

NOTES TO THE SHIUR PARSHAT PINCHOS JULY 2011 PODCAST

And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one of his men that were joined unto Baal Peor. Thereupon the tribe of Simeon went unto Zimri ben Salu and said unto him, 'Behold, capital punishment is being meted out, yet you sit silent [i.e., inactive].' What did he do? He arose and assembled twenty-four thousand Israelites and went unto Kazbi, and said unto her, 'Surrender thyself unto me.' She replied, 'I am a king's daughter, and thus hath my father instructed me, "Thou shalt yield only to their greatest man"'. 'I too,' he replied, 'am the prince of a tribe; moreover, my tribe is greater than his [Moses], for mine is second in birth, whilst his is third.' He then seized her by her coiffure and brought her before Moses. 'Son of Amram,' exclaimed he, 'is this woman forbidden or permitted? And should you say, "She is forbidden", who permitted thee Jethro's daughter'? At that moment Moses forgot the Halachah [concerning intimacy with a heathen woman], and all the people burst into tears; hence it is written, and they were weeping before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And it is also written, And Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it. Now, what did he see? — Rab said: He saw what was happening and remembered the Halachah, and said to him, 'O great-uncle! did you not teach us this on thy descent from Mount Sinai: He who cohabits with a heathen woman is punished by zealots?' He replied. 'He who reads the letter, let him be the agent [to carry out its instructions]'. Samuel said: He saw that 'There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord': whenever the Divine Name is being profaned, honour must not be paid to one's teacher. R. Isaac said in R. Eleazar's name: He saw the angel wreaking destruction amongst the people.

Talmud: Sanhedrin 82b

Two approaches to divine wrath

Pinchas is considered by the Talmud as a rare case of "taking the law into ones own hands" that the Torah permits for the zealous (*kanaim pogim bo*).¹

¹ Sanhedrin 82b

The Hebrew expression "One who acts like Zimri and asks for a reward as he were Pinchas" (עושה מעשה זמרי ומבקש שכר כפנחס) refers to hypocrites who ask for undeserved rewards and honors. It derives from the Babylonian Talmud (Sotah, Ch.22, page 2), where it is attributed to the Hasmonean King Alexander Jannaeus.

At various times, Phineas and his acts were cited in the United States by the promoters of laws banning interracial marriages. These so-called anti-miscegenation laws were enforced in several US states until 1967. The story is also used by some Christian Identity groups, naming themselves Phineas Priesthood after Phineas. They also claim that it is a Biblical injunction against interracial couples, transforming a conflict about temptation to idolatry into one about race.

Phineas, Husband of Cleopatra

Phineas features in the story of Jason and the Argonauts, and was married to Cleopatra, daughter of Boreas. Phineas and Cleopatra had two sons, named Plexippus and Pandion, who were mistreated by their stepmother, Idaeia, who Phineas married after the death of Cleopatra. His residence was the city of Salmydessus on the Black Sea. This Phineas was said to be a son of Poseidon, or of Phoenix, and had the gift of prophecy. **Zeus, angry that Phineas revealed too much of the plans of the gods,** punished him by blinding him and setting him on an island with a buffet of food. However, he could eat none of it because the harpies, vicious, winged women, stole the food out of his hands right before he could eat. This continued until the arrival of Jason and the Argonauts. They sent the winged heroes, the Boreads, after the harpies. They succeeded in driving the monsters away but did not kill them, as a request from the goddess of the rainbow, Iris, who promised that Phineas would not be bothered by the harpies again. As thanks, Phineas told the Argonauts how to pass the Symplegades.

In this myth Phineas angers the gods rather than assuage their wrath, precisely because he revealed what as a human, he divined.

Pinchas In Midrash

In the end of parshas Balak it is recorded how the Israelites committed acts of immorality with the daughters of Moav. This incident immediately follows the departure of Bilaam and Balak who unsuccessfully attempted to place a curse on the Israelites.

