**[What is My Purpose? Parshat Pinhas](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/what-is-my-purpose-parshat-pinhas)**

Recently I received this question:

*I am struggling with something
...I have done a lot of things in my life but I still don’t know what my purpose is. Do you have any thoughts about how to figure that out?*

What a wonderful and core question! Like many spiritual inquiries, an answer requires exploration at a number of levels:

From a traditional Jewish point of view, our purpose is to do our part in the purpose of creation in general, which is to reveal Divine Reality in the world. We participate in this singular goal, in turn, on two different levels:

First, we participate simply by existing.

Without doing anything in particular, even without having any knowledge of it, we are always already a part of the process of Divine revelation in the world; we cannot do otherwise. Our existence is part of Existence; we play the role in the unfolding of Reality that we are given, whether we understand it or not.

But, second, we can also participate *intentionally.*

The whole point of the spiritual path is not to merely play our role unconsciously, but to be active participants in the process, to become “partners with the Divine” in a sense. We do this by committing to a path of *Torah* and *avodah,* “learning and spiritual practice,” as well as *gemilut hasadim,* “acts of kindness.” With these there are both internal and external aspects; for example, doing the *mitzvah* of lighting Shabbat candles on Friday evening are an external example of *avodah,* while connecting to the Divine in meditation (*devakut*) would be an internal example.

There is also a way in which our *knowledge* of our participation in the purpose of Existence *unintentionally* can become part of how we participate *intentionally:*

Ordinarily, we tend to see our lives in relation to our own experience; we judge things based on how they look and seem to us. But when we understand that there is a deeper process going on that is beyond the scope of our mental maps and immediate perception, we can surrender to that Bigger Picture and practice dedicating *all* parts of our lives to the service of the One. This “sanctification of the ordinary,” and even sanctification of things we might consider unholy, is a core practice of Hasidism and it has the power to liberate us from the angst that can arise from the question of meaning and purpose, by transforming whatever we happen to be doing into a means toward Divine fulfillment.

All of this, however, is part of a *general* understanding of purpose, applicable equally to anyone who cares to ask the question. But there is also a level that is specific and unique to each individual:

There is a story that Rabbi Baer of Radoshitz once asked his *rebbe,* Rabbi Yaakov Yitzhak (the “Seer of Lublin”) to show him one general way to fulfill his purpose. The Seer answered:

“It is impossible to tell people one general way. One person fulfills their purpose through the teachings, another through prayer, another through fasting, still another through eating. Everyone should look within and see which way their heart draws them, and then choose that path with all their strength.”

There are two key points to this teaching. The first and more obvious one is that our purpose is given to us partially by our inclinations; we don’t need to look externally for our purpose, because we are already drawn toward some things and away from others.

The second and less obvious point is that, after you discern your own inclinations, you must *choose* them as your purpose. Your own power of choice is not something separate and unrelated to the discovery of your purpose; we must use our full power of decision and commitment to say, *“I choose such-and-such as my purpose.”*

We can see this truth hidden in the story of Moses and the Burning Bush. On the surface, it looks like God simply gives him his purpose by telling him to free the Israelites. But actually, Moses already knew about the suffering of his brethren in Egypt; God wasn’t telling him anything new. On this deeper level, the “burning bush” is really a symbol of his own waking up to the power of decisiveness. This decisiveness certainly has an element that comes from beyond the self; Moses didn’t “choose” to be an Israelite brought up in the palace of Pharaoh. His situation was given. But, he still needed to *choose* his path with his whole being – that’s what it means to look into the fire of the burning bush; that’s what it means to be *commanded;* that’s what it means to discover your unique purpose: it is both *receiving and choosing in one.*

