



Parasha Pinchas

July 8, 2023

Torah: Numbers 25:10-30:1.

Haftarah: Jeremiah 1:1-2:3.

Ketuwim Shlichim: John 2:13-22.

Have you ever thought about your destiny? What is it? According to *Collins Dictionary*, “A person's destiny is everything that happens to them during their life, including what will happen in the future, especially when it is considered to be controlled by someone or something else.” As followers of Yeshua, we can accept the first part of the definition, but not the last. We can say that our destiny is everything which happens to us during our life including what will happen in the future, but we can't say, that is, we don't believe, that our destiny is controlled by someone else because ADONAI has created us with free will. He allows us to make our own choices. Our destiny may have in some way been shaped by circumstances beyond our control, even guided by ADONAI, but our final destiny is based upon our choice, our decision, to live in a certain way. We know what our destiny has been up until this point, but has it been completely written? No, it has not. There will always be choices facing us, choices which we will make according to our free will. Aaron's grandson, *Pinchas*, Phineas, came to a point in his life where he was faced with a choice.

Our *Torah* portion today is *Pinchas*. At the time of these events, Israel had been in the wilderness for over 39 years and wandering for the last 37 years according to ADONAI's leading. The first generation which came out of Egypt, rejected ADONAI's plan to take them into the land of milk and honey and He condemned them to die in the desert. At the time of our *parasha*, almost all of the older generation, including *Aha'aron* and *Miryam*, had died. ADONAI had judged Moses and Aaron for their lack of faith and obedience to follow His commands and Aaron had completed his destiny, dying on Mount Hor. At the time of the events of *Parasha Pinchas*, Aaron's son *El'azar*, Eleazer, is High Priest. But now, someone we've not noticed before, a possible future leader, suddenly appears. We see this in every society. There are those who are there, basically unknown for years, and then they appear and began to do great things. That is what happened with *Pinchas*. He was Aaron's grandson and the son of Eleazer. His father was a priest, actually, the High Priest at that time, but he had not even been heard from before. And, he entered the scene dramatically: *6 Then behold, a man from Bnei-Yisrael came and brought a Midianite woman to his brothers before the eyes of Moses and of the whole assembly of Bnei-Yisrael, while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting! 7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the kohen saw it, he arose from the midst of the assembly, took a spear in his hand, 8 and went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced them through—both the Israelite man and the woman's belly.* (Numbers 6:6-8a TLV). These verses are from last week's *parasha*, *Balak*.

To fully understand what this event with *Pinchas* is all about, we have to go back and find out what happened before. In last week's *parasha*, *Balak*, the king of *Moav* had paid the prophet *Bil'am*, Balaam, to curse Israel, but his plan failed completely. Balaam obeyed ADONAI and blessed Israel, rather than cursing them and this caused *Balak* to completely

fail in his attempt stop the Israelites. Balaam is now temporarily out of the picture, having left Moab and returned to his home.

Our *parasha* today begins with this: *1 While Israel was staying in Shittim, the people began to have immoral sexual relations with women from Moab. 2 Then they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, so the people were eating, and bowing down before their gods. 3 When Israel became bound to Baal of Peor, the anger of Adonai grew hot against Israel* (Numbers 25:1-3 TLV). Bound to Baal means that they were worshipping this false god as their god. ADONAI was so displeased with this that He commanded Moses to seize all of the ringleaders and hang them. That they were worshipping Baal had been brought about by a very clever plan. King *Balak* had allied himself with the Midianites against Israel and the Moabite and Midianite women were sexually enticing the Israelite males to lead them away from ADONAI. It was working so well that many Israelites were worshipping *Ba'al* of *Pe'or*, the local god of Mount *Pe'or*. Many Israelite men and women had violated one of the first commands which ADONAI gave to Israel, *3 "You shall have no other gods before me"* (Exodus 20:3 TLV).

This sexual activity was not only going on at Moabite cult gatherings, but even in the Israelite camp. The Moabite and Midianite women were fearlessly coming over into the Israelite camp for sex, at least that one did. Because of this, ADONAI in His righteous anger, brought a plague on Israel and many were dying. Even while they were dying, the illicit sex was continuing. This is where we meet *Pinchas*. *7 When Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the kohen saw it, he arose from the midst of the assembly, took a spear in his hand, 8 and went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced them through—both the Israelite man and the woman's belly. Then the plague among Bnei-Yisrael was stopped* (Numbers 25:7 TLV). The audacity of those two people, having sex in an open tent to be seen by anyone without regard for anything but their pleasure. Righteous anger rose up in *Pinchas* as he saw this Israelite man, *Zimri*, having sexual relations with a Midianite woman, *Kozbi*, at the same time that all of Israel was fervently paying in front of the Tabernacle about the plague. Righteous anger swelled up in *Pinchas* and he grabbed a spear, went into the tent and thrust it through the back of the man and into the stomach of the woman and both died and the plague stopped.

