



“Therefore, say: Behold! I give him My covenant of shalom”

The Three Weeks Open with Pinchas Who Is Eliyahu Who Was Granted Eternal Life and Will Herald In the Final Geulah

This week’s parsha is parshas Pinchas. In a non-leap year, it is always read during the first week of Bein HaMetzarim. During these three weeks, we mourn the churban and galus and yearn for the future geulah. It is fitting that we begin this essay with the promise HKB”H makes to Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen—that he will be privileged to be Eliyahu HaNavi “Zachur LaTov,” who will live forever and be the herald of the future geulah for Yisrael. Here are the pertinent pesukim (Bamidbar 25, 10):

“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתי מעל בני ישראל, בקנאו את קנאתי בתוכם ולא כליתי את בני ישראל בקנאתי, לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום.”

Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael, when he zealously avenged Me among them; so, I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My vengeance. Therefore, say: Behold! I give him My covenant of shalom. We find the following rendering in the Targum YoNasan: **I will establish My covenant of shalom with him by making him a living malach (a messenger); he will live forever to herald the geulah at the end of time.**

This Targum informs us that two promises were made to Pinchas. Firstly, he will become Eliyahu HaNavi, who will live an eternal life untouched by death or burial. Secondly, he will herald in the future geulah for Yisrael. This Targum YoNasan is problematic. Where do we find any reference or allusion to these two promises in this passuk: «הנני נותן לו את: Behold! I give him My covenant of shalom?—בריתי שלום»

Now, the promise that he will be privileged to usher in the future geulah is spelled out in an exposition in the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni): **Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish said: Pinchas is Eliyahu. HKB”H told him, “You brokered shalom between Yisrael and Me in Olam HaZeh; also, le’asid la’vo, you will be the one to establish shalom between Me and My children. As it says (Malachi 3, 23): “Behold, I send you Eliyahu HaNavi before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem. And he will turn back the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers.”**

This Midrash does not, however, make any mention of the promise that Pinchas will live forever and never experience death. After all, it is possible that he will die like any other human being and then be revived by HKB”H prior to the future geulah to usher it in for Yisrael.

A Fascinating Insight from the Sforno

We will begin to shed some light on the subject with a fascinating insight from the Sforno regarding the phrase “בריתי שלום”. He asserts that the “**covenant of shalom**” indicates freedom from the Malach Hamaves. Death results from the clash of opposing factors. Pinchas was immune to this; the result was longevity; he outlived everyone in his generation. This is especially pertinent to the opinion that Eliyahu and Pinchas are one and the same, and that he is still alive and well.

At first glance, the Sforno's comment is enigmatic and incomprehensible. However, in Shu"t Yehudah Ya'aleh (Part 2, 155), the great Mahari Asad, ztz"l, explains the Sforno's meaning eloquently. He relies on the well-known concept presented in Sefer Yetzirah that man is made up of four basic elements: **אש, רוח, מים ועפר—fire, wind (air), water, and earth (dust).**

Death results when these elements are incompatible with one another. When fire overwhelms water, it evaporates the water. Conversely, when water overwhelms fire, it extinguishes it. Similarly, when the wind overwhelms the dust of the earth, it scatters it. Yet, when the dust overwhelms the wind, it obstructs it and stops it.

This then is what HKB"H promised Pinchas with the berachah: **"הגני נותן לו את בריתי שלום"**. He assured him that his four basic elements would coexist harmoniously; one would not overwhelm the other. As a result, he would not die; instead, he would live a very long life. Thus, we learn from the Sforno that death results from the inherent antagonism between the four basic elements. Pinchas, on the other hand, was blessed with "shalom"; his elements coexisted in harmony; thus, he lives on forever.

In the compilation Shev D'Nechemta (1), authored by the brilliant Rabbi Yosef Engel, ztz"l, he brings down this wonderful insight from the Sforno and applies it to interpret the statement in the Gemara (Berachos 4b): **"אליהו בארבע"**—**Eliyahu in four**. In most human beings, one of the four basic elements is dominant. For instance, if a person's dominant force is the element of fire, his actions tend to be speedy and impetuous. Whereas the actions of someone whose dominant force is earth tend to be performed in a ponderous and lazy manner.

