

25 While Israel was staying at Shittim, the people^a profaned themselves by whoring^a with the Moabite women,² who invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. The people partook of them and worshiped that god.³ Thus Israel attached itself to Baal-peor, and the LORD was incensed with Israel.⁴ The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the ringleaders^b and have them publicly^c impaled before the LORD, so that the LORD's wrath may turn away from Israel."⁵ So Moses said to Israel's officials, "Each of you slay those of his men who attached themselves to Baal-peor."

⁶Just then one of the Israelites came and brought a Midianite woman over to his companions, in the sight of Moses and of the whole Israelite community who were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting.⁷ When Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, saw this, he left the assembly and, taking a spear in his hand,⁸ he followed the Israelite into the chamber and stabbed both of them, the Israelite and the woman, through the belly. Then the plague against the Israelites was checked.⁹ Those who died of the plague numbered twenty-four thousand.

PINHAS

¹⁰The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,
¹¹"Phinehas, son of Eleazar son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Israelites by displaying among them his passion for Me, so that I did not wipe out the Israelite people in My passion.¹² Say, therefore, 'I grant him My pact of friendship.¹³ It shall be for him and his descendants after him a pact of priesthood for all time, because he took impassioned action for his God, thus making expiation for the Israelites.'"

¹⁴The name of the Israelite who was killed, the one who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri son of Salu, chieftain of a Simeonite ancestral house.¹⁵The name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi daughter of Zur; he was the tribal head of an ancestral house in Midian.

¹⁶The LORD spoke to Moses, saying,¹⁷"Assail the Midianites and defeat them—¹⁸for they assailed you by the trickery they practiced against you—because of the affair of Peor and because of the affair of their kinswoman Cozbi, daughter of the Midianite chieftain, who was killed at the time of the plague on account of Peor."

כה וישב ישראל בשטים ויהל העם לזנות אל-בנות מואב: ² ונתקראן לעם לזבחי אלהיהן ויאכל העם וישתחוו לאלהיהן: ³ ויצמד ישראל לבעל פעור ויחר אף יהוה בישראל: ⁴ ויאמר יהוה אל-משה קח את-פל-אשוי העם והקע אותם ליהנה נגד השמש וישב קרון אף-יהוה מישראל: ⁵ ויאמר משה אל-שפטוי ישראל הרגו איש אנשיו הנצמדים לבעל פעור:

⁶ והנה איש מבני ישראל בא ויקרב אל-אחיו את-המדינית לעיני משה ולעיני כל-עדת בני-ישראל ותמה בכים פתח אהל מועד: ⁷ וירא פינחס בן-אלעזר בן-אהרן הכהן ויקם מתוך העדה ויקח רמח בידו: ⁸ ויבא אחר איש-ישראל אל-הקבה וידקר את-שניהם את איש ישראל ואת-האשה אל-קבתה ותעצר המגפה מעל בני ישראל: ⁹ ויהיו המתים במגפה ארבעה ועשרים אלף: פ

פינחס

¹⁰ וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ¹¹ פינחס בן-אלעזר בן-אהרן הכהן השיב את-חמתי מעל בני-ישראל בקנאו את-קנאתי בתוכם ולא-כליתי את-בני-ישראל בקנאתי: ¹² לכן אמר הנני נתן לו את-בריתי שלום: ¹³ והיתה לו ולזרעו אחריו ברית כהנת עולם תחת אשר קנא לאלהיו ויכפר על-בני ישראל:

¹⁴ ושם איש ישראל המפה אשר הקה את-המדינית זמרי בן-סלוא נשיא בית-אב לשמעוני: ¹⁵ ושם האשה המפה המדינית כזבי בת-עזר ראש אמות בית-אב במדן הוא: פ
¹⁶ וידבר יהוה אל-משה לאמר: ¹⁷ צרו את-המדינים והפיתם אותם: ¹⁸ כי צררים הם לכם בנבליהם אשר-נבלו לכם על-דבר-פעור ועל-דבר כזבי בת-נשיא מדן אחתם המפה ביום-המגפה על-דבר-פעור:

5 Simeon and Levi are a pair;
 Their weapons are tools of lawlessness.
 6 Let not my person be included in their
 council,
 Let not my being be counted in their assem-
 bly.
 For when angry they slay men,
 And when pleased they maim oxen.
 7 Cursed be their anger so fierce,
 And their wrath so relentless.
 I will divide them in Jacob,
 Scatter them in Israel.

5 שמעון ולוי אחים
 בלי חמס מברתיקם:
 6 בסדרם אל-תבא נפשי
 בקהלם אל-תחד כבדי
 פי באפם הרגו איש
 וברצנם עקרו-שור:
 7 ארזור אפם כי עז
 ועברתם כי קשתה
 אחלקם בייעלב
 ואפיצם בישראל: 8

as it is stated, "And he was a lad, even with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah," etc. (Gen. 37.2). (If you say) Issachar and Zebulun, (it is not so,) for they would not have spoken before their brothers who were older than they. Of necessity you (must say), they were Simeon and Levi, whom their father called, "brethren" and "אחים" (אחי).

