

Pinchas's Peace Prize: Thoughts for Parashat Pinchas

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Devar Torah by Max Nussbaum

In the 3rd verse of this week's Parasha, Parashat Pinchas, Hashem grants Pinchas with the peace prize. We know from the end of Parashat Balak that Pinchas killed Zimri and Kozbi thus ending the plague on the Israelite People. The result of Pinchas's action is great; but why should he deserve a peace prize for killing two people? Furthermore, why did this end the plague?

Throughout Tanakh we see a few more interesting rewards and punishments that may lead us to question some foundational ideas. Moshe hit the rock and was unable to enter Israel. Avraham almost sacrificed his son Yitzhak and received a promise that his offspring would be the chosen nation. Yaakov tricked Yitzhak and received many blessings. The spies spoke badly about Israel and they were all sentenced to death in the desert. There's seems to be no set standard for results of our actions; but in Parashat Ha'azinu we learn: "His (Hashem's) deeds are perfect". It appears as if we're missing something.

There's one common denominator among all of these things; the proper standard is fulfillment of Hashem's will. Following Hashem's will leads to blessing; violating His will leads to punishment. Moshe was supposed to talk to the rock and was punished because he didn't. Avraham was ready to sacrifice his son as Hashem had commanded and he was rewarded. The same for Yaakov and the spies.

Pinchas acted in a way that maintained Hashem's standard of morality for the People of Israel...and was therefore rewarded.

Pinchas deserved the peace prize because he had faith and was loyal to Hashem's will. Due to the fact that this incident with Zimri and Kozbi happened in front of the nation, Pinchas inspired the people to do the will of Hashem. This is why Pinchas was granted the peace prize, and this is why the plague was stopped. The main message to take away from this week's Parasha is that no matter what, we should always do the right thing and strive to live up to the standards that Hashem has set for us.