Eliyahu HaNavi, however, was blessed by HKB"H with the covenant of **"shalom."** This meant that he would live forever, since his four basic elements coexisted and functioned harmoniously; they were equally balanced, and one did not overwhelm the other. Thus, we can interpret Chazal's depiction of **"אליהו בארבע"** to mean that all of Eliyahu's actions reflected the harmony of his four basic elements.

In this manner, we can combine the two promises HKB"H

made to Pinchas/Eliyahu: **"הגני נותן לו את בריתי שלום"**—that his four basic elements would coexist with **"shalom,"** which would grant him eternal life. Additionally, he would be privileged to herald the future geulah by establishing **"shalom"** between Yisrael and their Father in Heaven, as predicted by the passuk: **"והשיב לב אבות על בנים ולב בנים על אבותם"**.

We can suggest based on what the Megaleh Amukos writes (Behar) that the four galuyos—Bavel, Madai, Yavan, and Edom—align with the four basic elements of fire, wind, water, and earth. This would imply that because Yisrael damaged the four elements, they were exiled to the corresponding four galuyos. In his own inimitable way, the Megaleh Amukos provides a "remez" from the words HKB"H spoke to the prophet Amos when He showed him the four galuyos (Amos 7, 9): **"מה איתה ר'ואה ע'מוס"**—**what do you see, Amos?** He points out that the first letters are the first letters of the four basic elements: **מ'ים א'ש ר'וח ע'פר** that correspond to the four galuyos.

Now, the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 217a) teaches us that when Pinchas proceeded to kill Zimri ben Salu, a prince of shevet Shimon, he saw that tribe, and his neshamah flew away due to his intense fear. To compensate for this, HKB"H endowed him with the neshamos of Nadav and Avihu that were floating adrift in the world without a tikun until that point in time. Therefore, in the merit of his willingness to sacrifice his life for the benefit of Yisrael, his four basic elements were sanctified and harmonized. In this same merit, he will also be privileged to usher in the geulah at the end of days from the four galuyos corresponding to those four basic elements. Thus, the two matters go hand-in-hand magnificently.

Humility Portends Balance among the Four Basic Elements

Now, we know that the churban of the Beis HaMikdash is attributed to the sin of "sin'as chinam"—baseless hatred. Thus, in the spirit of these mournful days of Bein HaMetzarim, it gives me immense pleasure to suggest to our esteemed audience a method of achieving harmony and balance among one's four basic elements thereby promoting long, productive, happy lives. I would like to refer to a tremendous

chiddush found in the immaculate teachings of the holy Maggid of Mezritch, Rabbi Dov Ber, zy”a. He claims that when a person steers clear of “ga’avah”—haughtiness and audacity—and adopts the midah of “anavah”—humility—he brings his four elements into harmonious alignment free of any antagonism. As a result, he will live a long life and will not die before his designated time.

In Ohev Yisrael (Shelach and Chukas), the distinguished Rav of Apta, zy”a, discusses this vital principle in the name of his Rav, the Maggid of Mezritch, zy”a, regarding the passuk (Iyov 25, 2): “המשל ופחד עמו עושה שלום במרומו” — **dominion and fear are with Him; He makes peace (“shalom”) in His high places.** They expounded in the Midrash (D.R. 5, 12): **Michael is all snow and Gavriel is all fire, and yet they stand adjacent to one another, and they do not harm one another.**

Let us explain. The malach Michael is the Prince of Water; he represents the midah of “chesed” and stands on the right. Whereas the malach Gavriel, the Prince of Fire, representing the midah of “din,” stands on the left. Seemingly, they represent two opposing forces, since water extinguishes fire, and fire evaporates water. Nevertheless, **“He makes ‘shalom’ in His high places”**—HKB”H makes peace between them, allowing them to coexist, side by side, harmoniously. Here is a translation of the explanation of the Maggid of Mezritsch regarding this phenomenon (as presented by the Ohev Yisrael in parshas Chukas):

The existence and status of everything that has been created is that of “ayin”—nothingness. When each creature views and understands its own essence and value in relation to the brilliant, infinite light of the Blessed One, blessed is His name, it becomes insignificant; it perceives itself as a mere nothing. Then it considers? Why did HKB”H create me? I must have been created to honor Him. Surely, my corresponding opposite force was also created by HKB”H to honor Him. In this manner, shalom is established between them; they agree not to cancel each other out. Thus, the water does not extinguish the fire.