שנאמר: והוא נער
 את בני בלהה
 ואת בני זלפה וגו',
 יששכר וזבולן
 לא היו מדברים
 בפני אחיהם הגדולים
 מהם,
 על כרחך
 שמעון ולוי הם
 שקראם אביהם
 אחים:

5. Simeon and Levi (are) brethren with one counsel regarding Shechem, and regarding Joseph: "and they said one to another... Come now therefore, and let us slay him" (Gen. 37.19-20). Who were these? If you say Reuben or Judah, (it is not so,) for they did not consent to killing him. If you say the sons of the maidservants, (it is not so,) for their hatred (of Joseph) was not whole,

5 שמעון ולוי אחים.
 בעצה אחת על שכם ועל יוסף:—
 ויאמרו איש אל אחיו,
 ועתה לכו וננהיגהו,
 מי הם?
 אם תאמר ראובן או יהודה,
 הרי לא הסכימו בהריגתו,
 א"ת בני השפחות,
 הרי לא הייתה שנאתן שלמה,

2
 Rashi
 Genesis
 49: 5

31 The LORD saw that Leah was unloved and he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.
 32 Leah conceived and bore a son, and named him Reuben; for she declared, "It means: 'The LORD has seen' my affliction"; it also means: 'Now my husband will love me.'
 33 She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This is because the LORD heard that I was unloved and has given me this one also"; so she named him Simeon.
 34 Again she conceived and bore a son and declared, "This time my husband will become attached to me, for I have borne him three sons." Therefore he was named Levi.
 35 She conceived again and bore a son, and declared, "This time I will praise the LORD." Therefore she named him Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

31 ויצא יהודה כי-שנואה לאה ויפתח את-רחמה ורחל עקרה: 32 ותהר לאה ותלד בן ותקרא שמו ראובן כי אמרה כי-ראתה יהודה בעיני כי עתה יאהבני אישי: 33 ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר כי-שמע יהודה כי-שנואה אנכי ויתן-לי גם-את-זה ותקרא שמו שמעון: 34 ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר עתה הפעם ילוח איש אלי כי-ילדתי לו שלשה בנים על-כן קרא-שמו לוי: 35 ותהר עוד ותלד בן ותאמר הפעם אודה את-יהודה על-כן קראה שמו יהודה ותעמד מלדת:

Chukat/Balak @ the DC Beit Midrash

Tuesday, July 8, 2003; Yom Shlishi, 8 Tamuz 5763

Welcome to the DC Beit Midrash!

The Chumash (Five Books of Moses) is divided into 54 portions, which Jews read sequentially each week in services. On a regular evening, a member of our community will lead us in a text-study of this portion, or *parsha*. The voices of both past and contemporary interpreters will inform our discussion. Every week, a sheet summarizing the Torah portion of the week and the other sources the teacher will use will be provided to aid you in your study.

This Week's Parsha (Torah Portion):

Chukat/Balak, Bemidbar (Numbers), Chapter 19:Verse 1 to Chapter 25:Verse 9

Chukat starts off with the laws for the "Parah Adumah," red heifer, a special purification ceremony that was performed for those who had touched, or been under the same roof as, a dead body. The narrative of the Israelite journey through the desert then continues. Miriam, Moshe's sister dies. After her death, the well of water that had miraculously accompanied the Israelites ceases to flow. God instructs Moshe and Aharon to speak to a specific rock, following which enough water would flow to satisfy the people. Instead, Moshe strikes the rock. As a punishment, God told Moshe and Aharon that they wouldn't be allowed to enter Israel. As the 40 years in the desert begin drawing to a close, Aharon too dies. The Israelites complain about the lack of food and water and are, consequently, punished by the deadly bite of fiery serpents. Moshe sets a serpent of brass on a pole; whoever looks at it is healed. Finally, they wage a successful war against two local kings. The Israelites then take up camp on the border of Moav (Jordan), facing Jericho.

Balak tells the story of Bilaam, a prophet who is hired to curse the Israelites by Balak, the Moabite king. Having heard the tales of their other battles, Balak perceives Israel as a threat. God makes it clear to Bilaam that he is not to curse Israel, whom God has blessed. God permits Bilaam to go, but only with the knowledge that Bilaam will have no control over the words that will come out of his own mouth. On his way to curse Israel, Bilaam gets into an argument with his donkey who refuses to move. Finally Bilaam reaches his destination and opens his mouth to curse Israel. But instead of curses, words of blessing are spoken. This blessing (Ma Tov) is now part of the daily morning service. At the end of the *parsha*, the Israelites get in trouble by consorting with foreign women and worshipping a foreign deity.

(adapted from <http://www.virtualtorah.com/learning/advanced/parsha/chukas.htm> and http://www.kolel.org/pages/parasha/bemidbar_summary.html)

This Week's Source

Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Isaac)

(1040-1105)

This French sage is regarded as medieval Judaism's greatest teacher. Since his death almost nine hundred years ago, Jews who study either the Torah or the Talmud invariably do so with the help of his commentary. The last years of his life were marred by the anti-Semitic Crusades that swept over France and Germany starting in 1096. In his Torah commentary, Rashi explains terms both on the basis of *pshat* (literal meaning) and *drash* (homiletical or sermonic meaning). He also makes use of words in his vernacular, Old French, for clarification. Rashi's Torah commentary achieved such wide acceptance that it became mandatory for Jews to review the weekly Torah portion with his commentary. In 1475, Rashi's commentary became the first book printed in Hebrew even before the Torah itself was.

(Excerpted from Harvey J. Fields, *A Torah Commentary for Our Times*, and Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, p 180-183.)

This Week's Teacher

Jeremy Kadden

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Jeremy Kadden is a Research Assistant at the American Enterprise Institute. He'd like to dedicate this class to his wonderful brothers.

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