

Pinchas, the New Hebrew & the Use of Force

And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought near to his brothers a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, while they were weeping at the door of the tent of meeting **7**. And when Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand **8**. And he went after the man of Israel into the chamber, and thrust both of them, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly. So the plague ended from the children of Israel **9**. And those that died by the plague were twenty and four thousand

10 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying' **11** :Pinchas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned away My wrath from the children of Israel, in that he was very zealous / jealous for My sake among them, so that I did not consume the children of Israel in My jealousy **12**. Therefore say : Behold, I give him My covenant of peace ; **13** and it shall be to him, and to his seed after him, the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous / jealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel'.

וַיְהִי אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא, וַיִּקְרַב אֶל-אֶחָיו אֶת-הַמִּדְיָנִית,
לְעֵינֵי מֹשֶׁה, וּלְעֵינֵי כָל-עֵדֹת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל; וְהָמָּה בְכִים, פָּתַח
אֶהָל מוֹעֵד. ז וַיֵּרָא, פִּינְחָס בֶּן-אֶלְעָזָר, בֶּן-אֶהֱרֹן, הַכֹּהֵן; וַיִּקֶּם
מִתּוֹךְ הָעֵדָה, וַיִּקַּח רֶמֶחַ בְּיָדוֹ. ח וַיָּבֵא אַחֵר אִישׁ-יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-
הַקְּבֵה, וַיִּדְקֹר אֶת-שְׁנֵיהֶם--אֶת אִישׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאֶת-הָאִשָּׁה
אֶל-קְבֵתָהּ; וַתַּעֲצֹר, הַמַּגֵּפָה, מֵעַל, בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. ט וַיְהִי,
הַמָּתִים בַּמַּגֵּפָה--אַרְבָּעָה וָעֶשְׂרִים, אֲלֹף. {פ}

י וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה, אֶל-מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר. יא פִּינְחָס בֶּן-אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן-
אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן, הִשִּׁיב אֶת-חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת-
קְנָאֹתַי, בְּתוֹכָם; וְלֹא-כִלִּיתִי אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּקִנְאֹתַי. יב
לָכֵן, אֲמַר : הִנְנִי נֹתֵן לּוֹ אֶת-בְּרִיתִי, שְׁלוֹם. יג וְהָיְתָה לוֹ
וּלְזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו, בְּרִית כְּהֵנָּה עוֹלָם--תַּחַת, אֲשֶׁר קִנְא לְאַלְהֵיו,
וַיִּכְפֹּר, עַל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

במדבר פרק כה

- (1.) Why does it name Pinchas' genealogy?
- (2) What is the connection with priesthood? (and doesn't he have it already?)
- (3) Why does Pinchas get a Brit Shalom? What is the connection between violence and Shalom?

A Rabbinic Approach to Power, Violence and Force

Ben Zoma said, "Who is wise? The one who learns from everyone, as it is said, 'From all who would teach me, have I gained understanding.' [Psalms 119:99] **Who is mighty? One who controls one's [natural] urges**, as it is said, 'One who is slow to anger is better than the mighty and one who rules one's spirit than one who conquers a city.' [Proverbs 16:32] Who is rich? One who is happy with what one has, as it is said, 'When you eat what your hands have provided, you shall be happy and good will be yours.' [Psalms 128:2] Who is honored? One who honors others, as it says, "Those who honor Me, will I honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed." [I Samuel 2:30] Pirkei Avot 4:1

"בן זומא אומר, איזה הוא חכם--הלמד מכל אדם, שנאמר "מכל מלמדיי, השכלתי" (תהילים קיט, צט). **איזה הוא גיבור--הכובש את יצרו**, שנאמר "טוב ארך אפיים, מגיבור" (משלי טז, לב). איזה הוא עשיר--השמח בחלקו, שנאמר "יגיע כפיך, כי תאכל; אשריך, וטוב לך" (תהילים קכח, ב): "אשריך", בעולם הזה; "וטוב לך", לעולם הבא. איזה הוא מכובד--המכבד את הברייתו, שנאמר "כי מכבדיי אכבד ובזיזי ייקלו" (שמואל א ב, ל). " מסכת אבות ד א

