

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them... Therefore, say: Behold! I give him My covenant of peace. (25:11,12)

The *Midrash* begins with the statement, *B'din hu she'yitol sharo*, "It is only *halachically* correct that Pinchas should receive his just reward. Therefore, I give him the Covenant of Peace." What is the meaning of the phrase *b'din hu*, "It is by right (*halachically*)"? *Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl*, explains that reward is measured and repaid *middah k'neged middah*, measure for measure. Pinchas' act of zealousness certainly warranted reward, but could *Brisi Shalom*, "My Covenant of Peace," be considered *middah k'neged middah* for an act of zealousness? Superficially, Pinchas' slaying Zimri does not appear to be a peaceful act. Asking such a question indicates a lack of understanding of *shalom*, which means peace, but also means wholeness, perfection. Pinchas attacked the rift that was destroying *Klal Yisrael*. He brought *Klal Yisrael* back from its self-imposed distance from Hashem. He prevented the rift from widening and spreading. Furthermore, as noted by the *Brisker Rav, zl*, Pinchas was not accepted by the nation until he had catalyzed harmony among the tribes.

The *Brisker Rav* explains that if one were to ask what the most appropriate and fitting reward for Pinchas' act of zealousness is, the answer would be -- anything but *shalom*. Hashem, however, views things differently. *Kanaus* is not the opposite of *shalom*. On the contrary, it fortifies and affirms peace. *Kanaus* is not about striking the other fellow and putting him down. That is the opposite of peace. True *kanaus* is only about achieving a peaceful resolution. If, at times, it is necessary to act proactively, or impose sanctions – then, so be it. If the zealot is sincere and this is his only medium to achieve success, then it is an act of peace, worthy of the Covenant of Peace.

People have two reasons for performing *mitzvos*: to earn the accompanying award; to fulfill Hashem's command. One who spends his life in pursuit of reward infuses his children with the notion that reward in and of itself should be their focus. Thus, explains the *Brisker Rav*, if a sack of gold is to be found behind the closed doors of a warehouse, they will break down the door to obtain the prize. It is all about gain/reward – nothing else matters.

Likewise, there are those zealots whose only motivation is a good fight, a battle in which they best their adversary and emerge triumphant. Some enjoy the fight even if they do not win. Someone who had just left a *hafganah*, protest, that had turned sour, with both sides sustaining injury, relayed the news to the *Brisker Rav*. He made the mistake of adding, "We really got them good!" [This was a reference to the physical altercation that had ensued.] The *Brisker Rav* began to tremble. The "protestor" considered this a good sign. Apparently, the *Rav* was pleased with this tidbit of information. "I see I pleased the *Rebbe*," the fellow said. The *Brisker Rav* replied, "One slap could possibly be considered for Heaven's sake. *An ershte patch l'shem Shomayim, ken amol*

zein – a tzveiter patch iz er shoin a bandit, a rotzeach, a shofeich damim! Morgen ken her gein hargenen menschen chas v'shalom. The second slap, however, transforms him into a bandit, a murderer, one who spills blood. Tomorrow, you will be capable of killing people in the street.”

Obviously, the *Brisker Rav* did not approve of a *hafganah*, protest that resorted to violence. He maintained a similar attitude regarding secular Zionists. Ignore them. If they had issued decrees that would have affected Orthodoxy, he would have protested – peacefully. When they declare war on the Torah, we fight back, but never with violence. The *Satmar Rav*, *zl*, said, “Our weapons are our *yeshivos*. When they attack us, we respond with more Torah, more *yeshivos*, more *Bais Yaakovs*, more *Kollelim*. Our light will extinguish the darkness created by their secular, anti-Torah decrees.”