

פרשת בלק

It is quite easy to raise our hands in defeat when we approach the study of this week's Parshas Bolok. The description of the events is seemingly relatively easy to follow. However, when we come to the prophecies of Bil'am we are challenged. Even the translation of some of the words is very difficult, not to mention the cryptic and concealed messages contained in his sayings.

However, we do not have to run from confronting our Parsha. We can first, at least, attempt to gain a perspective on how it is to be approached.

In fact, I would have thought that the interchange between Bolok and Bil'am could have concluded immediately after the first words the latter uttered in his first prophetic episode in our Parsha.

We read (B'midbar Perek 23/Posuk 8):

מָה אֶקְבֵּל לֹא קִבֵּה א... ל וּמָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זְעַם ה':

How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse? How can I be angry at someone who Hashem is not angry at?

Even if we do not understand each word in each verse, we do know that this is the theme that carries over the three events when Bil'am went to curse Israel. He cannot curse them.

The objective truth is said. What is there to add?

Why didn't Bolok catch on from the beginning?

Let us view a few P'sukim and see if we can perceive the picture that the Torah wishes to present to us.

Our Parsha begins as follows (Perek 22/Posuk 2):

וַיֵּרָא בִּלְקָם בֶּן צִפּוֹר אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאֶמֹרִי:

Bolok ben Tzippor saw all that Israel did to the Emorites.

As the commentators point out, Bolok didn't actually 'see' what was done. But, as we find many times in the Torah 'seeing' is used to convey deep understanding.¹

However, it is clear that Bolok was not only a king with geopolitical awareness. Rashi points out in our Parsha (Perek 23/Posuk 28):

קוסם היה בלוק

Bolok himself was a sorcerer².

In fact, Rashi writes later on (Perek 23/Posuk 14):

בלעם לא היה קוסם כבלוק

Bil'am was less of a sorcerer than Bolok.

Bolok 'saw' but he didn't see.

Although he lacked true vision, the elders whom Bolok sent to invite Bil'am to curse Israel did not possess such a lacking.

We read early on in our Parsha (Perek 22/Posuk 7):

וַיֵּלְכוּ זַקְנֵי מוֹאָב וְזַקְנֵי מִדְיָן וְקִסְמִים בְּיָדָם וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶל בְּלַעַם וַיְדַבְּרוּ אֵלָיו דְּבַרֵי בָלֹק:

¹ See for example (B'reishis Perek 11/Posuk 5):

וַיֵּרַד ה' לִרְאוֹת אֶת הָעִיר וְאֶת הַמִּגְדָּל אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:

Hashem descended to see the city and the tower that people built.

Rashi writes:

וירד ה' לראות - לא הוצרך לכך, אלא בא ללמד לדיינים שלא ירשיעו הנדון עד שיראו ויבינו. במדרש רבי תנחומא:

Hashem went down to see - This was unnecessary to write (because Hashem is omniscient). Rather it comes to teach judges that they should not adjudge a person as guilty until they see and understand. This is in Midrash Rabi Tanchuma.

² *Midrash Aggadah* here writes that Bolok was a

קוסם גדול

A great sorcerer.

The elders of Moav and the elders of Midian went and they had sorcery tools in their hand and they came to Bil'am and they spoke the words of Bolok to him.

What were the 'sorcery tools' that they were holding? In one of his explanations, Rashi writes there:

וקסמים בידם...-קסם זה נטלו בידם זקני מדין, אמרו אם יבא עמנו בפעם הזאת יש בו ממש, ואם ידחנו אין בו תועלת, לפיכך כשאמר להם (כב/ח³) לינו פה הלילה, אמרו אין בו תקוה, הניחוהו והלכו להם, שנאמר וישבו שרי מואב עם בלעם, אבל זקני מדין הלכו להם:

Sorcery tools in their hand-This piece of sorcery-perception was what the elders of Midian took in their hand: They said, 'If he will come with us this time, then that indicates that he has substantive powers. If he will delay us, that indicates that he will not be beneficial.

Therefore, when Bil'am said to them 'sleep here tonight', they said, 'there is no hope from him'; they left him and went on their way. For it says, 'The officers of Moav stayed with Bil'am.' However, the Midianite elders went on their way.

The קסמים in this second explanation are 'omens', signs that indicate success or failure. The omens here indicated failure.

Immediately, it became apparent to at least some that Bil'am would be of no service.

Certainly the famous incident with Bil'am and his she-donkey should have given pause to the most fervent believer that he was not as good as his reputation. And yet, Bolok received Bil'am royally. Instead of having Bil'am come first to Bolok and pay his respects, as would be expected, we read (Posuk 36):

³ The entire verse reads:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם לִינוּ פֹה הַלַּיְלָה וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי אֶתְכֶם דְּבַר כְּאֲשֶׁר יְדַבֵּר ה' אֵלַי וַיִּשְׁבוּ שְׂרֵי מוֹאָב עִם בְּלָעָם:
Bil'am said to them, 'Sleep here tonight and I will respond a word to you when G-d speaks to me; the officers of Moav stayed with Bil'am.

וַיִּשְׁמַע בִּלְקָם כִּי בָא בִלְעָם וַיֵּצֵא לִקְרָאתוֹ אֶל עִיר מוֹאָב אֲשֶׁר
בְּקֶצֶה הַגְּבוּל:

Bolok heard that Bil'am came and he went out to meet him to the Moav City that was on the border of *Arnon*, at the edge of the border.

And at this point, Bil'am returns with his initial prophecy and the verse that we saw above.

מָה אֶקְבֵּל לֹא קִבְּהָ א... ל וּמָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זָעַם ה':

How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse? How can I be angry at someone who Hashem is not angry at?

Let us see what this verse says beyond its translation.

Rashi writes:

מָה אֶקְבֵּל לֹא קִבְּהָ א... ל- כִּשְׁהִיוּ רְאוּיִם לְהִתְקַלֵּל לֹא נִתְקַלְלוּ, כִּשְׁהִזְכִּיר אֲבִיהֶם אֶת עוֹנָם, כִּי בִאִפְסֵי הַרְגוֹ אִישׁ. לֹא קָלֵל אֲלֵא אִפְסֵי, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר (בְּרֵאשִׁית מִט/ז⁴) אֲרוּר אִפְסֵי. כִּשְׁנִכְנַס אֲבִיהֶם בְּמַרְמָה אֲצֵל אֲבִיו הָיָה רְאוּי לְהִתְקַלֵּל, מָה נֶאֱמַר שֵׁם (שֵׁם כִּז/לג⁵) גַּם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה. בְּמַבְרָכִים נֶאֱמַר (דְּבָרִים כִּז/יב⁶) אֱלֹהִים יַעֲמְדוּ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת הָעָם.

⁴ The entire verse reads:

אֲרוּר אִפְסֵי כִּי עָז וְעִבְרָתָם כִּי קִשְׁתָּהּ אֲחִלְקֶם בְּיַעֲקֹב וְאִפְיָצִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
Cursed is their anger because it is brazen and their wrath because it is harsh;
I will divide them in Yaakov and I will scatter them in Israel.

⁵ The entire verse reads:

וַיִּתְרַד יִצְחָק חֲרָדָה גְּדֹלָה עַד מָאד וַיֹּאמֶר מִי אֶפּוֹא הוּא הַצֵּד צִיד וַיָּבֵא לִי וְאָכַל מִכָּל בְּטָרָם תְּבוֹא וְאֶבְרַכְהוּ גַם בְּרוּךְ יִהְיֶה:
Yitzchak trembled very greatly and he said, 'Who then was he who captured the hunt and brought it to me and I ate from it all before you came and I blessed him? He shall also be blessed.

⁶ The entire verse reads:

אֵלֶּה יַעֲמְדוּ לְבָרֵךְ אֶת הָעָם עַל הַר גְּרִזִּים בְּעִבְרָכֶם אֶת הַיַּרְדֵּן שְׁמַעוֹן וְלֵוִי וַיְהוּדָה וַיִּשְׁשָׁר וַיֹּסֵף וּבִנְיָמִן:
These shall stand to bless the people on Mt. Grizim when you cross the Jordan: Shimon, Levi, Yehuda, Yissochar, Yosef and Binyamin.

במקללים לא נאמר ואלה יעמדו לקלל את העם, אלא (שם יג⁷) על הקללה, לא רצה להזכיר עליהם שם קללה:

How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse-when they deserved to be cursed, they were not cursed. When their father Yaakov mentions the sin of Shimon and Levi 'that with their anger they killed a man', he only cursed their anger [but not them] as it is says, 'their anger is cursed'.

When their father Yaakov came to his father Yitzchak in deceit, he deserved to be cursed. What does it say there? 'Despite this⁸, he should be blessed'.

When the blessings and curses were given on *Har Gerizim and Har Eival* it says, 'These [tribes] shall stand to bless the people. Regarding those who said the curses it does not say 'these shall stand to curse the people'. Rather it says [these will stand] 'regarding the curse'. G-d did not want to mention a curse upon them.

