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Parshat HaShavua  
Yeshivat Har Etzion

This parasha series is dedicated  
in memory of Michael Jotkowitz, z"l.

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**PARASHAT PINCHAS**

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In memory of Nathaniel H. Leiderman, Naftali Hertzke ben Mayer Eliezer v'Gitel

whose seventh yahrtzeit was on 11 Tammuz.

Dedicated by Ira Leiderman and Mindy Smith and their children Eric and Cara.

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**The Rise of Pinchas**

**Rav Chanoch Waxman**

I

*Parashat Pinchas* opens with God declaring the reward of Pinchas. In a systematic fashion, God delineates both the rationale for the reward and the contents of the reward. The text of the Torah reads as follows:

Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Priest, has turned my wrath away from the Children of Israel, in that he was vengeful for my sake (*be-kano et kinati*) amongst them, and I did not consume completely the Children of Israel with my vengeance (*be-kinati*). Therefore say, Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace. And he shall have it, and his descendants after him, the covenant of priesthood everlasting, because he was vengeful (*kinai*) for his God, and made atonement for the Children of Israel. (25:10-13)

Upon witnessing the brazen actions of the Israelite man, later identified as Zimri, a prince of the Shimonite tribe (25:14) and the Midyanite women Kazbi, later identified as a princess of the Midyanites (25:15), Pinchas took action. In response to Zimri's "bringing close" of the Midianite women in front of the "eyes of Moshe" and "eyes of the entire congregation of Israel" (22:6), Pinchas arose from amidst the congregation, spear in hand. Following them into the tent they had entered, he impaled them both and the plague that had broken out amongst the people ceased (25:8). For his valor, and in merit having turned God's wrath from the people (25:11), God grants Pinchas his "covenant of peace" (25:12). Pinchas, a descendant of Aharon not previously numbered amongst the designated priests, is elevated to the priesthood (25:13).

As sketched here, the actions of Pinchas are heroic. By simple logic if a particular action is rewarded by God, it constitutes the right and just action. If such were not the case, God would not reward the action. Moreover, God himself describes the action of Pinchas as "turning his wrath" (25:11) away from the people and "achieving atonement" (25:13). Twenty-four thousand members of the Children of Israel had already died in the plague that resulted from the people engaging in harlotry with the daughters of Moav and Midyan (25:1,9,15). If not for the initiative of Pinchas, and the atonement achieved by his actions, even more would have fallen.

Finally, the Torah describes Pinchas as being "vengeful" for his God (25:13). Pinchas acts on behalf of God. Again, certainly a good thing. In addition, the Torah depicts Pinchas as *be-kano et kinati*, translated above as no more than "being vengeful for my sake." Yet this is not precisely correct. The original language carries the connotation of "carrying out my vengeance." In a certain sense, Pinchas carries out the role of God. As such, there is no need for God to continue to consume the people with his vengeance, the ongoing plague. Pinchas plays the God-like role, the plague is rendered unnecessary, and the people are saved. In this light, Pinchas's bold action of vengeance constitutes a full-fledged act of *imitatio dei*, of emulating the ways of the divine, of walking in his ways. In point of fact, the second commandment refers to God as "a vengeful God (*el kana*)" (*Shemot* 20:5, *Devarim* 5:9). *Shemot* 34:14 even goes so far as to claim that "the Lord's name is vengeance, he is a vengeful God." As such Pinchas's actions are not just heroic, just and for the sake of heaven. They even border on the divine.

This reading may generate a sense of discomfort. After all, is it not theologically problematic to attribute vengefulness to God? Likewise, is vengefulness a desirable trait and action, an integral part of the value matrix that comprises the ethical personality mandated by the Torah? Perhaps we should translate the stem *k.n.a.* used by the Torah in these varied contexts (*Shemot* 20:5, 34:14, *Bamidbar* 25:13) in a more moderate fashion. Perhaps it only carries connotations of jealousy, rage, zealousness and passion. Pinchas is passionate, zealous and jealous for God's sake. But does this really help matters?

