

Parashah Pinchas Numbers 25:10-30:1

‘The Zeal of God has Consumed me’

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In our last parashah, Balak, we saw that although Balaam did not succeed in cursing Israel, whom God had blessed; in the end the people of Israel brought destruction upon themselves through their own sin. The Midianites, unable to curse Israel directly, instead **‘beguiled them in the matter of Peor.’** (Numbers 25:18).

Balaam, called the son of Beor, in the end must have somehow been involved in leading Israel into sin with Midianite women through sexual immorality. It seems that the desire for riches won out over his desire to do God’s will. God told Moses to harass the Midianites and smite them in return.

Some people may still be under the harassment of the Midianites in the spiritual realm. Recently, a close member of my family has been under incredible harassment – it has been one thing after another after another – bizarre things they have to deal with that just steal their time, energy and money. We discerned the harassment of the Midianite spirit and entered into spiritual warfare to stop it in its tracks! We need to get on the offensive when we are being harassed like this and smite the Midianites in the spirit. They are dangerous enemies that can seduce us into sin.

Pinchas, son of Eleazer, son of Aaron the Cohen (priest), took a spear and thrust it through Zimri and Cozbi, an Israelite man and Midianite woman caught in the sin of fornication (sexual immorality) within the camp.

We may look at this act of violence in two ways. Through man’s eyes, this was a clear act of murder, deserving the most severe punishment. Through God’s eyes, however, **“That was credited to him as righteousness, through all generations forever.”** (Psalm 106:28-31)

Because of Pinchas’ zeal for the Lord, the plague was stopped and God rewarded Pinchas with the covenant of an everlasting priesthood. The word for zeal in Hebrew is usually translated as jealous in English. It comes from the root ‘kanah’ (כָּנָה) as in El-Kanah (God is jealous). Hannah’s husband in the Bible was called El-kanah.

Yeshua instructed us that the Kingdom of heaven must sometimes be taken by force or violence. **“And from the days of John the Baptist (Yochanan the Immerser) until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent ‘take it by force.’**” (Matthew 11:12)

What is our view of religious fanaticism? Might it be different from God's? Pinchas was filled with hatred of evil and indignation against that sin which so grossly profanes God's holy name. In fact, in the Hebrew, a distinction exists between the words for murder (ratzach) and kill (harag). In the Ten Commandments, God forbids the act of murder, but there are various instances where He commands the people of Israel to kill, as shocking as this seems to our humanistic mindset.

The vital point to be made here, however, is that Pinchas was zealous with the zeal of God, not his own, fleshly passion. The Lord spoke to Moses saying, "**Pinchas...has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal.**" (Numbers 25:11)

There are people who commit all kinds of crazy, radical and even violent acts, thinking that they are doing God a favor, whereas, their zeal is totally misguided. A Biblical example of this is Shaul, before he became transformed into the Apostle Paul, who persecuted the Church, imprisoning Believers and putting followers of Yeshua to death for their faith. He is one who stood by, consenting to the death by stoning of the martyr, Steven. (Acts 22:20)

By his own words, Paul admits to being "**zealous toward God**" but his zeal was totally without knowledge of the Truth and therefore misguided, just as are so many Orthodox Jews today. (Acts 22:3-5) They seek to establish their own righteousness through keeping many man-made laws and rules rather than receiving the righteousness we have by grace through Yeshua.

Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they may be saved. For he bore witness that they have a '**zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.**' (Romans 10:1-3) Here is a photo of an Orthodox Jewish man passing out tracts to cars stopped in traffic along a busy street in Jerusalem.



Whenever we have zeal, even for God, but without a revelation knowledge of Truth, our zeal can become destructive. A modern day well publicized example of this is the religious Jewish zealot who planted a bomb at the home of Messianic Believers, the Ortiz family in Ariel, Israel. This bomb blew up in the hands of their son, Ami, and almost cost him his life! There are, of course, many other examples, enough that we should have a fear of acting out of our own misguided zeal.

The covenant of everlasting priesthood was given to Pinchas – and to his seed (zarah). This, of course, refers to his natural descendants, but it may also refer to his spiritual seed. Not all of us are natural born cohanim, but each of us belonging to God has been given the privilege of priesthood. "**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...**" (1Peter 2:9)

We should, therefore, possess this same zeal as Pinchas for righteousness; but we must make sure that our zeal is truly from the Lord.

