

Pinchas - Zealous For Hashem

The Trait of Zealousness - Avenging The Honor of Hashem

“Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aaron the Kohen, turned back My wrath from upon the children of Israel, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them.”

Pinchas knew that there is a halachah of “Zealots may attack” (*kanaim poegin bo*) in the case of Zimri, who had taken a Moabite woman in marriage, which is one of the three examples listed by the Sages as a law which does render punishment in Beis Din, but which a zealot may take action against.

Zealousness (*kanaus*) stems from the trait of jealousy (*kinah*). In the side of evil, “jealousy” is a trait that removes a person from the world. When this trait is rectified, it is a trait of Hashem, Who is called “A zealous, vengeful G-d.”

In the soul, when *kinah*\jealousy is evil, it stems from the “animal” level of the soul (*the nefesh habehaimis*). When it is holy, it stems from the neshamah, the Divine aspect of the soul, which is a “portion of G-d above.” Since the neshamah receives traits from Hashem – as it is written, “For a part of Hashem is His nation” - the neshamah is able to acquire the ability to be zealous and vengeful to take action that will defend Hashem’s Torah.

There is also an intermediate level of *kinah*\jealousy: “jealousy of scholars”, which increases wisdom. However, although jealousy of scholars increases wisdom, it is not a totally pure motivation. The holy use of *kinah*\jealousy is when it is stemming from Hashem’s trait which is vengeful, “The zealousness of Hashem, the Almighty”, which is rooted in “A zealous, vengeful G-d”.

We need to understand, however, that although this trait is rooted in the spiritual, and it was created to defend the honor of Hashem, it is still tainted with a mixture of good and evil together, just as everything else in Creation, which currently contains a mixture of good and evil. Let us therefore see what the different kinds of unholy motivations are, which can become mixed with the holy kind of zealousness and taint it.

1- Jealousy and Personal Agendas

Many times, it can happen that as a person is being engaged in holy zealousness, there is some base zealousness mixed in, which stems from the “animal” level of the soul. Even more common than this is the fact that personal agendas are also mixed into the holy cause. It will seem to the person as if he is acting zealous in a holy way, as if he is emulating Pinchas, while in reality, the person is also acting upon various interests that are self-serving.

The root of the person’s zealous act is holy, but it is the way in which it manifests, its “garment”, where it can become evil, mixed with other motivations that are not about Hashem. One must be greatly cautious when it comes to being zealous in avenging Hashem’s honor, and to be extra wary of any unholy jealousy that may mix in with his holy cause, and to he must make sure that he is remaining only with the holy zealousness, a result of being attached to Hashem in *d’veykus*.

2 - Born Into Zealousness

Even more so, sometimes a person is born into a certain sect, where the ideals there are to be zealous. When a person is zealous because he grew up in “zealous” surroundings, this is usually not the holy kind of zealousness.

He has simply been “educated” to become like this, and it is entirely by rote and superficial. He acts zealous because it is a learned behavior, it is “second nature” to him, but he has not really acquired the true kind of zealousness. He may perform acts that are zealous, but he is not touching upon the actual trait that is zealousness. He has simply trained himself to behave this way, and he is merely acting out what results from zealousness, but he does not actually possess the trait of zealousness.

Therefore, people who are born into an environment of kanaus\zealousness are usually far from true kanaus; it is all being practiced habitually.

3 - Unrefined Character

Making this matter more complicated, if a person has not yet tried fixing his character traits, that means his zealousness contains base jealousy, motivations of self-interest, and habit. Any sensible person can understand what kind of “zealousness” will be produced from this. These kinds of zealots are destructive people, and their trait of zealotry hasn’t been built upon the proper foundations.

Thus, whenever a person wants to act zealous, he must clarify well what his motivations are.

Holy Zealotry: From A Burning Love For Hashem, and From A Quest For Truth

Where does true, holy zealousness come from? There are two root points where it can stem from.

Holy zealousness may stem from the depths of the neshamah, which contains a great love for HaKadosh Baruch Hu - as in the verse, “For love is as tough as death, and zealousness is hard like a reed, and her sparks are sparks of fire, a flame of G-d.” When one has revealed his neshamah, he is zealous for Hashem due to this lofty source. The more that a person loves Hashem – and not simply in the sense of a pleasant kind of love (*which stems from the element of water in the soul*), but a fiery kind of love (*which stems from the element of fire in the soul*), the more this fire burns, like a “constant fire shall burn on the Altar”, this will produce a holy trait of zealousness that comes from the neshamah.

Another source of where holy zealousness stems from is, from a deep quest for truth, which is also an inherent trait of the neshamah’s nature. “The seal of Hashem is truth”, and truth is the trait of Moshe Rabbeinu, and every neshamah contains this desire for truth.

