

Tell a story
Parshah Pinchas
by Julie Zhuk on 2022-07-23

Comments

This week is going to be focused on all the good things that Pinchas did. He was a very wise man and had a deep connection with G-d unlike many of the other Jews back then. G-d gave Pinchas a covenant of peace and it is in this week's parsha, we learn G-d gave Pinchas an apportionment of the land of Israel. We will also read about a man named Tzelafchad who had five daughters and they petitioned for some land of Israel. They did this after the land had already been divided among the different tribes of the Jewish people. This was a bit of an issue because their father died without having any sons, so they too wanted some parts of land to belong to them.

We learn that their father had died in the wilderness during the time Korach instigated his rebellion against Moses. These daughters, their father was not part of the group Korach led who were against G-d. Nor was he an ally of Korach either. What we do know of him comes from a source, Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva called Tzelachad a "wood gatherer". He was among those who were defiant, he and others tried going into the land of Israel after the sin of the spies. G-d accepted their petition and incorporated it in the Torah's laws of inheritance.

Moses at the time was aware that he was going to die and he gave his job over to Joshua. We are all aware how much sinning the Jews had done by turning to idol worship. This made G-d extremely upset, there was nothing that could make His feelings of anger towards the Jews go away. That's how we thought, until Pinchas steps in and acts. Pinchas was known for having zealotry towards G-d and one thing he did that G-d never forgot was kill a Simeonite prince named Zimri who was having sexual relations with a Midianite princess. That princess was his lover. This was why G-d gave Pinchas a covenant of peace and allowed him to be a priest. It is important to note there were a lot more Jews before a count of the Jewish men who were of twenty to sixty years of age. The numbers went down, because many people had turned to idol worship and G-d had them removed from the earth.

Before Moses died, he was instructed by G-d on how to divide the land of Israel through a lottery system. The land was divided among the tribes and families of the Jewish people. G-d's way of dividing the land was for those with large families to get a larger portion of the land. Those who were few in numbers in their families got a smaller portion of the land. It was divided and received as a possession to the fathers of the tribes of the Jewish people. If it wasn't for Moses a lot of things wouldn't have happened. He had an abundance of patience. Unfortunately, being human, he made many mistakes and being at such a high-level G-d chose to not allow him entrance into the land of Israel. He had worked so hard and was so close to entering the land of Israel with all the people. G-d made his decision and Moses was not one to argue with Him.

After learning what was going to happen next, Moses didn't question what would happen with him. He started asking G-d who was going to be the next leader for the Jewish people. Moses had one main concern, he wanted for the next leader to make sure the Jewish people wouldn't drift off from where they were. Moses hoped the next leader would keep the Jewish people in line by following in G-d's ways and stay away from idol worship. Moses asked G-d to pick someone who would be passionate about bringing the flock of Jewish people closer to Him. Before Moses died, we know that he was a compassionate man and had a lot of love to give. Pinchas emulated Moses and he did a good job at that. Pinchas had so much zealotry towards G-d that he became Elijah.

Haftarah Pinchas

The haftarah Pinchas is found in the book of Kings. The main protagonist in this haftarah is Elijah. Elijah and Pinchas had the same soul, they shared one. They were very similar and Pinchas was the hero of the Torah portion. Both Elijah and Pinchas were known for being zealous for G-d. They fought on G-d's behalf for the things He wanted the Jews to have. As they fought this way, they didn't concern themselves with the dangers that were involved or lay ahead of them. The haftarah touches briefly on the showdown that happened with the Baal prophets that happened on Mount Carmel.

These events led to the execution of the Baal priests and the queen at the time, her name Jezebel. She decided to put a death sentence on Elijah. Elijah, not wanting to die, ran away to the Judean desert and asked G-d to take his life. G-d didn't let Elijah die like that. Elijah slept and later was awakened by an angel who gave him food and drink. That food and drink left him feeling re-energized and he was like that for forty days, he walked until he reached Mount Horeb aka Sinai.

It was there that he fell asleep in a cave on the mountain and then he heard the word of G-d come to him asking him why he had come all the way out here. Elijah shared with G-d his feeling of being zealous for he had watched the Jewish people turn away from G-d. It wasn't as if G-d didn't already know what happened, but Elijah decided to share anyway. He told G-d how the people had torn down G-d's altars and killed the prophets by the sword.

These prophets were sent by G-d. Now Elijah felt very alone and thought the Jewish people wanted to take his life as well. G-d listened to him and sent him away from the cave. G-d told Elijah to stand on the mountain and reminded him that G-d's presence would pass through.

