

חמודי שי על התורה והמועדים

Chamudei Shai on the Torah and Holidays

by Dr. Joseph Geliebter

Topics discussed

Parashas Pinchas

- ▶ **The relationship of Pinchas to Aharon**
- ▶ **The different paths for attaining the *kehunah***
- ▶ **Pinchas' act of zealotry was in the category of Moshe Rabbeinu's breaking of the Luchos**
- ▶ **"Pinchas is Eliyahu"**
- ▶ **The Inclusion of Pinchas within Aharon**

Parashas Pinchas

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The relationship of Pinchas to Aharon

Pinchas was born as an ordinary Levi and was not sanctified as a *kohen* until our parashah. This was because Pinchas had been born before Aharon and his sons were anointed to the *kehunah* (priesthood). Through his act of zealotry for Hashem in slaying Zimri and Kozbi, he merited the *kehunah*. The Torah states: "Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen." The Torah traces his lineage back to his grandfather, "Aharon HaKohen." This is remarkable, for Pinchas' sanctity as a *kohen* did not stem from his lineage to Aharon but rather was granted as a reward for his act of zealotry. What, then, is his spiritual connection to his grandfather, Aharon HaKohen?

Different paths to attaining the *kehunah*

It may be suggested that the Torah wishes to teach us about the unique quality through which Pinchas merited the *kehunah*, and to compare it with the unique quality through which Aharon himself merited the *kehunah*, even though these qualities were complete opposites.

Aharon merited the *kehunah* because he joyfully yielded his honor and his rights as the elder brother, sincerely rejoicing over the appointment of his younger brother Moshe as the leader of Bnei

Yisrael. The Torah testifies: וְרָאָה וְשָׂמַח בְּלִבּוֹ
 "When he sees you, he will rejoice in his heart." (Shemos 4:14)

Moreover, Chazal likewise describe Aharon as one who was:

אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן
 לתורה

"loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them close to Torah."

The attribute of zealotry, exemplified by Pinchas, seems entirely foreign to Aharon. Nevertheless, the Torah traces Pinchas' lineage as the grandson of "Aharon the *kohen*" to teach us that had Aharon witnessed the deed of Pinchas, he would have recognized that his extraordinary act of *kana'us* (zealotry) was warranted and would have fully approved of it. Indeed, he would have wanted his own name to be mentioned as Pinchas' grandfather. This is unlike Yaakov, who instructed that his name should not be mentioned in connection with the dispute of Korach, so that it would not appear in the genealogy of Korach.

There are different paths by which *kohanim* may become worthy of the *kehunah* in the eyes of Hashem, and in attaining *kapparah* (atonement), and in safeguarding the holiness of Klal Yisrael. These are represented by the differing approaches of Aharon and Pinchas. Aharon's way was "he will see you and rejoice in his heart," and "loving peace and pursuing peace, loving people and bringing them close to Torah." Pinchas' path to the *kehunah*, to bringing *kapparah* upon Yisrael and preserving their holiness, was "because he was zealous for his G-d and brought atonement for Bnei Yisrael." He therefore merited to be remembered as the grandson of Aharon

the *kohen*, teaching that each validates the other. Both are beloved and cherished before Hashem and that each has its place.

Pinchas' act of zealotry was in the category of Moshe Rabbeinu's breaking of the Luchos

Every year, we read Parashas Pinchas on the Shabbos closest to Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, and this is no coincidence. In the *piyutim* (liturgical poems) of the *Selichos* (penitential prayers) for the Seventeenth of Tammuz, we recall that on this day the Luchos were broken and the cause of this was the Luchos were broken, and the cause of this was the *Chet ha'Eigel*.

In our sefer *Chamudei Shai* on Bereishis, in the essay on Sukkos-Shemini Atzeres, where we explored in depth Rashi's final comments on the Torah (s.v. לְעֵינֵי כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל "Before the eyes of all Israel"), that the Torah concludes with an allusion to Moshe's breaking of the Luchos. There we explained that the breaking of the Luchos was a crucial act intended to awaken Bnei Yisrael to *teshuvah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu praises Moshe for this, saying, אשר שברת, "which you broke" – "Yasher kochacha sheshibarta" ("Thank you for breaking them"), as we read on every public fast day. That act took place on the very day that would later become known as the Fast of Shiva Asar B'Tammuz.

Thus, although the breaking of Hashem's Luchos was a shocking act, and one of the reasons we fast on this day, nevertheless it marked the beginning of Bnei Yisrael's *teshuvah* and *tikkun* (rectification).

The same may be said regarding Pinchas. Despite the tremendous shock of

his act of zealotry, which lay outside the judicial framework of the *Beis Din*, and although it appeared as though Pinchas had rendered a *halachic* ruling in the presence of Moshe Rabbeinu and, above all, slew a *nasi* of Yisrael before the eyes of the people, including the members of the *nasi's* own tribe, nevertheless this "shocking act," carried out with *mesiras nefesh*, brought about *kapparah* and *teshuvah* for Klal Yisrael.