Needless to say, in the time honored tradition of philosophical exegesis of the Torah, we can engage in a bit of fancy footwork and claim that "the Torah speaks in the language of men," that the Torah's attribution of vengefulness, zealousness etc. to God does not really describe God himself or any emotional state of God. Rather these attributions simply describe his actions, in a language intelligible to the reader. While this may ease the theological difficulty, the issue of vengefulness as a desirable character trait remains in place. Pinchas is vengeful, Pinchas is zealous and Pinchas is violent. The Torah describes Pinchas as taking on a quasi-divine function, and for this action he is rewarded. Apparently, vengeance, zealousness and passion for God's sake are recommended traits and activities.

II

In commenting on the story of Pinchas, *Talmud Yerushalmi* *Sanhedrin* 9:7 makes the following striking claim:

Pinchas acted against the will of the wise men. Rabbi Yuda…said: They desired to excommunicate him. If not for the divine spirit that sprung upon him and said: And he shall have it, and his descendants after him, the covenant of priesthood everlasting…

According to the Jerusalem Talmud, the action of Pinchas was perceived by the wise men, a Talmudic term for the Rabbinic establishment, as inappropriate. As punishment for his brazenness, Pinchas was threatened with a form of excommunication. Only divine intervention and divine sanctioning of Pinchas's initiative prevented his punishment. On the simple level, this opinion of the Talmud may be seen as concerned with the proper functioning of the judicial system. The piece appears in *Massekhet Sanhedrin*, a tractate whose overriding concern is with courts, the court system and proper modes of justice. Pinchas had just engaged in what we term in modern terminology an extrajudicial killing. While the Torah and Talmudic law specifies the requirement of witnesses and other judicial apparatus (see *Devarim* 17:6 and Ibn Ezra 25:7), Pinchas acted as judge, jury and executioner.

Returning to the text provides some surprising support for R. Yuda's interpretation and helps reveal another dimension of meaning. Right before the "bringing forth" of the Midyanite women by the Israelite man "in front of the eyes of the entire congregation (25:6), Moshe had commanded the "Judges of Israel" to "kill, each one his men," all those who had "attached themselves to Ba'al Peor" (25:5). In other words, Moshe had commanded the execution of justice by the judicial system upon those who had strayed after the foreign women and foreign god. It is in this context that Pinchas bypasses the slowly turning wheels of justice and performs his zealous elimination of Zimri and Kazbi. Moreover, the text specifies that the entire event occurs in a public context, in the language of the text "in front of the eyes of Moshe and the eyes of the entire congregation" (25:6). From this perspective, the actions of Pinchas comprise not just a bypassing of the judicial system, an extrajudicial killing, but the very serious violation known in the Talmud as "teaching Halakha in front of one's teacher" (*Bavli Berakhot* 31b, *Sanhedrin* 17a). Proper rabbinic doctrine requires not just procedure, but also respect for hierarchy and authority. Pinchas rises in front of Moshe his teacher, the ultimate religious and legal authority of the Children of Israel, and without waiting for word or approval from Moshe carries out a different punishment than that mandated by Moshe. While Moshe, upon God's word, had commanded the judges to hang the sinners (see Rashi, Ibn Ezra 25:4, Ramban 25:5), Pinchas impales them (25:6-7). While this may seem a minor matter, Pinchas is not a judge, he does not receive the go ahead from the proper authority and his revolutionary action occurs in front of the entire community. In a certain sense, Pinchas's act is an act of subversion, a charismatic act that threatens the social structure, legal hierarchy and leadership structure of the Children of Israel. No wonder the Jerusalem Talmud states that "they desired to excommunicate him." No self respecting court could do otherwise. While Pinchas's actions had clearly saved the day, no structure can tolerate subversion and revolution.

III

Reading the story of the straying at Shittim (25:1) and the rise of Pinchas as involving a tension between the leadership of Moshe and the almost rebellious yet heroic action of Pinchas, brings us back to the issue of *kina*, the question of zealousness, passion and vengeance that we began with. In point of fact, Moshe does not act with zealousness and passion at Shittim. He does not carry out God's vengeance. He simply operates the wheels of justice. As pointed out above, and highlighted by the Jerusalem Talmud, this is in marked contrast to Pinchas, the passionate avenging agent of the Lord.

