

“PINCHAS ... TURNED AWAY MY WRATH...” (BAMIDBAR 25:11)

Where did Pinchas get the fortitude and resolve?

ZIMRI AND KASBI BAS TZUR committed an act of public immorality, openly defying Moshe and Aharon. *B'nei Yisrael* were dying by the thousands in a plague of Divine retribution. Pinchas boldly summoned his strength and courage, and plunged forward into the hostile crowd, spear in hand, and put Zimri and Kasbi to death as dictated by *halacha*. Where did Pinchas get the fortitude and resolve to go forth on this dangerous mission?

Our sages (Shmos Rabbah 33:5) tell us that Pinchas himself did not think he could succeed. The Midrash portrays Pinchas as wrestling with himself internally, saying, “I can’t do it! Two can defeat one, but can one person defeat two?” While he debates, the plague rages on, and Hashem tells Pinchas, “I know what’s in your heart, and I know that you have the ability to do this task.”

It appears that Pinchas was only able to ascertain his ability because he focused on the fact that Hashem knew the truth. Although his entire being was burning with the flame of zeal and self sacrifice for Hashem and his Torah, Pinchas simply could not realize that it was within his capacity to act, until he concentrated on the knowledge that Hashem was aware of what he could and could not do. How did this concept help Pinchas decide if it was achievable? Believing that Hashem knows his capabilities should not have enlightened Pinchas at all about those capabilities.

Hashem has provided us in His Torah with tools to understand ourselves

Hashem has endowed man with a mind and personality of tremendous depth, having layers of subconscious thought and emotion that are often hidden from our conscious intellect. Yet Hashem has provided us in His Torah with tools to understand ourselves, to fathom the murky depths of our being and spotlight the true feelings that lie beneath it all. Here we see one technique: Focusing on the fact that Hashem knows the answer. Despite any attempt we may make to deceive ourselves, when we internalize this concept that Hashem is omniscient, we can no longer fool ourselves. Deep down, we really know the truth. Subconsciously, our *Yetzer Harah* tries to “sweep it under the rug,” to hide it under rationalizations and excuses. “We can bury the truth and no one will know!” he whispers. However, once we focus on the fact that the undeniable truth is known to Hashem, this subconscious fraud of the *Yetzer Harah* is exposed for what it is – a shameful cover up. We come face to face with the truth, merely because we know it exists, known to Hashem in His infinite wisdom.

Hashem is aware of our deepest, most hidden thoughts

Obviously, Pinchas’s dilemma was not similar to our problems of excuses and self deception. He had a question of relying on miraculous intervention to succeed in his task. He doubted that he was on a sufficient level of faith to deserve such miracles. Using this technique of “Hashem knows the truth,” he was able to perceive that deep inside, he knew that indeed he was on that lofty plateau of *bitachon* and therefore able to succeed with miraculous assistance. We can nevertheless derive a lesson, on our level, in how we can understand ourselves and our true emotions by contemplating that Hashem is aware of our deepest, most hidden thoughts and feelings. By utilizing this method, we can see through the darkness of our own psyche, acknowledge the truth, and serve Hashem to our fullest abilities, with zeal and love.