You Created Them All with the Chochmah of Humility

Apropos this subject, we find a precious gem in the remarks of holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy”a, in Avodas Yisrael (Noach). He presents this introduction brought down by the Ohev Yisrael describing how the four elements are able to coexist due to the unifying force of the Master of Everything. Then he proceeds to explain its relevance to the passuk (Tehillim 104, 24): “מה רבו מעשיך ה' כולם בחכמה עשית” — **how abundant are Your works, Hashem, with “chochmah” (wisdom) You made them all.** He explains that the word חכמה is a combination of ח”ה and מ”ה (literally, the former represents a potential quality, while the latter represents a state of nothingness). All creations, including the four basic elements, were created with the potential capacity to view and realize that every item in the universe is insignificant in relation to the Creator. Therefore, it is obliged to obey the innate command of its Creator, even though this may entail a nullification of its own essence. In this manner, the water and the fire and all of the elements become “nothing,” allowing them to unite and coexist with one another as dictated by the Creator.

The same holds true for the malachim that surround the heavenly Chariot—namely Michael to the right and Gavriel to the left. Although they represent opposing forces—chesed versus gevurah—notwithstanding, they coexist peacefully (with shalom), without hatred or jealousy between them, for the reason just explained. Every malach is cognizant of the fact that the other malach is not acting of his own volition but is merely fulfilling the wishes of his Creator. Michael’s chesed and Gavriel’s gevurah are both from the Almighty. Thus, they allow each other to perform their roles with shalom and friendship. Disputes and quarrels are only present among the inhabitants below, where each person believes that he is better and wiser than his fellow. They forget their abilities are given to them by the Creator. Above, they understand that the spirit of Hashem is within them, and He sustains all of them; so, they behave and act in accordance with His will. Hence, shalom and ahavah prevail among them. For, the name of HKB”H is Shalom. This concludes the remarks of the Avodas Yisrael.

HKB”H Added the Letter Yud to the Name Pinchas to Allude to His Humility

Accordingly, it appears that we can explain why Pinchas was rewarded with “בריתי שלום”—that shalom would prevail among his four basic elements—based on a teaching of the bas Ayin. He elaborates on the teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Pinchas 237a) that HKB”H added the letter “yud” to the name “פנחס” to make it “פינחס”, because the letter “yud” is the smallest of all the letters. As such, it alludes to Pinchas’ midah of anavah.

His humility was evident before the incident with Zimri, as it is written (Bamidbar 25, 7): “ויקם מתוך העדה ויקח רמוח בידו—he rose from the midst of the assembly and took a spear in his hand. The term for spear is רמ”ח; it has the same gematria as אברה”ם (248), who says of himself (Bereishis 18, 27): “ואנכי עפר ואפר”—although I am but dust and ash—reflecting an extreme degree of humility. His humility was also evident after he saved Yisrael from extermination. As Rashi teaches us (Bamidbar 25, 11), the shevatim did not condone his actions, so they began disparaging and insulting him by saying: **Did you see this son of Puti whose mother’s father fattened calves for avodah-zarah; yet he killed the prince of a shevet of Yisrael!**

We can postulate that this is why the Torah specifies that Pinchas was the grandson of Aharon, who was a paradigm of humility—as attested to by Moshe Rabeinu (Shemos 16, 7): “ונחנו מה?”—but what are we?—insinuating that he and Aharon were insignificant. In this merit, he was granted the berachah of shalom—the harmonious coexistence of his four basic elements accounting for him not dying. In this light, the order of HKB”H’s pronouncement to Moshe can be interpreted fabulously: “פינחס” (spelled fully with the inclusion of a “yud,” which HKB”H added to his name to attest to his humility) בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן (relating him to Aharon, who was a paradigm of humility), בקנאו, את קנאתי בתוכם ולא כליתי את בני ישראל בקנאתי, לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את “בריתי שלום”—in the merit of his “anavah,” he will be blessed with shalom among his four elements, and he will not die.

