

Emor: Kiddush Hashem V'Chilul Hashem

- The Rav.

The requirement to give our lives rather than transgress the three sins of idolatry, illicit relations, and murder, is found in this parsha. The parsha deals with sanctifying, or desecrating Hashem's name. The link between giving our lives for kiddush Hashem and living a life of kiddush Hashem is discussed, as well as why we are required to sacrifice life even if no person perceives it as idolatry, like Chana and her seven sons, or Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

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Shiur Harav J. B. Soloveitchik zt"l on Parshat Emor

(Transcribed by Josh Rapps and Dr. Israel Rivkin)

In Parshas Emor, the Torah says that there is an obligation to sanctify the name of Hashem, Vnikdashti btach Bnay Yisrael. The corresponding negative Mitzvah (lo taaseh) is stated in the first half of the verse, not to blaspheme the sanctified name of Hashem (Lo techalelu es Shem kadshi). From this verse, we derive the Mitzvah of yayhareg val yaavor, one should submit himself to be killed rather than transgress illicit relationships, murder or idolatry. There also are other situations when one must surrender his life, for instance during a sheas hashemad. If one submits himself to be killed in such situations he fulfills the Mitzvah of kiddush Hashem. Otherwise, he violates the prohibition of chillul Hashem.

The Rambam (Hilchos Yesodot Hatorah, chapter 5) discusses the laws of kiddush Hashem and chillul Hashem. He begins with the laws of yayhareg val yaavor and concludes with additional situations of chillul Hashem that cast aspersions on the Torah or its scholars. For example, a scholar who purchases on credit, or who walks 4 cubits without tefillin. The Rambam is quoting the Gemara (Yoma 86a) which lists these examples of chillul Hashem. The Rav said that the Rambam intentionally connected these different sorts of chillul Hashem in the same chapter.

The Gemara (Sanhedrin 61b) quotes the machlokes between Abaye and Rava if one worships avoda zara out of fear of being killed is guilty for transgressing idolatry. Tosfos asks, if he does not violate the prohibition in this case, then why is there a Mitzvah of yayhareg val yaavor? The Rav answered Tosfos question through the Rambam. In Sefer Hamitzvos (Aseh 9), the Rambam says that there is a Mitzvah to sanctify the name of Hashem and to offer our lives in order to that the coercer not think that we have succumbed to denying our faith (over al hadas), even though the Jew knows full well in his heart that he is steadfast in his faith. This is basically the story of Chana and her children where they refused to bow down before the idol even when it would have been obvious that they were picking up the ring and not worshiping the idol. Even if there would have been no transgression of avodah zara, one must still fulfill the obligation of kiddush Hashem to show that the Jew cannot be coerced to surrender his faith.

The Rambam quotes the example of Chanania, Mishael and Azariah who refused to bow down before Nebuchadnezzar and were thrown into the furnace. The Rambam describes their strength at a time when all people, including the Jews, bowed before the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, and no

one stood up to sanctify the name of Hashem. Rather all the people were fearful of the king and this brought great shame on all of Israel, because they had neglected and forgotten the obligation of kiddush Hashem. Their act of kiddush Hashem, according to the Rambam, returned the honor of Israel. The Rambam stresses that the obligation of kiddush Hashem is paramount especially during exceptional situations, similar to where the entire world was fearful of the king.

At Har Sinai Hashem gave the Jews the Torah through kolay kolos, with a tumultuous reception. Rashi comments that the second Luchos were given without accompanying fanfare, Moshe alone went up the mountain. The tumultuous manner in which the first Luchos were given was an ayin hara, which foretold the eventual destruction of those Luchos. The question is: why did Hashem give the first Luchos through kolay kolos even though He knew full well that this would foretell their ultimate destruction? The Rav explained that Hashem wanted the nations of the world to recognize the greatness of the Jewish Nation. Avraham was held in the highest regard by the nations of the world. Isaac had less prestige and Jacob even less, and ultimately his children were enslaved by their hosts, the Egyptians.

Had the Jew been respected it would have been very difficult to enslave them. Hashem wanted to ensure that His chosen nation would receive the respect that the Am Hashem deserves. This was accomplished through Yetzias Mitzrayim and the first Kabbalas Hatorah soon after the exodus. The nations of the world were gripped with palpable fear, chil achaz yoshvei plashes (which Rambam says refers to Maamad Har Sinai and not the splitting of the Red Sea). All the nations recognized the greatness and uniqueness of the Jewish nation as Hashem returned the honor of Bnay Yisrael. That was the purpose of the kolay kolos.

After the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, the Jews again were not respected. The honor of Am Hashem had to be restored. Hashem told Yeshayahu that the people will perform kiddush Hashem. Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah returned the honor of the Jewish People years later by making their stand against Nebuchadnezzar and reminding the people of the mitzvas kiddush Hashem. Nebuchadnezzar's forcing them to bow down before the idol was Hashem's plan for restoring the honor of Bnay Yisrael, through their act of defiance.

The Mitzvah of yahareg val yaavor includes the concept that the honor of Yisrael should not be diminished. That is why the Rambam includes the different forms of chillul Hashem, be they transgressing idolatry, illicit relationships and murder or a scholar who acts in a way that brings shame on Torah and himself: both have the common property of diminishing the honor of Bnay Yisrael. According to the Rambam, when the Jew worships avodah zara, even under coercion, there is still an aspect of chillul Hashem because he has diminished the honor of Bnay Yisrael.

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