



Shabbat Announcements

Parshat Pinchas

July 11 2015 24 Tammuz, 5775

TORAH
ARTSCROLL 876
HERTZ 686

HAFTORAH
ARTSCROLL 1192
HERTZ 699

BAR MITZVAH
SHAUN MAHER

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks on Parshat Pinchas

In 1165, an agonizing question confronted Moroccan Jewry. A fanatical Muslim sect, the Almohads, had seized power and were embarked on a policy of forced conversion to Islam. The Jewish community was faced with a choice: to affirm Islamic faith or die. Some chose martyrdom. Others chose exile. But some acceded to terror and embraced another faith. Inwardly, though, they remained Jews and practiced Judaism in secret. They were the conversos, or as the Spanish were later to call them, the marranos. To other Jews, they posed a formidable moral problem. How were they to be viewed? Outwardly, they had betrayed their community and their religious heritage. Besides, their example was demoralizing. It weakened the resolve of Jews who were determined to resist, come what may. Yet many of the conversos still wished to remain Jewish, secretly fulfill the commandments and when they could, attend the synagogue and pray. One of them addressed this question to a rabbi. He had, he said, converted under coercion, but he remained at heart a faithful Jew. Could he obtain merit by observing in private as many of the Torah's precepts as possible? Was there, in other words, hope left for him as a Jew?

The rabbi's reply was emphatic. A Jew who had embraced Islam had forfeited membership in the Jewish community. He was no longer part of the house of Israel. For such a person to fulfill the commandments was meaningless. Worse, it was a sin. The choice was stark and absolute: to be or not to be a Jew. If you choose to be a Jew, you should be prepared to suffer death rather than compromise. If you choose not to be a Jew, then you must not seek to re-enter the house you had deserted. We can respect the firmness of the rabbi's stance. He set out, without equivocation, the moral choice. There are times when heroism is, for faith, a categorical imperative. Nothing less will do. His reply, though harsh, is not without courage. But another rabbi disagreed. The name of the first rabbi is lost to us, but that of the second is not. He was Moses Maimonides, the greatest rabbi of the Middle Ages. Maimonides was no stranger to religious persecution. Born in Cordova in 1135, he had been forced to leave, along with his family, some thirteen years later when the city fell to the Almohads. Twelve years were spent in wandering. In 1160, a temporary liberalization of Almohad rule allowed the family to settle in Morocco. Within five years he was forced to move again, settling first in the land of Israel and ultimately in Egypt.

Maimonides was so incensed by the rabbi's reply to the forced convert that he wrote a response of his own. In it, he frankly disassociates himself from the earlier ruling and castigates its author whom he describes as a 'self-styled sage who

has never experienced what so many Jewish communities had to endure in the way of persecution'. Maimonides' reply, the Iggeret ha-Shemad ('Epistle on Forced Conversion'), is a substantial treatise in its own right. What is striking, given the vehemence with which it begins, is that its conclusions are hardly less demanding than those of the earlier response. If you are faced with religious persecution, says Maimonides, you must leave and settle elsewhere. 'If he is compelled to violate even one precept it is forbidden to stay there. He must leave everything he has and travel day and night until he finds a spot where he can practice his religion.' This is preferable to martyrdom. None the less, one who chooses to go to his death rather than renounce his faith 'has done what is good and proper' for he has given his life for the sanctity of God. What is unacceptable is to stay and excuse oneself on the grounds that if one sins, one does so only under pressure. To do this to profane God's name is 'not exactly willingly, but almost so'. These are Maimonides' conclusions. But surrounding them and constituting the main thrust of his argument is a sustained defense of those who had done precisely what Maimonides had ruled they should not do. The letter gives conversos hope. They have done wrong. But it is a forgivable wrong. They acted under coercion and the fear of death. They remain Jews. The acts they do as Jews still win favor in the eyes of God. Indeed doubly so,

Times

Candle Lighting	8:09 pm
Friday Mincha	7:00 pm
Hashkama	8:00 am
Youth Minyan	8:30 am
Main	9:00 am
Beit Medrash	9:15 am
Gemara Shiur	7:05 pm
Mincha	8:05 pm
Shabbat ends	9:17 pm
Sunday	7:30/8:30 am
Tues., Wed., Fri.	6:45/7:45 am
Mincha	8:05 pm
Latest Times for Shema/Shemoneh Esrei	
July 11	9:13/10:28 am
July 18	9:20/10:34 am
Next Shabbat Mattot-Masei	
Candle Lighting	8:05 pm
Mincha	7:00 pm

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for when they fulfill a commandment it cannot be to win favor of the eyes of others. They know that when they act as Jews they risk discovery and death. Their secret adherence has a heroism of its own.