What do we know about *Pinchas*? Hardly anything. There is an earlier brief mention of him in Scripture, but up until this point, he had not played any part in what was happening among the Israelites. In past messages regarding *Pinchas*, I have presented one idea, but find that my answer was incomplete and there is more information to be considered. The question is, “was *Pinchas* a *kohen* when he responded to this situation? The *Talmud* discussed this question in *Tractate Zevachim* and gave two opinions about it. The first is that only sons or sons of sons born after Aaron became High Priest could become priests. The second opinion was that all of Aaron’s descendants, regardless of when they were born, were *kohanim*.

Rashi, *Rabbi Shlomo Ytichaki*, a rabbi in 11th century France took the first opinion. *Rashi* said that *Pinchas* was not a priest because he had already been born when his father *Eleazar* was appointed to be a priest. He believed that the rule was that only sons born to priests “after their appointment as priest” would become priests and so, *Pinchas* was not a priest when he intervened in this situation. He believed this because when Moses was dealing with Pharaoh in Egypt, *Pinchas* was also there: *25 Eleazar, Aaron's son, married one of the daughters of Putiel and she bore him Phinehas.* (Exodus 6:25a TLV). *Phinehas*, the son of *El'azar* had already been born before his grandfather Aaron was appointed High Priest. And,

according to *Rashi*, that left him out of the priesthood. According to what *Rashi* understood, when the plague began, *Pinchas* was a Levite serving the Kohath clan, the clan founded by his great-great-grandfather, *K'hat*. If what *Rashi* believed was true, *Pinchas* would have been serving a very important function as a Levite. He would have been one of the ones who was charged with transporting the special articles of the sanctuary, the Ark of the Covenant, the *Menorah* and all of the other things in the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. According to *Rashi*, even though he was the son of the High Priest Eleazer, he was never to be a priest. He would always be a Levite of the Kohath clan.

The second opinion was taken up by Maimonides, *Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon*, also known as the *Rambam*, a rabbi living in Spain in the 12th century. According to this opinion, *Pinchas* and his descendants after him already possessed the status of the priesthood and that ADONAI's covenant with him was not about becoming a priest, but was about something different. 12 "So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of shalom! 13 It will be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei-Yisrael" (Numbers 25:12-13 TLV). Maimonides said that *Pinchas* was already a *kohen*, and had been a *kohen* from birth. Other rabbis add that this covenant is to be understood that ADONAI was promising *Pinchas* the High Priesthood, an office in which he did serve after his father *El'azar*. With all this in mind, I tend to side with Maimonides, believing that *Pinchas*, even though already born, was already a priest and most likely had been assisting in the priesthood even though it is not mentioned in Scripture. This is interesting background information, but we don't need to get bogged down in the details and speculations of what the rabbis think the Scripture that we just read means. The important point for us is that *Pinchas* did what was necessary at the time it was needed and in doing so is an example for us and ADONAI rewarded him for it. Any follower of Yeshua can be called upon to step out in faith for ADONAI even though he or she has up until that time, has essentially, just been sitting in the congregation. *Pinchas* was a priest who up until this time had not done anything remarkable. The emergency to which he responded was not just two people having sex in public, but the apostasy of Israel in following a false god. We next see *Pinchas* in Numbers 31 leading Israel into the battle in which the Moabites and Midianites were defeated. 6 Moses sent them into battle, 1,000 from each tribe, and with them Phinehas son of Eleazar the kohen, who took with him articles from the Sanctuary and trumpets for signaling (Numbers 31:6 TLV). We are also told that in this battle, the Midianite kings and also Balaam were killed (Numbers 31:8 TLV). Balaam had apparently returned to the area and he was judged by ADONAI for his sin. What was his sin? It was his advice. ADONAI judged Balaam: 16—because of Balaam's advice—who caused Bnei-Yisrael to be unfaithful to Adonai in the matter of Peor, so that the plague was on the community of Adonai (Numbers 31:16b TLV). Balaam planned the whole thing and because of it, ADONAI judged him.