The Rabbis point out that the two incidents are related. It was Bilaam who advised Balak to send out the "daughters of Moav" in order to cause the Israelites to sin.²

There seems to be some dissonance regarding the nationality of the illicit women. The narrator ascribes to them the nationality of Moav (Num25:1). Whereas, it is clear from Moses' words in parshas Matos that the women were of Midianite extraction (Num 31:16). In fact, it was the Midianite women who bore the brunt of the punishment, and were killed later.³

The enticement of the daughters of Midian/Moav was a ruse to seduce the Israelites into the the worship of Baal Peor. Baal Peor was worshiped by defecating on the idol.

A chieftain of the tribe of Simeon grabbed Kazbi the daughter of Tzur by the hair and brought her in front of Moses. He asked Moses if she is permissible or forbidden because of her Midianite origins. If forbidden, then who permitted Moses to marry Tzipporah, also a daughter of Midian's high priest Jethro?

The **Targum Yonason** records Moshe's reaction. He became angry, cried, and recited "*krias shma*". He had forgotten the Law, the Halacha in such a situation.

IT IS THIS FORGETTING OF HALACHA THAT ALLOWS PINCHAS INTO THE NARRATIVE!!!!!! I wish to focus on their differing reactions to the crisis.

² It's interesting to note that the Torah omits all mention of Bilaam's complicity in the affair until much later, in parshas Matos (perek 31, posuk 16).

³ The **Medrash Tanchuma** suggests this was the first time in the history of Israel that they fell prey to the wiles of "*giluy arayos*" or the sin of immorality on a national scale. Having survived the Egyptian exile morally intact despite the fact that as a society it too was steeped in licentiousness.

Pinchas, quoting Moshe, provides the requisite halacha, "***haboel aramis kanaim pogim bo***". One who is caught having relations with a gentile woman, is to be put to death by avengers. He proceeded to ram a spear through the chieftain, Zimri, and Kazbi, killing them both simultaneously. It's interesting to note the parallel made between Moses and Zimri. Moses' reaction also requires further study. Pinchas emerges as the only one capable of differentiating between Moses' marriage and Zimri's conduct. ***The quoted halacha is meant to convey that the avenger may, on his own, impose the death penalty, without the prior consent of the courts, bais din. This is something which is not found in even the gravest of sins.***

Pinchas' quick reaction brought an end to a plague which was raging amongst the Israelites. The plague affected those that were indirectly involved in the affair by not taking measures to bring an end to it. What role did killing Zimri and Kazbi have in bringing an end to the plague?

The women of Moav participated in the affair, but it was the Midianite women who were the source and energizing factor behind it all. Balak was a Midianite who ruled over Moav. **The Rabbis tell us that Kazbi was his daughter who originally sought to entrap Moses.** There is thus a triangle of desire set up in the rabbinic imagination between Kazbi, Moses and Zimri. Both Kazbi and Tzipporah, Moses' wife, were of Midianite extraction. When confronted by the legal question Moses falls silent as if exposed. When faced with Zimri's iniquity, not remembering how to respond, Moses saw that the whole world was at risk. He cried and said *krias shma*. *Krias shma* is the declaration of our belief in the oneness of Hashem. It is the doxology recited before one is martyred or dies. This belief was at stake. But his actions were insufficient, and were taken on by Pinchas. Pinchas was a descendant of Putiel. He descended from Joseph, Yosef Hatzaddik and from Jethro as well. Pinchas, whose genetic were from Midian, became the emissary to break the hold of Midian on the Israelites. Moses, married to Midian could not.

In expanding the merit of his deed the Rabbis tell us that Pinchas merited to having twelve miracles performed on his behalf. Numbered among them are the miracles that enabled Pinchas to show and demonstrate to the Israelites the full scope of the wickedness of Zimri.

1. He was able to kill Zimri and Kazbi with one spear thrust, impaling the two of them upon the spear.
2. When he picked up the spear it supported the weight of both of them and didn't snap,
3. An angel came and switched the positions of Zimri and Kazbi on the spear, in order to reproduce for the Israelites the act that was committed.
4. The entranceway to the tent expanded in order to accommodate the removal and subsequent exhibition of the corpses of the sinners, and so on.

