

# HEALING WONDERS

*by Rabbi Label Lam*

And behold! A man of the Children of Israel came and brought the Midianite woman near to his brothers before the eyes of Moshe and before the entire assembly of the Children of Israel; and they were weeping at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. Pinchas, son of Elazar son of Aaron the Kohen stood up from amid the assembly and he took a spear in his hand. He followed the Israelite man into the tent and pierced them both, the Israelite man and the woman into her stomach- and the plague was halted from upon the Children of Israel. Those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. HASHEM spoke to Moshe saying, "Pinchas son of Elazar son of Aaron the Kohen turned back My wrath from upon the Children of Israel, when he zealously avenged My vengeance among them, so I did not consume the Children of Israel with My vengeance." Therefore say, "Behold I am giving to him My covenant of peace! (Pinchas 25:6-13)

What did Pinchas do to make himself worthy of a "peace prize"? This was certainly not an act that had any overt gestures of what we would consider peaceful. Just the opposite is true! It was violent and cruel to the untutored eye. What's the meaning of his heavenly award?

Let us approach this "crime scene" like forensic scientists and with benefit 20/20 hindsight, deconstruct the incident to discover what happened. I believe we may be missing an important piece of peace! It's a little bit of a dirty word in the world of relative values and where the only absolute is that there is no absolute, but it's worth mentioning here because it may be the most important part of the puzzle. That explosive word is "truth"- yes "TRUTH"! There I said it! Pinchas exposed a serious point of truth while all around confusion prevailed. Certain sacred boundaries were crossed and blurred. Nobody knew quite what to do about it! A plague was afoot. The congregation was consumed in a cloud of chaos. Pinchas surgically exposed that truth - no puns intended- he lanced the boil and peace triumphed. Rabbi Samson, Raphael Hirsch ztl. wrote that peace is a descendant of truth and not the other way around. That might just be the hidden factor of peace- the obvious truth- the pink elephant in the middle of the room that nobody wants to talk about!

There's a story about a Baal Teshuvah- a returnee to Torah life who was living in Israel. He had accepted upon himself the full and complete lifestyle and was experiencing the fullness of community life. He had one issue though. He wanted badly to go gain the extra purity associated with going to a Mikvah like many others and yet he was prevented from doing so, not by anyone else but rather by himself. You see, he had a tattoo on his arm, but not just a tattoo but a nasty

image. It didn't say "MOM". So he was ultra-concerned that nobody should find out about this ugly reminder of his past. Looking at him nobody would or could ever suspect that he bore this grotesque image on his arm.

As Rosh HaShana approached wanted badly to visit the Mikvah and so he began to strategize and scout out how it might safely be done without his secret becoming exposed. He figured out the optimal time when the Mikvah would be least crowded and how he would be able walk along a wall from the shower to the pool with a towel and walk back albeit awkwardly but with no one being the wiser.

The great day came and the room was a little busier than he planned and so he nervously hurried along a little faster than he should have given the amount of soap and water on the floor. Then his feet when flying and his towel too that covered as his arm because he needed that hand to break his fall. The busy and bustling room was stricken silent. In that sudden quiet he understood that his darkest secret was exposed and there was no way to put the genie back in the bottle.

He was humiliated beyond belief. Nothing anyone could say or do could possibly remedy his pathetic situation. Then hobbling along came an elderly Jew who while helping him gently off the floor pointed to the numbers etched on his arm and declared empathically, "This was my gehinom (hell)! Most probably that was your gehinom! Let us go into the Mikvah together!

We see that when even the most brutal truth is shockingly revealed, peace can begin to work its **healing wonders**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and [Torah.org](https://torah.org).