



PINCHAS

WHY YOU MUST LEARN FROM YOUR OWN MISTAKES

Some Things Cannot Be Taught. They Must Be Learned and Earned.

PARSHAH OVERVIEW

Pinchas

Aaron's grandson Phineas is rewarded for his act of zealotry in killing the Simeonite prince Zimri and the Midianite princess who was his paramour: G-d grants him a covenant of peace and the priesthood.

A census of the people counts 601,730 men between the ages of twenty and sixty. Moses is instructed on how the Land is to be divided by lottery among the tribes and families of Israel. The five daughters of Zelophehad petition Moses that they be granted the portion of the Land belonging to their father, who died without sons; G-d accepts their claim and incorporates it into the

Torah's laws of inheritance.

Moses empowers Joshua to succeed him and lead the people into the Land of Israel.

The *parshah* concludes with a detailed list of the daily offerings and the additional offerings brought on Shabbat; Rosh Chodesh (the first day of the month); and the festivals of Passover, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

TEXT 1A

Numbers 27:1–5

א. ותקרבנה בנות צלפחד בן חפר בן גלעד בן מכיר
בן מנשה למשפחת מנשה בן יוסף, ואלה שמות
בנותיו, מחלה נעה וחסלה ומלכה ותרצה.

ב. ותעמדנה לפני משה ולפני אלעזר הכהן ולפני
הנשיאם וכל העדה, פתח אהל מועד, לאמר.

ג. אבינו מת במדבר והוא לא היה בתוך העדה
הנועדים על ה' בעדת קרח, כי בחטאו מת ובנים לא
היו לו.

ד. למה יגרע שם אבינו מתוך משפחתו כי אין לו
בן, תנה לנו אחזה בתוך אחי אבינו.

ה. ויקרב משה את משפטן לפני ה'.

1. The daughters of Zelophehad, of the Manassite family—son of Hephher, son of Gilead, son of Machir, son of Manasseh, son of Joseph—came forward. The names of the daughters were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.

2. They stood before Moses, Eleazar the priest, the chieftains, and the whole assembly, at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting, and they said:

3. “Our father died in the wilderness. He did not belong to Korah’s faction, which banded together against G-d, rather he died for his own sin, and he has left no sons.

4. “Let not our father’s name be lost to his clan just because he had no son. Give us a holding among our father’s kinsmen.”

5. Moses brought their case before G-d.

TEXT 1B

Ibid., 25:6–8

ו. וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

ז. בְּנֹת צִלְפָּחֵד דְּבָרְתִּי, נָתַן תָּתֵן לָהֶם אֲחֻזַּת נַחֲלָה
בְּתוֹךְ אֶחָי אֲבֵיהֶם, וְהֶעֱבַרְתָּ אֶת נַחֲלַת אֲבִיהֶן לָהֶן.

ח. וְאֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר, אִישׁ כִּי יָמוּת וְבֶן
אֵין לוֹ וְהֶעֱבַרְתֶּם אֶת נַחֲלָתוֹ לְבָתּוֹ.

6. G-d spoke to Moses saying:

7. “Zelophehad’s daughters speak justly.
Certainly, give them a portion of inheritance
along with their father’s brothers, and
transfer their father’s inheritance to them.

8. “Speak to the Children of Israel saying, ‘If a
man dies and has no son, transfer his
inheritance to his daughter.’”

TEXT 2A

Numbers 9:6–11

ו. וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טְמֵאִים לִנְפֹשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ
לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא, וַיִּקְרְבוּ לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וְלִפְנֵי
אַהֲרֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא.

ז. וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הֵהֱמָה אֵלָיו, אֲנַחְנוּ טְמֵאִים לִנְפֹשׁ
אָדָם, לָמָּה נִגְרַע לְבַלְתִּי הַקָּרֵב אֶת קִרְבֵּן ה' בְּמַעַדוֹ
בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

ח. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם מֹשֶׁה, עֲמְדוּ וְאִשְׁמְעָה מֶה יִצְוֶה ה' לָכֶם.

ט. וַיַּדְבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר.

י. דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר, אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי יִהְיֶה טְמֵא
לִנְפֹשׁ אוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ רְחֹקָה לָכֶם אוֹ לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם, וַעֲשֵׂה פֶסַח
לָהּ.