There is a hint in the *parshah:*

פִּֽינְחָ֨ס בֶּן־אֶלְעָזָ֜ר בֶּן־אַהֲרֹ֣ן הַכֹּהֵ֗ן הֵשִׁ֤יב אֶת־חֲמָתִי֙ מֵעַ֣ל בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל בְּקַנְא֥וֹ אֶת־קִנְאָתִ֖י בְּתוֹכָ֑ם וְלֹא־כִלִּ֥יתִי אֶת־בְּנֵֽי־יִשְׂרָאֵ֖ל בְּקִנְאָתִֽי׃

*“Pinhas, son of Elazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the Children of Israel with his passion for My passion among them, so that I did not consume the Children of Israel in My passion.”*

לָכֵ֖ן אֱמֹ֑ר הִנְנִ֨י נֹתֵ֥ן ל֛וֹ אֶת־בְּרִיתִ֖י שָׁלֽוֹם׃

*“Therefore I say, behold! I grant him My covenent of peace!”*

This strange passage comes in the aftermath of the episode in which the Midianite women seduce many Israelite men into an idolatrous orgy. At the hight of it, *Pinhas* grabs a spear and executes an Israelite man and Midianite women in sexual embrace, thus appeasing “God’s wrath” and saving many Israelite lives.

In our times, when violence resulting from religious zelotry is not something we tend to value, this passage can be a difficult vessel for spiritual teaching. But we must look below the surface:

What is idolatry?

In the Zohar and in many other Kabbalah texts, idolatry is understood not primarily as the worship of statues, but as the recognition of the sacred dimension in something as separate from its Divine Source. For example, let’s say you recognize the sacredness of a particular flower. Good! But then, a landscaper guy comes along and cuts it down with a weedwacker accidentally, and you murder the landscaper guy because he cut down your sacred flower. That would be idolatry, not because the flower isn’t sacred, but because in your mind you cut off the sacredness of the flower from the sacredness of human life; you made an “idol” out of the flower.

Similarly, just as there is a unity between the sacredness of all life, so there is a unity between the impulse we feel toward fulfilling our purpose and our own power to *decide*our purpose. If someone came along and told us our purpose (as cult leaders and ideologically extreme politicians will often do), and we were to just accept what they say unquestioningly, thereby negating our own Divine potential for judgment and decision, that too would idolatry; we would have “cut off” our impulse toward purpose from our own inner reality.

When *Pinhas* comes along and pierces the couple with his spear, he is “piercing” through false separation; he is, in that moment, choosing his purpose by “killing” the seductive force of idolatry, the tendnency to see our purpose as somehow outside of ourselves. This is why he is given the *brit shalom –* the “covenant of peace” – for such a “violent” act. Sometimes we too must “pierce through” our inertia, our inability to take this moment seriously, to take ourselves and our situation seriously, in order to formulate and realize our own unique and Divine purpose. In this way, we too can win the *brit shalom –* the inner peace that comes from bringing our potential into actuality and coming into harmony with the truth of who we really are.

Here is an exercise:

Sit in meditation with the question, “What am I drawn toward? What do I want to do? How do I want to live?” See what arises. Answers may not come right away. If this is the case, try asking prayerfully that an answer come. When answers do begin to come, see if you can choose one of the answers to work with as an affirmation of purpose. Make a dedication to it. If you find it difficult to commit, it may not be the right purpose. Or, you may simply be resistant to commitment! Only you can discern this; return to the question in your meditation until you receive a path to which you can commit.

If time goes by and you still don’t receive any satisfactory answers, *make this practice itself into your purpose,* temporarily. Dedicate yourself to finding the path that will serve as your purpose, and continue with inquiry as part of your daily practice. Don’t worry how long it takes; the dedication to the practice will bear its own fruit in time. Trust the process…

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***More on Pinhas…***

[**Questioning Your Mind – Parshat Pinhas**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/torah-of-awakening-teachings-408656/parshat-pinhas)
Today it seems that, once again, we are in a cultural and political crisis.

