
MAKING IMPRESSIONS FOR STARDOM OR INFAMY

Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem

Two mega-principles central to the daily life of every Jew, yet not necessarily well-known, are *Kiddush Hashem* – the precept of sanctifying the Name of God, and *Chillul Hashem* – the corresponding prohibition of profaning or desecrating His Name. Patiently waiting in a long line followed by a courteous “thank you” to a tired cashier, or in contrast, cutting in line amidst the ire of those around creates either a Kiddush Hashem or Chillul Hashem, respectively.

As this class will illustrate, Kiddush Hashem is defined as the promotion of God in the world, demonstrating His omnipresence, His omniscience, His almighty power, and His sovereignty over humanity. As the verse declares, the Nation of Israel was created for this very purpose: “This nation I have created for Myself, [in order that] they should tell of My glory” (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 43:21). “Telling God’s glory” is the essential definition of Kiddush Hashem. Ultimately, a Kiddush Hashem brings about the positive awareness of the Presence of God in the world. In contrast, Chillul Hashem undermines the positive awareness of God in the world.

Upon reflection, it seems remarkable that the sanctification and desecration of God’s Name should be dependent on the actions of humanity. It is, in fact, only by virtue of God’s infinite kindness that this is the case. Out of His desire to benefit mankind, God has placed the ability to increase or decrease His glory (His sanctification or desecration) in our hands. By fulfilling our purpose of sanctifying God, we can help bring the world to its completion.

This class will address the following questions:

- Why is Kiddush Hashem considered a central value of Judaism?
- Why should we always avoid making a Chillul Hashem?
- Do Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem apply only in public?
- What are examples in everyday life of Kiddush Hashem and Chillul Hashem?
- Are there times when we must choose to suffer martyrdom rather than transgress the Torah?

Class Outline

Section I. The Concept of Kiddush Hashem

Section II. The Concept of Chillul Hashem

Part A. The Seriousness of Chillul Hashem

Part B. Unrefined Behavior Can Be a Chillul Hashem

Part C. Chillul Hashem in Private

Section III. Kiddush Hashem through Martyrdom

Section IV. Everyone Can Make a Kiddush Hashem

SECTION I: THE CONCEPT OF KIDDUSH HASHEM

The following story is an introduction to the topic of Kiddush Hashem:

No doubt, the most famous incident involving Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky (1891-1986) in Tzitevian [Lithuania] – and one which he felt was a mitzvah to publicize – involved the local postmaster. Shortly after he assumed the position of rabbi, a Jew came to Reb Yaakov and told him that the postmaster had mistakenly given him change for a hundred-lit note instead of for the ten-lit note he had given him. Reb Yaakov advised the man to return the money.

*Several weeks later, Reb Yaakov was in the post office and this time the postmaster gave him more stamps than he had paid for. The smile on the postmaster's face as he handed Reb Yaakov his stamps alerted him that the postmaster was deliberately testing him to see whether the other Jew had just been an honest fool or had been acting according to the dictates of the new rabbi. Reb Yaakov was delighted that he had been presented with such an opportunity for Kiddush Hashem and instantly returned the extra stamps. Years later, he learned from the Holocaust survivors of Tzitevian that the postmaster had been one of the few locals who had been willing to hide Jews in his cellar, and he was convinced that such displays of honesty had been a major factor in that decision. (Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum, *Reb Yaakov, The Life and Times of HaGaon Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky*, Mesorah Publications, 1993 pp. 107-108)*

Befitting its centrality to the Jewish faith, the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem is often referred to as the “biggest” mitzvah of the Torah, as we shall soon see. It is the essence of our existence as a nation. Wherever we are, whatever we do, the concept of sanctifying the Name of God is always a pertinent issue. Although at times it may seem uncomfortable, the Jewish people live with a spotlight on them. As Jews, we play the role of God's representatives in the world; in all our ways we should seek to be faithful representatives, whose primary role is to bring glory to God.

1. Ner Le'Elef – Definition of Kiddush Hashem.

Kiddush Hashem is defined as the promotion of God in the world, demonstrating His omnipresence, His omniscience, His almighty power, and His sovereignty over humanity. As the verse declares, the Nation of Israel was created for this very purpose: “This nation I have created for Myself, [in order that] they should tell of My glory” (Yeshayahu/Isaiah 43:21). “Telling God's glory” is the essential definition of Kiddush Hashem. Ultimately, the goal of a Kiddush Hashem is to bring about the positive

awareness of the Presence of God in the world. As the Rambam writes in the Sefer HaMitzvot (Positive Mitzvah #9) “It is appropriate to publicize the Presence of God so that He will be known in the world,”
 – והיה בו ראוי שיפורסם הייחוד ויגלה ברבים.

In contrast, Chillul Hashem undermines the positive awareness of God in the world.

As we will see later, the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem, and the corresponding prohibition of Chillul Hashem, also applies in less public forums. Nevertheless, the greatest level of Kiddush Hashem is when the mitzvah is performed in front of a gathering of ten people, which is the minimum number that comprises a congregation (minyan). First and foremost, we are called upon to sanctify God in front of our fellow Jews – partners in the Divine mission – the mitzvah, however, even includes sanctifying God in front of non-Jews.

Although the state of affairs whereby “all the world will be filled with the knowledge of God” (Yeshayahu 11:9) will be brought about by God Himself, the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem (and the corresponding prohibition of Chillul Hashem) is a constant charge to each Jew to lead the world in that direction.

The following sources describe the concept of Kiddush Hashem:

2. **Vayikra (Leviticus) 22:32 – The Biblical source.**

You shall not desecrate My holy Name; and [rather] I should be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel.

ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל.

3. **Sifra 22:138 (cited by the Rambam/Maimonides in Sefer HaMitzvot, Positive Mitzvah #9) – The mission of the Jewish people in this world is to sanctify God’s Name in public.**

“I am God, Who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be a God unto you” – On condition that you should sanctify My Name in public.

אני ה' אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים (ויקרא כ"ה ל"ח) על מנת שתקדשו שמי ברבים.

The primary task of the Jewish people in this world is to sanctify God’s Name and thereby spread knowledge of God to others.

The verse in Source 1 appears to limit the scope of Kiddush Hashem to an audience of Jews. The next source explains that we are also commanded to sanctify God’s Name before non-Jews.

4. **Sefer Mitzvot Gedolot (Smag), Positive Mitzvah #74 – We are dispersed throughout the Diaspora to spread awareness of God to the nations that host us.**

I have already instructed the Jews who are in exile in Spain and the rest of the exiles in Europe that now that the exile has extended for such a long time, it is fitting for the Jewish people to separate themselves from the vanities of the world and grasp the seal of God, meaning truth; and that they should not lie to Jews or to gentiles nor cheat them in any way, and to sanctify themselves with that which is permitted to them, as it says, “The remnant of Israel will not speak

כבר דרשתי לגלות ירושלים אשר בספרד ולשאר גלויות אדום כי עתה שהאריך הגלות יותר מדאי יש לישראל להבדל מהבלי העולם ולאחוז בחותמו של הקב"ה שהוא אמת ושלא לשקר לא לישראל ולא לגוים ולא להטעותם בשום ענין ולקדש עצמם אף במותר להם שנאמר "שארית ישראל לא יעשו עולה ולא ידברו כזב ולא ימצא בפיהם לשון תרמית" (צפניה ג,ג).

falsehood and there will not be found in their mouths a language of trickery” (Tzefaniah/ Zephaniah 3:13).

And when God will come to redeem them, they will say, “He acted justly, for they are people of truth and the Torah of truth is in their mouths.” But if they will act with trickery toward the gentiles, they will say, “Look what God did – He chose as His share thieves and crooks.”