"from my father and his friends I heard about the prowess of Benny Leonard, Barney Ross, Max Baer, and the clownishly nicknamed Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom. And yet Jewish boxers...remained like boxing itself, 'sport' in the bizarre sense, a strange deviation from the norm and interestingly largely for that reason: in the world whose values first formed me, unrestrained physical aggression was considered contemptible everywhere else. I could no more smash a nose with a fist than fire a pistol into someone's heart. And what imposed this restraint, if not on Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom, then on me, was my being Jewish. (Philip Roth, the Facts)

A Rabbinic Approach to Power, Violence and Force

The anti heroic military inexperienced Jews of the Diaspora characteristically have responded to the experience of power through irony [humor] and fantasy, two sometimes complementary ways of adapting to unchallengeable realities...Perhaps the most instructive expression of Jewish fantasy in the face of danger is the legend of the Golem. The Golem is an artificial man, created by magic often for the purpose of defending the Jews...The Golem is commonly depicted as a creature formed out of clay and animated by the magical manipulation of Hebrew letters and divine names.

It is pertinent, of course, that as Jewish responses to power in the Diaspora, both irony and fantasy conceive force as something possessed and exercised by the 'other'. The ironic response to power is verbal, and the rabbi who knows the magic of power performs the miracle of the Golem by manipulating words. ...in the absence of sovereignty, military power, and territory, the word of God, Holy Scriptures, and the words of the rabbis became the ultimate world-making, of acting and interpreting, of shaping and protecting life, of resurrecting the ruined temple, the conquered holy land and the Lost Kingdom.(Yaron Ezrahi, Rubber Bullets)

Most cultures build their heroes and avengers out of their idealized selves: their Galahads. But the golem is in every way the antithesis of the ideals of traditional Judaism. In a culture that revered learning and wisdom, the golem is stupid and incapable of reason. In a culture defined by the rigorous discipline of religious law, the golem is unruly, savage, and incapable of self-control. In a culture that took pride in its pacifism, the golem is created expressly for the purpose of committing acts of violence. So contrary is the golem to the ideals of Jewish tradition that in Jewish circles his name eventually became an insult. To refer to someone as a "golem" is, essentially, to call him an idiot and a fool. The full implications of the insult are suggested by its elective affinity to another term of abuse: *goyishe kop*, or "Gentile head," referring to someone of notably low intelligence.

...it seems, both terms express a contradiction in the Jewish self-image, what might be called the Gentile at the heart of the Jew. The golem embodies action, power, liberating: qualities officially eschewed but, through the medium of fantasy, projected onto a creature that lives and yet does not live, just as these same qualities lived and yet did not live in the psyche of his creators. This is a creature, moreover, given life not only by the wisdom and knowledge of the Jew but by his rage, his thirst for retribution, his hatred of the life he is forced to endure in exile: a life that appears to be life, but is not.

(The Golem: Universal and Particular, Benjamin Kerstein)

Zionism & the Creation of the 'New Jew'

Descend then, to the cellars of the town, / There where the virginal daughters of thy folk were fouled / Where seven heathen flung a woman down / The daughter in the presence of her mother / The mother in the presence of her daughter / Before slaughter, during slaughter, and after slaughter! / Touch with thy hand the cushion stained; touch / The pillow incarnadined / This is the place the wild ones of the wood, the beasts of the field / With bloody axes in their paws compelled thy daughters yield / Beasted and swined / Note also, do not fail to note / In that dark corner, and behind that cask / Crouched husbands, bridegrooms, brothers, peering from the cracks / Watching the sacred bodies struggling underneath / The bestial breath / Stifled in filth, and swallowing their blood / Watching from the darkness and its mesh / The lecherous rabble portioning for booty / Their kindred and their flesh / Crushed in their shame, they saw it all / They did not stir nor move / They did not pluck their eyes out; they / Beat not their brains against the wall / Perhaps, perhaps each watcher had it in his heart to pray / A miracle, O Lord — and spare my skin this day!

Those who survived this foulness, who from their blood awoke / Beheld their life polluted, the light of their world gone out / How did their menfolk bear it, how did they bear this yoke? / They crawled forth from their holes, they fled to the house of the Lord / They offered thanks to Him, the sweet benedictory word / The Cohanim sallied forth, to the Rabbi's house they flitted / Tell me, O Rabbi, tell, is my own wife permitted? / The matter ends; and nothing more / And all is as it was before.

