

Ha Shavuah B' Sha'arey Israel

July 9 – July 16, 2009

17 Tammuz – 24 Tammuz 5769



Candle lighting time 8:28 pm
Friday July 10

Friday Evening Kabbalat Shabbat Services begin at 6:15 pm
Saturday morning Shabbat Services begin at 9:30 am

PARASHAT PINHAS

Annual: Numbers 25:10 – 30:1 (Etz Hayim, p. 918)
Triennial: Numbers 26:52 – 28:15 (Etz Hayim, p. 924)
Haftarah: Jeremiah 1:1 – 2:3 (Etz Hayim, p. 968)

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We wish a Happy Birthday this week to:

Teddy Gribbins, Stuart Kent, Sivia Lipson, David Cohen, Shelley Kruger and Jennifer Koplin

And Happy Anniversary to:

Lynn & Jay Freedman and Gail & Jack Krapf

This week we remember the Yahrzeit of:

Joseph Phillip Cohen, Max Weinstein, Leslie Jampole, Sophie Coolik, Mollie Wall, Julius Davidson,
Irene Hirsh, Rose Levine, Florence Besser, Morris Rosen

We would like to extend our condolences to Ed Vogel
and his family on the passing of his father, Henry Vogel.

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Last Chance!

To make any changes for the 2009-2010 Directory
you must call Beth Cohen at 474-1221 by **July 13.**

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

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Tisha B'Av Service
Wednesday - July 29
8:00 PM

Parashat Pinhas

This week's commentary is by Simha Rosenberg, the New York Associate Director for the New Israel Fund.

The Limits Of Leadership: Pinhas' violent act raises questions about the extent of any leader's authority.

In order to understand this week's portion, it is necessary to first look at the narrative that concluded the previous portion. Last week, we read the story of Balak, the King of Moab, who feared that the Children of Israel would conquer him. In defense of himself and his people, Balak recruited Balaam to place a series of curses on the Children of Israel. However, God intervened and turned the curses into blessings.

At this point, the Children of Israel were in a critical moment of transition, for Moses' leadership was drawing to a close and the mantel was about to be passed to his successor who would bring the people into the Promised Land. But despite repeated manifestations of divine protection--including the transformation of Balaam's curse into a blessing--some of the Children of Israel fell prey to the seductions of the Moabite women and participated in their religious rituals, thus betraying the covenant with God.

This was the generation that was supposed to be free of the mentality of enslavement, and was expected to experience the historic redemption of the chosen people. But tragically, when faced with uncertainty about the future, some of the people turned for reassurance to a religion that offered concrete, tangible gods. Their betrayal brought divine punishment in the form of a plague.

Even in the midst of this disaster, as people were weeping over the calamity, one of the princes of the Children of Israel defied Moses and the elders by associating with a Midianite woman. Moreover, he did so within sight of the tent of meeting where everyone had gathered. The authority of Moses and the elders was being flouted, even as they pronounced the sentence of divine retribution. Pinhas, the grandson of Aaron the priest,

jumped up, grabbed a spear, and killed both the Israelite prince and the Midianite woman. His action stopped the plague and ended the crisis. Thus concluded last week's Torah portion.

This week, we open with God's response to Pinhas' action. God emphasized that Pinhas' zeal has made atonement for the Children of Israel and averted a disaster, and thus Pinhas is given a "covenant of peace."

Rabbinic commentators, however, do not find Pinhas' actions to be so completely laudable. They note that even though Pinhas did not act for self-aggrandizement or to challenge Moses' authority, he took matters into his own hands and acted in an extreme manner--certainly a potentially dangerous precedent to set.

Many commentators question how Pinhas can be rewarded at all for acting in such a summarily violent way, without conforming to the established strict procedures that severely constrain capital punishment in Jewish law. Some see the covenant of peace as a necessary antidote to calm Pinhas' zealotry. Other commentators stress that Pinhas is not made Moses' successor specifically because he does not show the qualities necessary to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

Regardless of which approach we take, this week's portion drives home the theme that no leader, not even Moses, has any absolute or permanent claim on authority over the Children of Israel. Leaders are certainly important, and sometimes they must take risks. However, as the commentators point out, they will always have to answer to the judgments of God and history, and it is the responsibility of the people to analyze their leaders' choices and decide whether they were the correct ones to follow.

Similarly, the entire Children of Israel, too, must be held accountable to the divine purpose. And just as the decisions of their leaders will be scrutinized and judged, the actions of future generations of Jews will be judged as well.

Ultimately, only successive generations of both leaders and the people are able to collectively fulfill the divine covenant. It takes the continued struggle and faith of each generation in order to enter the Promised Land and to fulfill the purposes of Jewish history. Equally, the Torah shows God's ultimate faith in us that, even if it does take many generations, we will ultimately be able to complete our journey.

For other commentaries on this week's Torah portion check out these sites:

Aish.com

ISJL Taste of Torah

JTS

MyJewishLearning.com

USCJ Torah Sparks

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- [CSI Macon Online](#)
- [United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism \(USCJ\)](#)
- [JTS Podcast - this week's Parsha](#)
- [Audio Siddur](#)
- [Jewish Telegraphic Agency \(JTA\)](#)
- [Israeli News Broadcast – in English](#)
- [The Jewish Ethicist](#)
- [Synagogue 3000](#)
- [Learn through USCJ online](#)
- [The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum](#)
- [United Jewish Communities \(UJC\)](#)
- [American Jewish University](#)

**For the children (or the young at heart):**

- [Torah Portion Coloring Pages](#)
- [Babaganews Torah Parasha of the week movie](#)