



The Real Kiddush Hashem

When a Shliach discovered one hundred thousand shekel.

The Lost Money

Several weeks ago, the young daughter of Beer-Sheba Chabad Rabbi Mendy Yitzchaki lost her mother's earring deep inside a couch in their home. Always the good husband, Rabbi Yitzchaki got to work reaching into the cushions to recover the earring. He never found the earring, but instead, he found a much bigger treasure. He found a stash of envelopes filled with cash — some in dollars and some in euros — which totaled around 100,000 Israeli shekel.

The couch had come with them from their previous apartment, which they had rented from an elderly woman, a Holocaust survivor who had immigrated from Russia. When they left the apartment for their new home, she had given them the couch to take along. Finding the money, he immediately assumed that it had belonged to Paulina, his former landlord.

Paulina has since moved into a nursing home and speaks only Russian and Yiddish, so, to be able to communicate properly, they brought along an interpreter. However, she didn't understand what they wanted from her when they began talking about the couches.

"Yes, I gave you the couches," she said.

"We found the money inside!" they told her.

“Money? Why didn’t you take it?” she responded.

“Why don’t you talk to my son,” she ended the conversation.

They reached out to her son, a doctor by profession, and he came to pick up the money. He too, had no knowledge about the treasure. Apparently, his father had saved up and stashed away the cash without informing anyone before he died; perhaps it was the payments he received as a Holocaust survivor which he had saved for his children. When the son came to take the money, the rabbi told him, “Your father saved this for you.”

Of course, the son put on tefillin; he was very thankful, and he shared that his mother had commented, “I didn’t know that there were still such honest people around.”

The media in Israel interviewed the rabbi, but he said that he didn’t understand the fuss. It’s true, he commented, he needed another 50,000 shekel to purchase a home, but he would never steal money that belonged to somebody else.

The Kind Traveler

Just yesterday, we celebrated Lag Ba’omer, the Yahrzeit of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the author of the Zohar. Allow me to share a story with you from the Zohar.

Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yosi were traveling together when they reached a certain mountain and noticed two other travelers. As they watched, a fellow approached those two travelers and made a request. “Please give me some food and bread; I’ve been lost for the past two days and I’ve had nothing to eat.”

One of the travelers took out some food from his bag and fed the poor man. His friend looked at him and said, “What are you going to do when you need food? I’m not going to share mine with you.”

“Did I say I was relying on your food?” the kind traveler retorted. When the poor man had eaten his fill, the benefactor gave him the rest of his bread to take along on his way.

Watching this unfold, Rabbi Chiya commented, “G-d apparently did not want this good deed to be carried out through us.”

“Perhaps,” said Rabbi Yosi, “A decree was hanging over that traveler, and G-d arranged this Mitzvah for him in order to save his life.”

As they continued on their way, the kind traveler began to get tired. “Didn’t I tell you not to share your food with others?” his friend criticized him.

Rabbi Chiya said to Rabbi Yosi, “We have enough provisions; let’s share some with him.”

“Do you want to steal his merit?” responded Rabbi Yosi. “Let’s continue watching. No doubt, it was decreed that this person die, and G-d arranged for this mitzvah to save his life.”

The tired traveler settled down under a tree and fell asleep. His friend settled under a different tree some distance away. “Let’s wait and see,” Rabbi Yosi told Rabbi Chiya. “No doubt, G-d wants to make him a miracle.”

As they waited, an agitated animal suddenly approached the sleeping fellow. “Poor guy!” exclaimed Rabbi Chiya. “Now he’s going to die!”

“No,” responded Rabbi Yosi. “this person has merits, and G-d will make a miracle for him.”

Suddenly, they noticed a snake slithering down from the tree, poised to bite him. The animal immediately jumped up and killed the snake, and then abruptly went on its way.

“Didn’t I tell you,” said Rabbi Yosi, “that G-d wants to make a miracle for him and we shouldn’t take away his merit?”

As they spoke, the fellow woke up and prepared to continue on his way. Now, Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Yosi stopped him and gave him some food to eat. After partaking of their food, they showed him the miracle that had occurred. (Zohar Behar 110b).

The message of this story is that sometimes, G-d sets us up with the opportunity to do a mitzvah because he wants something to be accomplished. If so, the question arises: what exactly, did G-d want to accomplish with this rabbi?

Glorifying G-d’s Name

In this week’s Torah portion, we read about the commandment to sanctify G-d’s name. “Sanctify me among the people of Israel,” the verse says (Emor 22:32). According to the common understanding of this concept, when a Jew sacrifices his life for Judaism, he glorifies G-d. As Rashi comments, “Sacrifice yourself and sanctify My name.” Throughout Jewish history, when Jews were killed simply for being Jewish, they were remembered as martyrs “who died sanctifying G-d’s name.”

But the Rebbe questions this assumption. Is G-d’s name really glorified when a Jew is killed by an anti-Semite? “To the contrary,” the Rebbe said, “it seems to be a desecration of G-d’s name, a *chilul hashem!* The killing of a Jew allows the non-Jews to raise the question — where is your G-d?”

Rather, the Rebbe said, the opposite is true. When a person is prepared to sacrifice his life, but then, G-d does a miracle and saves him from certain death — as in the story of Chananel, Mishael and Azariah who emerged unscathed from a fiery furnace — then, His name is glorified. (Toras Menachem 5747 vol. 3 pg. 330).

The Best Way

However, there is an even easier way to sanctify G-d's name; you don't need to jump into a fire or give up your life.

The Talmud cites the verse, "and you shall love G-d," and adds an interesting interpretation: "The name of G-d should become beloved through you. When you study Torah, come to the aid of Torah scholars, and are impeccably honest in your business dealings, what will people say about you? What a lucky father who taught him Torah; what a lucky teacher who taught him Torah...just look how wonderful he is and how perfect is his behavior." (Yoma 86a)

Similarly, Maimonides writes that when a "wise man" is careful to speak pleasantly, to be social, to be kind to others, to be honest in his business dealings and to always go beyond the letter of the law, people will praise him, love him, and try to emulate him — and that is a sanctification of G-d's name. (Yesodei Hatorah 5:11)

Hashem gave this Shliach a mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem *par excellence*. In his own words, "People in the neighborhood told me that they could understand anything, but money? And so much money? They gained the new respect; they said, 'Now you don't have to convince us about the beauty of Judaism; we know there is truth to what you teach."