יא. בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּאַרְבַּעָּה עָשָׂר יוֹם בֵּין הָעֶרְבִים יַעֲשׂוּ
אֹתוֹ, עַל מִצּוֹת וּמָרָרִים יֹאכְלֶהוּ.

6. There were men who were ritually impure [because of contact with] a dead person, and therefore could not offer the Passover sacrifice on that day. They approached Moses and Aaron on that day.

7. Those men said to him, “We are ritually unclean [because of contact] with a dead person; why should we be excluded so as not to bring the offering of the L-rd in its appointed time, with all the Children of Israel?”

8. Moses said to them, “Wait, and I will hear what G-d will instruct you to do.”

9. G-d spoke to Moses, saying:

10. “Speak to the Children of Israel saying: Any person who becomes unclean from [contact with] the dead, or is on a distant journey, whether among you or in future generations, should offer a Passover sacrifice to G-d.

11. “They should offer it in the second month, on the fourteenth day, in the afternoon; they should eat it with matzot and bitter herbs.”



In both cases, the people brought their case not just to Moses but to others as well. The daughters of Zelophehad spoke to Moses, Eleazar, and the princes. The men who wanted a second Passover asked it of Moses and his brother Aaron.

TEXT 2B

Rashi, Numbers 9:6

"לפני משה ולפני אהרן". כששניהם יושבין בבית
המדרש באו ושאלום. ולא יתכן לומר זה אחר זה,
שאם משה לא היה יודע, אהרן מניין לו?

"Before Moses and Aaron." They asked both,
as both were seated in the study hall. One
cannot suggest that they asked Aaron after
Moses because if Moses didn't know, how
would Aaron know?

TEXT 2C

Rashi, Numbers 27:2

"לפני משה". ואחר כך לפני אלעזר. אפשר אם
משה לא ידע אלעזר יודע? . . .

אבא חנן משום רבי אלעזר אומר: בבית המדרש
היו יושבים, ועמדו לפני כולם.

“Before Moses” and then before Eleazar. If
Moses didn’t know, how would Eleazar know?
. . .

Aba Chanan said in the name of Rabbi
Eleazar, “They were all seated in the study
hall, and the daughters stood [to speak]
before [them] all at once.”

TEXT 3

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei Sichot
18, p. 118*

דער חילוק, אין פשטות, צווישן פסח ראשון און פסח
שני איז:

פסח ראשון איז דער אופן החיוב פון הקרבת הפסח ווי
ס'איז אויסגעשטעלט און דארף זיין על פי סדר פון
תורה (בזמנו); פסח שני איז אופן החיוב שלא על פי
סדר (שלא בזמנו)

