



Parsha Pinchas: Be Zealous for Shalom with YHVH our Elohim.
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Text: Pinchas; Torah: B'midbar 25:10 - 26:51; Haftarah: Yirmeyahu 1:1-2:3; B'rit Chadashah: Yochanan 2:17.

Theme: How do we truly observe Torah? By being truly zealous for YHVH is the answer.

I. Introduction.

B'midbar 25:10-13; (The "expanded" Schocken Scriptures) Now YHVH spoke to Moshe saying, Pinchas (Phinehas), son of El'azar, son of Aharon the Kohan (Priest) has turned back My venomous anger from B'nei Yisra'el (the Sons of Yisra'el) in his being zealous with My ardent or jealousy in their midst, so that I did not consume or finish off B'nei Yisra'el (the Sons of Yisra'el) in My ardour or jealousy. Therefore say: Here, I give him My Covenant of Shalom; and it shall be for him and for his seed after him a Covenant of Everlasting Priesthood, because that he was ardent or zealous for his Elohim, and made Kapparah (Atonement) or effected appeasement for B'nei Yisra'el (the Sons of Yisra'el).

This passage concludes a situation that was noted in the beginning of this chapter where the daughters of Moav started committing fornication with B'nei Yisra'el. They invited the People to participate in the sacrifices to their gods, and the People ate their sacrifices and worshipped their gods. The wrath of YHVH was kindled against Yisra'el because of this, and a plague started in Yisra'el.

When Moshe and the whole of the Society of B'nei Yisra'el cried before YHVH, **Zimri (my praise or my music)**, a Yisra'eli Leader brought **Kozvi (voluptuous; lying; deceiver; deceitful)**, a Midiani princess, into his tent, and that in the sight of all the People. Nu, symbolically and in truth the **praise or music** to YHVH was perverted by a **sensual, lying deceiver** leading Yisra'el into idolatry. **Pinchas** saw it, stood up and took his javelin. He entered the Yisra'eli's bedroom and thrust his javelin through the both of them. And the Plague among the People was stopped.

Pinchas was able to rightly understand the reason for the destruction that started in Yisra'el: the People turned away from Elohim, were enticed by the daughters of Moav and began worshipping other gods. Thus B'nei Yisra'el not only lost the Divine Protection around them, but YHVH Himself turned into their adversary.

D'varim 25:4: And YHVH said to Moshe, "Take all the Heads of the People, and hang them up to YHVH before the sun, that the fierce anger of YHVH may be turned away from Yisra'el."

R. Ariel writes: It means that the whole of the affair was started by the Heads of the People, they did it themselves and they knew that others did it following their example. But it is very difficult to kill all the chiefs and most important people in the society, and that before all the people.

D'varim 25:5: And Moshe said to the Shof'tim (Judges) of Yisra'el, "Slay every one his men that have joined themselves to Ba'al Pe'or". That was a just word to say, but it was not exactly the Commandment given by YHVH, that showed where the Plague originated from. So, the Plague fell on the People. The society was dismayed. B'nei Yisra'el cried at the entrance of the **Miskhan (Tabernacle)**.

At this moment **Pinchas** stood up and did the exact Will of Elohim, he slayed one of the Heads of the People, the one that in the sight of all the People committed the very sin that caused the Plague. The Plague immediately stopped.

And so, the beginning of the Parashah describes YHVH's reward to **Pinchas** for his zealousness in avenging Zimri's insolence in bringing a heathen woman into the Camp of the Yisra'elim.

II. War and Shalom

B'midbar 25:12 "Therefore say, 'See, I am giving him My Covenant of Shalom.'" Pinchas' reward for avenging the Honor of Heaven by executing Zimri and Kozvi was **"My Covenant of Shalom."** Does it seem ironic that the reward for a violent killing should be a **"Covenant of Shalom"**? Or perhaps **"Shalom"** really means much more than we think it means. The Hebrew word **"Shalom"** means more than just **peace**; it also denotes **completeness** and **perfection**. Any **shalom** which lacks **completeness** and **perfection** is not really **shalom**. R. Sinclair writes: If something is **perfect**, it means that it can only be perfect in one way, the way it is. If it could also be perfect in another form, then the perfection itself is lacking. There can only be **One Completeness** and **One Perfection**, and thus there can only be **One Real Shalom, YHVH's Shalom**, for only **"He who makes Shalom in His Exalted Realms, He will make Shalom for us and for all of Yisra'el."** Appeasement is not **shalom** and never leads to **shalom**. However, an act of zealousness divorced of pure intentions can be a crime in itself. For this reason the Torah points out that **Pinchas** acted **"for his Elohim"**, he had no motivation whatsoever other than to do the Will of YHVH Elohim. Only when our intentions are entirely pure, in YHVH, can zealousness lead to **"a Covenant of Shalom."**