Elijah felt a great and strong wind that split the mountains and it shattered the boulders. Elijah came to the realization that G-d was no longer in the wind, then came an earthquake and it was followed by a fire and G-d was not present in any of these things. When the fire subsided, there was a subtle and gentle voice and Elijah came to the realization that the Divine Presence had appeared. Once again, G-d turned to Elijah asking him why he came, what was the purpose for his visit.

Elijah repeated what he had said earlier about why he came, and for that G-d told him to go to Damascus and anoint Hazael as king of Aram. G-d wanted Elijah to anoint Jehu as the king of Israel and to anoint Elisha to be a prophet instead of Elijah. G-d had a plan and these three would continue the battle against Baal. G-d didn't feel Elijah was no longer fit to help the Jewish

people because he kept putting them down. Elijah followed the instructions to a T. We don't know if he understood what was going on and that his complaints about the Jews were only going to lead him to be let go of his current job. He immediately found Elisha and recruited him. Elisha became Elijah's aide and then he became Elijah's successor.

Haftarah Pinchas from Midrash

It was together with the Jewish nation that King Achav saw the Heavenly Fire come to consume the sacrifice that Eliyahu gave at Mount Carmel. Eliyahu with all the Jews saluted that Hashem was the One true G-d. G-d was impressed to hear these words and brought a blessing of water to the Jewish people. There was a downpour to end the drought once the prophet Eliyahu's entreaty. G-d was so impressed to even see the wicked king, Achav decided to do some teshuva as well.

Once king Achav prepared his royal chariot to go back to his balance in the valley of Yizre'el, king Achav suddenly discovered that his servants left earlier than expected. There was no one left to escort him. Maybe they were resenting him because he was the one who originally encouraged them to worship idols. Eliyahu found out what was going on and decided to run in front of the king's chariot so there would be someone to escort the king. Eliyahu was aware of how much G-d wanted for kings to be given honor even kings who were considered evil.

There is an example used here that G-d commanded Moses to honor the Pharaoh of Egypt. Now, Eliyahu was giving honor to Achav, Eliyahu was using the same incentive because Achav was open to doing teshuvah. If Eliyahu showed a deep sign of respect for Achav, he would be drawn to doing a service to G-d. Eliyahu was girding his loins to protect them from getting hurt, as he ran and sped ahead of the king's chariot. Eliyahu at the time was already an old man and pretty enfeebled because of his ascetic lifestyle.

G-d caused a miracle to happen and invigorated him. Eliyahu ran as if he was a young man. He was able to keep up his pace until Achav reached his palace in Yizre'el. When Achav got back to the palace, he reported to the queen about Eliyahu killing her proteges known as the Ba'al and Ashaira priests. The queen got very upset about this, but she kept her calm because she could tell Achav had been under the influence of Eliyahu.

She thought for sure the Jewish people had been swayed, there could have been a threat to her and she thought if the tide would keep going it would turn against her. She thought it was going to be in her best interest to get rid of Eliyahu. She believed that once he would be gone, the people would keep worshipping her proteges, Ba'al. She sent some servants over to Eliyahu with a message that something bad was about to happen. She used the words that she swore by the gods who would punish her if she didn't keep her oath and that the next day, Eliyahu would share the same fate that her proteges had. Her message was supposed to show the people that they were not better than them. From the source we learn the queen was being nice enough to warn him. We are taught that the queen knew she wouldn't be successful in actually killing Eliyahu, but she knew that she had an ability to scare him.

The queen wanted to scare him so that way he would stay away from public events and that would help get the people under her influence once again. Something else was happening, that the queen was unaware of. G-d came to Eliyahu's side, He came to his rescue and was protecting him. By G-d being at his side, it caused the queen a chance to escape. Eliyahu didn't

want to simply rely on a miracle that was his number one reason of leaving the kingdom of Israel.

He went to a town called Be'e Sheva in the rival kingdom of Yehuda. It was there he decided to keep going because he didn't feel safe. He thought that Achav's arm would be long enough and could reach him if he stayed there. He left his servant in that town and kept going into the desert. He didn't feel nager there or think he could be arrested. Being in the desert did expose him to a different kind of danger, where he found himself starving. He thought to himself how he would rather not have food, than be executed at the hands of the queen.

He felt another problem rise at the top of his throat. He didn't want to keep staying in the desert alone, away from his fellow Jews. He wanted to be around the Jewish people to help keep them away from their idol worship. He knew that without his presence they were under Achav's influence. Having them turn away from G-d made Eliyahu feel as if the only One he could communicate with was G-d. Eliyahu had considered he had traveled very far into the desert to pass the boundaries of ISrael. He wasn't sure whether this was the right step for him to take and he wanted to ask G-d for his prayer. G-d heard him and asked him if he felt superior to his forefathers. G-d reminded Eliyahu how his forefathers left Israel when they felt danger around them. Yaakov ran away to his uncle Lavan in the city of Aram to escape from his brother Aisav. Moshe traveled to Midyan when Pharaoh tried to kill him, and King David was being pursued by Shaul. It gave King David a reason to move to the land of the Pelishtim.