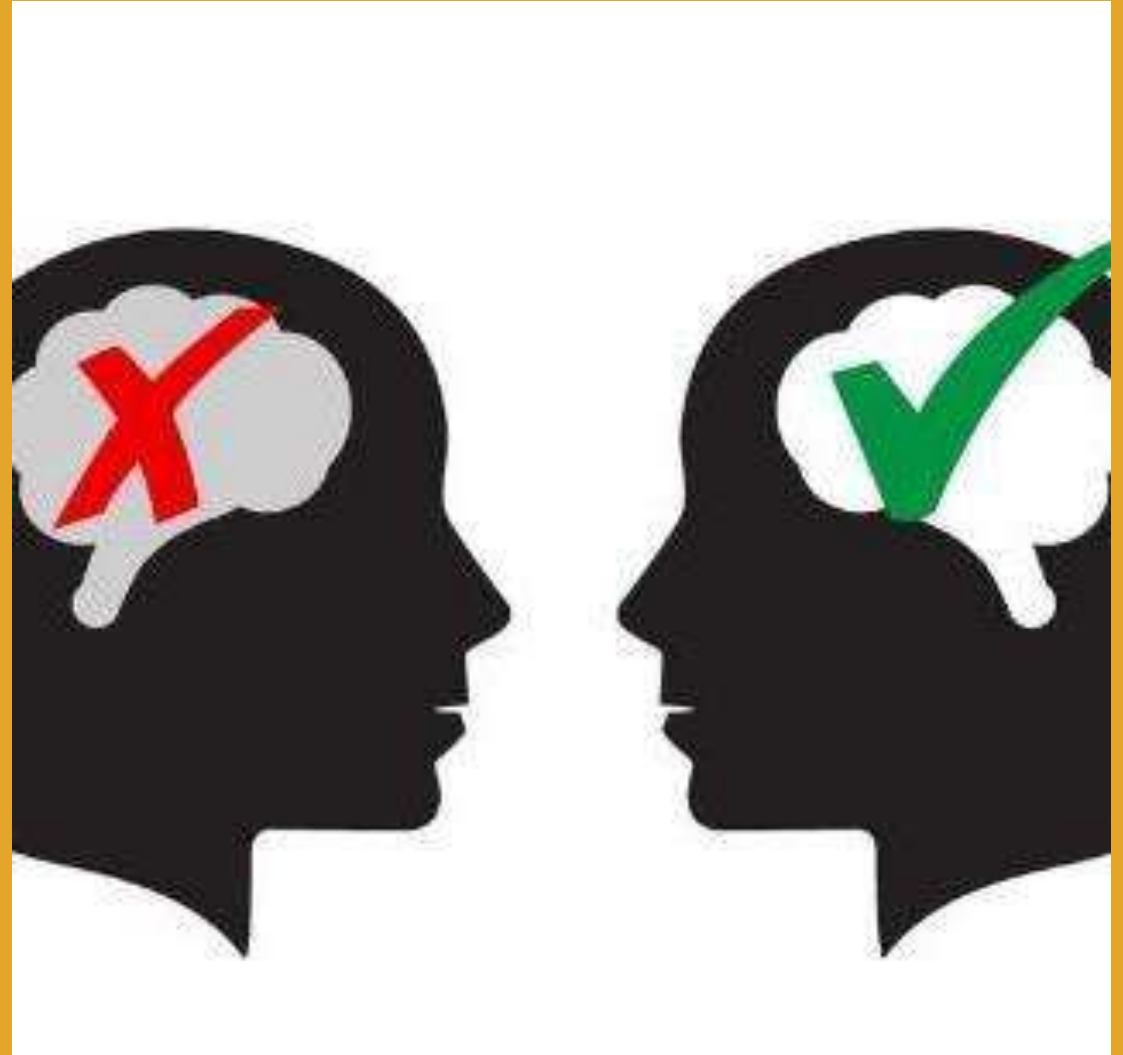
די וואס האבן ניט געבראכט דעם פסח בזמנו — אף
על פי כן זאגט מען ניט עבר יומו בטל קרבנו נאר
תורה גיט די געלעגנהייט צו ברענגען דעם קרבן
שפעטער.

What is the difference between the first and the second Passover?

The first Passover is the default method of discharging the paschal offering obligation—on the date assigned by the Torah. The second Passover is activated when one discharges one's obligation in a disorderly manner—on the incorrect date.

Those who failed to bring the paschal offering on time did not lose their chance. The Torah made an exception and offered them a second opportunity.

The first Passover represents our state of mind when we keep up with our obligations and do everything right. The second Passover represents our state of mind when we slip up, deliberately or inadvertently, and do something wrong.



TEXT 4

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, ibid., p. 119*

ס'איז בדוגמא צום אונטערשייד צווישן דער
עבודה פון א צדיק אדער פון א בעל תשובה:

א צדיק דינט דעם אויבערשטן לויטן דרך הישר
— "אשר עשה האלקים את האדם ישר" — על
פי סדר התורה. א בעל תשובה וואס האט עובר
געווען אויף סדר התורה, גיט אים דער
אויבערשטער די מעגליכקייט צו פאריכטן דעם
עבר און משלים זיין החסר.

The [difference between the two Passovers is like the] difference between a righteous person and a penitent.

The righteous person serves G-d in the way that the Torah establishes—he is upright. A penitent is one who has transgressed the Torah's proper order. Now G-d provides the opportunity to correct the past and fill in what was lacking.



Life is messy, and most of us mess up from time to time. When that happens, we are not perpetually out of favor with G-d. Although we walked out the front door, and might even have slammed it behind us, the back door is always wide open for us.

In a state of sin, there is a barrier between G-d and us, and we are at a distance. There is no direct communication between us because we have turned from G-d.



TEXT 5

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Hayom Yom,
14 Iyar*

פסח שני ענינו איז — עס איז ניטא קיין
"פארפאלען".

מען קען אלע מאל פאריכטען. אפילו מי שהיה
טמא, מי שהיה בדרך רחוקה, און אפילו "לכם", אז
דאס איז געווען ברצונו, פונדעסטוועגען קען מען
מתקן זיין.

The theme of the second Passover is that it is
never too late; we can always make things
right.