But this is not the first time we have encountered a disconnect between Moshe and *kina* or even an outright rejection of *kina* by Moshe. Thirty-eight years previously, back in Midbar Par'an, Moshe had censured Yehoshua, another of the future leaders of Israel, for his *kina*. In the strange story of the prophecy of Eldad and Meidad, the Torah recounts that unlike the seventy elders designated to share the burden of leadership with Moshe, Eldad and Meidad remained in the camp and prophesied while in the camp (11:26). While the Torah does not inform us as to the content of the prophecy, it does inform us as to Yehoshua's reaction. Upon hearing of their prophesying in the camp, Yehoshua urges Moshe to "restrain them" (11:28). In less Biblical terminology, Yehoshua urges Moshe to shut them up. As the Ramban points out (11:28), irregardless of the unmentioned content of the prophecy, the very act of prophesying in the camp, not under the leadership and spirit of the "father of all prophets," constitutes an undermining of the status of Moshe. But while Yehoshua is zealous for Moshe's sake and wants to restrain Eldad and Meidad, it is Yehoshua that Moshe wishes to restrain. Before stating his wish that all of Israel should be graced with prophecy and the divine spirit, Moshe questions Yehoshua as to his *kina* for Moshe's sake (11:29). Apparently, Moshe has no need for *kina* and frowns upon it.

IV

This possible tension between Moshe and the leadership of Moshe on the one hand and the attribute of *kina* on the other is further strengthened by and an interesting overlap between the story of Eliyahu recounted in the *Melakhim* and the life of Moshe.

When Izevel, the wife of Achav became aware of Eliyahu's slaughtering of 450 prophets of Ba'al after the showdown at Mount Carmel, Eliyahu was forced to flee to the desert (I *Melakhim* 19:2-4). After prompting by an angel and a bit of food and water, the text reports that Eliyahu embarks on a journey of "forty days and forty nights" for which he will have no sustenance but that just consumed food and water. The journey culminates at "Chorev, the mountain of God" (19:8). This term and the desert setting constitute obvious echoes of God's first revelation to Moshe. Moshe had gone out to the "desert," eventually winding up at "Chorev, the mountain of God" (*Shemot* 3:1). Likewise, the imagery of "forty days and forty nights" sustained without food and water conjures up Moshe's later experience at that very same place, usually known as Sinai. *Sefer Shemot* describes Moshe's sojourn on the mountain in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf as lasting "forty days and forty nights." As part of this formula, the text specifies that during this time he neither ate bread nor drank water (*Shemot* 34:28), just like Eliyahu later on, in the desert, forty days and forty nights, without food or water, at Sinai. The point of this four-part parallel, of drawing the connection between Eliyahu and Moshe, seems to be to set the scene for the upcoming conversation and divine theophany. Grasping this point requires some elaboration of the details of the story found in *Sefer Melakhim*. With this in mind, let us turn to some of the details.

The central part of the narrative of Eliyahu and Chorev begins with a conversation between God and Eliyahu.

Upon being asked by God, "What are you doing here Eliyahu?," Eliyahu responds as follows:

I have been vengeful (*kano kinaiti*)for the Lord God of Hosts: for the Children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain your prophets with the sword…And they seek my life to take it. (19:10)

At this point, God conducts a little demonstration for Eliyahu. After commanding him to stand on the mountain "in front of the Lord," God informs Eliyahu that he will "pass by" (19:11). A great and mighty wind ensues, and then an awful noise, and then a fire. But God was not found in the wind, the noise or the fire. Rather, God was present only in the still small voice that followed the wind, noise and fire (19:12). Upon hearing the voice, Eliyahu exits the cave he was in and covers his face (19:13). Strangely enough, at this point God reiterates his original question. Once again, God questions Eliyahu with the exact same words. "What are you doing here Eliyahu?" whispers the divine voice (19:14). And once again Eliyahu knows why he has come to Sinai, why he has spent forty days and forty nights without food and water and even why God has passed by his face. Eliyahu repeats his previous response word for word.

