

# Meshech Chochma

## - Jacob Solomon

Emor

*You shall not desecrate My holy Name. Rather, I should be sanctified among B'nei Yisrael. I am G-d, Who makes you holy (22:32).*

The Gemara explains that Chilul HaShem, doing an act that brings G-d's Name into disrepute, is one of the most serious of all Aveirot and one that is most difficult to atone for. The scope of what can be included in an act of Chilul Hashem and conversely a Kiddush Hashem, is illustrated by the following:

If someone studies Torah and Mishna, and attends on the disciples of the wise, is honest in business, and speaks pleasantly to persons, what do people then say concerning him? "Happy is the father who taught him Torah! Happy is the teacher who taught him Torah! Woe to people who have not studied the Torah! For this man has studied the Torah: look how fine are his ways, how righteous are his deeds!" Of him does Scripture say: He said to me: "You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified" (Yeshayahu 49:3). But if someone studies Scripture and Mishna, attends on the disciples of the wise, but is dishonest in business,

and discourteous in his relations with people, what do people say about him? "Woe to him who studied the Torah! Woe to his father who taught him Torah! Woe to his teacher who taught him Torah! This man studied the Torah: look, how corrupt are his deeds, how ugly are his ways..." (Yoma 86a).

Thus a person who behaves in a way that brings G-d and His teachings into disrepute performs a Chilul Hashem. The Meshech Chochma emphasizes that this applies to Torah teachings as a whole, which the Torah brings out in the p'sukim that come just before:

*"A newly-born ox, sheep, or goat must stay with its mother for the first seven days" (22:27).*

*"You may not slaughter an ox or sheep with its offspring on the same day" (22:28).*

Yes, the Torah provides for korbanot, offerings. Yes, the Torah allows people to eat meat. But the Meshech Chochma emphasizes, that in sharp contrast to the idolatrous pagan practice at the time which included human sacrifices in the most appalling conditions, it does so by showing maximum sensitivity to civilized and decent behavior. This is something that would have stood out as characterizing Klal Yisrael, that

they would serve G-d without enforcing unnecessary suffering. And it is that which Israel can be proud of: the reality of the Torah being demanding, but humane, with due respect to all members of the Creation, all creatures great and small. Those who observe Torah from a distance can see how it deeply supports living, not undermines it. In line with the Gemara's putting it: "Look how fine are his ways, how righteous are his deeds!"

Perhaps this can indicate, however, that it is important that various since-developed customs in different Jewish communities are observed in such a way as they do not inadvertently bring the Torah into disrepute...

e