

READ IT  
UP 



THE LEARN IT UP NEWSLETTER

Read it Up

## Is Violence Justified

By Rebecca Ijadi

Before understanding this week's *parasha*, one must know last week's- *Parashat Balak*. Last week, Pinchas- the grandson of Aharon- was able to stop the plague that was striking *bnei israel*. The plague was occurring because Jewish men were having relations with women from *Moav* and *Midyan*. Especially outrageous was the incident between *Zimri* (the leader of *Shevet Shimon*) and *Kozbi* (the princess of *Midyan*). Pinchas stopped the plague by going into their tent and killing them both with a *romach*- a spear.

Did *bnei israel* appreciate Pinchas's act of bravery? No. On the contrary! *bnei israel* were furious, especially the members of *Zimri*'s tribe, *Shimon*.

Thankfully, Hashem saw Pinchas's true intentions. Hashem was very proud of him for his act of fearlessness, and his desire to do a *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctifying God's name). Hashem commanded Moshe to announce: "Pinchas...turned my wrath from upon the Children of Israel...So I did not consume the Children of Israel in My vengeance." Pinchas saved them from destruction, and in the end Hashem rewarded Pinchas with a *brit shalom*. "Behold I give unto him my Covenant of Peace" (Num. 25:10-12).

How does one merit a Covenant of Peace out of violence? While the words seem paradoxical, many rabbis express that this is not the case. Firstly, the Zlotamer Rebbe teaches that Pinchas may have done an act of violence, but his motivation was purely out of love. Many Jews were dying, sinning, and suffering because of this plague, and stopping the plague simply brought peace among

the nation. We see this hinted from the word *ro-ma-ch* (spear), which has the same root as the word *ra-ch-em*—compassion. From this we learn that many times, in history and in our own personal lives, peace can only be accomplished through conflict.

The *Ibn Ezra* (R. Abraham ibn Ezra; Spain, 1089-1167) holds differently. He says that Pinchas was given a Covenant of Peace to ensure his safety. This covenant was a pledge from Hashem to Pinchas that he would be protected from the rage of *Zimri*'s supporters.

Lastly, the *Netziv* (R. Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin; Lithuania, 1817-1893) gives his own opinion. He explains that after one does an act of violence, it is natural that his heart holds intense emotional unrest afterwards. Hashem therefore rewarded Pinchas with the attribute of peace, in order for him to be able to cope with the situation with peace and tranquility of the soul.

This small piece of our *parasha* holds an extremely important life lesson to be learned. The lesson is that although we are a nation of peaceful people, it is necessary at times to take a stand! The Jews at this time were acting immorally, and many believed that it was wrong, but no one was taking action.

The brave Pinchas decided that he couldn't just sit back and watch. He took action and because of him, in a sense, the Jewish nation is still in existence today! The lesson here is to never be afraid to stand up for what you know is right, because you never know what an impact you are making in this world.



## Mashal of the Week

Just imagine if you have a pot of water on the stove and you are waiting for it to boil, but every few minutes you remove it. It's quite obvious that the water will never boil. It doesn't even matter how big the fire is, because each time the pot is removed and returned, the boiling process starts over from scratch. It is only the continuous process of heating which causes the water to boil. The flame could be very small, and it may take longer to heat up, but if it's consistent it will eventually begin boiling.

This parable helps us understand why the *korban tamid* had such enormous effects for the Jewish people. The *korban tamid* was an offer-

ing that did not cost much, but was brought every single day. Even though it was not the most lavish of offerings, it still atoned for the sins of the Jewish people because of its consistency.

So too, it doesn't matter how big a project is in life—rather it matters how you accomplish that project. If you are not consistent then you won't get too far. But if you take even the smallest of things but do it consistently, it will only be a matter of time before you start bubbling over.



## Spotlight on a Mitzvah

### Simchat Yom Tov

Yom Tov; for some this term might immediately strike ideas such as: no electricity use, no movie going, and other ideas of prohibition we're use to that relate to Shabbat. Although this holds partially true (there are slightly different rules that apply to Yom Tov which we will save for another time), many tend to overlook the positive Torah commandment of "*Simchat Yom Tov*"- or, "happiness of Yom Tov".

*Parshat Pinchas* enumerates all the holidays given to us in the Torah to celebrate, the prohibition of working on these days, and a list of sacrificial offerings (*korbanot*) brought on the various holidays. However, the aspect of *simchat yom tov* is mentioned later on in the Torah (*Devarim* 16:14), and only after having that in mind, is the picture of Yom Tov complete. As the Torah commands us (ibid): "You shall rejoice in your holiday, yourself, and your son, and your daughter, and your servant, and your maid-servant, and the Levi, and the non-Jewish citizens, the fatherless, and the widow, that are within your gates."

The Rambam in his *Mishneh Torah* (Yom Tov 6) discusses these laws at length. A few of them are as follows: Included in [this commandment to] rejoice is that he, his children, and the members of his house-

hold should rejoice, each one in a manner appropriate for him. "Children should be given roasted seeds, nuts, and sweets. For women, one should buy attractive clothes and jewelry according to one's financial capacity. Men should eat meat and drink wine, for there is no happiness without partaking of meat, nor is there happiness without partaking of wine".

The Rambam continues, "When a person eats and drinks [in celebration of a holiday], he is obligated to feed converts, orphans, widows, and others who are destitute and poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his gut."

Therefore, we learn that although we are told to enjoy ourselves on the holidays, by not letting others partake in our celebrations defeats the purpose. The Torah wants to be happy, yes. But at the same time, why shouldn't we help others experience the same type of joy we look forward to every year.



Questions? Comments? Ideas? Email us at [MYCRiU@gmail.com](mailto:MYCRiU@gmail.com)



כ"א תמוז תשע"ג • June 29, 2013

**Contributors:** Joshua LeVian, Nathan Zabolani, Oren Heskia, Shawn Aziz, Yosef Zarnighian