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God's Eternal Covenant with Phinehas

25: 10-18

God's eternal covenant with Phinehas DIG: What would have happened if Phinehas had either waited several days, or even not cared at all and did nothing? Why was Phinehas rewarded for his actions? Define zealous. How did Phinehas make atonement for Isra'el? Why are Zimri and Cozbi now remembered?

REFLECT: What covenant of peace do you have with Messiah (John 14:27)? How does the action of Phinehas encourage you to act when you see blasphemy against your God? What does it mean to be zealous for the Lord in today's culture? How can this story of Isra'el's seduction aid you in this struggle?

Parashah 40: Phinehas (dark-skinned) 25:10 to 29:40

(See my commentary on Deuteronomy, to see link [click Af](#) - Parashah)

The Key People are Moshe, Phinehas, Zimri, Cozbi, the Midianites, Eleazar, the Israelites who were counted a second time and listed clan by clan, Caleb and Joshua. This portion is named for **Phinehas**, the **zealous** grandson of **Aaron the high priest**, who turned aside **God's anger** by publicly impaling two flagrant **transgressors** of Torah. Without trial or due process, **Phinehas** rose up as a court of one. **He** was the witness, judge, and executioner. Yet, rather than being punished for **his zeal**, **Phinehas** was awarded an **eternal covenant of peace**.

The Scenes are on the plains of Mo'av by the Jordan across from Jericho; entrance into the Tabernacle, and a mountain in the Abarim range.

The Main Events include Phinehas becoming High Priest because of his zeal, another census count for the army, land inheritance that was to be based on numbers, the Levites receiving no land, a note that the first generation had all died except for Caleb and Joshua, Joshua declared the new leader to succeed Moshe, and regular and festival offerings spelled out.

Phinehas made atonement for the people of Isra'el.

In this parashah, we find ourselves back in the setting of the camp of **Isra'el**. **The Guardian and Protector of Isra'el** has just thwarted a potentially major catastrophe in the spiritual realm by stifling **the curses** of **Balak** and causing **the** evil **Balaam** to utter **blessings** toward **Isra'el**. Now **ADONAI** has some unfinished business to attend to in order to fully prepare the wilderness generation to take possession of the Land.



The zeal of Phinehas (25:10-11): **ADONAI** said to Moshe, “Phinehas the son of El’azar, the son of Aaron the high priest, 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.”

The word that is translated as jealousy is the Hebrew word *kana*, a word that can also be understood as **zeal**. In fact, the anti-Roman, Jewish revolutionaries of the First Century were referred to by the same word: **the Zealots**. First Century Judea and Galilee were filled with political and religious **zealots** who regularly resorted to violence to advance their purposes. In many ways, **their** fervor and ruthlessness is comparable to religious fundamentalists, who trouble our modern world with terrorism and bloodshed.

Prior to **his** encounter with **Messiah on the road to Damascus** (see the commentary on **Acts, to see link click [Bc - Sha’ul Turns from Murder to Messiah](#)**), **Rabbi Sha’ul** pursued believers with a **Phinehas-like zeal**. As **he** wrote to **the Philippians**, **he** mentioned **his** history as a persecutor of the believers as evidence of **his zeal for God** (**Philippians 3:6**). It is far better to emulate **the Master** who was **zealous** for **His Father’s house** (see the commentary on **[The Life of Christ Bs - The First Cleansing of the Temple](#)**) and **His Father’s** will. It is good to be **zealous** for **God**, but we must be careful in case we misplace that **zeal**. We should be **zealous** for the godly standards of **the**

Kingdom of God; we should be **zealous** for **the Word of God**; and we should be **zealous** for our **Lord**. This means ruthlessly rooting out from our lives those things that lead us to **sin** and compromise. After **Phinehas** had stopped the plague, **Ha'Shem** instructed **Moshe** to carry out **His zeal** against **Midian**. Because **the Midianites** had conspired to seduce **the sons of Isra'el**, **Moses** was told to lead **Isra'el** in a war against **them**. We need to exercise this same type of vigilance in our war against the flesh. For **Messiah gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good mitzvot (Titus 2:14).**⁵⁶³