This past week, our nation celebrated its 247th birthday. As we look at our nation today, we see a moral collapse in our society. A large segment of our nation is focused on sex, much like Israel was for a brief time at Peor. But, even with all of the sin going on here, we have the hope of the end of the age and the return of *Yeshua* our Messiah to deliver us. Today we face some of the same spiritual challenges that Israel faced in *Pinchas's* day when they were getting ready to fight the battles necessary to possess the land of Israel. They were going in to Canaan to do battle with a people who rejected G-d's authority, a people who followed other gods, a people who sacrificed humans to their gods, and a people who used sex in their pagan religious rites. The Canaanites were people who were doing things which ADONAI called abominations. Today, we see those very same abominations in our own

society, and in a growing segment of our population these things are even accepted as normal. We know that ADONAI hasn't called us to kill those who don't follow Him. On the contrary, we are to love those who reject ADONAI. In spite of their rejection of Him He loves them just as much as he loves us. Today, we are engaged in a spiritual battle, a battle just as fierce as Israel was facing in the incident at Peor, and every follower of Yeshua is being called upon to have the devotion to ADONAI that *Pinchas* had. It's a battle which we will win because we are on the right side.

Pinchas was a citizen of Israel. While our spiritual citizenship is in heaven, in the natural we are Americans. As citizens of the United States we have enjoyed many freedoms since our beginning, but what is happening today shows us that our freedom of worship is seriously being challenged. How can a nation change so much in such a short period of time? The things we are seeing today don't seem possible. Just ten years ago, who would have believed that a large segment of our population would have a positive opinion regarding allowing children to have medical treatment to change their sex or that whole church denominations would approve of a homosexual lifestyle and homosexual clergy? We would all agree that from a moral standpoint, the United States of today is much different than it was in 1776. But, there are some things that are better. Slavery has always been wrong and our forebears were wrong in allowing it. It occurred because they made laws which allowed it. We all understand that the nation is not our savior, Yeshua is. But, many in His body today have made the nation their savior, and look to their favorite candidate for president as the one who will rescue them from the abominations of the far political left. ADONAI gave us governments, and yes, we are charged to support them by obeying laws, by voting, by paying taxes, by serving in the military and by many other things, but our government is not our savior. We are called to be responsible citizens of our nation, but Yeshua is our Savior and it is only to Him that we look for deliverance.

In the year 1787, a man named Alexander Tyler, a history professor at The University of Edinburgh in Scotland, wrote a paper which he entitled: "The Fall of The Athenian Republic." It is about the Greek democracy which existed thousands of years ago. Tyler wrote: "A democracy is always temporary in nature; it simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up until the time that voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury, with the result that every democracy will finally collapse due to loose fiscal policy, which is always followed by a dictatorship." We definitely seem to have a loose fiscal policy. With current assets of 5 trillion dollars, our national debt is more than 32 trillion and has doubled in the last ten years. Tyler went on to say: "The average age of the world's greatest civilizations from the beginning of history, has been about 200 years." Actually, the United States is a Republic, but in essence a democratic nation, and we are well past the average age.

Is our nation headed for collapse? Tyler's description certainly sounds a lot like our nation today and we're already 47 years over the 200 year average for democracies. But Tyler's theories primarily address fiscal events, money, and do not directly address the moral decay that we see so rampant in our country today. In the remainder of his paper, he proposed a number of steps which he says that democracies usually go through from beginning to final failure. Does the United States fit Tyler's thesis?

According to Tyler the first step is “from bondage to spiritual faith.” Looking back at our history and the people who founded this country, this seems to fit us. We were founded by those who were seeking both spiritual and economic freedom. Many came with spiritual faith, actually seeking spiritual freedom. As they continued to strive to live, they continued to trust G-d and their spiritual faith continued to grow.

Tyler’s second step is “from spiritual faith to great courage.” This step also seems to fit with the events of our nation’s founding. As time passed the king’s government took increased authority over those who had come here to escape his authority and placed greater burdens on the people. The colony leaders grew in their courage as their oppression increased. The Boston Tea Party and events of a similar nature occurred as our forefather’s courage continued to increase.

The third stage is “from courage to liberty.” Earlier small skirmishes over a period of years led to the all-out military conflict of the Revolutionary War. Courageous leaders came forward and led the colonies to a miraculous victory and liberty from the King of England, their oppressor.

