LEHRHAUS

Over Shabbos Pinhas 5778

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The Source of Faith is Faith Alone

David Wolkenfeld

We used to tell visitors that the only kosher restaurant in Princeton was our kitchen. As such, during the five years that my wife and I directed the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Princeton University we developed a tradition of hosting the graduating seniors and their parents for a BBQ dinner the evening prior to graduation. Since the campus kosher dining hall was already closed at that time of year, the students and their parents needed someplace to eat. These dinners became a very special time in our lives each spring. It was a chance for us to say goodbye to cherished students and to thank parents for lending us their children for four years.

There were two groups of families who stood out at these meals. One group was made up of parents who never anticipated that they would be eating a kosher dinner at the home of the Orthodox rabbinic couple on the eve of their children's Princeton graduation. They did not raise their children with *Kashrut*, perhaps they did not raise their children as Jews at all, and here they were eating a kosher BBQ dinner because of the religious and social choices their children had made at college. And there were also families who came to dinner whose children we did not recognize; they were not involved in campus Jewish life and we never had a chance to meet them, but their parents needed a kosher meal and so they came to our home.

I think of those two groups of families frequently because our Modern Orthodox community is fixated on questions of religious commitments and how to transmit them. And we are fixated on questions of religious faith and how it is cultivated, preserved, or lost. Rabbi Chaim Jachter's recent book, *Reason to Believe: Rational Explanations of Orthodox Jewish Faith* gave me further opportunity to reflect on these questions.

In the book's introduction, Rabbi Jachter shares a passage from one of the posthumously published books by Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik that presents a powerful and compelling metaphor for the recognition of God (*Abraham's Journey* 29-31). A lost object can be claimed by its rightful owner through one of two methods. If the owner can identify *simanim*, distinguishing features of the lost object, she can combine enough of those *simanim*, to infer that the object is the one that she has lost. Alternatively, an owner may be able to recognize the object holistically through "*teviat ayin*," a general recognition of the form and shape of the object. *Teviat ayin* is a superior form of recognition because it is an instantaneous, spontaneous, and certain identification of an object all at once. Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that these two approaches to identification of lost objects can be used to describe religious faith as well.

Simanim are akin to the arguments and proofs that suggest God's existence or God's role in history. *Teviat Ayin* is akin to an encounter with God that creates recognition instantly, prior to, and really independent of, any specific argument, proof, or issue.

This distinction was the basis for a powerful essay written by my teacher Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein *z'l* called "The Source of Faith is Faith Itself." Rav Lichtenstein, in this short

essay originally published in 1992, describes the impact of his parents and of his teachers on his religious life, but concludes that his direct encounters with God, the moments of his life in which God was apparent, meant more to his faith than any specific arguments or educational messages he received. *Teviat Ayin,* recognizing something all at once for what it is, provides stronger grounds for correct identification than using *simanim* to make an identification.

This prioritization notwithstanding, Rabbi Jachter's book consists mostly of a collection of *simanim*, logical arguments in support of the various faith commitments that undergird Orthodox Judaism. Some of the arguments were quite compelling, convincing, and even exciting to me, whereas some of the arguments were less compelling or convincing. But, perhaps ironically, I found the experience of reading the book to be a religiously inspiring experience, not because of any one of its arguments, but because of the warm and embracing personality of its author, which permeates each page of the book, and invites its readers to share Rabbi Jachter's love for Judaism.

This dynamic is most clear in Rabbi Jachter's chapter on responses to the challenge to faith posed by science and scientific understandings of the origin of the universe, of human life, and human evolution. The chapter is striking in the diversity of approaches that Rabbi Jachter presents to his readers as useful options to choose among as a way to support faith in the face of scientific challenges.

Rabbi Jachter presents the theory proposed (in one way or another) both by Rabbi Moshe Meiselman and the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, which maintains that scientific theories, the product of flawed human reason, can never undermine or influence the knowledge gained by tradition and revelation. Since our Orthodox way of life presumes that the Torah is Divine and eternal, and since scientists themselves acknowledge that all of their theories are tentative and subject to revision, it is never necessary, appropriate, or even wise to revise any truth claim of Jewish tradition in light of a scientific theory.

