

BOSTONER TORAH INSIGHTS

BOSTONER 'CHASSIDUS' TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

PARSHAS CHUKAS – 9 TAMUZ 5781

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The Gemara (Zevachim 101a) contemplates when Pinchas became a Kohen. According to R' Elazar, it was after Pinchas killed Zimri for his public sins that he earned the Kehuna. According to R' Ashi it was when Pinchas made peace between the tribes of Yisroel in the times of Yehoshua (see Yehoshua 22). Tosfos there explains that in Parshas Pinchas, Hashem blessed Pinchas that he should be able to become a Kohen, and from that point forward he was fit to become a Kohen. However, in order for the Kehunah to be activated requires dressing in the priestly garments, anointed with anointing oil and for the Kohen to bring his first initial offering of flour in a pan upon his installation. At the time that Pinchas killed Zimri, who was the Nasi of the tribe of Shimon, all of Bnei Yisroel were not unanimous in their acceptance of Pinchas as Kohen, whose role it is to bring peace, as Hillel would say, "Be among the disciples of Aharon who love peace and pursue peace..." (Pirkei Avos 1:12). It was not until after Pinchas made peace between the tribes of Yisroel in the times of Yehoshua that Pinchas was universally accepted as a Kohen, after which he was dressed, anointed and offered his initial flour offering

The recently installed Rav of Boston in Beit Shemesh, R' Aharon Dovid Flintinshtein wondered how it is possible for Hashem to bestow the Kehuna upon Pinchas after he killed Zimri and it not be accepted by Klal Yisroel until the times of Yehoshua. At that time, the 2.5 tribes of Reuven, Gad, and Menashe who lived in the Transjordan area of Ever L'Yarden did not want to have to travel to the Mishkan in Shiloh (see Yehoshua 18:1) in order to bring Korbanos there, instead, they wanted to build a Bamah altar on their side of the Jordan River to bring an offering to Hashem. When the Mishkan was in Shilo, the use of Bamos was prohibited (Zevachim 12:6) and this caused the other 9.5 tribes who lived in Eretz Yisroel proper to suspect the 2.5 tribes of taking their first steps to secede from the other tribes and break up the unity of Klal Yisroel. The 9.5 tribes prepared for war in order to preserve the union of Yisroel. It was Pinchas who saved the day, using his skill of diplomacy to prevent a civil war within Klal Yisroel and unify the tribes together. It was at this point according to Tosfos that Pinchas was universally accepted by Klal Yisroel to complete his process of becoming a Kohen.

One approach is based upon a disagreement in the Gemara (Yoma 9a) of whether the Kohen is a representative of Hashem or if he is a representative of Klal Yisroel. Thus, one could suggest that after Hashem gave Pinchas the blessing to become a Kohen after the killing of Zimri, they accepted Pinchas as a representative of Hashem. However, they were hesitant and reluctant to recognize Pinchas as their representative, since he had killed a Nasi of the tribe of Shimon. It was only once they saw the Pinchas was able to unite the tribes and prevent civil war that they accepted him as their own representative.

Alternatively, we know that Pinchas was a Navi in the times of the Shoftim from the Gemara (Taanis 4a) that references the Haftara in Parshas Chukas about Yiftach the Giladi. Yiftach who was the leader of Yisroel at the time made a vow that if Hashem would "deliver Ammon into my hand then whatever emerges from the doors of my house toward me when I return in peace shall belong to Hashem and I shall offer it up as an elevation offering" (Shoftim 11:30-31). When Yiftach returned home in peace, his daughter and only child came out to greet him with drums and dancing came home successful from the war against Ammon. The Gemara criticizes Yiftach for speaking foolishly and cites the Haftarah on the morning of Tisha B'Av, where Yirmiyahu laments, "Is there no medicinal balm in Gilead, is there no healer there. Why did the health of the daughter of my people not recover" (Yirmiyahu 8:22). The Gemara explains that this refers to Yiftach's daughter. As Rashi there explains, Yiftach could have had his vow annulled had he traveled to Pinchas, who was the Navi at the time. Both Yiftach and Pinchas were punished as both men were held accountable for not traveling to the other, due to their pride and sense of self-importance, in order to rectify the injustice to Yiftach's daughter.

A leader must have a balance between zealotry and sensitivity. Perhaps this is why Yehoshua was chosen as leader of Yisroel instead of Pinchas. Klal Yisroel was also hesitant to accept Pinchas as a Kohen because of his tendency toward zealotry and his apparent lack of sensitivity. It was only after Pinchas displayed his sensitivity to make peace between the other tribes that he was accepted by the entire nation as Kohen Gadol, and most of the Kohanim Gedolim came from the line of Pinchas

May it be His will that we should merit to see the Service of the Kohen Gadol in the Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days.