

A Midrash for Monday

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“Therefore proclaim: Behold! I [God] am giving [Pinchas] My covenant of *shalom!*” (Numbers 25:12).

Great is the *shalom* that was given, because the world runs only on *shalom*.

The entirety of the Torah is *shalom*, as it is said (Proverbs 3:17), “Her ways are way of pleasantness and all her paths her *shalom*.”

When someone arrives from a journey, we welcome him, “*Shalom*.”

In the morning, as our day begins, we hail one another with, “*Shalom*.”

At day’s end, as we return from our day’s labors, we wish one another, “*Shalom*.”

After we say the [evening] *kriat Shema* (reading of the *Shema Yisrael*), we follow it with the blessing that concludes, “Blessed are You ... Who spreads the canopy of *shalom*....”

And we seal every *Shemonah Esrei* with, “Who blesses His people Israel with *shalom*.”

Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Pinchas #1

I usually don’t add any commentary, but I do want to point out the apparent irony in the Midrash. Following Pinchas’s defense of God’s honor and Torah by killing Zimri and his consort, it may seem seem hypocritical to claim that the Torah’s ways are peace.

But our Sages are cutting through a lot of pro-zealot and anti-zealot rhetoric in order to show us what is at the core Pinchas’s decision and behavior. This is what the Torah is. We have to learn how to think so we can learn how to behave. Amen. Amen.

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