Eliyahu heard G-d's words and thought he should run away to Mount Sinai because he didn't have any food or anything to drink. At the time he was very tired and wanted to unde under a rosebush. At this point, tired from all of his running away, he asked G-d to just take his life so he wouldn't have to deal with the queen or be killed by her either. When G-d tried using Eliyahu's forefathers as examples for him, Eliyahu ran out of patience and said he had enough and that he wasn't a good enough person like his forefathers. From the reader's perspective we can tell there was a lot more behind what was going on in Eliyahu's mind. He was very desperate trying to run away and now ended up in the desert not feeling any closer to being safe. The source is asking us why Eliyahu didn't ask G-d for help in the first place.

Eliyahu had become pretty disillusioned after the scene he and the rest of the Jews saw at Mount Carmel. The people saw what G—d did and even though they declared there was only One True G-d, they weren't following through with what they actually believed. They still turned to idol worship and this bothered Eliyahu to no end. Eliyahu knew the queen was using her power to intensify the worship of the idol, Ba'al. The Jews were very much under her spell and Eliyahu didn't feel there was anything new he could try to get them to turn away from her and idolatry. Eliyahu felt everything he had done to teach the Jews, guide them how to love each other, and turn to G-d, his whole mission in life had failed.

He was depressed and he cried out to G-d asking if the Jews keep stooping down to such a low level of idol worship, then I would rather just die. He didn't feel any of the work he did with the Jewish people actually worked. He didn't feel he accomplished anything and he didn't want to keep doing the job G-d gave him, because the Jews just simply wouldn't listen to him. He played down under the rosebush and once he was done praying, he fell into a deep slumber. G-d didn't want Eliyahu to die, he wanted him to keep living. G-d had more faith in Eliyahu than he had in himself. G-d felt Eliyahu had a strong power of getting people to keep doing repentance towards G-d. We will see how Eliyahu managed to do this later. Eliyahu was required to change his way of doing things. While Eliyahu was sleeping, G-d sent an angel from heaven with food to give Eliyahu his strength back. The angel touched him lightly and commanded him to get up and

eat. Eliyahu ate the piece of cake that had been baked on coals and there was a jug of water next to him.

He was a tzaddik and he only ate a bit that was necessary to survive and then he lay down again. The angel touched him once again and ordered for him to eat everything because he had a long journey ahead of him. Eliyahu did as he was told, the food and the angel's touch aided him in cleansing himself of his physical attributes and he became a lot more spiritual. Sleeping under that bush and eating the piece of cake baked on coals was designed to get him to wake up and be conscious of how he had put down the Jewish people and their many transgressions and that doing this was wrong. G-d was displeased with Eliyahu, He had not wanted for him to accuse the Jews in how they thought or how they prayed.

G-d wanted for Eliyahu to defend the Jewish people regardless of their many mistakes they made. G-d wanted Eliyahu to help the Jewish people do teshuva. The source is asking us how the rosebush indicated all of this. Our Sages tell us that the bush had the characteristic of one who spoke poorly and those things someone says about another shows the person's internal grudge and hatred for a long time. Even if the person has stopped maligning his victim. The coals from the rosebush also had an inward glow long after they were extinguished. Anyone guilty of speaking poorly would be signed with glowing rosebush-like coals in Gehinnom. That piece of cake Eliyahu ate also hinted that G-d wanted Eliyahu to stop being so critical of the Jewish people.

There is a Hebrew term for baked coals and it is an abbreviated form of broken or having a shattered mouth. The broken or shattered mouth implied Eliyahu. He should have had his mouth broken or shattered for speaking so poorly about the Jewish people. The Jewish people are forever the G-d's children and Eliyahu shouldn't have spoken so poorly about them and their transgressions. G-d understood why Eliyahu was upset with the Jewish people, He still didn't believe Eliyahu went about things the right way. G-d felt Eliyahu failed to pay attention to these signs of being careful how he spoke of the Jewish people. Eliyahu had been fed by the angel and he felt refreshed. He was able to travel for forty days straight into the desert. He finally makes his way to Mount Sinai.