Gur Aryeh here helps to better understand the depth of Rashi's commentary:

פירוש, כי "לא קבה" הוא לשון עבר, כמו "לא זעם ה'", ואם כן על כרחך פירוש שהיו ראויים לקללה, דאם לא כן, למה היה הקדוש ברוך הוא מקלל אותם - אם לא היו ראויים לכך, אלא שהיו ראויים לקללה, ואפילו הכי לא קלל הקדוש ברוך הוא אותם. ואם לא היה לשון עבר, הוי למכתב 'מה אקוב לא יקוב אל', ואם כן על כרחך אנו צריכין לפרש כמו שאמרנו:

The explanation is that 'He [Hashem] did not curse' is in the past tense, just like the second clause, 'G-d was not angry'. Since that is its explanation, you are forced to say that it implies that Israel deserved to be cursed. Were it not so, what reason would there be for G-d to curse them?

⁷ The entire verse reads:

וְאֵלֶּה יַעֲמִדוּ עַל הַקְּלָלָה בְּהַר עֵיבָל רְאוּבֵן גָּד אֲשֶׁר וְזְבוּלֹן דָּן וְנַפְתָּלִי:
These will stand by the curse on Mt. Eival: Reuven, Gad, Asher, Zevulun, Dan and Naftali.

⁸ This is how Targum Yonasan renders the word גם in this particular context.

Rather, they deserved to be cursed and even so, HaKodosh Boruch Hu did not curse them.

[The proof is] that were it not past tense, the Posuk should have written 'what will I curse, G-d *will* not curse'. [Since it is not written that way] we need to say that the explanation is as we said.

The point that Gur Aryeh makes in this commentary is that Bil'am is saying that to curse Israel is impossible. There is no possibility to curse Israel, because G-d Himself did not curse them in the past, even when they deserved it.

Rabbenu Bachye adds to these comments. In the words of Bil'am there is more implied than the fact that Israel was not cursed by G-d. Embedded within these sentiments that Bil'am spoke was the unceasing love of G-d for Israel. He writes:

מה אֶקְבֹּל לֹא קִבֵּה א...ל-אף כשהיו ראויין לקללה במעשה העגל לא זז מלחבבן, לא פסקו ענני כבוד והמן והבאר, וכן כתוב בעזרא: (נחמיה ט/יח - כ) "אף כי עשו להם עגל מסכה ויאמרו זה אלהיך אשר העלך מארץ מצרים ויעשו נאצות גדולות, ואתה ברחמיך הרבים לא עזבתם במדבר את עמוד הענן לא סר מעליהם ביוםם להנחותם בהדרך ואת עמוד האש בלילה להאיר להם ואת הדרך אשר ילכו בה, ורוחך הטובה נתת להשכילם ומנך לא מנעת מפיהם ומים נתת להם לצמאם".

How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse -Even when they deserved to be cursed in the event of the *Eigel*, G-d's love did not veer from them: Clouds of Glory, the Manna and the Well did not cease. And so it is written in Ezra:

Even when they made for themselves a molten calf and they said, 'This is your god Israel that took you up from the Land of Egypt', and they made terribly hateful behaviors, You Hashem with your abundant mercy did not forsake them in the wilderness-the Clouds of Glory did not turn from them in the day to lead them on the path and the Pillar of Fire at night to give them light on the path upon which they were to go. Your good spirit You gave to make them wise and Your manna You did not withhold from their mouths and you gave them water for their thirst.

And, if this would not be enough, the saga continues confirming that which was perceived already-the mission of Bil'am was impossible; it would not succeed.

Thus we continue to read (Perek 23/Posuk 11) the inevitable conclusion that Bolok drew after hearing the first prophecy:

וַיֹּאמֶר בִּלְקָם אֶל בְּלָעָם מָה עָשִׂיתָ לִּי לְקַבֵּל אֵיבֵי לְקַחְתִּיךָ וְהִנֵּה בֵּרַכְתָּ בְרַךְ:

Bolok said to Bil'am, 'What did you do to me? I took you to curse my enemies and behold you surely blessed them.

Bolok defies understanding. If we didn't see it happening we would not have believed that it could have occurred. We wonder why Bolok didn't see what was happening- but he didn't. That is implied in the opening statement that Bil'am makes as he begins his second prophecy. He says (Posuk 18):

וַיֵּשֶׂא מִשְׁלוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר קוּם בִּלְקָם וּשְׁמַע הָאֲזִינָה עֲדֵי בְּנוֹ צִפּוֹר:

He took up his parable and he said, 'Arise Bolok and hear; listen to me you son of Tzippor.

Why did Bil'am address Bolok in such a way? Why did he tell him to arise? It is the king's prerogative to be seated⁹! Rashi explains:

קוּם בִּלְקָם - כִּיּוֹן שֶׁרָאָהוּ מִצַּחֵק בּוֹ, נִתְכוּוֹן לְצַעֲרוֹ עֲמוּד עַל רִגְלֵיךָ, אֵינֶךָ רֹשֵׁאֵי לִישֵׁב וְאֵנִי שְׁלוּחַ אֵלֶיךָ בְּשִׁלְיחוֹתוֹ שֶׁל מִקּוּם:

Arise Bolok- When Bil'am saw that Bolok was mocking him, Bil'am intended to cause Bolok discomfort [so he said] 'Stand on your feet, you are not allowed to sit while I am being sent to you on a mission of G-d.

⁹ Although this is not a proof, but it is certainly an indication of such when we learn (Masseches Yoma 25 a):

אֵין יוֹשִׁיבָה בְּעִזְרָה אֲלָא לְמַלְכֵי בֵּית דּוֹד בִּלְבָד

The only ones allowed to sit in the Azarah area of the Beis HaMikdosh were kings of the Judean dynasty.

Thus, at least some kings are allowed to sit where sitting by any other individual is not permitted.

Were this not to be Torah, I think I would consider the unfolding events to be a comedy, a comedy of buffoons. I am reminded of the 'Emperor's New Clothes' where the foolishness is entirely evident but most people refuse to believe it.

But, such is not the case.

Furthermore, we must continue to ponder why Bil'am was chosen to be the vehicle to transmit these unique blessings to Israel. If such was to be transmitted to Israel there were certainly other means. Yaakov Ovinu bestowed blessings upon Israel as did Moshe Rabbenu. The Torah gives its blessings prior to the *tocheicha*-rebukes in Parshos Bechukosai and Ki Sovo.

We must conclude, therefore, that if Bil'am was the medium through which these blessings were given there must have been a purpose that required that he be the communicator.

What was that purpose?

I think that at least part of the answer can be found in Masseches Sanhedrin (105 b) where the Gemara brings a verse from the Haftarah of Parshas Bolok.

The Gemara begins with an analysis of another part of Bil'am's prophecies. We read in our Parsha (Perek 24/Posuk 16):

נָאֵם שִׁמְעֵ אִמְרֵי אֱלֹהִים... לְיָדַע דַּעַת עֲלִיּוֹן מִחֲזֵה שׁ... יִחֲזֶה נִפְל וְגַלְיֵ עֵינָיִם:

This is what he who hears the words of G-d and he who knows the mind of the Supreme Being says. He sees the vision of the Almighty; he falls but his eyes are opened.

The Gemara proceeds to analyze the meaning of this statement of grandiosity in light of the event with Bil'am's donkey. It writes:

וידע דעת עליון, השתא דעת בהמתו לא הוה ידע, דעת עליון הוה ידע?...אלא מאי וידע דעת עליון - שהיה יודע לכוון אותה שעה שהקדוש ברוך הוא כועס בה, היינו דקאמר להו נביא לישראל (מיכה ו/ה) עמי זכר - נא מה יעץ בלק מלך מואב ומה ענה אתו בלעם בן בעור מן השטים עד הגלגל למען דעת צדקות ה', מאי למען דעת צדקות ה' - אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל: דעו נא כמה צדקות עשיתי עמכם

שלא כעסתי כל אותן הימים בימי בלעם הרשע, שאילמלא כעסתי כל אותן הימים -
לא נשתייר משונאיהן של ישראל שריד ופליט. היינו דקאמר ליה בלעם לבלק. מה
אקב לא קבה א...ל

He who knows the mind of the Supreme Being-If he didn't know the mind of his animal, he would know the mind of the Supreme Being?

Rather, [he meant] that he knew how to find the precise moment that G-d gets angry [and curse Israel at that moment].

That is what the prophet meant when he said to Israel: 'My people, remember please the counsel that Bolok King of Moav gave and what Bil'am ben B'or answered him from the *Shittim* to the *Gilgal* in order to know the righteous acts of G-d.'

What were the 'righteous acts of G-d' that Israel was to know?

Hashem said to Israel [in this verse]: Know, please, how many acts of righteousness I Hashem have done with you in that I was not angry with you at all during all of the days that the wicked Bil'am [was threatening you]. Were I to have been angry, no enemy of Israel¹⁰ would have survived at all.' That is what Bil'am said to Bolok: *How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse.*

That is, in a certain fashion, Bil'am was privy to the times when G-d was angry with Israel. Since he was privy to those times, he would have uttered his curse at those moments so that they would find a place within G-d's anger to be effective against Israel. Hashem's righteousness was that He refrained from anger for that entire period of time in which Bil'am was attempting to harm Israel.