I have been vengeful (*kano kinaiti*)for the Lord God of Hosts: for the Children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and slain your prophets with the sword…And they seek my life to take it. (19:14)

All that has happened to Eliyau has happened because of who he is. He is the righteous and zealous prophet of the Lord. He has acted with *kina* as he should and has been persecuted for his just and correct actions.

By repeating the identical words after the theophany in response to God's repeated question, Eliyahu telegraphs that from his perspective nothing has changed. God's sign, the sign of the still small voice, has had no effect on Eliyahu. His words after are the same as his words before. For we the readers, this indicates that Eliyahu has missed the point of the revelation. Whatever the point of bringing him to Sinai, whatever the point of the sign of the still small voice, Eliyahu has not gotten the point. Something else should have been heard. We may argue, that by no accident, following Eliyahu's response, God informs Eliyahu that he should anoint Elisha in his stead (19:16). God has no patience for prophets who fail to perceive. But what was it that Elisha missed? What was the sign of the still small voice?

The Moshe imagery provides the key. In addition to the Moshe symbolism that comprises the setting of the "sign of the still small voice," the entire story is peppered with thematic and linguistic elements drawn from Moshe's experience on Sinai in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf. As pointed out previously, Eliyahu is instructed to stand on the mountain in front of the Lord (19:11). This constitutes a thematic, if not an exact linguistic parallel to the positioning of Moshe. God tells him to "ascend the mountain" and stand/present himself in front of God on the mountain (*Shemot* 33:21, 34:2). Similarly, throughout the narratives, Moshe and Eliyahu are both portrayed as located in protected rocky spaces, shielded from the brunt of the divine revelation. While Moshe is in a niche in the rock (31:22), Eliyahu is in a cave (19:13). Finally, and most importantly, in both stories the revelation of God consists of Gods "passing by" or "passing over" the "face" of both Moshe and Eliyahu (34:6, 19:13).

This brings us to the crucial point of contrast. Unlike Eliyahu, in his experience of the "passing by" of God, Moshe perceives something new. He does not remain entrenched in previous paradigms or patterns. In fact, he perceives the famed attributes of mercy. Upon God's passing over, Moshe proclaimed:

The Lord, the Lord, a merciful God and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth. He stores up kindness for thousands of generations, and bears sin, iniquity and transgression and yet will not forgive completely. He visits the sins of the fathers upon the sons, the second, third and fourth generations. (34:6-7)

In his experience of the "passing by" of God, Moshe perceives mercy, kindness, patience, slowness to anger and the like. In short, he perceives the attributes of God by which God now promises to lead the Children of Israel (see *Shemot* 33:12-13).

These merciful attributes, revealed as part of the process of the making of the second set of tablets and reconstitution of the covenant in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf (*Shemot* 34:1-10), constitute a radical change from the previous revelation of God's attributes found in the Torah. Previously, in the second commandment, God had described himself as:

a vengeful God (*el kana*), visiting the sins of the fathers upon the sons, the second, third and fourth generations of those who hate me. Doing kindness for thousands of generations for those that love me and keep my commandments. (*Shemot* 20:5)

God identifies himself as primarily a vengeful God (*el kana*). After placing this terrifying attribute in the first position, the second commandment places the punishment of the children and future generations for the sins of the forefathers in the second position on the hierarchy of God's attributes. Both of these attributes correlate strongly with the notion of divine justice, or perhaps even something stricter. While the attribute of kindness and the consequent doing of kindness for future generations finally do make their appearance, this complex appears only at the end, in the third position of this three-part description. Moreover, the doing of kindness to future generations is limited by a very specific modifier. Apparently, God's kindness is confined to those who "love him" and keep his commandments. Justice, punishment and divine vengeance constitute the fates of sinners.