Usually, if one person is traveling from Be'er Sheva to Mount Sinai it takes a quarter of the time, but G-d led Eliyahu on a much longer route. Doing this route was similar to what Moshe did when he was purified during his forty day stay at Mount Sinai and then he relocated to a higher spiritual plane. It was parallel to the forty days it takes for an embryo to form. G-d wanted Eliyahu to undergo this process of having a "spiritual rebirth." Only after this spiritual rebirth could he take in the grand spectacle that G-d planned to show him. G-d had the intention of waiting until Eliyahu reached Mount Sinai, he would change his strict view of the Jewish people and their many mistakes. He would do this because he would remember it was here at Mount Sinai the Jews had received the Torah.

G-d decided long ago that the fact the Jews accepted the Torah then and there, that was enough merit for Him to give them mercy. There was a cave nearby that a long time ago Eliyahu had stood in and it was there that G-d gave Moses the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy.

Moshe merited this revelation after the Jewish people had transgressed after the incident of the Golden Calf and then he pleaded to G-d on their behalf. He was appealing to G-d for mercy. G-d wanted Eliyahu to imitate Moshe. Eliyahu goes into this cave that is near Mount Sinai. It is the very opening of the rock where Moses once stood and witnessed G-d's glory passing by. There are some opinions that this cave had been especially prepared on the evening of Shabbat, the sixth day of Creation. Eliyahu lay down to imitate that holy place and G-d reached out to him. G-

d asked Eliyahu what he was doing there? This was G-d's way of opening the conversation. Now that Eliyahu had a spiritual rebirth, G-d wanted to try talking to him again. He was giving Eliyahu a second chance to change his attitude. G-d told him that he didn't have the right to accuse the Jews or speak poorly of them. G-d was telling Eliyahu to be careful and watch himself. G-d told Eliyahu that he had endowed him with speech in a way where he would defend the Jewish people and not criticize them.

G-d told Eliyah to remember he had arrived at the place where the Jewish people once got together and accepted the Torah so he can't go accuse the Jews of their wrong doing. After saying all of that, G-d asked Eliyahu why he came to this spot and what was he doing here? He asked Eliyahu why he was isolating himself from the Jewish people and reminded Eliyahu that his job was to be around the Jews and to work to better them. G-d was hoping that Eliyahu would start out with a plea that he was asking for mercy on the Jewish people for they were descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, our holy forefathers. They always fulfilled the will of G-d. Eliyahu was still feeling pain and bitterness when thinking about the Jewish people. He didn't forget their many transgressions and came forward to G-d about how they turned away from G-d and nothing he had tried to do had been working.

Eliyahu complained that because of the Jewish people constantly making poor choices of worshiping idols like the Ba'al priests and that was one reason why there was no rain for a long time, the Jews had turned away from the Torah and were not even performing the bris ceremony when they had baby boys born. Eliyahu just kept going, explaining how the Jews had destroyed the altars G-d had set up and the Jews preferred to use the altars belonging to the idols. Eliyahu concluded his speech that the Jews were ready to take his life. Eliyahu let G-d know that he had run out of patience trying to teach the Jews and have them follow the way of G-d. Eliyahu felt many of these Jews, if not all should be punished.

G-d let Eliyahu speak as long as he felt he needed. Then G-d reprimanded him asking why he got so excited and asked him if it was Eliyahu's covenant that the Jews had forsaken, and did they destroy the altars that once belonged to Eliyahu? G-d told Eliyahu that He could take care of His own part. He didn't want Eliyahu to accuse the Jews anymore. He reminded Eliyahu what a zealot he had always been, even when Moshe was alive. He told Eliyah that he didn't remember when He came down to Mount Sinai to give the Jewish people the Torah and yet he had to bring with him some of His angels to defend the Jewish people. G-d swore to Eliyahu that since he accused the Jews of failing to perform the ceremony of a bris when a baby boy is born, from now on Eliyahu would have to be present whenever they do have this ceremony in the future. By being present when it happens, Eliyahu can be the one to correct the mistake he made by being so zealous and witnessing that the merit of this happening consistently. G-d's last words were painful for Eliyahu. He told Eliyahu to leave the cave and stand on the mountain. From there he would see the presence of G-d pass before him.

Eliyahu did as he was told, he stood there with a group of angels and they were in charge of the wind. They made the presence of G-d pass before him. It was a spectacle that accompanied by this gust of wind and split apart the entire mountain and broke some rocks. Eliyahu got a prophetic message that the spirit of G-d was no longer in the wind. The angels that were in charge of earthquakes flew by and at the same time there was a very loud and large explosion that rocked the whole earth. Eliyahu got another prophetic message saying that the spirit of G-d was not the noise he heard from the earthquakes and the large explosion rocking the earth. The next thing that Eliyahu saw was the passing of a group of angels in charge of a fire.

