

## You shall not take the Name of Hashem, your G-d, in vain. (20:7)

The *Talmud Shavuot* 39a relates that when Hashem said the words of *Lo sisa...*, “You shall not take the Name of Hashem, your G-d, in vain,” the entire world shook. We wonder why this particular commandment had such a frightening effect on people, more so than *Lo signov*, “Do not steal,” *Lo sirtzach*, “Do not murder,” or any of the other commandments for that matter. The *Kotzker Rebbe, zl*, explains that, regrettably, some people convince themselves and others that under certain circumstances, for the “greater good,” one can find a dispensation to steal – even to murder! It is all done in the name of Heaven: “I am acting *l’shem Shomayim*, for the sake of Heaven,” seems to be the clarion call lately. In the name of Heaven – for the sake of Hashem – one finds ways to circumvent *Halachah*, to skirt the law, to make the reprehensible a *mitzvah*. After all, he is doing it for G-d’s sake!

The *pasuk* admonishes us not to use Hashem’s Name for personal advantage. The Holy Name is sacred and is to be treated in such a manner. No wonder the entire world shook with fright when Hashem said, *Lo sissa*. No longer would we have dispensations with which to skirt the law.

A similar interpretation is quoted by the *Chidushei HaRim*. *Horav Ezriel Hildesheimer, zl*, *Rav* of Berlin, had occasion to be in Warsaw. While he was in Warsaw, he decided to visit the *Chidushei HaRim*. Their conversation revolved around Torah and Torah-related topics. *Rav* Hildesheimer began the conversation with a question. He quoted the *pasuk* in our *Parshah*, “The entire people **saw** the sounds/thunder, and the flames” (Ibid. 20:15). The Torah is describing the supernatural perception which the Jewish People experienced at *Har Sinai*. What was the necessity of such a miracle? Was it not enough that they had heard Hashem? Did they have to “see” the words which had been uttered? The *Chidushei HaRim* gave a practical, but brilliant, response. In the Hebrew language, a number of words sound alike, but have totally different meanings. For instance, the word *lo* with an *aleph* means do not, while *lo* with a *vav* means to/for him. Imagine, Hashem said *Lo signov*, “Do not steal,” but a person who hears what he wants to hear, can possibly infer that for Him (*lo*, with a *vav*) – for Hashem – one **may** steal! For Him – one may murder! Thus, it was necessary for the people to **see** the true meaning of the words clearly. Make no mistake: murder and theft are never permitted – even in the Name of G-d.