When I read these words that the Novi Micha uttered centuries following the event in the Chumash, I understand that one can contemplate that which happened generations earlier. But what about the contemporary people? How can they know what is occurring?

¹⁰ This is a euphemism. It is really referring to Israel.

If we return to the early verse of our focus and see it again in a certain context we may have an insight.

מה אֶקְבֹּל לֹא קִבְּהָ א... ל וּמָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זְעַם ה':

How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse? How can I be angry at someone who Hashem is not angry at?

Imagine, Israel is sitting far below and the most crucial events of the moment that are related to them are taking place far beyond their perception. Plots and plans are being discussed, their destruction is being plotted and they are going about their everyday business. What expectations do we have from Israel?

I think that one of the messages of this entire Parsha is the solution to the above question.

Where did Bolok and Bil'am first meet? We read earlier:

וַיִּשְׁמַע בִּלְקָם כִּי בָא בִלְעָם וַיֵּצֵא לִקְרָאתוֹ אֶל עִיר מוֹאָב אֲשֶׁר עַל גְּבוּל אַרְנֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּקִצֵּה הַגְּבוּל:

Bolok heard that Bil'am came and he went out to meet him to the Moav City that was on the border of *Arnon*, at the edge of the border.

Now, if this was the place where Bil'am was to offer his curses, I understand why the Torah tells us of the location of their first meeting. But such was not the case. The curses were to be offered somewhere else. Thus we read (Perek 22/Posuk 39):

וַיֵּלֶךְ בִּלְעָם עִם בִּלְקָם וַיָּבֹאוּ קִרְיַת חֲצוֹז:

Bil'am went with Bolok and they came to the City of Chutzos.

Why then are we told about their initial meeting place?

If we test our memory, we will quickly be reminded that *Arnon* figured prominently in last-week's Parshas Chukkas.

What did we read? The verse, discussing Israel's travels, reads (Perek 21/Posuk 13):

מִשָּׁם נָסְעוּ וַיַּחֲנוּ מֵעֵבֶר אַרְנוֹן אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבַּר הַיַּצָּא מִגְּבֹל הָאֱמֹרִי כִּי אַרְנוֹן גְּבוּל מוֹאָב
בֵּין מוֹאָב וּבֵין הָאֱמֹרִי:

From there they traveled and they encamped opposite *Arnon* that was in the wilderness that extended from the Emorite border because Arnon is the border of Moav between Moav and the Emorites.

Now, if all I had was this verse, I might have thought that we are being apprised of their location to know why Moav saw them as a threat. They were on their border!

However, the following verses reveal that far more happened than was visible to the eye of Israel. We read the next Posuk (14):

עַל כֵּן יֹאמֵר בְּסֵפֶר מִלְחַמַּת ה' אֵת וְהַב בְּסוּפָה וְאֵת הַנְּחָלִים אַרְנוֹן:

Therefore it is said in the Book of the Wars of G-d, 'that which He gave us at the Red Sea and the ¹¹rivers of Arnon.

Rashi explains the meaning of this cryptic verse and the similar ones that follow:

על כן - על חניה זו ונסים שנעשו בה...כשמספרים נסים שנעשו לאבותינו יספרו את
והב וגו':

Therefore-Regarding this encampment and the miracles that were done in it. When Israel will tell of the miracles that were done to our ancestors they will tell of that which was done at the Red Sea [and that which was done at Arnon].

את והב...כלומר את אשר יהב להם הרבה נסים בים סוף:

¹¹ *Nachal* can mean a river or a valley. Here, it means both as will become apparent.

That He gave-This means to say that G-d gave them many miracles at the Red Sea.

ואת הנחלים ארנון - כשם שמספרים בני ים סוף, כך יש לספר בני נחלי ארנון,
שאף כאן נעשו נסים גדולים. ומה הם הנסים:

And the rivers of Arnon-Just like they will tell of the miracles of the Red Sea so they should tell of the miracles of the Rivers of Arnon. Here, too, great miracles were done. What were the miracles?

...שנשפך שם דם אמוריים שהיו נחבאים שם, לפי שהיו ההרים גבוהים והנחל עמוק וקצר וההרים סמוכים זה לזה, אדם עומד על ההר מזה ומדבר עם חבירו בהר מזה, והדרך עובר תוך הנחל. אמרו אמוריים כשיכנסו ישראל לתוך הנחל לעבור, נצא מן המערות בהרים שלמעלה מהם ונהרגם בחצים ואבני בליסטראות. והיו אותן הנקעים בהר של צד מואב ובהר של צד אמוריים היו כנגד אותן נקעים כמין קרנות ושדים בולטין לחוץ, כיון שבאו ישראל לעבור נזדעזע ההר של ארץ ישראל...לצד הר של מואב ונכנסו אותן השדים לתוך אותן נקעים והרגום...

The blood of the Emorites who were hiding there spilled into the rivers¹². The mountains were very tall and steep and the valley¹³ was deep and narrow. The mountains were very near to each other. A person could stand on one mountain and talk to someone else on the other mountain. The passageway [was not over the mountains, but] through the valley between the mountains.

The Emorites said, 'When Israel will enter the valley to pass through, we will go out from the caves and crevices in the mountains above them and we will kill them with arrows and propelled stones.

On one mountain there were crevices and on the facing side of the other mountain there were protrusions extending outwardly. When Israel entered the valley, the mountain on the Eretz Yisroel side moved towards

¹² That is, the valley became a channel for the river of blood as Rashi explains.

¹³ It is clear that here the translation of *nachal* is 'valley'.

the side of the mountain of Moav and the protrusions entered into the crevices and killed the Emorites who were waiting to ambush Israel.

...אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא מי מודיע לבני הנסים הללו...לאחר שעברו חזרו ההרים
למקומם והבאר ירדה לתוך הנחל והעלתה משם דם ההרוגים וזרועות ואיברים
ומליכתן סביב המחנה וישראל ראו ואמרו שירה:

Hashem said, 'Who will inform My children about these miracles? After Israel passed through the valley, the mountains returned to their place and the well descended into the valley and brought up from there the blood, the limbs and the organs of the killed Emorites, and made them circle the Camp of Israel and Israel saw and they said *Shira* [just like the *Shira* that was said at the Red Sea.]

If we consider what occurred at this event, an event that happened immediately before the episode of our Parsha we will have a new insight into what was expected of Israel and what is expected of us.

At *Arnon*, there was hostile activity planned against Israel. It was an ambush that was plotted meticulously and should have been successful. We can be certain that the brief description that Rashi brings and that we find in the Midrashim is not exhaustive.

Undoubtedly, Emorites recruited many troops, supplied them with the necessary armaments and battle tools and stationed those troops strategically above the narrow passageway that Israel was about to enter. There were certainly generals and commanders who waited for the appropriate signals to begin their attack in which they hoped to maximize the number of casualties and inflict a punishing blow to Israel so that Israel would retrace its steps and no longer be a threat to the Emorites and the Moabites.

Except that they left out one factor-Yad Hashem. They ignored the history of Israel which was so well-known to all¹⁴. And, of course, that was *the* factor that could allow success or assure defeat.

And they were defeated resoundingly.

But, all of this took place far from the awareness and cognition of Israel. It seems certain that even Moshe Rabbenu Olov Hashalom was unaware of this terrible threat. Were Moshe Rabbenu to have been aware of the threat he would have taken some preventative measures, whether militarily or through prayer. But since he did not take those measures we see that G-d chose to keep even Moshe Rabbenu, *Av HaNevi'im* in the dark.

¹⁴ Forty years after the splitting of the Red Sea, the wonderment of that miracle was just as fresh to non-Jews as were the more recent events.

We read the words of Rachav to the spies that Yehoshua sent to Yericho (Yehoshua Perek 2/P'sukim 9-10):

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל הָאֲנָשִׁים יְדַעְתִּי כִּי נָתַן ה' לָכֶם אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְכִי נִפְלָה אִימַתְכֶם עָלֵינוּ וְכִי נִמְגַּו כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ מִפְּנֵיכֶם: כִּי שָׁמַעְנוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר הוֹבִישׁ ה' אֶת מִי יָם סוּף מִפְּנֵיכֶם בְּצִאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם וְאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם לְשָׁנֵי מַלְכֵי הָאֲמֹרִי אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן לְסִיחֹן וְלַעֹג אֲשֶׁר הִחְרַמְתֶּם אוֹתָם:

She said to the men, "I know that Hashem has given you the land and that your fear has fallen upon us and that all the inhabitants of the land dissolve before you. Because we have heard how Hashem dried up the Red Sea before you when you went out of Egypt and that which He did to the two Emorite kings that are on the other side of the Jordan River, to Sichon and to Og, that you vanquished them.

And, centuries later, as we read in the Haftorah of Parshas Chukkas, the memories were as fresh as ever. The Novi (Shoftim Perek 11/Posuk 13) tells us the response of the king of Amon to Yiftach HaGiladi:

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶלֶךְ בְּנֵי עַמּוֹן אֶל מַלְאָכָי יִפְתָּח כִּי לָקַח יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת אֶרְצִי בְּעֵלוֹתוֹ מִמִּצְרַיִם מֵאֲרֹנוֹן וְעַד הַיַּבֵּק וְעַד הַיַּרְדֵּן וְעַתָּה הִשְׁיבָה אֶתְהֶן בְּשָׁלוֹם:

The King of B'nei Amon said to the messengers of Yiftach, 'Because Israel took my land when it went up from Egypt, from *Arnon* to the *Yabbok* and to the Jordan River; now, return them to me.

