

"Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon Ha'Kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael when he zealously avenged Me amongst them." (25:11)

Pinchas' act of zealousness is described in *Parashas Balak*, while his reward is presented in this *parsha*. Was it necessary to "wait" between the deed and the reward? *Horav Yitzchak Goldwasser, Shlita*, explains that, indeed, it was necessary to contemplate whether a reward was appropriate! This concept applies to every act of *kana'us*, zealousness. Is it truly a deed motivated *l'shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven, and -- therefore -- worthy of reward Or is it what it appears to be -- a wanton act of murder cloaked in a banner of zealousness? Only after contemplating the act, the individual and the situation, can one discern the truth.

Pinchas' act can be categorized by the *halachic* dictum, *uc ohgdup ohtbe ,hnrt kgucv*, "one who is intimate with a gentile, a zealous one may slay him." In his responsa on this issue, *Even Ha'Ezer 38*, *Horav Moshe Feinstein, z.l.*, cites *Horav Shlomo Heyman, z.l.*. He contends that the consent granted to a *kana'i*, zealous individual, to slay another person applies only to an individual who is clearly a G-d fearing Jew. His act of zealousness must be motivated by love for Hashem and righteous indignation concerning an act of brazen immorality. If any unjustified intention stimulates this deed, then the *kana'i* is guilty of wanton murder. According to Divine Justice, he incurs the death penalty.

Horav Goldwasser infers that this is the reason *Moshe Rabbeinu* disregarded the law regarding one who publicly violates the *Torah's* prohibition against intimacy with a gentile. This is a law for which one does not render a decision. Indeed, one who acts with zealousness because the *halacha* mandates it, is not acting as a result of *kana'us*, but rather as one who follows the *halacha*. This is not *kana'us* per se. This explains the use of the term *uc ihgdup*, "they may slay him" in lieu of *u,ut ihdruv*, which would be more appropriate. The word *gdp* is similar to the word *adp* which means "to meet". This means that they are to slay the sinner as soon as they notice his rebellious act. If they wait until later, they will not be motivated by zealous indignation, but rather by other catalysts.

Pinchas saw a moral outrage and acted immediately to avenge the wrath of Hashem, and to prevent further *chillul* Hashem. By tracing Pinchas' lineage to Aharon *Ha'Kohen*, Hashem attested to Pinchas' true zealous nature and pure motives. After this Divine testimony, Pinchas' act was rendered justifiable and his reward was decreed.