

PARSHAT PINCHAS
NUMBERS 25:10-30:1
HAFTARAH JEREMIAH 1:1-2:3
17 TAMUZ 5783/06 JULY 2023



Breathing Watercolor
Painting by Jeppe Hein

THE POWER OF BALANCED BREATHING

1. “Let Adonai, Source of the breath (*ruach*) of all flesh, appoint someone over the community...” (Numbers 27:16)

“...one who shall go out before them and come in before them, and who shall take them out and bring them in...” (Numbers 27:17)

God answered Moses, “Take for yourself Joshua son of Nun, a man who has breath (*ruach*) in him...” (Numbers 27:18)

2. God spoke to Moses...“Pinchas displayed before Israel his *kanah* (כַּנָּה) for Me.” (Numbers 25:11)

Elijah said to them “Seize the prophets of Baal, let not a single one of them get away.” Elijah too them down to the wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there...Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel, crouched on the ground and put his face between his knees. (I Kings 18:40-42)

“Why are you here, Elijah?” He replied, “I am full of *kanah* (כַּנָּה) for Adonai.” (I Kings 19:9-10, alternate haftarah for Parshat Pinchas)

Israel cannot withstand your *kanah*. You were *kanah* at Shittim and now you were *kanah* at Mount Carmel. You spilled blood there and you spilled blood here, in your *kanah* for God. (Midrash/Yalkut Shimoni)

“When a *ruach kanah* (רוח קנא) comes over him...” (Numbers 5:14)

רוח קנא – be jealous, zealous; become intensely red in the face

3. Breathing is a complex process that relies heavily on the coordinated action of the muscles of respiration and the control center in the brain. The primary function of the lungs is to facilitate gas exchange between inspired air and the circulatory system. It helps bring oxygen to the blood and remove carbon dioxide from the body. Oxygen is critical for proper metabolism on a cellular level, while carbon dioxide is crucial for achieving adequate PH levels. (NIH, “Physiology, Respiratory Drive,” Joshua E. Brinkman; Fadi Toro; Sandeep Sharma)

CO₂ plays various roles in the human body including regulation of blood pH, respiratory drive, and affinity of hemoglobin for oxygen (O₂). (NIH, “Physiology, Carbon Dioxide Retention,” Shivani Patel; Julia H. Miao; Ekrem Yetiskul; Anya Anokhin; Sapan H. Majmundar.

Oxygen is vital for life—without it, severe brain damage may ensue in as little as three minutes.... Evidence suggests that pumping in too much oxygen too quickly can strip the molecule of a single electron, creating a free radical. (*Scientific American*, “The Oxygen Dilemma,” Victoria Stern)

4. “Life begins with an inhale and ends with an exhale. In-between we all breathe and live different lives. And yet, each breath keeps us together, connected, sharing the same air. *Breathe With Me* visualizes the invisible – our breath and the resulting relation between us. Ideally, it will encourage people to conspire, as in the Latin *conspirare* (“to breathe together”). Jeppe Hein