

"(Pinchas) has turned away My wrath from the Bnei Yisrael in that he was jealous for My sake among them (so) that I did not consume the Bnei Yisrael in My jealousy." (25:11)

In its purest form, zealousness is contingent upon three criteria. The zealot must perform his act totally "*le'shem shomayim*," for the sake of Heaven. There should be no personal prejudice or vested interest which "motivates" his urgent reaction. Second, it is imperative that the zealot not remove himself from the community. He must challenge any incursion from within. Running away and hurling stones at the sinners does not reflect true *kana'us*, zealousness.

Horav Nissan Alpert, z.l., points out that a third contingency is regrettably often overlooked. Those individuals who exhibit unbounding devotion to Hashem's ideals may react zealously and swiftly to any incursion against the *Torah*. They ignore, however, one very important point: the welfare of those who erred and sinned. How often do we hear the term "*ye'mach she'mam*" (let their names be blotted out) regarding those who sin. One should take note of the *Torah's* text regarding Pinchas' act, "*And I did not consume Bnei Yisrael in My jealousy.*" Pinchas' goal was to prevent *Bnei Yisrael's* death, not to destroy them. Our goal in *kana'us* is to save Judaism, not to see it destroyed. Undoubtedly, there are times when Hashem's Name is profaned and swift unrestrained reprisal is warranted. This response, however, should be executed with dignity, with an attitude reflecting the lofty necessity for this action.