III. Keeping Up with the Goldbergs.

B'midbar 25:13 "and it shall be to him and to his seed after him a Covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he showed zealousness for his Elohim, and made kapparah (atonement) for B'nei Yisra'el"

Consider this, Could the **Ten Words** or **Ten Commandments** have been written in the singular as well as plural? If they were given to the Yisra'eli People as a whole, they would be written in the plural? However, I believe, the **Ten Words** were also written in the singular so that we should feel they were given to each one of us alone as well as for the nation. Each person is responsible for keeping the Torah, no matter what others are doing. In life, there is a great temptation to set our level of self-expectation by

the standards of other people. Nu, the **Ten Words** were also written in the singular to teach us that we shouldn't look at what others are doing, or not doing. R. Sinclair writes: **Pinchas** saw Moshe and Aharon and the Seventy Elders standing and watching Zimri committing a grave sin and none of them lifted a finger. He could certainly have said to himself, "Moshe and Aharon aren't doing anything. Why should I be **frumer (more pious)** than them?" However, **Pinchas** picked up his spear and avenged the Honor of Heaven without a second thought and without reference to what others were doing or not doing. It is for this reason that the Torah writes "**he showed zealotness for his Elohim.**" (**D'varim 25:13**). **Pinchas** acted as if YHVH was his Elohim, and he didn't care whether there was no one else in the **Olam (World)** who would do the job, he would.

R. Resnik writes: Why does the Torah find the **zeal** of **Pinchas** so commendable? Is it not concerned that his example of taking justice into his own hands might be abused?

The early commentators seem to have had similar concerns about the possibility of misguided religious zeal. They insisted that **Pinchas** was acting within the bounds of established authority; he had YHVH-based **zeal**. Nu, **Sanhedrin 82a** says that Zimri brought Kozvi into the Camp of Yisra'el to challenge Moshe, who himself had a Midiani wife, Tzipporah. Rashi comments that Moshe married Tzipporah before the Torah was given. At the time of the giving of Torah, he continues, all Yisra'el underwent a mass conversion, in which Tzipporah was included so that she was no longer a heathen, but part of Yisra'el.

Nonetheless, Moshe was so shaken by Zimri's challenge that he became speechless. Then, **Pinchas "saw"** (**B'midbar 25:7**) this challenge to Moshe, and thus to his YHVH Elohim, and was given the authority to act as he did.

The earliest commentary on this incident appears in **T'hilim 106: 28-31**: **And they joined themselves to Ba'al Pe'or, and ate slaughterings made to the dead. Thus they provoked Him with their deeds, and the plague broke out among them. Then Pinchas stood up and intervened, and the plague was stopped. And that was reckoned to him for tzedakah (righteousness) to all generations forever.**

The **T'hilim** views the matter more simply, as the intuitive response of a **tzadek (righteous)** man confronted by idolatry for they clung to Ba'al Pe'or and ate the sacrifices of the dead. So the action of **Pinchas** was accounted to him as a **tzadek (righteous)** deed for all generations, forever.

The circumstances of his story help us distinguish between a commendable **zeal** for YHVH and the misguided religious zeal that disgraces YHVH's Name.

Pinchas is introduced as **B'midbar 25:7 "the son of El'azar the son of Aharon the Kohan (Priest)"**. He is of the line of the **Kohan HaGadol (High Priest)**, charged with handling and protecting the **Kadosh (Set-apart)** things in Yisra'el. When Zimri defied the authority of Moshe and the Priesthood, and thereby of YHVH Elohim, it was up to the line of the **Kohanim (Priests)** to arise and defend the Torah.