Thus, there was a deathly threat and Israel was saved, not knowing of the threat and not knowing of their salvation.

The Ribbono Shel Olom decided that, after the fact, Israel should know of their salvation and thus the life-giving well brought the tidings of another life-saving event.

Why did G-d want them to know that they were saved? He was surely able to let them know of the threat in real-time and the salvation in real-time¹⁵, but He didn't.

I think that the reason may have been that there was to have been a lesson for Israel:

G-d is always protecting Israel. Never take anything for granted and do not assume that if things go well that it is because 'that is the way it is'.

Israel was greatly endangered and they didn't know it. They would not have been able to defend themselves against such a deadly attack if it would have occurred.

It was Yad Hashem that prevented its occurrence.

With that lesson having been taught, what should we have expected from Israel? Should we not have expected Israel to be more aware when the seductive practices of their enemies began?

We read at the end of our Parsha (Perek 25/P'sukim 1-3):

וַיָּשֶׁב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשֹׁטִים וַיַּחַל הָעָם לְזָנוֹת אֶל בָּנוֹת מוֹאָב: וַתִּקְרְאוּ לָעָם לְזָבָחֵי אֱלֹהֵיהֶן
וַיֹּאכַל הָעָם וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לֵאלֹהֵיהֶן: וַיִּצְמַד יִשְׂרָאֵל לְבַעַל פְּעֹזר וַיִּחַר אַף ה' בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

Israel dwelled in *Shittim* and the people began to behave promiscuously with the daughters of Moav. The daughters of Moav invited the people to

¹⁵ It would seem that Israel was unaware of the movement of the mountains or that they did not directly see the result of the movement or hear the cries of the stricken Emorites.

the offerings of their gods and the people ate and prostrated before their gods. Israel became attached to *Ba'al P'or* and Hashem's anger was ignited against Israel.

It was not only the promiscuity and idolatry that brought about G-d's anger. It was, as well, ignoring the Guiding Hand of G-d that they had so recently seen. That explains the unusual expression that we read in the instructions given regarding the punishment of the sinners. The Torah writes there (Posuk 4):

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה קַח אֶת כָּל רִאשֵׁי הָעָם וְהוֹקַע אוֹתָם לְהַ' נֶגֶד הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וַיֵּשֶׁב חֲרוֹן
אָפָי ה' מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

Hashem said to Moshe, 'Take the heads of the people [as judges-Rashi] and hang [the sinners-Rashi] before Hashem in the sun and G-d's anger will recede from Israel.

What is the meaning of 'in the sun'?

Rashi writes:

נגד השמש - לעין כל. ומדרש אגדה השמש מודיע את החוטאים, הענן נקפל
מכנגדו והחמה זורחת עליו:

Before the sun-Visible to all. The *Midrash Aggadah* says-'The sun would make known who the sinners were. The Divine cloud would fold itself up [from above the sinner] and the sun would shine on him [pointing out his guilt].

The *p'shat* cannot be that the people were tried and found guilty by this Divine indication. There were trials as the Halachah dictates; that is why Moshe was told to appoint judges to deal with the cases¹⁶.

¹⁶ Or Hachaim HaKodosh explains that there was judicial justice and Divine justice. Where judicial justice could be applied, that is when there were proper witnesses and warning providing the necessary evidence for the courts, the judges appointed by Moshe Rabbenu adjudicated properly.

The idea is, though, that their behavior was guilty because they had the sun-like clarity of the events of *Arnon* to make them beware of such untoward behavior. There should not have been surprises. G-d taught them that He 'works behind the scene'. They should have been aware of His Presence and not have sinned.

This, I believe is the message of Parshas Bolok to us. This is why we see the events unfolding as they do and the behavior of Bolok and Bil'am and their legions being so absurd as it seems to be in retrospect.

Bolok thought that he 'saw', but we saw that he was blind. He thought that he was a leader of the event but he was led, no less than Bil'am. He and Bil'am became puppets in the Hand of G-d when they thought that they would

However perpetrators against whom court-acceptable testimony was not available were punished by Heaven.

We find a precedent for this explanation of Or Hachaim in the events surrounding Eigel HaZahav.

We read in Parshas Ki Sisa (Sh'mos Perek 32/P'sukim 26-28):

וַיַּעֲמֵד מֹשֶׁה בְּשַׁעַר הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מִי לָהּ אֵלֵי וַיֵּאָסְפוּ אֵלָיו כָּל בְּנֵי לֵוִי: וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם כֹּה אָמַר ה' אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שִׁימוּ אִישׁ חֶרְבוֹ עַל יָרְכוֹ עִבְרוּ וְשׁוּבוּ מִשַּׁעַר לְשַׁעַר בַּמַּחֲנֶה וְהָרְגוּ אִישׁ אֶת אָחִיו וְאִישׁ אֶת רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת קָרְבוֹ: וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי לֵוִי כְדִבְרַת מֹשֶׁה וַיָּפֵל מִן הָעָם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא כִּשְׁלֹשָׁת אֲלָפֵי אִישׁ:

Moshe stood at the gate of the camp and said, 'Whoever is for Hashem, to me; all of the Levites gathered to him. Moshe said to them, 'So said Hashem the G-d of Israel, 'Each man should place his sword on his thigh and to throughout the camp, from one gate to the other and each man should kill his brother and his neighbor and his relative [who sinned]. The Levites did as Moshe spoke and there fell from the people that day about 3,000 men.

However, we read just a few verses later (Posuk 35):

וַיִּגַּף ה' אֶת הָעָם עַל אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ אֶת הָעֵגֶל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה אַהֲרֹן:

Hashem put a plague upon the people that made the *calf* that Aharon made.

Certainly, the question begs to be asked: if all those who worshipped the calf were killed, upon whom was the plague visited?

Rashi writes:

ויגף ה' את העם - מיתה בידי שמים, לעדים בלא התראה:

Hashem put a plague upon the people-Death from heaven for those against whom there were witnesses but no warning.

manipulate Him Yisborach. And that is why Bil'am was empowered to give the blessings. He was empowered to give the blessings to show that his intentions and actions were meaningless when he thought that he would defeat the Ribbono Shel Olom.

The perspective was fixed at *Arnon*. G-d is there. Shlomo HaMelech taught us in Sefer Mishlei (Perek 19/Posuk 21):

רבות מחשבות בלב איש ועצת ה' היא תקום:

There are many thoughts in the heart of a person; but it is the counsel of Hashem which will stand.

Davka, the blessings were given by Bil'am to show that blessings come from G-d alone and He alone will choose the vehicle by which they are delivered. With the overview that the Torah gives us of his absurd behavior, his extraordinary failure to attend to the reality surrounding him, we know that the words that he utters were not his own. As the angel of Hashem told Bil'am (Perek 22/Posuk 35):

ויאמר מלאך ה' אל בלעם לך עם האנשים ואפס את הדבר אשר אדבר אליך אתו
תדבר וילך בלעם עם שרי בלק:

The angel of Hashem said to Bil'am, 'Go with the men; but the word that I will speak to you-that is what you will speak; Bil'am went with the officers of Bolok.

If we were studying literature and the 'story' of Bolok and Bil'am was a short story it surely would have been called a 'farce'. It is silly. But, of course, so was the emperor who had no clothes.

The donkey saw, but not the prophet.

What is the message of Parshas Bolok us? I think that it is no different than it was for Israel three millennia ago.

Just a week ago Medinat Yisrael and the Jewish People marked the 40th anniversary of the Entebbe Rescue. Most of the readers here were born long

after the event. But I remember it clearly. It was a 'mission impossible'. It had no chance of success.

Some 9 years before Entebbe there was the Six Day War. It was 144 hours of terrible suspense that was preceded by weeks of anguish and fear of what would be. And yet, Israel defeated its enemies against all odds; it was humanly impossible.

I remember the Six Day War well, too. I remember it far more intensely than Entebbe that was finished before we even knew that it happened.

Can we speak about the evident miracles of the Six Day War and of Entebbe and then immediately forget that there is a Divine Guiding Hand?

Perhaps it would seem farcical to suggest such a possibility. But we know that such is the fact so often.

We can be enthralled with Divine salvation and then ignore His Existence the next minute.

That is the message of Parshas Bolok.

If we mock the foolishness of the king, his prophet and their cohorts, let us remove ourselves from being objects of the very same ridicule that we level against others.

We can fulfill the dictate of the Novi Michah who, after exhorting us to remember the events of our Parsha, concludes with a prescription, as we read (ibid. Perek 6/ Posuk 8):

הַגִּיד לְךָ אָדָם מֵה טוֹב וּמֵה ה' דּוֹרֵשׁ מִמֶּךָ כִּי אִם עֲשׂוֹת מִשְׁפָּט וְאַהֲבַת הַצְדָּק וְהִצַּנֵּעַ
לֵקֶת עִם אָךְ...לִיקִיר:

Man, G-d has told you what is good and what Hashem seeks from you-only to do justice, to love kindness and going modestly with your G-d.