And then, Rabbi Jachter presents the theories and approach of Rabbi Natan Slifkin which emerge from theories first explicated in the medieval period by Maimonides and his son Rabbi Avraham ben ha-Rambam. According to this line of thinking, truths that can be proven by logical deduction and truths that have been given to humanity through revelation and then lovingly passed down through an authentic transmission of tradition can never be in conflict with one another. Therefore, if a certain understanding of the Biblical narrative or a literal interpretation of a Talmudic legend cannot be reconciled with reason, then we are called upon to reinterpret the Biblical narrative or Talmudic legend so that it corresponds to our sense of what is possible. The Talmudic Sages were not scientists, they based their analysis of reality based on the best information available to them and we should do the same based on the best information available to us.

And yet it might escape the attention of many readers that these two approaches by which an Orthodox Jew can reconcile faith and reason, represented polar opposite positions in a fierce Orthodox polemic that raged ten and fifteen years ago. Rabbi Natan Slifkin's books were attacked and even banned by influential *Haredi* rabbis. Rabbi Meiselman's books were derided as obscurantist and unsophisticated. Rabbi Jachter has replaced a bitter religious polemic with a loving presentation of helpful strategies to navigate the tension between faith and

reason. In the world of Orthodox polemics, the question of reconciling faith and reason represents a prime example of how an argument about religion can so quickly escalate into mutual recrimination and delegitimization. In Rabbi Jachter's book, both paths are legitimate and therefore sincere and faithful Jews are invited to make use of them as they see fit.

This move away from divisive argumentation towards a loving presentation of different tactics and strategies within which to ground a love of Torah and *mitzvot* exemplifies each chapter of *Reason to Believe* and turns the book into a holistic experience that is far greater than the sum of its various parts. That holistic experience, whether by design or by fortuitous accident makes *Reason to Believe* a book that is quite compelling and even important. I do not know if there is a thirst for logical arguments on behalf of faith, but there is a great need for the sort of warm, non-judgemental, and embracing invitation into the world of Jewish faith that Rabbi Jachter provides in *Reason to Believe*.

We saw this at our end-of year BBQ dinners.

Those meals were proof, if any proof was necessary, that college is a time of great religious flux. It is to be expected that college would be a time of religious exploration alongside the intellectual exploration that occurs at any great university. What I had not expected was the disconnect between the intense arguments and debates about elements of religious faith on the one hand, and any actual changes in religious practice.

Our students were deeply interested in all of the questions and answers that thinking people ask about God and the Torah. How was the Torah written? Does archaeology discredit or reinforce the Biblical narrative? Can Judaism become consistent with Feminism while preserving its continuity with the past? And so many students shift their relationship to Torah and *mitzvot* dramatically while they are in college. But I can't recall a single student who changed his or her relationship to Torah and *mitzvot* because of a question or an answer to a question.

One helpful description of the nature of contemporary religious faith was provided by the recently deceased philosopher of religion Peter Berger. Berger argued that religious commitments are built on the ability to live within a "sacred canopy" that provides meaning and orientation to our lives. Communities enable their membership to live under a sacred canopy by constructing what he calls a "plausibility structure" in which religious commitments can still make sense and be reinforced by something outside ourselves.

It is extremely uncommon for someone to abandon a faith commitment because of a question he cannot answer or an argument that she cannot countenance. But it is so common for faith to be undermined by an unfriendly or unwelcoming visit to a shul, or by a religious leader whose serious ethical lapses are exposed. From one perspective, acceptance of a religious worldview shouldn't depend on whether people are nice in shul! Either the Torah is true or it is not true! But, Berger's paradigm helps us understand this common phenomenon. Faith is maintained by the communities and relationships that sustain a plausibility structure. When those relationships are strained or those communities shut us out, or we can no longer find religious leadership that is ethically compelling to us, faith itself can be lost or undermined.

And, the corollary is equally true. Religious commitments are reinforced by religious leaders whose good will and good character helps us see the world through their eyes and motivates us to want to.

For this reason, I found the experience of reading *Reason to Believe* to be one that affirmed and strengthened my own love of Torah and *mitzvot*. Although the book is erudite and displays its authors prodigious knowledge, I do not recall finding any one answer to any particular question that had challenged my faith. Instead, through reading the book I was invited into the *beit midrash* of its author and was invited to share in his love of Torah and love of God.

Rabbi David Wolkenfeld serves as the rabbi of Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel Congregation in the Lakeview neighborhood of Chicago. Prior to that he and his wife Sara directed the OU's JLIC program at Princeton University.