The following is a rabbinical commentary from Torah Weekly from Jerusalem. It gives a Torah - consistent perspective on the current 'peace talks'.

INSIGHTS: SENSE AND SENTIMENT

"I give him My covenant of peace." (Numbers 25:12)

We live in a world where sentimentality has replaced feeling. On the one hand, we see righteous indignation on all subjects PC: "Save the Whales!" "Save the environment!" "Save religious women from the tyranny of 'over-large' families!" On the other hand, events took place here in Israel a few weeks ago that make the hair stand on the back of your neck:

About a month ago, Michael Bar-Am and Efraim Dawishe were in their cars, jockeying for position back and forth from one traffic lane to another. At one point, Bar-Am sideswiped Dawishe in anger. Dawishe then followed Bar-Am to his workplace south of Tel Aviv, where they argued and exchanged blows in the parking lot before a crowd of spectators. Dawishe, 28, then knocked Bar-Am to the ground and beat him to death. Neither Dawishe nor the victim had a criminal record, police said.

Within days of this murder, 19-year-old Alon Michaeli was stabbed to death with a broken beer bottle in a dispute over a beach chair. Most chilling of all, in a separate incident, a 2-year-old was beaten to death, allegedly for disturbing an adult watching a soccer match.

In two of these incidents, nobody lifted a finger to help the victim. People watched and did nothing. What kind of society is it that can engender such apathy at unspeakable acts of violence while preaching its concern for the poor, the needy, the environment and the whales? Poor whales.

A World Health Organization sponsored study last year ranked Israel in the top 10 Western countries for schoolyard violence. Israeli minister Ben-Ami reported that the national statistics for such violent incidents had quadrupled from 1991 to 1999.

These acts of mindless violence reveal a frightening emptiness in the soul of the nation. What is being done about it? One pundit recommended that the Israeli government set up a committee on violence modeled on "successful" U.S. violence reduction programs that targeted schools and communities: "The problem in Israel is very, very simple -- we have not yet implemented such a strategy," he opined.

American culture is the most violent in the world. A quick trip down the aisles of your local "Wars-are-us" will reveal how Western society inculcates violence into the brains of toddlers.

In this week's Torah portion, we read of an incident that, on the surface, looks like it could have been culled from a contemporary newspaper: A lone assailant picks up a spear and, in front of a vast crowd, murders a prince and a princess in cold blood. Their only crime -- they are "romantically involved."

You would think that G-d would have punished Pinchas severely, and yet, He confers priesthood on Pinchas and all his descendants -- "My covenant of peace."

Why?

A society that runs on sentimentality will ultimately turn around and perform acts of unspeakable cruelty. In Nazi Germany, the first law that was passed against Judaism was the outlawing of shechita, kosher slaughter or animals. And during the war, the German society for the prevention of cruelty to animals sent a memo to the SS to ask them to please slow down the deportation of Jews to concentration camps because they couldn't keep up with the volume of pets for which new homes had to be found.

The word for peace in Hebrew also means wholeness and perfection. There is only one true peace. **There is only one true Perfection.** By definition, if we do what G-d wants, we are performing an act of peace, we are bringing the world to its perfection -- even if that act looks like violent murder. If we act against the Creator, though modern culture may praise our liberality and our cultured open-mindedness, we have waged war on reality. We have laid waste the world as surely as an atomic plant melt-down.

Sources:

* Binyomin Yerushalmi in Yated Neeman, AP wire service

Note: Let's pray in unity that the Daati (religiously observant Jewish community) in Israel and all over the world will open their eyes to see that only the "PRINCE OF PEACE" (ISA 9:6) will ever bring true peace to this world. We will never achieve peace through the efforts of man, but through the supernatural intervention of the Messiah – Yeshua!

