

## Emor

The Sedrah of *Emor* contains sixty-three Mitzvoths: twenty-four positive and thirty-nine negative. One of the most important of these Mitzvoths is the one which states, “*Venikdashiti betoch b’nei Yisroel,*” and I shall be hallowed among the children of Israel. The purpose of this commandment is that we are obligated to proclaim this true religion to the world. Even if a tyrant tries to compel us by force to deny G-d we must not obey, but must positively rather submit to death; we must be ready to sacrifice our lives for our love of G-d and our faith in His unity, even as Hannaniah, Mishael and Azariah did in the time of the wicked Nebuchadnezzar when he forced people to prostrate themselves before the idol.

The *Sifra* says, “On this condition I brought you out of the land of Egypt, that you may sanctify My name publicly.” The sad and tragic history of the Jewish people is replete with countless episodes of heroic acts of entire communities hallowing G-d’s name by not submitting to the evil designs of the despots and religious zealots. The one bright golden thread which weaves through the oppression and persecution of the Jewish people, is the readiness of the Jew to give up everything, even his life, rather than reject the faith of our fathers.

The full scope of the concept of *Kiddush Hashem*, the Sanctification of the Holy Name in its daily application may be seen from the following words in the *Mishne Torah* of the *Rambam*, “Likewise the scholar who is scrupulous in his own conduct, speaking gently to his fellow men, showing concern for their welfare, receiving them with a cheerful countenance, accepting humiliation at their hands without humiliating them, showing honor even to those that slight him, being faithful in his dealings, being in all his deeds lenient above the letter of the Law, being ever seen engaged in the study of the Law, so that all may be disposed to praise him and love him and to be desirous of emulating his deeds—such a one sanctifies the L-rd and concerning him Scripture says: “And he said unto me you are my servant Israel in whom I will be glorified.”

Right living in accordance with the highest Jewish standards thus constitutes in itself an act of *Kiddush Hashem*.

In our daily affairs, be they business, social or domestic, we have the duty to conduct ourselves in such a manner that the name of the Jew as the chosen people of G-d becomes exalted and praised. Our lofty standards of honesty, integrity and morality must be maintained despite all opportunities, difficulties and temptations to the contrary. The Jew who is polite, courteous, understanding, gentle, generous and kind towards his fellow man indirectly sanctifies G-d's name.

Conversely, a person can be guilty of the prohibition mentioned in the same sentence quoted at the beginning of this article—namely, “You shall not profane my Holy Name, if: a) he does not give up his life for the love of G-d; b) if he commits transgressions not caused by lust or the desire for gain, but simply because of indifference and laxity of behavior; c) if a man of known piety and righteousness acts in a manner unworthy of such a person.

We are grateful to G-d that we in America do not have to face the choices which our forefathers had to make in Babylon, Israel, Spain, Turkey and Europe. Ours is the challenge of responding to the injunction of sanctifying G-d's name by controlling our evil inclinations leading us to act in a manner debasing of the name Jew.

In order to prepare one's frame of mind and spirit to react favorably in this area, one needs to study Torah. By setting aside time each day to read and study the Holy Torah, a person arms himself mentally and spiritually to overcome any and all diversionary tactics of the *Yetzer Horah*, to mislead him. Torah inspires man to be alert to his responsibility and privilege to sanctify G-d's name through exemplary conduct worthy of the blessings from Heaven.