

Pinchas

פינחס

“Phinehas”

Numbers 25:10 - 30:1

Torah Together



This *Torah* portion begins with the story of Phinehas, son of Eliazar the High Priest. His zealousness for God earns him high praise from YHWH. The portion ends with another listing of God’s “appointed times,” his feast days. This emphasizes the importance God places on these special celebrations.

1. Phinehas - 25:10-18

a) Looking back to the end of last week’s parashah, describe the actions of Phinehas.

An Israelite man and a Midianite woman had engaged in a pagan act (probably ritual prostitution) in the presence of Moses and the community. Phinehas (grandson of Aaron) ran them both through with a spear.

b) What did God say had motivated Phinehas? What would have been the effect of God’s zealousness?

God said that Phinehas had been motivated by zealousness for God’s honor (verse 10). Verse 11 implies that had Phinehas not done this, God may have put an end to the Israelites “in His zealousness.”

c) What promise did God make to Phinehas? According to verse 13, what did Phinehas’ actions do for the Israelites?

God “made a covenant of peace” with Phinehas, promising he and his descendants a “covenant of a lasting priesthood.” Verse 13 says that Phinehas’ act “made atonement for the Israelites.”

d) What were the names of the people killed by Phinehas? Where were they from?

The man was Zimri, son of Salu, the leader of a Simeonite family. The woman was Cozbi, daughter of Zur a tribal chief of a Midianite family.

e) How were the Israelites to treat the Midianites? What were God’s reasons for this command?

The Midianites were to be treated as enemies of the Israelites because they had treated the Israelites as enemies when they seduced them into worshipping the pagan god Baal at Peor.

Who were the Midianites?

The Midianites lived in Moab and were intermingled with the Moabites. The term “Midianite” may have referred to their religious practices whereas the term “Moabite” may have referred to where they lived or their heritage as they were descended from Moab, an offspring of Lot. Moab refers to a land area north of Edom, south of Ammon and east of the Dead Sea. The Midianites, however, were a people group that populated the area of the northern Arabian peninsula. This is the same group of people that Jethro (Reuel), Moses’ father-in-law, was from. He was said to be a priest of Midian.

Scripture Link:

For another perspective on this incident, see what Saul of Tarsus had to say about it in **1 Corinthians 10:8 - 9.**

Scripture Links:

As we learned in **Numbers** chapter 1, the usual purpose of a census was to prepare for war. The first census was taken soon after the Israelites had left Egypt and were supposedly ready to enter the land of Canaan. Their lack of faith after sending the 12 spies into the land kept this from happening (**Numbers 13**). Now, some 40 years later, the Israelites were again ready to enter the land that God had promised them. So this was a good time to take another census.

Comparing the results of the census at the beginning of their time in the wilderness with the results 40 years later can provide some insight into how the Israelites had changed during that time.

2. The Second Census - 26:1-65

a) When and where was this second census taken? Who exactly was counted? Why just these? Why was this important at this time?

This census was taken “on the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho.” (verse 3) All men over the age of 20 were counted (except for the Levites) as these were the men capable of fighting in battle. The Israelites were preparing to enter and conquer Canaan which would involve battles.

b) Compare the results of this census with that recorded in Numbers 1 and 2. What differences do you notice?

See accompanying chart. This census contains details not listed in the first census, perhaps because this was the census that would be used to divide up the land among the tribes (verses 52-56).

Comparison of Israel’s Census

Tribe	Numbers 1 & 2	Numbers 26
Rueben	46,500	43,730
Simeon	59,300	22,200
Gad	45,650	40,500
Judah	74,600	76,500
Issachar	54,400	64,300
Zebulun	57,400	60,500
Ephraim	40,500	32,500
Manasseh	32,200	52,700
Benjamin	35,400	45,600
Dan	62,700	64,400
Asher	41,500	53,400
Naphtali	53,400	45,400
TOTALS	603,550	601,730

Items of interest:

- 1) The tribe of Simeon showed the largest decrease followed by the tribes of Ephraim and Naphtali.***
- 2) The largest growth was experienced by Manasseh followed by Asher and Issachar.***
- 3) Judah, still the largest tribe, grew to 76,500.***
- 4) The 2 tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh totaled 85,200, making the “Tribe of Joseph” larger than the tribe of Judah.***

c) There are several interesting details included with this census. For example, what happened to the sons of Eliab the Reubenite? Do you remember the story of Judah's sons? Why are Joseph's sons mentioned separately?

