

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon HaKohen, turned back My wrath from upon Bnei Yisrael... Therefore, say: “Behold! I give him My covenant of peace.” (25:11,12)

Concerning Pinchas' right to reward, *Chazal* express themselves strongly: *B'din hu she'yitol s'charo*; “It is by right (*halachically* axiomatic) that he (Pinchas) should take his reward.” Such an act of zealousness on behalf of Hashem warrants an exemplary reward. Far from belittling Pinchas' right to reward, it seems inconsistent with the *halachic* maxim, *S'char mitzvah b'hai alma leka*, “The reward for *mitzvah* performance is not rendered in this world.” Simply, this is a physical world, a world of the mundane; *mitzvos* are spiritual in nature, given to us by Hashem for the purpose of our spiritual advancement and as a means of serving Him, so that we earn reward in the World of Truth. This world, however, is the staging area for *mitzvah* performance – not acquisition of reward. Why do *Chazal* seem to underscore his “right” to reward?

Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl, cites the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, in his commentary to *Parashas Re'eh* (*Devarim* 11:27) of the *pasuk*, *Es ha'brachah asher tishme'u*, “The blessing (is) that you listen (to the words of Hashem).” This *pasuk* intimates the reason that reward does not exist for a *mitzvah*. The mere fact that one is able to perform a *mitzvah*, to serve Hashem in such a capacity, should in and of itself be sufficient reward. Expecting supplemental reward in addition to the merit of being able to serve Hashem would be audacious. Serving the Supreme King of Kings is the greatest source of pleasure. For what more can one ask?

This is true, explains *Rav Eliyahu Baruch*, with regard to all *mitzvos* – except for one: the *mitzvah* of *kanaus*, zealousness, for Hashem. Zealousness by its very nature is considered an act of ardent devotion, only as long as one does not derive any pleasure/satisfaction from his act. Indeed, the *kanai* who slays a fellow Jew that is cohabiting with a pagan woman does so without choice, without alternative. What pleasure can one derive from seeing his fellow Jew, his brother, bleeding to death? True, this man has committed a grave sin, and the *kanai* saw to it that he received his *halachically*-mandated punishment, but this should not cause him satisfaction. It is a tragedy for which one should weep. Meting out punishment should be performed with great reluctance – certainly not with joy. A *kanai* who executes this *mitzvah*, accompanied by the proper and correct intentions, warrants his reward.