

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them. (25:11)

Kinaah and *kanaus*, jealousy and zealousness, are two terms which share the same root word. Indeed, *Rashi* interprets *kanaus*, zealousness, as a jealous reaction, which results in vengeance. One becomes outraged when something which he feels is rightfully his has been taken from him. A jealous person feels slighted by someone who has that which he feels is rightfully his. A true zealot feels that when someone impugns Hashem, His Torah and *mitzvos*, he is infringing upon his religion. Such a person has a sense of kinship with Hashem and is grievously hurt by an action which undermines Hashem. The zealot does not act for attention. He is real. He views a slight against Hashem as a personal affront. A zealot represents the highest moral and spiritual integrity; otherwise, his outrage is nothing more than an act of divisiveness, troublemaking, attention seeking, headline grabbing, by an individual who has no qualms about destroying others in pursuit of his own vested agenda. True *kanaus* builds; false fanaticism destroys.

The **Chazon Ish** was known for his deep, abiding love of Hashem and His People. He was uncompromising in his devotion to Hashem and His Torah. *Halachah* was his moral compass. An act is either right or wrong. He was acutely aware that even good intentions and good deeds, when not carried out in the appropriate place and time, can be counterproductive and even destructive. On more than one occasion he demonstrated how, what appeared to be commendable exactness in *halachah*, was actually the opposite. The *Chazon Ish* expended much energy ensuring that *Shemittah* be fully observed. To this end, he instituted a system in Bnei Brak whereby *Otzar Beis Din* receives the produce of the fields from the owners and recompenses the owner only for the expense of delivering the produce to *Otzar Beis Din*. The produce itself is not paid for.

Despite the decision of the *Chazon Ish*, a group of *rabbanim*, who under normal circumstances did not have a reputation for strict adherence to *halachah*, raised objection to *Otzar Beis Din*. The *Chazon Ish* strongly suspected the true motives of these rabbis and applied to them a phrase from the *Viduy* of *Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon* (recited during the *Yom Kippur Katan* service). "With respect to that which You were strict, I was lenient; and with respect to that which You were lenient, I was strict". Rather than conform to the strictness of *halachah*, these chameleons manipulated *halachah* to suit their self-serving purposes.

The *Chazon Ish* asked, "What is objectionable to being *machmir*, taking extra stringencies, above the letter of the law?" He replied that *Rabbeinu Nissim Gaon* was addressing a situation much like the present one, "Those who objected to the leniency of *Otzar Beis Din* for those who were meticulous concerning *Shemittah* observance" were the very same *rabbanim* who wished to permit all the prohibitions of *Shemittah* by relying on a *heter mechirah*" (a fictional sale of the fields of *Eretz Yisrael* to a gentile). "By opposing the use of the *Otzar Beis Din*, they hope to demonstrate that, in modern times, *Shemittah* cannot be observed unless one relies on a *heter mechirah*. Such

rabbis definitely require atonement for their actions”, said the *Chazon Ish*, “for prohibiting that which is permitted”.

The *Chazon Ish* had an intimate relationship with *halachah*. Thus, if someone undermined *halachah*, he took umbrage. This person was impugning the very core principles of *Yiddishkeit*. One does not tinker with *halachah*.

In another instance, a group of representatives of *Neturei Karta* (a staunch anti-Zionist group) came to the *Chazon Ish*, demanding that he censure one of the distinguished Torah leaders of Bnei Brak for being insufficiently anti-Zionist. The *Chazon Ish* became extremely upset with these men, replying to them very sharply, “You come to Bnei Brak from Yerushalayim, and you presume to tell us how to behave!”

Sadly, one of the younger members of that group spoke to the *Chazon Ish* with disrespect. He did not live out the year. The *Chazon Ish* was a great man whose very essence was intertwined with Hashem. To insult an individual of his stature was to insult the Almighty.

He had strong feelings concerning groups whose very foundation was to foment trouble. While the majority was comprised of holy Jews, devoted to seeing the Holy City in its glory, unfettered by their secular coreligionists who were bent on destroying Yerushalayim's *kedushah* and literally placing a *tzelem* in the *Heichal*, an idol in the Sanctuary, many of their followers were interested in nothing but tumult, discord, rabble-rousing and fights that accompanied the protests.