For a later commentator, Zimri, by virtue of the fact that he united with Kazbi, unified himself with death. He separated himself totally from his creator. There is a need to consult *bais din* when putting to death a live person, not when killing someone already dead.⁴

Pinchas was rewarded by being made a Priest. At the time of the formation of the institution of priesthood, Aharon and his children were anointed to be priests. Pinchas was left out. Why? The same commentator suggests that he had to earn his right to it as opposed to the Aaronic line. However modern scholars see in this episode a darker motive behind the narrative, that of a later struggle between different lines. In fact the Book of Numbers contains several controversial stories regarding the relative position of Aaron vis a vis Moses and vis a vis other Levites. Some scholars believe these stories reflect later rivalries between Aaronic and Levitical priesthoods during the period of the Judges which were finally resolved in the seventh century B.C.E. with the supremacy of the Aaronic priestly lineage confirmed by the Deuteronomic reforms of Hezekiah (Deuteronomy 12). Others see these controversies as a continuation of a simmering mistrust that may have developed between Moses and Aaron from the time of Aaron's sin in the incident of the Golden Calf.

⁴See Ohr Hachaim on Num. 25,14

As we read the mystical commentaries such as the Lurianic corpus, we find that for the Ari HaKadosh, Pinchas was the reincarnation of Aharon's sons Nadav and Avihu, who had died when they offered strange incense before HaShem . He was awarded with the Covenant of Peace since his zealous actions created a state of cosmic harmony in Heaven. As we have learned previously Nadav and Avihu attempted to serve *HaShem* in a state of intense spiritual ecstasy and allowed themselves to lapse from normative Halacha in their attempt to achieve mystical union with the Divine. **Although they were filled with love of HaShem they were struck down by Midat HaDin** due to their close proximity to the King's palace (Shaar Hagilgulim)

Pinchas, acting as the messenger of HaShem's Midat HaDin as he struck down Zimri, achieved a state of religious passion in a way seemingly antithetical to that of Nadav and Avihu. He was also standing on problematic Halachic grounds, for had he asked the *Bet Din*, he would have been told that Zimri could **not** be executed. ***The law of HaBoal Aramit, kanaim pogim bo, that the zealous may kill a man for having intercourse with a Gentile woman, is in itself a kind of extra-legal provision*** (*Avoda Zara 36b, Sanhedrin 82b, Rambam: Hilchot Isurey Biah 12:4-8.*)

The whole comparison seems counter-intuitive. Nadav and Avihu were apparently punished directly for Heaven for their act of religious fervor. Pinchas, acted violently with religious fervor to punish Zimri who was engaged in prohibited passionate and immoral behavior. Nadav and Avihu suffer violence in response to their peaceful incense offering, and Pinchas is rewarded with peace for his violence. It has been explained by the Netsiv that Pinchas needed the covenant of peace or else he might have spent the rest of his life overcome with remorse for his violence, however justified it may have been. It seems that the paradox of violence and peace, *kanaut* and *shalom* manifest in both characters Nadav and Avihu, and Pinchas, who are apparently two sides of the same inner desire to confront the divine wrath.

The Rabbis then make the connection that Pinchas is Eliyahu Hanavi. The same Eliyahu Hanavi who caused a public miracle on Har HaKarmel in his war to eradicate the idolatry of Baal the Israelites were steeped in at the time. Eliyahu Hanavi lives forever. He is free of the constraints of this world. He is the one who brings everlasting life to his people. He will be the harbinger of the future redemption, the Messianic period.

PINCHAS IN ZOHAR:

There appear to be two approaches to assuaging divine wrath and these are made most poignant in the Zohar where God confides to Moses about the impending appointment of Pinchas. In this dialogue we see a recalcitrant Moses facing the divine power and almost reluctantly assenting to whatever God has in mind. God, on the other hand wants to break it gently to Moses and inform him of the difference between his approach and Pinchas' to His rage.

