

## When he zealously avenged Me among them. (25:11)

Pinchas was acting according to *halachah*: *Boel aramis kanaim pogin bo*, “One who cohabits with a gentile, zealous ones may strike him.” If so, why is he referred to as a *kanai*, zealot? He was just doing what any other observant Jew would/should have done. Indeed, *Chazal* imply that Hashem chastised Moshe *Rabbeinu* for remaining passive during the moral outrage that took place. As a result, Moshe’s gravesite remains unknown to us. *Chazal* derive from here that one must be “bold as a leopard, as nimble as an eagle, as swift as a deer, and as mighty as a lion in executing the will of Hashem.” While this critique is only relative to Moshe’s extreme spiritual level, it does at least indicate that *kanain pogin bo* is a *halachah* which applies to everyone.

**Horav Mordechai Gifter, zl**, explains that the punishment of death for a *boel aramis* may only be carried out by one who is a *kanai*. One who has achieved this elevated plateau of serving Hashem out of extreme love, he – and only he – may assume the mantle of executioner.

The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that, unlike the misguided perception of many, a *kanai* is not an extremist. Any person who is willing to render his life for Hashem is not an extremist. He is an intelligent human being who has achieved a true level of greatness. He sees with an impeccable clarity what others do not see. His entire life revolves around carrying out the will of G-d. If one’s motives are not pristine, he ceases to be a *kanai*. He is a regular fellow, and, hence, he may not lay a finger on the perpetrator of this immoral act of sacrilege. To paraphrase *Rav Gifter*, “The *kanai* sees things from an altogether different perspective. His vision is clear and unambiguous. There is not an iota of deviation in his perspective. Thus, he sees what others do not. The *kanai* sees a *boel aramis* for what it really is. Everybody else sees an act of promiscuity. He sees the underpinnings of Judaism being yanked from their moorings. Therefore, he may act – while others may just watch.”