God's eternal covenant (25:12-13a): To protect **Phinehas** from being punished for taking the law into his own hands, **the LORD** announced: **I am giving him my eternal covenant of shalom**. This saved **him** from any personal revenge, it also served to vindicate **him** of any legal wrongdoing. So, **YHVH made a covenant with him and his descendants after him with an eternal priesthood**. **God** made another dynastic covenant with **King David** and **his descendants** (see the commentary on [the Life of David Ct - The LORD's Covenant with David](#)). There, **God** promised that **the descendants of David** will occupy **the throne of Isra'el forever**; there will never be another family who will rightfully usurp this honor. **The prophet Jeremiah** spoke about both of these families, **the royal family** and **the priestly family**. **For this is what ADONAI says: David will never fail to have a man to sit on the throne of Isra'el, nor will the Levitical priests ever fail to have a man to stand before me continually to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to present sacrifices (Jer 33:17-18).**

Thus, through **the prophet**, **God** reiterates the fact that **His covenants** with **David** and **Phinehas** (see the commentary on [Ezra-Nehemiah Bh - Ezra Returns from Babylon: Ezra's Genealogy](#)) will never be broken. In fact, a line of **Phinehas' descendants**, called **the Zadokites**, will be given a superior role in the ministry of **the Temple** during **the Kingdom** (see the commentary on [Jeremiah Gs - God Shows a Vision of the Messianic Temple: the descendants of Phinehas](#)). Today, it seems to us that there is no one left from either the line of **David** or **the sons of Levi** to fulfill **God's covenants**. However, we need to remember that **the houses of David** and **Phinehas** have never stopped existing, even though we don't know for certain who the proper **descendants** are. The important thing is that **God** certainly remembers! It is not a problem for **Him** to sovereignly maintain **His covenants**.⁵⁶⁴

The broken Vav and Yeshua (25:12): **I am giving him my eternal covenant of shalom, a priesthood forever. Soferut (the laws concerning the scribal arts of writing Seferi**

Torah) requires that all Hebrew letters be well formed; that is, no letters can touch other letters and no letters can be malformed, broken, or otherwise illegible.

However, there is a strange exception to these rules regarding the Vav that appears in the word **shalom** in **Numbers 25:12**. The Vav is broken, this is the only place in the Torah that we see such an abnormality. What is the reason for this? The Vav is a picture of the brokenness of **the Messiah** for our ultimate deliverance. How so? Well, since the Vav (the number 6) represents the number of Man, the broken Vav represents **a man** that is broken. In this particular verse, **the man** has been broken for the sake of a **covenant** of **shalom** that brought atonement to **Isra'el** . . . a clear picture of **the man Yeshua Messiah**, our eternal **High Priest**.

Phinehas made atonement (25:13b-15): The **priests** and **Levites** were responsible for guarding **the Tabernacle** against any illegitimate entry, be it inadvertent or intentional, and had the responsibility of killing trespassers. Here, however, **Phinehas** killed **a sinner** in the camp, not a would-be trespasser into **the Tabernacle**. Nevertheless, **his** action was quite similar to the responsibility of **the priesthood**. **The priest** represented **God** before **the people**. So, **his body** needed to be unblemished, to symbolize the perfection of **ADONAI**. **His wife** and **children** needed to be of exemplary character, so that **they** did not tarnish **his** reputation (see the commentary on **Leviticus Do - Prohibited Practices for the Priests**). In **his** personal life, **the priest** needed to personify the character of **YHVH**. And that was exactly what **Phinehas** did, **he was zealous on behalf of his God**. In other words, because **Phinehas** executed **the sinner**, expressing so clearly and visibly **Ha'Shem's** own **anger**, that **anger** was turned away. **Phinehas made atonement for the people of Isra'el (25:13b)**. To make atonement (Hebrew: *kipper*) is the usual phrase to describe the effect of the sacrifice (**Leviticus 1:4, 4:20 and 5:16**). In normal circumstances, the animal died in place of the guilty sinner; here **the guilty sinners themselves** were put to death, and, consequently, **they** became the sacrifice.

Not only did **the priest** represent **God** before **the people**; **he** also represented **the people** before **God**. **He** attempted to be **the ideal Israelite**. All **the Israelites** were called to be **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6)**, but **the priest** was expected to display true holiness in **his** life. This idea of **the priest** representing **the people** before **God** explains **the covenant of peace** made with **Phinehas**. **Isra'el** had broken **the covenant** **she** had agreed to at Mount Sinai (see the commentary on **Exodus El - The Sinai Covenant Oath of Allegiance**) by **worshiping the gods of Mo'ab** (see **Ea - Taking a Stand for God: The idolatry of Israelite men**). **Phinehas** had restored **the Sinai Covenant** with **his** deed, and was therefore rewarded with **the covenant** of an eternal **priesthood**.⁵⁶⁵ This suggests that the office of **priest** would now be channeled through

Phinehas and not through any other grandson of **Aaron (First Chronicles 6:4-15)**.

