

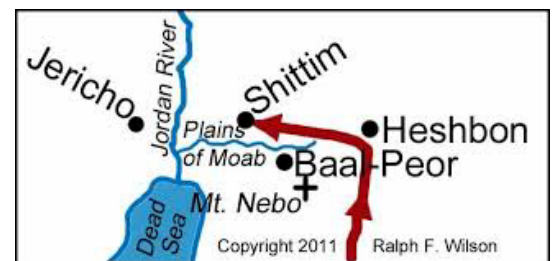
## The Zeal of Pinchas (Phinehas)

*<sup>10</sup> Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, <sup>11</sup> “Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the kohen has turned away My anger from Bnei-Yisrael because he was very zealous for Me among them, so that I did not put an end to Bnei-Yisrael in My zeal. <sup>12</sup> So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of shalom! <sup>13</sup> It will be for him and his descendants a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei-Yisrael” (Nu. 25:10-13).*

It is advantageous to read/review the context of the beginning *Parashat Pinchas* when the *Torah* celebrates *Pinchas*’ zeal. Israel falls prey to the sin of immorality and idolatry. In last week’s *Torah* Reading (*Balak*) the gentile prophet Balaam was unable to curse Israel even though Moabite King Balak offered him a great reward. After blessing Israel in Numbers 24 Balaam and Balak depart from each other without Balaam getting any reward: “<sup>25</sup> Then Balaam got up and went and returned to his own place, and Balak went on his way” (Numbers 24:25). That was not the end of Balaam’s influence and evil doings. *Yeshua* elucidates on the doctrine/teaching of Balaam to the Messianic Congregation at Pergamum: “<sup>14</sup> But I have a few things against you. You have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who was teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before Bnei-Yisrael, to eat food sacrificed to idols and to commit sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14). Evidently, between Numbers 24 and Numbers 25 Balaam figured out a way to collect his reward from Balak. Balaam advised the Moabites how to entice the people of Israel into grave sin with prostitutes and idolatry. Since he could not curse Israel directly, he came up with a plan for Israel to bring the curse upon them. Balak followed Balaam’s advice, and Israel fell into sin, worshiping Baal of Peor and committing fornication with Midianite women. For this God plagued them, and 24,000 people died. This is way more people than the potential casualties of a war with Moab! Moshe refers to the evil work of Balaam: “...because they hired against you Balaam son of Beor from Petor of Aram-naharaim to curse you. <sup>6</sup> But Adonai your God refused to listen to Balaam, and Adonai your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because He loves you. (Deuteronomy 23:5b-6). In the Psalms we read: “<sup>28</sup> Then they yoked themselves to Baal of Peor, and ate the sacrifices of dead things. <sup>29</sup> So they provoked Him with their deeds, and a plague broke out among them. <sup>30</sup> But Phinehas stood up and intervened, so the plague was stopped. <sup>31</sup> It was credited to him as righteousness, from generation to generation forever” (Psalm 106:28-31). Let us review this context:

### **Moabite Seduction and Phineas Arises**

*<sup>25</sup> <sup>1</sup> While Israel was staying in Shittim, the people began to have immoral sexual relations with women from Moab. <sup>2</sup> Then they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, so the people were eating, and bowing down before their gods. <sup>3</sup> When Israel became bound to Baal of Peor, the anger of Adonai grew hot against Israel. <sup>4</sup> Adonai said to Moses, “Seize all the ringleaders and hang them before Adonai facing the sun, so that Adonai’s fierce anger may be turned away from Israel.” <sup>5</sup> So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you, kill your men who have been joining themselves to Baal of Peor.” <sup>6</sup> Then behold, a man from Bnei-Yisrael came and brought a Midianite woman to his brothers before the eyes of Moses and of the whole assembly of Bnei-Yisrael, while they were weeping at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting! <sup>7</sup> When Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron the kohen saw it, he arose from the midst of the assembly, took a spear in his hand, <sup>8</sup> and went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced them through—both the Israelite man and the woman’s belly. Then the plague among Bnei-Yisrael was stopped. <sup>9</sup> However, 24,000 were dead because of the plague!*



