

Parsha Ponders

Pinchas | July 2, 2021 | 22 Tammuz 5781

Just reward¹

פינחס בן-אלעזר בן-אהרן הכהן השיב את-חמתי מעל בני-ישראל בקנאו את-קנאתי בתוכם ולא-כליתי את-
בני-ישראל בקנאתי

Pinchas, the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Kohen, turned back My wrath from upon the Jewish people, by acting out his zealotry amongst you. [As a result] I did not wipe out the Jewish people with my zealotry²

Parshas Pinchas begins where the previous *parsha* ended. Zimri ben Salu, a prince of the tribe of Shimon, committed a leud act with a Midianite woman in front of the entire congregation. Moshe was at a loss what to do³. Pinchas, a grandson of Aharon HaKohen, recalled that in such a situation a zealot may take the law into their own hands⁴. He punished Zimri, and Pinchas was rewarded kindly by Hashem. The Sages in the *Midrash* make an unusual comment about the results of Pinchas' actions. They say⁵ that "it makes sense that Pinchas was rewarded". What do they mean by this teaching, and what are they stressing?

The Chasam Sofer offers several suggestions. One is based on a principle that Hashem does not provide reward for *mitzvos* in this world⁶. Our reward awaits us in the next world⁷. Some ask⁸ on this principle from a prohibition in the Torah not to delay payment of wages from one's workers⁹. How then could Hashem delay paying us the reward for our *mitzvos*¹⁰? They answer that there's a special dispensation to this prohibition. If you hire someone through an agent, there's no problem delaying payment¹¹. Since Hashem gave us the Torah and the *mitzvos* through Moshe¹², there's no problem delaying payment.

The Chasam Sofer wants to say that this only applies to the Leviim and the Yisraelim. In contrast, the Kohanim are considered on a higher level than the rest of the Jews. They're much closer to Hashem¹³, and heard the *mitzvos* directly from Him. As such, it would be prohibited to delay their payment. That means that the principle that there's no reward for *mitzvos* in this world only applies to the rest of the nation. It does not apply to the Kohanim. Since Pinchas was a Kohen¹⁴, our Sages are telling us that it makes sense that he was rewarded in this world, and not just in the world to come¹⁵. Good Shabbos

¹ Based on Chasam Sofer's Toras Moshe I to Numbers 25:11 §

² Numbers *loc. cit.*

³ Sanhedrin 82a

⁴ *Ibid* and Yerushalmi Sanhedrin 9:7, brought by Rashi to v. 6,7

⁵ Bamidbar Rabbah 21:1

⁶ Kiddushin 39b

⁷ Several explanations are given for this principle. One is that since the reward for *mitzvos* is eternal, they cannot be given in this finite world (Asarah Ma'amaros). This idea is expanded upon by Rav Dessler in Michtav MeEliyahu I. As we'll see, this explanation doesn't seem to fit with the Chasam Sofer's understanding

⁸ Toras Moshe HaShalem cites the *sefer Chanukas HaTorah parshas Yisro* § 84

⁹ Leviticus 19:13

¹⁰ This question assumes Hashem keeps the Torah, which indeed is stated by Yerushalmi Rosh Hashana 1:3 and Shemos Rabbah 30:9. Cf. Da'as Zekeinim to Exodus 14:2

¹¹ Bava Metzia 110b

¹² See Exodus 20:16

¹³ See *ibid* 19:22 and Mechilta to v. 24

¹⁴ According to the opinion in Zevachim 101b

¹⁵ See Chasam Sofer for six more explanations to this *Midrash*