

"They shall be holy unto their G-d, and not profane the name of their G-d." (21:6)

This *pasuk* describes the exalted level of holiness, and in contrast, the descent to the nadir of profanity. Does no "compromise" exist between these two extremes? Indeed, in regard to serving Hashem, there is no middle course. One either sanctifies Hashem's Name, or is guilty of its desecration. One's involvement in Hashem's service is a process of constant ascension; one either fulfills the precept of "*they shall be holy*", or by default, falls into the abyss of "*and not profane the name of their G-d*". *Chazal* state that although Hashem forgives man for the sins of idol-worship, murder, and adultery, He does not forgive him for the cessation of *Torah* study or bitul *Torah*.

It seems puzzling that Hashem would concede forgiveness for these cardinal sins and not offer forgiveness for the sin of bitul *Torah*. The *Alter of Kelm Z"l* explains that forgiveness refers to the source of these sins, rather than the actual sin. Man who has sunk to the lowest level of depravity, such as murder, idol-worship, and adultery, is beyond help. He is no longer viewed as a person who is worthy of reproach, for he has forfeited consideration as a human being. This man is punished for his initial sin, the original evil step which led to a life of debauchery and decadence. He is rebuked for the cessation of *Torah* study, which was the direct cause of these evils. All of these other sins are included in the sin of bitul *Torah*. One who does not grow in Hashem's service will invariably decline in his observance of *Torah* and *mitzvos*. The spiritual refinement which results from true *Torah* study serves as the greatest protective agent against moral degradation.