

Battle for Peace

Drash on Parashah 41, Pinchas

By Oriyan (aka Kevin Phipps)

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.*

*I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:
His day is marching on.*

*I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with His heel,
Since God is marching on."*

*He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.*

*In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me:
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.*

*He is coming like the glory of the morning on the wave,
He is Wisdom to the mighty, He is Honor to the brave,
So the world shall be His footstool, and the soul of Time His slave,
Our God is marching on.*

These are the original verses to the Battle Hymn of the Republic, written by Julia Ward Howe. It may seem odd that the message of grace is weaved within the language

of war, but as we see in the end of last week's parashah, and the beginning of this week's parashah, dedication to God can, at times, turn violent.

Just then, in the sight of Moshe and the whole community of Isra'el, as they were weeping at the entrance to the tent of meeting, a man from Isra'el came by, bringing to his family a woman from Midyan. When Pinchas the son of El`azar, the son of Aharon the cohen, saw it, he got up from the middle of the crowd, took a spear in his hand, and pursued the man from Isra'el right into the inner part of the tent, where he thrust his spear through both of them – the man from Isra'el and the woman through her stomach. Thus was the plague among the people of Isra'el stopped; nevertheless, 24,000 died in the plague. Adonai said to Moshe, "Pinchas the son of El`azar, the son of Aharon the cohen, has deflected my anger from the people of Isra'el by being as zealous as I am, so that I didn't destroy them in my own zeal. Therefore say, 'I am giving him my covenant of shalom, making a covenant with him and his descendants after him that the office of cohen will be theirs forever.' This is because he was zealous on behalf of his God and made atonement for the people of Isra'el." [B'midbar/Numbers 25:6-13]

This was part of a rebellion by some in the community of Israel, as the result of deception started by Bil'am. A plague began amongst those who allowed themselves to be a part of the rebellion. Of all the people, including priests, who were there, it was one man, Pinchas, who took the initiative to do what had to be done to end the plague. I want us to notice a few things about this atonement which was provided for the people. First, it was not the killing of the man and the woman which brought about favor from God. It was his zeal in upholding Torah and bringing honor to God which God favored. The result was God's grace by providing atonement Himself for the people, and His covenant of shalom with Pinchas.

Our God is a God of love and peace, and desires His people to also be people of love and peace. However, there is opposition from the Adversary who desires to rob God's people from that love and peace. He introduces deception, selfishness, and conflict. Such things must be fought against in order to obtain and maintain the good things God has for us.

It is said in our military that freedom isn't free. There are many who have died and continue to die so that others can live. Life is full of contradictions like this that can lead to confusion. At times death is necessary to bring about life. Conflict is necessary to bring about peace. At times a mess has to be made worse before it can be cleaned up. Trees have to be pruned so they be healthier. Children have to be disciplined so they learn how to act properly. Perhaps the greatest paradox of all is the death of God's own Son to provide eternal life for all those who would faithfully serve Him.

"Don't suppose that I have come to bring peace to the Land. It is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword! [Mattityahu/Matthew 10:34]

On the surface, these are odd words from our Messiah Yeshua. This is the Prince of Peace saying that He has come not to bring peace, but a sword. Is Yeshua advocating rebellion or anarchy? No, the context of this verse has to do with the devotion His talmidim are to have to Him. He is our King, and if following Him causes us to break family relationships or lose friends, He must have priority. Truth is truth, God's people are called to stand up for truth regardless of the obstacles or consequences, and Truth provides freedom. This is not an easy obligation.

Use all the armor and weaponry that God provides, so that you will be able to stand against the deceptive tactics of the Adversary. For we are not struggling against human beings, but against the rulers, authorities and cosmic powers governing this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. [Ephesians 6:11-12]

We live amongst a church that preaches an easy Gospel. Believe and a be saved. Leave the rest at the foot of the cross. How convenient in the midst of a culture, owned and operated by Ha Satan, which teaches living for yourself, working for materialism, you are what you do, and our children's heroes are dragons and sorcerers. When our world is working so hard to combat the ways of God, how is God's truth going to continue to march across our planet when His people do little more than sit in pews and "believe" in God?

Pinchas believed in God. However, in the midst of rebellion and plague, it was his belief which spurred him onward to see the source of the rebellion, get up off his butt, pick up a spear and drive it through flesh of two people to stand up for the truth of God's Word. His zealous activity offset God's jealous sovereignty to provide atonement for the people. God needs more Believers like Pinchas who take their faith seriously, take His Word seriously, and openly strive against the forces of darkness in our world. There is nothing simple or comfortable about this. The only tree huggers in God's Kingdom are those who embrace the Tree of Life, and like the Tree of Life have a faith which is rooted deeply in Torah and produce fruits of the Holy Spirit, so others can taste the love and goodness of God.

Don't deceive yourselves by only hearing what the Word says, but do it! For whoever hears the Word but doesn't do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror, who looks at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But if a person looks

closely into the perfect Torah, which gives freedom, and continues, becoming not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work it requires, then he will be blessed in what he does. [Ya'akov/James 1:22-25]

The works of the Word are not there to be a burden. They are not there to give us a mountain to climb so we can look down on all those who haven't reached our level of spirituality. They are not there to give us an impossible task to accomplish, thus relying on God's grace to the point we do nothing. They are there to teach us the nature of our relationship with God and our fellow man. They are there to give us weapons of warfare to use to defeat the work of the Adversary in our lives and our world.

Being zealous for God requires more than your heart and mind. We have hands and feet so we can actively live the way God has called and gifted each one of us to live. If belief was all God required, none of us would be here. What purpose would there be for us to continue to live in this world, where we are faced with temptation, and sometimes fall, and where sin still makes us unclean, if not to be a part of a work which is more important? Yeshua saved us from our sin, in order to free us to go about the work of building His Kingdom.

David was the least of His brothers and spend the majority of His days literally counting sheep. His family was content with leaving him to the relatively fluffy, meaningless life he was living. It was God who saw His kingship in the midst of his shepherding. God has plans for us beyond anything we can imagine, but it will take dedication, hard work, and the zeal of Pinchas or David. What would you rather be? A sheep counter or giant slayer? Perhaps a sheep counter is what you are, but know that in counting and protecting the sheep, you are being prepared for something greater. There will come a day when everyone is silent and you will be called to speak. Everyone will sit by in the midst of a plague and you will have to pick up a spear and thrust it into the heart of the problem causing it. God's people will be mowed down by evil, and you will have to cast a stone in its temple. Those around you will be hungry and only you will have the Bread of Life to give them. You won't be comfortable, you will sweat, your life may be put in jeopardy, you will have to make difficult decisions, you will fall, you may have to abandon those you care about, you may have to give up everything, you may have to do things that make no sense, and trust completely on God to take care of you, but in the end when you are successful, God will extend His covenant of shalom to you and He did to Pinchas.