These two verses give the names and families of **the** two slain **sinner**s. **They** were perhaps not given until now because insertion of **them** earlier would have deflected the main point here, which was not connected with the specific identity of **the pair**, but **their sin**, its consequences, and **Phinehas'** reaction.⁵⁶⁶ **The name of the man from Isra'el who was killed was Zimri the son of Salu, leader of one of the clans from the tribe of Simeon (25:14)**. As the great pride of **Eleazar** must have swelled over the actions of **his son** that day, so there must have been extraordinary shame among the members of **Zimri's** family on realizing what that promising young man had done. **Zimri** (Hebrew: meaning *praiseworthy*) had been named in praise of **ADONAI**. However, **he** is now remembered as the one who nearly destroyed **his people** with **his** brazen, immoral attack on the pure worship of **YHVH**. With **his** name turned on its head, **he** serves as a memorial to destruction. **The name of the woman from Midian who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Tzur, and he was head of the people in one of the clans of Midian (25:15)**. Her name is likely another example of the names deliberately changed by **Isra'el** because of the contempt in which **she** is held. **Cozbi** means *My Lie* or *My Deception*. **She** stands forever memorialized as a prime example of the deception of the allure of pagan worship. **Verse 18** speaks of **her** as **the daughter of the leader from Midian**. **She** was likely a high priestess of **her** religion, a prototype of **Jezebel** (see the commentary on **Elijah and Elisha As - The Wrath of Jezebel**) who would later be instrumental in bringing **Ba'al** and **Asherah** worship into the center of the life of **Isra'el**.

Attack the Midianites (25:16-18): Because of **their** active participation in the seduction of **the sons of Isra'el** with **the Moabites (31:16)**, **the Midianites** were also put under **the curse of God** and afterwards were to be treated as enemies. **They** had been in league with **Balak** from the beginning of the confrontation and became the objects of wrath to declare the glory of the name of **ADONAI** (see **[Ep - The War Against Midian](#)**).⁵⁶⁷ **ADONAI said to Moshe, "Treat the Midianites as enemies and attack them; because they are treating you as enemies by the trickery they used to deceive you in the Peor incident and in the affair of their sister Cozbi, the daughter of the leader from Midian, the woman who was killed on the day of the plague in the Peor incident."** This is in keeping with the Abrahamic Covenant: **I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse (Genesis 12:3a)**. A later campaign against **the Midianites** would be led by **Gideon** during the period of **the Judges** (see the commentary on **[Judges Bb - Gideon's Victory Over the Midianites](#)**). Indeed, **Isaiah 9:4** likens the victories of **the Messiah** to **Gideon's** triumph over **Midian**.

Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are not only a gracious **God** of love, **You** are also a righteous and just **Father** who delights in blessing **His** children! **You** are a perfect balance of complete love, **God is love. Now whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (First John 4:16c)**; and total holiness: **One (Seraphim) called out to another, and said: Holy, holy, holy, is ADONAI-Tzva'ot! The whole earth is full of His glory (Isaiah 6:3).**

Your love is so great and **You** want all to come to you to be saved. **You** call out to the crowds to come to **You (Matthew 11:28-29)**. **You** desire people to respond to **Your** call with a yes, they will love and follow **You**. **You** wisely give the choice to come humbly to **You** or to remain separated from **You**. **You** never grab someone and tell them they are chosen to do something. Instead **You** call to them to forsake their evil ways and **return to ADONAI, so He may have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7)**. **Phinehas**, out of love for **You**, chose to protect **Your** holy **Name** and **You** graciously awarded **him** with an eternal **covenant of peace**.

Ruach Ha'Kodesh, please help me to speak up against wrong. And when I do speak up for **You**, please protect me for the world thinks that there is no wrong and everyone can do what they want. But **Your Word** declares that is not so! Thank **You** that when I stand for what is right and just, and told that I am wrong, in **the Spirit**, I focus on the brevity of trials on earth and the eternal joy of home in heaven with you! **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. In your holy **Name** and power of **His** resurrection. Amen