Two of Eliab's sons, Dathan & Abiram, were killed in Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16). Judah's sons, Er and Onan, died in Canaan (Genesis 38) leaving Shelah as Judah's only son. Perez was Judah's offspring by Tamar, the widow of both Er and Onan. Joseph's sons, Ephraim & Manasseh, are mentioned separately because Jacob adopted them as his own sons, thus giving Joseph a double portion of the inheritance (Genesis 48).

d) Why were the Levites counted separately? How many male Levites were counted over the age of 1 month? Why weren't the men over age 20 counted in this case?

The Levites were counted separately because 1) they weren't to fight in the upcoming battles and 2) because they weren't to receive any land in Canaan. There were 23,000 Levite males over the age of 1 month.

e) How many of those who had been counted in the first census (Numbers 1) were also included in this census?

They only ones left from the first census were Caleb and Joshua; the others had died during the 40 years in the wilderness just as God had said.

3. Zelophehad's Daughters - 27:1-11

a) Who were the daughters of Zelophehad? From what tribe were they? What was unusual about their situation? What did they do about it?

Zelophehad, of the tribe of Manasseh, had 5 daughters (Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah) and no sons. With no sons, Zelophehad's name and inheritance in the land would not be passed on. The daughters approached Moses and Eleazar to ask that they receive their father's inheritance.

b) What did Moses do about their situation? What instructions did God give to Moses?

Moses inquired of God who ordered that Zelophehad's daughters be given their inheritance.

c) How did this situation effect future generations of Israelites? Do you think this is a good example of how the Israelites develop their legal system?

In addition to the arrangements for Zelophehad's daughters, God made arrangements for the passing down of land in the case of no male heirs. This assured that land would stay in the families.

Scripture Links:

To read about what happened to the sons of Eliab (verses 8 – 9), see the story of Korah's rebellion in **Numbers 16:1 – 40**.

The story of Er and Onan, sons of Judah (verse 19), can be found in **Genesis 38**.

For the story of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu (verse 61) see **Leviticus 10**.

Scripture Link:

The subject of Zelophehad's daughters is addressed again in **Numbers** chapter **36**.

This passage includes further instructions that the daughters are to marry within the tribal clan of their father, thereby assuring that their inheritance would not leave the tribe.

Maintaining the original tribal inheritance was of prime importance to the Israelites.

Joshua Succeeds Moses

In Hebrew, his name is *Yehoshua*, which means “YHWH is salvation.” We first meet Joshua in **Exodus 17:9**, when Moses gives him the task of choosing the men who will fight against the Amalekites as the Israelites are leaving Egypt. We next see him as “Moses’ aid” who went with Moses part way up Mt. Sinai when he received the Ten Commandments (**Exodus 24:13**). (Joshua stayed on the mountain until Moses came down with the tablets.) Joshua was also one of the 12 men sent to spy out the land of Canaan in **Numbers 13**. (He was one of two who came back with a good report, noting that the Israelites could indeed take the land.) And Joshua did in fact lead the Israelites into Canaan and presided over the division of the land among the 12 tribes, as told in the **book of Joshua**. Joshua is a great model of a strong and devoted man of God. It’s no accident that our Messiah shares his name.

4. Joshua to Succeed Moses - 27:12-23

a) What did God tell Moses to do at the beginning of this passage? How do you think Moses felt about the news God gave him? What was his first concern?

