

Midian had a plan to destroy Bnei Yisroel. They sent their daughters to corrupt Hashem's nation. Hashem tells Moshe:

**פִּינָחָס בֶּן־אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־אֶהֱרֹן הַכֹּהֵן הָשִׁיב אֶת־חַמְתִּי מֵעַל בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאוֹ אֶת־קִנְאָתִי
בְּתוֹכְכֶם וְלֹא־כִלִּיתִי אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּקִנְאָתִי**

“Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon, the Kohen, returned My wrath from upon Bnei Yisroel with his jealousy of My jealousy from among them. And I will no longer destroy Bnei Yisroel in My jealousy.” (Bamidbar 25:11).

The pasuk already gave Pinchas' lineage, (Ibid 25:7), why is it repeated? Why is only Aharon called “the Kohen?” At this point Elazar was the Kohen Gadol so it should have said ‘son of Elazar the Kohen and Aharon the Kohen.’ קִנְאָ means jealousy and zealousness. How are they both the same thing? Also, it appears that Pinchas did not save Bnei Yisroel from destruction. Hashem already gave Moshe the solution (Ibid 25:4) that would have also stopped the plague. Why is Pinchas credited with saving Bnei Yisroel from destruction?

Gemara Sanhedrin 82b, says, *the lineage of Pinchas is given here because after he killed the sinning couple many defamed him by calling him from his mother's side – a descendant of Yisro. The Torah clarifies his good 'yichus.'* This Gemara is difficult. Yisro was the father-in-law of Moshe and he was a well-known celebrity in the camp, having appeared twice. Using Yisro to disparage Pinchas is also disparaging Moshe. Further, Denigrating Pinchas, who just turned back the plague, also makes no sense. After such an act he should be feared and honored. Also, the Torah already gave the full lineage so we know that Pinchas came from Aharon.

Sforno says, *Pinchas got his reward for his deed and Bnei Yisroel were saved and earned atonement because they did not protest what he did.* This goes contrary to the Gemara by saying that Bnei Yisroel accepted Pinchas' endeavor.

Chizkuni says, *Pinchas turned away Hashem's wrath. This is in the earlier pasuk (Ibid 25:8) "and the plague ceased." Bnei Yisroel saw that and accepted it because it resulted in blessings. This prince of Shimon was clearly unworthy.*

Daas Zekeinim reconciles the Gemara. *The Torah repeats the lineage to show that even after he did his deed he was just as worthy as Elazar and Aharon. He was not hated for what he did because he saved everyone. Had he not done so, the would-be critics would have died in the plague.*

Kli Yakar further reconciles, *the Gemara means that because of his mother's lineage from Yisro, Pinchas may have held back and thought that he should not act with a bad trait from his mother's side of his family. However, when he did act, he was following his father's side.*

Gemara Sotah 22b says, *do not fear those that are hidden. Hashem will protect you. King Yannai said to his wife, do not be afraid of the Pirushim or the Tzedukim, rather beware of those who are hypocrites – who appear like the Pirushim but their actions are wicked like Zimri and they request a reward akin to Pinchas' reward.* This Gemara means, King Yannai (a Chashmonoi) was assuring his wife as she got closer to death that the exact way to serve Hashem is not as important as the honesty in one's heart. At the time, there was a struggle to know if Chazal (Pirushim) or the Tzedukim were correct in interpreting the Torah. The main point in life is act earnestly toward Hashem. Do not act wickedly while holding hands out for rewards.

Rashi says, *Pinchas avenged my avenging when he displayed anger that I should have displayed. קנאה means glowing with anger.*

Ibin Ezra points out, *there is no dagesh (dot) in the nun of 'jealousy' because Pinchas was jealous like his Creator. Hashem is a "jealous Lord." (Shmos 20:5). If Pinchas was not jealous for Hashem's sake then Hashem would have destroyed all of Bnei Yisroel.*

Ramban points out that, *Pinchas deserved the reward because he killed a prince and the daughter of an enemy chieftain and he was unafraid. His zeal made him do this work in the name of Hashem. He was given a covenant of peace (Bamidbar 25:12) because of his zealousness.*

Kli Yakar says, *the zealousness was 'among them' not 'on them' because a Kiddush Hashem must be in the midst of Bnei Yisroel. Pinchas put himself in danger by doing this among Bnei Yisroel, with all the witnesses and Zimir's kin watching.*

Rabbeinu Bachya says, *the 'turn back' means Hashem was about to destroy Bnei Yisroel and His anger was turned back. Given that twenty-four thousand already died, this is a question. However, since only those from Shimon died proves that the rest were saved by Pinchas.*

Our pasuk is clearer in context. Hashem gave Moshe the solution to the plague. He must kill the leaders and hang them before Hashem, publicly, in daylight. (Ibid 25:4). Moshe delegated this task to the judges. (Ibid 25:5). "Behold," a man from Bnei Yisroel then came to publicly sin before Moshe and the entire people. (Ibid 25:6). This was done while they were still crying before Moshe at the entrance of the Mishkan. (Ibid). Bnei Yisroel were bereft and Moshe was instructing the judges when Zimri amplified the sinning. Why were Bnei Yisroel crying? There was a plague. (Ibid 25:8). "Those that died in the plague were twenty-four thousand." (Ibid 25:9). What plague? The plague is only mentioned retroactively. Until reading the last words of pasuk 8, there is no mention of the plague and no reason why Bnei Yisroel were crying.