הצנע לכת

Going modestly.

הצנע means to be hidden. If one goes 'hidden' *with* G-d that means that he mutes his prominence so that the prominence of G-d which may not always be visible is allowed to come to the fore and to present itself.

G-d keeps Himself hidden almost all the time. We are able to remove the veil if we stand to His side and not block His visibility. That is the antidote to our misdeeds at the end of our Parsha and our misdeeds throughout history and in our own lives.

If we allow G-d to become visible in our lives then we can hope to merit Divine protection so that regarding us, too, our enemies can say:

מָה אֶקְבֵּל לֹא קִבֵּה א... ל וְמָה אֶזְעַם לֹא זָעַם ה':

How can I curse someone that G-d did not curse? How can I be angry at someone who Hashem is not angry at?

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock

פרשת פינחס

One of the 'behind the scene' goals of our Parshas Pinchos is to protect the national and personal reputations of the maligned. Dozens of verses in our Parsha are dedicated to the purpose of affirming the positive nature of our people as an entirety and of one specific individual in particular.

There were aspersions cast upon the tribes of Israel. As Rashi writes in our Parsha (Perek 26/Posuk 5):

היו האומות מבזין אותם ואומרים מה אלו מתיחסין על שבטיהם, סבורין הם שלא שלטו המצריים באמותיהם, אם בגופם היו מושלים קל וחומר בנשותיהם

The other nations would shame the tribes and say, 'How can they trace their patriarchal lineage to their individual tribes? Do they think that the Egyptians did not take advantage of their mothers? If the Egyptians ruled over the men as slaves, certainly they ruled over their wives.

The context of this comment of Rashi is the census that appears in our Parsha. This census is the final one of the tribes of Israel in the desert and it serves a dual purpose. After the thousands of deaths that occurred following the episode with the daughters of Midian and as the successor of Moshe Rabbenu is about to be appointed¹⁷, Israel is counted once again. And that which calls Rashi's attention to make his comment is the seemingly unnecessary repetitiveness of the family names, one after the other, of those who are being counted.

Thus we read at the beginning of the census (Posuk 5):

רְאוּבֵן בְּכוֹר יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי רְאוּבֵן חֲנוּךְ מִשְׁפַּחַת הַחֲנֹכִי לְפִלֹא מִשְׁפַּחַת הַפְּלֹאִי:

Reuven was the first-born of Yisroel; the children of Reuven – Chanoch, the *Chanochi* family, Pa'lu, the *Pa'lu'i* family.

Why were the names of Chanoch and Pa'lu written twice? Could not the Torah have written only 'the Chanochi family' and omitted 'Chanoch'? Could not the

¹⁷ Rashi provides both of these explanations in his commentary to Posuk 1 there.

Torah have written only 'the Pa'lu'i family' and omitted Pa'lu? And such is the pattern for the remaining family names of this part of the census.

It is upon these verses that Rashi made his comment, as brought above, and Rashi continues:

לפיכך הטיל הקדוש ברוך הוא שמו עליהם, ה"א מצד זה ויו"ד מצד זה, לומר, מעיד אני עליהם שהם בני אבותיהם.

Therefore, Hashem added His Name to them. Hashem added the letter *heh* on one side and the letter *yud* on the other side, to say that I G-d testify upon them that the children are the offspring of the fathers [listed here].

If the names of the fathers were written only once, not twice, I would not have attributed special significance to the fact that they were written in the *Chanochi family* style. Such style is certainly acceptable in *L'shon HaKodesh*. The fact that the name was written twice, however, directs me to note the *Mishpachas HaChanochi* style and to interpret it as such.

In fact, the proof to the repetition of the name being the source of this interpretation can be seen in the second census of our Parsha, that of *Shevet Levi*.

Shevet Levi is counted independently of the other tribes because they did not receive a portion of Eretz Yisroel as an inheritance. When we read their census, we find that the style in which they are presented mimics the style of the verses of the tribes.

Thus, we read (P'sukim 57-58):

ואלה פקודי הלוי למשפחתם לגרשון מגרשני לקהת משפחת הקהתי
למררי משפחת המררי: אלה משפחת לוי משפחת הלבני משפחת החברני
משפחת המחלי משפחת המושי משפחת הקרחי וקהת הולד את עמרם:

These are the numbers of Levi according to their families; Gershon, the *Gershuni Family*, Kehos, the *Kehosi Family*, M'rori the *M'rori Family*. These are the families of Levi, the *Livni Family*, the *Chevroni Family*, the *Machli*

Family, the Mushi Family, the Korchi Family and Kehos was the father of Amram.

Although the form in the first of these two verses is identical with the form of the census of the other tribes, when the individual Levite families are mentioned, there is no repetition of the name. Didn't the reputation of the Levites require the same defense as that of the other tribes?

The answer is that the Levites did not require that same defense. The reason that the nations doubted the veracity of the paternity of the tribes was that they understood that the Egyptian enslavement of Israel went beyond the work that they were required to do and included complete mastery and control of their personal lives as well. Thus, the Torah had to write extra words to provide the defense.

However *Shevet Levi* was never enslaved in Egypt¹⁸ and thus they did not require a defense of the moral fiber of their families.

Rashi continues and tells us that this interpretation was already intimated by Dovid HaMelech in Tehillim (Perek 122/Posuk 4) where we read:

שָׁשֶׁם עָלוּ שְׁבֵטִים שְׁבֵטֵי י... הַ עֵדוּת לְיִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַדוֹת לְשֵׁם ה':

¹⁸ We read at the end of Parshas Sh'mos (Perek 5/Posuk 4):

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם לְמֹה מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן תִּפְרִיעוּ אֶת הָעָם מִמַּעֲשֵׂיוּ לִכְן לְסַבְּלֵתֵיכֶם:

Par'o, the King of Egypt, said to them, "Why do you, Moshe and Aharon, disturb the people from what they need to do; go to *your* burdens.

Rashi writes:

לִכְן לְסַבְּלֵתֵיכֶם - לִכְן לְמַלְאכְתְּכֶם שִׁישׁ לָכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּבֵיתֵיכֶם. אֲבָל מְלֹאכֶת שְׁעֲבוּד מִצְרַיִם לֹא הִיְתָה עַל שְׁבֵטוֹ שֶׁל לֵוִי, וְתַדַּע לָךְ שֶׁהָרִי מִשֶּׁה וְאַהֲרֹן יוֹצֵאִים וּבָאִים שְׁלֵא בְרִשׁוֹת:

Go to your burdens—'Go to your work that you have to do in your homes.' However, the work of slavery in Egypt was not put upon *Shevet Levi*.

The proof is that Moshe and Aharon were going out and in without having to secure permission.

There [to the Beis HaMikdosh] the tribes of Hashem [*Yud Heh*] ascended; a testimony for Israel to give thanks to the Name of G-d.

Israel would give thanks to the Name of G-d spelled with the letter Yud and Heh because that Name of G-d provided testimony of the propriety of their lineage.

The need for the Torah to mount this protective shield for *Shivtei Koh* is apparent. They did nothing wrong. They were being accused falsely. How could they defend themselves? What would be an irrefutable proof? Only the Word of G-d and He provided it.

There is a second time in the Parsha that the Torah seemingly serves as a 'character witness'. That instance, preceding the census, is for an individual and the circumstances are quite different and bear our consideration.

At the very beginning of our Parsha, the Torah lauds Pinchos for the action that he initiated, as we were told at the end of last week's Parshas Chukkas.

The Torah expresses itself thus (B'midbar Perek 25/P'sukim 10-11):

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הִשִּׁיב אֶת חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְיָאוֹ אֶת קִנְיָתִי בְּתוֹכָם וְלֹא כִלִּיתִי אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְיָתִי:

Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: 'Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen turned My anger away from upon B'nei Yisroel when he acted zealously for My sake in their midst and I did not destroy B'nei Yisroel because of My zealousness.'

It is rare that the Torah identifies someone by his grandfather's name as well as that of his father, unless the Torah is teaching us someone's lineage.

We have already been told of the lineage of Pinchos in Parshas Vaeira where there is a partial genealogy of some of the tribes. We read there (Sh'mos Perek 6/Posuk 25):

וְאֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן לָקַח לוֹ מִבְּנוֹת פּוּטִיָּאֵל לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה וַתֵּלֶד לוֹ אֶת פִּינְחָס אֶלֶּה רִאשֵׁי אֲבוֹת הַלְוִיִּם לְמִשְׁפְּחֹתָם:

Elazar the son of Aharon took for himself from the daughters of Putiel for a wife and she bore him Pinchos; these are the heads of the fathers of the Levi'im according to their families.

Even if this biographical information may be considered insufficient, when the actual incident of Pinchos killing *Zimri* and *Kozbi* was told in last week's Parsha, just a few verses before this opening verse of our Parsha, his identity was clearly stated. We read (Posuk 7):

וַיֵּרָא פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֱלֶעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקָּם מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה וַיִּקַּח רֶמֶחַ בְּיָדוֹ:

Pinchos the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen saw and he stood up from the midst of the congregation and he took a spear in his hand.