“AT THAT TIME GOD SAID “WHAT AM I TO DO WITH MOSES?”...

“MOSES YOU WERE READY FOR MESIRAS NEFESH FOR KLAL ISRAEL THAT THEY SHOULD NOT BE DESTROYED A NUMBER OF TIMES, HOWEVER HE (Pinchas) ASSUAGED MY RAGE FROM ISRAEL”

THE TWO TYPES OF RAGE

- 1. Moses: willingness to sacrifice self on behalf of the people (e.g. Ex 32)**
- 2. Pinchas: willingness to kill to assuage God's rage**

Moses had turned away G-d's anger from the Jewish people numerous times during the forty-year trek in the desert, and yet received no reward for it. On the contrary, when he asked for his sons to replace him after his death, G-d told him to appoint Joshua instead. Why do Pinchas and his offspring receive such an incredible reward for a one-time zealous act?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, explained that the answer is found in the words of one translation, that Pinchas “avenged My vengeance amongst them.” There is a fundamental difference between the service of Moses and Pinchas. Moses sought to mitigate G-d's anger against Israel through prayer. In contrast, Pinchas's action took place not in the supernal realms, but rather “below,” in the physical world. Moses was top-down; Pinchas operated from the bottom up. This distinction is also reflected in the forms of the two leaders' self-sacrifice. After the incident of the golden calf, Moses told G-d that if He did not forgive the Jewish people, He should erase Moses' name from the Torah. Moses' was a very bold act, for sure, but he placed only his soul and spirituality on the line. Pinchas, on the other hand, engaged his entire self; his physical being was risked.

After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses also turned away G-d's wrath and ended the plague. Why, then, wasn't Moses also rewarded with the priesthood, or at least with something that could be bequeathed to his descendants? The answer is that Moses used his power of prayer to nullify the negative decree from Above. Although Moses accomplished it, we see that the effect on the Jews was minimal - i.e. they sinned again. Therefore, the reward Moses received was also only temporal. Pinchas, on the other hand, affected the world from below, by causing the Jews to repent through his deed. Since he changed the way the world is composed, at least in some measure, the world could not return to its former state. Accordingly, G-d rewarded him in a similar fashion, with an eternal change of status as a priest. In relation to ourselves, we have to try to create "facts on the ground", positive changes that affect our behavior, not just changes in our thoughts and emotions that are detached from action.

I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT THEIR METHODS FOR DIVERTING DIVINE ANGER ALSO DIFFERED....

Pinchas in Kabbalah.

Why were the names of the sinners only mentioned in the next parsha?

Zohar says it is not becoming for the judge and executioner who will become high priest to be sullied with their names so they were omitted.

Another possible explanation is found based on the Ari is as follows:

What is in a name?

In Shaar Hagilgulim we are told that all the personalities in the Bible were captured in one of many "gilgulim" or incarnations, that the soul when descending into this muddy world must spend its life in refining itself and if it fails to fully it must return, each time revealing more and more of its true nature. The name reflects this nature.

If the name is merely *ish* or *isha* a generic un-named naming for man or woman then it signifies that their soul nature is fully concealed allowing the act of sexuality to be animal in nature in full view of the people.

They then must return in the form of another incarnation.

The mentioning of Kazbi and Zimri in this week's parsha reflects a change in their soul nature. By killing them on one plane Pinchas had healed them on another namely, allowing their soul nature to be reflected more. Pinchas BECOMES THE CATALYST FOR INNER TRANSFORMATION THEN AT FIRST BY INFLICTING DEATH THEN ONCE THEIR TRUE NATURE IS REVEALED THEIR OWN MESIRAS NEFESH.....

In their next re-incarnation they are re-incarnated as Rabbi Akiva (24000 died in the plague paralleling 24000 student who died in the time of the sefira) and his wife Rachel daughter of Kalba Savua.⁵

Pinchas then becomes in Kabbalah, a kind of soul shepherd triggering the soul development and healing for Zimri who die in ignominy, destined to now paradoxically die as a martyr Akiva. The soul is manifested in the very name given to the person. The name consists of letters which in and of themselves are named.