Let us return to the revelation to Moshe in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf, or to adopt the terminology utilized previously, the perception of Moshe in his experience of God's "passing by." The contrasts between the attributes of God listed in God's self-identification in the second commandment and the list of attributes revealed to Moshe in the "passing by" revelation should be obvious. For starters, while the notion of God's visiting the sins of forefathers upon future generations also appears in the "passing by revelation," it has been bumped down to third position (34:7). In its place, the Torah places the previously third, and last, attribute of kindness, the doing of kindness for thousands of generations. To put this slightly differently, the second and third positions on the two lists have switched. While beforehand, in the second commandment (20:5), punishment was second and kindness was last, now, in Moshe's revelation, kindness is second and punishment is last (34:7). Moreover, the kindness to future generations is no longer confined to those who love God and keep his commandments. It is unbounded and seems to encompass even the less deserving.

But this is only the minor part of the story. The true dramatic change occurs in the pole position of the hierarchy of God's attributes. While the second commandment had defined God as "a vengeful God" and placed this definition front and center, in the opening line of the list, this term is completely absent from the thirteen attributes. In its place, in "Moshe's revelation," the aspects of God that Moshe perceived when God "passed by," the Torah lists the primary attributes of mercy. As we should well remember, the text specifies in great detail what Moshe calls out, what he perceives, upon God's passing by:

The Lord, the Lord, a merciful God and gracious, slow to anger, abundant in kindness and truth… (34:6)

The difference between these attributes and the previous definition of "a vengeful God" could not be greater.

This brings us full circle to Eliyahu, Moshe, and the intended revelatory and prophetic content of God's passing by. What was Eliyahu supposed to perceive in the sign of the still small voice? Why did God bring him to Sinai and place in him the position and place of Moshe? Simply put, Eliyahu should have perceived what Moshe perceived. Just as Moshe perceived mercy, kindness and a complete absence of *kina*, the attribute of vengeance and zealousness in God's "passing by," so too Eliyahu should have perceived the same or similar divine attributes.

Arguably, the imagery of the sign may support this interpretation. As the text specifies, God was not present in the power of the wind, the noise, or the heat and flame of the fire. Rather, he was only present in the still small voice. But Eliyahu can only think, apprehend and speak about one thing. Upon being asked by God why he has come to Sinai, Eliyahu speaks again only of *kina* (I Melakhim 19:13-14), the opposite of what Moshe perceived, the opposite of the intended content and message of the revelation of God's "passing by."

To put this all together, God had attempted to educate Eliyahu in his ways, the ways of God revealed to Moshe in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf. These are the modes by which God had promised to lead the people and the modes which a prophet and leader needs to apprehend, understand, emulate and bring to fruition. But Eliyahu only knows *kina,* the way of passion, zealousness, and fiery vengeance. He can no longer serve as prophet and leader and God informs him so.

But these ways, the mode of mercy, graciousness, and slowness to anger, the textual opposite of *kina* in *Sefer Shemot* are also the ways of Moshe. After all, they are the attributes that Moshe apprehended, in his experience of God's "passing by." They are the way in which God has promised to lead his people, the mode of providence a prophet and leader needs to apprehend, understand, emulate and bring to fruition. They are the attributes of Moshe and Mosaic leadership. Once again, Moshe and the attribute of *kina* do not mix.

V

Until this point, our analysis has focused on building a dual tension between Moshe on the one hand and Pinchas on the other. While Moshe operates the institutional leadership, Pinchas violates the normal judicial structure. While Moshe, in his character and mode of leadership eschews the attribute of *kina*, the passion of zealotry and vengeance, Pinchas embodies these very attributes. But where does this leave us with our reading of the story of Shittim and the rise of Pinchas to prominence? Let us not lose sight of the point we began with. God heartily endorses Pinchas's actions at Arvot Moav. He rewards Pinchas with membership in the priesthood and describes Pinchas as acting for the sake of heaven and achieving atonement for the people of Israel (25:13). In the formulation of the text highlighted earlier, Pinchas's *kina* is in fact God's zealousness and vengeance.

