

## You shall not desecrate My Holy Name, and I shall be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)

Some of us live under the misguided, self-imposed impression that *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying Hashem's Name, is a one-time event – the ultimate sacrifice one must accept upon himself when the need arises and the situation is so pressing that there is no other way out other than abdicating one's religious commitment. *Horav Nissan Alpert, zl*, understands otherwise from the text of this *pasuk*. According to the *Rambam (Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 5:1)*, this *pasuk* is the source for the *mitzvah* that all the Jewish People are commanded to sanctify the great and holy Name of *Hashem Yisborach*. As it says, *V'nikdashti b'soch Bnei Yisrael*, "And I will be sanctified among *Bnei Yisrael* ." If this is the case, why did the Torah not present the *mitzvah* in a positive *tzivuil*/commandment-like message: "You should sanctify Hashem's Name"? In its present form of: "Do not desecrate My Name – and "I shall – (in the future) be sanctified," it is almost saying that sanctification is a future event that will come to pass.

*Rav Alpert* believes that the *pasuk* is actually presenting us with a fundamental insight concerning the nature of *mesiras nefesh*, devotion and dedication to the point of self-sacrifice in general, and *Kiddush Hashem* in particular. It is not a one-time, last ditch effort. It is a lifestyle.

How do we define *mesiras nefesh*? It is the act of relinquishing everything – up to and including one's life. Clearly achieving such an extraordinary level of devotion and commitment does not happen overnight. It requires a step by step process in which the individual climbs higher and higher, ultimately achieving such a profound relationship with Hashem, His Torah and *mitzvos*, that he stands willing and prepared to give up his life for them. It seems unrealistic that an intelligent adult would be willing to give up his life for the sake of *Kiddush Hashem* just because he discovered one day that such a *mitzvah* in fact exists. It also does not make sense that such a decision is an isolated, spur of the moment decision, disconnected from any other thought in the person's mind.

Rather, *mesiras nefesh* is the result of: one's having lived a life of devotion to Hashem; clear and thoughtful cogitation of the meaning and values of Judaism; living a life of observance – of *shemiras Shabbos*, *taharas ha'mishpachah*, family purity, *kashrus*, integrity in the marketplace. These, in turn, are the result of spiritual integrity and its accompanying appropriate demeanor – in the home, the *shul*, and the business. Such a person has sanctified himself. He is ready – if and when the time comes that he is asked to make the ultimate sacrifice. The *kedushah* that he has developed within him will direct and guide him toward the *mitzvah* of *mesiras nefesh al Kiddush Hashem*.

This is the meaning of *V'nikdashti b'soch Bnei Yisrael*. It will happen, but not as the result of a command; rather, it will occur as the natural extension of one's behavior and lifestyle up to that seminal moment. It takes a lifetime of "holy living" in order to "die holy."