As the soul incarnates more and more the letters of the name become filled out (*miluim*) so, for example, Zimri fills out through the letters of his name as **zayin**, **mem**, **resh**, **yud**. These "fillings out" become the permutations of the technology of the soul architecture that mirror the ultimate NAME i.e the divine name of Yud heh Vav Heh and its own *miluim* or permutations. At some level this Name incarnates all others. Kazbi becomes similarly incarnated as he travels through successive incarnations of refinement of soul.

This idea is also reflected in the writings of Hassidic masters such as the Kedushat levi who suggests that Pinchas is unique in being able to reflect his soul character to such a refined extent, that he he needs no further incarnation so he has no need to actually die and thus lives until Eliyahu and on to Mashiach. Maybe it is this property that the divine finds so attractive in appointing him High Priest and giving him bris shalom. Maybe Moses is not at this level of soul incarnation. And in assuaging the divine wrath it maybe that Pinchas is able to perform in such a paradoxical way that his violence serves the midat haRachamim in ways that Moses' supplications cannot transform. it is as if the

⁵ According to the [Talmud](#), Akiva owed almost everything to his wife. Akiva was a shepherd in the employ of the rich and respected Kalba Sabu'a, whose daughter took a liking to him, the modest, conscientious servant. She consented to secret betrothal on the condition that he thenceforth devote himself to study. When the wealthy father-in-law learned of this secret betrothal, he drove his daughter from his house, and swore that he would never help her while Akiva remained her husband. Akiva, with his young wife, lived perforce in the most straitened circumstances. Indeed, so poverty-stricken did they become that the bride had to sell her hair to enable her husband to pursue his studies. But these very straits only served to bring out Akiba's greatness of character. It is related that once, when a bundle of straw was the only bed they possessed, a poor man came to beg some straw for a bed for his sick wife. Akiva at once divided with him his scanty possession, remarking to his wife, "Thou seest, my child, there are those poorer than we!" This pretended poor man was none other than the prophet [Elijah](#), who had come to test Akiba ([Ned. 50a](#)).

degree of soul manifestation is the degree to which one can hold the divine paradox, of midat haDin and haRachamim and transform one to another through acts down here in the finite world. The Zaddik is able to effect these transformations.

ORTHOGRAPHY AND EARLIEST STRANDS OF MIDRASH

It is my contention that the earliest commentators on the bible were in fact, the soferim, the copyists whose orthography allowed for subtle changes in the text that reflected their midrashic intentions without deflecting from reverence for the sacred text they were copying. The large letters of the Shma's shin and daled, the small aleph of vayikra and the small yud of Pinchas all reflect, I believe, intrusions of intent, not mistakes. Later the mystical literature will inform us that there are 2 Torah's, one below and one supernal, perfected Torah above, as reflected in the large and small lettering respectively.

VAV KETIYA THE BROKENNESS OF THE VAV IS THE BROKENNESS OF OUR DIVINE CONNECTION:

“Wherefore say: Behold, I give unto him My covenant of peace;”

לְכַן, אֶמְרֶה נְנִי נְתַן לּוֹ אֶתְבְּרִיתִי, שְׁלוֹם

Num 25:10-12.

The letter *vav* in the word Shalom is uniquely written in the *Sefer Torah* as a broken letter (*vav ketia*), to indicate the problematic nature of the Shalom of Pinchas. See the *Baal HaTurim*.

The one letter that is unique to all of Torah is the broken *vav* in the word *shalom*, again prompting many latter day commentaries. Since Pinchas has access to the divine through his soul manifestation of a high level of refinement, I would like to suggest that the role of the zaddik is to connect the supernal world to the real world, the world of the infinite with the world of the finite. This is seen in the very letters of the name of the divine YUD HEH VAV HEH. CHABAD hassidus has nicely made this metaphor for human comprehension as follows: there are four stages in the process of mind:

- 1) The initial flash of inspiration (concept) **YUD**
- 2) The broadening of the concept (developing the concept in detail) **HEH**

3) Emotional involvement and the drawing of actual plans VAV

4) Practicalities (building) HEH

Kabbalah explains that these four stages were also used in the creation of the world. The first stage was the overall concept.