Beliefs and values seem to have clumped together into two opposing camps, each often accusing the other of the worst. It is a war, in a sense, because the prevailing belief is that if you hear the point of the other and empathize in any way, they might get the upper hand. So, the rule is, fight to win. Exaggerate (or invent) the failings of the other, so that they remain your enemy.

I wonder if it is possible for intelligence to pierce through this mind and emotion created illusion, just as the spear of *Pinhas*pierc​ed through *Zimri*and *Kozbi*(names which together mean the “song of falsehood”)? Can awareness prevail over the power of ideology, on a cultural level? Can we, not only as individuals, but as a movement in history, become more interested in questions than assertions?

It is true, questions can be endless, and sometimes action is required. If an arrow is stuck in your body, you don’t ask where the arrow came from, who made it, and so on; you remove it from your body and save your life.

But what about when the action we think is required isn’t based on a clear seeing of an arrow in your body, but on stories we believe in, stories we identify with, stories that our collective egos are invested in? It is then, perhaps, that the action required is a stepping back from acting to make a space for questions. It is then, perhaps, that the actions required would be actions aimed at awakening the *spirit of the question* in people.

Then, perhaps, is now.

I wonder: might we be able to ask questions that pierce through our most cherished beliefs about what is right and true, in order to clear a space for seeing without bias? Or, at least, might we be able to see our own bias?

I know, these are dangerous questions, and it is dangerous to promote the spirit of the question. Many in history have been killed for doing so. In the *haftora,*Elijah must have felt the danger and hopelessness of his mission in a similar way, when Jezebel vowed to have him killed for questioning the cult of Baal that the Israelites had adopted. Despondent, he left the world of people and went out into the wilderness to die.

But then an angel came to him and gave him food and drink – “get up and eat!” He ate and drank a little, then lay back down again to die. Then the angel gave him some more food: “You will need this for your journey ahead!” Then he seems to get super powers from the second meal and he walks for forty days and nights. Eventually he comes to a cave here he is shown a vision of the power of the Divine, manifesting as great winds, earthquakes and fires, and yet the Divine was not in the wind, the earth, or the fire. Where was It?

 ק֖וֹל דְּמָמָ֥ה דַקָּֽה *– Kol d’mama dakah – a still, small voice…*

Can we sense the Divine power in the fiery storms that are erupting today? Can we sense that we are being pushed by them, as the forces of evolution have always pushed life to transform, to hear what is *beneath*all those storms? Can the *kol d’mama dakah*actually be our own voice, arising out of the depths of stillness beneath our thoughts and feelings?

The angel is tapping you on the shoulder; she gives you the nourishment of the teachings and implores you: don’t run away from the storms, but don’t get caught up in them either! God is not in the storm, but there is a Divine potential of the storm – this crisis has a purpose, if we are willing to engage it. And that purpose could be: awakening out of the mind, out of the passionate beliefs, out of ideologies, out of polarization, and into the spirit of the question, into the spirit of openness, into the willingness to really look. Whether that is the purpose or not, is actually our choice.

Will you be part of the (r)evolution?

[**Freedom in Pain – Parshat Pinhas**](http://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/freedom-in-pain-parshat-pinhas)

There are really two different kinds of discomfort.

The first is like when you stub your toe. It happens suddenly, and once it happens, you're going to feel pain; there's no choice involved. The second is like when someone is talking your ear off, and you want to get away. The discomfort increases moment by moment, and you can get away any time you choose.

If you want to live an awakened life, if you want to be free, these two kinds of discomfort require two different responses. The first requires simple acceptance; there's no way to escape the intense pain once you stub your toe. The second requires conscious choice about when to stay in the discomfort and keep listening to the person talk at you, and when to simply walk away.

Yet for some reason, we often confuse these two situations. We can trick ourselves into thinking we're "trapped" by someone talking to us, and not realize that we have a choice. When we finally escape, we might be angry at the person: "How could they keep talking at me like that! How insensitive!" And yet, we could have left any time; we don't take the power that's ours, and instead blame someone outside ourselves for our experience.

