

46 ■ Chillul Hashem

Whenever we gather in prayer invariably we do recite or respond to the words of Kaddish: “May His Great Name be magnified and sanctified”. And whenever we introduce the daily Kedusho we call out: “Let us sanctify Your Name in the world”. And every so often during the course of our Tefilloh we emphasize our desire to belong to the sanctifiers of the Divine Name amongst men true to the injunction contained in Vayikro (22,33) תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל ולא (”You shall not desecrate My Holy Name and I shall become sanctified in the midst of the children of Israel.”)

The second sentence of Sh'ma Yisroel begins with the command: “You shall love Hashem”, which is interpreted by our Sages: “Let the name of Hashem become beloved through you.” In other words, we are supposed to lead the kind of exemplary life which would contribute to the universal adoration of G-d and which would, in turn, enhance the glory and lustre of the Torah, adding respect for the dignity of the Jewish people as a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation.

The very opposite of the sanctification is the desecration

of the Name as condemned by the Prophet with the scathing words (Yechezkel 36): “They came to the nations and desecrated my Holy Name, so that one said to them, is this the people of G-d who came from His land?”

Every form of Chillul Hashem lowers the awareness of the Divine Presence in the world. But if the desecrator happens to be a professed Torah observer or, even worse, a so-called scholar of the Torah, then the Chillul Hashem not only weakens the respect for Torah on one hand, but strengthens on the other hand the defiance of the non-observer and adds fuel to the scoffers, fanning the fires of religious insurrection all around. Chillul Hashem is responsible, directly or indirectly, for the increase of frivolity, heresy and licentiousness in the world. Therefore, we should not be surprised reading the harsh words of condemnation we find in the Talmud: “He who has committed Chillul Hashem, even Teshuvoh, Yom Kippur and suffering cannot fully atone for his sin until the day of his death (Yoma 86).”

“Better to commit a sin in secrecy than to commit Chillul Hashem in public (Kiddushin 40).

“There is no delay in the Divine punishment for Chillul Hashem, whether committed knowingly or unknowingly (ibid.)”.

“If one steals from a non-Jew, swears falsely and dies, his death is no atonement for his sin because of Chillul Hashem” (Tosefta B. Kamma, 10).

“He who desecrates the name of Heaven in secrecy is punished in public” (Avoth 4).

“All sins are forgiven by G-d but Chillul Hashem He punishes immediately” (Sifri Haazinu).

This is but a small selection from the many fierce condemnations addressed by our Sages to the desecrators of the Divine Name.

All this comes to mind at this time since some perpetrators of Chillul Hashem are making the headlines of our daily newspapers. Certainly we are not sitting in judgment of the persons who are publicly accused and we have to wait whether the indictments will be borne out by

irrefutable evidence. However, be it as it may, the Chillul Hashem is there in the worst possible way. “Rabbi” so and so, who sits in court with his velvet Yarmulka in full view of a television audience composed of millions of viewers, is accused of having ruthlessly enriched himself at the expense of others, flaunting the laws of G-d and man, exploiting, conniving and manipulating — in short, desecrating all the fundamentals of Torah Judaism. And this sorry onslaught on our Jewish sensitiveness is repeated by similar allegations, proven or unproven, involving more prominent men who are stigmatized as orthodox Jews, sometimes even with so-called rabbinic diplomas.

While it is obvious that the vast majority of loyal and observant Torah Jews deal honestly and correctly with their fellow men, a very small minority of criminal perpetrators suffices to cast sinister aspersions on all orthodox Jews and, what is worse, on orthodox Judaism as a way of life. The Chillul Hashem of a few individuals provides excuses for the doubter, and encourages the desecration of Torah learning, Torah education and Torah influence. To defraud and exploit our fellowmen, Jew or gentile, to conspire, to betray the Government, to associate with underworld elements all these are hideous crimes by themselves. Yet to the outrage committed there is added another dimension, namely the profanation of the Divine Name and that means the profanation of all that is supposed to be held sacred by us as well as — in their heart of hearts — by the perpetrators themselves. What a sorry picture that is.

Suppose I have cheated my neighbor or my Government and then I stand in the midst of a congregation of honest and decent men and women to recite the Kaddish which is the prayer for Kiddush Hashem in the world. What audacity! What a shame! Can there be a worse contradiction than the strict Sabbath observer who may also be a stickler for Kashrus and who at the same time violates the spirit of Shabbos and Kashrus during the week with non-kosher money manipulations?

Let us repeat. The profaners and the desecrators are

only a handful of unscrupulous people and we even hope that some of them will be proved innocent. But it needs only very few violators to give us all a rotten name, aiding and abetting our many adversaries and antagonizing our few friends.

Therefore, no white-washing, no condoning, no apologizing on behalf of the desecrators. Let us make it clear that anyone who besmirches the sacred Name ceases to be our friend. He has unwittingly defected from our ranks and has joined our antagonists, to make us all suffer in his wake. And — noblesse oblige — the more prominent a man has become in orthodox Jewish circles the more obligated he must feel to observe the most painstaking scrupulousness in his dealings with the outside world.

Our observance of Torah and Mitzvos is regulated by the Choshen Mishpot, the code of social justice no less than by the other codes of the Shulchan Aruch. Whoever betrays his loyalty to one portion of the Torah uproots all others. For, at the roots of Chillul Hashem are gross materialism, blatant selfishness, insatiable love of wealth and brazen disregard for common decency. Even if, strangely enough, as it sometimes happens — those ugly traits go together with excessive charity and benevolence. We call this type of twisted ethics *מצוה הבאה בעבירה* i.e. virtue acquired by sin, which is worthless — less than worthless. It is a travesty and a farce. It means playing jokes with the Torah. It is blasphemy and therefore unforgivable. Let us proclaim, loud and clear, that we shall have no part of such sickly “Yiddishkeit”. Our aim is to strive for Kiddush Hashem. And in order to reach this goal we shall band together and march together, we and our children *נקיי כפיים וברי לבב* with clean hands and pure hearts towards the dawn of Geuloh, speedily in our days.