And it is also written, “And I will sow you like the land” (Hoshea/Hosea 2:25). A person only sows a *kur* [of seed] in order to find several *kur*. So does God sow [the people of] Israel in other lands in order that proselytes will be added to their ranks; but as long as they act with trickery, who will join them?

וכשיבא הקב"ה להושיעם יאמרו הגוים בדין עשה כי הם אנשי אמת ותורת אמת בפיהם אבל אם יתנהגו עם הגוים ברמאות יאמרו ראו מה עשה הקב"ה שבחר לחלקו גנבים ורמאים.

ועוד כתוב "וזרעתיה לי כארץ" (הושע ב, כה) כלום זורע אדם כור אחד אלא למצוא כמה כורים כך זרע הקב"ה את ישראל בארצות כדי שיתוספו עליהם גרים וכל זמן שהם מתנהגים בהן ברמאות מי ידבק בהם.

The following incident illustrates a Kiddush Hashem accomplished with non-Jews:

On Wednesday the 12th of February, Josh Stern was visiting New York City from Israel amidst a blizzard and freezing cold. Josh was scheduled to meet Malka Hirschfeld, a senior director of Camp Shira, to make summer plans. Braving conditions that should have kept him at home, Josh carefully drove his father-in-law's Ford Taurus down one-way Avenue N in Flatbush. Traffic was sparse – but suddenly, Josh's rear-view mirror was filled with the menacing image of a van barreling down the street.

Josh did what most drivers would have done in similar circumstances. He cleared to the right, held his breath and prayed for a modest collision. His prayer was fulfilled. He heard a crunch and felt the impact – not from the left where he expected it, but from the right. The Taurus' right, side-view mirror had connected with the mirror on the driver's side of a red Porsche. It was no garden-variety, used Porsche. It was the recently released 911 Carrera 4S. Designed for the racetrack with 450 horsepower, 0-60 MPH in 4.1 seconds, it cost a mere \$93,200.00. Taking the price tag and dividing by inches, the damage that Josh inflicted was easily a four-digit figure. Josh noticed a temporary paper license plate in the window featuring the date of issuance: February 11 – just the day before, a brand new car!

With the alarm screeching, Josh assumed the owner would be out any minute, but maybe because of the cold, or because sirens constantly sound in Gotham, no one emerged. Josh called Malka on his cell phone and asked her to come out, as she was only a few doors down. Malka took one look at the glistening car and observed, “This doesn't belong to anyone on this block. If I were you,” she suggested, “I wouldn't stick around.”

“I can't do that,” Josh protested. “It was an accident, but I hit him.”

“I really don't think you should stay here,” Malka insisted.

“I can't just walk away – I have to let him know I did it.”

“Are you kidding,” Malka yelled. “This is New York. The guy'll kill you! Plus if you stay out here any longer you'll freeze. So either way you're finished!”

“You go back to your house and I’ll be in real soon.” Josh wrote a note, placed it on the Porsche, parked his car and went up to Malka’s apartment to take care of his business.

Josh still felt guilty even after leaving the note and deliberately positioned himself in a chair facing the street. After nearly two hours, he saw what must have been the owner peering at his car and ... crying. The man, in his early thirties, was barefoot and wearing nothing but shorts. Josh pointed to the figure, but Malka claimed she did not know who he was. Josh threw on his coat and headed for the door despite Malka’s desperate pleas to reconsider.

Josh silently walked over to the man who was breathing steam, slapping his sides for warmth and heaving as he sobbed industrial-strength tears. “Is this your car?” asked Josh. Nick Accordo replied, to no one in particular, “Brand new, brand NEW! I just got it; I just got it! Can you believe it? I don’t even have it one day and look! If I ever get my hands on that –”

“I’m really sorry,” Josh interjected at this critical juncture. “I’m so sorry, but I hit your car. It was an accident. I’ve been waiting here for about an hour and a half.”

Suddenly Nick stopped heaving and started blinking as though the falling snow were actually freshly diced onions. “No way. You’re messin’ with me.”

“Like I said, I’m really sorry.”

“No way, no way,” Nick said, again displaying his propensity for repetition. “I really don’t believe you, dude; you from New Yawk?”

Suddenly, a woman appeared across the street and Nick called out to her, “Carmela, this guy hit my car! He hit me an hour and a half ago and he’s been waiting here to tell me.”

“You ain’t from New Yawk, are ya,” Carm affirmed, rolling her eyes in wonder.

Nick turned to Josh. “Nick Accordo, who’re you?”

“Josh Stern. I’d like to give you the insurance details, but don’t you think we should, er, do this inside?”

Either Nick didn’t hear Josh’s suggestion or it didn’t register, but he had one thing to say and he repeated it several times. “I promise you, I will not take more than the repair cost, not a penny.” Josh supplied him with his father-in-law’s insurance information and apologized once again for all the grief he had caused. Three weeks later Josh’s father-in-law received the following letter in the mail:

Dear Mr. Wasserman,

I wish to share my feelings with you about your son-in-law, Josh Stern. I’ve lived in New York all my life, and I guess – as they say – we New Yorkers have an attitude problem. I am aware of this. And I do expect things to go a certain way. But on that cold, wintry day, a day that I will never forget, Josh changed my philosophy. More importantly he changed my attitude. It was an emotional time for my sister and me for reasons Josh could not have known. My mother died suddenly the night before and at a time when I was basically angry at the world, Josh taught me that there are still individuals with a sense of responsibility, fair play, fundamental integrity, and kindness.

The aggravation I went through with the car repair was more than worth it for this lesson and for the privilege of meeting an unassuming, honest person like your son-in-law. I told many people at my mother’s funeral about what Josh had done and everyone was very impressed with his honor and humanity. I know that in Heaven,

my mother is smiling because of Josh's kindness and uprightness. My mother always felt that I was too critical and mistrusting (she was neither born or raised in NY). Therefore, even though the events of that Wednesday delayed me, I trust she will forgive me for being late to her wake.

Respectfully,
Nicholas Accordo

(From Hanoch Teller, *The Great Divide*, in *Too Beautiful*, Feldheim and NYC Publishers.)

5. **Rabbi Dan Roth, *Relevance: Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers) for the Twenty First Century*, Feldheim Publishers, 2007, pp. 104-105 – Kiddush Hashem in our times.**

God created the world to spread His glory. To this end He set aside the Jewish people to sanctify His Name and be a light unto the nations. Had we not transgressed and been expelled from our Land, God's glory and existence would have been recognized throughout the world relatively quickly. The presence of the Temple and the open miracles that God would have done for us would have made it clear to the world that He alone runs and controls the universe. The nations would have seen God's Providence much as the Egyptians saw it when He split the Reed Sea.

Because of our transgressions however, we were deemed unworthy of this supernatural existence. Yet God did not abandon us. Instead, He relates to us through hidden, natural ways. Since it takes much longer for the nations of the world to recognize God's existence by these means, it only becomes possible when we are dispersed amongst them and are actually living in their midst.

Thus, the purpose of our exile among the nations is to strengthen belief in God and sanctify His Name – not by lecturing or proselytizing, but by deed and example. One who desecrates God's Name, even unintentionally ... acts against the ultimate purpose of Creation, and, in particular, of the Jewish Nation. Our role in exile as a "light unto the nations" is disregarded by many people ... We forget that we have a positive part to play – to be God's ambassadors to the world.

The impression we make in our daily dealing with non-Jews must be in the forefront of our minds. Whenever we meet gentiles, we should ask ourselves, "What mark will I leave? Will his respect for God and His nation increase as a result of my coming into contact with him?"

And if this is true about our relationships with non-Jews, how much more so is it true when we interact with fellow Jews who are our own brothers and sisters ...

Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv once commented that every generation possesses a mitzvah that is especially significant for its time. The mitzvah for our day, he said is to "let the Name of Heaven become beloved through you."

6. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Sotah 10b – Recognition for public sanctification.**

Rabbi Shimon Chasida taught, "Yosef (Joseph), who sanctified the Name of Heaven in private [when he resisted the advances of Potifar's wife – Rashi, Sotah 36b], was rewarded by a letter of God's Name being added to his name. [This is referred to in Tehillim/Psalms 81:6, in which Yosef's name appears with an added *heh*.]

"Yehudah (Judah), who sanctified the Name of Heaven in public [when he saved Tamar and

א"ר שמעון חסידא יוסף שקידש שם שמים בסתר
הוסיפו עליו אות אחת משמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא.

יהודה שקידש שם שמים בפרהסיא נקרא כולו על
שמו של הקדוש ברוך הוא

her two children by admitting his role], was rewarded by being called entirely by the Name of God. [The letters of the name Yehudah include the four letters of the Holy Name.]”

A recent Kiddush Hashem was read by tens of millions of people after a surprising decision by a Jewish businessman.

7. **The Mensch of Malden Mills, www.cbsnews.com – Mr. Aaron Feuerstein rebuilt his business and supported his payroll when he could have retired and collected fire insurance.**

The fire that broke out at Malden Mills in the winter of 1995 was the largest fire Massachusetts had seen for a century. Malden Mills was one of the few large employers in a town that was already in desperate straits. “The only thing that went through my mind was, how can I possibly recreate it?” says owner Aaron Feuerstein, the third generation of his family to run the mill. “I was proud of the family business and I wanted to keep that alive, and I wanted that to survive. But I also felt the responsibility for all my employees, to take care of them, to give them jobs.”

Feuerstein decided to rebuild right there in Lawrence – not to move down South or overseas as much of the industry had done in search of cheap labor. He also made another shocking decision. For the next 60 days, all employees would be paid their full salaries.

“I think it was a wise business decision, but that isn’t why I did it. I did it because it was the right thing to do,” says Feuerstein. Some might have said the proper business decision was to take the \$300 million in insurance and retire. “And what would I do with it? Eat more? Buy another suit? Retire and die?” asks Feuerstein. “No, that did not enter my mind.”

He kept his promises. Workers picked up their checks for months. In all, he paid out \$25 million and became known as the Mensch of Malden Mills – a businessman who seemed to care more about his workers than about his net worth. For guidance he turns to the Torah, the book of Jewish law ...

Some background to the next source: Pinchas (Phineas), a grandson of Aaron the High Priest, heroically stood up to one of the leaders of the tribe of Shimon (Simon) engaged in an act of Chillul Hashem (Bamidbar/Numbers 25:6-8). As a reward for Pinchas’s act of Kiddush Hashem, there is a mitzvah for all Jews to award the priests the choice gifts of meat from every animal that is slaughtered for private use (Devarim/Deuteronomy 18:3). The following source elaborates.

8. **Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah #506 – We gain material reward in this world for making a Kiddush Hashem, in addition to reward in the World to Come (as with all mitzvot).**

We learn from this [mitzvah to give the priesthood choice gifts of animals slaughtered for private use] that someone who publicly sanctifies the Name of Heaven brings merit to himself and to his descendants in this world; notwithstanding the merit that is reserved for him in the World to Come [as with all mitzvot].

ולמדנו מזה שהמקדש שם שמים בגלוי זוכה לו
ולדורותיו בעולם הזה, מלבד זכותו שקיימת לנפשו
בעולם הבא.

The following story is a remarkable example of a Kiddush Hashem by a young boy:

As a young boy, Rabbi Yitzchak Eisenbach from Jerusalem was walking to the Western Wall through the Jaffa gate one Sabbath afternoon, in a section of the city which was densely inhabited by Arabs. As he walked through the narrow, unpaved streets he passed numerous Arab-owned cafes in which young and old folks were milling around. Suddenly Yitzele noticed a gold coin on the sidewalk. The value of the coin was such that it could support a family the size of his own for two weeks. The poverty in his home was wrenching, and he was thrilled at the prospect of being able to help his parents in their struggle for their family's survival.

However, because it was the Sabbath (and the money was forbidden to be handled), he would not pick up the golden coin. He immediately put his foot on the coin to hide it from view, and decided to stand there until nightfall (after the Sabbath), when he would take the coin home to his family. For another child his age, the time element might have posed a problem, but for the determined Yitzele there would be no difficulty, even though there were four hours left to the Sabbath!

After Yitzele had been standing immobile in the Arab street for more than an hour, an Arab teenager approached him and asked, "Why don't you move on? Why are you standing here like a statue?"

At first Yitzele didn't answer, but when the larger and stronger boy persisted, he replied innocently, "I have something under my foot that I can't pick up because it is the Sabbath today. I'm watching it this way, so that after the Sabbath I can take ..."

Before the last words were out of Yitzele's mouth, the Arab boy shoved Yitzele to the ground, swiftly bent down, plucked up the coin and ran off. Yitzele lay in the street, stunned. By the time he got up, the culprit had long since disappeared over a fence, and Yitzele knew it would be hopeless – perhaps even dangerous – for a Jew to chase an Arab in that neighborhood.

Late that afternoon a dejected Yitzele made his way back to the synagogue of the Chernobyler Rebbe, Rabbi Nachum Twersky (1840-1936), where his father prayed Minchah (the afternoon prayers) and ate the third Sabbath meal. Yitzele usually helped set up the chairs and tables and put out the food for the men who sat down to eat with the Rebbe, but today he sat in a corner by himself.

The Rebbe, who loved little Yitzele, realized that something was amiss because the chairs and benches were in disarray. He looked around for a moment and then saw Yitzele sitting in a corner by himself, downcast.

The Chernobyler Rebbe approached the child and asked, "What's wrong? You look so unhappy. We all need you at the table."

Yitzele told the Rebbe what had happened earlier that afternoon, and explained how he felt about the opportunity he had lost. The Rebbe listened intently, then, taking Yitzele by the hand, he said, "Come to the table with me now, and after the Sabbath come into my house."

After the Sabbath, Yitzele followed the Rebbe into his home, which was connected to the synagogue. The Rebbe opened a drawer and removed from it a golden coin similar to the one Yitzele had seen near the Jaffa Gate that afternoon. "Here, this is yours," said the Rebbe. "However, I am giving it to you on one condition: that you give me the reward of the mitzvah that you did this afternoon."

The startled young child looked up at the Rebbe. "The Rebbe wants the reward in exchange for the coin?"

"Yes," the Rebbe said. "You made a great Kiddush Hashem (sanctification of God's Name) by not picking up the money because it was the Sabbath. The coin is for you, though. I just want the reward."

Yitzele was astounded. Was the mitzvah that great? Was it really worth so much? He looked at the coin and thought fleetingly about what it could buy for his family. He looked up at the Rebbe and said, "If that is what the mitzvah is worth, then the mitzvah is not for sale."

The Rebbe bent and kissed the boy on his forehead. (Rabbi Paysach Krohn, In the Footsteps of the Maggid, pp. 116-118)

Yitzele performed a Kiddush Hashem by placing God's Will before anything else in the world, including his own will. (For further development of the concept of Kiddush Hashem by placing His will before our own, please see Rabbi Yisrael Salanter, *Ohr Yisrael*, Letter 13.)

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ≈ The Jewish people were charged with the task of sanctifying God's Name in this world from the time that they became a nation when God took them out of Egypt.
- ≈ It is virtuous to make a Kiddush Hashem in private, but a public Kiddush Hashem is a greater achievement, and has greater reward.
- ≈ Kiddush Hashem does not just apply in the presence of Jews – we are commanded to sanctify God's Name before all of humanity. Our presence dispersed among the nations in exile is designed to spread awareness of God throughout the world.

