked up his pen. He now knew the answer to the question he had had on the *parshah* the night before, and he wished to write it down.

If Tzelafchad wasn't part of Korach's group in the desert, then he must have sided with Moshe! That means Moshe felt a certain closeness to Tzelafchad that he would otherwise not have felt. The daughters felt it was important to mention that their father didn't join Korach to make sure Moshe didn't feel animus toward him, but instead, they caused Moshe to feel like he may have some unfair feelings of closeness to Tzelafchad, and by extension, his daughters—just like the litigant in the *din Torah* before the Minchas Chinuch that day. So Moshe recused himself from the case and immediately brought the case to Hashem.

HALACHAH

Parshas Pinchas includes a list of *korbanos* brought on all the special days of the year, including Rosh Chodesh. Here are some *halachos* of Rosh Chodesh.

SHABBOS

MEVARCHIM

Rishonim bring the custom to say special prayers on the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh. Their purpose is to remind the people about Rosh Chodesh in order that they keep its *halachos* properly. It is therefore unnecessary to do so on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah, which one is unlikely to forget.

Although *Birchas Hachodesh* is not meant to be a reenactment of *beis din* declaring the new month (*kiddush hachodesh*), several *minhagim* are derived from *kiddush hachodesh*: It is customary to stand while announcing the new month and its Rosh Chodesh just as the people stood when *beis din* said “*Mekudash*,” and the people repeated, “*Mekudash, mekudash*.” In addition, the chazzan holds the *Sefer Torah* while saying it, as was done when announcing a leap year if the requisite *minyan* was not present (*Igros Moshe*).

KNOWING THE

MOLAD

It is customary to announce the precise time of the first possible sighting (if it were dark) of the new moon just before declaring the name of the upcoming month. This is because the word “*chodesh*” stems from “new,” referring to the birth of the moon. Also, *beis din* would not declare the new month without knowing the precise time of the *molad* (*Aruch Hashulchan*). According to some, the *molad* that should be announced is the time the moon begins its cycle in Eretz Yisrael, not locally. If members of a shul do not know the *molad*, they should continue with *Birchas Hachodesh* anyway.

ROSH

CHODESH AV

There are some communities that do not say *Birchas Hachodesh* for the upcoming month of Av because of its disasters. The prevailing custom, brought by *Shaarei Efraim*, is to say it, but to refer to the month as *Menachem Av* in the hope that this Av shall bring *nechamah* (it is not the name of the month and may not be used on official documents like a *kesubah*).

OTHER

PRAYERS

Aside from announcing Rosh Chodesh, other prayers for a good month and the ultimate *geulah* are said. Beginnings are always an auspicious time to ask Hashem for blessings. According to several sources, since Shabbos “feeds” the entire coming week, it also feeds the month that begins that week. *Geulah* is mentioned because the first *Birchas Hachodesh* took place in Mitzrayim, just before the *geulah*. The phrase “*geshamim b’itam*—rain in their time” is added for the *Birchas Hachodesh* of winter months, including both Cheshvan and Nissan.



THE LAST WORD

A one-liner worth remembering

“NEVER MIND THAT, LET ME TELL YOU WHAT I LOST: ANGER, EGO, GREED, DEPRESSION, INSECURITY, FEAR OF DEATH.”

- A man responding to the question “What did you gain by praying regularly to Hashem?”

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