God instructed Moses to go up on a mountain (Mount Nebo) and look at the land the Israelites were about to receive, where he would die. Moses was probably disappointed that he wouldn’t be entering the land, but at 120+ years of age, he may have been ready to “be gathered to his people.” His first concern was that God appoint a new leader for the people.

b) What was God’s solution to Moses concern? What part were Moses and Eleazar to have in the process God commanded? Why do you think this process was necessary?

God instructed Moses to publicly ordain Joshua as his successor. Moses was to lay hands on Joshua in front of Eleazar and the entire assembly. This public ceremony established that it was God’s will that Joshua succeed Moses.

“May YHWH, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so YHWH’s people will not be like sheep without a shepherd.”

Numbers 27:16 - 17

c) Do you think Joshua would have the same type of relationship with God that Moses had? Why or why not? What were his qualifications for the job?

God had said that no one had a relationship with Him like Moses (Numbers 12:6-8). Joshua’s would be different, but he had worked along side Moses since the first time Moses had gone up Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:13).

5. Daily, Sabbath and Monthly Offerings - 28:1 - 28:15

a) What was to be offered as a burnt offering to YHWH each day? When were these offerings to be made?

Each day, in the morning and at evening, a lamb was to be offered along with the grain offering and drink offering. (Note: These are burnt offerings.)

b) In addition to the daily sacrifices, what was to be offered on the Sabbath?

On each Shabbat, an additional 2 lambs were offered along with their grain and drink offerings.

c) In addition to the daily sacrifices, what was to be offered as a burnt offering on the first of each month? What other type of offering was to be made at this time? How was the first of the month recognized?

On the first of every month (the appearance of the new moon), 2 young bulls, 1 ram, and 7 male lambs were offered along with their appropriate grain and drink offerings. In addition, a male goat was offered as a sin offering.

6. The Passover - 28:16-25

When was the Passover to be celebrated? In addition to the daily offerings, what other offerings were to be made at this time? How many days were these offerings to be made?

The Passover celebration, which started on the 15th of Nissan, included the burnt offering of 2 young bulls, 1 ram, and 7 male lambs along with their appropriate grain and drink offerings, as well as the regular daily offerings. Also a goat was sacrificed as a sin offering. This was continued for 7 days.

7. Feast of Weeks - 28:26-31

In addition to the regular daily offerings, what offerings were to be made at *Shavaot* (the Feast of Weeks)?

For the Feast of Weeks, 2 young bulls, 1 ram, and 7 male lambs were offered along with their appropriate grain and drink offerings. A goat was also included as a sin offering.

8. Feast of Trumpets - 29:1-6

When was the Feast of Trumpets celebrated? In addition to the regular daily and monthly offerings, what other offerings were to be made?

The Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah), which occurred on the 1st of Tishri, was to include a burnt offering of 1 young bull, 1 ram, and 7 male lambs along with their grain and drink offerings as well as a goat for a sin offering. These were in addition to the regular daily and monthly offerings.

The New Moon Offering

The calendar that God defined in the Torah is based on both the sun and the moon. The first day of any month occurs at the new moon which is fairly easily observed. (The word "month" is derived from "moon.")

This description of the New Moon festival and offering is unusual in that it only appears in the book of **Numbers**. One might expect that it would be included with the description of the other feasts in the book of **Leviticus**. The reason for this is not known.

The Appointed Times of God

God's appointed times (*moedim* in Hebrew) are also described in **Leviticus** chapters **16** and **23**. In addition to the weekly *shabbat*, and monthly New Moon feasts, there are seven set times in the year when God's people are to do no regular work and to hold a sacred assembly. The description of these appointed times given here differs from the one given in **Leviticus** in that it focuses on the offerings that are to be made at each one. Both passages should be studied together to get a complete picture of God's holy days.

In general, each appointed time serves two purposes. One is to remember a time in the past when God blessed His people in some way. A second purpose is to rehearse for a future event yet to come in God's prophetic calendar, so that His people might be prepared for the future. For more information on this subject, see the companion study on the book of **Leviticus**.