SECTION II: THE CONCEPT OF CHILLUL HASHEM

The following story introduces the principle of Chillul Hashem:

I once heard something very disturbing. I don't know if it is true or not, but if such a story is even making the rounds, something is dreadfully wrong. They say a Tower airplane once landed in Israel toward the end of December. About half the passengers were Jews and the other half were Christian Yuletide visitors. This plane had been delayed on the runway, and by the time it reached the terminal many passengers were pulling their carry-on luggage from the overhead bins. The stewardess got on the public address system and said, "To all of you who are standing we want to wish you a Happy Chanukah, and to all those seated we wish you Seasons Greetings."

Obviously there's a perception that there's something out of line ... What do people think of us? That we're rude and grasping? What a horrendous Chillul Hashem! (Rabbi Yissocher Frand, Listen to Your Messages, ArtScroll Publications, p. 123.)

The opposite of Kiddush Hashem is Chillul Hashem (desecration of God's Name). Just as a Jew has the power to spread awareness of God in the world, he also wields the ability to distance people from God. The worst thing a Jew can do is to commit a Chillul Hashem. The consequences of such an act will often linger long after the act is committed.

It is important to note the precise term of sanctifying and desecrating the *Name of Hashem*, or the *Name of Heaven*. We cannot desecrate God Himself; we can, however, desecrate His revelation and manifestation in the world, which is embodied by His Name. (See Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin *Nefesh HaChaim* 3:8 for further development of this idea.)

PART A. THE SERIOUSNESS OF CHILLUL HASHEM

Because it undermines the fundamental purpose of a Jew, the transgression of Chillul Hashem is more severe than any other sin in the Torah. As the sources will show, it is the only transgression for which repentance, some level of personal suffering, and the power of Yom Kippur combined cannot atone. However, there is an opportunity to make amends by seeking opportunities to make a Kiddush Hashem as well as engaging in Torah study.

1. Rambam, Hilchot Teshuvah (Laws of Repentance) 1:4 – Chillul Hashem is the most difficult transgression to gain atonement for.

Regarding what is this [order of atonement] said? Regarding one who did not desecrate the Name when he transgressed. But a person who does desecrate the Name, even after he has repented, and Yom Kippur has passed, and he is still repentant, and he undergoes suffering – [nevertheless,] does not achieve full atonement until he dies.

במה דברים אמורים בשלא חילל את השם בשעה שעבר אבל המחלל את השם אע"פ שעשה תשובה והגיע יום הכפורים והוא עומד בתשובתו ובאו עליו יסורין אינו מתכפר לו כפרה גמורה עד שימות.

The level of difficulty of gaining atonement is a way to accurately gauge the seriousness of a transgression. For example, atonement for the least serious transgressions occurs immediately after one repents. For the next category of more serious transgressions the prerequisites for atonement are repentance and the passing of the Day of Atonement; while for the most serious category atonement only occurs when it is preceded by repentance, the passing of the Day of Atonement, and some degree of personal suffering.

(Regarding the suffering a person undergoes as atonement: as a loose analogy, if a person commits a capital crime, he is incarcerated (1) to remove him as a menace to society for a period deemed adequate to enable him to reform his behavior, and (2) to be in an sub-optimal environment to motivate him to want to both return to normal society and avoid repeating the crime so that he should not have to return to jail.)

When a sin involves Chillul Hashem, however, atonement does not occur until a person leaves this world – even after having undergone the first three required steps.

2. Rabbeinu Yonah, Shaarei Teshuvah (The Gates of Repentance) 4:16 – It is possible to gain atonement in one’s lifetime by either devoting the rest of one’s life to Kiddush Hashem, or through constant exertion in Torah study.

Now let us talk of one who has committed the sin of desecrating the Name of God, whose sin will not be atoned for through suffering. We mentioned earlier that he has a means of rectifying it by sanctifying the Name of God at all times.

He can also gain atonement by consistent and diligent Torah study, as the Sages said, “The transgression of the House of Eli will not be atoned for through sacrifice and meal offering” (Shmuel/Samuel I 3:14). [The verse implies that] it will not be atoned for through sacrifice and meal offering, but it will be atoned for through Torah study.

עתה נדבר על מי שיש בידו עון חילול ה' שלא יתכפר עונו ביסורים. והנה הקדמנו כי יש לו רפואות תעלה אם יקדש את ה' יתברך תמיד.

עוד תמצא לו כפרה בהגיונו תמיד בתורה ויגיעתו בה, כאשר אמרו זכרונם לברכה (ר"ה יח:): אם יתכפר עון בית עלי בזבח ובמנחה (שמואל א' ג:יד) בזבח ומנחה אין מתכפר אבל מתכפר בדברי תורה.

Exerting oneself in Torah study is only achieved when a person pushes himself to think differently than he did in the past, and to leave his natural patterns of thought (Rema Mi'Pano, Chikur Din 1:23).

3. **Rabbeinu Bachya, Vayikra 22:32 – Chillul Hashem is worse than idol worship. Yet, it can be corrected by performing a Kiddush Hashem in the exact situation where there was formerly Chillul Hashem.**

“You shall not desecrate My holy Name, and I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel” [Vayikra 22:32] – Chillul Hashem is a very serious transgression. [For example] God forgave the sin of idol worship, but did not forgive the desecration of the Name, as the prophet said, “And you, House of Israel, let every man go serve his idols, and do not desecrate my name any longer” (Yechezkel/Ezekiel 20:39) ...

However, we have found a means of correcting the transgression of Chillul Hashem by sanctifying His Name in the exact situation where one formerly desecrated it. And this is why the words “and I should be sanctified” are juxtaposed [to the words “You shall not desecrate My holy Name”].

ולא תחללו את שם קדשי ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל - חילול ה' הוא עון חמור ביותר, ומצינו שויתר הקב"ה על עבודה זרה ולא ויתר על חילול ה', והוא שאמר הנביא: (יחזקאל כ, לט) "ואתם בית ישראל איש את גולו לכו עבדו ואת שם קדשי לא תחללו עוד"....

ואמנם מצינו תקנה לעון חילול השם כשיקדש את השם כנגד מה שחלל, ולכך סמך לו: "ונקדשתי".

Rabbeinu Bachya therefore teaches us of the possibility to rectify Chillul Hashem in one's lifetime.

4. **Rabbi Dan Roth, Relevance – Pirkei Avot for the Twenty First Century, Pirkei Avot 4:4, p. 104 – Why is unintentional Chillul Hashem still so serious?**

There are many actions that one might do inadvertently, such as turning on a light or dropping a pen. Some deeds, however, are so serious that one cannot claim that they were done accidentally. For example, one cannot assert that he lashed out at the President or Prime Minister of a country accidentally. In the same way, the sin of Chillul Hashem is so grave that one cannot claim that he did it by mistake.

5. **Maharal, Derech Chaim, Pirkei Avot 4:4 – Why is Chillul Hashem such a serious crime regardless of the motivation of the one who commits it?**

In Jewish civil law, when someone harms another person – even unintentionally – and it leaves a mark, the Torah is not lenient. Similarly, when desecrating God's honor in the world, there is no leniency for doing it unintentionally [since it leaves a “mark” on His honor].

לענין נזיקין כאשר נעשה רושם לא אמרה תורה להקל אצלו כמו בשאר שוגג, וכן כאן כאשר היה גורם חלול כבודו יתברך אין דומה חטא זה אל חטא אחר שוגג וכי'.

In an instance of one person causing injury or damage to another, the injury or damage suffered is the same whether it was intentional or inadvertent. So too, the damage the Name of God suffers in this world due to Chillul Hashem is real regardless of whether it was done intentionally or inadvertently.