The matter of "Pinchas is Eliyahu"

The well-known statement of Chazal, פנחס זה אליהו "Pinchas is Eliyahu," opened a discussion that spanned many generations of Torah discussions in general and halachic discussions in particular, beginning with the *Amoraim* (Sages of the Gemara) and continuing through the *Achronim* (later authorities), seeking to understand in what sense this is true. If Eliyahu HaNavi was indeed a Kohen, how could he revive the dead and come into contact with the deceased? These discussions are extensive and well known. Our purpose here, however, is simply to explain the underlying meaning of Chazal's statement "Pinchas is Eliyahu" according to our approach. Pinchas attained his *kehunah* and all his spiritual stature "because he was zealous for his G-d and brought atonement for Bnei Yisrael." Eliyahu HaNavi likewise describes himself with the words, קָנָא קָנִיתִי לַיהוָה "I have been exceedingly zealous for Hashem" (Melachim I 19:10). (This indicates that they share the same spiritual root. Chazal likewise said concerning Pinchas: "Rabbi Simon said: When *ruach hakodesh* (Divine inspiration) would rest upon Pinchas, his face would burn like torches." Similarly, Eliyahu ascended to Heaven in a fiery chariot. Both were consumed by the same holy

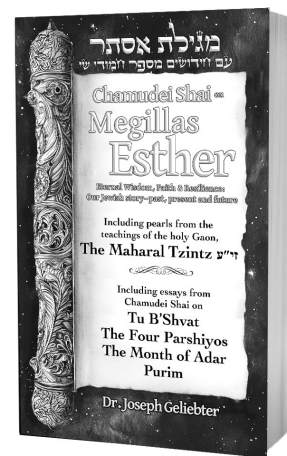
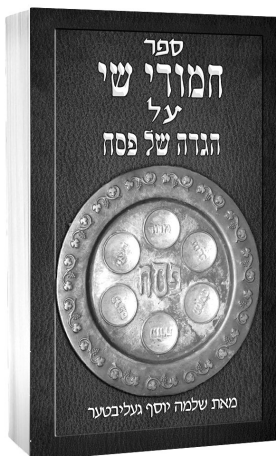
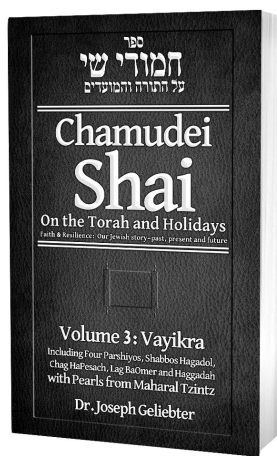
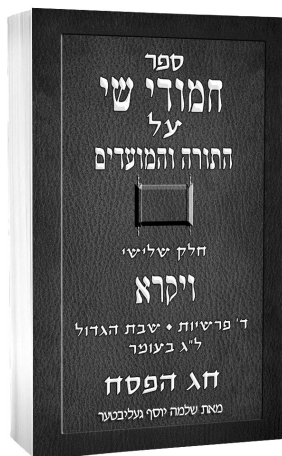
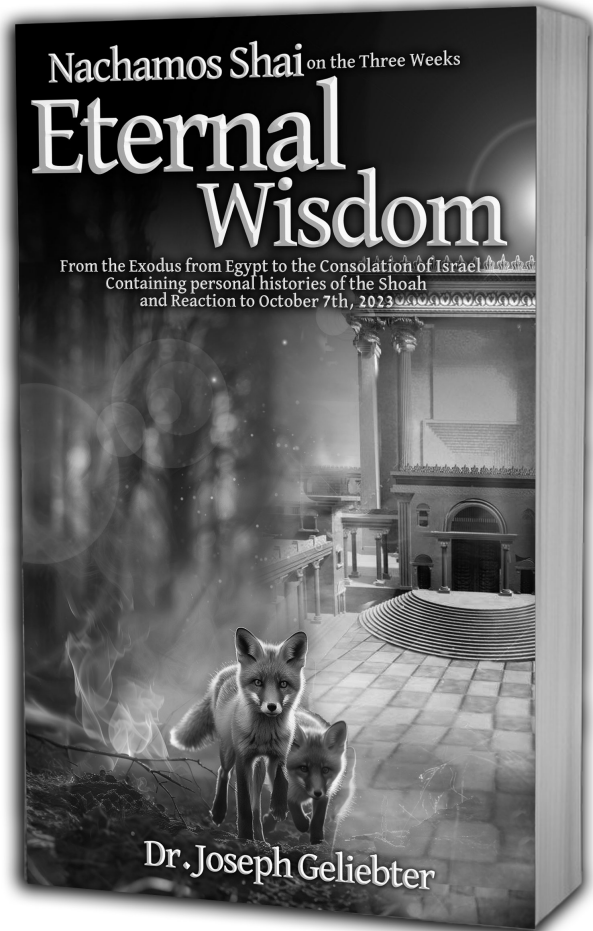
fire, burning with passionate zeal for the honor of Hashem's Name.

The Inclusion of Pinchas within Aharon

Rabbi Elazar said in the name of Rabbi Chanina: "Pinchas did not become a *kohen* until he slew Zimri, as it says (Bamidbar 25:13), 'And it shall be for him and for his descendants after him a covenant of eternal *kehunah*.'" Rav Ashi said: "[He did not become a *kohen*] until he made peace among the tribes, as it says (Yehoshua 22:30) : 'And Pinchas the *kohen*, and the leaders of the congregation, and the heads of the thousands of Yisrael heard...'" (*Zevachim* 101b).

In light of what we explained above, the view of Rav Ashi can be readily understood. We explained that the Torah traces Pinchas back to Aharon in order to teach that although their approaches were complete opposites, "both are the words of the living G-d" and both are necessary. Rav Ashi is coming to add that Pinchas did not become a *kohen* until he truly became "...the son of Aharon the *kohen*," adopting Aharon's attributes of loving peace and pursuing peace through making peace among the tribes, thus truly becoming included in his grandfather Aharon. And so will it be in the future era, as the Mishnah teaches:

...And the Sages say: "[Eliyahu will come] neither to distance nor to bring near, but rather to make peace in the world, as it says, 'Behold, I am sending you Eliyah the prophet... and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers'" (*Eduyos* 8:7).



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