Or, we lament and complain about some discomfort that we can't control, when we should really just accept it; it already happened, we have no control! So why be in conflict with it?

There's a hint of this in *Parshat Pinhas:*

צַ֚ו אֶת־בְּנֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵ֔ל וְאָֽמַרְתָּ֖ אֲלֵהֶ֑ם אֶת־קָרְבָּנִ֨י לַחְמִ֜י לְאִשַּׁ֗י רֵ֚יחַ נִֽיחֹחִ֔י תִּשְׁמְר֕וּ לְהַקְרִ֥יב לִ֖י בְּמֽוֹעֲדֽוֹ

*Command the children of Israel and say to them, “My offerings, My food for My fires, My satisfying aroma, you shall take care to offer Me in its special time…*

If you draw your awareness into your pain, it becomes לַחְמִ֜י לְאִשַּׁ֗י – *food for My fires –*that is, food for awareness, because awareness is strengthened through the practice of fully being present with whatever you feel the impulse to resist. That's the first kind of pain, like stubbing your toe.

That’s why the offering is called קָרְבָּנִ֨י – *My korban,* because *korban* means to “draw near.” The magic is that even though you are drawing your awareness into something unpleasant, the attitude of openness can transmute the pain into a connection with the Divine, with Reality, with our own being, which are all ultimately the same thing.

The second type of pain, as in the example of someone talking at you, is the רֵ֚יחַ נִֽיחֹחִ֔י –*pleasing aroma.* That's because there's a sweetness when you claim your own power to change your situation, and not blame others.

Our response to these different kinds of discomfort must be done בְּמֽוֹעֲדֽוֹ – *it its special time –* meaning, our response has to be in alignment with the reality of our situation. Is it time to simply accept, or is it time to act? Notice the inner tendency to lean away from your own power, or to lean into resisting what has already happened. Then, simply lean a bit the other way, and come back into balance.

Once, when Reb Yisrael of Rizhyn was sitting casually with his Hassidim and smoking his pipe, one of them asked, "Rebbe, please tell, me– how can I truly serve Hashem?"

"How should I know?" said the rebbe, "But I'll tell you, once there were two friends who broke the law and were brought before the king. The king was fond of them and wanted to acquit them, but he couldn't just let them off the hook completely.

"So, the king had a tight rope extended over a deep pit. He told the friends, 'If you can get to the other side of the pit on the tightrope, you can go free.' The first set his foot on the rope and quickly scampered across. The second called to his friend, 'How did you do it?'

"'How should I know?' said the first, 'But I'll tell you– when I started to fall toward one side, I just leaned a little to the other side...'"

Good Shabbos!

[**Piercing the Two Layers of Mind- Parshat Pin**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/piercing-the-two-layers-of-mind-parshat-pinkas)**has**
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***"Notein lo et briti shalom –
"I give him my covenant of peace.”***

​*Parshat Pinkhas* begins in the aftermath of a plague that God put on the Israelites, because they had been seduced by the Midianites into an idolatrous orgy. At its climax, The Israelite man *Zimri* and the Midianite woman *Kozbi* are engaged in sexual union in front of everyone, and the zealot *Pinkhas* comes along and kills them both by piercing them through with a spear, causing the punishing plague to subside. God then says in the opening of the *parsha,* that *Pinkhas* *“heishiv et khamati- turned back my wrath from upon the children of Israel- b’kano et kinati- when he avenged my vengeance”* or *“my jealousy. Therefore, hin’ni, check it out- notein lo et briti shalom- I give him my covenant of peace.”*

Woe, what is going on here. This sounds like the vengeful, jealous God that everyone loves to hate. What kind of a God is that, right? A God that’s jealous, a God that kills people and so on. And yet, in a sense, that’s actually perfectly true. From a certain point of view, God is a vengeful, jealous God that kills people. Not literally, of course, but this is scripture. It’s pointing to something spiritual in the language of the time it was written. So what is it pointing to?

