

Pinchas saw... and he stood up from amid the assembly, and took a spear in his hand. (25:7)

Pinchas saw Zimri acting in a morally aberrational manner. He immediately grabbed a spear and put an end to the mutinous repugnancy that was taking place. Everyone else stood around wondering what to do. Pinchas saw and acted. Why does the Torah emphasize that Pinchas went to secure a spear and then used it to slay the two sinners? Could it not simply have said that Pinchas saw what was occurring, and he responded accordingly? Why did the Torah underscore that he took a spear?

The *Tolna Rebbe, Shlita*, offers a practical, but powerful, response. The Torah is teaching us that there are two types of *kana'im*, zealots: There are those who walk around with spears in their hands, **searching** for someone to kill. These are sick people whose mission in life is to stir up trouble and destroy lives. They do not care what the protest is about, nor against whom they are protesting. They are like sharks who swim in the water ready to pounce upon the first sign of blood.

Pinchas was not like that. He was a peace-loving Jew who saw a tragedy taking place. He **then** searched for a spear to carry out the appropriate *halachah*. *Raah maaseh v'nizkar halachah*, "He saw an action, and (then) he remembered the *halachah*." Pinchas acted reluctantly, from a need to respond to a desecration of Divine Authority.

One may express his passion for serving Hashem in various ways. Some **call attention** to their *davening* or learning by the high volume level of their recitation. Others do the same thing – but without fanfare. It is from the heart. When a "pot" is boiling, it gives off steam.

A *Karliner Chassid* once had occasion to be in Vienna for *Shabbos*. He visited *Horav Yisrael Chortkover, zl*, and asked his permission to *daven* in the *Chortkover Bais Ha'knesses, shul*. The *Rebbe* responded, wondering why one would need permission to *daven* in the *shul*. A synagogue is open and free to all who enter. Why should the *Chortkover Shul* be any different? The *chassid* explained that he was from Karlin, a *chassidus* whose service to the Almighty is expressed with great passion and a high volume level. The *chassidim* literally scream as they expound the glory of Hashem. A polite person, this *chassid* did not want to offend or disturb another Jew with his *davening*.

The *Rebbe* replied with an invitation to join them for *davening*, but with one stipulation: tone it down. In *Chortkov*, the service was much more disciplined, and they wanted to maintain this form of prayer service. The *chassid* accepted the *Rebbe's* request, saying that he would "restrain" himself from any form of high volume self-expression.

On *Shabbos* morning, the *chassid* came to *shul*, took a seat and began to pray. His voice was controlled, as he poured out his love for Hashem in the *Pesukei D'Zimra* prayers. All was going well

until he reached the *Nishmas* prayer, which is an exaltation of Hashem's glory. The *chasid* "lost it." Forgetting that he had given his word to the *Rebbe*, he allowed his emotions to reverberate with the inspirational text of the *tefillah*, prayer. He screamed with adulation as he articulated Hashem's praises. His voice and passion reached a frenzy with each passing word. He realized too late that he had reneged on his word to the *Rebbe*. One does not play with fire, and only a fool starts up with a *tzaddik*, righteous person. He was determined to apologize for his lack of self-control.

After waiting in line for a while, he finally entered the *Rebbe's* office. With tears streaming down his face, he brokenheartedly apologized for breaking his word by screaming during *davening*. "Why should a Jew who *davens* with passion feel the need to apologize?" asked the *Rebbe*.

The *chasid* was shaken up. What did the *Rebbe* mean? He had expressly told him the other day that he must tone it down. Now he was saying that a Jew should be allowed to express his fervor in prayer. "*Rebbe*, prior to *Shabbos*, the *Rebbe* expressed his displeasure with my high decibel *davening*. Why does the *Rebbe* now change his position?" the *chasid* respectfully asked.

The *Rebbe* laughed and said, "When you approached me prior to *Shabbos*, I responded negatively to your request. The reason is simple: We are not interested in – nor do we countenance – "made-to-order screaming." Prepared high decibel prayer is frowned upon in my *bais medrash*. However, when you were *davening* and your passion got the better of you – **that** is *davening*! Such passion is acceptable and encouraged."

In his *Nitzotzos*, *Horav Yitzchak Hershkowitz, Shlita*, quotes an episode which took place concerning the *Strelisker Rebbetzin*, wife of the holy *Horav Uri, zl, m'Stelisk*, who once told a German Jew who had come to visit, "When one's heart is on fire, he screams!" She made the comment in regard to the following incident:

Rav Uri was referred to as the *Saraf*, Fiery (Angel), of *Strelisk*. A *Saraf* is one level above the "average" Heavenly Angel. He was known to scream loudly during his *davening*. One day, this German Jew visited the *Chasidic* court of *Strelisk*. After spending a few days in the proximity of the holy *Rebbe*, he was approached by the *Rebbetzin*, who asked, "*Nu*, how do you feel here? What are your observations of *Strelisk*?"

"Everything is wonderful. I am very impressed and inspired. There is, however, one thing which troubles me, but it is not important."

The *Rebbetzin* was not accepting this as an answer. If something troubled the Jew, she wanted to know what it was. Perhaps she could enlighten him. "What is it that troubles you?" she asked.

"I have a problem with the *Rebbe* screaming during *davening*. Prayer is a personal thing and should be expressed in a quiet, almost intimate manner," the German Jew respectfully replied.

“When the heart is aflame, one must cry out. The *Rebbe*’s heart is burning with passion and love for Hashem. Therefore, he expresses himself accordingly” said the *Rebbetzin*.

“I, too, have a burning heart; yet, I control myself,” the man countered.

The *Rebbetzin* understood that there is no end to such a debate. She bid the man good day and they both went about their business. That *Erev Shabbos*, the German Jew approached the *Rebbetzin* with a request. Since he was traveling with a considerable sum of money, which he felt was not safe to leave over *Shabbos* at the inn where he was staying, could he perhaps deposit it with the *Rebbetzin* for the duration of *Shabbos*? The *Rebbetzin* gladly acquiesced.

On *Motzoei Shabbos*, the man returned and asked the *Rebbetzin* for his money. The *Rebbetzin* asked him, “What money?”

“*Rebbetzin*, **my** money that I gave you before *Shabbos*. I need it.” the man replied somewhat impatiently.

“Perhaps you are mistaken,” the *Rebbetzin* replied. “What money did you leave with me?”

“*Rebbetzin*, this is not a time for games! I need my money – and I need it **now!**” the man began to scream. “Please do not test my patience!”

“Perhaps you gave the money to someone else,” the *Rebbetzin* suggested.

This was the proverbial straw that changed this calm, disciplined, refined man into a screaming lunatic. “How dare you take my money?” the man began to scream. “I gave you money; I trusted you; and now you deny me my money?” the man began to rant and rave.

Finally, the *Rebbetzin* said, “You must relax, calm down. You will get sick from all the screaming.”

“Calm down!” the man screamed. “How can I calm down when my heart is burning?”

“Ah ha! Your heart is burning,” the *Rebbetzin* began. “When it hurts, one cries out. It all depends **when** one cries. If one’s heart is aflame during *davening*, this is an indication that his heart burns with *yiraas Shomayim*, Fear of Heaven. If one cries, however, when he **thinks** he has lost money, such tears are, regrettably, an indication of his real values.”