Eliyahu was told that the spirit of G-d was not in that fire either. The last group of angels that praised G-d came and one could hardly hear them. Eliyahu became prophetically aware that the

spirit of G-d was with them. The spirit of G-d wrapped his face in his coat, afraid of having anyone look at it. That coat was following the example of Moses who had also modestly tried to not show his face when he was a shepherd and he beheld the spirit of G-d at Mount Sinai. There is a story that can be related to this situation. It's told by a sage, known as Rav Shaishes. He shed light on the spirit of G-d appearing in a silent form. The sage was a blind man and he decided to join a crowd of Jewish people who were going out to meet the emperor, in order to say a blessing for a reserved occasion.

There was an apikoros that could tell the sage was a blind man and in a teasing manner asked if the broken vessels go to the water with the rest? This was his way of making fun of the blind man for trying to figure out when the emperor would actually show up. The one who didn't believe in G-d or Judaism all together didn't understand how this blind man would know who the emperor would be if he can't visibly see! The Rav Shaishes told him to just give him some time and he would be able to figure out who and when the emperor would arrive. The parade started and there was a troop of soldiers who came amidst a lot of people. It was very loud at this parade and the excited crowds started to cheer and they craned their necks trying to get a glimpse of who this emperor was.

The Rav Shaishes commented that the emperor had not yet arrived. Then there was a second round of troops who came through. Again the crowd was very loud and there was a lot of commotion going on. The people started to applaud and they were straining their eyes to get a view of the emperor. The Rav Shaishes again repeated the words that the emperor still didn't show up. The soldiers walked by and the Rav Shaishes made similar remarks about the emperor not being there yet. Finally there was an absolute stillness that fell in the air and there was another troop of soldiers that started coming by.

That's when the person who didn't believe in G-d nor Judaism asked if the emperor showed up. Rav Shaishes said yes. The one who didn't believe asked the sage how he knew for sure, since the Rav Shaishes was blind and couldn't physically see. Rav Shaishes explained to him that the earthly kingdom works in a way that is very much the same to the heavenly one. It is written about G-d that He didn't reveal Himself in the wind, earthquake, nor a fire. He appears in the silence, just as there is a stillness around G-d because all are in awe of His majesty, so a monarch's servants are also subdued in his presence.

What the point of this story is when the Rav Shaishes read the story how G-d did reveal Himself to Eliyahu among the silent angels that were very respectful to G-d, he viewed it as a practical guideline and applied it to a similar life situation. It was through this story, G-d tried conveying a message to Eliyahu. G-d wanted for Eliyahu to know he had to beg for mercy for the Jewish people and not just demand they get punished. The message that G-d sent Eliyahu was how He disapproved of Eliyahu's anger towards the Jewish people. The anger Eliyahu felt towards the Jewish people motivated G-d to pass a decree that they wouldn't get rain or dew for seven years. G-d didn't want even the guilty people to die, but He wanted them to do teshuva. G-d didn't want the Jewish people to be broken down by devastating windstorms, or be blotted out by the earthquakes, or to be consumed by a fire as took place for example when the sinful cities in S'dom and Amora didn't follow the orders G-d set in place.

G-d thought if punishment was needed, He preferred to bring it in a gentle and gradual manner. He wanted it to be symbolized by the subdued and quiet sound of the angels. G-d always managed the affairs of the world with kindness and tried very hard to avoid any harsh methods

of punishment. G-d was trying to show Eliyahu that his method of addressing the Jewish people was wrong and wasn't working. He wanted Eliyahu to know that his fiery zealot had gotten people to sway with the wind, earthquake, and fire. G-d preferred for there to be a quiet and subdued voice representing gentle persuasion and that was what would win the Jewish people over. There is a general rule that is based on a dictum of our Sages, the words of the wise should be spoken in a soft tone.

One who is humble will never become angry and will always speak and act considerately. The spirit of G-d will rest in stillness and will be the opposite of haughtiness, tumult, and anger. The vision that Eliyahu had served as encouragement for the countless heroes and heroines who had never been listed on any official records who quietly sanctified G-d's name with their daily actions. The person who devotes themselves totally into the Torah by learning despite staying poor, is known as the simple ba'al habayis. It means his life is filled with mitzvos in honor of G-d. He is doing everything out of the kindness and giving tzedaka. This includes the young mother, who is deprived of sleep and convenience because she is raising the next generation of Jews. There is no fanfare to be made about these kinds of people. The spirit of G-d is not necessarily found in the wind, noise, or fire.

It is not always present around those who are honored by the press or at public gatherings. Our Sages teach us that in the future and in a truthful world, people will be surprised to find out that places have been switched. There will be a lot of people who are now in the forefront and will be relegated to what is known as a back seat and there will be a lot of people who will be presently considered of lesser status than those who are honored. For Eliyahu it was a big deal and privilege to stand there on Mount Sinai.