PART B. UNREFINED BEHAVIOR CAN BE A CHILLUL HASHEM

Irresponsible behavior performed by a Jew lessens respect for the Jewish people, and consequently for God Whom they represent in this world.

A rabbi accused of hitting an unattended car in a parking lot and fleeing pleaded guilty to failure to report an accident in Pitkin County Court on Tuesday. Because of his standing as a rabbi, his traffic case garnered plenty of attention in Aspen (Excerpt from the Aspen Daily News, Dec.16, 2009)

1. Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah (Laws of the Fundamentals of Torah) 5:11 – Unrefined behavior by a Torah scholar is a Chillul Hashem.

There are other things included under Chillul Hashem when committed by someone great in Torah and known for his piety, which other people will talk about negatively. Even though they are not transgressions, he has nevertheless desecrated God’s Name. The following are examples of this form of Chillul Hashem: one who buys something but does not pay immediately, despite having the money, and waits for the seller to claim the money from him; or one who indulges in frivolity or eating and drinking with unrefined people; or one who speaks unpleasantly to others and does not greet them with a pleasant demeanor, but rather is a quarrelsome and angry person; or similar matters. According to the person’s stature, so must he be very exacting with himself and go beyond the strict letter of the law.

ויש דברים אחרים שהן בכלל חילול השם והוא שיעשה אותם אדם גדול בתורה ומפורסם בחסידות דברים שהבריות מרננים אחריו בשבילם ואע"פ שאינן עבירות הרי זה חילל את השם כגון שלקח ואינו נותן דמי המקח לאלתר והוא שיש לו ונמצאו המוכרים תובעין והוא מקיפן או שירבה בשחוק או באכילה ושתיה אצל עמי הארץ וביניהן או שדברו עם הבריות אינו בנחת ואינו מקבלן בסבר פנים יפות אלא בעל קמטה וכעס וכיוצא בדברים האלו הכל לפי גדלו של חכם צריך שידקדק על עצמו ויעשה לפנים משורת הדין.

A Torah scholar is held to more exacting standards than the common populace because people expect more from him. Understandably, the impact upon those who observe his negative behavior is great.

2. Dan Roth, Relevance, Pirkei Avot for the Twenty First Century, Pirkei Avot 4:4, p. 100 – Greater sensitivity is required by Torah scholars.

In defining Chillul Hashem, the Talmud (Yoma 86a) quotes the statement of Rav that if he were to buy meat without paying for it immediately, it would be a Chillul Hashem. Rav intended to pay eventually, so there would be nothing wrong with his buying on credit. Nevertheless, because Rav was known for his Torah scholarship and piety, even the slightest act that could be construed as stealing would make people think less of Torah. Thus, it emerges from the Talmud that any action that puts Torah in an unfavorable light is a Chillul Hashem, even if no specific sin is involved.

This is also clear from the rabbi’s remarkable statement that a Torah scholar who has a stain on his clothes is liable for the death penalty (Shabbat 114a). Now, nowhere does the Torah say, “Thou shall not walk around with a stain on thy clothes.” How, then, can this warrant such a severe penalty? The explanation is that a Torah scholar is God’s representative in this world. When people see him wearing dirty clothes they will say, “Look, how unkempt Torah scholars are.” By causing people to have less respect for God and his Torah, he becomes guilty of desecrating God’s Name.

Chillul Hashem is relative to the status of the person doing the act. What is considered Chillul Hashem for one person is not necessarily a Chillul Hashem for another. This is because the more learned a person is, the greater the level of refinement people expect from him and the more they will scrutinize his every deed. Thus, for Rav, who was exceptionally pious, not paying immediately constituted a Chillul Hashem, whereas for most of us it would not.

Nevertheless, since Chillul Hashem depends on the way people perceive us, our true status may not be relevant. For example, an ordinary yeshivah student may not think of himself as being a Torah scholar and so might not feel that the rabbi's sharp comment about an unkempt Torah scholar applies to him. But his humility would be out of place, because to the outside world he appears like a Torah scholar.

The Chofetz Chaim was once rushing to catch a train when he was asked to be the tenth man for a minyan [a quorum of men for prayer] in a mourner's home. Even though he had already prayed and completing the minyan would have meant missing the train, he agreed to help so as not to cause a Chillul Hashem.

Had the Chofetz Chaim refused to help, it certainly would not have been a transgression. Nevertheless, since the people may not have understood why he refused, he felt it would have been a Chillul Hashem to do so. Again we see that a Chillul Hashem depends on the perception of the behavior rather than on the behavior itself. (Rabbi Dan Roth, Pirkei Avot for the Twenty First Century, p. 100)

3. **Rambam, Hilchot De'ot (Laws of Conduct) 5:3 – Public drunkenness for no particular reason by a Torah scholar is a Chillul Hashem.**

When a Torah scholar drinks wine, it should be an accompaniment to his meal. Anyone who gets drunk [for no particular reason] is committing a sin, and is degrading and spoiling his wisdom. And if he gets drunk in front of those who are unrefined, he desecrates the Name.

רמב"ם הלכות דעות פרק ה הלכה ג : כשהחכם שותה יין אינו שותה אלא כדי לשרות אכילה שבמעיו, וכל המשתכר הרי זה חוטא ומגונה ומפסיד חכמתו ואם נשתכר בפני עמי הארץ הרי זה חילל את השם.

(Even though the Sages instituted a mitzvah to drink wine on Purim, the purpose on that day is “to use refined physical enjoyments to reach great heights of love for God and wonder at the miracles He did for us” (Biur Halachah 695, s.v. *ad d'lo yadah*). On the other hand, if he thinks that he will act like a drunk and lower his worth in the eyes of others, then he should not drink, in keeping with the previous source (ibid.). See Morasha class on *Purim: The Mitzvot of the Day* for more on this topic.)

PART C. CHILLUL HASHEM IN PRIVATE

Although the conventional transgression of Chillul Hashem occurs in front of a group of Jews or non-Jews, there are particular sins that cause a desecration of the Name even when they are committed in total privacy.

1. **Vayikra 19:12 – The prohibition to swear falsely in God's Name.**

You shall not swear falsely by My Name, thereby desecrating the Name of your God – I am God.

לֹא תִשָּׁבְעוּ בִשְׁמִי לְשָׁקֵר וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת שֵׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲנִי ה'.

2. **Rabbeinu Bachya, ibid. – The damage caused by certain transgressions, even when committed privately.**

If a person swears falsely by it [the Name], he desecrates the Name, for he separates its strength and uproots it [by diminishing the credibility of the Name of God]. Regarding this it is said, “thereby desecrating the Name of your God” ... We thus learn that one who swears [falsely] by His Name desecrates the Name of his God, and he who desecrates the Name of his God will not be pardoned by Him ...

ואם נשבע בו לשקר הרי זה מחלל את השם כי הוא מפריד ממנו כחו ועקרו. זה שאמר “וחללת את שם אלהיך” וכו’ ונמצאת למד שכל הנשבע בשמו מחלל שם אלהיו והנושא שם אלהיו לא ינקה ה’ וכו’.

By swearing in God’s Name we are supporting our oath with the reputation of truth inherent in the Name of God. Someone who swears falsely diminishes the credibility of the Name of God in this world.

3. **Rabbeinu Yonah, Pirkei Avot 4:4 – Chillul Hashem in private constitutes an action which inherently desecrates the Name of God, such as idolatry and swearing falsely.**

That which we have learned, “A person who desecrates the Name of Heaven in private,” refers to matters that are inherently a desecration of the Name, such as idolatry ... for he does not accept His Godliness. Likewise, one who swears falsely and thus deceives others by using the Name of God, also desecrates His Name ...

וזה ששינינו “כל המחלל שם שמים בסתר” מדבר בדברים שהם בעצמם חילול השם, כמו עבודה זרה ... שאינו מודה לאלוהותו, וכמו כן נשבע לשקר, שגונב דעת הבריות בשמו של הקב“ה, חילול השם הוא...

