



NHS Sedra Sheet

Pinchas – David Kahn (reprinted)

כ"ד תמוז תשע"ו – 30th July 2016 – שבת פ' פנחס

Why do we bless our sons "May you be like Ephrayim and Menashe"? Being Jewish you will immediately ask me a question back: "What has that to do with this week's Parshah?" Well if you read on, all will become clear– so please be patient!

At the beginning of this week's Parshah, Hashem rewards Pi'nechos: "Therefore I say: Behold I give him my covenant of peace. And he and his descendants shall have the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous on behalf of his G-d and thus made atonement for all the children of Israel."

But why should Pi'nechos receive a special reward that "he and his descendants shall have the covenant of everlasting priesthood"? Was he not Pi'nechos, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Kohen. That is to say – was he not automatically a Kohen and, for that matter, his descendants too? As we Kohanim say "My father was a Kohen, my grandfather was a Kohen – so I must also be a Kohen." However, it may surprise people to learn that this was not so with Pi'nechos. Rabbi Bernstein ZTs'L pointed out in a shiur on this Parshah that, when Aaron and his sons were anointed to the priesthood, Pi'nechos was only a young boy - not yet Bar Mitzvah. He could not be anointed with them, as he was still too young. After that initial anointing only descendants of those who were anointed at that time became Kohanim automatically. Unfortunately for him, Pi'nechos missed the boat! All his younger cousins were Kohanim by birth, his father, grandfather and uncles were all Kohanim by 'anointment', but poor little Pi'nechos was left out!

Just three weeks ago we read about Korach the Levite and his comrades being jealous of the priesthood even though, as we know, every member of Am Yisroel has their place in G-d's scheme of things. They reaped their just rewards for not being prepared to accept this. If Korach et al were jealous, how much more so did Pi'nechos have a right to be jealous of all his relatives being Kohanim. But NO – "...he turned My wrath away "Be'Kanoth Es Kinosi" – when he was jealous for My sake". Throughout his life Pi'nechos was never ever jealous of his cousins – when it came to the crunch he was only jealous on behalf of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. "Therefore I say: Behold I give him my covenant of peace. And he and his descendants shall have the covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was jealous on behalf of his G-d and thus made atonement for all of the children of Israel." Pi'nechos and his descendants were given the Kehunah for all time, not because he was born into it, but because he deserved it! A Matonoh Mikel Elyon. A thank-you gift from the L--d on High!

We find that, as a result, not only was Pi'nechos elevated to the priesthood, but all the High Priests of the first Beis Hamikdosh (see Divrei Hayomim I,V, 36- 41) were his direct descendants, and, according to the Sifri, as quoted by Tosfos in Yuma 9a, all the High Priests of the second Beis Hamikdosh as well! So what is the connection between all this and the blessing that we parents give to our sons? As Yaacov Ovinu grew up he was aware of the jealousy of his Uncle Yishmael towards his father Yitzchak, the jealousy of other shepherds towards theirs, the jealousy he himself suffered at the hands of his brother Esau and even from his father-in-law Lavan. Later in his life, the jealousy of his own sons towards their brother Yoseph - a whole litany of jealousy and hatred. What a wonderful surprise, therefore, when he arrived in Egypt and became acquainted with Yoseph's two sons, to realise that the word 'jealousy' did not exist in their dictionary. Eventually, when he came to bless these two young men before he died, he knew for certain that, if he placed his right hand on the head of Ephraim, his elder brother would not say a word but would only be happy for him to receive the greater blessing. Only their father Yoseph was unhappy on their behalf and attempted to uncross Yaacov' hands. Yaacov also knew that Menasheh would not lord it over his brother as a result. Hinei Ma Tov Umah Naim Shevet Achim Gam Yachad. That is why we bless our children that they should be like them – without arrogance, but most importantly without any jealousy. It could be that Pi'nechos epitomised this Midah because he had received this blessing from none other than the great Elazar Hacoheh and maybe even from Aharon himself.

May we all be blessed with sons who follow in their path.