Pinhas' Parts: Of Priests, Peace, and Disturbing the Piece

Shlomo Zuckier

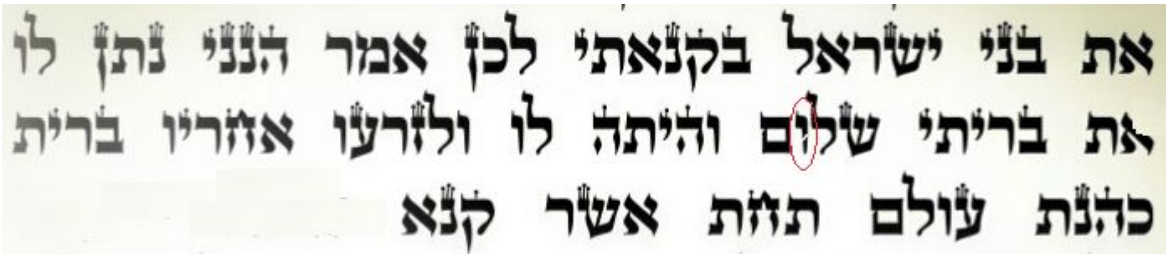
The story of Pinhas, at its core, is about the use of violent force for an ultimately positive outcome benefitting the common good. Facing a crisis of public sin and divine wrath, Pinhas zealously and publicly skewers the sinning couple of Zimri and Cosbi. The reward for his actions, which stem a terrible plague, headlines his eponymous *Parashah* (Numbers 25:10-13):

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

> And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying: "Pinhas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the Israelites, as he was very zealous for My sake among them, and I did not consume the children of Israel in My jealousy. Therefore I say: Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace. And it shall be for him, and his seed after him, a covenant of everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and atoned for the Israelites."

While Pinhas' fervent action itself is ripe for semiotic analysis, the reward he earns — the covenant of peace — is no less remarkable, as is readily discernible from the biblical text.

One looking inside the text of a Torah scroll at this verse will find the covenant of peace that Pinhas is bequeathed represented somewhat unusually. A *vav keti'ah*, or a "cut *vav*," generally understood to mean a *vav* sliced down the middle, is included within the word *shalom*.



A short but enigmatic Talmudic passage (*Kiddushin* 66b) addresses this disfigured letter:

> בעל מום דעבודתו פסולה מנלן? אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל, דאמר קרא: (במדבר כה) לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום, כשהוא שלם ולא כשהוא חסר. והא שלום כתיב! אמר רב נחמן: וי"ו דשלום קטיעה היא.

> How do we know that the [Temple] service of a [priest] with a blemish is invalid?

> Rav Yehudah said Shemuel said, "as the verse said: 'Therefore I say: Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace (*shalom*)' — when he is whole (*shalem*) and not when he is missing [as is a priest with a blemish]."
>
> But it says "peace" (*shalom*)?
>
> Rav Nahman said: "The *vav* of *shalom* is cut (*keti'ah*)."

Rav Nahman suggests that the cut *vav* can effectively be ignored, with the verse then reading *shalem* (שלם) rather than *shalom* (שלום). With that emendation, Shemuel can simply assert his interpretation, which defines the priestly covenant discussed in the next verse as pertaining only to those who are whole and disqualifying those with a blemish.

However, an obvious question arises upon reading this passage: Why does the strike-through invalidate the *vav*? No one says to simply erase that letter, and we still do write out the word *shalom*, peace, in our Torahs? How can we simply ignore the *vav* and read *shalom* as *shalem*?

Rav Nahman's appraisal of the *vav* may bear not just on the form of the letter but to the content matter under discussion as well. It is possible to apply the rule being discussed, the understanding that a bodily blemish renders a priest ineligible for service, to the way that one reads the Torah's embodied letters. The *vav*, because it has a slice through its middle, is rendered ineligible to be read; what remains is the word *shalem*, which in turn reinscribes the teaching that priestly service requires a whole body.

If so, the teaching that a blemished body is invalid appears twice: both in Shemuel's teaching stemming from the word *shalem* and in Rav Nahman's dismissal of the letter *vav*, which he renders unfit to be read on account of its blemish.

