

SIDRA OF THE WEEK : פינחס

1. When Pinchos ben Elozzor ben Aharon HaKohen acted for the honour of HaShem in the brave way that he did, it was not without criticism. Although his zealous act had halted the ravages of the plague (*see* **SIDRA OF THE WEEK: בלק**) some misguided people complained. Why did he act so violently — couldn't Pinchos have merely injured Zimri, perhaps, or disabled him in some other way? What right, these people asked, did Pinchos have to kill a Prince of one of the Tribes? And killing the Midyanite princess who was with Zimri could have dire consequences upon the Jewish People — in revenge, they might declare war against us.

2. This week's Sidra starts with the pronouncement by HaShem that He, HaShem, is pleased with Pinchos. HaShem salutes his courageous and rightful act. It has diverted the anger of HaShem from the Jewish People, showing as it does that there is within the Jewish People itself a "self-correcting" element of straight-thinking and earnest people who will not tolerate immorality, such as that exhibited by Zimri, within the Jewish People. This righteous anger and direct action are good and show that the ordinary people of the Jewish Nation can be depended upon even when one of their own Princes might dare to lead others astray.

3. The high praise that HaShem bestowed upon Pinchos for his courageous act shows clearly that it is the self-correction by the ordinary people of the Jewish Nation that finds favour with HaShem. Indeed, had Pinchos been a Kohen at the time, this would not necessarily have shown that the Jewish People as a whole were worthy. (After all, Kohanim, the Torah teachers of the Jewish People and the repository, as it were, of HaShem's teachings and the guardians of the Jewish Nation's morals, are expected to act in such a way.) But Pinchos, at the time of his act for the honour of HaShem, although a grandson of Aharon HaKohen, was not himself a Kohen. Pinchos's ordinariness demonstrated that within the Jewish Nation there is this capacity of self-correction. Furthermore, because he has shown such real concern for the dignity of the Jewish People, HaShem bestows upon Pinchos the crown of Kehunnah, so that Pinchos too, and his descendants forever, are included in the Tribe of the Kohanim. For by his fearless action, Pinchos has shown himself worthy to be included amongst those who safeguard the Jewish People for all time.

4. Because of the part that the Midyanites played in the plot to entice the Jewish People away from the holy Torah to sin, HaShem commands the Jewish People to harass them and thus incite them to war. Midyon is considered more detestable than Mo'av because whereas Mo'av, who were to share a border with us, ostensibly could claim that they felt

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threatened by the advance of the Jewish People, Midyon on the other hand had involved themselves in a conflict with us although they were not at all threatened — their hatred was totally unprovoked. Furthermore, whereas the Midyanites had deliberately abandoned themselves to immoral purposes (to such an extent that even heathen peoples were disgusted by their behaviour) Mo'av, although guilty of much the same depravity, at least had some latent quality of decency within them (as was realized in later generations).

5. After the plague (and, as it transpired, preparatory to Mosheh our Teacher handing us over to his successor) HaShem commands the counting of the Jewish People, as previously, according to their Tribes and their paternal families. These families, comprising HaShem's Own People, were the ones who now were to inherit Eretz Yisroel, according to their needs and at the direction of HaShem.
6. In response to the claim of the astute daughters of Tzeloph'chod, Mosheh our Teacher had to enquire from HaShem how — or indeed whether — those families' heads who had no male successors were to be allotted a portion in Eretz Yisroel. In reply, HaShem commands the Laws of Inheritance, and these Laws are set out in this week's Sidra.
7. HaShem tells Mosheh our Teacher to go up Mount Avorrim and glimpse the Promised Land, for he will not be allowed to come there. Mosheh is told that soon he is to die — just as Aharon his brother died — because of the episode at the Waters of Strife. When Mosheh hears this, his main concern is the future of the Jewish People, and Mosheh speaks to HaShem, begging Him to appoint a leader for the People “that they should not be like sheep without a shepherd.” HaShem tells Mosheh to take Yehoshua bin Nune, Mosheh's faithful minister from his youth, whom HaShem has imbued with His Spirit and, in the presence of Elozzor the Kohen Ga'dol and in the presence of all the People, to appoint him as their next leader.
8. There follow the laws of the various public Korbannos with their libations and Menochos (that is, their accompanying meal-offerings) to be brought on different occasions, in addition to the daily Korban Tommid. There is the Korban Mussaf for Shabbos (“Mussaf” means “additional”), the Korban for Rosh Chodesh, the Korbannos for Pessach, those for Shovuos, for Rosh HaShannah, for Yom Kippur, and the various Korbannos brought on the seven days of Sukkos (together with the water libations) and finally the Korbannos brought on Sheminni Atzeres.

For the explanation of the Haftorah of Sidra פינחס please go to HAFTORAS.