

Taking Parsha Pinchas to Heart **A True Torah Experience by Seth Feldman**

This week I left my heart in San Francisco.
Well, to be exact, I changed my heart in San Francisco.

During my business trip to San Fran, something amazing happened to me – and to my heart. Literally. Physically. Some would even say – Miraculously.

And it can best be explained in this week's Torah portion – Parsha Pinchas.

For a long time, I suffered from “Afib” – an irregular heartbeat. Not life threatening, but a pretty big deal. Finally, two years ago, I underwent a major procedure to correct it. Thank G-d, It worked. Since then, my heart has been pretty close to perfect.

Perfect, until this week.

I woke up Tuesday with my heart racing and completely out of rhythm. I felt awful: The anxiety, the light-headedness, and the chest pain. Plus, it was devastating to think I may have to go through this whole ordeal again.

For better or worse, I knew what caused it.

The night before, I stayed up late, drank too much and stressed myself over work. These are things that can trigger Afib.

And they've been par for the course lately.

Once I started travelling fulltime for work, I have been fixated on my job. Plus, my healthy habits have gone downhill. My home kitchen is kosher and filled with healthy foods. The hotel bar, well, not so much.

What's more, my learning and davening have fallen by the wayside. And so has my peace of mind.

I'm not a prophet. But this episode of "Afib" was clearly G-d telling me "Enough is Enough."

Here's where the story gets good.

With my heart fluttering, my mind racing and a long workday ahead, I met my co-worker at one of San Fran's most swanky hotels.

When I got there, I went to the bathroom in the hotel lobby.

There, a guy, clearly homeless, was washing himself in the sink.

Very well spoken, he wished me a "Good Morning."

Without much thought, I replied, "How are you?"

He said, "Not well."

Told me he was just evicted and was staying at a shelter, waiting for his next Veteran's check to arrive.

Then he went on to say that he completely messed up but will get his life back in order.

That's a pretty powerful admission.

Even though he didn't ask me for a penny, I pulled out my wallet.

But when I opened it -- it was empty.

I felt terrible. This homeless guy didn't know what to think.

Then something clicked.

I told him to wait, found an ATM, took out cash, and gave the homeless man a relatively large amount of tzedakah; much more than he would ever expect.

He was so happy.

He gave a hug. Said this day was a blessing.

He was right.

I felt really good too.

Then at that moment - when I was least expecting it -- my heart went back in rhythm.

My Afib was gone!!!

True story.

But what really happened?

Let's look at this week's Parsha:

To the large [tribe] you shall give a larger inheritance and to a smaller tribe you shall give a smaller inheritance, each person shall be given an inheritance according to his number.” ([Numbers 26:54](#)).

G-d gave the Jewish people a very logical system for dividing the holy land. It wasn't cut and dry. There were a lot of factors at play. The process took thought and energy and very careful analysis.

But then...

Only through lot shall the Land be apportioned (Numbers 26:55)

Despite everything we just read, the determining factor in dividing the land was a lottery. Imagine, the future of Israel being determined by Powerball.

What's the deal?

Don't our own thoughts, energy and decisions determine our fate? Or is it one big lottery in which G-d pulls the winning numbers?

Here's one answer by Rabbi [Naftali Silberberg](#).

Even those decisions, which seem to be in our hands are also ultimately determined by lottery, orchestrated by G-d's hand.

Yes, G-d expects us to make wise decisions, but ultimately these wise decisions are manipulated and guided by G-d, who orchestrates the circumstances to ensure that we follow the path which He planned for us.

Holy Kosher Guacamole!

That's what happened to me this past week.

I experienced first hand how G-d plots our path and forces us to follow it – through the places we travel, through the people we meet, through unexpected opportunities – and even through the beating of our hearts!

Including the one I changed in San Francisco.