

altar. This entire horrible story could have been averted.

The rabbis in the Talmud tell us that Yiftach could have had the vow annulled retroactively by appearing before Pinchas and his court and requesting such an annulment. But ego and hubris interfere, even at the cost of the life of one's own child. Yiftach refuses to humble himself - after all he is the leader of Israel - to appear before Pinchas and ask for the annulment.

Even though Pinchas is aware of the vow, he also refuses to lower himself - after all he is the high Priest and the head of the Sanhedrin - to travel to Yiftach to effect the annulment. As the Talmud ruefully observes, because of this display of personal pique and ego, an innocent person is killed. Pinchas' reputation is therefore tarnished by this incident. Perhaps this is another reason that we do not find the zealotry of Pinchas repeated and complimented again in the Torah. *Rabbi Berel Wein and torah.org.*

## Haftarah Summary Rabbi Aron Tendler

Tlas Diparanuta is the name given to the next three Haftoros. These are special selections from the Navi Yirmiyahu that were chosen because they prophesies the destruction of Yerushalayim and the 1st Beit Hamikdash. In this Haftarah, Yirmiyahu HaNavi foretells of the Babylonian invasion. The condemnation of the Jews for abandoning G-d and Torah is somewhat softened by the concluding description of Hashem's love for His children. "I remember the devotedness of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land that

## Minyan Schedule

Erev Shabbat Parashat Pinchas  
Candle lighting 29/07/16 4.55 pm  
Mincha (Mizrachi) 4.50 pm

Shabbat Parashat Pinchas  
Shacharit 30/07/16 9.15 am  
Children's Service 10.00 am  
Mincha (Mizrachi) 4.43 pm  
Shabbat ends 5.53 pm

Rosh Chodesh Av 5/08/16

Erev Shabbat Parashat Matot Masei  
Candle lighting 5/08/16 5.00 pm  
Mincha (Mizrachi) 5.00 pm

## Announcements

**Kiddush is sponsored  
by Jack and Miriam  
Stein commemorating  
the yahrzeit of Miriam's  
mother, Rivka Leah bat  
Chaim Wolff HaCohen**

**'An expanding universe?  
Orthodoxy in the 21st  
century' see email for  
programme details**

was not sown." as if we are given permission to envision the tears of the Creator as He confronts His beloved's infidelity. *Rabbi Aron Tendler and torah.org.*

# Or Chadash

קהילת אור חדש

## WEEKLY BULLETIN

**Shabbat Parashat Pinchas**  
24 Tammuz 5776; 30 July, 2016  
**Shabbat Torah reading:** Stone Chumash  
page 876, Haftarah page 1190.

**President** Jonathan Erlich  
**Rabbi-in-residence**  
**D'var Torah** Rabbi Eisenberg

## Dangers of "Echo Reasoning" Rabbi Marc D. Angel

The Book of Judges, chapter 11, tells the horrific story of Jephthah and his daughter. Jephthah was chosen to be the leader of the Israelites in their war against Ammon. Before going to battle, he vowed that, if victorious, he would offer "whatsoever comes forth of the doors of my house to meet me" as a burnt offering to the Lord. When he returned triumphantly from the war, it was his daughter, his only child, who came out of the house to greet him with song and dance.

Though sorely grieved by the rash vow he had made, Jephthah said that he could not go back on his word. It appears from the biblical story that he did indeed sacrifice his daughter. Rabbinic tradition, though, includes the view that

he did not murder his daughter, but had her life devoted to G-d. She was doomed to live the rest of her life in isolation from society.

The Midrash raises obvious questions: why didn't Jephthah go to Pinehas, the high priest, and plead for his vow to be annulled? Or why didn't Pinehas take the initiative to go to Jephthah so as to annul the vow and thereby save the daughter's life?

Jephthah thought: I am the judge of Israel, and I will not humiliate myself by going to the high priest, a man of lower rank. Pinehas thought: I am the high priest, and I will not humiliate myself by showing deference to the judge, a man of lower spiritual rank. While each of them was jealous for his own dignity, the life of Jephthah's daughter was sacrificed. The Midrash points out that G-d punished both Jephthah and Pinehas for their callousness, willfulness and



egocentrism.

Yet, why did these leaders allow their pride to prevent them from acting intelligently and morally? I think this Midrash is underscoring a problem endemic to powerful or charismatic leaders. These individuals are accustomed to being honored, to having a retinue of admirers who fawn over them and agree with their every word. They internalize a feeling of invincibility and infallibility; they think that they do not make mistakes, or that they are not allowed to admit that they make mistakes. Their personal honor becomes a “false G-d”, they worship themselves!

