



דרכים בפרשה

פנחס



פנחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן השיב את חמתי מעל בני ישראל בקנאו את קנאתי בתוכם... לכן אמר הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום (כה:יא-יב)

Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen turned back my wrath from upon the Bnai Yisroel when he zealously avenged my vengeance among them...Behold I give him my covenant of peace (25:11-12)

Our Parsha begins with the tremendous reward that Pinchas received for his act of zealotry. By killing Zimri in middle of his grave sin, Pinchas managed to quell the plague, with the death toll stopping at 24,000. Therefore, HaShem rewarded him with His everlasting covenant of peace, and that all his offspring would have eternal kehunah.

Chazal tell us: פנחס זה אליהו, “Pinchas and Eliyahu are as one”. The usual understanding of this is that the *neshama* of Pinchas became that of Eliyahu, for both of them were men of *kana’us*, jealous and zealous for HaShem’s honour.

Looking at the life of Eliyahu HaNavi, during the aftermath of the confrontation with the false prophets of Ba’al at Har HaCarmel, Eliyahu had a “conversation” with HaShem in which he was advised to anoint Elisha as the new Navi in his place. Eliyahu’s crime was that he said, קנא קנאתי -לה'... כי עזבו בריתך בני ישראל *I have been exceedingly zealous for HaShem... because the Bnai Yisroel have abandoned your covenant” (Melachim 19:14).*

On the one hand we have Pinchas receiving the ultimate reward for his zealousness, and yet, on the other hand we see that Eliyahu was deposed for such behaviour. Why was there such a disparate response from HaShem?

When discussing the traits of a person of Torah, the Mishna in Avos (6:6) lists the concept of being *makir es mekomo*, a person that knows and recognizes his place. This means that one must examine very carefully the circumstances surrounding a happening. What was the temper of the time; how and why did it happen, and what the condition of society was like.

Pinchas’ action of rising up at Shittim came during a time when what had occurred with the daughters of Moav and Midian was *not* the norm. The Yidden were pious and loyal to HaShem, fully committed to the Torah and its ways. In such an instance, an act of *kana’us* can be enough to shock the people into realizing what they had done wrong, thus bringing them back to HaShem. Such an action was commended and was the proper response in that incident.

Eliyahu's timing was much different. During his days, the wicked Achav and Izevel ruled and most people served the avoda zara of Ba'al and did not keep Torah and Mitzvos. It is true that Eliyahu's zealotry caused the people to proclaim "HaShem hu Elokim", but that return was only temporary. *Kana'us* at that moment won't get anyone very far. Unlike by Pinchas, you cannot stem a major tide of defection with a spear, as Pinchas had done. What was necessary during Eliyahu's time was a slow arduous process of education, reconciliation and rapprochement.

Now we begin to understand why HaShem told Eliyahu that, אי אפשר בנבואתך - *it is impossible for you to remain as the navi*. HaShem desired a navi that would assess a situation and understand what was necessary for that given moment. Just showing up with *kana'us* when the people are so far from really understanding will not accomplish anything other than hatred towards the Torah. So at that moment HaShem needed someone else for the job, so Elisha was chosen.

If we fast forward to our day and age, it would do us well to understand the times we live in. *Kana'us*, fervor and passion are all extremely important and commendable traits to have, but just to use it at all times losing control and without great discretion will only push people further away. In general, today's times are more similar to the days of Eliyahu than those of Pinchas.

Many of those that are not on the derech of Torah are only where they are due to ignorance. Each situation must be assessed, using good judgement to ascertain what the appropriate response is in every scenario. This being so, we will accomplish much more through understanding, patience, teaching and warmth than we can through defiance and rebellion!

Let us always keep in mind that דרכיה דרכי שלום וכל נתיבותיה שלום the ways of the Torah have always been of pleasantness and all its paths are peace. Of course there will be times where *kana'us* is warranted and necessary, but that needs to be the exception not the rule.

Good Shabbos, מרדכי אפפּעל



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