

PARASHAT PINCHAS

Numbers 25:10–30:1

Parashat Pinchas elaborates on the incident at the end of *Parashat Balak*: Pinchas, son of Eleazar, kills Zimri son of Salu and Cozbi daughter of Zur, a Midianite, who have entered a tent to have sex. Pinchas's zealousness saves the Israelites from a plague. God rewards him with a covenant of peace and his descendants with the office of the priesthood for all time. Moses tells the people to crush the Midianites for their "trickery" in seducing the Israelites into idolatry and whoring with their women. After the plague, Moses and Aaron take a census of the entire Israelite community. The total number of Israelites is 601,730. Moses also announces the division of the land, providing larger tribes with greater holdings and smaller tribes with lesser ones. Each person is assigned a lot of equal size, except for the Levites who are not given land but are compensated monetarily for their work in the sanctuary. During the taking of the census the case of the daughters of Zelophehad—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah—arises. They claim that, because their father has died and left no sons, they should have the right to inherit his holdings. God confirms their claim and instructs Moses to announce that, if a man dies without leaving a son, a daughter will inherit his property. Moses is told to climb to the top of Mount Abarim to see the Land of Israel, and he is informed that he will die there. When Moses requests that his successor be chosen, God tells Moses to appoint Joshua. Moses is to instruct Joshua to present himself to Eleazar the priest, who will consult the Urim for important decisions and instructions regarding the community. The *parashah* concludes with a description of the offerings to be presented daily, on the Sabbath, on new moons, for Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and for each of the days of Sukot, including the eighth day, or Shemini Atzeret.