Come, now, and I will bring thee to their lairs / The privies, jakes and pigpens where the heirs / Of Hasmoneans lay, with trembling knees / Concealed and cowering,—the sons of the Maccabees! / The seed of saints, the scions of the lions! / Who, crammed by scores in all the sanctuaries of their shame / So sanctified My name! / It was the flight of mice they fled / The scurrying of roaches was their flight / They died like dogs, wherever they were found... (Nachman Bialik, The City of Slaughter)

וְנִרְדַּת מִשֶׁם וּבָאת אֶל-תּוֹדֵד הַמִּרְתָּפִים הָאֶפְלִים, / מְקוֹם נִטְמָאוּ בָנוֹת
עִמְדֵי הַכְּשָׁרוֹת בֵּין הַכְּלִים, / אִשָּׁה אִשָּׁה אַחַת תַּחַת שְׂבָעָה שְׂבָעָה יְגַרְלִים,
/ הַבַּת לְעִינֵי אִמָּה וְהָאִם לְעִינֵי בַתָּהּ, / לִכְנִי שְׁחִיטָה וּבִשְׁעַת שְׁחִיטָה
וּלְאַחַר שְׁחִיטָה; / וּבִדְדֻד תִּמְשָׁשׂ אֶת-הַכְּסֵת הַמִּטְנָפֶת וְאֶת-הַכֶּר
הַמְאֲדָם, / מְרַבֵּץ חֲזִירֵי יַעַר וּמְרַבַּעַת סוּסֵי אָדָם / לַעַם-קַרְדִּים מְטַכְטֵף דָּם
רוֹתֵם בְּגִדָם. / וְרָאָה גַם-רָאָה: בְּאֶפְלַת אוֹתָהּ זָנוּיָה, / תַּחַת מְדוּכַת מִצָּה זוֹ
וּמְאַחֲרֵי אוֹתָהּ חֲבִית, / שְׂכָבוּ / בְּעֵלִים, חֲתָנִים, אַחִים, הַצִּיצוּ מִן-
הַחֹרִים / בְּפִרְפֹר גְּזִיּוֹת קְדוֹשׁוֹת תַּחַת בְּשַׁר הַמְּזוֹרִים, / נִחְנָקוֹת בְּטַמְאָתָן
וּמְעַלְעוֹת דָּם צוֹנָאָר, / וּכְחֵלֶק אִישׁ פֶּת-בְּגוֹ חֵלֶק מִתְעַב גּוֹי בְּשַׁרן — /
שְׂכָבוּ בְּבִשְׁתָּן וַיִּרְאוּ — וְלֹא נָעוּ וְלֹא זָעוּ, / וְאֶת-עֵינֵיהֶם לֹא-נִקְרוּ וּמִדַּעְתָּם
לֹא נִצְאוּ — / וְאוּלֵי גַם-אִישׁ לִנְפֹשׁ אִזּוֹ הַתְּפִלָּל בְּלִבָּבוֹ: / רְבוּנוּ שֶׁל-עוֹלָם,
עֲשֵׂה גַם — וְאַלֵי הַרְעָה לֹא-תִבֵּא. /

וְאֵלָה אֲשֶׁר חָיו מִטַּמְאָתָן וְהִקִּיצוּ מִדְּמֹן — / וְהִנֵּה שְׂקִיצוֹ כָּל-חַיֵּיהֶן
וְנִטְמָאוּ אוֹר עוֹלָמָן / שְׂקוּצֵי / עוֹלָם, טַמְאָת גּוֹי וְנִפְשׁ, מִבְּחוּץ וּמִבְּפָנִים — /
וְהִגִּיחוּ בְעֵלְיֵיהֶן מַחֹרֶם וְרָצוּ בֵית-אֱלֹהִים / וּבְרָכּוּ עַל-הַנְּשִׁים שֶׁם אֵל
יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמִשְׁנֵבֶם; / וְהִכְתִּיבֵם שֶׁבָהֶם יִצְאוּ וַיִּשְׂאֲלוּ אֶת רַבִּי: / "רַבִּי! אֲשֵׁי
מָה הֵינִי מִתְּרַת אוֹ אֲסוּרָה?" — / וְהִכְלִל יָשׁוּב לְמִנְהַגוֹ, וְהִכְלִל יַחֲזֹר
לְשׁוּרָה.