Once he was identified by his father's and grandfather's name, why was such an unusual identification repeated? One cannot suggest that such is the way that the Torah always wished to present him because when the participation of Pinchos is mentioned in the war against Midian he does not receive three-generation identification. We read there in Parshas Mattos (B'midbar Perek 31/Posuk 6):

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֹתָם מֹשֶׁה אֶלְפֵי לְמִטָּה לְצַבָּא אֹתָם וְאֶת פִּינְחָס בֶּן אֱלֶעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן לְצַבָּא וְכָלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ וְחֲצֵצְרוֹת הַתְּרוּעָה בְּיָדוֹ:

Moshe sent them, one thousand per tribe to the army, them and Pinchos the son of Elazar the Kohen to the army and the holy vessels and the trumpets for sounding the *t'ru'ah* in his hand.

Thus, the question focuses on our Parsha. Why is Pinchos named here with his father and his grandfather?

Rashi's answer to this question is famous. He writes on our verse:

פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן - לפי שהיו השבטים מבזים אותו, הראיתם בן פוטי זה שפיטם אבי אמו עגלים לעבודה זרה והרג נשיא שבט מישראל, לפיכך בא הכתוב ויחסו אחר אהרן:

Pinchos the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen-Because the tribes would shame him saying, 'Did you see this son of *Puti*, whose mother's father fattened calves for idolatry? He killed a prince of a tribe of Israel!'

Therefore the verse comes and ascribes his parentage to Aharon.

We already saw that the grandfather of Pinchos, on his mother's side, was Putiel. Who was this *Putiel*? Rashi writes there in Sh'mos:

מבנות פוטיאל - מזרע יתרו שפטם עגלים לעבודה זרה.

From the daughters of Putiel-from the seed of Yisro who fattened calves for idolatry¹⁹.

Because Pinchos was belittled for his dishonorable ancestry, there was widespread condemnation of his action in attacking an individual with a much higher pedigree. In response, the Torah reminded the Shevatim that the pedigree of Pinchos was no less respectable than that of Zimri. Pinchos was the grandson of Aharon the Kohen HaGodol!

And this is what I do not understand. Let us say that Pinchos did not have such distinguished ancestry. Let us say that on his father's side his *yichus* was nondescript. Let us say that the only part of his *yichus* that was noteworthy of mentioning was his maternal grandfather whose actions were not a source of pride, to say the least.

If such was true, does that detract from Pinchos and what he did? If such was true perhaps I would need to ascribe even greater accolades to this person of

¹⁹ Rashi continues there:

ומזרע יוסף שפטם ביצרו:

And from the seed of Yosef who stimulated his Yetzer Hara'.

Rashi attributes both Yisro and Yosef as being the symbols of *Putiel*. Zohar on our Parsha discusses the combined nature of Yosef and Putiel and their influence on the personality of Pinchos. We will cite the Zohar shortly but not discuss this aspect which focuses on *gilgulim*.

humble background who nonetheless overcame the limitations of his ancestry and was a hero of Israel²⁰.

If Pinchos needed to be defended against an unjust onslaught, why shouldn't the focus of the defense be against the intemperate charges? Why aren't the accusers being put in their place? Why was the accusation not rebuffed as it should have been?

In order to gain a perspective on what occurred when Pinchos killed Zimri and Kozbi, let us revisit the initiative and independent action that Pinchos undertook.

As we read earlier, Pinchos *saw* and he took a spear. What did he see? The verse could certainly refer to the behavior of Zimri and Kozbi. The difficulty with such a statement is the fact that the Torah would not have written that *Pinchos saw*. Everyone saw, not only Pinchos. Why, then, does the Posuk emphasize that it was Pinchos who saw?

As we know, quite often in the Torah 'seeing' refers to understanding, intellectual perception, and not necessarily visual perception.

What was it that Pinchos perceived when the Torah writes that he 'saw'?

Rashi writes:

וירא פינחס - ראה מעשה ונזכר הלכה, אמר לו למשה מקובלני ממך הבעל ארמית
קנאין פוגעין בו²¹, אמר לו קריינא דאגרתא איהו ליהוי פרוונקא, מיד ויקח רומח בידו
וגו':

²⁰ There are additional points as well. Yisro was a hero. He added an entire section to the Torah as we read in Parshas Yisro and as Rashi explains there (Sh'mos Perek 18/Posuk 1). Moshe pleaded with Yisro to stay with B'nei Yisroel as we read in Parshas B'haalosecha (B'midbar Perek 10/Posuk 29). Yisro's legacy remained with his descendants. See Parshas Bolok (B'midbar Perek 24/Posuk 21) and Rashi's commentary there. See also Shmuel I Perek 15/Posuk 6.

Thus, the focus of the *shevatim* on Yisro prior to joining Israel was in and of itself inappropriate.

Pinchos saw-He saw the act of Zimri and Kozbi and he was reminded of the Halachah. Pinchos said to Moshe, 'I have a tradition from you that one who has relations with a non-Jewess, the *ka'na'im*-zealots can kill him.' Moshe responded, 'He who reads the letter should be the one to do its mission'.

Immediately, 'Pinchos took the spear in his hand, etc.'

It is clear from this explanation of Rashi that Pinchos would not have undertaken his action without the approbation of Moshe Rabbenu. Pinchos turned to Moshe expecting him to fulfill this Halachah and only then, when Moshe directed Pinchos to take the spear did he do so.

In fact, this explanation of Rashi is only one opinion expressed by Chazal in describing the thoughts and actions of Pinchos.

Chazal discuss Pinchos' actions at length in Masseches Sanhedrin (82 a) in relationship to the Mishnah (81 b) that teaches the Halachah that

הבוּעַל אַרְמִית קְנַאִין פּוֹגְעִין בּוֹ

One who has relations with a non-Jewess, the *ka'na'im*-zealots can kill him.

The first explanation that the Gemara brings is that of *Rav*. Rashi adopts that explanation.

The Gemara continues, however, and tells us that *Shmuel* understood the event differently. This is what Shmuel says:

וּשְׁמוּאֵל אָמַר: רָאָה (מִשְׁלֵי כֹא/ל) שְׂאִין חִכְמָה וְאִין תְּבוּנָה וְאִין עֲצָה לְנֶגְדַּהּ - כֹּל מְקוּם שִׁישׁ חִילּוּל הַשֵּׁם - אִין חוֹלְקִין כְּבוֹד לְרַב.

Shmuel said, 'Pinchos saw that "there is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel in opposition to G-d." [He interpreted], "Wherever there is *Chilul Hashem*, one not need not apportion honor to the Rav.

²¹ The details of this Halachah are mentioned in the *sugya* in Masseches Sanhedrin to which we will refer shortly.

This implies that when there is a public desecration of the Name of G-d, then one has to respond vigorously in order to nullify the desecration. One need not wait for rabbinical approval²².

Rashi writes there:

שמואל אמר מאי וירא ראה שאין חכמה - כלומר: נזכר פסוק אין חכמה ואין תבונה נגד ה' שכל מקום שיש חילול השם אין חולקין כבוד לרב, לפיכך הורה פנחס הלכה בפני רבו, ולא המתין ליטול רשות ממשה, שלא יראו הרואים וילמדו להתיר את הנכרית.

Shmuel said, 'What did he see?; He saw that there is no wisdom-this means to say that he was reminded of the verse that there is no wisdom and no understanding in opposition to Hashem and where there is *Chillul Hashem* one need not apportion honor to the Rav.

Therefore, Pinchos decided a Halachah in the presence of his Rav and did not wait to receive permission from Moshe Rabbenu so that observers who were observing this event should not see and learn to allow a non-Jewess.

This is an extraordinary explanation²³.

²² This concept of

שכל מקום שיש חילול השם אין חולקין כבוד לרב

Where there is *Chillul Hashem* one need not apportion honor to the Rav

is a Halachah in and of itself. The Gemara there in Masseches Sanhedrin makes it very clear. Therefore, only one who knows the Halachah well, as did Pinchos, can attempt to fulfill it.

The fact that there are Halachic boundaries governing such a response distinguishes it from an independent vigilante initiative that more often than not is forbidden.

²³ The Gemara tells us that there is a third explanation of what 'Pinchos saw'. We read there:

רבי יצחק אמר רבי אליעזר: ראה שבא מלאך והשחית בעם.

We read in Masseches B'rachos (31 b):

כל המורה הלכה בפני רבו חייב מיתה.

One who decides a *Halachah* in the presence of his Rav deserves the death penalty.

Rambam (Hilchos Talmud Torah Perek 5/Halachah 2) cites this as *Halachah*:

איזהו חולק על רבו זה שקובע לו מדרש ויושב ודורש ומלמד שלא ברשות רבו ורבו קיים ואף על פי שרבו במדינה אחרת, ואסור לאדם להורות בפני רבו לעולם, וכל המורה הלכה בפני רבו חייב מיתה.

Who is considered one who is disputing his *Rav*? One who establishes a Beis Midrash and expounds and teaches without the permission of his Rav, and his Rav is alive, even though he is in a different country. It is always forbidden for a person to instruct a Halachah in the presence of his Rav and anyone who instructs a Halachah in the presence of his Rav deserves the death penalty.

