

## CHIZUK AND IDUD

*Divrei Torah from the weekly sedra  
with a focus on living in Eretz Yisrael -  
Chizuk for Olim & Idud for not-yet-Olim*

The Torah's graphic and detailed description of Pinchas's violent act, and its substantial and surprising reward, present us with a puzzling conundrum: How exactly is bloody zealotry linked to the blessing of everlasting peace? Many have suggested different ways of understanding the matter. Thus, for example, the Ketav Sofer notes that people mistakenly believe that peace will be achieved when one side assumes a weak stance of appeasement (i.e. Chamberlain's infamous declaration that he had brought 'peace in our time'...), while in truth lasting peace may ensue from lengthy battles. [This thought may be relevant to our situation in Israel today as we strive to find a true peace...]

A different attempt to make sense of what we might call the 'Pinchas Puzzle', was suggested by Rav Kook in a somewhat unexpected historic setting. In 1924 Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook zt"l visited the USA accompanied by both Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein, the head of the Slobodka Yeshiva, as well as by Rav Avraham Dov Ber Kahana Shapira, the famed Rav of Kovno. These three Rabbonim came at the invitation of the CRC (Central Relief Committee) in the attempt to raise funds for the destitute European Jewry. Their presence on American shores was highly publicized, and Rav Kook was granted an interview with President Calvin Coolidge in the White House.

In a JTA report issued on that same day (April 15, 1924), Rav Kook is reported to

have thanked the President for the USA's support of the Balfour Declaration, expressing his hope that the United States would continue to be a center of liberty and idealism. Rav Kook told the U.S president that the return of the Jews to the Holy Land would benefit not only the Jewish people, but would serve as a blessing for all of mankind, and President Coolidge reportedly replied by saying that "The American government would be glad to assist Jews whenever possible."

During their visit, the Rabbis met with representatives of the American Agudat HaRabanim. One of the American rabbis present at the meeting rose to challenge Rav Kook: "As a Kohen", he began, "you are known to follow in the footsteps of Aharon HaKohen as an 'Ohev Shalom and Rodef Shalom', in your outreach towards the Chalutzim, so many of whom are terrible Posh'ei Yisrael, sinners of Israel, who defile the Holy Land with their blasphemous behavior. Why, however, do you not emulate the ways of Pinchas HaKohen who was greatly blessed for giving expression to the deep divine wrath?"

Upon hearing the derogatory depiction of the Jews of Eretz Yisrael, tears flowed from Rav Kook's eyes, and he answered curtly: "Eliyahu HaNavi thought he too could be like Pinchas - did you learn from what happened to him?"

Rav Zev Gold explains that Rav Kook meant the following: Anyone who wishes to follow the lead of Pinchas must know that his was a one-time-only exceptional act. Pinchas was awarded the covenant of peace in order to teach us that peace is the gold standard - the strict norm we are always to abide by. Rav Zev Gold in Nivei Zahav explains that in the

book of Meloachim Alef (19:14) we are told that after Eliyahu tells G-d: "I have been very jealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away", he is directed to appoint Elisha as a prophet in his stead. Rashi explains that this was a direct result of Eliyahu having laid accusations - Katigorya - against G-d's children. Per Rav Kook, the everlasting covenant of peace is the overarching principle which should always guide our behavior, while the necessity of zealotry is something to bear in mind, though rarely if ever to emulate in action. There is a time and place for everything.

Perhaps one such occasion arrived a number of years later: After the 1929 massacre in which 67 Jews were murdered in Chevron, the British Secretary, Lord Lock, said, "You Jews may defend yourselves but do not attack others." Rav Kook lambasted him: "You who have violated the commandment 'do not murder', do not teach us ethics! The Talmud teaches, 'he who comes to kill you, rise up and kill him.'"

A time and place for everything... Avigdor Hemeiri described the deep impression Rav Kook's words had on the general public in his time, writing: "If not for this one man, completely unique, who stood at the post of our national and individual honor, then we would also have been mourning the death of our self-respect."

To conclude on an Aliya note: A man once told Rav Kook, "G-d willing I plan on making Aliya".

To which Rav Kook replied: "G-d is surely willing! Are you?"

*Rabbi Yerachmiel Roness, Ramat Shiloh, Beit Shemesh*