וְעַתָּה לָךְ וְהַבְּתִידֵךְ אֶל-כָּל הַמַּחְבּוּאִים: / בְּתֵי מַחְרָאוֹת, מְכֻלָּאוֹת /
חֲזִירִים וְשָׂאָר מְקוֹמוֹת צוּאִים. / וְרֵאִיתָ בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֵיפֹה הָיוּ מִתְּחַבְּאִים

אֲחִיד, בְּנֵי עִמְדָה וּבְנֵי גְּנִיָּהם שֶׁל-הַמַּכְבֵּים, / וְנִינֵי הָאֲרִיּוֹת שֶׁבִּיאָב
הַרְחֵמִים" וְזָרַע הַ"קְדוֹשִׁים". / עֲשָׂרִים נֶפֶשׁ בְּחֹר אֶחָד וְשִׁלְשִׁים
שִׁלְשִׁים, / וְנִגְדְּלוּ כְּבוֹדֵי בְּעוֹלָם וְנִקְדְּשׁוּ שְׁמֵי בְּרַבִּים... / מְנוּסָת עֲקָבְרִים
נִסּוּ וּמַחְבֵּא פִשְׁפִּשִׁים הַחֲבָאוּ, / וּמִמוֹתָיו מוֹת כְּלָבִים שֶׁם בְּאֲשֶׁר נִמְצְאוּ,



Zionism & the Creation of the 'New Jew'

"The State is not handed to a people on a silver platter" Chaim Weizmann

The Earth grows still. / The lurid sky slowly pales / Over smoking borders / Heartsick, but still living, a people stand by / To greet the uniqueness / Of the miracle. / Readied, they wait beneath the moon. / Wrapped in awesome joy, before the light. / --Then, soon, / A girl and boy step forward, / And slowly walk before the waiting nation. / In work garb and heavy-shod / They climb / In stillness. / Wearing yet the dress of battle, the grime / Of aching day and fire-filled night / Unwashed, weary unto death, not knowing / Rest, / But wearing youth like dewdrops in their hair. / --Silently the two approach and stand. / Are they of the quick or of the dead? / Through wondering tears, the people stare. / "Who are you, the silent two?" / And they reply: "We are the silver platter / Upon which the Jewish State was served to you." / And speaking, fall in shadow at the nation's / Feet / Let the rest in Israel's chronicles be told.

The Erosion of the Idea that Force Liberates

We looked at each other for half a second and I knew that it was up to me, personally, to kill him, there was no one else there. The whole thing must have lasted less than a second, but its printed in my mind like a slow motion movie. I fired from the hip and I can still see how the bullets splashed against the wall about a meter to his left....I fired again and somehow got him in the head. There was so much blood. I vomited, until the rest of the boys came up. A lot of them had been in the Sinai Campaign and it wasn't new to them. They gave me some water and said it's always like that the first time, not to worry. I found I had fired my whole magazine at him. It's true what they said: you grow more and more callous as you go along, and at the same time, you get used to the gun and miss less. But I'll never forget that moment. It just goes through my mind all the time.

But as we went on fighting, I began to care less. For the whole three days that we fought I was sick and vomiting, but it meant less and less to me. All my friends were going down and I grew madder and madder. I wanted to kill them, all the time that I didn't want to see them. I wanted to get a wound and get out; that's what we all wanted – anything to get out...As we grew angrier, we stopped being human beings. You start out shouting, but by this time, we were all just machines for killing. Everyone's face is set in a snarl and there's a deep growl coming from your belly. You want to kill and kill. You grow like an animal, you know – no, worse than an animal. I think those three days aged me five years...my father used to tell me that until a man has been through a war he wasn't a man. He was right, I know that now. Its like part of a man's education. But it's a part we're better off without, you know. I'll never be the same person again. We had to do it though. That's all I know. But it must never, never happen again. If it doesn't, then perhaps it will have been worthwhile. But only if it never happens again. (The Seventh Day)

Without force we won't rebuild the land. But if we use force we'll have to live our lives by the sword. That was my thought in the year 1929, more than fifty years ago, and to this very day I can't find a solution. To be without power is, in my eyes, both a sin and a catastrophe. It's the sin of exile, and Diaspora. On the other hand, to live by force is no less a catastrophe, and maybe a sin too. Do you remember King David? Even he was punished for living by the sword all the days of his life. (Amos Oz, In the Land of Israel – A Cosmic Jew)

Israel's victory in 1967 facilitated the beginning of a long, gradual, consolidation of more ambivalent orientations toward the use of force among soldiers, and through them among wider sectors of the Israeli society. Thus began a process that eventually broke the grip of the self referential notions of force in modern Israel and replaced it with a more dualistic view. Israeli Jews continued to regard the use of military force as necessary. What changed was the notion that the use of force symbolized cherished elements of the Israeli's identity as a new Jew. The knowledge, ambiguities and doubts that came with the actual experience of fighting (and in 1967 war, decisively winning) began to erode a view of force that until then had seemed self evident and compelling (Yaron Ezrahi, Rubber Bullets)