We certainly remember that one of the reasons attributed to the deaths of Nodov and Avihu on the day of the dedication of the Mishkan was this very sin. Rashi writes there (Vayikro Perek 10/Posuk 2):

רבי אליעזר אומר לא מתו בני אהרן אלא על ידי שהורו הלכה בפני משה רבן.

Rabi Eliezer says, 'The sons of Aharon died only because they decided a Halachah in the presence of their Rav, Moshe.

Shmuel tells us that Pinchos was audacious. He did not wait for permission; he did not seek authorization. He was correctly convinced of his responsibility and he did not hesitate to fulfill it.

Rabi Yitzchak said in the name of Rabi Eliezer-Pinchos saw the angel [of death] destroying the people.

Although Rabi Yitzchak argues regarding what 'Pinchos saw', it is not relevant to the nature of the character of Pinchos.

We may wonder if there is a connection between these two seemingly unrelated commentaries of Rashi. Is there a relationship between the nature of the undertaking of Pinchos and the improper way in which the *Shevatim* related to him?

Of course, such a possibility only exists if there is an alternative explanation as to why the Torah repeats Pinchos' name with its connection to his grandfather Aharon.

In fact, we do find an alternative explanation for the association of Pinchos with Aharon in the words of the Zohar in our Parsha. We read (213 a):

אמר רבי שמעון אתחזיין ישראל לאשתצאה בההוא שעתא בר דאקדים פנחס להאי
עובדא ושכיך רוגזא הדא הוא דכתיב פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב וגו':

Rabi Shimon said, "At that time [of the events of the daughters of Midian because they did not all protest against Zimri²⁴] Israel deserved extinction were it not that Pinchos came first to the event and caused the anger [of G-d] to subside. That is why is written, "Pinchos the son of Elazar the son of Aharon."

The *Zohar* does not explain itself, but i think that the explanation is self-evident.

The *avodah* of all of the Kohanim was to bring Israel closer to HaKodosh Boruch Hu. If such was the need always, certainly the need was far more pronounced when Israel, as individuals or as a nation, sinned.

Thus, when offerings were brought, they sought to expiate the sins of the individual or of the people. All Kohanim shared in that function.

However, there was a daily function done only by the Kohen Godol and an annual one, exclusive to him as well.

²⁴ Both of these points are mentioned in the contemporary authoritative commentary to the *Zohar HaKodosh Mosok MiDvash*.

The daily function was the *Minchas Cohen Godol* brought every morning and every afternoon²⁵.

The annual function was, as is so well-known, the service of the Kohen Godol on Yom HaKippurim, a service that was exclusive to him.

And so we read in Parshas Acharei Mos (Vayikro Perek 16/P'sukim 3, 30, 34):

בְּזֹאת יָבֵא אַהֲרֹן אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּפָר בֶּן בָּקָר לְחֹטֵאת וְאֵיל לְעֹלָה:

With this shall Aharon come to the Holy Place with a bullock of the cattle for a sin-offering and a ram for a burnt-offering.

כִּי בַיּוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם לְטַהֵר אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵיכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' תִּטְהָרוּ:

Because on this day He will atone for you to purify you from all of your sins; before Hashem you will be purified.

וְהָיְתָה זֹאת לָכֶם לְחֻקַּת עוֹלָם לְכַפֵּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל חַטֹּאתֵם אַחַת בַּשָּׁנָה וַיַּעַשׂ כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת מֹשֶׁה:

This will be for you an everlasting statute to atone for B'nei Yisroel from all of their sins, once a year; Aharon did as Hashem commanded Moshe.

Thus, the Mishnah at the end of Masseches Yoma (Perek 8/Mishnah 7) writes:

...תשובה מכפרת על עבירות קלות על עשה ועל לא תעשה ועל החמורות הוא תולה עד שיבא יום הכפורים ויכפר:

Repentance brings atonement for 'light' sins, the nullification of positive Mitzvos and the violation of negative Mitzvos. Regarding 'severe' sins, repentance keeps the punishment suspended until Yom HaKippurim comes and brings atonement.²⁶

Disaster was about to befall Israel. Who would rise to the task to avert disaster?

²⁵ See Vayikro Perek 6/Posuk 13 and Rashi there.

²⁶ See the rest of the Mishnah there and the relevant passages in Rambam in Hilchos Teshuva.

The Torah concludes last week's Parshas Bolok with these verses (Perek 25/P'sukim 7-9):

וַיֵּרָא פִּינְחוֹס בֶּן אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן אַהֲרֹן הַכֹּהֵן וַיִּקָּם מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה וַיִּקַּח רֶמֶחַ בְּיָדוֹ: וַיָּבֹא אַחֲרַי אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל הַקֶּבֶה וַיִּדְקֶר אֶת שְׁנֵיהֶם אֶת אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶת הָאִשָּׁה אֶל קִבְתָּהּ וַתַּעֲצֵר הַמַּגָּפָה מֵעַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיְהִיו הַמֵּתִים בַּמַּגָּפָה אַרְבָּעָה וָעֶשְׂרִים אֱלֹפִי:

Pinchos the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen saw and he stood up from the midst of the congregation and he took a spear in his hand. He entered after the Israelite man to the tent and he speared both of them, the Israelite man and the woman to their insides and the plague was stopped from B'nei Yisroel. Those who died in the plague were 24,000.

Pinchos was chosen to be a Kohen, in the footsteps of his illustrious grandfather, Aharon, because he performed a *kohen-act*, he averted disaster. The impending destruction of Israel would have severed the relationship between them and G-d for eternity.

Pinchos prevented the punishment of the plague from spreading. He saved Israel.

That is the meaning of the Zohar. The reason that the Torah lists his name together with that of Aharon is not for the purpose of identifying the person under discussion. That question of personal identification was done sufficiently a few verses earlier.

The reason that the Torah lists Pinchos' name here together with his grandfather Aharon is to underscore the scope and importance of the action that he undertook. He was an 'Aharon HaKohen HaGodol' at that moment!

Thus, we have two approaches to the use of Aharon's name in connection with Pinchos and we have two approaches to the way that Pinchos undertook his action.

In fact, the explanation that Rashi brings, that of *Rav* in Masseches Sanhedrin, lowers the prestige of the action that Pinchos undertook.

The zealot acts without consultation. In fact, were he to enter a Halachic discussion²⁷ before Beis Din regarding the question of whether or not Zimri was liable for the death penalty, the response would have been 'no'.

According to this explanation, therefore, Pinchos displayed a lack of self-assuredness. He knew the Halachah. He was aware of its parameters and at that moment he alone was authorized to take action based on the Halacha of

קנאין פוגעין בו

Ka'na'im-zealots can kill him.

We may therefore understand the reason for the association of his name with that of Aharon as Rashi explains but have a greater insight into Rashi's explanation.

Rashi wrote:

פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן - לפי שהיו השבטים מבזים אותו, הראיתם בן פוטי זה שפיטם אבי אמו עגלים לעבודה זרה והרג נשיא שבט מישראל, לפיכך בא הכתוב ויחסו אחר אהרן:

Pinchos the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen-Because the tribes would shame him saying, 'Did you see this son of *Puti*, whose mother's father fattened calves for idolatry? He killed a prince of a tribe of Israel!'

Therefore the verse comes and ascribes his parentage to Aharon.

We expressed difficulty with Rashi's explanation. We asked two questions: would it have been disreputable if Pinchos came from a lesser parentage? Why did the *shevatim* deserve a reply; they should have been reprimanded for their audacity?

The answer now appears to be quite different than what we thought at the beginning.

²⁷ Evidently, the interchange between Pinchos and Moshe was less than a Halachic discussion.

Hashem associated the name of Aharon with that of Pinchos not for the sake of the *shevatim*. If, after they saw that the plague was averted from its potential culmination, they still found it within themselves to denigrate Pinchos, they did not deserve a response.

But Pinchos did. Pinchos who doubted himself, as is evidenced by his initial approach to Moshe, required uplifting.

Pinchos who saw himself as a descendant of a person who, for a period of time worshipped and promulgated idolatry, questioned whether he, Pinchos, could have or should have done that which he did.

HaKodosh Boruch Hu responded to Pinchos and said, 'You are the descendant of the Kohen Godol. You saved Israel from extinction and thus you are rewarded with the *kehunah* and My covenant of peace'.

And so we read at the beginning of our Parsha (Perek 25/P'sukim 12-13):

לֵכֶן אָמַר הַנְּנִי נִתֵּן לּוֹ אֶת בְּרִיתִי שְׁלוֹם: וְהִיְתָה לוֹ וּלְזַרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו בְּרִית כְּהֻנַּת עוֹלָם
תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר קָנָא לֹא...לְקִיּוֹ וַיִּכְפֹּר עַל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

Therefore, say to him, 'I, Hashem, am giving him My covenant of peace. He and his seed after him will have an eternal covenant of *Kehunah* because he showed zealousness for his G-d and he atoned for B'nei Yisroel.

The second approach, that of *Sh'muel* in Masseches Sanhedrin, teaches that Pinchos acted in complete accordance with the concept of

קְנָאִין פּוֹגְעִין בּוֹ

Ka'na'im-zealots can kill him.

