

DARE TO CARE

by Rabbi Label Lam

And it will be to him and his descendants after him an eternal covenant of priesthood because he zealously took up G-d's cause and made atonement for Israel. (Bamidbar 25:13)

In one courageous moment Pinchus earned an eternal contract for himself and his children. This was no incentive package. It was payment for a job well done. Well, what had he done? How was he able to earn such great credit from a single deed?

It's admittedly a bad joke but it may help illustrate what the case of Pinchus is not like. A schul Rabbi and an Israeli Egged bus driver are called before the heavenly court upon the occasion of their having parted this world. The bus driver's life is made to appear upon the computer screen. The interviewing agent hums and haws and evaluates. Afterward a door is thrown open with a glowing light of love that embraces the driver lovingly as he enters. Now the Rabbi confidently takes his place next before the screen that shows his life in review. The angelic agent sadly shakes his head and reveals the opening to another door. Streaks of intensely hot fire jump forth to grab the poor fellow. The Rabbi shouts in protest, "Why did that simple bus driver get preferential treatment. He just drove a bus but I was a Schul Rabbi and the leader of a precious and loyal flock!" He is given the following explanation, "Rabbi, you must understand that when you gave your speeches- your sermons people became extremely tired and fell asleep, but when that Egged bus driver started driving his bus ooohhhh everyone began to pray!"

In this crazy account the funny point is that one is considered to have achieved and is credited so due to secondary results he had no idea he had inspired while another's good and noble intentions and deeds are deeply discounted. By the incident involving Pinchus the opposite forces may have been be more at play.

The Mishne in Chapters of the Fathers makes the following amazing claim, "All who exert themselves for the community should do so for the sake of heaven, for then the ancestors will assist them, and their righteousness will endure forever. And you, I will bestow upon you as great a reward, as though you had done it" What does this mean?

The Maharal explains that there is universe of difference when one performs a deed for some local immediate concern or if one has in mind the total and eternal mission of G-d and Israel. Just like the patriarchs were the architects of the entire building and share in every detail of the future accomplishments of their children throughout history so too any later personality that has in his mind

that even his small part should have a positive affect upon the entirety of the edifice will be credited as if he too had created the whole thing, even though he had only worked on one part of a part of one floor and even though his part was hardly his own doing. Wow! Working for the community can have some incredible benefits and dividends. One can borrow from the bank account of the patriarchs and with the correct mind-set be credited with accomplishments far beyond one's individual means.

The verse reveals that Pinchus was granted unending generations of Priesthood - holy public service, because his action was not a response of anger, personal and passionate or of zealous rage. Rather he purely intended to take up G-d's cause and to achieve atonement for the Children of Israel. Since he was focused, in that single deed, on defending the honor of the Almighty and the welfare of the Nation of Israel, he was rewarded with a gift of endless opportunity, available to those who dares to care! Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.