The next stage is “from liberty to abundance.” After winning the Revolutionary War, we’ve had some ups and downs through the years. We’ve had the Civil War, World War I, the great depression and World War II, but in general we began to slowly progress to a materially wealthy nation with times of great abundance. G-d has blessed this nation and poured out wealth on us.

But then we got very used to our abundance. Tyler’s next stage is “from abundance to complacency.” Is our nation complacent? It certainly seems to be. Our leaders are seemingly satisfied with the way things **are** and also seem to be unaware of the dangers lurking around the corner. Not only do we have fiscal problems, but also social problems and we are sticking our heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich. Our complacency seems to have happened gradually over a period of time since World War II and the time of our nation becoming the world’s “superpower.” We do fit this definition of complacency, “a general sense of security while being unaware of potential danger.” That seems to accurately describe the mood in our nation today. And our abundance seems to have been the cause. Even during the dark days of the depression and World War II there was optimism and continued hard work to succeed. There was always the idea that something better was available through hard work, something called “the American Dream.” But then, things began to change. Socialistic ideas were introduced and people began to believe that they were owed success. Many began to turn from personal striving to the expectation that the government owes them a living. And it seems that the “American dream” today has changed to “America, the provider,” “get whatever you can from the government. The government won’t miss it. If I don’t get it someone else will.”

Here are Tyler’s final three steps and you can decide where you think the United States is at this time. They are: “from complacency to apathy,” “from apathy to dependence,” and finally, “from dependence back into bondage.” Maybe we are in the “apathy” stage. We realize we’re in big trouble, but are doing nothing to change it. In apathy, we are on our way to “dependence.” Actually, a large segment of our society is already in the dependence stage and is relying completely on government. But, there is still a remnant of American citizens who are striving to do their best both economically and spiritually. Tyler only wrote about economics. There may be truth in his predictions about money, but we cannot only look at

our circumstances from an economic standpoint. In our nation, it is very easy for those of us with a rigid moral compass to see that there has also been great moral decline.

In Ecclesiastes Solomon said: *4 A generation comes, and a generation goes, but the earth remains forever. 5 The sun rises and the sun sets, and hurries back to the place it rises. 6 The wind goes toward the south, and circles around to the north. Round and round it swirls about, ever returning to its circuits. 7 All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full. To the place where the rivers flow, there they go again. 8 All things are wearisome. No one can express them. The eye is never satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.* (Ecclesiastes 1:4-8 TLV). And then in verse 8 he said: *9 What has been is what will be, and what has been done will be done again. There is nothing new under the sun.* (Ecclesiastes 1:9 TLV). According to Solomon, history repeats itself just as according to Tyler, what has happened to the United States has happened before in world democracies. Without ADONAI's intervention, our American house of cards will fall. But, there is good news. ADONAI is going to intervene with His own plan for the world. Whether or not this nation endures as a nation, the King is coming and we will live under His government. Isaiah prophesied: *5 For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. 6 Of the increase of His government and shalom there will be no end— on the throne of David and over His kingdom— to establish it and uphold it through justice and righteousness from now until forevermore. The zeal of Adonai-Tzva'ot will accomplish this.* (Isaiah 9:5-6 TLV). A child has been born, *Yeshua Ben Elohim, Ben David, Ben Miryam*, and the government will soon be upon His physical shoulders. It is to Him that we must look for deliverance, not our nation. Yes, we must continue to carry out our responsibilities to the government. *Sha'ul* wrote: *1 Let every person submit himself to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist are put in place by God.* (Romans 13:1 TLV). There have to be exceptions which ADONAI allows or what the people of the 13 colonies did would have been in violation of it. But, unless we are living under a tyrant, this is what ADONAI has called us to do; live by the laws of the land and respect the president, whomever he or she may be.