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Second Census:

After the plague, and in preparation for the division of land, the people of Israel were counted again, the first time being after their deliverance from Egypt. But after the

devastation of the plague, the Lord commanded another census, like a shepherd, whose flocks have been depleted by an attack of wolves. When the catastrophe is over, the shepherd lovingly counts his sheep in order to know how many are left alive. (Rashi)

We may notice that *“the sons of Korach died not.”* (Numbers 26:11) Korach was the leader of the rebellion against Moses - he and his followers were consumed by an earthquake and fire. But the sons of Korach survived to become the founders of a whole guild of Psalmists, whose writings are still with us today filling a portion of the book of Psalms (Tehillim). The lesson behind this verse is that we are not destined to follow in the footsteps of our father (or mother). We can rise above our backgrounds- even the sin or rebellion of our own parents - to become devoted followers of God.

The other side of the coin, however, is that Godly parents do not necessarily beget Godly children. **“And Nadav and Avihu** (sons of Aaron the priest) **died when they offered strange fire before the Lord.”** (Numbers 26:61) (Lev. 10:1-7). This is a source of great sorrow to parents who love and serve the Lord; but we see many other examples in the Bible of children who do not follow in the footsteps of their parents, for example: the sons of King David, the Prophet Samuel, and the Priest, Eli. We each must choose whom we will serve and cannot either blame nor rely upon the previous generation.

We must accept our responsibilities as parents to train up our children with the best of our abilities to love and serve God but we must also accept that children will eventually grow to make their own decisions about their relationship with God. In Judaism, boys (and often girls) celebrate this rite of passage called a Bar or Bat Mitzvah at the age of 13 (12 for girls). Thus, they declare before the whole community that they acknowledge reaching this important milestone – the age of accountability.

We must learn to let go of the guilt associated with having grown children who refuse correction and follow in the pathway of sin and rebellion. We can, however, continue to hold onto our faith that God will receive the prodigals when they come to their senses and return home to their Father.

Caleb and Joshua:

Only two men from the first census survived to be counted in the second- Caleb and Joshua Why? They were the only two who **believed and trusted in God wholeheartedly.** (Numbers 26:65)

All the rest of this generation perished. We must wholeheartedly put our trust and confidence in the Lord. Doubt and unbelief are serious handicaps to our spiritual growth. We will never possess all the blessings God has for us unless we choose to trust in Him and believe in His promises.

What do we believe? If we think we are just a lowly grasshopper, so we will be; but if we believe we are more than conquerors in Messiah Yeshua, then that we will also be. Yeshua said to the centurion who came to plead for his servant's healing, **“...as you have believed, so let it be done for (or unto) you.”** (Matthew 8:13)

This is so powerful if we really get it! This can work for us both in the positive and in the negative. Therefore whether we are believing for success or failure, life or death, victory or victimhood, God will give us according to our faith or belief system. If we believe that nothing ever works out for us, or that we don't deserve to enjoy the blessings of God, then this will be done unto us.

The battle is in the mind; we must challenge every lie that we believe and replace each one with the truth of God's word. This is the journey of transformation – by the renewing of our minds, the changing of our belief system to one that wholeheartedly trusts God.

In this parashah, the land was divided according to the size of the tribe. Today, most Jewish people have no idea which tribe they belong to. These records have been lost and forgotten, but the prophet Ezekiel tells us that in the future, the land will again be allotted to Israel (along with the aliens who settle peaceably among them) as an inheritance according to the tribes. These are listed in chapter 48 of Ezekiel. Obviously the Lord has not forgotten who belongs to which tribe, and He will restore the tribes of Israel.

The daughters of Zelophehad ask for their inheritance, as their father died without sons. Some mortal fathers may prefer his sons to his daughters, but God's love is not like that. He loves men and women equally and God decreed justice for the daughters. Too often women are hesitant to stand up for their rights in legal or financial matters. We don't receive what is due to us because we are too passive or fearful to go after them. Just because we are women, even single women, it does not mean that we cannot inherit what is rightfully ours.

In a spiritual sense, the Lord is our portion – He is a God of justice and will give us our inheritance if we boldly ask for it and believe that we deserve it. What if the daughters of Zelophehad didn't think they were worthy – or that because all the rest were men, that they should not even ask? They would not have received their portion of the Land that was due to them.

