

FUCHSBERG JERUSALEM CENTER CONSERVATIVE YESHIVA

TORAH SPARKS

Parashat Pinchas

July 27, 2024 | 21 Tammuz 5784

Torah: Numbers 25:10–30:1 **Triennial:** Numbers 26:52–28:15

Haftarah: Jeremiah 1:1–2:3

Dear Torah Sparks Community,

Torah Sparks began more than 20 years ago, and to this day we pride ourselves on sharing thoughtful, unique, and engaging Torah learning with you each week. As a not-for-profit organization, the Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center depends on your support to keep initiatives like Torah Sparks thriving. We are eager to continue providing this content to you. If you have not yet registered for a \$5 monthly payment plan for the weekly Torah Sparks email, please do so [here](#).

Starting August 1, those of you who have not paid for a subscription will no longer receive Torah Sparks. If you represent a synagogue that distributes this email to your community, please contact us to arrange for a Torah Sparks community subscription [here](#).

Torah Sparks will continue to host the reflections of wonderful Jewish thinkers, and the weekly email will have a fresh look and feel in the months ahead. We're also creating an archive of two decades of Torah Sparks that will be available free of charge on our website www.fuchsbergcenter.org.

We'd like to take this opportunity to thank Bex Stern Rosenblatt, whose weekly online Torah Sparks classes will come to an end in August. Bex will continue to offer her teachings in future Torah Sparks emails.

May you and we continue to learn and teach Torah through this holy vessel of learning for many years to come.

Yours,

The Fuchsberg Jerusalem Center Team

We believe that in times of great strife, words of Torah can provide stability and comfort in our lives.

We know that you join us in praying for the safety of our soldiers and citizens, and that together we mourn the terrible losses already suffered.

We stand together for a strong and secure Israel.

Passing It On

Bex Stern-Rosenblatt

Parashah

Moses steals God's thunder in this parashah. He takes the mic. It's been a rough time for Moses.

His family has passed. Everyone he grew up with, every contemporary of his, has left this world. He has the numbers to prove it. Yet again, Moses must take a census, must record this new generation. Last time he did this, he did it with Aaron at his side. He recorded those he had

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shared his life with, those who had witnessed miracles with him, those who had seen him transform from an outsider with a stutter to a humble man who talked with God. This time, it is Aaron's son by Moses's side. Those that Moses records never knew Moses the man. They knew only Moses the leader. We read "And among these there was not a man from the reckonings of Moses and Aaron the priest, who reckoned the Israelites in the Wilderness of Sinai."

It is all too understandable that looking at these grown children, Moses sees the echoes of their parents. In this census, Moses mentions Dathan and Abiram, Er and Onan, all of whom are dead. But most tellingly, Moses mentions his mom and dad, his brother and sister, his two deceased nephews. Looking at the future, Moses sees the past, and he understands himself in a new role. Moses the transmitter of God's message becomes Moses the transmitter of history. He has already told God's message. He has delivered the Torah. His life is coming to a close. Now, he just has to tell his story and the story of all those who lived with him. He must make sure that this new generation understands itself as carrying the legacy, the knowledge, the relationships of those who came before it. This will not be God's message. This will be Moses's message. This will be the Book of Deuteronomy.

There is a huge amount of *chutzpah* here on Moses's part. God has told him that his time is drawing to a close—but Moses does not stand down. God has listened to Moses and given him a successor—but

Moses won't stop talking. God created the world once through an act of speech. God said, and there was. In Deuteronomy, Moses too will speak the world that was into being, transforming fading memories into transmittable national myth.

It begins in our parashah. For the past three books and forty years, we have read, over and over, "And God spoke to Moses saying." There are two common interpretations for the use of both the word "spoke, *dbr*" and the word "saying, *amr*." Some, including Rashi, hold that the two words refer to different types of speech, harsh speech and gentle speech. God talks with both types. Some, including Rabbeinu Bahya, hold that the use of *amr* means that the words God addresses to Moses are meant to be passed on, to be resaid, to the Israelites.

In our parashah, the phrase gets flipped on its head. We read, "And Moses spoke to God saying." Moses is asking God to provide a successor, a leader to guide the people once Moses is gone. But he does so using God's language. Moses the humble, Moses who needed Aaron to communicate for him, now addresses God directly. Of course, he had spoken to God before. But never with God's own form of address. Moses is making God his messenger. After all, God will still be with the people. It is Moses who will be gone. And God listens. God takes no offense at this reversal of roles. God gives Moses his platform, lets Moses have his final book. Moses has earned it.