We can now embellish this thought with a wonderful “remez” from the passuk (Tehillim 147, 6): “מעודד עניים ה’

משפיל רשעים עדי ארץ”—Hashem encourages the humble; he lowers the wicked down to the ground. The Megaleh Amukos writes (Behar) that the four basic elements are nurtured by the four letters of the name **Havaya—the Tetragrammaton**. This can be alluded to by the fact that first letters of the words מ’שפיל ר’שעים ע’די א’רץ in this passuk are the same first letters as the four elements מ’ים ר’וח ע’פר א’ש. Thus, the passuk states that HKB”H lowers the four basic elements of the wicked; they are antagonistic and disconnected. Conversely, the passuk states that HKB”H encourages and uplifts the humble with the four letters of the name **Havaya**, so that shalom prevails among their four elements resulting in long lives.

Eliyahu Will Mend the Defect of Sin’as Chinam by Establishing Shalom in the World

As mentioned, during these days of mourning, it behooves us to learn a critical lesson from this parshah. The reason it will be necessary for HKB”H to send Eliyahu HaNavi in preparation for the future geulah should be apparent from the passuk cited above from Malachi: **“Behold, I send you Eliyahu HaNavi before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem. And he will turn back the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers.”** He will come to mediate shalom in the world. Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Yoma 9b):

“מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב, מפני שלשה דברים שהיו בו עבודה זרה וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים... אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ומצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב, מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם, ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות עבודה זרה גלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.”

The first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because the people were guilty of the three cardinal sins—avodah zarah, immorality and murder. These sins were not prevalent during the times of the second Beis HaMikdash; the people of that period engaged in Torah-study and performed mitzvos and acts of kindness. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of “sin’as chinam”—baseless hatred. This teaches us that “sin’as chinam” is equivalent to the three cardinal sins.

Now, the root cause of “sin’as chinam” is “ga’avah” and jealousy. Hence, the obvious tikun is developing and

embracing the midah of “anavah.” Therefore, it is specifically Eliyahu HaNavi whom HKB”H chose to establish shalom as a crucial prerequisite for the future geulah. After all, in the merit of his “anavah,” he was blessed with eternal life; his berachah of shalom meant that his four basic elements would coexist in harmony; each element displayed humility and treated even its opposite component with due respect (i.e., like fire and water). Hence, he is best suited to remedy the tragic flaw of “sin’as chinam.” In that merit, the defect in the four basic elements that caused the four galuyos will be remedied, and we will be deserving of the complete, final geulah.

Based on this, let us explain what the sages expounded in the Gemara (B.M. 107b) on the passuk (Devarim 7, 15): **“והסיר”**—**“Hashem will remove from you every illness.” Rav said: This refers to the (evil) eye.** Rashi comments: **That thing that all illness is related to, namely, the evil eye.** The Gemara explains: **“רב לטעמיה, דרב סליק לבי”**—**“רב קברי עבד מאי דעבד”—this accords with Rav’s opinion. For, Rav once went to the cemetery, where he did whatever he did.** Rashi explains that Rav knew an incantation that enabled him to stand over a grave and discern the cause of a person’s death. **“אמר תשעים ותשעה בעין רעה ואחד בדרך ארץ”**—after completing his investigation, **he said that ninety-nine (out of one hundred) die of an evil eye and only one from natural causes.** We can explain this phenomenon based on our current discussion. Ninety-nine per cent die because they have an **evil eye** rather than a **good (benevolent) eye.** Instead of being supportive and happy when their friends succeed, they are jealous of their success, chas v’shalom. This causes disharmony among their four elements, which empowers and enables the Malach Hamaves.