There is a basis, or a foundation for everything you’re experiencing right now. Whether we’re talking about things that appear to be outside of you – like the sensory world, what you see, what you hear, or things that appear to be inside you, such as feelings or thoughts, everything is perceived only because of this miracle called consciousness. And in the field of your experience, everything you perceive is, in fact, made out of consciousness. So that thing that I see over there is nothing but consciousness, because seeing is a function of consciousness. And, in fact, the sense of “me” that sees the thing over there, this body/mind that I call me, is also something that I perceive, so it too is just a form of consciousness. So the thing I see and the me that sees are both forms of one consciousness.

And yet, as you know, most people have no sense of that at all. There’s just the sense of me over here in this body and that thing over there that I see. Why? Because we’re constantly framing our experience with language that reinforces the belief that things are objective and separate. The language we use refers to “me” and “that thing over there,” and so our thinking which is largely made out of language, is deeply conditioned with this assumption of separateness, even though our experience right now tells us otherwise. But to really see what our experience is telling us, we have to pierce a hole through the lie that’s created with our language.

And to do that takes a special effort because the language lie is two-ply. Just like good toilet paper. If you have only one-ply toilet paper, that doesn’t work too well. Good toilet paper has two layers of paper so that it doesn’t tear when you’re using it.

It’s the same with our minds- there’s two layers. The first layer is simply the fact that our minds are constantly going. Bla bla bla bla. It’s like a song that you get stuck in your head. Once that song is stuck, it just repeats over and over, because it’s created a groove in your nervous system. That’s why music is groovy. Dance music is always talking about “getting into the groove” and “making you move” because it’s playing on this tendency of the mind to get into *grooves* of thought patterns within which your mind *moves*. That’s the first layer you have to get through- the movement in the groove of constant thinking.

The other ply is the content of the groove- the nature of how language tends to work. How does language work? Well even right now as I talk about language, the words are creating the impression that language is this thing that “I” am talking about. So there’s the sense that “I” and the subject of this talk, language, are two separate things. This doesn’t get questioned unless we deliberately decide to question it, which is what we’re doing right now by the way, because it’s simply the background assumption of language and thinking- that there’s a me who thinks and talks, and there are things that the “me” thinks and talks about.

And yet we can, if we choose, notice that these words right now, as well as whatever concepts we’re talking about, as well as this body that’s talking, as well as the “you” that’s listening, are all *living within* and are *forms of* awareness. And as soon as we point this out, there can be this subtle but profound shift- and this is the shift into knowing that there’s only one thing going on. *Hashem Eloheinu Hashem Ekhad-* All Existence, all Being is not separate from *Eloheinu-* our own divinity, meaning consciousness, and *Hashem Ekhad-* All Existence is just this One thing that’s going on- consciousness in form. And how do you know this? Because you are *Sh’ma-* you are the listening, the perceiving, and nothing you perceive is separate from that.

Isn’t it funny that we tend to look for God, thinking we know the world but we have to find God, when in Reality, God is the only thing we really know? Meaning, we know that there’s Existence. And we know that the knowing and the Existence, are not separate. That’s *Hashem Ekhad;* that’s the Oneness of God right there. Or should we say, right here.

So if you choose to think in this very different, very counter-intuitive and yet very obvious kind of way, you can pierce through that ply of separateness almost instantly. Because even though it’s counterintuitive, it’s also really obvious. It’s really obvious that there’s only one Reality and this is it. How many Realities could there possibly be? Only one, because Reality just means whatever is. And it’s also totally obvious that you don’t have to go anywhere or do anything to find Reality, because there’s only ever one place to find it, and that’s always right now in your present moment experience.