A person needs to tell apart the difference between zealousness that stems from love for Hashem, and zealousness that stems from a search for truth. There is a sharp difference between them.

When a person feels a fiery, burning love for Hashem, it is still possible that other impurities can be mixed into the act. A person who is zealous out of love for Hashem might become so excited that he may not notice certain subtle details, which will cause him to act mistakenly. Even when the fire is holy, its nature is to burst out impulsively, so when a person is zealous for Hashem out of a fiery love

for Him, his zealousness might just be an impulsive kind of explosion, which isn't necessarily truthful.

In contrast, if a person's zealousness stems from a search for truth, it will then be pure. This does not simply mean to act correctly, but to be one who "speaks truth from his heart" – it is an inner sense of *yashrus* (*uprightness*) to do what's right. This quality of truthfulness in the soul demands that zealous action be taken in order to defend Hashem's Torah.

The clearer that the truth is to a person, the more truthful his zealousness will be. This does not mean that it will always be completely holy and pure, but it will be much closer to truth.

Love and Truth Together

Thus, even in people who live inwardly and for holiness, zealousness is only holy and genuine when it meets two conditions. It must stem from both love for Hashem, as well as from a quest for truth.

There are people whose *kanaus*\zealousness stems only from love for Hashem, and usually, their zealousness is off-mark. Only those who are also motivated by a quest for truth are ready to truly avenge Hashem's honor. All *kanaus* must have these two parts: a fiery love for Hashem, and a quest for truth, which stems from an inner sense of what's right, both in the mind and in the heart, which demands the truth.

When meeting those two conditions, a person's *kanaus*\zealousness is complete. Pinchas possessed both of these qualities – he had a great love for Hashem, as well as a demand for truth. When a person has these two qualities together, he is taking the right path. However, even then, he will still need to purify his character and inner motivations, so that other factors don't become mixed in with his holy cause.

Zealousness Is Only For Individuals

Clearly, *kanaus*\zealousness is not a trait to be practiced by the general public. It is in the category of "A halachah, but we do not give it as a ruling for the public." There are many halachos which Beis Din did not punish for when overridden. But for someone who has true, genuine zealousness - which can only stem from a search for the truth – he may be zealous about these matters. However, only individuals reach the true *kanaus*\zealousness. Therefore, *kanaus* is mainly an *avodah* for individuals, and not for the general public.

Understanding Extremist Zealotry

There are some extremist people who act very zealous when it comes to certain matters. We should understand where this stems from and how their extreme zealousness is developed.

Some of these people are acting zealous because they have been trained to act this way since they were young, which is habitual and not truthful; others act this way because they have not yet worked on their animalistic trait of jealousy. In others, extreme zealotry stems from various personal interests that are self-serving.

There is almost no one who can remain a long time with the higher motivation for zealousness,

and with time, they become vulnerable to any of the above reasons, which taints whatever they are doing. It has gotten to the point where the only people who practice kanaus are people with unrefined character.

To have a deeper understanding of this matter, it is because we are further from the time when we stood at Sinai, where we had great clarity. As we become further and further away from that clarity, there is concealment upon concealment (*confusion and lack of clarity of what the truth is*), and the idea of zealousness undergoes changes as well, becoming more and more of a concealed matter to us. It becomes like “extremism” to us, when in reality, it is not extreme, but the words of the Torah which we must remain steadfast to.

In the times we live in, there is a tremendous lack of clarity over what there is to be “zealous” about, and the difference between matters of “halachah” and matters of “kanaus” (*zealousness*). This has caused much confusion about what is considered “kanaus”, and what is not considered “kanaus” (*and rather clearly obligatory to all*).

This is another reason that can taint kanaus, in addition to the reasons listed until now. It is because even when a person is being zealous in order to defend Hashem’s Torah, it is not clear to most people if he is really justified in his zealousness, or he is just being extreme.

Differentiating Between “Zealousness” and Laxity In Keeping Halachah

To give an example, there are people today who have chosen to take a very lax path when it comes to keeping many areas of halachah, and they take a very “lenient” approach towards halachah. Clearly, this is a lack of yiras shomayim (*fear of Heaven*). However, when people get upset about this and they condemn this lenient attitude towards halachah, they are considered by many people as ‘extreme’ zealots!

In our generation, areas that are really words of Torah have become turned into mere “words of kanaus” (*zealousness*), regarded as extremist behavior, when in reality, these areas are not “kanaus”, but clearly defined halachah and words of Torah!

That is the destruction that takes place in our generation. What used to be clear to people before as matters that are clearly defined by halachah, is no longer so clear. Certain matters that are “words of Torah” are mistakenly considered by many people to just be extreme “words of kanaus”....