I would like to interpret another teaching in the Gemara based on this concept (A.Z. 20b): **“אמריו עליו על מלאך המות שכולו: מלא עינים, בשעת פטירתו של חולה עומד מעל מראשותיו וחרבו שלופה בידו וטיפה של מרה תלויה בו, כיון שחולה רואה אותו מזדעזע ופותח פיו וזורקה לתוך פיו, ממנה מת ממנה מסריח ממנה פניו מוריקות.”** **They said of the Malach Hamaves that he is full of eyes. When an infirmed person is dying, it stands above his head, with its unsheathed sword in its hand, and a drop of poison at its tip. As soon as the sick person sees it, he shudders**

and opens his mouth; it (the Malach Hamaves) promptly throws the drop into his mouth. From it he dies; from it he rots; from it his face becomes sallow. What is the significance of the description of the Malach Hamaves—as it appears to a person about to die—as **“full of eyes”?** It implies that he is empowered by **all of the evil eyes** of people. This enables it to cause disunity and antagonism among the basic elements and make people die. Clearly, the tikun is to have a **good, benevolent eye**—to rejoice when our friends succeed. For, this will promote shalom among one’s four basic elements, which will promote longevity.

We Must Seek and Value Shalom to Bring an End to the Galus of Edom

It gives me immense pleasure to conclude this essay with what the Megaleh Amukos writes on this week’s parsha: HKB”H promises to give Pinchas His **covenant of “shalom,” in direct contrast to Eisav, who detests and opposes “shalom.”** For, **עשׂו** (376) has the same numerical value as **שׁלוֹם** (376). This can be better understood by referring to a teaching of the Chasam Sofer (Toldos). He brings down what they expounded in the Midrash Shochar Tov on the passuk (Tehillim 120, 6): **“רבבת שכנה לה נפשׂי עם שונא שלום. וכי”**—**“my soul has had its fill of dwelling with those who hate “shalom.” Is there such a person who hates “shalom”?** Indeed, **Eisav hates the reality of “shalom.”** Along these lines, He says (Vayikra 26, 6): **“I will provide shalom in the land.”** When will this be? (ibid.) When **“I will cause wild beasts to withdraw from the land.”** There is no other wild beast other than the wild pig (boar), as it states (Tehillim 80, 14): **“The boar of the forest ravages it.”** This refers to Eisav HaRasha.

Regarding this, the Chasam Sofer writes: **I heard from my close friend Moreinu Avraham Binga Segal that the gematria of עשׂו equals שׁלוֹם in the realm of tumah. Therefore, he is called the one who hates “shalom.”**

Now, let us apply what we have learned to the narrative in parshas Vayishlach (Bereishis 32, 25): **“ויותר יעקב לבדו ויאבק”**—**and Yaakov remained alone, and a man wrestled with him until the break of dawn.** Based

on the Midrash Tanchuma (Beshalach 8), Rashi informs us that this mysterious, nocturnal wrestler was none other than **Samael, Eisav's ministering angel**. Furthermore, we know that he is the Malach Hamaves. Based on what we have learned, he only has the power to kill when shalom does not prevail among the Jewish people, because that causes a lack of unity among the four basic elements. This explains very nicely why עש"ו (376) hates שלו"ם (376). In the absence of shalom, chas v'shalom, he can cause death and destruction in the world.

This illuminates for us the significance of the wonderful "remez" of the Megaleh Amukos: HKB"H promises to give

Pinchas His **covenant of "shalom," in direct contrast to Eisav, who detests and opposes "shalom."** For, עש"ו **has the same numerical value as שלו"ם**. This goes hand-in-hand with HKB"H's promise that Pinchas will be privileged to live forever—that his four basic elements will coexist in "shalom." In this capacity, HKB"H will send him to establish shalom in Yisrael among their four basic elements. This will abolish and end the galus of Edom—who is עש"ו, the one who hates שלו"ם. In this merit, may we be privileged to witness the complete geulah swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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