

D'var Torah:

Pinchas

Office of The
CHIEF RABBI

What would it be like without you?



Video transcript: A rabbi once returned to his shul after a vacation. One of his congregants said to him, "Rabbi, you should have been here to see what it's like without you!"

The rabbi took that as a great compliment. And if there is one Biblical character whose presence made all the difference to those around him, it was definitely Aharon HaKohen, Aaron the High Priest.

At the commencement of Parshat Pinchas we're given a genealogy of the people at a time of census and Rashi notices some changes. And he attributes the changes to the fact that a civil war had happened in the wilderness. And why did it happen? It happened because Aaron had passed away.

The Torah recounts the death of Aaron for us. He was buried in a place called Hor HaHar and the entire nation wept bitterly for him because they loved him so dearly.

In Parshat Eikev we are told that Aharon died in a place called Moserah, and that's

where he was buried. So how is it possible that in one place we're told that he was buried in Hor HaHar because he died there, and in another place, that it was Moserah?

So Rabbi Shimon Schwab based on the Rashi in our parsha says as follows: Actually Aaron died in Hor HaHar and that's where he was buried, but because he was the great peacemaker of our people, his absence was felt dearly and, for the very first time, civil war raged in our midst and many people died.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab explains that Aaron's death in Hor HaHar was felt in Moserah and therefore, when the people were in Moserah it was as if Aharon had died there and that's why they were fighting against each other in Moserah.

We often notice how the presence of one person - whether in the family circle, an office setting or a community - can make all the difference, sometimes positively, and sometimes negatively.

From what we learn about Aaron, let's all ask the following question to ourselves. What kind of positive impact does our presence make wherever we are? And to what degree will we be missed when we're not there? Shabbat shalom.

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