A similar issue arose with **Mashiach (Messiah) Yahshua**, when He took it upon Himself to drive the moneychangers out of the **Mikdash (Temple)** Courts. When his **Talmidim (Disciples)** saw Yahshua acting this way, they remembered the Words of **T'hilim 69:9 (Yochanan 2:17)**, "... ardour (zeal) for Your House has eaten Me up

(consumed Me)". The Hebrew root word for **ardour (zeal)** in both the **T'hilim** and in our **Parashah** is "**kana**", meaning **to be envious, jealous, or zealous**. It is a Word YHVH employs in the **Second Commandment** to describe Himself: **Sh'mot 20:3-5 "You shall have no other elohim before Me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image ... you shall not bow down to them or worship them, for I YHVH your Elohim am El Kana (Jealous Elohim)".**

Idolatry is the key here. The **jealousy** or **zeal** of Elohim arises in the face of idolatry. Zimri's offense is not only the immorality of fornication, but also the worship of idols that accompanied it. Yisra'el went after not just the Midiani women, but the Ba'al of Pe'or. Likewise, the moneychangers' offense was not merely greed. Rather, by making the **Mikdash (Temple)** of YHVH a place of merchandising, they were worshipping the false elohim mammon.

Schocken Scriptures translator Everett Fox writes, "For the Scriptural writers, idolatry was the worst of all crimes." Idolatry demands judgment. Elohim's response to the idolatry of Ba'al Pe'or is to send a plague among the Yisra'elim. Before **Pinchas** acted, YHVH had instructed Moshe to execute the chief perpetrators, **B'midbar 25:4 "so that the fierce anger of YHVH may turn away from Yisra'el"**. When **Pinchas** arose to stop the plague, 24,000 idolaters had already perished. His act of **zeal** in **B'midbar 25:13 "made Kapparah (Atonement) for B'nei Yisra'el"**. Similarly, **Mashiach (Messiah)** Yahshua makes Eternal **Kapparah (Atonement)** for Yisra'el. The ultimate sign of His Messiahship is the Resurrection, an event that is ultimately Redemptive.

The Kohan is responsible to combat idolatry, to be jealous on behalf of the **jealous** Elohim. **Pinchas** is rewarded with an Eternal Priesthood because he has shown himself to be a true Kohan while Yahshua is the Eternal Kohan HaGadol.

Hear this O Islam and you other false religions. Religious zeal is often a plague in the **Olam Hazeh (this present World)**, yet **Pinchas' zeal** is different it is YHVH-based and averts a plague. He displays the distinguishing mark of **tzadek (righteous) zeal**. It rises up, not in defense of a religious party, nor of holy sites, nor of ethnic or political dominance, but only to counter idolatry against YHVH. Its purpose is never victory or revenge, but is always redemptive, bringing **Kapparah (Atonement)** for those who have offended **El Kana, the Jealous Elohim**, and restoring them to Him.

IV. Haftarah: Yirmeyahu 1:1-2:3

This week begins a series of Haftarah readings consisting of moving visions of the **Navi'im (Prophets)** depicting the pending Yisra'eli Exile and destruction of the **Beit HaMikdash (House of the Temple)** and concludes with an ongoing exchange between YHVH and the Yisra'eli People expressing a strong desire for reunification. The three **Haftarot** which are read in the next Three Weeks are called the **"three of affliction."** They detail the dire consequences that will befall Yisra'el if we, the Yisra'eli People, do not return to YHVH. Nevertheless, each of these three **Haftarot** end on a note of optimism, expressing the confidence that YHVH never forgets His People even in the deepest and darkest exile.

Yirmeyahu 1:16-19 I will utter My Judgments Against them concerning all their wickedness, Because they have forsaken Me, Burned incense to other gods, And worshiped the works of their own hands. "Therefore prepare yourself and arise, And speak to them all that I Command you. Do not be dismayed before their

faces, Lest I dismay you before them. For behold, I have Made you this day A fortified city and an iron pillar, And bronze walls against the whole Land; Against the M'lakhim (Kings) of Y'hudah, Against its princes, Against its Kohanim (Priests), And against the People of the Land. They will fight against you, But they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you," says YHVH, "to deliver you."

Our Haftarah speaks about the introduction of **Yirmeyahu** into Prophecy and shows him trusting that YHVH would personally direct **Yirmeyahu** and protect him from all opposing forces. Thus, **Yirmeyahu** actually felt compelled to speak his Words of Prophecy at all costs.

Both **Yirmeyahu** and **Pinchas** took personal responsibility for the ethical conduct of the entire Nation. In addition, each of them faced serious opposition from their people for the hard stand they took in defending the Name of YHVH.

We can now appreciate the opening words of **Yirmeyahu** in which he portrayed himself as compelled to speak the Word of YHVH. It was the unpleasant role of **Yirmeyahu** to predict, in the most vivid form, the Yisra'eli Exile and the destruction of the **Beit HaMikdash (House of the Temple)**. R. Siegel writes: These tidings were so penetrating and dreadful that the Yisra'eli People would react to them as if they had heard direct Words from YHVH. **Yirmeyahu** sensed the intensity of his Prophetic Mission and felt as if YHVH Himself was speaking directly to the Yisra'eli People.