Let us not be timid, but bold in carrying out God's invitation to ask for what we want and desire and trust Him to bring it to pass in His way and His time. But we will not know unless we ask. The Word says **"You have not because you ask not."** Jesus invites us to ask for what we desire in His name, **"Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full."** (John 16:24) God can always say no, but if we don't ask, then the answer is automatically no. As the saying goes, *it is the squeaky wheel that gets the grease.*

We see from God's attention to these two women's request, that there is nothing so small, so insignificant, so trivial that God does not care about if it is something that concerns us. He cares not just for the nation as a whole, but for each and every individual within the nation. **"He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him."** (Psalm 145:19)

An interesting side-note that came out of this Torah study was that these women were of the tribes of the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. If it is true, as those who ascribe to the 'Two House Theory' believe, that some of those being grafted into the Olive Tree are actually from the ten Northern Tribes of Israel (Ephraim), then these daughters could represent the Ephramites who are now standing up for full and equal inheritance with JUDAH. Hmm....

In this portion of Scripture God delivers what must have been devastating news to Moses. He is told that although he would be allowed to see the Promised Land, he would never be allowed to enter (see Parashah Chukat). God granted Moses the privilege of seeing that all his labor had not been in vain. (Numbers 27:12-14)

We may or may not see the fruit of our service to the Lord in this lifetime, but in faith we press on, believing that our work for the Lord, done in obedience and with right motives, is not in vain also. Unlike Moses and the Israelites who died in the wilderness, we don't need to wander for forty years and then die, having fallen just short of entering into the Promised Land. We can enter in and possess the Land but only by faith in God's ability to help us overcome. Not by might nor by power but by My Spirit says the Lord.

Moses asked God to **transfer the leadership to Joshua** (Yehoshua) by the laying on of hands. This is a physical act to symbolize the transference of authority. In Hebrew, the word is '**samach**', from which is derived the noun, **Smichah**, the act of rabbinic ordination. The word Samchut means authority. The root of this Hebrew word means **'to trust, to support, or to rely on'**. Being anointed for leadership of a group of people is a sacred trust that we may not take lightly. Moses made sure to ordain Joshua so that the congregation **would not be left as sheep without a shepherd** (Numbers 27:17)

Moses still showed concern for the flock, even when he knew it would not be him taking them into the Land. When we left for Israel we had been leading a small fellowship of people who studied Torah, learned Hebrew and dance. There seemed to be no one to carry on after we left and so sure enough, the sheep scattered and fell prey to the wolves. Many of those who once studied and fellowshiped with us have now gone to the synagogue, and some have even converted to Orthodox Judaism and denied their faith in Yeshua.

We need godly leadership; we were created to be governed – to come under samchut (authority). Without a shepherd, we are scattered and helpless sheep, exposed to attack on all sides. There are Believers who are unable or unwilling to come under the leadership of a shepherd in a congregation; but the Word warns us that those who isolate themselves are not wise. People may say, "Well, I am under the authority of the Lord..." But this is not enough. We need also to submit to earthly leadership, as is demonstrated in the examples of Moses and Joshua. Even though God is the ultimate authority, and Yeshua is our Great Shepherd, He will also ordain leaders to help guide and support us in our walk with God.

We must be careful, however, whose leadership we place ourselves under. A foolish or incompetent shepherd can lead us astray into deception or destruction. **“My people have been lost sheep; their shepherds have led them astray.”** (Jer.50:6)

Many of the people of Israel today and the Jewish people generally listen to what their ‘shepherds’ (the Rabbis) are telling them, but most of them do not yet have the saving knowledge of the Messiah, Yeshua, to lead their people to life in the Father through His atoning death and resurrection. Therefore they are, as Yeshua said, the blind leading the blind into a ditch.

Numbers 28:16-18 describes **the Pesach (Passover) of the Lord** in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month. And on the fifteenth day, there should be a chag (feast) that lasts seven days to eat matzot (unleavened bread). The first day is a holy day where no one would do any of their vocational work. Then the Word goes on to describe the prescribed sacrifices for this special mo’ed (appointed time).

As followers of Yeshua, we believe that He is our Passover lamb who was slain on Pesach. His death removes or takes away all our sins by making atonement for us. Although we still keep this mo’ed, as it is an eternal commandment of God to remember this time, we no longer need to give the prescribed sacrifices.