Even if one was ritually impure or at a
distance, and even in a case when it was
deliberate, it can nonetheless be corrected.

TEXT 6

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei Sichot*
18, p. 120

די תנועה פון תשובה קומט (בדרך כלל) דורך דער
התעוררות פון דעם בעל תשובה: כאטש ער איז
אין א מצב פון "טמא לנפש אדם" — היפך דטהרה
ועל אחת כמה וכמה ניט קדושה, ער איז ניט שיין
צו דערהערן א גילוי אור מלמעלה, דאך ווערט ער
נתעורר מצד עצמו — מלמטה למעלה, בתשובה.

As a rule, the inspiration for repentance comes from within [not from G-d]. Penitents are in a spiritual state of impurity: "Their soul is impure" [Numbers 9:6]. In the present, their mindset is not one of purity, and they are certainly not in a holy mindset—they are uninspired by G-dliness. Nevertheless, they find their own way to repentance. Repentance is, by definition, self-inspired.



What inspires their repentance? Free choice. They freely choose to ignore the allure of physical pleasures and to choose spiritual attachment. To choose G-d. Nothing forces them. They force themselves. This is free choice.

TEXT 7A

Talmud, Berachot 34B

מָקוֹם שֶׁבַעֲלֵי תְּשׁוּבָה עוֹמְדִין, אֵין צַדִּיקִים גְּמוּרִין
יְכוּלִין לַעֲמֹד בּוֹ.

The pedestal upon which penitents stand
cannot be reached by those who are
perfectly righteous.

TEXT 7B

Zohar, vol. 1, p. 129B

רבי יוסי אמר: תנינן, אתר דמאריהון דתשובה
קיימי ביה בההוא עלמא, צדיקים גמורים לית לון
רשו לקיימא ביה, בגין דאינון קריבין למלכא
יתיר מכולהו, ואינון משכי עליהו ברעותא דלבא
יתיר, ובחילא סגיא לאתקרבא למלכא.

Rabbi Yosei said, “We learned that perfectly righteous people have no permission to enter the Heavenly space occupied by those who repented on earth. This is because penitents are closer to G-d and are drawn to G-d with more passion than everyone else. They are drawn ever closer to G-d with intense vigor.”



The closeness and conviction that comes from hitting rock bottom and then fighting your way back for a second chance isn't something you can learn in a classroom or get from being inspired in a synagogue. It can only come from living through it on your own. The appreciation you come to thereafter is deeper and more real.

TEXT 8

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Letter, II Adar
8, 5727 (March 20, 1967),
www.chabad.org/1898668*

To be sure, that period of time in the past when the daily life should have been different requires rectification, especially by means of a determined effort to improve the present and future, so as to make up for the past.

On the other hand, human nature is such that things that come easily are taken for granted, and are not so appreciated and cherished as things for which one had to fight and struggle. Thus, the level of *Yiddishkeit* which you and your husband have attained through real efforts has permeated you more deeply and thoroughly.

May G-d grant that you should both continue in this direction together with your children, without allowing yourself to be hindered or influenced in any way by the difficulties which you describe in your letter.

On the contrary, the difficulties themselves can serve as a challenge and stimulus to greater spiritual advancement, as is also explained in Chassidic literature. . . .

It is precisely because penitents come to G-d on their own that they cherish Torah and Judaism much more than the person who never strayed.



TEXT 9

*Rabbi Shneur Zalman of
Liadi, Tanya, Likutei
Amarim, ch. 37*

השכחה היא מקליפת הגוף ונפש החיונית הפהמית.

Forgetfulness stems from G-d being
concealed in the body and in the soul that
vitalizes it.

TEXT 10

Rashi, Numbers 27:5

נתעלמה הלכה ממנו.

וכאן נפרע על שנטל עטרה לומר "והדבר אשר יקשה מכם
תקריבון אלי" (דברים א, יז).

The law eluded him.

Here, he was punished for crowning himself [with authority] by saying, “And any case that is too difficult for you, bring to me” (Deuteronomy 1:17).

TEXT 11

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, Likutei Sichot
23, pp. 185–186*

”בית המדרש” איז אן ארט וואו מ'לערנט תורה צוזאמן (ניט אן ארט וואו אידן פארזאמלען זיך צו הערן תורה, הלכה, דרשה וכיוצא בזה, פון א חכם), דאס הייסט, הגם אז אין בית המדרש איז פאראן א רב, ראש ישיבה וכיוצא בזה, און עס זיינען דא תלמידים . . . אף על פי כן, איז דער ענין פון בית המדרש, אז אלע "יושבי בית המדרש" זיינען זיך משתתף אין דעם לימוד: הערן די שאלה, שקלא וטריא אין איר וכו'.