In her book, “The March of Folly,” Barbara Tuchman describes the immorality and corruption which characterized a group of Renaissance Popes. Rodrigo Borgia, known as Pope Alexander VI, was an egregious example of depraved and luxurious living. Late in life, he was stricken with a moment of remorse. He told a consistory of cardinals: “The most grievous danger for any Pope lies in the fact that encompassed as he is by flatterers, he never hears the truth about his own person and ends by not wishing to hear it.”

I recently learned of a phenomenon called “echo reasoning.” This refers not merely to leaders, but to everyone who speaks and listens only to those with similar views. These views are echoed from one to the other, and become louder and more entrenched. It becomes increasingly

difficult to think beyond the “truths” of the group. Members of the closed circle become more extreme, less able to reason independently.

To be morally strong and intellectually sound, we need to be open to an array of views and to be open to criticism. We need to engage in honest self-evaluation, trying to avoid the egotism and pride that paralyzed Jephthah and Pinehas, Pope Alexander VI and victims of “echo reasoning.” We need to think; to challenge and be challenged; to express our views and listen to the views of others. Unless we have this intellectual and emotional flexibility, we run the risk of becoming our own “false G-ds”. We surround ourselves with flatterers and sycophants, with the result that our own humanity becomes hollow and false.

When political or religious leaders succumb to the illusion of power and infallibility, they become dangerous to themselves and to others. A society or religious group that submits blindly to authoritarian leadership is dooming itself to perdition.

It is fashionable in some religious circles to idolize cult leaders and to refrain from (and even deeply resent) any criticism aimed at these great ones. It is fashionable in some circles to foster “echo reasoning”, where it is only licit to speak with others who share the same views, where it is forbidden to hear opposing ideas and critiques. Such circles represent a genuine danger to healthy religious

life. Such circles foster leaders who are likely to fall into the patterns of Jephthah and Pinehas.

When this happens, innocent people suffer. Religion grows rigid and intolerant. Voices are silenced. We can fight “echo reasoning” by insisting on independent reasoning. We can fight autocracy by insisting on freedom of expression. We can combat religious rigidity and intolerance by raising our voices for intellectual vibrancy, compassion and social responsibility. *Rabbi Marc. D. Angel and the Institute of Jewish Ideas and Ideals.*

## Zealotry: How Far To Go

Rabbi Berel Wein

Pinchas is not an overly popular figure in Jewish life and among his own generation. The people of Israel were angered by his act of violence in killing the head of the tribe of Shimon without giving the matter due judicial process. It is because of this type of murmuring that the Lord Himself, so to speak, blesses Pinchas personally and grants him the gift of priesthood and of peace.

Pinchas’ motives are challenged by the people but they are vindicated by G-d. But it takes G-d himself, so to speak to quiet the objections to Pinchas and his behavior. And it is noteworthy therefore to emphasize that we do not find any other further act of holy zealotry mentioned in the Torah or approved of by Jewish tradition

Pinchas and his behavior become the exception and not the rule in Jewish life and tradition. Zealotry is a very difficult characteristic to gauge correctly. How much are personal quirks involved in such zealous behavior? Jewish history

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*We have operated since 1995. During the year we arrange special activities including: learning, shiur/lecture series and social events.*

and society is littered by the victims of religious zealotry who were felled by personal attacks clothed in the guise of religious piety and zealotry.

The zealot often covers his own weaknesses and self-doubt by attacking others. That is why the people of Israel questioned the motives of Pinchas in killing Zimri. Because of this, it is obvious that only G-d, so to speak, could save Pinchas from unwarranted criticism and public disapproval. But in so doing, G-d, again so to speak, warns us of the dangers of zealotry. He will not step in again to rescue the zealot from public and historical disapproval.

We meet Pinchas again later in Jewish history, again at a moment of personal tragedy. He is the High Priest and head of the Sanhedrin at the time of Yiftach, the judge of Israel. Yiftach has made a foolish vow that whatever or whoever comes forth first from his house to greet him upon his return from the successful war that he waged to save Israel from the oppression of Bnei Ammon will be sacrificed to G-d.

The daughter of Yiftach, not knowing of her father’s vow, rushes out of the house to welcome home the returning hero. Eventually Yiftach fulfills his vow and kills her on the

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