That is the dismal situation today, and only a few sparks of good still remain in the world.

Mourning The Lack of Clarity In Our Times

If a person has purified his motivations within himself, and he has an inner quest for the truth, and he hasn’t been negatively affected by harmful influences, and he truly searches for Hashem and for the truth of the Torah, he can feel the inner purity in the soul that demands the truth, to defend the values that are true to Hashem and His Torah.

He will then see a different world in front of him than what most people see, even in the world of most of those who keep Torah and mitzvos. He will see that there are many areas and situations which are clearly defined as obligations of halachah, which many in the generation are lax in keeping to.

Those areas are not matters of “kanaus” – they are rather the foundations of Yiddishkeit being ignored and uprooted!

When you realize the way things are supposed to be according to the pure halachah, and when you contrast this with the situation that is taking place today, in which there is blatant laxity towards the keeping of halachah, you can then recognize the depth of the terrible destruction which Klal Yisrael is found in right now. It will pain you, and it can bring on a deep crying of the neshamah.

Then you can feel the deep desire of the soul to be zealous to avenge the honor of Hashem – providing that it stems from love for Hashem, as well as a quest for truth. You can see the words of Torah and Chazal in their purity, and then you see the destruction in front of you, because many people are being lax in those areas.

However, as emphasized, you must have those two conditions met (*a burning love for Hashem, and a quest for truth*) in order for the kanaus to be genuine and holy.

Let It Burn In Your Heart, But Don't Always Act Upon It

How much of the kanaus should remain in our heart, and how much of it should we act upon? In order for a person to know the answer, he must reach the level of chassidus (*piety*), and then he will know.

Practically speaking, most of the kanaus (*zealousness*) that we will feel needs to remain in our heart, and we cannot act upon it. It remains as a burning pain in our heart, so that we can mourn the Shechinah (*The dwelling of Hashem's Presence*), over the situation of Klal Yisrael, which has descended to such a low, unbecoming level.

The reason why we should generally not act upon any kanaus (*zealousness*) that we feel is because in any case, there are no actions we can do that will change the situation of the generation today. Therefore, it is impossible to change the generation through any kanaus (*zealousness*). Only through the light of mesirus nefesh (*self-sacrifice*), which comes from Above, can the generation change - but nothing can be done in the active sense to change the generation today.

In Conclusion

May Hashem let us merit the time in when the Beis HaMikdash and Klal Yisrael will be rebuilt again in their full glory, when “The earth will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem.”

Gog & Magog

QUESTION

1) What lays behind the evil forces of the *kelipos* of “Gog” as well as “Magog”?

ANSWER

Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin (*in sefer Machsheves Charutz: 9*) explains that “Gog” is from the word *gag*, “roof”, and also the concept of *gaavah*, conceitedness. He writes: “When the word Gog is spelled with the letter vov, it implies self-sufficiency, to be entirely conceited at the root.” (*See also Pri Tzaddik to Parshas Shemini: 9*). On a similar note, the Zohar (*II:57, II:75*) says that Hashem’s exaltedness and pride (*ga’on*) will reign supreme after the arrival of Gog and Magog. And Rav Tzadok further writes in *sefer Pri Tzaddik (Beraishis:12)* that the evil of denying G-d is represented by Gog and Magog, which is the collected evil of all 70 gentile nations, for the *gematria (equivalent)* of Gog and Magog totals 70 (*sefer Pri Tzaddik, Va’eira 2, and based on Midrash Tanchuma, parshas Korach, 12*).

QUESTION

2) Does “Gog” represent the evil forces that conceal Hashem’s Presence, and does “Magog” represent the clashes within our own souls?

ANSWER

Gog fights against Mashiach ben Yosef. As a hint, Gog has the letter *gimmel* twice in his name, which equals 3 and 3, for a total of 6, and Yosef is represented by the number 6, for Yosef is the sixth level [*of the 10 Sefiros*]. Rav Tzadok writes (*in Pri Tzaddik, Naso 15*) that Gog and Magog will fight against Mashiach ben Yosef. This is because Gog and Magog represent *gaavah (conceitedness)*, which is also the root of homose*ual behavior [*as written about by Rebbi Nachman of Breslov*]. Refer also to *Talmud Bavli Succah 52a* about the war of Gog and Magog against Mashiach ben Yosef.