Yeshua has sacrificed his own life so that this system of blood sacrifice need not be repeated year after year after year with the sacrifice of animals on the altar. When Yeshua died on the cross he said, “It is finished.” Once and for all.

“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” (Hebrews 9:12)

HAFTARAH: 1 Kings 18:46-19:21 The Zeal of Elijah

The haftorah portion compares the zeal of Pinchas with the zeal of Elijah. Both demonstrated zeal on God’s behalf. Here, too, the Israelite nation has gone astray. And also here, it is a foreign woman who is at the core of their idolatry and sin.

Queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, has persuaded the people of Israel to worship Ba’al, a false god. Much has been written about Jezebel and a controlling, rebellious ‘spirit of Jezebel’ that can operate in people of both genders. However, I find an interesting message in her Hebrew name – **E’zevel**.

E (pronounced ee) in Hebrew means **not**, (as in ‘E efshar’ meaning not able to). **Zevel** means **garbage**. Is E’zevel dealing with a spirit of pride, a sense of insecurity, inherent in her name, that she must proclaim *“I am not a piece of garbage!”* ? Is it haughtiness and pride that causes her to think more highly of herself that she ought, that leads to her ultimate destruction? **“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.”** (Prov. 16:18)

On Mt. Carmel, alone and defenseless, Elijah (Eliyahu) single-handedly brings the people back to God through a dramatic display of Divine power. The people surrender

and confess Adonai Hu Haelohim (YHVH He is God) . In his zeal for God, Elijah slays the prophets of Baal.

Afterwards, however, Elijah becomes demoralized and runs away in fear from the murderous threats of this one woman, Jezebel. Elijah flees into the wilderness, sits down under a broom tree and asks to die. **“Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers.”** (1 Kings 19:4)

Isn't it so typical that after a high, exciting mountain top experience we often flop, morose and dejected into a deep, dark pit? There were times when, after great times of travelling, ministering, and seeing God do mighty things in our midst, that I would spend my first day back home just sitting and weeping. Why?

Because of the excitement of travel – meeting new people, having a great time, enjoying the freedom from the daily grind of responsibilities, duties and chores, sometimes even having people look up to me as ‘somebody special’ because I come from a foreign country and teach the Word of God.

And then I come home. Thud. The house is a disaster (*Why can't anybody clean up after themselves while I'm gone?!*) Thud. The place is small and confining and the kids are screaming and arguing with each other. Thud. And I still have to unpack, do all the laundry and dishes and it's back to the routine. Thud. *I'm nobody after all – just a maid, servant, more like slave – all I'm good for is cleaning other people's toilets... how foolish I was to think that I could actually do anything for God!* Double Thud! This is how my thinking begins to lead me into depression, discouragement and despair – the three deadly ‘d’s. Sometimes I actually want to die. So I understand Elijah. Maybe some of you do as well.

What is God's response to Elijah or even to us when we feel this way? Well, first of all, He sends him some good food to eat and water to drink and lets him have a good sleep. Sometimes that is all we need; we are just physically depleted and need to build up our bodies again through proper nutrition and rest.

Then Elijah runs to a cave; he is not finished with his depression yet. God finds him in his dark cave and says, **Mah l'cha po, Eliyahu?** (1 Kings 19:9) In Hebrew, mah means what? He's not really asking *Why* are you here? But ‘*what?*’. In other words, *what business do you have being in this cave, Eliyahu? What brings you to this place?* Eliyahu gives his answer to ‘why’ – he describes why he is in retreat, demoralized by the difficulties of his work and overwhelmed by the task ahead of him:

“I have been very jealous (סנן) for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.” (1 Kings 19:10)

Notice that in his dark mood of despondency, Elijah exaggerates the problem. *I, even I, and the only one....* whereas the truth is that there are 7,000 others who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al. What is it about us, I wonder, that sometimes seeks to

exaggerate our problems? *‘I am the only one suffering with this....I am the only one who does what is right...’*

We have to make sure we tell people how stressed out we are, how long it has been since we had a day off, or how little sleep we got the night before – or we take it a step further to present ourselves as total victims - *everyone* has abandoned me or *nobody* cares about me – whereas that is not really the truth. Do we do this to make other feel sorry for us?