Most probably, the *parasha* should be interpreted as endorsing *kina* in a limited fashion. In short, extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary measures. While Pinchas does act in violation of the system and the normal mode of communal leadership, he acts in a context of an ongoing plague. Twenty four thousand of the Children of Israel have already died. In front of the entire community of Israel and its collective leadership, at the Tent of Meeting itself, a place considered "in front of the Lord" Himself, Zimri now stands to add insult to injury. He "brings forth" a Midyanite women, with all the connotations of harlotry, idol worship and betrayal of God that she carries (25:1-2). They enter into a nearby tent for one purpose and one purpose only. At this moment of public desecration of the divine, Pinchas arises and acts for the sake of heaven. Extraordinary circumstances demand extraordinary action.

Alternatively, or perhaps even in parallel, the story can be interpreted in a slightly more radical fashion, as a story about violation of norms, the occasional need for revolutionary action and transition. Immediately after noting the action of Zimri in "bringing forth" the Midyanite women in front of Moshe and the entire community, the text states that "they were crying at the door of the Tent of Meeting." While some commentaries interpret the crying as referring to prayer (Ibn Ezra 25:6), most probably the crying reflects despair and even paralysis of Moshe and the judges of Israel. (Ramban 25:5, Rashi 25:6). While the system has been put into play and may in fact be churning away, it does not really function. It cannot deal with the radical and revolutionary act of Zimri. Only a radical act, a revolutionary breaking of norms for the sake of heaven, can balance the radical and revolutionary act of Zimri. Only Pinchas and his *kina* for the sake of God can save the day. In this vein, *Bamidbar Rabba* 20:24 states that Moshe's "hands trembled" at Shittim so that Pinchas could come and take "that which was suited for him." Apparently, every leadership structure needs to be renewed upon occasion. Things need to be shaken up, and entrenched structures need to be shattered. They need to be built again with new blood, energy, verve and passion. Elevating Pinchas to the role of priest serves exactly this purpose. He becomes part of the system. In this light, the story of Shittim constitutes part of the theme of leadership transition prominent in the latter part of *Sefer Bamidbar*.

While both these readings are attractive, the Halakha seems to eschew them both. Instead, the Halakha seeks to limit the charismatic and revolutionary quality of Pinchas's actions. In doing so, it dissolves the tension between Moshe and Pinchas we have carefully structured. Mishna *Sanhedrin* 9:6 teaches regarding one who has intercourse with a non-Jewish woman – "the zealous (*kanai'n*) attack him." Pinchas's actions are in fact in perfect accord with the Halakha, i.e. the teachings of Moshe. Rather than a revolutionary and extra-Halakhic act, Pinchas engages in no more than the letter of the law. He simply carries out the law. He is a *kanai*, a zealot, and the law demands that he stand up and kill Zimri.

The numerous *midrashim* paralleling this Mishna, further emphasize this point. While Moshe and his judges had forgotten the particular law in question and were busy debating whether Zimri was liable to the death penalty (*Tanchuma Balak* 21), Pinchas remembered the appropriate principle. In another version, Pinchas, upon remembering the appropriate law, reminds Moshe of the rule that "our master has taught us" (*Midrash Aggada Bamidbar* 25:2) before rising against Zimri. In other words, there is no tension between Moshe and Pinchas. Pinchas is ever the loyal student, acting upon, and putting into place the rules of *Torat Moshe*, the Torah of Moshe.

VI

Before closing, let us try to bridge the gap between these variant interpretations. Quite possibly, Pinchas does act according to some given, previously existent criteria. At the same time, Pinchas's actions still possess a radical, and even anti-Moshe quality. This requires some explanation. Once again, the story of Moshe in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf should provide the key.

While not highlighted earlier, God does not completely retract his self-identification as "a vengeful God" in the revelation narrative that contains the thirteen attributes. Immediately after "passing by" Moshe and revealing the attributes of mercy in all their contrast to the attributes of the second commandment, God informs Moshe that he consents to renew his covenant with the Children of Israel (*Shemot* 34:10). As part of the list of commandments that comprises the contents of the renewed covenant, the Torah follows God's consent with the prohibition of contracting a counter covenant with the inhabitants of the land. This may lead to idol worship, and "you shall worship no other god, for the Lord's name is vengeance/jealousy (*kana shemo*), he is a vengeful/jealous God (*el kana*)" (34:14).