At the same time, however, the *vav* does still appear in our Torahs, and what is read in *shul* is *shalom* rather than *shalem*; thus the status of the blemished priest can't be fully clear-cut. While it is clear that Jewish law disqualifies the priest from Temple service — the reasons for which are a conversation for another occasion — the fact remains that a priest, *mum*s and all, retains priestly status in other areas, just as the *vav* remains an integral part of the Torah.

If we return to our protagonist, the present-but-silent *vav keti'ah* is the perfect representation of Pinhas' action. His zealous act damages *shalom*, by thrusting a spear through the bodies, both literal and literary, in the service of preserving the Jewish people as *shalem*, whole and safe from plague. Although at some level this produces *shalom*, the shock of the violent action leaves that peace in pieces.

It is no coincidence that this passage is selected to teach the Halakhah regarding the broken priestly body.

After all, the Pinhas story exemplifies the conception of a broken peace, or at least a broken piece of *shalom*. Pinhas' actions — killing Zimri and Cosbi and halting the plague — represent perfectly the theme of peace by destruction, of resolving a breakdown by breaking down the destructive source. Echoing the Talmudic story of Keti'ah bar Shalom, Pinhas' narrative is also one of achieving peace (*shalom*) by cutting (*keti'ah*). Pinhas may attain peace through his

intercessive actions, but, to paraphrase another biblical context, it's a cold and most certainly a broken *shalom* that is attained.

Significantly, Pinhas' violent actions are not what one would have expected from a priest. *Kohanim* stem from Aharon, the quintessential "lover of peace and chaser of peace; one who loves people and brings them close to Torah" (*Avot* 1:12). But Pinhas' priesthood, however, is different; indeed it does not stem from Aharon. The Gemara (*Zevahim* 101b) divulges that, despite being Aharon's grandson, Pinhas did not originally hold the status of priest. It is only when Pinhas receives a second *berit* here in verse 13 — the "covenant of everlasting priesthood" — that he is first admitted into the priesthood.

This makes perfect sense, because Pinhas' priesthood is fundamentally differentiated from Aharon's, basing its conception of peace not on building community among its members but on zealously cutting out those who do not belong. In doing so, Pinhas manages to stop the plague, indeed achieving peace, but it is a broken peace, represented by the *vav keti'ah*. As opposed to Aharon's stopping an earlier plague by offering *ketoret* (Num. 17:12), Pinhas averts disaster by resorting to violence. His zealotry may have been necessary in the situation, but the peace it yields is of a fundamentally different order, which gives rise to an essentially distinct priesthood from that of Aharon.

In a sense, then, Pinhas is the perfect locus for a discussion of the blemished priest. Pinhas' priesthood, like a *ba'al mum*, is blemished, given that it originates with an act of violence. Because it serves a greater goal of securing the Jewish people, it qualifies as *shalom*, peace, or at least as *shalem*, the preservation of Israel's structural integrity. Similarly, on an individual level, the *kohen ba'al mum*, although lacking in bodily wholeness, still maintains individual integrity and thus remains fundamentally whole, albeit with some ritual limitations.

The word *shalom* with the *vav keti'ah* thus occupies the space between brokenness and wholeness; too broken to be fully *shalom*, but still sufficiently *shalem*. It symbolizes, visually and semiotically, two distinct, complex tensions facing priests of the peace and piece — both a physically blemished priesthood and the priesthood of Pinhas, bearing his moral blot. Despite their various limitations, we are taught, each can still participate in the covenant of *shalom*.

The author is very appreciative to Cole Aronson, Tzipporah Machlah Klapper, Elinatan Kupferberg, and Chana Zuckier for their integral editorial contributions to this piece.

Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier is a PhD candidate in Ancient Judaism at Yale University, a member of Yeshiva University's Kollel Elyon, and is a Lecturer at YU's Isaac Breuer College. Previously he served as Director of the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Yale University. Shlomo is an alumnus of Yeshivat Har Etzion and Yeshiva University (BA, MA, Semicha), as well as of the Wexner, Tikvah, and Kupietzky Kodshim Fellowships. He has lectured and taught widely across North America, and is excited to share Torah and Jewish scholarship on a broad range of issues. Shlomo serves on the Editorial Committee of Tradition*, is co-editor of* Torah and Western Thought: Intellectual Portraits of Orthodoxy and Modernity*, and is editing the forthcoming* Contemporary Forms and Uses of Hasidut.