He knew the Halacha and he knew the danger in which he was placing himself-but he did not hesitate.²⁸

²⁸ We read in Masseches Sanhedrin there:

אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן: הבא לימלך - אין מורין לו. ולא עוד אלא, שאם פירש זמרי והרגו פנחס - נהרג עליו. נהפך זמרי והרגו לפנחס - אין נהרג עליו, שהרי רודף הוא.

But, Pinchos also knew the reason for his action. It was not motivated out of personal anger or hatred. It was motivated because 'he showed zealousness for his G-d'.

It could very well be that according to this approach as well, the *shevatim* were demeaning Pinchos. But, according to this approach, Pinchos did not care!

Pinchos knew that what he was doing was correct. Pinchos knew that he should disregard the mockers and those who derided him. He wasn't discouraged by his parentage. He was aware of the idolatrous past of his ancestor Yisro and of how Yisro gave up a position of prestige and power and was willing to be ostracized for his belief in One G-d.

That is what Rashi explains in Parsha Sh'mos at the initial meeting of Moshe and Yisro's daughters. We read (Perek 2/P'sukim 16-17):

וּלְכַהֵן מִדְיָן שִׁבְעַת בָּנוֹת וַתְּבֹאנָה וַתִּדְלְגָה וַתִּמְלֹאנָה אֶת הַרְהָטִים לְהַשְׁקוֹת צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶן:
וַיָּבֹאוּ הַרְעִים וַיִּגְרְשׁוּם וַיִּקָּם מֹשֶׁה וַיִּזְשַׁעַן וַיִּשְׁקֵן אֶת צֹאנָם:

The Priest of Midian had seven daughters and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to give drink to the sheep of their father Yisro. The shepherds came and drove them away, and Moshe arose and saved them and gave drink to their sheep.

Rashi writes:

ולכהן מדין - רב שבהן ופירש לו מעבודה זרה ונידוהו מאצלם:

Rabba bar bar Chana said in the name of Rabi Yochanan, 'If the potential zealot comes to consult [whether or not he should kill the perpetrator in this case of *בוועל ארמית*], we do not *pasken* for him to do so.

And not only that [that we do not instruct him to do so], if Zimri and Kozbi had separated themselves from their relations and then Pinchos would have killed him, Pinchos would be liable the death penalty.

[And not only that] but if Zimri would have turned around [when Pinchos was coming to spear him] and had killed Pinchos, Zimri would not have been killed [because it wasn't considered as murder] because Pinchos was considered a *rodef* pursuer [and why may kill an attacker].

The Priest of Midian - He was their leader. He separated from idolatry and they excommunicated him.

ויגרשום - מפני הנידוי:

They drove them away-because of the excommunication.

At the same time, Pinchos was aware of the self-indulging nature of his other ancestor, Yosef, as a youth. He knew what we read in Parshas Vayeshev (B'reishis Perek 37/Posuk 2):

אֵלֶּה תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב יוֹסֵף בֶּן שִׁבְעַ עָשָׂרָה שָׁנָה הָיָה רֹעֵה אֶת אָחָיו בְּצֹאן וְהוּא נֶעַר אֶת בְּנֵי בְלָהָה וְאֶת בְּנֵי זִלְפוּה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו וַיָּבֵא יוֹסֵף אֶת דְּבָרֵם רָעָה אֶל אָבִיהֶם:

These are the generations of Yaakov: Yosef was seventeen years old and shepherded with his brothers with the sheep; he was a lad with the sons of Bilhoh and the sons of Zilpoh the wives of his father, and Yosef brought the bad reports of his brothers to their father.

Rashi writes:

והוא נער - שהיה עושה מעשה נערות, מתקן בשערו ממשמש בעיניו, כדי שיהיה נראה יפה:

He was a lad-He acted childish. He would fix his hair and his eyes so that he would look handsome.

At the same time, Pinchos was aware of the courage that his ancestor Yosef displayed when he overcame his childish behavior and rebuffed the wife of Potifar.

That is what we read there in Parshas Vayeshev (Perek 39/P'sukim 7, 10-12):

וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתִּשָּׂא אִשְׁתּוֹ אֶת עֵינֶיהָ אֶל יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁכַבְה עִמִּי:

After these things, the wife of his master raised her eyes to Yosef and said, 'Lay with me'.

וַיְהִי כַּדְּבָרָה אֶל יוֹסֵף יוֹם יוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ לְשָׁכַב אִצְלָהּ לִהְיוֹת עִמָּה: וַיְהִי כִּהְיוֹם הַזֶּה וַיָּבֹא הַבַּיִתָּה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלָאכְתּוֹ וְאִין אִישׁ מֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בְּבַיִת: וַתִּתְּפֹשֶׁהוּ בְּבִגְדּוֹ לֵאמֹר שִׁכְבָּה עִמִּי וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיֵּנֶס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה:

When she spoke to Yosef daily, he did not listen to her to lay next to her, to be with her. And it was on that day that Yosef came to the house to do his work and no one from the people of the house was there in the house. She grabbed him by his garment saying, 'lay with me' and he left his garment in her hand and he fled and went out to the outside.

Rashi writes, in one explanation:

לעשות מלאכתו...-לעשות צרכיו עמה...

To do his work-to do his needs with her [i.e. to accede to her seduction].

Pinchos knew his personal genealogy. He was well-aware of his family tree. Pinchos knew that others may refer to his heritage as being one from *Putiel*, a reason to hide his ancestry of Yosef and Yisro. But, Pinchos saw the actions of his ancestors and was not embarrassed. On the contrary, he was empowered by his lineage.

Yisro turned his back on the very idolatry that Israel was now embracing. Yosef refused the seductress, in complete opposition to what Pinchos' compatriots were doing at that very moment.

Pinchos was not an unwilling descendant of Yosef and Yisro; he was their proud heir.

He did not need a reminder from HaKodosh Boruch Hu that that which he did was correct. He knew he was correct because he knew the Halachah.

But, Pinchos did not understand the magnitude of his action. Since his action was 'zealousness for his G-d' only, he made no assessment of its impact. Pinchos acted with outward boldness and yet retained his inward humility.

Hashem told Pinchos the truth that he did not perceive. Pinchos was a worthy descendant of Aharon and therefore was rewarded with the two unique aspects of Aharon.

He would have the potential to be the peacemaker that Aharon was. Pinchos was given the covenant of peace so that he could²⁹ imitate Aharon about whom the Mishnah (Masseches Ovos Perek 1/Mishnah 12) writes:

הלל אומר הוי מתלמידיו של אהרן אוהב שלום ורודף שלום אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה:

Hillel says, "Be among the students of Aharon who loves peace, pursues peace, loves people and draws them near to Torah."

Pinchos was rewarded with the gift of *Kehunah*, even though he was not born as a Kohen. Rashi writes thus at the beginning of our Parsha (Posuk 13):

ברית כהנת עולם – שאף על פי שכבר נתנה כהונה לזרעו של אהרן, לא נתנה אלא לאהרן ולבניו, שנמשחו עמו ולתולדותיהם שיולידו אחר המשחתן, אבל פינחס שנולד קודם לכן ולא נמשח, לא בא לכלל כהונה עד כאן. וכן שנינו בזבחים (קא ב) לא נתכהן פינחס עד שהרגו לזמרי:

An eternal covenant of Kehuna-Even though the *Kehuna* was already given to the children of Aharon, it was only given to Aharon and his sons who were anointed with him and to their children that would be born after their anointment.

²⁹ We have many sources (see Midrash Shochar Tov Perek 63) that teach us:
פינחס הוא אליהו

Pinchos and Eliyahu are one and the same individual.

Thus, we can understand why Eliyahu's anger with B'nei Yisroel brought about such a powerful Divine response. See, for example, Melachim I, Perek 19 with Rashi and the Midrashim.

If he was given a unique potential to make peace and squandered it, he was considered culpable.

Pinchos, however, who was born prior to their anointment and was not anointed [with them], did not enter the *Kehuna* until this moment. And so we learned in Masseches Zevachim: Pinchos did not become a Kohen until he killed Zimri.

The awarding of the double covenants of peace and *Kehuna* were the just reward for Pinchos that informed him, and us, of the majesty of his actions.

Thus, we have two approaches to view the intent of Pinchos and the response that HaKodosh Boruch Hu gave him.

At this point, I do not know why Rashi chose the approach that he did. Certainly, there is something in the Parsha that taught him to teach us that this is the *p'shat*.

And, even if we discover the reasoning behind Rashi's choice, we still have two disparate approaches to the inner-thinking of Pinchos and the response of HaKodosh Boruch Hu, whether it was reparative and rewarding or informative and rewarding.

What we do have, through Chazal and Rashi, is two approaches that we can use to examine ourselves. We have approaches that demand of us to look into our intentions, not only our actions.

We have approaches that demand that we are personally insightful and that we see the ramifications of that insight.

The more that we are truthful with ourselves, understanding our actions, along with their performance, we will be able to do our service of G-d with greater dedication and intent and seek to also be recipients of the Divine blessing of peace and the blessings that the Kohanim bestow upon us.

Shabbat Shalom

Rabbi Pollock