We know that “we are to be in the world, but not of the world” (John 17:11; 14-16). We have been faithful to follow Yeshua, but now is the time for us to be even more faithful. Now is the time for us to increase our witness of Yeshua to others. Now is the time for us to increase praying. Regarding *Pinchas*, ADONAI said: *12 “So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of shalom!* (Numbers 25:12 TLV). The first part of ADONAI's covenant with *Pinchas* was *shalom*. Just as ADONAI made a covenant of *shalom* with *Pinchas*, we have it as well. *Sha'ul* said: *7 “And the shalom of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua”* (Philippians 4:7 TLV). He was quoting Isaiah who said: *3 “You keep in perfect peace one whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. 4 Trust in Adonai forever, for the Lord Adonai is a Rock of ages”* (Isaiah 26:3 TLV). The *shalom* of God which surpasses all understanding which *Sha'ul* wrote about is the perfect peace of Isaiah 26. Perfect peace in Hebrew is *shalom* doubled, *shalom shalom*. *3 “Yetser samuk titsor shalom shalom ki'v'cha batu'ach.” 3 “You keep in perfect peace one whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.* (Isaiah 26:3). We who trust in Yeshua have received that *shalom shalom*. We don't always remember that we have it or act like we have it, but we do. It is a covenant benefit of our covenant with Him, but we have to keep our minds fixed on ADONAI.

The second benefit of ADONAI's covenant with *Pinchas* was an eternal priesthood: *13 It will be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—*

because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei-Yisrael" (Numbers 25:12-13 TLV). It is the time for the *Pinchas's* of this generation to be revealed. Under our High Priest Yeshua, a priest after the order of *Malkitzedek*, the Levitical priesthood is no longer active. But, *Shimon Kefa* has told us that under Yeshua we have all been made priests. Just as *ADONAI* gave *Pinchas* a special assignment, we also have been ordained with an assignment. *Kefa* said to Yeshua's followers: *4 As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house—a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Messiah Yeshua* (1Peter 2:4-5). We are *kohenim* for our *Kohen Gadol*, Yeshua. In our reading from the *Sh'lichim* today, we read about Yeshua's zeal in overturning the tables of the merchants and money changers in the Temple, a reference to David's Psalm about the "Son of David:" *10 "For zeal for Your House consumed me—the insults of those who insulted You have fallen on me"* (Psalm 69:10 TLV). As His *kohanim*, we are to have that same type of zeal for His spiritual house, the priesthood of His followers who are called to bring others into His house. We, Jew and Gentile, male and female, who serve our High Priest *Yeshua*, are *ADONAI's* priesthood under His *B'rit Chadasha*, His New Covenant.

When Yeshua died on the cross, *ADONAI* split the *parochet*, the curtain dividing the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Even as High Priest, Aaron could only enter the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle once per year, but now we, the ordinary *kohenim* of Yeshua's Priesthood, have open access to Him and the Father 24/7 every day of the year through the *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit, which dwells in us. But, let's not forget that as His *kohenim*, we also have a spiritual purpose to fulfill, the purpose of servanthood. *Pinchas* was there in the wilderness with Moses and the people for 37 years and never did anything remarkable. You may have been a faithful follower of Yeshua for many years but have never answered a specific spiritual calling from Him. It doesn't have to be something as dramatic as what *Pinchas* did. In fact, it most likely won't be. No matter how mundane they are, all tasks are important in Yeshua's eyes.

What is your destiny in this life? Has it been fully written? *ADONAI* said to Jeremiah: *5 "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I set you apart—I appointed you prophet to the nations."* (Jeremiah 1:5 TLV). To be a prophet to the nations was *ADONAI's* word to Jeremiah, but the rest is true for each of us who has trusted in Yeshua. *ADONAI* has known us and how we would serve Him since before the foundation of the earth. David wrote: *16 Your eyes saw me when I was unformed, and in Your book were written the days that were formed— when not one of them had come to be.* (Psalm 139:16 TLV). *ADONAI* knew every one of our days and what we would do in each of them before we were even born. His book about us was written before the foundation of the world. In His eyes, everything we have ever done is complete, but in our lives, our actions are not complete. As long as we live, we still have free will and can determine how we will serve Him. Our destiny, your destiny, my destiny, has not yet been fully written on the earth. There are still things we can do for Yeshua. Yeshua said: *42, "You know those recognized as rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones play the tyrant over them. 43 Yet it is not this way among you. But whoever wants to be great among you shall be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you shall be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* (Mark 10:42b-45 TLV). Ask Yeshua if there is something more that He has for you to do.

Our definition about destiny which we began with is: "A person's destiny is everything that happens to them during their life." Our destiny is not complete because our lives are

not yet complete. *Sha'ul* said: *13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself as having taken hold of this. But this one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the reward of the upward calling of God in Messiah Yeshua.* (Philippians 3:13-14 TLV). *Pinchas* got a reward from ADONAI, a covenant of *shalom* and an eternal priesthood. We, also, will be rewarded for our service to Yeshua. May each of us write a worthy ending to our destiny. *Shabbat shalom!*