Referring to them, the *Chazon Ish* once said, “They are Jews from before *Mattan Torah*, the Giving of the Torah”. He meant that their zeal was not guided by Torah principles. On yet another occasion, he compared them to an alarm clock: “It is true that an alarm clock rouses people from their sleep, but in life one must decide whether it is really time to get up, or whether he can sleep in a bit longer”. In other words, there is a time and place for everything. Unless one has *daas* Torah, the wisdom that is derived from total immersion in the Torah, one is unable to discern if the time is right.

Pinchas carried out the *halachic* dictum, *Boel aramis kanaim pogin bo*, “A zealous individual may slay one who cohabits with a gentile”. To undertake such a drastic response to a blatant desecration of the Torah takes a very special person, one whose love for Hashem is overflowing and who views this dastardly act as usurping the very foundations of Judaism. There is another way. The saintly **Apter Rav, zl**, was famous for his *ahavas Yisrael*. His love for all Jews, regardless of their religious affiliation, was legendary. Indeed, the name of his commentary on *Chumash* is *Oheiv Yisrael*.

Once, a rumor spread in his city concerning the *shochet*, ritual slaughterer. The rumormongers alleged that he had acted inappropriately. The community's *rav* insisted that the *shochet* be deposed from his position. They could not tolerate a *shochet* whose morals were suspect. The

Apter Rav refused to remove him from his position, claiming that his family relied on him for their sustenance. (Today, we see nothing wrong with character assassination, and, if it entails the loss of livelihood for the victim, it is just too bad. In our unbridled zeal to uphold the Torah we forget and lose sight of the human being factor, too often allowing someone's life to be ruined based upon rumor.) The *rav* argued, quoting *Chazal* who permit a zealous Jew to kill someone whose moral turpitude has been unleashed to the point that he is cohabiting with a gentile. If such a person could be killed, he certainly could be subject to losing his business.

The *Apter Rav* replied, "I interpret that *Chazal* differently. I view *kanaim* as *tzaddikim*, truly righteous Jews, whose love for their errant brother is overwhelming. They look for every opportunity to save him and encourage his return. *Pogin bo* means pray for him. As we find the word *pegia* used in the context of prayer: *Va'yifga bamakom*, "He (*Yaakov Avinu*) encountered the place" (he prayed there) (*Bereishis* 28:11) *bo*, for him. The true *kanai*, righteous person who cares for his brother, should pray for him, pray that he returns to the proper path of Torah".

Horav Aryeh Levin, zl, the venerable *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, would tender his "rebuke" in such a manner. One Friday night, after candle lighting, *Rav Aryeh* was walking to *shul*, when a secular Jew came over and asked for directions. The man held a lit cigarette in his hands and continued smoking as he walked with *Rav Aryeh* in the direction of his destination. While it was quite difficult for *Rav Aryeh* to walk on *Shabbos* alongside a man who was smoking, he never for one moment forgot his etiquette. He inquired about the man's health and welfare and when they parted ways, he wished him well.

During their conversation, the man became overwhelmed with embarrassment. He knew that it was *Shabbos*, a time in which one is not permitted to smoke. Yet, he had the audacity to approach the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim while smoking a cigarette! The man threw away his cigarette and remarked, "*Rebbe!* I have never deferred to anyone, but this time I will. I cannot smoke in front of the *Rav*. In fact, I accept upon myself never to smoke on *Shabbos!*"

We can see from here that treating a person with respect and warmth might achieve the desired rebuke effectively without harsh rebuke and voice raising.

Another time, *Rav Aryeh* left for *shul* on Friday night and chanced upon an ice cream store that was quite busy. In fact, the line of customers waiting to purchase ice cream extended around the block. It was *Shabbos*, and these people were clearly in the process of desecrating the holy day. It goes without saying that the owner whose shop was open was partially responsible for this sacrilege. True, if his store would be shuttered, they would find another place to purchase their ice cream on *Shabbos*; nonetheless, he was playing a leading role in their *chillul Shabbos*.

Rav Aryeh entered the store, sat down at one of the tables and groaned, "*Shabbos!*" He arose from the chair and left the store. Five minutes later, the storekeeper closed the store, and the line of customers dispersed. A few days later, the storekeeper met *Rav Aryeh* and explained,

“When I saw the *Rav*’s reaction to my *chillul Shabbos*, a true expression of pain over a brother’s desecration of a *mitzvah* which is so dear, I felt that I could no longer be open on *Shabbos*. No one ever rebuked me in such a manner. The *Rav* made me see the *aveirah*, sin, in a manner that I never saw before”.

This is the definition of *kanaus* for Hashem. One personally feels Hashem’s pain.