We can mistake pity or sympathy for love. Maybe this is the way we received the affirmation, affection or attention we needed as children – by being pitiful. But when we grow up we need to say I am not a victim; I am a victor! More than a conqueror in Messiah Yeshua. If we have a bad habit of exaggerating our problems to others or even to ourselves, we must stop trying to gain sympathy and attention from others through acting pitiful. As the saying goes, *“You can be pitiful or you can be powerful but you can’t be both so take your pick!”*

The Lord instructed Elijah to stand on the Mount as God’s presence passed by. First a strong wind came that broke the rocks apart, and after the wind, an earthquake, and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in any of these things. The word for earthquake used in the Hebrew here is ‘ra’ash’ which also means noise.

God was not in all these noisy, loud, dramatic manifestations. Then comes a still, small voice – kol d’mama daka. Elijah had known God in the high drama – he recognized Him as the God who brings down fire from heaven to consume a water drenched offering. But did Elijah yet know God in the silence? Dakah means thin (feminine) and d’mamah comes from damum which means to be still or silent.

“Be still and know that I am God (Elohim).” (Psalm 46:10)

We may know God’s anointing when we are on stage or in front of a lot of applauding people. But do we know God in the stillness and silence of our own private lives? In the quiet times when we are simply going about our daily tasks?

The Hebrew letter Hey is often used as a representation of the Almighty God. At the end of a word it completely silent. Even at the beginning or middle of a word, it is a very soft, almost inaudible exhalation. (See Shalom Morah II, Wisdom from the Hebrew Alphabet). We are so impressed when we hear that someone actually heard the audible voice of God; but what about hearing His barely audible whisper in our souls?

In the ra’ash (noise) of our lives, with cell phones, iphones and ipods plugged into our ears; and the noise of the T.V., video games, car alarms and traffic bombarding us on a daily basis, we need to find places of quiet and solitude in order to hear the kol d’mama daka (still, small voice) of God. If Yeshua, Son of God, needed to get away to solitary places to pray and hear the voice of His Father, how much more must we mortals need that as well?

“The Lord is in His Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silent before Him.
(Habakkuk 2:20)

God cries out to us through a soft voice of stillness. The Philosopher Thomas Carlyle said that *“Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves.”*

I recall once attending a seminar led by a man, once a poor bricklayer from a family of thieves and prostitutes. Becoming a Christian in his early adulthood, he arose to become a prominent and wealthy businessman in Australia. His goal – to see how much money he could give away in his lifetime. After the seminar, he took a select group into a private room to disclose the secret of his success. In the hushed atmosphere of this meeting, he told us of one simple secret that he had learned from the wealthiest man in the Swiss Alps. In the morning, this man arose and sat for an hour in silence, listening for the still, small voice of God, knowing that it was God’s thoughts he needed rather than his own, and that God’s creative ideas would bring him success.

A quiet, calm, and undisturbed mind is the key to health and peace. **“In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.”** (Isaiah 30:15)

This was God’s message to Elijah, and to His word to us today: that not only can God be known by mighty acts, but God is also known in the silence after the greatness. Sometimes God is seen in a small, private moment of a mother or father listening to the stories of a young child, or a friend giving a silent comforting hug to a grieving friend.

A friend of mine who recently lost her husband to cancer said that the most precious gift she received was from a brain-damaged friend who just sat and listened to her and then wept as she wept. God was more with Job’s friends while they sat in silence than when they began opening their mouths.

When a siren sounds all across the nation of Israel on the Holocaust Memorial Day (Yom Hashoah), people everywhere stop what they are doing for one minute of silence. That silence speaks a message of sorrow more powerful than thousands of words.

I have realized recently that most of us are such a ‘wordy’ people. We want to be heard and understood. My dog, Pepper, doesn’t talk – but he communicates so much. Yeshua warns us that we will be judged by every idle word that comes out of our mouth. A hard word for a writer and speaker who makes her living from words!

Again, in verse 13, God asks him the identical question, “Mah l’cha poh?” (What are you here?) Elijah gives the identical response. What is striking about this is that Elijah has not been transformed or changed in the least by this encounter with God. The still small voice of God was an invitation for Elijah to come to know God in a new and deeper, more subtle way, but it was lost on Elijah. He could only see God in the grand power plays; and so God knew He would have to bring Elijah down and raise up another.