What was wrong in the first rabbi's ruling was his insistence that a Jew who yields to terror has forsaken his faith and is to be excluded from the community. Maimonides insists that it is not so. 'It is not right to alienate, scorn and hate people who desecrate the Sabbath. It is our duty to befriend them and encourage them to fulfill the commandments.' In a daring stroke of interpretation, he quotes the verse: 'Do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving' (Proverbs 6:30). The conversos who come to the synagogue are hungry for Jewish prayer. They 'steal' moments of belonging. They should not be despised, but welcomed.

This Epistle is a masterly example of that most difficult of moral challenges: to combine prescription and compassion. Maimonides leaves us in no doubt as to what he believes Jews should do. But at the same time he is uncompromising in his defense of those who fail to do it. He does not endorse what they have done. But he defends who they are. He asks us to understand their situation. He gives them grounds for self respect. He holds the doors of the community open. The argument reaches a climax as Maimonides quotes a remarkable sequence of midrashic passages whose theme is that prophets must not condemn their people, but rather defend them before God. When Moses, charged with leading the people out of Egypt, replied, 'But they will not believe me' (Exodus 4:1), ostensibly he was justified. The subsequent biblical narrative suggests that Moses' doubts were well founded. The Israelites were a difficult people to lead. But the midrash says that God replied to Moses, 'They are believers and the children of believers, but you [Moses] will ultimately not believe.' Maimonides cites a series of similar passages and then says: If this is the punishment meted out to the pillars of the universe, the greatest of the prophets, because they briefly criticized the people – even though they were guilty of the sins of which they were accused – can we envisage the punishment awaiting those who criticize the conversos, who under threat of death and without abandoning their faith, confessed to another religion in which they did not believe? In the course of his analysis, Maimonides turns to the prophet Elijah and the text that forms this week's haftarah. Under the reign of Ahab and Jezebel, Baal worship had become the official cult. God's prophets were

being killed. Those who survived were in hiding. Elijah responded by issuing a public challenge at Mount Carmel. Facing four hundred of Baal's representatives, he was determined to settle the question of religious truth once and for all. He told the assembled people to choose one way or another: for God or for Baal. They must no longer 'halt between two opinions'. Truth was about to be decided by a test. If it lay with Baal, fire would consume the offering prepared by its priests. If it lay with God, fire would descend to Elijah's offering. Elijah won the confrontation. The people cried out, 'The Lord, He is God.' The priests of Baal were routed. But the story does not end there. Jezebel issued a warrant for his death. Elijah escapes to Mount Horeb. There he receives a strange vision. He witnesses a whirlwind, then an earthquake, then a fire. But he is led to understand that God was not in these things. Then God speaks to him in a 'still, small voice', and tells him to appoint Elisha as his successor.

The episode is enigmatic. It is made all the more so by a strange feature of the text. Immediately before the vision, God asks, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' and Elijah replies, 'I am moved by zeal for the Lord, the God of Hosts....' (I Kings 9:9-10). Immediately after the vision, God asks the same question, and Elijah gives the same answer (I Kings 19:13-14). The midrash turns the text into a dialogue:

Elijah: The Israelites have broken God's covenant

God: Is it then your covenant?

Elijah: They have torn down Your altars.

God: But were they your altars?

Elijah: They have put Your prophets to the sword.

God: But you are alive

Elijah: I alone am left.

God: Instead of hurling accusations against Israel, should you not have pleaded their cause?

The meaning of the midrash is clear. The zealot takes the part of God. But God expects His prophets to be defenders, not accusers. The repeated question and answer is now to be understood in its tragic depth. Elijah declares himself to be zealous for God. He is shown that God is not disclosed in dramatic confrontation: not in the whirlwind or the earthquake or the fire. God now asks him again, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' Elijah repeats that he is zealous for God. He has not understood that religious leadership calls for another kind of virtue, the way of the still, small voice. God now indicates that someone else must lead. Elijah must hand his mantle on to Elisha.

In turbulent times, there is an almost overwhelming temptation for religious leaders to be confrontational. Not only must truth be proclaimed but falsehood must be denounced. Choices must be set out as stark divisions. Not to condemn is to condone. The rabbi who condemned the conversos had faith in his heart, logic on his side and Elijah as his precedent. But the midrash and Maimonides set before us another model. A prophet hears not one imperative but two: guidance and compassion, a love of truth and an abiding solidarity with those for whom that truth has become eclipsed. To preserve tradition and at the same time defend those others condemn is the difficult, necessary task of religious leadership in an unreligious age.