So once you do that, and hopefully we just did it, the next step is to connect with the Presence of Being in form. Meaning, let your awareness really connect whatever is present, rather than continue with all that duality producing language. Just let yourself be present. This isn’t complicated- just notice what’s going on… and be conscious of your breathing. And in doing that, your mind effortlessly becomes quiet, and you pierce through the other ply- the layer of the constantly moving mind.

So once you’ve gotten through the two layers, and maybe you just have, Reality can be your friend, and the plague, so to speak, can be lifted. What’s the plague? It’s just the belief that you’re separate. And that’s why God can be thought of as jealous or vengeful. Not literally of course, but if you’re not paying attention to God, meaning you’re not seeing the underlying Being of everything, always focused on the conditional world, then you’re literally in exile from yourself. You’re identified with this tiny piece of who you really are, and you don’t even know it.

So this is why God gives *Pinkhas* the covenant of shalom – of peace and wholeness – for killing *Zimri*and *Kozbi.* Because what is *Zimri?* It’s like the word *zemer-* song. So *Zimri* is “my song”- meaning, the constant movement of the mind; the song that my thoughts are always singing. And what is *Kozbi?* *Kaf-Zayin-Bet* means a lie, a falsehood. So *Kozbi* means “my lie.” And when *Zimri* and *Kozbi*unite, that’s the two ply barrier of both constant thinking and the lie of separateness that *Pinkhas* is able to pierce through.

Now, what is *Pinkhas?* It’s *Pey-Nekhs.* *Pey* is a mouth, and *Nekhs* is bad, or unsuccessful. So *Pinkhas*knows the bad side of the mouth, meaning language, how it tends to make us unsuccessful in our quest for Truth. So he pierces through both layers, and receives the *Brit Shalom,* reminding us that whoever wants real peace and wholeness, must also pierce through the two-ply toilet paper of the mind.

So on this *Shabbat Pinkhas,* which we might call the Sabbath of Silence, may we pierce more deeply and consistently through the noise and conditioning of the mind, connecting with and also embodying in our actions, words and even thoughts, the Divine Presence of Being that is ever-present...

love,
​brian yosef

**​**[**Put Your Weed in There! Parshat Pinhas**](https://www.torahofawakening.com/weekly-torah/put-your-weed-in-there-parshat-pinhas3427267)

​One of my favorite Saturday Night Live sketches begins in one of those exotic import stores, filled with incense holders, meditation bowls, handmade musical instruments and the like. A stoner-type guy who works there comes up to some customers and starts showing them some crafty knick-knack import. He says in a stoner voice:

“This is a Senegalese lute carved from deer wood, used for fertility rituals… oh and you can put your weed in there!”

They move from one knick-knack to another. Each time the stoner guy describes the intricacies and history of the item, he concludes by showing them some hole or little compartment in it and says, “Oh, and you can put your weed in there!”- and stuffs a baggy of marijuana into it.

Finally, a cop comes into the store. When the stoner sees the cop, he anxiously tells his customers to say nothing about weed. The cop walks over to them and says, “How you doing?” The stoner clenches his jaw, trying to restrain himself, and then busts out uncontrollably:

“WEED!! WEED!! WEED!!”

The cop says, “Why are you yelling like that?” He then examines the knick-knack he’s holding, finds the weed and arrests him.

The Talmud says (Sukkah 52a), “A person’s *yetzer* (drive, inclination, desire) grows stronger each day and desires his death.”

In the sketch, all the stoner guy has to do to not get caught is nothing. But he can’t help it- he yells, “Weed! Weed!”

How often are you given the opportunity for life to go well, to go smoothly, and somehow you find yourself messing the whole thing up? Why do we have this *yetzer hara-*this “evil urge”- this drive toward self-destruction?

In his introduction to *Pirkei Avot,* HaRav Yochanan Zweig proposes something unique and compelling: He says that the reason we tend to sabotage ourselves is actually because of our unbelievably enormous potential. We know, on some level, that our potential is enormous, and that creates a kind of psychological pressure. We are terrified of not living up to our potential.

