

STRENGTH LIKE THAT!

by Rabbi Label Lam

"You shall not desecrate My Holy Name and you should sanctify Me amidst the Children of Israel. I am HASHEM Who makes you holy, Who took you out from Egypt to be for you a G-d, I am HASHEM."
(Vayikra 22:31- 33)

Man was only created to serve his Creator and if he fails to give over his body for the service of his Master he is not a good servant. We find that people are willing to surrender their lives for the cause of their earthly masters, how much more so for the Mitzvah of the King of kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He! (Chinuch)

If you think this sounds like a difficult Mitzvah, you're right. It is! Although theoretically it is every man's duty to be willing, not everyone is granted the opportunity. How do we do this Mitzvah then if the situation never arises? Even more, how can one ever be ready to do such a thing if it ever arises as it did for so many Jews throughout our history?

In the Tzetel Katan the Rebbe Elimelech advises that one should exercise the power of imagination and frequently picture himself successfully following through with such a difficult decision.

When Rabbi Akiva was being led to his death for the crime of teaching Torah he was observed reciting "Shema" and his students inquired as to why he was doing so. He answered that all his life he had recited the accompanying words, "And you should love HASHEM your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul (ready to give up your life) and with all your might." Now he would finally have a chance to fulfill that which he had spoken of and imagined. How, though could he remain so serene as they were raking his flesh with combs of steel?

The Aish Kodesh who perished in the Warsaw Ghetto wrote, "The reason a martyr feels no pain is that since the individual who is about to be martyred is inflamed with a powerful yearning to surrender his life for the sake of the sanctity of His Blessed Name, he raises up all his senses and his entire physical being by means of that fervor for the world of thought. Eventually he reaches the point where he is entirely vested in thought so that his sensory awareness disappears, while feeling and corporeality are stripped away so that he feels nothing but pleasure..."

Rabbi EE Dessler ztl. posits that this ability to give everything away for HASHEM was installed in every Jew since the incident of the Akeida, by Isaac who was willing to stretch his neck out for the sake of his Maker.

When the Nazis would storm a Polish town they would gain control by systematically demoralizing the masses of Jews by publicly murdering the leaders. In one particular town rumors spread amongst the SS that the presumed gentile mayor was a Jew although his name was not Jewish. It was in fact true that his mother's mother had married a gentile and so did his mother. For three generations they had not lived as or identified themselves as Jews.

The Nazis had sure-fire test. They led him to the Synagogue and opened the Ark and handed him a Sefer Torah and demanded that he throw it to the ground and trample it. He held it firmly against his chest and declared. "I want to thank you for returning me to my people and my G-d!" They shot and killed him on the spot and he is to be counted amongst the 6,000,000 martyrs. We are left wondering, "Where does one find strength like that?" Text Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.