GNS Yoetzet Halacha Dena Block welcomes your questions about mikvah, observance of taharat mishpacha (halacha relating to married life) and women's health, as it connects to Jewish law. Reach out to her at:
Phone: (516) 320-9818
Email: gnsyoetzet@gmail.com All conversations/ emails are strictly confidential.



Great Neck Synagogue
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516-487-6100

Rabbi Dale Polakoff, Rabbi
Rabbi Ian Lichter, Assistant Rabbi
Dr. Ephraim Wolf, z"l, Rabbi Emeritus
Zeev Kron, Cantor
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GREAT NECK SYNAGOGUE

JULY CHESD COLLECTION



Who among us does not have old and unneeded shoes, eyeglasses or cell phones sitting in a closet or a drawer at home? Although enjoyed and treasured in their day, now these items sit awaiting their seemingly inevitable final resting with the Great Neck sanitation department. It doesn't have to be that way. You can give these items a new lease on life and, more importantly, help those in need when doing so.

All you need to do is drop off these items this week at one of the two convenient drop-off locations listed below. Here's how your items will help:

Shoes: Your gently used shoes will go to *Shoesholes*, a terrific charity dedicated to fighting poverty in the U.S. and around the world. First, the shoes are sorted by condition, including by a facility dedicated to employing women with disabilities. When in new or nearly-new condition and not suited to those in need, sometimes in response to natural disasters, or sometimes to those suffering chronic poverty, such as in orphanages in Third World countries. Most believe that grade are provided to micro-entrepreneurs in Third World countries, thereby helping some of the world's most poor people to start and sustain businesses to bring their families out of poverty. Read more about it at <http://Shoesholes.org>

Glasses and Sunglasses: Your glasses or sunglasses will go to *Free Eyes*, an outstanding charity based in New Jersey dedicated to providing free prescription glasses for those in need. Your donations will be sorted by volunteers, who will measure the prescription strength of the lenses, and who will also remove any small amounts of previous marks that can be combined and sold to pay for glasses for the needy here in the U.S. After sorting, the glasses will then be shipped to medical missions and other distribution networks across the Third World. The needy recipients will sometimes travel and wait in line for hours for what can be a life-changing restoration of vision. Read more at <http://www.freeeyes.org>

Cell phones: Your used cell phones can help provide cost-free communication to the brave members of our military. *Cell phones for Soldiers* was founded in 2004 by a 12 and 11-year old brother and sister from Massachusetts and has since provided almost 200 million minutes of talk time allowing troops to have precious conversations with their loved ones back home. Your old cell phone will be sold to a recycling company and the proceeds raised is then used to pay for calling cards or other devices for members of the military. You can donate your old cell phones even if you don't have the charger, battery or other accessories. You can read more about the program at <http://www.cellphonesforsoldiers.com>

We hope that you will take a few moments in your day to go through your closets and drawers to find and donate these items. This is also a wonderful opportunity to teach your children the life-changing value of small acts of kindness. **Please drop your items off any time Sunday through Friday, through August 17.**

1. **185 5th Street Bldg** (Please leave by the garage.) Contact, if needed: **Steve Blumler - (516) 530-8845**

2. **11 William Ave.** (Please leave by the garage.) Contact, if needed: **Jenny Ankole - (516) 971-8138**

**SALLY & SEYMOUR OLSHIN
ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM
GNS SUMMER 2015
LEARNING PROGRAM**

Guest Speaker:
SANDRA E. RAPOPORT
"Accepting Forgiveness: Does Joseph
Forgive His Brothers?"



Identifying and accepting authentic forgiveness is extremely difficult to do, it is even more complex when a person has arranged or been wronged by one's siblings. Using the Torah as our teaching model, we will explore the question of whether Joseph truly forgives his brothers. We will introduce aspects of the Joseph narrative with Midrash, we will parse at other biblical sibling relationships, and will come to some surprising conclusions. Join us for an exciting summer evening of Torah learning.

Sandra E. Rapoport teaches Torah at Orleim east of the Manhattan JCC and speaks on Torah topics in the US, Canada and London. Her first book, *Biblical Misadventures*, won a National Jewish Book Award, Foster Prize, and was a Boston Globe "Top-Ten Bestseller." Sandra taught Bible as a Resident Scholar at Harvard, and her periodic columns appear in *The Jewish Week*.

