

You shall not do this to Hashem your G-d. Rather, only at the place that Hashem, your G-d chose...to place His Name shall you seek out His Presence and come there. And there shall you bring your elevation offerings. (12:4,5,6)

The commentators, each in his own inimitable style, explain what it is that we "*shall not do*" to Hashem. **Horav Itzile M'Volozhin, zl**, offers a practical interpretation of this *pasuk*. We find that in order to facilitate the unintentional murderer's "escape" to the *Arei Miklat*, Cities of Refuge, the people erected signs at various crossroads to indicate the most efficient way to reach his destination. They did this in order to ensure that the *rotzeach b'shogeg*, unintentional murderer, would not have to ask people for directions as he sought his destination. We may wonder why this helpful idea was not also a provision for those that went up to *Yerushalayim* for their annual pilgrimages or to offer *korbanos* on the *Mizbayach*.

Horav Itzile comments that if we had made it "easy" for the individual to reach *Yerushalayim* without construing a situation in which he would be obliged to speak to people, to share with them his lofty and noble plans, to tell them about the exciting occurrences that were taking place in *Yerushalayim*, he would probably be one of the few who would consider making the trip. Now that he was required to seek out the *Bais Hamikdash*, to interact with people, to inspire them through his attitude and intentions, others would also join him on his journey to *Yerushalayim*. Indeed, did not Elkanah make his annual trip to *Yerushalayim* using a different route, precisely so that he could influence more people to join his pilgrimage?

In sum, Hashem wants people to strive, to search, to seek out the Holy Place where they will perform the rituals and offer *korbanos*. By doing so, they will encourage others to join in their endeavor. The pagans, on the other hand, placed their idols on mountains, so that everyone was able to notice their presence -- and easily arrive there to worship. The *Torah* admonishes us, "*You shall not do this to Hashem*". *Chazal* interpret this to mean not to place G-d on mountains and hills, to build the *Bais Hamikdash* on high land. Rather, the *Torah* commands us "*to place His Name shall you seek out His Presence*." The *Torah* emphasizes "*sidreshu*," "you shall seek", to teach us that one ascends to the *Bais Hamikdash* only through *derishah*, seeking, searching, including and inspiring others in this course of his quest. Only then will we fulfill the enjoyment of "*and then shall you bring your elevation offering*." When everyone perceives how the individual diligently searches for the Divine, they will follow suit. The serious individual whose commitment to Hashem is sincere will inspire others, with by his genuineness and candor, to serve Hashem alongside him.

We may add that Hashem wants us to seek Him out, to search diligently, to reach out to Him. The actual search is the key to obtaining the sanctity that one strives to achieve. He who sits back waiting for spirituality to come to him might discover its elusiveness. Perhaps this is why the

pasuk begins in the plural, "*l'shichno sidreshu*," and ends in the singular, "*u'baasa shamah*." Everyone asserts that he wants to ascend, to attain a higher level of *kedushah*, to build Hashem's *Mikdash*, but for how many people are these merely empty words? Only the *yachid*, the individual who is discriminating and determined, who leaves no stone unturned in his quest for *kedushah*, will attain the ultimate goal. Everyone has the opportunity, but only a few achieve the supreme gift: closeness to Hashem.