The context here is crucial. In elaborating upon the possible counter covenant that would arouse God's attribute of vengeance/jealousy, the Torah states the following:

Lest you contract a covenant with the inhabitants/dwellers in the land and go astray (*zanu*) after their gods. And you will sacrifice to their gods, they will call to you, and you will eat from their sacrifices. And you will take of their daughters (*banot*) for your sons and their daughters will play the harlot (*ve'zanu*) for their gods. And your sons will stray/commit harlotry after their gods. (34:15-16)

The Torah here outlines a complex that might be termed double harlotry. Matters begin to go astray through involvement with the prior inhabitants of the land. The complex involves sacrifices to a foreign god, being called, eating, *zenut*, or harlotry, with foreign women and finally, *zenut*, a different form of harlotry, with foreign gods.

In this context, God stands in the role of the betrayed and consequently, jealous or vengeful husband. The people abandon their covenantal relationship with God for a foreign, and other, god. Realizing this point, should go a long way to explaining the use of the term *kina* as one of God's attributes. *Parashat Sota*, the story of the women who has either committed adultery or whose husband possesses reason to think that she has betrayed him utilizes the stem *k.n.a*., the root of the term variously translated as "vengeful," "zealous" or "jealous," a full ten times (*Bamidbar* 5:14,15,18,25,29,30). The Torah describes the betrayed husband as filled with "the spirit of vengeance/jealousy" (5:14,30) and as "*kinai* *et ishto*," jealous of his wife, or vengeful against his wife (5:14,30). It is God's love and passion for Israel, their covenantal relationship and the problem of double betrayal with foreign women and foreign gods that is signaled by the use of this term to describe God. In this context, God's name is *kana*. He is the jealous and vengeful betrayed husband.

What we should realize is, that at Shittim, the Children of Israel engage in exactly the behavior predicted by God in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf. The narrative begins by specifying that the Children of Israel "dwelt" in Shittim and that the people began to stray/commit harlotry (*liznot*) after/with the daughters of Moav (25:1). This triple parallel of "dwellers/dwelt," "daughters" of a foreign people and "straying/harlotry (*zenut*), is immediately followed by all of the other elements of the story in *Shemot*. The people are "called." There are "sacrifices" and the people "eat" (25:2). And of course, the double straying/harlotry paradigm reaches its culmination with the people worshipping foreign gods, the people "bow to their gods" and "attach themselves" to Ba'al Peor (25:2). Not surprisingly, having been betrayed, and in response to the double harlotry of the people, God becomes angry (25:2), and is vengeful (25:11); a plague rages among the people (25:9).

From this perspective, Zimri's bringing forth of the Midyanite women "to his brothers" in front of the eyes of Moshe and the congregation comprises far more than just a brazen act of adultery. It is probably the predicted counter covenant of *Shemot* 34:15. In pointed contrast to God's already raging anger, Zimri proposes a treaty with the inhabitants of the land. It is in this context that Pinchas acts. He acts to sabotage the counter-covenant of Zimri. He acts on the basis of God's covenantal and covenant enforcing plague. His *kina* is in accord with God's *kina*. It is the passionate, zealous and jealous anger of the betrayed whose beloved has strayed. In other words, Pinchas acts in accord with a clear set of criteria, already set down by God in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf. He acts in accord with the divine wish already telegraphed in the plague and confirmed in its aftermath. While *kina* may have been limited by the revelation of the attributes of mercy, it still has its time and place.

To close the circle, we must return to Moshe. Did Moshe not remember the warning of God given in the aftermath of the Sin of the Golden Calf? Did he not recall the paradigm of double harlotry? Does Moshe not realize that a leader is sometimes called to emulate the harsher side of God's leadership?