Tuesday, July 14
following 8:05pm
Mincha

Sponsored by
**Tina Machnikoff
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Series
Sponsorships - \$100

To dedicate a
lecture, contact the
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516.487.6100
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26 Old Mill Road
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**Great Neck Synagogue
Presents
PEREK IN THE PARK**

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**SHABBAT PARSHAT PINCHAS JULY 11TH
5:00-6:00PM WEATHER PERMITTING
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

RABBI POLAKOFF'S SHABBOS DRASHA THROUGH 5775, IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF PINCHAS BEN YOSEPH FOR OTHER SUCH OPPORTUNITIES PLEASE CONTACT HOWARD WOLF [212-686-9800](tel:212-686-9800) EXT 220

IF YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE WHO IS MOVING INTO THE GREAT NECK AREA PLEASE LET THE OFFICE KNOW.

THE NEW GNS WEBSITE

Have you visited the updated GNS Website (www.gns.org)? It has davening/candle lighting times, weekly Parsha, Shabbos Announcements, upcoming events (including the Great Neck & NSHA calendars), Mazal Tovs, Sponsorships and photo galleries. You can even make donations and reservations. Check out the Aliya-by-Aliya explanation of the Shabbat morning laining. You'll also find the answers to the Parsha Picture Puzzle sheets we challenge you with every Shabbat.

ATTENTION

We have received numerous complaints from officials and local residents concerning the danger of walking in the streets on Shabbat. We request that you adhere to the following: 1) always use the sidewalk where available; 2) when walking in the street walk facing traffic, as close as possible to the side of the road, and in single file wherever possible; 3) at night wear something reflective to help drivers spot you. By following these guidelines not only will we help to prevent a tragic accident, but we will also be avoiding a possible chilul HaShem.

GNS JULY CHESED COLLECTION

Please donate shoes, eyeglasses, sunglasses and cell phones to the Blumner home, 88 Old Pond Rd, or the Ambalo home, 11 William Penn, now through Aug. 2nd. For more information, please see the flyer on pg. 3.

Special Thanks To Ada & Dov Berkowitz for coordinating the June Clothing Chesed Collection. We appreciate all their efforts to make this collection possible. We thank all of you who donated - more than 50 bags of clothing were distributed to many needy families throughout the Metropolitan area.

UPCOMING EVENTS AT GREAT NECK SYNAGOGUE

July 14: Summer Series: Sandra Rapoport
 July 21: Summer Series: Dr. Edward Reichman
 August 11: Summer Series: Dr. Elana Stein Hain
 August 18: Summer Series: Lisa Septimus

WITHIN OUR FAMILY

Mazal Tov to Negar & Keith Maher on the Bar Mitzvah of their son **Shaun**. **Mazal Tov** to grandparents **Vicki & Barry Maher**.

SAVE THE DATE: NSHA 12th ANNUAL GOLF, TENNIS, MAHJONG & SPA CLASSIC- Honoring **Larry Horn-Mon., July 13th** at Fresh Meadows County Club for a wonderful day of great golf, an all day BBQ, ladies tennis and lunch, a spa/pool day, card games/mahjong lessons, men's tennis and a sunset cocktail party followed by a buffet dinner, with entertainment, prizes raffles and auctions. For additional information re: sponsorships/participation, please contact **Glenn Zuckerman, Jonathan Muller, Andrew Feldschreiber** or **Ryan Ostrow** or email **Arnie Flatow** at aflatow@nsha.org or call 487-8687 extension 133.

MODEST DRESS

Please be cognizant that despite the warmer weather and summer schedule, we ask that when you come to Great Neck Synagogue, that you are dressed in modest attire. This affords all of us the opportunity to honor the sanctity of the synagogue. Thank you.

RALLY FOR PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH

Join the **Stop Iran Now** Rally on Wednesday, July 22nd at Times Square from 5:30-7:30 pm. For more information, please see Dr. Brody.

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Saturday, 24 Tammuz

Sharon Twersky for Hannah Leff
 Norman Rutta for Abraham Rutta

Sunday 25 Tammuz

Steven Blumner for Malka bat Yehiel
 Marc Gottlieb for Rachel Gottlieb
 Marc Gottlieb for Shlomo Schwartzman

Monday, 26 Tammuz

Janet Kashani for Abraham ben Elyahoo
 Robert Mendelson for Walter Mendelson
 Amy Goldberg-Reiss for Florence Reifle

Tuesday, 27 Tammuz

Eliot Heisler for Sharon Heisler
 Deborah Hollander for Sharon Heisler
 Martin Sokol for Sharon Heisler
 Joseph Sokol for Sharon Heisler
 Leo Mindick for Joseph Mindick
 Leo Mindick for Shimshon Mindick

Wednesday, 28 Tammuz

Ada Berkowitz for Israel Hass
 Alisa Hoenig for Augusta Barbara Olen

Thursday, 29 Tammuz

Adam Zalta for Maurice Zalta

Friday, 1 Av

Ivan Seidle for Hymie Seidle