So, to avoid the pain of knowing our great potential and not living up to it, we try to convince ourselves that we have no potential, that we are worthless, and all our self-destructive behaviors are aimed at proving our worthlessness to ourselves.

This week’s reading begins with the aftermath of a self-destructive incident as well.

​The Israelites had just been dwelling peacefully in their camp. Then the Midianites come along and try to seduce them into an orgy of idolatry and adultery. The Midianites didn’t attack them militarily; all the Israelites had to do is say “No thank you,” and they’d be fine. But what happens? They are easily seduced and the Divine wrath flares up. It’s the golden calf all over again! Dang.

The fellow for whom the *parshah* is named, *Pinhas,*then wields his spear and kills two particularly *hutzpadik* offenders who were flaunting their orgiastic idolatry right in front of the holy “Tent of Meeting.” This week’s *parshah* then begins with *Pinhas* getting rewarded for his heroic murder, and he is given a Divine *Brit Shalom-*a “Covenant of Peace.”

For many, it’s hard to see anything positive in this story. Murder in the name of religious zealotry? Embarrassing.

And yet, if we dig deep into the underlying currents of the narrative, an urgent message emerges: There is a powerful drive toward self-sabotage, toward self-destruction. It is seductive, sexy, exciting and relentless. It will disguise itself in all kinds of ways to trick you and lure you into its power.

But, you can overcome it, if you are aware of it!

In fact, if you are aware of it, it has no power at all. The Talmud says that in the future, the *Yetzer hara*will be revealed for what it really is. When the wicked see the *yetzer hara*, it will appear as a thin hair. They will weep and say, “How were we ensnared by such a thin hair?”

The key is being conscious, and clearly holding the intention that you are *not*living for your own gratification, but rather you are here to serve the enormous potential for wisdom and love that is your essence, your divine nature.

At the same time, it’s crucial to acknowledge that you do have needs and desires.

While it’s true there are times when our impulses are so destructive that they must be completely halted as represented by *Pinhas* and his spear, in most cases our thirsts can be quenched in moderation, with balance and wisdom. Our desires, after all, are like the impulses of an animal. Don’t let the animal take over, but don’t torture it either. You have the power, through your awareness, to give the animal enough so that it let’s you have peace, without it taking over and pulling you toward self-sabotage.

There’s a story of a simple man who came to Maggid of Koznitz with his wife, demanding that he be allowed to divorce her.

“Why would you want to do that?” asked the Maggid.

“I work very hard all week,” said the man, “and on Shabbos I want to have some pleasure. Now for Shabbat dinner, my wife first serves the fish, then the onions, then some heavy main dish, and by the time she puts the pudding on the table, I have eaten all I want and have no appetite for it. All week I work for this pudding, and when it comes I can’t even taste it- and all my labor was for nothing!

“Time after time I ask my wife to please put the pudding on the table right after *Kiddush*(the blessing over wine)*,* but no! She says that the way she does it is the proper *minhag*(custom).”

The Maggid turned to the woman.

“From now on, make a little extra pudding. Take a bit of the pudding and serve it right after *Kiddush.*Then, serve the rest of it after the main dish, as before.”

The couple agreed to this and went on their way.

From that time on, it became the *minhag*(custom) in the Maggid’s house to serve some pudding right after *Kiddush,* and this *minhag*was passed on to his children and his children’s children. It was called the *Shalom Bayit Pudding-*the “Peace-in-the-House Pudding!”

On this *Shabbat Pinkhas,* the Sabbath of Peace, may we be aware of the needs of our hearts an bodies, giving and receiving the pleasures of life without being controlled by them. May we know that we are infinitely more vast than any particular impulse or want. May we see that all impulses come and go, and that we need not identify with them.

And that is the good kind of self-destruction!

Good Shabbos,
Bless you,
brian yosef ​