

## **Because you did not believe in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of Bnei Yisrael...They are the waters of strife where Bnei Yisrael contended with Hashem, and He was sanctified through them. (20:12,13)**

Had Moshe *Rabbeinu* and Aharon *HaKohen* demonstrated greater faith in Hashem by speaking to the rock, rather than striking it, Hashem's Name would have been sanctified. The Nation would have derived the message: If an inanimate rock – which does not hear, speak, or require sustenance – carries out Hashem's command (when spoken to), surely we (humans) should do so. *Ramban* explains that Moshe and Aharon certainly were not lacking in faith; rather the phrase should be understood, "Because you did not cause them (the people) to believe in Me;" for if Moshe would have followed Hashem's directive as commanded, the people would have been infused with faith. While seeing water emerge from a rock that Moshe struck is clearly an infusion of faith, the resulting *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctification of Hashem's Name, would have been greater had Moshe spoken to the rock. Thus, by imposing punishment on such holy and spiritually impeccable leaders as Moshe and Aharon, thereby showing that regardless of one's spiritual status no one has license to sin, Hashem's Name becomes sanctified. Anything that brings about a greater awareness of Hashem is considered a sanctification of His Name. We may derive from here that if a greater *Kiddush Hashem* could have occurred, then, in effect, a *chillul*, profanation, of Hashem's Name, has taken place. Every opportunity for *Kiddush Hashem* that is wasted creates a void where *kedushah*, holiness, could have penetrated. This is *chillul*, desecration. A void is a waste. With regard to *Kiddush Hashem*, there is no place for a wasted opportunity.

Perhaps the following story will clarify the meaning of a *chillul* Hashem. The holy *Rizhiner Rebbe* (*Horav* Yisrael) was imprisoned for twenty-two months, sixteen of which were spent in the notorious Kiev Prison, a dark, desolate, cold dungeon. No charges had been issued against him, but, then, since when does an anti-Semitic regime need an excuse for persecuting Jews? The *Rebbe* fully accepted his predicament as Hashem's decree, and he sanctified Hashem's Name during his interment. On *Shushan Purim*, 1840, the cell door that separated him from freedom creaked open to release the *Rizhiner*. The *Rebbe* rose from the floor, walked out, paused momentarily, then turned around and stepped back into the cell.

Those who witnessed the *Rebbe's* self-imposed return to the cell looked on incredulously, as he remained inside for a few moments before finally stepping out to freedom. They then understood that the *Rebbe* viewed his period of incarceration as a period of holiness. It was an experience from which he should learn – and never forget. He returned to the cell to acknowledge this fact.

One of the *Rizhiner's* staunch admirers was the *tzaddik*, holy, righteous *Rebbe*, the *Divrei Chaim*, *Horav Chaim Halberstam, zl*, of Sanz. As *Rav* of Sanz, he had an illustrious career, both as

*halachic* arbiter and as a mentor to his many followers. When he retired, his son, *Rav Aharon*, assumed the position of *Rav* of Sanz.

Once, when *Rav Aharon* presided over a case between two litigants, his ruling was not accepted by the guilty party. He (the guilty litigant) demanded that the *Rav* retract his verdict. *Rav Aharon* refused to reverse his ruling. He had studied the case and felt that his ruling followed *halachah*. He was unmoved by the guilty party's threats of revenge. True to his threats, the miscreant went to the gentile authorities and, after fabricating a bogus story, demanded that *Rav Aharon* be arrested and locked up. The authorities were only too happy to accommodate him.

*Rav Aharon's* family and students went immediately to his father, *Rav Chaim*, to seek his counsel. Surprisingly, he did not react to the entire debacle. He said, "If my son had been incarcerated for some crime that he had committed, I would be greatly concerned. My son, however, was thrown into jail for upholding the Torah and rendering a true verdict based upon Jewish law. He is sitting in jail for upholding *kedushas haTorah*, the sanctity of the Torah! What greater *z'chus*, merit, is there?"

When the family saw that *Rav Chaim* was immovable, they went to his *mechutan*, parent of one of his children in-law, *Horav Yehoshua*, *zl*, of Belz. Perhaps *Rav Chaim* would listen to reason if presented by someone of his eminence.

*Rav Yehoshua* wasted no time in proceeding to *Rav Chaim* and explained the entire ordeal to him: from the original case in *bais din* until *Rav Aharon* was tragically thrown into jail. He explained that it was devastating for such a refined and dedicated person as *Rav Aharon* to languish with derelicts in a Hungarian jail. He was suffering, and so was his family and the entire Jewish community. Then he added one last caveat: By allowing *Rav Aharon* to fester in jail, it was creating a gross *chillul Hashem*. How could he, *Rav Chaim*, allow for this desecration of Hashem's Name to continue?

The mention of the *chillul Hashem* "card," ignited *Rav Chaim*. He turned to *Rav Yehoshua* and, with tremendous self-control (although he was seething), demanded, "Do you really believe that if one is incarcerated for upholding the sanctity of the Torah by rendering an honest, true and impartial judgment, it creates *chillul Hashem*? Would you consider the imprisonment of *Yosef HaTzaddik* by Pharaoh a *chillul Hashem*? Were the twenty-two months spent by the *Rizhiner* in a Russian dungeon a *chillul Hashem*? Absolutely not! On the contrary, it was a *Kiddush Hashem* of the highest order! Both *Yosef HaTzaddik* and the holy *Rizhiner* sanctified Hashem's Name *l'eila u'l'eila*, to the highest heights. My dear *mechutan*, I want you to listen to me. Anyone who calls himself a Jew and is not attached body and soul to his Creator – every moment of the day – is guilty of *chillul Hashem*!

We now understand the word *l'hakdisheini*, to sanctify Me. A Jew must live a life of *Kiddush Hashem* and, if he could have reached a higher level and did not, he has failed.