דערפון איז אויך מובן אז שאלות וועלכע ווערן געפרעגט אין "בית המדרש" זיינען באופן שונה ווי די שאלות וואס מען פרעגט במקום ישיבת בית דין, דיין, ביי א רב: בשעת מ'פרעגט א שאלה ביי בית דין, דיין, א רב, אפילו ווען דערביי שטייען תלמידים, איז מובן אז די שאלה ווערט געפרעגט דוקא ביי בית דין.

מה שאין כן א שאלה וואס ווערט געפרעגט בבית המדרש, איז זי געווענדעט (ניט צום ראש בית המדרש, ראש ישיבה, וכיוצא בזה, נאר) צו אלע "יושבי בית המדרש" — זיי זיינען אלע מעיין בהשאלה און יעדערער פון זיי קען זאגן דעתו בזה.

The study hall is where we study Torah together. It is not a place where Jews gather to hear a Torah lecture, a legal rendering, a sermon, etc. from a sage. This means that though there is a rabbi or a dean in the study hall as well as students, everyone is encouraged to participate. Everyone is a partner in the dialogue; they hear the question, they debate, etc.

This tells us that questions posed in a study hall are different from questions posed in a court, or in the private study of a rabbi or judge. When you pose a question in court or in a private study, the question is intended for the rabbi or judge even if the courtroom or study is filled with students.

When a question is posed in the study hall, it is not directed exclusively to the dean or teacher, rather it is addressed to everyone present. Everyone considers the question, and everyone is entitled to share an opinion.

If the petitioner had to initiate, the conversation, it made sense for them to choose an environment that encouraged students and laypeople to speak freely.



TEXT 12

*The Rebbe, Rabbi
Menachem Mendel
Schneerson, ibid., p. 188*

דער חידוש אין די צוויי פרשיות איז, אז זיי זיינען נמשך
און געזאגט געווארן מלמעלה דורך א טענה ובקשת המטה
...

און דאס איז אויך די שייכות צו . . . "בבית המדרש היו
יושבים" . . . מדגיש די חשיבות פון לימוד התורה על ידי
המטה . . .

לימוד התורה בבית המדרש איז מדגיש די מעלת הלימוד
דהאדם, המטה, מה שאין כן הקהלה (פתח אהל מועד —
הערן דבר השם על ידי משה, הקהל את העם בשנת הקהל
— הערן דבר השם על ידי המלך וכיוצא בזה) וואו ס'איז
מודגש מעלת המעלה, די נקהלים זיינען בלויז שומעים
ומקבלים הדברים.

ביז אז אי אפשר לבית המדרש בלא חידוש, דורך פלפול
חברים וכו' ווערן נתחדש ענינים בתורה.

The novelty of these two stories is that the response only came from Above after a petition or a request was made here below. . . .

[Both stories] are associated with . . . the study hall . . . because both emphasize the importance of our Torah study. . . .

The atmosphere in the study hall emphasizes the importance of the student's study. This is unlike the large gathering place where the nation heard Moses lecture or the national gathering in the year of *Hakhel* to hear G-d's words spoken by the king. There, the emphasis was on the speaker. The role of the people was to listen and receive.

[The study hall is so different that] "Every session at a study hall stimulates a new insight" [Talmud, Chagigah 3a]. When colleagues argue and debate, etc., new Torah ideas rise to the surface.

KEY POINTS

1. Repentance must be at the behest of the penitent. It is only when we turn back to G-d that G-d can tell us that we are welcome. Should G-d tell us before we are ready to hear it, we might not hear it.
2. Some things in life can be learned from a book or from others. Some things in life can only be learned from personal experience. Marriage, parenting, and grief are but a few examples.
3. The realization of how much we treasure G-d can only be arrived at from personal experience. When we have experienced distance, we learn to cherish closeness.
4. Our relationship with G-d is the gist of Judaism. We can learn the laws and traditions of Judaism from others. But the heart of Judaism must be learned from personal experience.
5. We learn the hows and whys in a lecture hall. The teacher lectures and we listen. We experience Judaism in the study hall. It is where we are encouraged to ask, propose, debate, and analyze until we internalize the teaching.