Rav Yehuda Amital and the Secret of Jewish Continuity

Shlomo Zuckier

(This article was originally published to The Lehrhaus *on July 20, 2017)*

Tonight is the seventh Yahrzeit of Rav Yehuda Amital, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion. He was influential in many ways on the Dati Leumi scene, both initiating religious approaches that became mainstream and diverging from the consensus at other times. Having spent several years learning at the Gush in the twilight of Rav Amital's career, I had the extraordinary fortune of counting him among those who have had a profound influence on my Judaism.

His legacies include the establishment of one of the first Yeshivot Hesder, as he combined a Lithuanian yeshiva curriculum with not only army service but also a certain Hasidic and spiritual flavor; significant theological contributions on natural ethics, theology of history, and *Kiddush* and *Hillul* Hashem; and the publication of several volumes of traditional Talmudic and halakhic novella. Throughout his speeches and writings, he consistently focused on recognizing and appreciating the complexity of life—his favorite slogan was "*ein patentim*," or "no shortcuts"—even in the face of countervailing trends. Over his public life, he shifted from supporting the far-right Gush Emunim to founding the left-wing religious Meimad party, for which he served as a government minister following the Rabin assassination.

There are, to be sure, several studies, biographies, bibliographies, and tributes to Rav Amital and his thought that I would recommend.

In honor of this year's Yahrzeit, I wish to honor Rav Amital's legacy by presenting one of his favorite teachings, and to do so by means of a *Derasha*, an art form that he mastered.

Editor's Note: The following Derasha, entitled "Transitions, Stability, and Ritual: Parshat Pinhas and the Secret to Jewish Continuity," was originally presented on July 15, 2017, at Lincoln Square Synagogue.

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Parshat Pinhas is full of transitions.

We begin with the wrap-up of the Pinhas story, where Pinhas had just killed Kozbi and Zimri. As a reward, he receives both a "Covenant of Peace" and a "Covenant of Priesthood," which, according to the Rabbis, marks his *transition* into the priestly status.

Pinhas' actions had served to stop a plague, which was occasioned by the Midianites and had killed many Jews. Following this epidemic, which itself came on the heels of God's wiping out Korach's rebellion, our Parsha features a lengthy headcount of all the Israelites.

The count fulfills three distinct purposes. First, it is a way of taking stock of the damage left in the wake of destruction. Rashi compares this to a shepherd who counts his sheep after they were ravaged by wolves. He offers another reason as well: Moshe had counted the Israelites when he first assumed the mantle of leadership, and now, as his time is winding down, he counts them again before ending his tenure.

Thirdly, as the verses make clear, the census is tied to the division of the land that the people are poised to enter. As the verses tell us, those who are counted stand to receive a portion of *Eretz Yisrael*.

We are then presented with elaborate details of the partitioning of the land, its division among the tribes, both large and small. We hear about the daughters of Tzelofhad: what if someone has only daughters—do they receive a portion?

Parshat Pinhas discusses Moshe's request for a leader to replace him. God designates as Yehoshua, and Moshe passes the spirit of leadership on to him.

All in all, the census of the people, and the three reasons surrounding it—the plague, Moshe's looming exit, and the impending communal entry to the land of Israel—delineate a clear transition period. Not only does Pinhas experience a change in status, but the entire People of Israel are about to undergo one as well. Israel has just endured a plague, and is now counting itself in preparation for receiving a new leader and entering the Land.

In the middle of this lengthy count, we are told, very poignantly, that no one survived the time in the desert, save for Kalev and Yehoshua, the two "good" spies. God had decided that everyone else would perish in the desert and not enter the Land of Israel, on account of the nation's acceptance of the negative report of the other ten spies. No man who had left Egypt—but for Kalev and Yehoshua—was to experience the Holy Land.

It is thus a full transition—a complete changeover from one generation to the next, from one leader to the next, from one land to the next; in essence, a comprehensive shift in national identity.

It is safe to conclude, then, that transitions are thematically central to Parshat Pinhas.

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And then we get to the next part of the Parsha. It's anything but dynamic. It delineates the sacrifices designated for various occasions: a twice daily *olah* offering, and a combination of offerings to be brought every Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh, Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, and Shemini Atzeret. As one might presume, there is a fair amount of repetition in the Torah's description of what is required. It is a dry, monotonous account fleshing out the particulars of these sacrifices.