Another Traditional Approach to Jews and Force

The commandment for Ir Hanidachat (city gone astray), in which everything, even the cattle, should be destroyed, gives rise to a cruel nature within the heart of those who do it. In light of this, God promises that He will grant them mercy. Even though it generates cruelty within their nature, the source of mercy (God) will renew their own feelings of mercy, in order to cancel the cruelty that was created within them from the act of destruction (Chaim ben Moses ibn Attar, the Ohr HaChayim, born in Morocco 1696, died Jerusalem 1743)

My Covenant of Peace – as a reward for stopping God's anger, He blessed him with peace, that he shouldn't be impatient or angry. And also, because the nature of killing might have left intense emotional unrest in his heart. But because his act was for the sake of heaven, he therefore receives a blessing that he should always experience peace and tranquility of the soul. (HaEmek Davar – Netziv, Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin, born Mir, Russia 1816, died Warsaw, 1893)

”לפי שצוה על עיר הנדחת שיחרגו כל העיר לפי חרב ואפילו בהמתם, מעשה הזה יוליד טבע האכזריות בלב האדם... והבחינה עצמה תהיה נשרשת ברוצחי עיר הנדחת. לזה אמר להם הבטחה, שיתן להם ה' רחמים. הגם שהטבע יוליד בהם האכזריות, מקור הרחמים ישפיע בהם כח הרחמים מחדש, לבטל כח האכזריות שנולד בהם מכח המעשה”. אור החיים

”את בריתי שלום - בשכר שהניח כעסו וחמתו של הקב"ה ברכו במדת השלום, שלא יקפיד ולא ירגיז. ובשביל, כי טבע המעשה שעשה פנחס להרוג נפש בידו היה נותן להשאיר בלב הרגש עז גם אחר כך. אבל, באשר היה לשם שמים, משום הכי באה הברכה שיהא תמיד בנחת ובמדת השלום ולא יהא זה הענין לפקוח הלב". העמק דבר

How much hate is too much?

In early August 1948, during the second cease-fire in Israel's War of Independence, the culture officers of each of the brigades in the nascent Israel Defense Forces convened for a discussion on how to portray the enemy's soldiers to IDF troops. The primary reason for the discussion was an argument that had begun within the army about the brutal and sharply worded style of the Givati Brigade's "battle pages," which were intended to motivate soldiers on the Egyptian front, and were written by the brigade's education officer, Abba Kovner. Kovner, 30 years old at the time, had been a leading figure in the Zionist resistance movement in the Vilna Ghetto and later in forests with the partisans during World War II. "Do not be deterred, boys: As for the murderous dogs – their sentence is one of blood!" he had written in his report of July, 1948, "and the more you excel at running down these dogs of blood, the more profoundly will you be able to love beauty, goodness and freedom. Furthermore, gird your loins, fellows: Our jeeps will become amphibian vehicles tomorrow, because we will be marching in the stream. In the stream of the invaders' blood."

For his part, the navy's education officer warned against an atmosphere in which there is "a sort of obsequiousness vis-a-vis the enemy," as was evident at times in the press – for example, in discourse related to the possibility of allowing refugees to return to the territory of the state. "Therefore, there is a necessity to teach hatred of the enemy," he explained, adding, "Hatred is a natural mental process. It should be given expression. Then there will be fewer complications in terms of the soldier's nervous system. However, limits must be set... There is propaganda toward hatred that jars the ear and does not achieve its goal." To which one of his colleagues added: "We should educate toward hatred – but it should not be portrayed in exaggerated fashion in printed texts."

Fears of the effect of the war in general – and Kovner's messages in particular – on the fighters' souls were also in the thoughts of the education officer of the 8th Brigade. "We will suffer from the war in many respects, and that includes the influences it has on the spirit and morality of our soldiers," he assessed. "This cannot be prevented. Something sticks to the character of every slaughterer in Israel – even the slaughterer of fowl and livestock." As the years passed, calls for hatred and dehumanization of the enemy by education officer Kovner were increasingly viewed as irrelevant and even inappropriate. In 1962, on the 10th anniversary of the death of Yitzhak Sadeh, his successor as commander of the Palmach, Yigael Allon said, "There is no need to hate the enemy in order to fight well. It is enough to love the homeland." (How Much Must We Hate the Enemy? Rafi Mann, Haaretz)