The first level of conceptualization is the initial stage in which the Sefirot become manifest. This level is called the world of Atzilut. The word Atzilut comes from the Hebrew word Aitzel, which means “next to,” or “emanated from.” This world is the next stage after the Tzimtzum of the Or Ein Sof. Once the possibility for finite creation had been made possible through the Tzimtzum, it was then possible to delineate different features or attributes of G-d. The Torah uses different Hebrew names for G-d. They are in fact names that describe the different Sefirot.

For example, the name E-I describes G-dliness as manifest in the Sefirah of Chesed. Elokim describes Godliness as manifest in the Sefirah of Gevurah, and so on.

The world of Atzilut is still within the realm of the Infinite, and each of the Sefirot in the world of Atzilut is infinite.

The novelty of the world of Atzilut is the delineation between the attributes. Each one becomes identifiable in its own right.

Previously, although the possibility for their creation existed, it was totally obscured by the Or Ein Sof. In the world of Atzilut, all that can be felt is the Divine. There is yet no independent existence.

Each of the four stages of creation corresponds to one of the four letters in the Tetragrammaton, G-d's four-lettered name of Havaye. The world of Atzilut corresponds to the letter Yud.

This letter is shaped in the form of a dot and is the smallest letter from which all other letters are conceived. It is the quintessential point from which all further existence may develop.

As explained earlier, the letter Yud also corresponds to the Sefirah of Chochmah. Although all ten Sefirot are present in every world, one Sefirah (or a group of Sefirot) is

predominant at each stage. The dominant Sefirah in the world of Atzilut is Chochmah. The world of Atzilut is the revealed potential of further creation.

In the next stage, the initial concept is worked out, and plans for the creation are further developed. Within the mind, the building has taken on some form of independent existence.

Something has been created, albeit only in theory. This world is called the world of Beriah (creation). The word “creation” always implies creating something (yesh) from nothing (ayin).

In Beriah, the initial concept of Atzilut has been broadened, both in length and depth. The letter Hey corresponds to the Sefirah of Binah, which is the predominant Sefirah in Beriah.

Binah takes the initial concept of Chochmah and develops it in all its detail.

The world of Beriah takes the initial manifestation of the Sefirot in Atzilut and creates with them some form of existence which starts to take on independence. Although in Atzilut there is total “nullification” (Bittul), nothing exists independently.

What is felt in Beriah is also the Divine, however, unlike in Atzilut, in Beriah there is something outside of G-d that is feeling Him while still being totally nullified. It is for this reason that the world of Beriah is called the world of the “Divine Throne”— Kisei Hakavod. In essence, a throne is a chair upon which man lowers his posture. So too, the Divine Throne is the idea of the Divine lowering itself to come into contact with the worlds. This lowering of posture takes place in the world of Beriah.

It is also in the world of Beriah that we find the creation of souls and the highest angels. Angels (malachim) are not white-winged creatures that fly across the sky. Rather, they may be conceived of as conduits for Divine energy flow. They act as agents through whom energies flow to this world. The angels in the world of Beriah are called Seraphim, from the Hebrew word Seraiphah (a fire). These angels are so infused with feeling that they “burn up.” This is not to be taken in the literal sense, but that they are so close to G-d that they cannot endure the intensity, and are in a constant state of spiritual ecstasy. The world of Beriah is also the place of the upper Garden of Eden, which is an abode for souls that have merited entering this most sublime realm as a reward for their efforts in this world.

The next stage is the world of Yetzirah (formation). It is in this world that finite plans are drawn up for actual creation.

The predominant Sefirot in this world are the six emotional Sefirot from Chesed to Yesod. They correspond to the letter Vav in the name Havaye (Vav numerically equals the number 6).