9. Day of Atonement - 29:7-11

There are several offerings made on this day. What is the specific offering described here? What other offerings (described elsewhere) are made in addition to these?

On the 10th of Tishri, Yom Kippor, 1 young bull, 1 ram, and 7 male lambs along with their grain and drink offerings were made. Also a goat was presented as a sin offering. This is in addition to the 2 goats that were to be offered for atonement on this day as well as the regular daily burnt offerings.

10. Feast of Tabernacles - 29:12-40

a) When is the Feast of Tabernacles celebrated? How long does it last?

The Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) begins on the 15th of Tishri and continues through the 23rd of Tishri (8 days).

b) Prepare a table listing the different offerings to be made for each of the days in **Sukkot** (the Feast of Tabernacles). Did these offerings take the place of the regular daily offerings? Why do you suppose this celebration is so different than the rest?

Day 1: 13 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 2: 12 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 3: 11 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 4: 10 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 5: 9 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 6: 8 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 7: 7 bulls + 2 rams + 14 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Day 8: 1 bull + 1 rams + 7 male lambs + grain & drink + 1 goat (sin)

Occurring at the end of the harvest season, Sukkot is a festival of thanksgiving for the provision of God. Many also see it as symbolic of the "marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9, 17) and the beginning of the millennial reign of Yeshua, events yet to come.

Digging deeper

1. The story of Phinehas has many interesting implications. For example, why was Phinehas rewarded by God for such a violent act instead of being reprimanded or punished? Or, how did the killing of Zimri and Cozbi “make atonement for the Israelites?” What can you learn by rereading and considering this story further?

In general, it is not a good idea to assume that our “righteous anger” is God’s will. God has said, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay.” In this case, however, God must have seen into Phinehas’ heart and determined that it was pure and that his violent act was an expression of God’s heart. The fact that the death of the sinners atoned for the sin of the Israelites is the first time that the death of a human atoned for the sin of others. (Yeshua’s death also atoned for the sins of others.)

2. **Numbers** Chapters **28** and **29** list the sacrificial offerings that the Israelites were to make during the year. Calculate how many animals and how much grain, wine, and oil were used. Now read **Hebrews** chapter **10**. Does this take on any new significance to you?

Total Yearly Sacrifices

	Bulls	Rams	Lambs	Grain	Drink	Goats
Daily (x 365)			730	1,460 l.	730 l.	
Shabbat (x 52)			104	416 l.	104 l.	
Rosh Hodesh (x12)	24	12	84	360 l.	147 l.	12
Pesach	14	7	49	210 l.	86 l.	1
Shavaot	2	1	7	40 l.	12 l.	1
Yom Teru'ah	1	1	7	24 l.	10 l.	1
Yom Kippor	1	1	7	24 l.	10 l.	3
Sukkot Day 1	13	2	14	112 l.	42 l.	1
Day 2	12	2	14	106 l.	40 l.	1
Day 3	11	2	14	100 l.	38 l.	1
Day 4	10	2	14	94 l.	36 l.	1
Day 5	9	2	14	88 l.	34 l.	1
Day 6	8	2	14	82 l.	32 l.	1
Day 7	7	2	14	78 l.	30 l.	1
Day 8	1	1	7	24 l.	10 l.	1
TOTALS	113	37	1,093	3,218 l.	1,361 l.	26

Note: 3,218 liters of flour is probably more than a ton and 1,361 liters of wine can be thought of as 1,362 bottles. (The 3 goats for Yom Kippor are the 2 goats for the atonement ceremony plus 1 goat as described in this passage.)

For further study, see

Haftarah : 1 Kings 18:46-19:21

Brit Hadashah : Matthew 26:1-30; Mark 14:1-26; Luke 22:1-20;
John 2:13-22; 7:1-13, 37-39; 11:55-12:1; 13:1;
18:28,39; 19:14; Acts 2:1-21; 12:3-4; 20:5-6;
16: 27:9-11; 1 Cor 5:6-8; 16:8; Hebrews 11:28