He saw this heavenly vision and the source asked us in what honor did he get to do this? G-d was not happy with the method Eliyahu chose to educate the Jewish people, but G-d was rewarding Eliyahu for having brought about a tremendous kiddush Hashem when he got all the Jewish people together at Mount Carmel and managed to get them all to say the words that Hashem is the true G-d. G-d was also very happy that Eliyahu got the Ba'al priests punished.

Eliyahu stood at the entrance of the cave and he could hear the voice of G-d. G-d asked him again what was he doing here. G-d thought that the repetition of this question and the vision that Eliyahu saw was supposed to make him realize how disappointed G-d was in him. Eliyahu was supposed to see that G-d disapproved of the way he judged the Jewish people. Eliyahu was supposed to beg for mercy in the Jewish people's defense even for all the wrong doings they had committed. Eliyahu was possessed by the idea that G-d's great Name was being desecrated by the Jewish people so he kept persisting in what he was saying about the wrong things the Jews did. Eliyahu repeated himself again how the Jewish people left the covenant that G-d had set up for them and how they had destroyed the altars that were meant for G-d and that they killed the prophets G-d sent by the sword.

Eliyahu stated that he was alone in staying true to G-d and that the Jews wanted to take his life. G-d told Eliyahu to not accuse the Jews anymore. He was going to send Eliyahu to Damascus and observe their activities. The people living in Damascus also served a different god every day of the week and devoted one day to them all. G-d wanted to know why Eliyahu wasn't

speaking poorly about that group of people instead of the Jewish people? The Jewish nation states that even when they are ugly they are still beautiful. There wasn't a generation as bad as the one living in the time of King Achav. The people there set up idols everywhere in Israel. Even they honored the Torah for when the Aramean king named Ben Hadad asked for a book of Torah, King Achav said that he couldn't give it to them.

He said to take anything, but not the Sefer Torah. The Sefer Torah went to Heaven and started arguing to the Master of the universe should he who had pity on me fall into the hands of Ben Hadad? There as a prophet that was sent to King Achav with the promise that G-d said the enemy would be delivered into your hands, that you could see who G-d really is. The people living in the time of King Achav did not speak poorly, they were aware about the hundred different prophets who were hidden from the queen Izevel. None of the people betrayed the secret to the king. Eliyahu never mentioned these and other redeeming factors to G-d, he was always focused on the wrongdoings of the Jewish people.

He was so concentrated on their guilt that G-d had enough of listening to Eliyahu about how awful the Jews were. G-d decided to send other agents who would punish any guilty Jews. G-d said that His punishments were slow in coming, but it would happen. G-d was hoping that the people who made poor choices would do teshuva. He told Eliyahu that the idolatrous family of King Achav would be destroyed by a future king named Yehu. There would be Jews who would fall by the sword because of future kings named Aram, Chazael.

These two will wage war against the Jewish people. G-d continued to give Eliyahu instructions, He told Eliyahu to go to Damascus and appoint Chazael to be king instead of Aram. Eliyahu was told to anoint Yehu ben Nimshi as king over the kingdom of Yisrael as a successor to Achav, who was from the family of Omri. Eliyahu was also to appoint a successor for himself, and that would be Elisha ben Shafat from Avail Mechola. G-d let Eliyahu know that he was rejected, because he couldn't keep seeing how the Jews transgressed.

G-d told Eliyahu that the next prophet would work better with the Jews and their wrongdoings. Elisha would somehow punish the unworthy Jews and they would die. G-d planned to protect any innocent Jews and there was seven thousand Jews who never even bowed to Ba'al and never kissed him either. These seven thousand Jews wouldn't be harmed by the sword of Chazael. Eliyahu leaves Mount Sinai and returns to Israel. G-d made it possible for him to pass by a man named Elisha. Elisha was ploughing his field.

Eliyahu came to the realization that it was G-d who led him in the direction of Elisha to appoint Elisha to be his successor. Elisha had been a student of Eliyahu's in the past. Afterwards he went back to his father, who was a rich landowner and helped him take care of his land. Elisha himself was also wealthy and needed to look after his own fields. He used to supervise all the workers and when Eliyahu passed, he found Elisha ploughing the field along with eleven other men. Each of these men drove a pair of oxen. Eliyahu approached Elisha and without saying a word he threw his cloak over him. Elisha was able to instantly understand the message Eliyahu was trying to send him. The message was he would be taking Eliyahu's place. The Midrash asks us why didn't Eliyahu just flat out tell him?