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ⌘ Chillul Hashem is more serious than idolatry.
- ⌘ Atonement for someone who commits a Chillul Hashem is more difficult than for any other transgression.
- ⌘ Even unintentional Chillul Hashem is a serious transgression since God’s honor in this world has been diminished.
- ⌘ There are transgressions that inherently desecrate God’s Name regardless of the forum within which they occur. Swearing falsely in God’s Name is a Chillul Hashem because of the use of the Name of God to bolster a falsehood.
- ⌘ Idolatry constitutes a Chillul Hashem because it grants legitimacy to other deities and thereby denies the truthfulness of God.

SECTION III: KIDDUSH HASHEM THROUGH MARTYRDOM

The supreme way that we sanctify God's Name is by leading a life guided by the Torah. At certain periods in Jewish history, Jews have been forced to accept other religions or commit one of the three cardinal transgressions (idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder) under the threat of death. In such times a Jew is called upon to give up his life for his faith – a sacrifice that demonstrates in a powerful way that God's Will, as guided by the Torah, is the ultimate reason for life.

Although the reward for no other single mitzvah can match that of giving up one's life in sanctifying the Name of Hashem (see Rambam below, Source #8), this in no way implies that it surpasses the achievements of a lifetime of Torah and mitzvot, nor should Jews proactively seek such a situation.

Nevertheless, throughout the millennia, individuals and even entire Jewish communities chose to give up their lives rather than accept other religions. Even if a person is killed simply because he is Jewish, even though he is not given any choice (for example, during the Holocaust), he is considered to have given up his life for God and has made a Kiddush Hashem, even if he was a non-practicing Jew his whole life (Rabbi Aaron Roth, *Mevakesh Emunah* (5709) pp. 27-28; Midrash Tehillim 9:13). Is there something unique in the Jewish spirit that enables seemingly ordinary Jews to give up their lives in order to remain steadfast in their devotion to God?

1. **Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Tanya, Likutei Amarim, Ch. 14 – Even the simplest Jew is endowed with a hidden love of God, expressed by a willingness to give up his life for the Name of God.**

I wish to cling to Him ... by virtue of the love that is hidden in my heart, as in the heart of all Jews, who are called "lovers of Your Name" [Tehilim 5:12]. Even the most unaffiliated Jew is capable of giving up his life for the sake of Kiddush Hashem.

רק אני רוצה לדבקה בו...מאהבה המסותרת שבלבי
לה' כמו בלב כללות ישראל שנקראו אוהבי שמך,
ואפילו קל שבקלים יכול למסור את נפשו על קדושת
ה'.

The following story is a dramatic example of the previous source.

In the Janowska Road Camp, there was a foreman of a brigade from Lvov by the name of Schneeweiss, one of those people one stays away from if he values life. He had known Rabbi Israel Spira in Lemberg (Lvov), but was not aware that the latter was an inmate in the camp. Only a handful of Chasidim who were close to the rabbi knew the rabbi's identity and they kept it a secret.

The season of the Jewish holidays was approaching. As the date of Yom Kippur was nearing, the fears in the camp mounted. Everyone knew that the Germans especially liked to use the Jewish holidays as days for inflicting terror and death. In Janowska, a handful of old-timers remembered large selections on Simchat Torah and Purim.

It was the eve of Yom Kippur. The tensions and fears were at their height. A few Chasidim came to the Rabbi of Bluzhov and asked him to approach Schneeweiss and request that on Yom Kippur his group not be assigned to any of the thirty-nine main categories of work, so that their transgression of the law by working on Yom Kippur would not be a major one. The rabbi was very moved by the request, and despite his fears, for he would have to disclose his identity, went to Schneeweiss. He knew quite well that Schneeweiss did not have much respect for Jewish tradition. Even prior to the outbreak of World War II, he had publicly violated the Jewish holidays and transgressed Jewish law. Here in Janowska, he was a cruel man who knew no mercy.

With a heavy heart the rabbi went before Schneeweiss. "You probably remember me. I am the rabbi of Pruchnik, Rabbi Israel Spira." Schneeweiss did not respond. "You are a Jew like myself," the rabbi continued. "Tonight is Kol Nidrei night. There is a small group of young Jews who do not want to transgress any of the thirty-nine main categories of work. It means everything to them. It is the essence of their existence. Can you do something about it? Can you help?"

The rabbi noticed that a hidden shiver went through Schneeweiss as he listened to the rabbi's strange request. The rabbi took Schneeweiss's hand and said, "I promise you, as long as you live, it will be a good life. I beg you to do it for us so that we may still find some dignity in our humiliating existence."

The stern face of Schneeweiss changed. For the first time since his arrival in Janowska, there was a human spark in it.

"Tonight I can't do a thing," said Schneeweiss, the first words he had uttered since the rabbi had come to him. "I have no jurisdiction over the night brigade. But tomorrow, on Yom Kippur, I will do for you what I can." The rabbi shook Schneeweiss's hand in gratitude and left.

In the morning, the rabbi and small group of young Chasidim were summoned to Schneeweiss's cottage. "I heard that you prayed last night. I don't believe in prayers," Schneeweiss told them. "On principle, I even oppose them. But I admire your courage. For you know well that the penalty for prayer in Janowska is death." With that he motioned them to follow him.

He took them to the S.S. headquarters in the camp, to a large wooden house. "You fellows will shine the floor without any polish or wax. And you, rabbi, will clean the window with dry rags so that you will not transgress any of the thirty-nine categories of work." He left the room abruptly without saying another word.

At about twelve o'clock noon, the door opened wide and into the room stormed two angels of death, S.S. men in their black uniforms, may their names be obliterated. They were followed by a food cart filled to capacity. "Noontime, time to eat bread, soup, meat," announced one of the S.S. men. The room was filled with an aroma of freshly cooked food, such food as they had not seen since the German occupation: white bread, steaming hot vegetable soup, and huge portions of meat.

The tall S.S. man commanded in a high-pitched voice, "You must eat immediately, otherwise you will be shot on the spot!" None of them moved. The rabbi remained on the ladder, the Chasidim on the floor. The Germans repeated the orders. The rabbi and the Chasidim remained glued to their places. The S.S. man called to Schneeweiss. "Schneeweiss, if the dirty dogs refuse to eat, I will kill you along with them."

Schneeweiss pulled himself to attention, looked the German directly in the eyes, and said in a very quiet tone, "We Jews do not eat today. Today is Yom Kippur, our most holy day, the Day of Atonement."

"You don't understand, Jewish dog," roared the taller of the two. "I command you in the name of the Fuhrer and the Third Reich, fress!"

Schneeweiss, composed, his head high, repeated the same answer. "We Jews obey the law of our tradition. Today is Yom Kippur, a day of fasting."

The German took out his revolver from its holster and pointed it at Schneeweiss's temple. Schneeweiss remained calm. He stood still, at attention, his head high. A shot pierced the room. Schneeweiss fell. On the freshly polished floor, a puddle of blood was growing bigger and bigger.

The rabbi and the Chasidim stood as if frozen in their places. They could not believe what their eyes had just witnessed. Schneeweiss, the man who in the past had publicly transgressed against the Jewish tradition, had sanctified God's Name publicly and died a martyr's death for the sake of Jewish honor.

(Yaffa Eliach, *Chasidic Tales of the Holocaust*, Vintage Books, 1988, pp. 155-159, excerpt based on a conversation with the Grand Rabbi of Bluzhov, Rabbi Israel Spira.)

When are we obligated to give up our live to sanctify the Name of God?

2. Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 74a – The three cardinal prohibitions for which one must rather give one’s life than commit: idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder.

Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yehozedek, “They took a vote on the matter and decided in the attic of Beit Nitzah in Lod – regarding all the prohibitions in the Torah if a person says, ‘Transgress such and such a prohibition and you will not be killed (but if you refuse, you will be killed),’ one should transgress the prohibition and not allow himself to be killed, except for [the sins of] idol worship, forbidden sexual relationships, and murder.” [See the continuation of the Gemara for the derivation of the laws].

אמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי שמעון בן יהוּצדק: נימנו וגמרו בעליית בית נתזה בלוד: כל עבירות שבתורה אם אומרין לאדם עבור ואל תהרג - יעבור ואל יהרג, חוץ מעבודה זרה וגילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.

The prohibitions of idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder may not be violated under any circumstances, in public or in private. The value of life – sublime as it may be – is compromised by violation of any of these cardinal prohibitions.

3. Ibid. – Kiddush Hashem in a time of persecution applies to all the mitzvot in the Torah.

Rabbi Yochanan said, “They only said [the above] concerning a period when there is no religious persecution, but in a time of religious persecution one must give up his life even when forced to violate a mitzvah that people treat lightly.”

א”ר יוחנן לא שנו אלא שלא בשעת גזרת המלכות אבל בשעת גזרת המלכות אפי’ מצוה קלה יהרג ואל יעבור.

During a period of persecution we are charged with following the mitzvot with utmost diligence. Therefore, we must be prepared to give up our lives to uphold any of the mitzvot.

4. Ibid. – Kiddush Hashem in public.

Ravin said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, “This [that one must give up one’s life even in a time when there is no religious persecution] refers only to [a transgression of idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder] in private, but in public one must give up one’s life rather than transgress even a mitzvah that people treat lightly” ... How many individuals constitute “being in public”? Rabbi Yaakov said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, “There is no ‘public’ that constitutes fewer than ten [Jewish] people.”

רבין אמר רבי יוחנן אפילו שלא בשעת גזרת מלכות לא אמרו אלא בצניעא אבל בפרהסיא אפילו מצוה קלה יהרג ואל יעבור ... וכמה פרהסיא אמר רבי יעקב אמר רבי יוחנן אין פרהסיא פחותה מעשרה בני אדם.

A person must give up his life even if he is coerced in private to transgress the three cardinal sins cited in Source 2. If he is coerced to violate the other mitzvot of the Torah, he must give up his life only if it is in the presence of ten Jews.

5. **Ibid. 74b – Only when the intent is to cause a Jew to transgress is one required to give up one's life.**

[If it is] for their own benefit, it is different [and one is not commanded to sacrifice his life] ... For Rava said, "An idolater who says to a Jew on Shabbat: 'Cut some grass [and thereby desecrate Shabbat] and give it to the animals, or I will kill you,' he should cut [the grass] rather than be killed. If he says, 'Cut the grass and cast it into the river,' he should be killed rather than cut [the grass]. Why is this? Because he intends to cause the Jew to transgress."

הנאת עצמן שאני... דאמר רבא עכו"ם דאמר ליה להאי ישראל קטול אספסתא בשבתא ושדי לחיותא ואי לא קטילנא לך ליקטיל ולא לקטליה שדי לנהרא ליקטליה ולא ליקטול מ"ט לעבורי מילתא קא בעי.

We are commanded to give up our lives and not violate one of the other mitzvot of the Torah (in the presence of ten Jews – Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 5:2) only when the goal of the coercion is to make us transgress the Torah. If the intent of the coercer is merely for his own personal benefit, then we are commanded to transgress rather than give up our lives (Rambam).

6. **Rambam, Sefer HaMitzvot, Mitzvah #9 – The persecutor should not conclude that he succeeded in coercing a Jew to transgress God's Will.**

The essence of this mitzvah is that we are commanded to publicize this true faith in the world, and that we should not be afraid of anyone harming us. And even if somebody comes to force us to deny God, we will not listen to him, but we will give up our lives, rather than allow him to believe that he has made us give up our faith, even though we still believe in God in our hearts.

This is the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem in which all of Israel is commanded: to give up our lives out of love for Him and belief in His Oneness ...

וענין זאת המצוה אשר אנחנו מצווים לפרסם האמונה הזאת האמתית בעולם ושלא נפחד בהיזק שום מזיק ואע"פ שבא עלינו מכריח גובר יבקש ממנו לכפור בו יתעלה לא נשמע ממנו אבל נמסור עצמנו למיתה ולא נתעהו לחשוב שכפרנו ואע"פ שלבנו מאמין בו יתעלה.

וזאת היא מצות קדוש השם המצווים בה בני ישראל בכללם רוצה לומר מסירת נפשנו למות ביד האונס על אהבתנו ית' ואמונת יחודו

Even though a Jew does not believe in the idolatrous practice that he is being forced to perform, he must not give his persecutor the impression that he compromised his beliefs in order to save his life.

7. **Rambam, Hilchot Yesodei HaTorah 5:4 – Someone who chooses martyrdom rather than transgressing sanctifies the Name of God and joins an elite group who have sanctified God's Name.**

Anyone who is told that he must give up his life rather than transgress, and he did not transgress

שנאמר בו יהרג ואל יעבור ונהרג ולא עבר הרי זה קידש את השם ואם היה בעשרה מישראל וכל מי הרי זה

[but chose to give up his life] – he has sanctified the Name. And if it was done in front of ten Jews, he has sanctified the Name in public like ... Rabbi Akiva and others. These people are martyrs, whose stature is unmatched by any other.

[The reverse, Rambam continues, applies to someone who chooses to transgress rather than to die: he desecrates the Name, and if he does so in public, he desecrates the Name in public.]

קידש את השם ברבים כ...רבי עקיבא וחביריו ואלו הן
הרוגי מלכות שאין מעלה על מעלתן.

Someone who gives up his life when being forced to violate the Torah performs a Kiddush Hashem. If it is in the presence of ten Jews, his act has the status of Kiddush Hashem in public. The same holds true in the opposite instance of Chillul Hashem.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ≈ There are times that a person is called upon to sanctify the Name of God by surrendering his life rather than violate the Torah under duress. The three sins of idolatry, sexual immorality, and murder may not be committed even under the threat of death.
- ≈ We must also be prepared to suffer martyrdom rather than violate any mitzvah of the Torah in public if the intent of the coercer is to cause us to transgress the Will of God.
- ≈ The reward for someone who gives up his life rather than violate the Will of God is beyond that of any other mitzvot. This in no way implies that it surpasses the achievements of a lifetime of Torah and mitzvot, nor should Jews proactively seek such a situation.

SECTION IV. EVERYONE CAN MAKE A KIDDUSH HASHEM

In this final section we will share practical examples of how to perform a Kiddush Hashem. Kiddush Hashem is not only a particular mitzvah; it is a way of life, a mode of living by which one senses the great opportunity of being God's representative in the world.

- Debbie launched *Study With a Buddy* at her university to pair up students who wanted to learn more about Judaism with students who could serve as mentors.
- Remy and David organized a group of students to prepare kosher meals at their university, which prompted their campus to establish a kosher meal plan.
- Burt protested a compulsory exam in graduate school given on Yom Kippur, triggering an administrative decision to provide alternative test days for students observing Jewish holidays.
- Greg established a Jewish Medical Ethics Society at his medical school, bringing students, professors, doctors, and rabbis together to discuss the many ethical questions raised in contemporary medicine.
- Sarah and Tami organized a *chesed* program at their college to visit the elderly at a nursing home, as well as raise funds to buy and distribute food to the impoverished in Israel.

Each of the above cases made a powerful impact on each of the participants as well as on the greater Jewish community that led to a geometric increase in the establishment of similar initiatives at campuses throughout the world!