If Moshe already had instruction on how to end this plague—that clearly was occurring—how did Pinchas save the day? Also, was it not murder? Pinchas was not instructed to kill anyone. The Torah forbids murder. (Shmos 20:13, 21:12). If Moshe was given instruction to stop the plague, what right did Pinchas have to step in?

Our pasuk clarifies this. "Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen." The lineage is repeated because the context is different. Before, the pasuk was emphasizing the lineage that he acted out of righteousness from Aharon the Kohen. Here, he was called Kohen. *Pinchase the son of Elazar the son of Aharon, the Kohen.* "The Kohen" goes back onto Pinchas. He is Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon. He is a kohen in his own right. How did he act like a kohen?

A kohen brings atonement for Bnei Yisroel. (Vayikra 4:1 - et seq.). Here, Pinchas was doing that. He specifically came from Aharon the Kohen. Aharon was the prophet in Mitzrayim and the maker of plagues. He cast a sea serpent before Pharaoh (Shmos 7:9)

and made the waters turn to blood (Ibid 7:20), spit out frogs (Ibid 8:2), and cover the Land of Mitzrayim in lice (8:13). He also built the golden calf idol. (Ibid 32:4). Yet, he was the Kohen. Imperfect people make good leaders. And leaders need not always seem to run after peace in order to make peace. Sometimes leaders get their hands dirty for the sake of the public good. Just as atonement through korban requires the kohen to get his hands bloody, so too, other times requires leaders to get their hands dirty for the sake of the nation.

“He returned My wrath from upon Bnei Yisroel.” “Return” connotes repentance. Pinchas actually caused Bnei Yisroel to do teshuva. The wrath was upon Bnei Yisroel. Yes, Moshe was given instruction to halt it. If Moshe did not, then Bnei Yisroel would perish. Pinchas did one step better than halt the plague. He caused Bnei Yisroel to actually to *teshuva*. That is how the wrath “returned.”

“His jealousy of my jealousy.” Do not read it zeal. Zeal by itself accomplishes nothing. There must be a reason behind zeal and a purpose to the zeal. Zealots all the time pave the way to more tragedy. Those with righteous indignation are rarely righteous. Pinchas acted with zeal but because he was jealous for Hashem. He knew that Hashem would be jealous to those the serve foreign gods and idols and even those that serve their own desires before Hashem’s. Pinchase *out jealoused* Hashem’s jealousy. He acted jealous in place of Hashem and also for Hashem. A parable is when a mother is angry at a child because the child broke something out of carelessness or broke a rule. The father, who was not there, comes in and sees what is going on and he starts to take matters in his own hands and scolds the child. The mother quickly loses her anger because she sees the father being angry. The father – who was not really angry – then can deal with the situation in a calm manner. (And vise versa). By Pinchas acting jealous it turned back Hashem’s jealousy.

Further, Pinchas was jealous for Hahsem – meaning he wanted Hashem always to have the Bnei Yisroel’s attention. When their attention turned Pinchas also got angry. What gave Pinchas the right to do what he did was because of what Zimri did. Moshe was instructed to end the plague by killing those that were engaging in sin. However,

before the judges could act, Zimri exacerbated the crimes by making it public and in front of the Mishkan, Moshe, and Bnei Yisroel. At that point he was not *Zimri*. He was a “man of Yisroel.” It made no difference who he was. It was a man of Yisroel – representing all the sinners – who is now doing this publicly. Pinchas followed them into *the tent* and killed them. (Bamidbar 25:8). “The tent” was the Ohel Moed, where Moshe and the assembly were standing and, understandably, weeping.

“His jealousy of my jealousy amongst them.” Pinchas was jealous that Hashem was jealous of Bnei Yisroel. He wanted to have his feelings of dedication to Hashem permeate all of Bnei Yisroel. He did not want his Lord to be jealous. His motivation ended the plague and also caused Bnei Yisroel to turn back from their sin. They saw what it is like when a person really loves and runs after Hashem. This revived their dedication.

“And I did not destroy Bnei Yisroel in my jealousy.” Not only was Bnei Yisroel saved, generally, but those that sinned were saved, too. Hashem originally told Moshe how to halt the plague. However, when the sin was intensified, made public, before (or in) the Mishkan, and all the assembly did was “cry,” the entire Bnei Yisroel were now at risk of total annihilation. “If a thief is breaking and entering and is discovered and the homeowner kills him in self-defense and home protection, there is no blood guilt.” (Shmos 22:1). Pinchas was protecting *his home*. He was protecting the Mishkan and Hashem’s honor. There was no *mens rea* for murder. This was an act done to rectify an evil. This was not “Zimri” that Pinchas was killing. It was “a man of Yisroel and a woman of Midyan.” There is no blood-guilt in that situation. Hashem wanted those who sinned to hang in the sun. (Bamidbar 25:4). Hashem wanted a public demonstration of punishment. Instead, Pinchas killed one Yisroel and one enemy – publicly. The plague ceased and now those that Moshe was instructed to kill – the sinners – they also did not die. They repented and they, too, were saved. This act also saved the soul of Bnei Yisroel as repentance brought them closer to Hashem. Thus, “I, therefore, grant my covenant of peace upon him.” (Ibid 25:12).