

SUPERHUMAN STRENGTH

by Rabbi Label Lam

And you should not profane My holy Name but let Me be sanctified in the midst of the Children of Israel, I am HASHEM Who makes you holy, that brings you out of Egypt to be to you a G-d, I am HASHEM. (Vayikra 22:32-33)

That brings you out of Egypt: On this condition- (To be to you a G-d) (Rashi)

I am HASHEM: Reliable to grant reward. (Rashi)

The whole exodus from Egypt was only for this express purpose that we should not desecrate but rather sanctify HASHEM's name. How does one profane or sanctify HASHEM's name? Why is the verse punctuated with "I am HASHEM"? Rashi tells us it's to remind us that that HASHEM is guaranteeing payment to whoever accomplishes this primary task. Why here, in this verse, is there a greater need of assurance?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch ztl. defines desecration of HASHEM's name- Chilul HASHEM as follows: "With every refusal to sacrifice- any impulse of our being, and any attraction which draws us, any fiber of ourselves, any tiny morsel of our possessions -from the fulfillment of His Will, we are "mechallel HASHEM". The Name that should be the highest, the holiest, and the most absolute for us, on which the justification for which all our existence and possessions depends, and as such should rule over us and all of ours with absolute power, we make that Name "challal"- a "lifeless and powerless corpse".

Rabbi Hirsch explains what it means to sanctify HASHEM's name in the midst of the Children of Israel: "G-d and His Holy Will are to be considered as the holy highest, as the underlying condition of all Jewish life. And that which every offering teaches and which is vowed and undertaken at every offering- to offer up on the altar of our G-d, every drop of blood, every urge and aim of our wishes, all the active power of our limbs, all our food, our well-being, and the joys of our life for the carrying out of His Holy Will. That is to be the picture of the life of every single individual for our own perfection and for a teaching example to every one of our contemporaries. Such is the Jewish mission..."

Why the extra reinforcement about receiving a reward for succeeding in this mission? It could be that for the same reason we find in other places when HASHEM's name is restated as the crowning point at the conclusion of a verse, for example. "Don't go about as a talebearer in your nation, and

don't stand idly by your brother's blood, I am HASHEM! (Vayikra 19:16)

On this verse too Rashi tells us: "I am reliable to grant reward and exact payment!" Why is that necessary here too? These are things that no one in the universe could know about. What's the sound of one hand clapping? If one swallows his tongue and decides not to engage in Loshon Hora no person can detect or measure the power of that exercise of self-control. Therefore the Vilna Gaon quotes the Midrash, "For each and every moment that a person seals his mouth, he merits a hidden light that no angel or other creature could ever estimate!"

Similarly if one fails act. It's hard to prove a negative. Nobody can know for sure how much one could have done or should have done to prevent tragedy and save a life but, perhaps if aware, the person himself and HASHEM!

A few years back an elderly Russian Jew in that quietly lived out his later years in Brooklyn passed away. A funeral ceremony was held in the Shul where he was a regular attendee. The Rabbi had only a very basic sketch of his life. He was married and he and wife had never had children. Very little was known about his life in Russia or since coming to America. After the Rabbi's abbreviated eulogy the wife of this man asked if she could speak, and with her heavy Russian accent and in a few words she revealed a whole world of Kiddush HASHEM. She said, "People want to know why we never had children. I'll tell you why! In Russia there was no water!"

Of course there was water in Russia, but what she intended to communicate ever so subtly was that there was no Mikvah to be found. They endured a marriage and remained apart all their childbearing years so as not to be in violation. May HASHEM reward them amply for their example and grant us one part of their superhuman strength. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.