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In the beginning of this week's Torah portion, Pinchas, G-d rewards Pinchas for having "zealously taken up My cause among the Israelites and turned My anger away from them." The reward was the priesthood: Pinchas and his descendents would be kohanim. "I have given him My covenant of peace...a covenant of eternal priesthood to him and his posterity after him."

Our Sages tell us that "Pinchas is Elijah." Like Pinchas, Elijah the Prophet was a zealot, chastising the Jewish people when necessary. Similarly, as reward for "zealously taking up My cause for G-d, the L-rd of Hosts," G-d granted Elijah a "covenant of peace" - that he would personally attend every brit mila ceremony.

On a deeper level, the term "covenant of peace" alludes to the relationship ("treaty") between body and soul. This connection was particularly apparent in Elijah, as his soul never departed from his physical body. As the Torah relates, instead of passing away, Elijah ascended heavenward "in a tempest"- both the soul and physical body.

How was Elijah able to do that? The answer lies in the concept of refinement. Elijah's physical body had been completely purified to the point that it no longer obscured the underlying spirituality of the soul, and itself constituted a vessel for holiness. Accordingly, there was no need for Elijah to die and be buried. The body itself could ascend and absorb all the spiritual revelations of the higher spheres.

In this respect, Elijah was even superior to Moses. Moses' physical body was certainly holy; in fact, "the house filled with light" the moment he was born, illustrating how his physical being was not an impediment to the light of the soul.

Nonetheless, Moses passed away and was interred, as this light never completely permeated his body to the extent that it was fundamentally transformed. While he was alive, Moses' body allowed the light of the soul to shine through, but it remained essentially physical.

This helps to explain why Elijah the Prophet will be the one to herald the Final Redemption, as the whole meaning of Redemption is the definitive refinement of the physical world and its transformation into a vessel for holiness. Indeed, in the Messianic era, "The glory of G-d will be revealed and all flesh shall see [G-dliness]." "Flesh" - the material plane - will be able to perceive "that the mouth of G-d has spoken."

The power to effect this transformation was granted to Pinchas; had we been worthy, the Final Redemption would have occurred immediately upon the Jews' entrance into the Land of Israel. Due to various negative factors this was not the case, and we are still waiting. But thank G-d, Elijah's announcement of Moshiach's arrival is imminent, along with the era of complete Redemption it signifies. (From L'Chaim #575, Adapted from Likutei Sichot Vol. II)

And it shall be to him, and his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood (25:13) Although the priesthood had already been given to the descendants of Aaron, it was given only to Aaron, and his [four] sons who were anointed together with him, and to the children they will father after their anointing. Pinchas, however, who was born before that time and was not himself anointed, did not enter the priesthood until now. Thus we have learned in the Talmudic tractate of Zevachim (101b): "Pinchas did not attain the priesthood until he slew Zimri." (Rashi)

When Pinchas entered Zimri's tent, thousands of members of the tribe of Shimon converged upon him to slay him, and his soul flew from his body in fright. At that moment, G-d sent the souls of Nadav and Avihu (Aaron's eldest two sons, who died on the day that the Sanctuary was dedicated--see Leviticus 10) and they entered into his body; at that moment, Pinchas became worthy to become the High Priest... Thus the verse says of him, "Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aaron"--he was now both the son of Elazar as well as the son of Aaron... (Zohar; Me'am Loez)

You shall observe to offer it to Me in its appointed time... two each day, a regular offering... (28:2-3) The "appointed time" of the regular offerings is every day. (Rashi)

The communal offerings include temiddin--"regular" or "perpetual" offerings brought each day in the same format--and mussafin--"additional" offerings brought on special occasions (Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, the festivals) which differ in accordance with the nature of the day.

In our own lives there also exists this division: there are the "routine" things, such as the fifteen breaths we take each minute and the job we troop to each workday; and there are the "special" things we do once in a while or once in a lifetime. Both are crucial to a fulfilling and satisfying life. The offerings--and their present-day substitute, prayer--include both temiddin and mussafin, to teach us that our relationship with G-d should likewise embrace the surety of the routine on the one hand, and the excitement of the occasional on the other.

But when speaking of the two daily offerings, the Torah uses the term mo'ed, "appointed time"--a phrase generally reserved for the festivals and other occasionally occurring observances. This means that the Torah also urges us to transcend these categorizations and experience a sense of specialty and occasion also in the "regular" rhythms of life. As Rashi comments on the verse, "The 'appointed time' of the regular offerings is every day." (From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe) - chabadonline.com

LAWS OF THE HOLY TEMPLE

Adapted from Rambam's Mishnah Torah

THE STRUCTURE: In building the Temple, large, expensive stones were used. Some were used in their natural form; others were shaped with tools, such as the huge stones still standing in the Western Wall.

On the Temple Mount itself, however, no iron tools could be used. Even to hear the sound of an iron tool was forbidden, because iron (as used for weapons) shortens the life of man, and the Temple is meant to prolong it.

THE TEMPLE MOUNT: The entire Temple area was built on a mountain slope, not on flat ground. When a person entered the Temple, he would have to climb up Mt. Moriah, mounting the steps from level to level as he went.

It is no accident that the Temple is built on a mountain. On a mountainside it is very hard to stand still. You always have to keep climbing. When it comes to learning Torah and doing mitzvot, it is the same. We must also keep climbing--by learning and doing more.

The Temple Mount is called Mount Moriah. The word moriah is from the word yirah, meaning "fear" and "awe." When the Temple was standing, the world was filled with fear and awe of G-d. The word moriah is also from the root ho-'ah, which means "teaching." This is because the highest court in all Israel, the Sanhedrin, used to sit in the Temple, so that teaching and instruction would go out from there to all the Jewish people. (From: www.moshiach.net)

WHEN MATOT AND MASSAI ARE SEPARATE, THEN ON SHABBAT AT MINCHA, AS WELL AS ON MONDAY AND THURSDAY, THE LEVI-ALIYA ENDS THE LAST JOURNEY. (1)
FOOTNOTE: 1. BAMIDBAR 33:50. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, TAMMUZ 23)

The undesirable event of "bein hametzorim" is only in the world; in Torah, however, it is a good thing. The Tzemach Tzedek explains that through "bein hametzorim" we reach the lofty heights that come when the undesirable things are transformed- again, the idea of "the superiority of light which follows darkness.

"From out of the straits I called to G-d; with abundance G-d answered me." It is specifically the call from the "straits" that produces G-d's answer with abundance." -

The Rebbe