

Pinchas ben Elazar ben Aharon Ha'kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Bnei Yisrael when he zealously avenged Me among them...Behold! I give him My covenant of Peace...And it shall be for him and his offspring after him a covenant of eternal priesthood. (25: 11,12, 13)

Pinchas receives the ultimate reward--*Kehunas olam*--eternal priesthood. This blessing of everlasting priesthood was not bestowed upon anyone else. It was not bestowed neither upon Moshe the lawgiver, nor Aharon the *Kohen*, who was the paradigmatic peacemaker. **Horav Moshe Swift, zl**, notes that the blessing of continuity, the concept of uninterrupted service to Hashem, was neither a product of the service in the *Mikdash* nor the teaching in the *Bais Ha'midrash*. While these contribute to future development, they do not actually forge the links in the chain of continuity. They do not create a "*lo ul'zaro acharav*" for him and his offspring after him. That emanates from the morality, the purity and the integrity of the home.

Pinchas was aware of Bilaam's subterfuge. Bilaam was no fool. He realized that cursing the Jew, attempting to destroy him through hatred and persecution, has no lasting effect. Indeed, the uncouth gentile's virulent, blatant anti-Semitism frequently has a revitalizing effect on the Jew. Suddenly, everybody is proud of his heritage. Individuals who have not been inside a *shul* since they became *bar mitzvah* become the spokesmen for the entire Jewish people. The community rallies together in support and solidarity. Judaism is once again acceptable.

No, Bilaam knew that in order to destroy the Jew, he must focus on the home. A home that is spiritually destroyed has a lasting effect upon its inhabitants. A *shul* that is gutted only encourages greater participation. A home that is religiously burnt out, is one in which children are raised ignorant of their noble heritage. They are exposed to the filth that dominates our secular society and are permitted -- and at times even encouraged --- to maintain friendships with those of another faith. Their exposure to intermarriage, impurity and immorality does not receive vehement resistance. This is a home that will not produce everlasting Jewish offspring.

Bilaam understood this. He advised Balak to give the Jews the pagan girls to expose them to immorality, cognizant that idolatry would follow shortly thereafter. Bilaam was clever. He did not focus on the simple Jew, he did not bring his harlotry to the masses. He sought out *Klal Yisrael's* leadership. Once the leaders had fallen victim to the desires of the flesh, who would teach the masses? When the leaders are involved, who will reach out to the common Jew?

This type of sin that Bilaam propagated was unique in the sense that the punishment for its perpetration is not meted out by a court of law. This sin, this type of immorality, is so foreign to Jewish family life that its punishment is to be executed by zealots. The pious ones are those who are totally devoted to Hashem; those who understand the gravity of this brazen sin. These

individuals realize that this incursion into the fiber of Jewish family life is not a sin against man or the community -- it is a sin against Hashem. Morality distinguishes the Jew from the rest of the world. To break down the purity of Jewish family life is to declare war on Hashem.

Pinchas cried out to the people, "How can you sin against Hashem?" He was jealous for Hashem's sake. Pinchas fought for family purity, for the morality and integrity of Jewish family life. He fought for Hashem. He was the man of peace. The covenant of generations of committed Jews is awarded to the one who fought to uphold the purity and chastity of Jewish family life.

Pinchas was the true man of peace. Sometimes in order to create peace, one must fight. The ever-ready peacemaker, the one who is accessible to all, who is tolerant and pliable, is not the one who is guaranteed peace. Tolerance has its shortcomings; peace has its price. The true peacemaker does not fear a fight when his conscience dictates it. Peace does not come from surrendering one's ideals or values in the name of unity. Everlasting peace, peace that is handed down from generation to generation, is one for which people are willing to fight. Peace takes courage, not cowardice. Peace takes firmness and stalwart commitment to ideals, not wavering, ineffectual commitment. How regrettable it is that some of us have confused tolerance with submission, flexibility with concession, and peace with surrender.