One explanation says that Eliyahu became sanctified to such a degree after the revelation at the cave and at the sight of Elisha he wasn't able to see him as the student he was to him before. When Eliyahu touched Elisha with his coat, that was when he assumed a spiritual quality that he had on Mount Sinai. This was how Eliyahu was able to communicate with Elisha. There was another explanation why Eliyahu didn't just tell Elisha he would take his place.

This view said that Eliyahu was testing Elisha. Eliyahu wanted to see if Elisha was going to be prepared wholeheartedly to follow him. Eliyahu wondered if Elisha would do that or just listen to an explicit command. Eliyahu intimated his intention with a sign which Elisha could easily ignore if he so chose. Elisha was a tzaddik and he didn't have any second thoughts when given a chance to take Eliyahu's place. He instantly wanted to do that. He had the desire to follow Eliyahu, no question. The moment he felt Eliyahu's coat touch his, he severed all of his ties with any earthly possessions and he left his oxen in the midst of ploughing. This upset the entire field's work leaving them with more work and not enough staff to do it. He was eager to do Eliyahu's bidding. Eliyahu did have one request from Eliyahu, he wanted to go see his parents and say goodbye to them. Even though he wouldn't be going with Eliyahu right away, Elisha going to say bye to his parents was a way he was showing respect to them.

Eliyahu told him that would be fine and then he asked him what he did to him? Eliyahu's response can be interpreted many ways, one of them was Eliyahu was testing Elisha even more. Eliyahu asked him why are you running after me if I just threw my cloak around you? The next reason was that Eliyahu was telling Elisha, go tell your parents bye, but come quickly and don't keep me waiting. Eliyahu told Elisha that by throwing his coat around him, he was giving him kedusha. Eliyahu let him know that the coat was the kedusha. And that was a minor thing compared to what he was going to experience later in life.

Eliyahu hoped that by Elisha hearing these words, his parents wouldn't prevent him from joining Eliyahu. The last explanation was Eliyahu didn't want Elisha to feel he was keeping him from saying bye to his parents. Eliyahu knew Elisha's going to say bye to his parents was a form of respect. Eliyahu told Elisha to go ahead and see his parents. Eliyahu wasn't trying to keep Elisha from his parents. Elisha was overjoyed at hearing the words he got Eliyahu's permission to go say bye to his parents. Elisha wasn't regretful in leaving behind his comforts even with the thought that his father was very wealthy. Right away Elisha went to slaughter an animal.

It was a pair of oxen from the field and he cooked it immediately over a fire.

It was a religious meal for everyone. Elisha was in a rush so he used the wooden plowshares for the firewood. The Midrash tells us that Elisha cooked the meat in the plowshares. He was fully expecting that they would be ruined in the process, but there was a miracle that happened in the honor of Eliyahu and Elisha. The plowshares weren't damaged in the fire. Instead they improved. From that point on, Elisha was serving Eliyahu consistently. Elisha became his main student and through his rebbe's training, the spirit of the prophecy came upon him. The chapter for the haftara stops here. The next part in the Midrash talks about the differences between both prophets, Pinchas and Eliyahu.

During Moshe's time, Pinchas was a zealous person and he punished Zimri. G-d had promised Pinchas an eternal reward for killing Zimri. G-d said that He was going to Pinchas and his descendants His covenant of peace. In the haftara, Eliyahu has a zealousness too and it evokes Heavenly disapproval and even prompted the appointment of Elisha taking over. Eliyahu and Pinchas had a different version of zealousness from each other. Pinchas did a great deed and it was described in the book of Tehillim as Pinchas arose and executed judgment. By doing this, the plague was arrested. The term of executing judgment has two meanings. The first one was

that Pinchas killed the brazen nassi who transgressed with a Midianite girl. By killing Zimri, Pinchas stopped the plague.

The second meaning was that Pinchas pleaded with G-d to spare the Jews. He pleaded for twenty four thousand souls to not perish in the plague because of one person who transgressed. By doing this, he made a court case against G-d. We recognize that Pinchas combined the qualities of judgment with mercy. Pinchas was very strict with anyone who transgressed, but at the same time he would plead with G-d on behalf of the other Jews. This kind of train of thought was expected of Eliyahu. It's hinted in Eliyahu's name from the beginning of his name.

The letters spell out the Name of G-d and it symbolizes judgement and the rest of the letters for Eliyahu's name symbolize G-d's name of mercy. Eliyahu was different from Pinchas, he was only using the first attribute to his name. Our Sages point out that there were some prophets who wanted both the honor of G-d and of the Jewish People. The other people limited themselves to the honor of only one. The prophet, Yirmiyahu demanded the honor of both G-d, the Father, and the Jewish people.

