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**RABBI WEIN'S
WEEKLY
BLOG**

There is zealotry that stems from hatred and jealousy. Though the motives are evil, this type of person is always able to cloak himself in a mantle of piety and public service. Unfortunately, this type of zealotry abounds in our religious world. Innocent people are pilloried, their words are distorted and they are slandered falsely and shamelessly, all in the name of higher religious causes.

There are many instances and examples of this type of behavior that make the news and are circulated instantaneously throughout the world. Apparently the zealots are unaware of the damage that they cause to Torah, the Jewish people as a whole, and sadly enough to themselves.

Zealotry that emanates from personal and political motives always proves itself to be harmful, counterproductive, divisive and in the long run, usually unsuccessful. On the other hand there is a type of zealotry that is born of pure motives, of love for the Jewish people and its survival and is not personal in nature. It is not encrusted with jealousy or is it politically motivated. This zealotry reflects the pain and suffering of the Jewish people and attempts to right a wrong and correct a grievous error that can

endanger Jewish survival itself.

This latter type of zealotry is exemplified by the actions of Pinchas in the narrative of the Torah reading of this week. This example of pure, justified zealotry is a rare instance of Jewish history. The rabbis of the Talmud could find no other instance where violent zealotry was justified and condoned. Pinchas was a one-off situation.

To emphasize this idea that Pinchas was no ordinary zealot motivated by base instincts and erroneous ideas and conclusions, the Torah recorded for us his genealogy. He is the son of Elazar, the grandson of Aharon, the Kohein Gadol of Israel, people who loved peace and pursued it and whose love for the Jewish people knew no limits.

Pinchas was a true heir to this holy family tradition. His zealotry arose from love and not from hate, from nobility of character and not from base personal character traits. It is difficult, if not even impossible, for outside observers to determine the motives that drive the actions, speech and behavior of the zealots of our time. These are hidden things that only Heaven can fathom.

We would do well to recognize that until now there has been only one Pinchas in the story of the Jewish people. Though we are usually bidden to give to others the benefit of the doubt, I do not feel that it is realistic in the case of zealots and zealotry. It is pure arrogance for anyone in our generations to

somehow claim the mantle of Pinchas for themselves. Caution, wisdom, foresight and patience should be the character traits taught to our children and students. These are the traits that will guarantee spiritual growth and Jewish survival. Only the zealot feels comfortable in his zealotry. But in reality he is the victim of his own wrongful behavior.

