

# IN A MOMENT OF TRUTH

by Rabbi Label Lam

*You shall keep My commandments and perform them; I am HASHEM. You shall not desecrate My holy name, rather I should be sanctified among the Children of Israel; I am HASHEM who sanctifies you, Who took you out of the land of Egypt to be a G-d unto you; I am HASHEM. (Vayikra 31:19-23)*

Here we have consecutive verses all punctuated with the same phrase, "I am HASHEM". In the midst of being adjured to keep all the Mitzvos and being reminded of HASHEM's personal history with us we are introduced to the awesome task of sanctifying the name of G-d. Just how is that done? When it is recognizable through our behavior or being that HASHEM is more real to us than even the most tangible facts that either threaten or tempt us, then that is a "Kiddush HASHEM".

A senior colleague named Yossi has a most intriguing personal story. His grandfather was a man strong in character and physique. The Nazis used him and a cadre of others to perform manual labor for the duration of the war. The men in his unit were given meat to keep them fit. Yossi's grandfather, who they called "The Rabbi" not because of his scholarship but rather because of his iron will, refused to eat any of the non-kosher meats, and yet he managed to stay strong.

On the day before liberation the head of the Nazi work force gathered all the Jews in a circle and put Yossi's grandfather in the middle. He challenged the one they had called "The Rabbi". He told him that his heroics had been hollow till now because his life was worthless and he had nothing to lose. Now that the war was almost over and he had a hope of being reunited with family the truth of his convictions could be determined. He offered a piece of non-kosher meat and threatened that if he didn't eat it he would be killed. Now the stance of Jewish Law changes because they are testing his religious mettle and in public. He is obligated to forfeit his life rather than be in violation of even a minor custom. He correctly refused and was killed on the spot. Witnesses to the event told his daughter who had settled in Israel about her father's last moments. She swallowed the news bitterly and developed a harsh attitude to things Jewish. She raised her children on a diet of pork and frequently told the story of her father's futile last stance, demonstrating how his religiosity not only didn't help him but actually cost him his life.

Her son Yossi was coming home from work one fine day and stopped at a store to bring home some meat stuff for dinner according with his wife's request. Standing in the heat and jostling on line he began to wonder seriously. "Here I am paying a premium price to purchase for my children something my grandfather gave up his life not to eat. Was he wrong?"

He came home with a personal dilemma for dinner and so he and his wife were prompted to attend a series of discussions organized by two Israeli scientists who had embraced Torah observance. In order to articulate to their western intellectual friends the merit of their choice they had organized a sequence of powerful presentations that convinced Yossi of the veracity of the Torah.

Employing his business expertise, he began to work closely with those two scientists and others to create a seminar format that would accommodate many more Jews and allow him to share the experience that had transformed his life. Over the decades, through Yossi's tireless efforts, tens of thousands of Jews have made new Jewish lives for themselves.

If life would have been a snapshot, it looked as if Yossi's grandfather had lost it all. In fact he invested his all in that moment. Like a deeply planted seed it would take many decades for that deed to yield its fruits in the Holy Land. With the passage of time, though, we can appreciate ever more what is accomplished in a moment of truth! Text Copyright © 2004 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.