Based on this reading, we do not know exactly what moved Phinehas son of Eleazar son of Aaron to do this. *Adonai* pronounced an edict (a death sentence) that all the ringleaders were to be hanged and a command to kill them had been issued (verses 4-5). But in our *Parashah* for this week *Adonai* identifies *Pinchas*’ motivation as the ‘*Zeal of Adonai*’ (verse 10). A song comes to mind, from the early days of Integrity Music: ♪ *The zeal of God has consumed me it burns within my soul. A driving force that cannot be stopped, a fire that cannot be quenched: O*

*hallelujah, hallelujah. O hallelujah, halle, halle, hallelujah... ♪* The Messianic Song “I Am Zealous Over Zion” also speaks of this type of godly zeal. Because Phinehas moved in the Zeal of Adonai his generations obtain an everlasting blessing: “<sup>12</sup>So now say: See, I am making with him a covenant of shalom! <sup>13</sup>It will be for him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood—because he was zealous for his God and atoned for Bnei-Yisrael” (Numbers 25:12-13 and Psalm 106:31).

The 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Numbers ends with a judgment on the Midianites (and by implication, the Moabites also). From this time forward Israel is to “*deal with the Midianites as enemies and strike them...*”

*<sup>14</sup>The name of the Israelite man killed with the Midianite woman was Zimri son of Salu, a prince of a Simeonite ancestral household. <sup>15</sup>The name of the executed Midianite woman was Cozbi, daughter of Zur—he was a tribal head of an ancestral house in Midian. <sup>16</sup>Adonai spoke to Moses saying, <sup>17</sup>“Deal with the Midianites as enemies and strike them. <sup>18</sup>For they have been enemies to you in their deceptions of you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a Midianite prince, their sister who was slain on the day of the plague on account of the Peor incident.” (Numbers 25:14-18)*

What is exactly meant by zeal? The dictionary renders the meaning of zeal as: *fervent or enthusiastic devotion, often extreme or fanatical in nature, as to a religious movement, political cause, ideal, or aspiration; fervor for a person, cause, or object; eager desire or endeavor; ardor.* It is a really good thing to have *fervent or enthusiastic devotion, eager desire, endeavor and ardor* for the Almighty. There are many significant examples of Godly Zeal in Scripture:

### **Elijah**

*<sup>9</sup>When he arrived there at the cave, he spent the night there. Then behold, the word of Adonai came to him, and He said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” <sup>10</sup>“I have been very *zealous* for Adonai-Tzva’ot,” he said, “for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and slain Your prophets with the sword—and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it...<sup>10</sup>“I have been very *zealous* for Adonai-Tzva’ot” (1 Kings 19:9-10, 14a)*

### **David**

*<sup>10</sup>For *zeal* for Your House consumed me—the insults of those who insulted You have fallen on me (Psalm 69:10)*

### **Yeshua**

*His disciples remembered that it is written, “*Zeal* for your House will consume Me!” (John 2:17)*

### **Messianic Communities**

*<sup>19</sup>Those whom I love, I rebuke and discipline. Therefore, be *zealous* and repent...<sup>22</sup>He who has an ear, let him hear what the Ruach is saying to Messiah’s communities (Revelation 3:19, 22)*

How are we to demonstrate the Zeal of Adonai in our day? I believe we have to demonstrate righteous zeal in our life, in our jurisdiction and in our Messianic community. Peradventure it might be credited to us as righteousness, from generation to generation forever. We who are the recipients of the Promised Land in our day must also be cognizant of the enemy’s plan to distract us as followers of ‘The Way’ by getting us to delve into self-gratification and lust: “*For the time that has passed was sufficient for you to carry out the desire of the pagans—living in indecency, lusts, drunken binges, orgies, wild parties, and lawless idolatries (1 Peter 4:3)*” and the consequent cursing of our own selves. The doctrine of Balaam has been a very effective weapon against Believers, and it has not lost any of its effectiveness in our day. We must carefully embrace the antidote and be inoculated with the Zeal of Adonai to eliminate our possible indulgence into self-gratification and lust forever, and *even more as day approaches* (Hebrews 10:25, 2 Thessalonians 2:2). Shabbat Shalom!