This world is where emotional attachment to the project forms and it takes on a momentum of its own. The entire project is no longer merely a concept and concrete steps are being taken to actualize the idea. Here exists the lower Garden of Eden, the abode for souls who merit basking in its Divine Light.

This is the realm of the angels called Chayot Hakodesh (lit. “holy beings”). The angels in this world take on names corresponding to the Sefirot. For example, the angel Michael corresponds to the Sefirah of Chesed, Gabriel to Gevurah, and Raphael to Tiferet, etc. When we recite Kedushah in the repetition of the Amidah, we say “Kadosh” (holy) three times. This is a reference to the angels of Beriah, Yetzirah, and Assiyah; all of whom pay homage to G-d in their different ways.

Ezekiel’s prophecy was experienced when he entered the world of Yetzirah through meditative techniques. Since he wished to communicate this experience to his people, he had to use human language to describe metaphysical phenomena.

In the world of Yetzirah, he describes the angels there in the form of creatures. Below him were the Ophanim, the angels of the world of Assiyah. Throne of the world of Beriah was above him. Sitting on the Throne was the form of a man describing the Sefirotic array in the world of Atzilut. Isaiah’s prophecy entered an even deeper state within the world of Beriah, and subsequently, his description is much less detailed.

Finally, the fourth world is Assiyah (the world of action), where the creation is actualized. The Divine creative flow from the world of Yetzirah flows down through the angels into the creation of the four kingdoms: Mineral, Vegetable, Animal, and Human. The predominant Sefirah in the world of Assiyah is Malchut. Malchut suggests sovereignty—the idea of a distant king ruling over willing subjects. Assiyah is the world in which the creation takes on a form of total independence, yet the place where the subjects accept G-d as King.

The world of Assiyah is somewhat contrary. The Master Creator, who is a supreme artist, has created a most beautiful and diverse creation. It is a creation of G-d alone, yet G-d is hidden to the degree that His creations are not aware of their Creator. Somehow it is possible in this world to totally deny the presence of G-d, as He is completely concealed. It is this total concealment that allows this world to be a realm of free choice, where a person can choose to serve or ignore, as well as the realm of challenge, where the hand of G-d is sometimes overt and at other times covert. This world is the ultimate purpose of creation, and it is here that G-d wishes His creatures to create an abode for Him. This is achieved through adherence to Torah and Mitzvot. In Torah, G-d has communicated the truth of creation and provided a path through which people can navigate the choppy waters of life. This is accomplished at every stage by attaching themselves to Him through Mitzvot.

In the higher worlds what is manifest is the Divine Light.

In reality, they are only manifestations of the Divine creative ability; mere rays out of the sun. However, it is in this world, where one cannot perceive the Light manifest in the higher realms, that one can truly appreciate Atzmut (essence of G-d).

In this world, we perceive ourselves as separate and distinct from the flow of G-dliness, and it is this feeling of being apart that permits us to behold the essence of G-d to a greater degree.

Ironically, there is a vantage point to the observer in this world.

In the higher worlds, one is blinded somewhat by rays of the "Divine Light" (Giluyim). The higher one goes, either in the lower or higher Garden of Eden, the more sublime the revelation and the more blinded a person is. Yet, from Earth, we can appreciate the sun in a far greater manner. It is specifically in this realm where there is a total eclipse of this Divine Light that the observer can actually come into contact with Atzmut Himself.

Though He stands far beyond comprehension, one can observe creation and realize that this can only be the work of G-d Himself.⁶

⁶ see http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/361902/jewish/The-Four-Worlds.htm Rabbi Nissin D. Dubov

I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT THE VAV **KETIYAH** MEANS A FRACTURE IN THE THE THIRD WORLD, THE WORLD OF CONNECTIVENESS. The VAV split means the relationship between the divine and human is also split and the shalom that was granted to Pinchas was not complete. Furthermore it was precisely Pinchas, not Moses, who could carry this brokenness because of his ability to see the world for what it is and not what it ought. Moses could only see the world from God's perspective. Pinchas saw it from both. This ability to see both perspectives and act accordingly allowed him the insight into the halacha of *kanaim pogim bo* the extra-judicial means of achieving soul refinement.

