

Therefore say, "behold, I give him My covenant -- the peace. (25:12)

The *Targum Yonasan* says that Hashem granted Pinchas transcendence over death. He was transformed into Eliyahu *Ha'navi*, who will be the harbinger of the Final Redemption. Indeed, the *Zohar Hakadosh* writes that the Angel of Death has no dominion over he who is for the Name of Hashem, as he does over the average human being. Obviously, this statement has a deeper meaning than meets the eye. Why was Pinchas selected for this unique position? *Horav Eliyahu Schlesinger, Shlita*, cites a *pasuk* in this *parsha* (27:16) in which Moshe asks Hashem to appoint his successor, "*May Hashem, G-d of spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in.*" What is the meaning of the phrase, "*Who shall go out before them, and come in before them?*" In the *Sefer Bais Yitzchak*, the author cites *Rabbi Moshe Mendel* who explained this according to an interpretation of *Horav Yisrael Salanter, zl*, regarding the *Talmudic* dictum: "the generation during which *Moshiach* will come, (will be one that) young people will humiliate their elders,... and the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog." In other words, in the "end of the days," people will manifest a lack of respect for those who deserve respect. What is the meaning of the analogy "to the face of a dog"? *Rav Yisrael* explained that usually when a caravan travels along a new route, or when someone must go on a trip along an unchartered path, he/they will select a guide to lead them, to show them where to go. The guide will travel in front, followed by the caravan. A dog also runs before his master, even though he does not know in which direction his master is going. He will, therefore, always look back to see if he is "leading" along the correct path. The guide knows where he is going, and the people follow. In contrast, the dog does not really lead, since he always looks back to see if he is going the way his master wants.

Jewish leaders should determine the correct path for their congregation, without seeking confirmation. They decide, and the people should follow. Otherwise, they are not leaders. They are similar to the dog who runs forward, always looking back for approval, making sure he is going the right way. Moshe *Rabbeinu* asked Hashem for a leader who would "*go out before them,*" "*who would take them out.*" He sought someone who was not afraid to make a decision, who would not vacillate indecisively waiting for his lay leadership's confirmation of "his" decision. He sought a leader who would lead, who would guide, who would teach and direct *Klal Yisrael* along the correct path.

Hashem responded with one name, "*a man in whom there is spirit,*" one in whom there is the spirit of G-d, who will know how to treat each person according to his own spirit. He would be a man who possesses a strong spirit, who would not concern himself with the various trends and social issues that would not necessarily coincide with *Torah* perspective. He would stand prepared to defend the *Torah* against usurpers and have the courage to uphold its precepts regardless of the opposition. This man was Yehoshua.

Pinchas possessed a similar character. His devotion to Hashem was uncompromising; his determination to uphold the *Torah* was resolute. When an incursion against Hashem took place, he did not care who acted in rebellion, what was his social standing, the degree of his support, his family pedigree, personal wealth, or erudition. Pinchas cared not what they would say about him at the time, whether he would be scorned or humiliated: nor did he concern himself with what they would later write. He cared not for his personal safety or well-being. His overriding concern was the truth -- the truth of *Torah*. Such a person would be the appropriate leader, to serve as harbinger for *Moshiach Tzidkeinu* and the Final Redemption.

Otzar Chaim sites *Rav Mendel M'vitebsk, zl*, who makes an intriguing statement. When Moshe saw the incredible reward that Pinchas received as a result of his *kanaus*, zealotry, he was concerned that zealotry was to become the criteria for leadership. He, therefore, requested of Hashem, "You are the G-d of all spirits - those generations of Jews yet to be born. There will be so many different types of people during various stages of our People's development. There will be various cultures, social scenes, internal and external pressures, which will affect our people. Please, Hashem, choose a leader who will be sensitive to these issues and to the different personalities. Choose a leader who will understand the nature of the sinner, who will not grab a spear and destroy someone the moment he sins." These are powerful words.

Indeed, the *Midrash* implies that Yehoshua was chosen because of his conciliatory ability. Does this mean that *kanaus*, zealotry, is inappropriate -- while passiveness and conciliation are appropriate? Are we to disregard flagrant incursions against our *Torah* and its disseminators? Is this a suggestion that we are to scrutinize -- even criticize -- Pinchas' courageous act? Did Pinchas lack sensitivity? We suggest that in no way is Pinchas's act to be critiqued. There is definitely a time and place for *kanaus* -- which is something to be determined by a *gadol*, preeminent *Torah* scholar and leader. When an act of denigration of such magnitude occurs, and its perpetrator is none other than a *Nasi*, Prince of *Klal Yisrael*, a leader of a tribe, where the possibility of creating a terrible influence exists, *kanaus* is the only recourse. Pinchas averted the tragedy of a nation which accepted, and was influenced by, Zimri's public defamation of Hashem's Name. When leadership sins, when leaders make a travesty of Hashem's *Torah*, they must be stopped. They must be exposed for what they really are. While the *kanai* will certainly be criticized, his courage will put a halt to the poison spewed by the "Zimris" of their generations.