God realizes that it is time for Elijah to have a successor and He instructs Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet in his place. Even the greatest prophets of God all have their weaknesses and limitations. There always comes a time for a man to step down and let another take over. For Moshe it was Joshua; for Elijah it was Elisha. No one

is perfect and yet sometimes we carry that expectation of others. If even the greatest men and women on earth had faults and blind spots, how much more do we need to have grace for the failings of our friends, family and even ourselves?

Eliyahu hanavi, Elijah the Prophet, was a great man of God. In the end, he was taken up to God in a fiery chariot and is given the honor of preceding the Messiah's return. But the limitation of Elijah was that he was most confident in and comfortable with God in the grand and the great.

Moses led, however, in a different way. He also demonstrated God's power through the ten plagues in Egypt, and by performing signs and wonders in the wilderness; but also by patient and caring listening to the common people – both men and women. As described in this week's parashah, when the daughters of Zelophehad – Mahlah, Noa, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah, brought their case before Moses, he listened.

This resulted in a change, not only for these five women, but a change in the law in general. The legal norm of the day at the time was that if a father died, leaving behind no sons, all the father's property would go to his male relatives rather than his daughters. But after this case, if a man had no sons, his daughters would inherit.

This seems such a small change, a small victory for women but this kol d'mama daka that Elijah missed is the voice of the Divine heard not only in the dramatic gestures of religious zealots like Pinchas, but also in administering justice and mercy to the 'least' and the few.

May we all engage in the holy work of listening slowly and carefully to the quieter voices in our midst, and to rise up to the challenge of speaking with a kol d'mama daka – a gentle, quiet, and yet passionate voice.

We don't need to wait for our one 'destiny moment' like Pinchas or Elijah when, in our zeal, we are used by God in some grand, dramatic way. We are God's messengers, perhaps even more so in unnoticed acts of chessed (kindness, mercy, or grace), than in great demonstrations of power and deliverance in front of a crowd.

Life can't be lived on the mountaintop; at some point we have to come down to level ground and find God in our everyday same old same old. I'll try to hang onto that thought for the next time I come home from a whirlwind trip across the world!

Zeal can be defined as eagerness, enthusiasm, intense desire, and passionate commitment. It carries both the idea of zeal and jealousy. May we all come to a place of living our life with zeal, as did our Lord and Savior Yeshua Hamashiach. When He cleansed the temple of moneychangers, His disciples, witnessing His zeal, remembered the words,

“Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up (consumed me).” (John 2:17, Psalm 69:9, Psalm 119:139).

I read something that made me feel somewhat jealous. It was an article about an Australian man (Steve Irwin) who spent his days splashing around in crocodile infested waters. He had devoted his entire life to wildlife conservation in Australia and had even created a television program to further his cause.

One thing in the article really struck me – it was Steve’s statement that he could hardly wait to jump out of bed in the morning and get to work. This was a man who displayed incredible zeal in his life. In his television programs you could just see the passion and enthusiasm emanating from his beaming countenance along with a flashing grin.

In the end, Steve was killed by a giant stingray, but he lived a full and abundant life until the moment of his death. Some of us may live a long life but are we really living or just existing...surviving...? Yeshua said that He came to give us life and life more abundantly (John 10:10).

Later, I had the pleasure of seeing Steve’s widow and daughter on a TV talk show. They carry on Steve’s work with the same dedication and I can see that Steve’s daughter has certainly inherited her father’s contagious zeal. How wonderful. I don’t know about you, but I can’t remember the last time I eagerly jumped out of bed in the morning. I am seeking and praying for God to light the fire once again in my heart, that I may once again say that **the zeal of the Lord consumes me**. How about you?

SHABBAT SHALOM!
Love Hannah

About the Author:

Hannah Neshet grew up in an Orthodox Jewish home and received her education in a religious Hebrew school in Canada. During a crisis pregnancy, she came to know Jesus (Yeshua) as her Messiah and Savior. She now lives in Israel with her children and grandchildren, teaching Christians about the Jewish roots of their faith.



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