Magog fights against Mashiach ben Dovid. The *sefer Pri Tzaddik (Rosh HaShanah, 11)* says, “The main evil of Gog and Magog is to counter the holiness of Mashiach ben Dovid. See also *Pri Tzaddik parshas Netzavim, 11*. This is the evil of heresy, denying G-d. As the *sefer Shem M’Shmuel (in Chol HaMoed Succos)* states, “The concept of Gog and Magog is all about rebelling against G-d.” If we analyze it more closely, this is actually the evil of Magog, because the *sefer Shem M’Shmuel* states elsewhere that Magog is all about “throwing away the yoke of Heaven.”

QUESTION

3) Is Gog and Magog connected with Mt. Seir, Mt. Amon and Mt. Moav which the Arizal writes about, the three particular forces of evil which will reappear in the final days?

ANSWER

Yes. The word *Gog* is the letter *gimmel* twice, connected by the letter *vov* (which is the Hebrew letter that connects all other Hebrew letters together), representing three forces of evil that combine together, which fight against the three main forces on the side of holiness. That is why Gog and Magog fight against Moshe, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid.¹ The *sefer Don Yadin [of Rebbi Shimon Astripole]* says that Gog, Magog and Armilos are all one unit. This is the depth behind the Gemara's words that if a person is careful to eat the three Shabbos meals, he is saved from the war of Gog and Magog, and this is also related to the words of the *Zohar (Shemos, 7, 72)* states that Gog and Magog will appear 3 times.

QUESTION

4) In a different response the Rav explained that the "war of Gog and Magog" is taking place today on an internal level, within the clashes and contradictions of each of our souls, which is manifest on an outer level today in all of the wars taking place today. But recently in a response the Rav explained that our war that we must fight against Internet and media use is the very war of Gog and Magog itself. Are these two different definitions of the "war of Gog and Magog" today, or do they correspond to each other?

1 Elsewhere, in a response concerning a different topic - how Christianity is the force of impurity that counters the side of holiness - the Rav explains how there are three sides to the side of impurity which counter the three sides of holiness. On the side of evil is Christianity, which believes that everything is run by three forces: a Deity, the father-and-son (which includes Yeshu HaNotzri, who proclaimed himself as a son born from G-d), and the holy ghost or the spirit. This is the evil, impure "triad" that fights against the holy "triad": Hashem, the Torah, and Yisrael, and alternatively, Moshe, Mashiach ben Yosef and Mashiach ben Dovid. (In particular, the man who fathered Yeshu HaNotzari, was a man by the name of Joseph, who sinned with a married man, thus representing the impurity that fights against the holiness of Mashiach ben Yosef, who descends from Yosef, the symbol of purity and holiness. Yeshu HaNotzari himself was also the antithesis to his namesake, Yehoshua, who descended from Yosef. The Ramchal explains (in *sefer Ginzei HaRamchal*) that Yeravam ben Nevat (who led the nation astray) had the soul of Mashiach ben Yosef, and Yeravam's failure created the impurity of Yeshu HaNotzari, who led the masses astray. Christianity, founded by Yeshu HaNotzari, was the very antithesis to Mashiach, claiming that Yeshu was the true Mashiach, and that the coming of "Shiloh" refers to the coming of Yeshu HaNotzari. As we know, Shiloh really means Moshe, who is the soul of Mashiach. The Ramchal (in *sefer Adir B'Marom*) says that Yeshu HaNotzari had the soul of Zimri, and therefore Moshe was buried facing Peor (where the idol worship of Peor was performed), in order to rectify the soul of Zimri, because Moshe is the triad in the side of holiness (for Moshe represents Moshe and the two Mashiachs, and he represents the triad of Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael), which counters the triad on the side of impurity, the three evil forces that comprise Christianity, which would come from the soul of Zimri/Yeshu HaNotzari.

ANSWER

All of the inner contradictions in the soul [which cause people to clash with each other] are rooted in the trait of *gaavah* (conceitedness). At the root of all contradictions and clashes is *gaavah*, conceitedness. This [the concept of Gog/gaavah/conceit] is the evil that fights against Mashiach ben Yosef.

The media [internet use] is the evil that fights against Mashiach ben Dovid. The internet and the media is one collective force which counters the Individual One of the world, and it represents the evil of denying G-d. The *Megaleh Amukos* (*parshas Noach*) says that the war of Gog and Magog against Mashiach ben Dovid is all-inclusive of all 4 kings [who fought against Avraham] and all 4 exiles.

QUESTION

5) The Gemara says that “Rebellious children in a home is more difficult than the war of Gog and Magog.” What is the depth of this statement, and could it mean that the many children who have strayed from *Yiddishkeit* today *Rachmana Litzlan* are an outcome of the spiritual war of Gog and Magog which the Chofetz Chaim spoke about, that the casualties of *neshamos* that have been affected by the final era of history is worse than the physical casualties of the previous world wars?

ANSWER

Yes – that is very, very, very true !!!



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