

# Ohr Yosef Giving vs Taking Pinchas p1

The Parsha begins with the zeal of Pinchas. The Torah explains how he stopped the plague that threatened to destroy Klal Yisroel.

## **Bilaam's Nefarious Scheme**

After Bilaam was unsuccessful in cursing the Yidden, he concocted a plan to destroy them, by causing them to commit cardinal sins.

The Goyim (Moav and Midian) sent their daughters to seduce the Jews, and to convince them to commit idolatry.

The idol of the time was called "Baal Peor", and had a unique form of religious service. The worshipper would defecate in front of the idol, and in some instances, even wipe his bottom on the idol's nose (Sanhedrin 64a). This disgusting ritual has a deeper connotation as we shall presently endeavor to explain.

At first, the plan looked like it was a failure. The Jews categorically refused to worship an idol under any circumstances. However, when he reached a certain level of lust, they convinced the Jews by saying, "Just uncover yourself before the idol. How bad can it be?" Eventually, when the poor fellow was in the throes of desire, and could no longer contain himself, the woman convinced him to actually bow down to it.

As the plan began to materialize, more Jews fell into the trap, and the Jewish government began judging (and killing) the idolators.

The final nail in the coffin was when Zimri, the prince of the tribe of Shimon, publicly consorted with the Midianite princess herself. At this point, all semblance of normality broke down, and a plague began to devour the Jewish nation.

Pinchas ignored the fact that Zimri was much older and more venerable than he was. He said a prayer, and stepped up to the occasion. He entered the house of harlotry, and physically skewered both the prince and the princess. At the moment of their death, the plague miraculously stopped in its tracks.

As a reward for his courageous act, Pinchas was given the gift of Kehuna, for himself and all of his descendants. In fact, some Midrashim say that he became Eliyahu Hanavi, and remains alive (in angelic form) to this day.

### **Equivalence of זנות, Harlotry and עבודה זרה, Idolatry**

It is interesting to note that the Torah seems to relate these two transgressions very closely. Whenever the Torah discusses the prohibition of intermarriage, the next sentence states that they will

now fall into Avoda Zara. At every mention of this Midianite women debacle, the Torah connects the two.

We see that Bilaam intended that one would cause the other. But what is really the connection?

Also, why did they choose such a disgusting act of service to their idol? What sense does this make?

### **Giving vs. Taking**

What is the most glaring difference between marriage and znus (harlotry). Marriage is giving, and znus is taking. In marriage, it's all about, "What can I do for you?", "How can I help you?", while znus is about lust and desire. "I want", "I need".

On a deeper level, marriage is about the melding, as in the nullification of the self to the other. Marriage is altruistic and self-effacing. Whereas lust and harlotry are self-indulgent and narcissistic.

Hashem is the epitome of goodness and generosity, and His commandments reflect this ideal (see Sotah 14a). When one connects to Hashem, one is imbued with an inner spirit that pushes them to help and care for others.

Avoda Zara is the opposite of Hashem. It aggrandizes the self versus the other. In olden times, when they were able to manipulate the forces of nature through idolatry, the aim was to have the entire universe serve ME.

Bilaam was certain that the harlotry would feed the ego and narrow-mindedness of the people, and thus make them more receptive to Avoda Zara, and less inclined to connect to Hashem.

The epitome of this self-centeredness was Baal Peor. Every normal person understands that we flush the toilet after doing our business. [It is, in fact, a positive Mitzva in the Torah to flush, and one should flush with this intention.] Only the most egotistical maniac could possibly leave their feces in the face of others. This is what this Avoda Zara was teaching. Destroying this horrific idol and its repulsive means of service is a most noble endeavor.

Similarly, we must negate the inner feelings of selfishness that the Yetzer Hara introduces to our ego, and realize our true purpose as a Yid is to be a benefactor, rather than a user. Whenever we are loving, charitable and noble, we are emulating Hashem, and connecting to Him on an inner level.

מְזִמּוֹר לְתוֹדָה הָרִיעוּ לָהּ כָּל הָאֲרָץ...

כִּי טוֹב הַשֵּׁם ... וַיִּיל דַּעַר אֵיבְעֶרשְׁטֶעַר אִיז גִּיט...