<i>Yud</i>	<i>Atzilut</i> (emanation)	<i>Chochmah</i> (wisdom)	Initial Inspiration
<i>Hei</i>	<i>Beriah</i> (creation)	<i>Binah</i> (understanding)	Broadening of Concept
<i>Vav</i>	<i>Yetzirah</i> (formation)	<i>Chessed</i> (kindness) through <i>Yesod</i> (foundation)	Emotional Involvement in Plans
<i>Hei</i>	<i>Assiyah</i> (action)	<i>Malchut</i> (kingship)	Building of Project

The broken VAV admits to a broken world. God gifts this brokenness to Pinchas who is able to carry it. The VAV is the connector between the idealized world of YUD nd HEH to the broken world of the final HEH.

Pinchas is able to connect to the divine by owning and containing the shleimut the anger of the divine and thus receiving the brit shalom,....

Numbers 26:1 provides a curious gap in the text with the sentence leaving off in mid speech: “and it was after the plague...” and then onto the the census.

This caesura leaves a gaping hole in the text marked by the orthographical “petichta” or gap all the way to the end of the column. this is a point of discontinuity in the text and a gap in comprehension for the reader leaving open as to what in fact took place “after the plague”.

IIN THIS EMPTY SPACE AFTER THE PLAGUE... we are invited to bring our own plagues, our own brokenness into the reading of the torah

Just like the broken VAV in the text and the brokenness of the Israelites by this horrific episode, we too are invited to step into the void, as if the Torah allows us to write our own biographies of brokenness into the text in a bold journalistic invitation.

AS IF THE SHLEIMUT OF THE DIVINE MANIFEST IN THE WORLD IS UNFULFILLED

AND THE EMPTY SPACE OF THE HAMAGEIFA SCREAMS TO US, begs us to enter the terrifying hollow space, a *chalal hapanui* where history is left open for us an invitation to take the leap into the unknown. Pinchas becomes our spirit guide into the healing needed for this journey.

Postscript:

RAV KOOK on zealotry

An incident took place in Jaffa, where Rabbi Kook served as rabbi from 1904 to 1914. One *Shabbat* day, a secular photographer came and disturbed the Sabbath peace of a religious neighborhood of Jaffa. In complete disregard for the local religious sensibilities, he set up a large camera in the middle of the street and began taking pictures.

This public desecration of the Sabbath deeply angered the local residents. One man, particularly incensed by the photographer's insensitivity, took a pail of water and thoroughly soaked the Sabbath-desecrater. Naturally, the photographer was indignant.

He was so confident in the justice of his cause that he decided to register a complaint against the water-douser with the rabbi of Jaffa - Rabbi Kook.

Rabbi Kook told the man, "I see that you don't understand the severity of public Sabbath desecration. But you should realize that your action was a serious affront to the community. You entered a neighborhood of Sabbath-observers and you offended them deeply, truly piercing their hearts.

"Of course, the proper path would have been to correct you verbally. Perhaps you would have understood the seriousness of your actions and stopped. If that man had consulted with me, I would have advised him **not** to throw water on you.

"However, he didn't ask; he just reacted spontaneously. You should know that on occasion, such instinctive reactions, which do not take into account norms of politeness, are justified. **In cases where people disregard societal norms, and breach accepted boundaries, irregardless of the implications for others - the unmeasured, spontaneous reaction is often the response that most effectively prevents further abuse.**

"There was such an occasion when the Jewish people were in the desert, and Pinchas responded, not accordingly to the normative *Halacha*, but as a zealot: "*Kanaim pogim bo.*" If Pinchas had asked, he would not have been told to kill Zimri. But since his act was done sincerely, and served to prevent future violations, his zealous deed was approved after the fact."

Rav Kook himself would not have approved of the zealotry yet made use of the Pinchas episode to condone such "extra-judicial" behavior. As if he recognized that even in the area of societal norms of behavior there is place for such spontaneous outbursts of violence.