In fact, Moshe himself had once acted the Pinchas/betrayed husband role. By no accident, God's definition of the double harlotry model is immediately followed by a warning against the fashioning of "molten gods" (34:16). This of course, is the term utilized by God to describe the Golden Calf (32:8). From God's perspective, the Sin of the Golden Calf constituted yet another example of "straying" and betrayal, another occasion for *kina*. Yet at that time, it was Moshe who stood in the Pinchas/betrayed husband role. Upon receiving the go ahead from God (32:7) and after smashing the tablets, Moshe grinds up the golden calf, places the powder in water and forces the Children of Israel to drink of the waters (32:20). This clearly parallels the drinking of "the bitter waters" forced upon the unfaithful wife by the betrayed and vengeful husband that comprises the centerpiece of the *Sota* story (*Bamidbar* 5:17-24). Similarly, shortly after conducting this "ceremony," Moshe summoned the Levites to battle and bid them pass through the camp "slaying each man his brother" (*Shemot* 32:27-28). Moshe commanded a spontaneous act of violence. In sum, in the Sin of the Golden Calf, Moshe plays the Pinchas/betrayed husband role. He is full of vengeance and violence for God's sake.

To conclude, regarding the question of Moshe's lack of *kina* and perhaps even inaction at Shittim, regarding the difference between Moshe of *Sefer Shemot* and Moshe of *Sefer Bamidbar*,we can never know or discern the exact dynamics that Moshe has undergone. Much has passed between the second and fortieth years in the desert. We have not been with God for forty days and forty nights on the mountain, nor had God "pass by" while we stood upon the rock. We have not descended from the mountain our faces aglow with divine luminescence, or been subjected to forty years of leading the fractious and ever complaining Children of Israel. Suffice it to say that by the fortieth year of the desert journey, Moshe's attachment to the people is not what it once was. They are rebels and in their constant rebellion doomed him to never entering the land (*Devarim* 4:21). He is no longer their eternal leader, and a new generation of leaders is destined to lead the people over the Jordan. From this perspective, it is not surprising that at Shittim, Moshe cannot or will not muster up the passion to play the role of the betrayed husband. While the leader must sometimes emulate one divine attribute and sometimes another, the attribute of *kina* and the passionate attachment it demands are no longer the role of Moshe. This is left to Pinchas, to avenge the betrayal of God, to restore the covenant and to "take that which was suited for him" (*Bamidbar Rabba* 20:24). While Pinchas acts according to the criteria of *Sefer Shemot* and his *kina* is justified, the narrative at Shittim is also about the transitions of *Sefer Bamidbar*, the change in leadership and the contrasts between Moshe and Pinchas.

Further Study

1. The *shiur* above attempts to develop a theory of the divine attribute of *kina* and the appropriateness or inappropriateness of human emulation of this divine attribute. The theory draws heavily on a particular reading of Chapter 34 of *Shemot*. Read *Shemot* 33:12-34:16. Explain how 33:12-13 supports one of the central theses of the *shiur* above. Now look at *Shemot* 20:3-5. Explain how these verses pose a question to one of the central theses of the *shiur*.

2. Scan I *Melakhim* 18:1-46. Now review 19:9-16. Try to note a contradiction between two central points made in the *shiur* above. Reexamine 19:10 and 19:14 carefully. Compare to *Bamidbar* 25:11. For whom does Eliyahu have *kina*? Does this resolve the problem?

3. See Rashi 25:6 s.v. *ve-haima* and 25:7. Does Rashi support or conflict with the final conclusion of the *shiur*? See 25:4-5 and Rashi, Ibn Ezra 25:4 and Ramban 25:5. Can you think of another explanation for 25:4 and the term "*otam*"? Reconsider the notion of revolution and entrenched leadership in light of this issue. Review 20:9-11. Try to formulate a possible relation between these verses and 25:4-5.

4. Review 25:1-8 and *Shemot* 34:12-16. Now see *Bereishit* 34:1-36. Pay special attention to 34:1, 2, 8-10, 25. Also see 35:1-4 and Seforno 35:2 and *Devarim* 31:16. Can you discern a connection?