

"And the whole congregation said to stone them with stones." (14:10)

The *Talmud* in *Sotah 35a* says that they never aimed the stones at the men, rather they threw them in the direction of Heaven. There seems to be a dispute about what occurred - were the stones originally aimed at Heaven? Or, rather, did Hashem's Cloud of Glory descend and "catch" the stones? We may suggest a homiletic rendering of this *Chazal*. *Bnei Yisrael* chose to hurl stones at their leaders, because of their "dissenting" views. They did not realize, however, that hurling "stones" or other epithets at *Gedolei Yisrael* is tantamount to hurling stones at Heaven! Our *Torah* leaders are Hashem's emissaries, and we must accord them the reverence consonant with this lofty station. This is referred to as *Kavod Ha'Torah*, respect for the *Torah*. Echoing the events of that fateful day, Hashem will always protect His devoted emissaries in their time of need.

We may be so bold as to suggest that in many cases the intent of those hurling "stones" at religious authority is -- in reality-- to cast aspersion upon the Almighty. Their moral cowardice restrains them from blatantly exposing their animosity towards Judaism and its tenets. Once again, these loathsome remarks will receive their response from Hashem. The codes and doctrine of Judaism are Hashem's mandate. The defamation of the *Torah* or its disseminators is reflective of an intention to sever relations with Hashem.