

I will be sanctified among Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)

If one peruses history, he notes that the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*, Sanctifying Hashem's Name, has applied to children as well. In other words, parents who were prepared to sacrifice themselves to sanctify Hashem's Name were, likewise, prepared to do the same for their children. During the Crusades, it was not unusual for parents to take the lives of their children prior to killing themselves, just so that the murderers would not defile their bodies. Why are children not exempt from the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*? The only reason that *mitzvos* apply to children is *chinuch*, educating them in the Torah's way in order to prepare them for a life of commitment. Does *chinuch* apply to *Kiddush Hashem* as well?

In his *Emes L'Yaakov*, *Horav Yaakov Kaminetzky, zl*, derives from the *lashon ha'Rambam*, the vernacular of the *Rambam*, that indeed he is of the opinion that *Kiddush Hashem* applies to children. In *Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah* 5:1, the *Rambam* writes: *Kol Bais Yisrael m'tzuvim al Kiddush Hashem*, "The entire House of Yisrael is commanded in the *mitzvah* of sanctifying Hashem's Name." *Rambam* uses a term, *Bais Yisrael*, which implies the **entire** house – men, woman and children. *Bnei Yisrael* is the term that would apply only to adults.

Rav Yaakov suggests that by using the word, *V'nikdashti*, "I will be sanctified," in *lashon nifaaal*, the passive conjugation of the verb – rather than speaking **directly** to the people and exhorting them to sanctify Hashem – the Torah is teaching us that the primary goal is for Hashem's Name to be sanctified – regardless of who is doing the sanctification. Thus, *ketanim*, young children, can also sanctify Hashem, because it is not who does the act, but rather the very fact that the act of *Kiddush Hashem* takes place which causes Hashem's Name to be glorified.

In the *Talmud Sanhedrin*, we learn that "the grandchildren of Cicero studied Torah in Yerushalayim; the grandchildren of Sancheirev taught Torah in public; the grandchildren of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak." In his *Netzach Yisrael*, the *Maharal, zl, m'Prague*, explains that the mere fact that the grandchildren of these supremely evil men converted and taught Torah publicly is an incredible thing. We must understand that the three evil individuals mentioned – and so many others like them – have enormous power, which is derived from the super power of Hashem. In these men, however, the power was defiled. When their descendants converted, they harnessed this innate power and purified it. The fact that the power has its origins in G-d gives it a grain of sanctity which generations later can ultimately be purified. Yet, we wonder in what merit did their descendants convert? Descending from such impurity should preclude their conversion.

Rav Yaakov explains that since the ultimate goal of *v'nikdashti* is that Hashem's Name be glorified, it does not matter why or how this sanctification occurs. Haman and the others were the catalysts that spearheaded a tremendous *kiddush Shem Shomayim*. Thus, they merited that their grandchildren became devout, committed disseminators of Torah.