

**Pinchas**

***Eternal Power***

In Parshas Korach we explained how boundaries are indestructible, just as the set boundaries of day and night.

We learned that we each have our unique God-given portion that we must humbly work within.

It struck me one Shabbos morning that while in Korach’s case this was definitely true- he could not break out of his boundary- it is not this way for everyone.

While many people seem to be forever stuck in their limitations and weaknesses, some people seem to be able to break out of their boundaries, even miraculously achieving the impossible.

What is the secret to their success?

A deeper look at the heroism of Pinchas might shed some light.

The nation of Israel was at a time of deep crisis.

The people were sinking deeply into immorality and adultery and were struck as a result by Divine retribution.

In the midst of all of this, Zimri, the prince of the tribe of Shimon, did the unthinkable: he mockingly engaged in a public act of adultery in front of Moshe and the Jews, cohabiting with Cozbi, the princess of Median.

Pinchas, witnessing this public disgrace of Hashem’s name, and seeing that no one was doing anything about it, courageously rose to avenge the disgrace of Hashem’s name.

The Midrash highlights the grave danger Pinchas put himself in through his actions.

He had to enter into the heavily guarded camp of Shimon, disguising himself and his spear so that no one would know of his true intentions to kill Zimri and Cozbi.

His very life was on the line.

The Talmud explains that not only was Pinchas protected from this danger, he also merited several fascinating miracles along the way.

Here are some of the miracles: Zimri, seeing Pinchas, should have separated from Cozbi but he didn’t; Zimri should have called his people to save him from Pinchas but he didn’t; Pinchas miraculously struck the spear through the exact place of their cohabitation so there would be no doubt about their guilt; Cozbi and Zimri miraculously remained stuck on the spear and didn’t fall off; none of their blood fell onto Pinchas; and the angel came and caused destruction in the tribe of Shimon so that Pinchas could escape.

In addition to all these miracles, Pinchas became the only man ever that was not of the necessary Aaronic lineage to be anointed a Kohen.

While Korach failed to break out of his boundary, Pinchas succeeded.

What was the difference?

The verse in the beginning of the Parsha hints at the answer, “Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aharon the kohen, turned back ***My*** wrath from upon the children of Israel, when he zealously avenged ***My*** vengeance among them, so I did not consume the nation of Israel in ***My*** vengeance.”

The verse emphasizes that Pinchas went out for one and only purpose: to do the will of Hashem and sanctify His name.

In contrast, by Korach it says, “And Korach took…”

Korach was out to take, to gain, to promote himself.

He wanted to be a leader, a priest and he wanted it for himself.

Pinchas didn’t want anything for himself; he wanted solely to avenge Hashem’s vengeance and turn back His wrath.

When one wishes to promote himself or advance his own agenda, he will find, more often than not, that the doors are closed, the boundaries are set, and that people are not so interested. He finds that he is stuck, and when he persists he causes much destruction to himself and his surroundings.

However, one who courageously looks to do the will of Hashem will find that the doors are open, the boundaries are almost nonexistent, and that people are more than willing to lend a helping hand. He will be infused with powers he never had before and will merit seeing miracles in many of his endeavors.

The reason for this is simple.

Hashem has no boundaries and has endless power, and a person who does for Him will merit being blessed with His helping hand, expanding his capabilities beyond all of his natural limitations.

In light of this, perhaps we can understand one of the most famous sayings of our sages in a deeper way.

“Yehuda Ben Taima says, Be bold as a leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer, and strong as a lion, t*o carry out the will of your Father in heaven*.” (Avos 5,20)

Simply understood, Yehuda Ben Taima is teaching us to use all of our energies in the service of Hashem.

The difficulty we must grapple with is this: is it truly possible for a human to possess the boldness of the leopard, the flight of the eagle, the swiftness of the deer, and the strength of the lion?

Perhaps we can understand his teaching as follows

Yes, naturally it is impossible for a human to rival the greatest powers and capabilities of the animal kingdom.

However, if we dedicate our lives to carry out *the will of our Father in heaven*, we will merit being miraculously imbued with the boldness of the leopard, the flight of the eagle, the swiftness of the deer, and the strength of a lion, achieving the impossible, sanctifying His great and holy Name.