

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 18

Pinchas - 12-13 Tammuz

The Context:

The 12th of Tammuz which marks the Previous Rebbe's day of liberation from Stalinist prison, as well as his birthday, coincide with the parshah of Pinchas. He himself remarked that many events of his life are alluded to in this parshah.

What is the thematic connection between the Previous Rebbe's life and Pinchas'?

The Explanation:

At the end of parshas Balak, the Torah describes how Pinchas acted zealously to defend G-d's honor by executing Zimri, a leader of the Jewish people, and his idolatrous paramour, who were brazenly cohabiting in the presence of the people and defying Moshe's leadership. Pinchas' killing was extrajudicial, and was not originally recommended or approved by the sages of the time.

But the parshah of Pinchas opens with G-d praising Pinchas for his actions, for "turning My anger away from the children of Israel by his zealously avenging Me among them." (Bamidbar 25:11) G-d then rewards Pinchas by conferring upon him and his descendants the status of Priests, even though that distinction is only inherited by Aharon and his descendants. (Ibid 12-13)

Thus, Pinchas' act was one of irrational dedication to G-d that transcended the bounds of expected and mandated dedication. The Torah did not ask, expect, or condone such an action, yet out of his fierce love of G-d, he did it anyway. His reward, therefore, was also one which transcended the limitations and protocol of holiness. Even though priesthood is only given to Aharon and his family, G-d reached outside those limitations and granted this distinction to Pinchas and his family as well.

The Previous Rebbe's experience in Soviet Russia followed a similar trajectory. When the Communists shuttered and suppressed all religious activity, many Jewish leaders advocated for leaving Russia. They did not sanction fighting a fight to the death with the oppressive regime, for Jewish law only

obligates one to give their lives for the three cardinal sins (idolatry, murder, and adultery), but not for other prohibitions or mitzvos. Despite this consensus, the Previous Rebbe remained in Russia and risked his life, and asked his followers to risk theirs, to preserve Jewish life, observance, education, and infrastructure in the Soviet Union.

In the end, he was vindicated by his miraculous release from jail.

Thus, the Previous Rebbe displayed a similar courageous, irrational dedication to Pinchas.

Linked by Name:

The connection between these two men is heightened further by their names: Yosef Yitzchak and Pinchas. Pinchas was a descendant of Yosef. And the numerical value of Yitzchak equals that of Pinchas.

Yitzchak was the model of irrational dedication and sacrifice, for he was prepared to be offered as a sacrifice if that was G-d's will, even if it meant the end of Avraham's line of descendants and spiritual legacy. The Previous Rebbe and Pinchas, too, were prepared to sacrifice their spiritual selves, going beyond the limitations on dedication imposed by the Torah.

But Pinchas differed from the Previous Rebbe in one regard — he was not the leader of the Jewish people. He only had to

concern himself with acting on Moshe's inspiration, he did not need to formulate an agenda and communicate it to others. He had to act. The Previous Rebbe had two responsibilities, as a leader he had to do the conceptual work of laying the foundation and framework for the mission, and he had to execute it as well with fearless dedication.

This is alluded to in his first name, Yosef. Chassidus explains that the name Yosef alludes to the preparation for an act of giving, while the name Yitzchak alludes to the practical act of giving. Pinchas' name is only connected to Yitzchak (they share a numerical value) because Pinchas was the soldier who acted. The Previous Rebbe also has the name of Yosef, for he was also the leader who prepared and inspired the people for a life of self-sacrifice.

The Lesson:

As messengers and representatives of the Rebbe we must be concerned with the practical dimension of actually going into the wider world to draw the hearts of Jewish people closer to G-d, in the model of Pinchas. But by being connected to the messenger, we also are able to impart the conceptual framework to those in our circle of influence, giving them an appreciation for the design of the mission itself, not just the practical application of it.