These are the types of passages that we often gloss over. There's no plot line. The laws aren't exciting or interesting; they just don't speak to the contemporary human condition. It's a repetitive listing of which animal offerings are required for this date and that, how much flour or oil to bring along with this type of animal.

In a sense, you could say that the text's somewhat repetitive nature, its monotony, is representative of the bringing of sacrifices themselves. Every day, day in and day out, there is the same offering (Num. 28:4):

אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר וְאֵת֙ הַכֶּ֣בֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִ֔י תַּעֲשֶׂ֖ה בֵּ֥ין הָעַרְבָּֽיִם׃

Offer one sheep in the morning and the other sheep in the afternoon.

Each is accompanied by a tenth of an Ephah of flour, mixed with oil, and a quarter-Hin of wine. This sacrificial combination is brought twice a day, 365 days a year, the same exact offering each time. And while some of the other offerings may take place less frequently—once a week, monthly, or annually—they too are not overly exciting. Each offering prescribes a very specific, set regimen of what is needed. There are no special ingredients to be offered. In fact, there is actually a prohibition against including a "secret sauce"—one may not include leaven or honey in any sacrifice on God's altar!

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A Midrash cited in the *Ein Yaakov* collection presents a discussion as to what the most important verse in the Torah might be. Several different opinions are offered by various rabbis. One invokes שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְקֹוָק אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְקֹוָק אֶחָד, "Hear O Israel the Lord is our God the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4). Another offers וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ, "Love your fellow as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). Both are clearly important verses, ones that might score high marks on a public poll. But the other opinion is most surprising: Shimon Ben Pazi says that the most important verse in the Torah appears in our Parsha—אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר וְאֵת֙ הַכֶּ֣בֶשׂ הַשֵּׁנִ֔י תַּעֲשֶׂ֖ה בֵּ֥ין הָעַרְבָּֽיִם, "Offer one sheep in the morning and the other sheep in the afternoon." This position is perplexing—the key verse in the Torah is about sacrificing sheep? Even more surprising is the fact that this choice of verse is singled out as the authoritative position on the matter!

What is the message here? How can the most important verse be the most monotonous one?

But, of course, that is exactly Shimon ben Pazi's point. It is precisely the most prosaic of *pesukim*, one describing the basic structure of a ritual done twice a day, day in and day out, that is the core of Torah. In a sense, it's an answer that undermines the question. There *is* no singular "high point" in Judaism. It is the every day, every law, every verse, that counts. It is consistency in following tradition that is to be valued, rather than a search for the high point, a pinnacle of Judaism.

One often hears about new programs or initiatives that are promoted as meaningful, as exciting, that feature highlights of Judaism. And while there is certainly value in presenting the highlights and seeking meaning—and while Judaism undoubtedly offers both of those—I wonder whether something might be lost in the singular focus on these points, to the exclusion of the more prosaic.

It might be helpful to think about Shimon ben Pazi's claim in the context of a familial relationship. Of course, one is going to have certain highlights of a relationship, whether it's a special birthday party, anniversary dinner, a favorite vacation. But in order to have a

relationship in the first place, in order for it to be *possible* to appreciate the high points, it is necessary to first establish a solid framework of commitment, of consistent support and love for one another. That might entail more mundane actions, such as washing dishes or taking out the garbage. Absent that foundation, that consistent connection at the base, the exciting events ring hollow. The same goes for one's relationship with God and religion.

While Judaism doesn't currently practice sacrifice, this paradigm can explain why Judaism does have set prayer three times a day, corresponding to the Temple sacrifices. The prayers have a set, unchanging, text that repeats daily, and at times weekly or monthly. Although one might experience high points in prayer from time to time, the structure doesn't exactly lend itself to ecstatic rapture; there won't always be a new revelation each time you attend synagogue. But the structure is in place in order to offer an avenue to consistently demonstrate one's fealty to God. One's religious identity is constituted by following this and other rituals, by going to synagogue and saying prayers, by putting on *tefillin*, by lighting Shabbat candles or doing any other mitzvah. When we attend Shul, whether it is אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר, for daily services, or whether it's וּבְיוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת, coming weekly on Shabbos, it is the consistency that is central, the fact that there is a set time in one's schedule for their relationship with God.