In the end, how we choose to make a Kiddush Hashem is guided by our personal character traits and capabilities, either accomplished alone or by joining together with others, as we find in the following two concluding articles of this shiur.

1. www.nytimes.com, **Brooklyn Girl Is Found Safe in Woods in Massachusetts – Kiddush Hashem made by Suri Feldman and the hundreds of people who traveled hundreds of miles to search for her.**

STURBRIDGE, Mass., May 6, 1994 – Displaying survival skills that impressed local people familiar with the outdoors, a 14-year-old Chasidic girl from Brooklyn who disappeared on Wednesday when a school outing in a Connecticut state park went awry was found today by the police in dense, swampy woods, frightened and tired but praying by the side of a tree.

Suri Feldman had carefully rationed her sandwiches so that they sustained her for the two days and two nights she was lost. She found ledges to keep her dry during occasional drizzles. When search helicopters flew overhead, she tried to signal them with the flash on her camera.

“We were concerned that this was a city girl with no survival skills at all,” said Chief Kevin Fitzgibbons of the Sturbridge Police Department. “But speaking to her I have nothing but absolute amazement for the girl.”

The thin, slight teenager had wandered along forest roads more than three miles from the point in Bigelow Hollow State Park where she became separated from her classmates. “She looked wonderful,” said Trish Bourassa, the ambulance driver who picked her up from the woods in Massachusetts. “I hugged her and I said you’re all right. I hugged her the whole time until we got to the hospital. She did an amazing job. Everybody deserves congratulations, but most goes to her.”

At Harrington Memorial Hospital in Southbridge, she was reunited with her father, Ernest Feldman. “I can’t remember the first thing I said when I saw her,” Mr. Feldman told reporters later. “I was too excited. But when I heard, I just said, ‘Thank God.’” When reporters asked what kind of sandwiches his daughter had eaten, he replied, “One thing I can tell you for sure, she didn’t have any ham sandwiches.”

News that she was alive and well set off jubilation in her neighborhood in Brooklyn and by the mixture of black-suited and bearded Chasidim and local volunteers who had searched the woods for her. At a firehouse that was the command center for the search, the Chasidim began dancing in a circle, holding high an umbrella-shielded Torah that they had brought in case they had to stay in the area during the Sabbath.

“I cannot pay the community for what they’ve done,” her father said later. “But hopefully God will repay them.”

The searchers, more than 1,000 according to the police, had picked up clues – an empty container of kosher vanilla pudding, a fresh tissue – that Suri was alive and in the woods.

The search attracted more than 600 Chasidim from as far away as Montreal and Washington, bringing truckloads of kosher food that they shared with non-Jewish volunteers. “It says in the Bible that to save a life is to save the entire world,” said Isaac Fortgang of Boston, explaining why he traveled so far to help.

Searchers mapped out grids for different groups to explore, and this morning one group of police officers found a fresh footprint near a swamp on the border between Sturbridge and Southbridge. Southbridge Police Officer John Mulcahy then noticed a road not shown on any of his maps and

headed down it with his colleagues. Within 500 yards, they spotted Miss Feldman at 10:34 A.M. at the side of a tree. He told reporters that he called for her but she did not answer because she was praying.

At the Feldman home at 1668 54th Street in the Borough Park section of Brooklyn, neighbors had hung an orange banner inscribed with Hebrew letters. “Say praise to God, for His goodness is for always,” Moishe Feldman, Suri’s brother, translated.

It is interesting to note that one of the local volunteers commented in amazement, “If one of our children were to get lost in these woods, I doubt if hundreds of volunteers would drive hundreds of miles to join in the search.”

Prof. Yisrael (Robert) Aumann, won the 2005 Nobel Prize for his research in game theory. Normally not one to bask in the limelight, Professor’s Aumann’s character, dedication to family, integrity, and commitment to Judaism combined to make an international Kiddush Hashem.

2. [Sara Yoheved Rigler, Jewish Nobility: The Life and Loves of a Nobel Prize Winner \(www.aish.com\)](http://www.aish.com) – Kiddush Hashem before the eyes of the world.

The picture on the bulletin board of his Hebrew University office says it all. Taken shortly after the announcement that the 2005 Nobel Prize in Economics was being awarded to Prof. Yisrael [Robert] Aumann, the photo shows three generations of the prizewinner’s grinning descendants, 32 people in all. In the middle, with his long white beard and white kippa, sits the 75-year-old Prof. Aumann, propping up a meter-high portrait of his beloved late wife Esther.

Prof. Aumann officially retired five years ago, but, at 75, he continues to fling himself into his quadruple loves: game theory, family, nature, and Torah. He still teaches three classes at the Hebrew University; picks up his grandchildren from kindergarten and takes them home with him when their parents are busy; skis, treks, and climbs some of the world’s most beautiful mountains; and learns Torah regularly with the same study-partner he’s had for 30 years.

Prof. Aumann, a connoisseur of everything, connects everything to its Divine source. A wine connoisseur, whenever he puts a superior bottle of wine on the table, he recites the blessing, “He is good and does good.” This was the blessing he recited publicly in front of 1,400 guests while delivering his toast at the royal banquet following the Nobel awards ceremony.

In the world of business, people steal money. In the world of academia, people steal ideas. One of Prof. Aumann’s outstanding traits is his scrupulousness to give credit to others, whether teachers, colleagues, or even students. At a press conference held the day the Nobel Prize was announced, Prof. Aumann surprised his audience by declaring that the Prize should have been awarded to someone else: “Lloyd Shapley of U.C.L.A. was worthy, and should have won. I see him as the high priest of game theory.”

Prof. Aumann learned the concept of “intellectual property” from the Torah. “There was a period 15, 20 years ago when stealing software was considered okay by many people, including many academics. There was an item of software that I needed, and I was wondering whether to ‘steal’ it – make a copy of which the developers of the software disapprove. Then I said to myself, why do you have to wonder about this? You are a religious person. Go to your rabbi and ask him. So I went to my rabbi – a Holocaust survivor, a very renowned, pious person. Maybe there is a Talmudic rule about this kind of intellectual property not really being property. Whatever he’ll say, I’ll do. The rabbi said, ‘It’s absolutely forbidden to do this.’ So I ordered the software.”

The world got a rare glance of the Torah way of living by observing Prof. Aumann in Stockholm. Although the Awards Ceremony was scheduled for late Saturday afternoon, the shortness of the Swedish winter day enabled the Aumann family to attend after the close of Shabbat. On Shabbat afternoon, they – all 34 of them – walked to a hotel located just 200 meters from Stockholm's Concert Hall, where the Awards Ceremony would take place. As soon as they made *havdalah* [the ceremony separating Shabbat from the rest of the week], the Aumanns dashed to the Concert Hall, arriving just 90 seconds before King Karl XVI Gustaf's arrival and the closing of the doors.

At the royal banquet afterwards, Prof. Aumann's entourage were served a special kosher dinner on new china plates with the obligatory royal pattern that were specially kilned for them. Their place settings were completed with newly forged gilded silver cutlery and recently blown gold-stemmed crystal.

In a world where Jews have so often sacrificed their religious principles to fit in, we can be proud at how this noblest of Nobel Prize winners stands out.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:

- ⇒ Kiddush Hashem is not only a particular mitzvah; it is a way of life, a mode of living by which one senses the great opportunity of being God's representative in the world.
- ⇒ A Kiddush Hashem can make a powerful impact on the one who accomplishes the mitzvah as well as on the greater Jewish community. This in turn can lead others to increase Kiddush Hashem throughout the world.
- ⇒ In the end, how we choose to make a Kiddush Hashem is guided by one's personal character and capabilities, either accomplished alone or by joining together with others.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READING & SOURCES

Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan, *Handbook of Jewish Thought*, Vol. II, Ch. 3 and 4