The Jewish people declared that G-d was fair in punishing them because they did in fact make many transgressions. Yirmiyahu defended G-d, he refrained from giving blame to any of the Jews. Yirmiyahu said that many people transgressed and rebelled against G-d when they made poor choices. Going back to Eliyahu, he honored the Father. He was not honoring the children because he made statements such as he was zealous for G-d. G-d in response told Eliyahu that He didn't want his prophecies.

That was when G-d decided Eliyahu couldn't keep doing his job and it was time for someone else to do it. That person was going to be Elisha. Eliyahu probably realized his struggles of having hope for the Jewish people to not make so many transgressions. That was the main reason why G-d chose Elisha to take over. There's an expression in English, one can't teach an old dog new tricks. Eliyahu felt he couldn't teach old dogs new tricks. The old dogs are in reference to the Jewish people. There was a prophet named Yona who was concerned with the Jewish people's honor to the exclusion of G-d. Yona fled to the sea and wanted to end his life instead of giving a prophecy that would cause harm to the Jewish people. There is the question that comes up of why Eliyahu defended only G-d's honor and not with the Jewish people. The Midrash tells us maybe, Eliyahu was disheartened by the large-scale defection of the Jews during the time Achav was King. Out in the desert it was only Zimri and the members of one tribe named Shimon that had transgressed. The majority of the Jewish people were loyal and on the other hand, during the time of Eliyahu there was a mere number of seven thousand Jews who didn't participate in the worship of Ba'al.

There is a verse that says, "I will leave Ba'al, and every mouth that has not kissed him". This verse is from the book of Kings 1 in 19:18. There were a lot of tzaddikim who were Jewish. The rest of them were afraid of dying at the hands of the Queen named Izevel. These people went to the Ba'al ceremonies and didn't dare stay away. There were only seven thousand Jews known as "refuseniks".

One source known as Rambam says in a book called Iggeres HaShmad says, "Even though only seven thousand Jews were left who had absolutely no ties to Ba'al, G0d disapproved of the criticism Eliyahu gave to the Jewish people." It was only after receiving so many strong messages from G-d, that Eliyahu realized what G-d what these messages meant. G-d was hoping that Eliyahu would change his attitude and repent. G-d was hoping Eliyahu would not argue so much against the Jews in the future and argue for the Jews. Arguing for the Jews would be Eliyahu's way of defending them. Since he wasn't capable of doing this, the job was given to Elisha.

Eliyahu is still considered to be living in some form, he is against evil decrees with his prayer in every generation. He is alive and he is a tzaddik of the generation whose merits shield it. Whenever G-d wants to destroy the world with earthquakes, Eliyahuk would mention the merit of the forefathers and that would evoke Heavenly mercy for the Jewish people. Eliyahu also mentions the merits of those people, individuals who G-d remembers how many heads of families have no careers, but study Torah on a daily basis. The Midrash reminds us how many paupers are always studying the Torah. We need to remember all the children who are learning Torah and how many elderly Jews are going to Bais Haknesses and the Bais Hamidrash every single day.

These people are waiting for salvation coming from G-d. G-d please recall the many lame and blind Jewish people who don't have enough food to eat and they are still teaching their sons the Torah. We need to remember how many widows and orphans are keeping themselves busy studying the Torah and doing mitzvot. Eliyahu is an incredible person. He did his job well as an advocate for the Jewish people and he was chosen to be the herald of peace at the end of days.

He was chosen to be the one who would return the hearts of the fathers to their children and children's hearts to their fathers. That is found in Malachi 3:24. It's important to keep a proper balance between extremes of judgment and mercy which is illustrated in the Haftara. The Western culture advocates for letting things take their own course, without getting involved between man and his fellow. Everyone should seek happiness in their own fashion and to not let anyone get in the other person's way of living.

This is not what the Torah is asking of Jews. It's the opposite. Every Jew is responsible for each other and their behavior is enjoined to reprimand the other person to the best of their ability. There are a lot of lost souls out there and a lot of people who are tragically ignorant of what authentic Judaism is. Changing this way has to be done in a gentle manner. There is a story that is told of a tzaddik named R. Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. The Rav from Jerusalem lived between 1859 to 1932.

He was known to reprimand the Jews who weren't religious in a stern way. Someone once asked this great rabbi, "Isn't a tzaddik always supposed to defend the Jewish people and to vindicate their behavior?" That great rabbi said back, to believe him because he says the Tehillim on a daily basis and he is always crying in front of G-d on behalf of the kind of Jews who are hard to control. The rabbi felt he had a duty to reprimand those who transgressed because he wanted them to repent. He also wanted people's influence to not have a negative effect on any Jew who was religious.