

## I should be sanctified among the Bnei Yisrael. (22:32)

Every Jew is commanded to sanctify Hashem's Name. A Jew's total demeanor is to reflect his subordination to Hashem. His behavior must be admirable; his dealings with others, the height of integrity, his devotion to *mitzvos*, exemplary. This *pasuk* serves as the general commandment to give up one's life, if necessary, to sanctify Hashem's Name. It, therefore, seems strange that the *Torah* does not write this *mitzvah* in a stronger, more emphatic form. It simply says, "I should be sanctified." Why does the *Torah* not say, "Sanctify My Name," as a form of command. The *Torah* seems to take a nonchalant approach to *Kiddush Hashem*. It is as if it were saying, "I will become sanctified."

**Horav Nissan Alpert, zl**, explains that the goal of the *Torah's* text is to teach us how one develops the level of conviction to be prepared to give up his life as a martyr for Hashem. From where does he call upon such remarkable fortitude that he is willing to give up his life to sanctify Hashem's Name? The answer is: it cannot happen over night. One does not suddenly conjure up the ability to be *moser nefesh*, sacrifice himself for Hashem. Only the willingness to live as a Jew can produce the willingness to die as a Jew. A Jew who observ

es *mitzvos*, who sanctifies his life through *Kashrus*, *Shabbos*, family purity; who strives constantly to cling closer to Hashem, who, when he errs, confesses his sin and seeks atonement through *teshuvah*, repentance, is the one who sanctifies his speech and overall personality. Such a person is prepared to give up his life for the Almighty. By fulfilling the "h,asebu", "*I should be sanctified*," by experiencing a wholesome life of *kedushah*, one elevates himself to the sublime level of *mesiras nefesh*.

This may be inferred from the *Tanna* who personified *mesiras nefesh*, whose life ended in a most tragic but striking example of *Kiddush Hashem* - Rabbi Akiva. *Chazal* tell us that when Rabbi Akiva was led out to be executed, he recited the *Shema*. He continued while his skin was being flayed off his body with steel combs. Imagine the excruciating pain and suffering he must have sustained. Yet, he continued to recite *Shema* with the same religious fervor and conviction he had demonstrated on a daily level. His students who were watching in shock and disbelief asked, "*Rebbe*, so much? How much is one supposed to suffer?" Rabbi Akiva responded, "My whole life I awaited the moment that I could sanctify myself to Hashem." *Horav Alpert* interprets the dialogue between Rabbi Akiva and his students in the following manner. The students wondered how a human being could endure so much pain and suffering - even if it was for the sake of Heaven. Rabbi Akiva told them that he spent an entire life conditioning himself for this moment when he could martyr himself for the Almighty. It did not occur overnight; it took a lifetime of preparation that climaxed with the ultimate sacrifice - himself.