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And this all brings me back to Rav Amital. He was very fond of this Midrash of Shimon ben Pazi, and would quote it quite frequently. Despite his personal charisma, and his spiritual nature—in many ways he resembled a Hasidic Rebbe—his message was clear: constancy and consistency, אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר, are the core tenets of being an observant Jew. There may be flashes of religious brilliance from time to time, but one cannot rely on that; one must build a religious framework from the ground up in order to advance as a religious Jew, in order to dependably keep God in our lives.

The message of *korbanot*, of the consistent offering to God day in and day out, week in and week out, is indeed a powerful one. And its message is rendered all the more powerful on account of its positioning in Parshat Pinhas. The Jewish People are situated at a major crossroads, in a real transitional period: a new land waits ahead, to be entered by new leadership, as well as a new followership, a new population. You can imagine the people, contemplating what lies ahead, bewildered by the changing landscape, fearful of what the promised land promises *them*. Everything was changing—the leadership, the people, the land.

But one thing was going to stay the same throughout. It will always be the same God, the same Torah, the same rituals, the same offerings. אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר, the religion remains the same, day in and day out. Moshe may pass on, but God can find a replacement for him, Yehoshua. The generation of the desert may expire, but their children and children's children hold fast to that very same Torah. Yes, the Land of Israel may hold unexpected things in store. But if the Torah was able to keep the Jewish people in good stead through their desert travels, it should serve to sustain them in *Eretz Yisrael* as well, only on a higher spiritual plane.

If the first half of our Parsha depicts a people nervous about what the future holds in store, the second half, with its prosaic listing of sacrifices, subtly responds to precisely those concerns. The Torah will sustain Israel amidst all the changes—it will always be the same sacrifices, the same religion, the same God.

Rav Amital was among a number of Torah scholars who survived the scourge of the Holocaust, finding himself in a new land with a new group of people. He experienced, in his description, a world built and then destroyed. What he maintained, and what maintained *him*, was his commitment to Torah study and to Jewish tradition. He endeavored to pass on what he had learned, to teach another generation how to be true to Torah Judaism, to be deeply committed to Torah and Halacha while seeing it as inseparable from ethics, to build a holy and healthy Land of Israel out of the ashes of the Holocaust. As he put it, his world could be rebuilt once again, upon the bedrock foundation of Torah Judaism.

The message of our Parsha—and the message of Rav Amital's life—is, in a sense, what Jewish History is all about. The Jewish People has flourished at times, and suffered at others. We have been autonomous and subservient, prominent and obscure, powerful and powerless, shifting along with the vagaries of history. But one thing has remained consistent throughout—אֶת־הַכֶּבֶשׂ אֶחָד תַּעֲשֶׂה בַבֹּקֶר, the daily commitment to religion—and it has held the Jewish People together throughout it all. There is a reason that Psalmist says לוּלֵי תוֹרָתְךָ שַׁעֲשֻׁעָי אָז אָבַדְתִּי בְעָנְיִי, "If not for your Torah, God, my pastime, I would have been lost and forsaken." Rituals are the constant throughout Jewish history, sustaining Israel amidst whatever challenges come its way.

All told, this profound yet simple message is the extraordinary legacy of Rav Yehuda Amital: entering *Eretz Yisrael* against great adversity, and adapting to the new challenges and opportunities of the Holy Land, while persisting in the Torah and traditions he had learned in Europe in his youth. He taught, by doctrine and by example, that there are no shortcuts. The righteous live by their consistent devotion to the Torah and Halakhah, thus ensuring Jewish continuity.

May Rav Amital's teachings and memory be for a blessing.

Yehi Zikhro Barukh.

Rabbi Shlomo Zuckier is a PhD candidate in Ancient Judaism at Yale University, a member of Yeshiva University's Kollel Elyon, and is a Lecturer at YU's Isaac Breuer College. Previously he served as Director of the Orthodox Union's Jewish Learning Initiative on Campus at Yale University. Shlomo is an alumnus of Yeshivat Har Etzion and Yeshiva University (BA, MA, Semicha), as well as of the Wexner, Tikvah, and Kupietzky Kodshim Fellowships. He has lectured and taught widely across North America, and is excited to share Torah and Jewish scholarship on a broad range of issues. Shlomo serves on the Editorial Committee of Tradition*, is co-editor of* Torah and Western Thought: Intellectual Portraits of Orthodoxy and Modernity*, and is editing the forthcoming* Contemporary Forms and Uses of Hasidut.