



Kiddush Hashem: The Quest

Perhaps one of the most obvious principles of the Jewish faith is one of the most difficult to observe consistently. For some of us who attend to life's chores, the daily grind so absorbs us that our religious sensitivities and responsibilities pass us by. We are so immersed in our worries that we forget the axiom: שׁוּיִתִּי ה' לִנְגִדִי תָמִיד – "I have set Hashem always before me" (Tehillim 16:8).

In this week's Parsha, we learn about the sanctification of Hashem's name (*Kiddush Hashem*) and its converse, desecration of His name (*Chillul Hashem*). In the spirit of 'Depart from evil and do good,' Hashem instructs Moshe to teach that "You shall not desecrate My holy name, rather I should be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael; I am Hashem Who sanctifies you, who took you out of Eretz Mitzrayim to be a God unto you: I am Hashem" (Vayikra 22:32-33).

Ideally, we should behave in a way that causes a Kiddush Hashem because Hashem is *Kadosh* (Parshat Kedoshim). However, Hashem now appeals to a lower sense of

values, namely, reciprocity (see Kohlberg's stages of moral development). Because He brought us out of Egypt to be our God, so we should accord Hashem honor and loyalty – and act accordingly.

Desecration of Hashem (*Chillul Hashem*) is one of the most severe sins and most easy to come by. In psychological and Torah circles, much is made of the effect we have on others, knowingly and otherwise. For example, we all know people who have said, "If that's the way observant Jews behave, what can you expect of me?" We are also aware, for instance, of the horrendous impact of Lashon Hara on society.

It just takes a slip of the tongue to destroy lives completely. It takes courage and perseverance, however, to act constantly in a way that gives rise to *Kiddush Hashem*.

Not for nothing, we pray that "we should find grace and good understanding in the sight of God and man" (*Benching* – Grace after meals). No wonder that following these mandates, the Torah introduces the *Mo'adim* – times (like Shabbat) to forget the daily struggles and spend quality time with Hashem. Then we might better cultivate our relationship with Hakadosh Baruch Hu, thus to fulfill our mission in this world. כִּן יִהְיֶה רָצוֹן – May it be His will. ■

Shabbat Shalom! Menachem Persoff