

He armed his disciples who had been born in his house. (14:14)

A war was to be waged in order to rescue Lot. Avraham *Avinu* wasted no time in gathering his students and setting out to the battlefield. Obviously, the Torah has a reason for relating this piece of history. Certainly, it is not to teach us about Avraham's physical prowess and his skill as a soldier and as a general. Indeed, the image of our Patriarch that is presented in this *parshah* is blurred. On the one hand, *Chazal* teach that Avraham took hold of a hammer and smashed his father's idols. He followed this up by arming himself and going out to war against those who had taken Lot captive. On the other hand, Avraham is the *amud ha'chesed*, Pillar of Kindness, the individual who reached out with love and sensitivity to a primitive, cruel, spiritually dispassionate world. He welcomed strangers and taught them the most important spiritual lesson: monotheism. All the while, he was sustaining them physically. What was Avraham? Was he kind and benevolent, or was he an extremist who lifted up the sword against those who acted improperly?

Truthfully, we find two individuals in the Torah who acted paradoxically: Avraham and Pinchas. Avraham was considered a *Kohen* to Hashem. While he became the beneficiary of the *Kehunah*, Priesthood, from Malkitzedek, who lost it due to his unsuitability, Pinchas earned the *Kehunah* due to his zealousness in avenging Hashem's Name. Both became *Kohanim* after acting zealously. It all depends upon one's focus and mission statement. Avraham and Pinchas served Hashem with great devotion. Thus, whatever was necessary, whatever action had to be taken to ensure that Hashem's Name remain glorified – they took, regardless of how unpopular it might have made them.