

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Pinchas – 5783

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The Torah lists the lineage of those that sinned.

וְשֵׁם הָאִשָּׁה הַמְּכָה הַמִּדְיָנִית כְּזוּבִי בַת־צֹר, רַאשׁ אֲמוֹת בֵּית־אָב בְּמִדְיָן הוּא:

“And the name of the woman who was struck, the Midinaynis Kuzbi daughter of Tzur. He was the tribal leader of his father’s house.” (Bamidbar 25:15).

Why was it important for the Torah to mention her name? Why did the Torah also call her important and also give the lineage of her father? Revenge is mentioned in her name, but wasn’t Moav at fault, not Midyan?

This parsha and all its related segments is filled with the lineage. Further, the Torah in other places also stresses the importance of lineage. Kuzbi is mentioned when Hashem tells Moshe to command Bnei Yisroel to attack the Midyanim because “of the matter of Peor and because of the matter of Kuzbi, daughter of the *president* of Midyan, their kin.” (Ibid 25:18). Peor was the idol that Bnei Yisroel worshipped when they were wooed by the Moavi women. Even though it was the Mavi women, the vengeance campaign is directed at Midyan. (Ibid 25:17). “Avenge the people on the Midyanim.” (Ibid 31:2).

When the Moavi women lured Bnei Yisroel to sin, Moshe commanded the leaders to destroy the sinners among Bnei Yisroel. (Ibid 25:5). However, **וְהִנֵּה אִישׁ מִבְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא וַיִּקְרַב, אֶל־אֶחָיו אֶת־הַמִּדְיָנִית** “Behold! A man of importance from Bnei Yisroel came and brought close to his brother the Midaynis.” (Ibid 25:6). The Torah teaches that when Bnei Yisroel copulated with the daughters of Moav, the real sin there was the idol worship. The unions were consensual, and it mentions nothing about married women. However, idol worship was a sin and so the sinners had to be punished. The Torah then says “behold” at this time there was an instigator of the matter.

A man of importance brought forth the Midaynis, an important woman from Midyan. When he did that, it appeared that mating with foreign nations was allowed. It also spurred the people to the sin when an important Yisroel fraternized with an important Midyan woman in front of the entire Bnei Yisroel and Moshe. Further, Moshe commanded that all ringleaders of the idol worship be executed. (Ibid 25:4). Yet, Zimri brought Kuzbi into the camp, untouched. Pinchas followed Moshe’s orders and impaled them. (Ibid 25:8).

Here, the Torah says that after Kuzbi was killed by Pinchas, her father is referred to as “president.” (Ibid 25:18). He received a promotion after his daughter was responsible for the plague. Contrastingly, “Pinchas, the son of Elazar, son of Aharon” (ibid 25:1) received a covenant of peace (ibid 25:12) for stopping the madness. Further, Pinchas is already singled out when talking about the head of the Levi household in Mitzrayim as he is the only grandchild mentioned. (Shmos 6:25).

Lineage is mentioned elsewhere. During the census, the sons of Eliav are mentioned. "Dasan, and Aviram." (Bamidbar 26:9). Even though his sons were partly responsible for the Korach treason, Eliav remained a head of household, counted among the righteous. Ohn son of Peles is only mentioned once in the Torah, in connection to joining Korach. (Ibid 16:1). The family drifted to obscurity. Also, despite their father, "the sons of Korach did not die." (Ibid 26:11). In fact, they wrote or were the muse for several Tehillim. (Tehillim 42, 44 - 49, 84, 85, 87, 88).

The daughters of Tzelophchod are mentioned to their benefit and their names are mentioned twice. (Bamidbar 26:33 and 27:1). They became the head of household, counted in the census. Tzelophchod is mentioned with his lineage, but only in connection to his daughters' good deed. (Ibid 27:1). His daughters were responsible for clarifying women's inheritance rights and it was really their lineage that was mentioned. The integrity of their quest, as opposed to monetary considerations, is also clarified. (Ibid 27:4).

Amram, Yocheved, and their three children are mentioned. (Ibid 26:59). Originally, the Torah had said, "A man went ... and took a daughter of Levi." (Shmos 2:1). They are only identified by name later. (Ibid 6:20). Here is the only time the Torah lists the full family. Earlier, in connection to Moshe, Miriam is mentioned as "his sister" but not named. (Ibid 2:4). Miriam is first identified by name as Aharon's sister. (Ibid 15:20). Here is the first time she is explicitly called Moshe's sister, by name.

Moshe passes the torch of leadership to Yehoshua. (Ibid 27:18). Yehoshua is mentioned many times, but he earned the title "bin Nun" when he would not leave Moshe's side even while Hashem talked to Moshe. (Shmos 33:11). Until then he is just "Yehoshua." He is also Yehoshua everywhere in the Torah except when he is chosen to be a scout. (Bamidbar 13:8) Then it cites Moshe changing his name from Hoshea to Yehoshua. (Ibid 13:16). Even though Moshe changed the name then, the Torah never, otherwise, records Yehoshua without the name Moshe gave him, even earlier. His dedication as an attendant was rewarded with that name and title. In fact, the Torah never records Yehoshua's lineage except that he is from Ephraim. (Bamidbar 13:8). His name is not mentioned as part of the households in any census and a Nun is not mentioned, either. Therefore, "bin Nun" is not Yehoshua's father. He was likely an orphan leaving Mitzrayim. He made his own name for himself.

The Torah also goes out of its way to praise Moshe and Aharon as part of Levi. When giving the lineage of Levi, it says "this is the same Aharon and Moshe that Hashem talked to." (Shmos 6:26). And again, the ones who spoke to Pharaoh were these same Moshe and Aharon." (Ibid 6:27). This is to stress that their greatness was tied to their lineage, and their family, was tied to them. Elisheva, Aharon's wife, is not only mentioned in connection with her father, Amminadav, but also as a sister to Nachshon. (Ibid 6:23). Nachson was one of the appointed Nesiim. (Bamidbar 1:7). Aharon chose well.

The Torah is teaching that family can lift a person or a person can make himself great regardless of their family, and sometimes, a person can act independently. Family can make one important, but ultimately, it is the person that makes the family name good.