Yirmeyahu 2:1-3 Moreover the Word of YHVH came to me, saying, "Thus says YHVH: 'I remember for your sake the chesed (kindness) of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the Wilderness in a land not sown.' Yisra'el is Sacred to YHVH, the first of His Grain; all who devour him shall bear his guilt, evil shall come upon them, the Word of YHVH."

R. Sinclair relates the following story: Once there was a sensitive lad, who spent all his days in study and refining his character. While still at a tender age, he was captured by bandits and forced to live amongst them. At first, he was repulsed by their coarseness, and clung to his original demeanor. However, as the weeks lengthened into years and no sign of rescue came, slowly but surely he began to degenerate to the level of his captors, and eventually he became indistinguishable from them. That is the meaning of these verses: **"I remember for your sake the chesed (kindness) of your youth, the love of your bridal days, your following after Me in the Wilderness in a land not sown."** (**Yirmeyahu 2:2**) I remember, says YHVH, how you were when you followed after Me through the Wilderness, before you were exiled amongst the nations. At your root you are **Kadosh (Set-apart)**, and if you have sinned it is because of the atmosphere you have imbibed during the long night of Exile. Do you hear this Am Yisra'el? Come out of her My People.

V. Conclusion and Application.

We read in **Revelation 2:14-17**: **"But I hold a few matters against you, because you have there those who adhere to the teaching of Bil'am, who taught Balak to put a stumbling-block before B'nei Yisra'el, to eat food offered to idols, and to commit whoring. "So you also have those who adhere to the teaching of the Nikolaites, which teaching I hate. "Do t'shuvah (repent), or else I shall come to you speedily and fight against them with the Sword of My Mouth. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Ruach (Spirit) says to the Assemblies. To him who overcomes I shall**

give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I shall give him a white stone, and on the stone a renewed Name written which no one knows except him who receives it.” This statement was addressed to the Netzarim Congregation at Pergamos and so should remind us of our responsibility to be always vigilant and **zealous**.

Pinchas was **zealous** for Elohim, for exactness in doing His Will, and so **did kapparah (atoned)** for B'nei Yisra'el. YHVH saw **Pinchas's zeal** for Elohim. He saw his heart so ready to **do Kapparah (atone)** for B'nei Yisra'el. Therefore He gave **Pinchas** and his descendants an eternal earthly Priesthood and true **Shalom**.

A Kohan must at all time's bear the People before Elohim and be ready to **do Kapparah (atone)** for man, and yet never to be reconciled to sin. **And Am Yisra'el you are Kohanim.** This was the way Aharon acted during the time of the Plague in the Wilderness, when he stood between the dead and the living, brought incense to Elohim and **did Kapparah (atoned)** for the People. In the same manner Mashiach Yahshua **did Kapparah (atoned)** for us all, while dying on the Tree He said in **Luke 23:34: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."**

Pinchas showed his **zeal** for Elohim and the ability to **do Kapparah (atone)** for the People. Therefore he received earthly Priesthood. Mashiach Yahshua, having accomplished YHVH's Perfect Will on the earth and the real **Kapparah (Atonement)** for sinners, became the Great Kohan HaGadol forever in Heaven. He entered before Elohim into the true **Kadosh of Kadoshah (Set-apart of Set-aparts)** in Heaven with His Own Blood. His Blood asks forgiveness for everyone that is ready to cast away his sin and come under the protection of His Precious Blood.

The event of **Pinchas** took place while a pestilence afflicted the Yisra'elim. And, though he was not, like Moshe, the leader of his generation, nonetheless by his action the pestilence was stilled, and **Shalom** was restored between the Yisra'elim and YHVH Elohim: **"Behold I give him My Covenant of Shalom."** This is the reward of the **zealous** individual.

So, even at a time of spiritual affliction, when one sees a Believer truly Torah **zealous** in his Service of YHVH, even a Believer with no claims to leadership or distinction, one must not dissuade or discourage him. For he, like **Pinchas**, is the bringer of true **Shalom** between YHVH and His People, the **Shalom** which is the opposite of separation and exile.

Nu, how do we truly observe Torah? By being truly **zealous** for YHVH is the answer. We, as **Pinchas** and **Yirmeyahu**, can act as heralds of the **Messianic Age**, that **Mal'akhi 4:6: "shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers"** in the ultimate and Everlasting **Shalom**. Omain, omain! Shabbat **Shalom!**