

מצוות צריכות כוונה

קידוש השם

The Shulchan Aruch paskens that one is obligated to have Kavanah before doing a mitzvah (Siman 60:4).

Furthermore, having the kavanah: 'כאשר ציוה ה' can turn a routine action into a full-fledged mitzvah!

It is preferable to speak out the words of Kavanah, as the CHovos Halevavos writes, 'המחשבה נמשכת אחר הדיבור'

The following was written by the Chofetz Chaim in the sefer Shem Olam:

If the power of Torah and mitzvos is as great as we have written, that the Name of Hashem Yisbarach is affixed to each mitzvah, then why doesn't the world understand their value and run after it with all their might, and only a select group of people understands its worth? The answer is, it is common knowledge that everyone understands the value of a small banknote worth only one ruble. A banknote worth 25 or 50 rubles, and especially one worth 100 rubles, is not understood by a large segment of village people. An even larger note of several thousa-

nd rubles would not be understood even by people living in large cities, except for those people who work in financial institutions such as the House of Rothschild and the like. Even those people who work in these large financial institutions would not understand banknotes whose value is several thousand million rubles or more, and such notes would be considered as being unique since they are not found at all. The greater the monetary value of the note, the fewer the people who could understand it.

'That being so, why are you so surprised that the world does not understand the Torah and mitzvos, as they are notes of such vast value that even the heavenly angels cannot fully comprehend them or fathom the enormity of their precious worth!

'And so is this written (Yeshaya 64:3, [regarding the reward for mitzvos]):

'עין לא ראתה אלקים זולתך יעשה למחכה לו'

'So then, how is it *possible* for the world to understand it?! It is sufficient for us to know that these are important and vital 'notes', but to fathom their true precious worth is definitely beyond our comprehension...'
(From Sefer Shem Olam, Perek 5)

We see that the mitzvos are so incredibly valuable, that even the

angels cannot comprehend the value of one mitzvah! Surely then, we should be proactive, and grab opportunities to do those mitzvos which are readily available, and which surround us on all sides. Of course, we should also look forward to doing the mitzvos, and not ignore the 'diamonds' that are lying right in front of us.

מצות קידוש השם

The mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem is most often applied to making a good impression in front of non-Jews. However, we will see that this mitzvah applies to *far* more situations than this. In fact, one can fulfill this mitzvah all the time!

In Parshas Emor, the Torah says:

וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל,

And I shall be sanctified among the Children of Israel. (Vayikra 22:32)

The Rambam, in Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah (5:11) discusses the behavior of a חכם. He writes that if the חכם is careful to speak gently, has concern for others... greets them pleasantly, takes abuse but never responds in kind, respects everyone, does business honestly, and doesn't sit with עמי הארץ... but rather he is seen constantly studying תורה, wrapped in תפילין and crowned with ציצית, and is careful to act מישורת until all people praise him and love him and desire to act as he does - הרי זה קידש את השם

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ועליו הכתוב אומר ויאמר לי עבדי
אתה ישראל אשר בך אתפאר
(ישעיה מט, ג).

On these words of the Rambam, Rav Avigdor Miller *zt"l* explained that it isn't enough merely to act properly and allow the Kiddush Hashem to happen, ממילה. Rather, just like all the other Mitzvos which require kavanah, one must do these actions with Kavanah to fulfill the mitzvas Asei of Kiddush Hashem! Rav Miller also said that one should try to call attention to his good deeds in order to increase the kiddush Hashem. (עיין ספר שערי אורה, דף רכה)

Therefore, any time we act in a fine and upright manner in view of others, Jew or non-Jew, we fulfill the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem.

Chazal tell us that the mitzvah ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל includes other ways of sanctifying Hashem's name. For example, every time we gather with a minyan of ten to say Borchu, Kedusha, Kadish, krias haTorah and birchas Kohanim, it is a fulfillment of this mitzvah.

We say these tefillos regularly in shul, and one should not pass up the many precious opportunities to fulfill the mitzvah d'oraysa of Kiddush Hashem. All that's needed is to have Kavanah at the time.

In the words of the Mishnah Berurah:

'וצריך לכיוון ביותר בקדושה לקדש השם יתברך ובזכות זה ישרה עליו השם יתברך קדושה מלמעלה, ויכיוון לקיים הפסוק 'ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל', והאר"י ז"ל היה מזהיר מאוד על זה.' (ס' קכה ס"ד ק)

Other times one can have Kavanah for this mitzvah are when

attending a Siyum or any gathering designed to uplift and inspire people and be mekadesh Shem Shamayim. This certainly includes the recent gathering of Adirei HaTorah.

Therefore, when acting in the upright manner described by the Rambam, and also when saying Borchu, Kedusha, Kadish, Krias haTorah and Birchas Kohanim, one should be careful to remember and think:

הריני מכוין לקיים מצות קידוש השם כאשר צוה השם

Up till now we've been discussing making a Kiddush Hashem in front of other people. However, it is even possible to fulfill this mitzvah without any audience or witnesses.

Rav Eliyahu Dessler, in his sefer Michtam Ma'aliyah writes that the main mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem is בין אדם לעצמו, as the Gemara says, Yosef Hatzadik was מקדש שם שמים בستر when he resisted the lures of Potifar's wife. (סוטה י:)

Therefore, whenever one does any of the above: learning Torah, doing Mitzvos, and avoiding Aveiros - in public or in private - he should have Kavanah for the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem.

Surprisingly the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem is not limited to mitzvos or even to behaving properly. One can even fulfill the mitzvah when doing something as mundane as washing one's body!

The Gemara (Shabbos 50b) says that a person should wash their face, hands or feet for the honor of Hashem, as the pasuk in Mishlei says, *כל פעל ה' למענהו*, Hashem made everything for His sake (16:4). On this pasuk, the Malbim explains that acting this way is a Kiddush Hashem.

The Medrash recounts that Hillel HaZaken once told his students that he was on his way to do a mitzvah: bathing himself. The students were surprised, for what mitzvah does one fulfill by washing their body? Hillel explained that it is the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem. Even statues of human kings are washed and kept clean in honor of the king. All the more so, then, must we take care of our bodies, which were made in Hashem's image!

Therefore, before a person goes to the washroom to wash themselves, they should have Kavanah for the mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem.

It is a Mitzvas Asei for a Jew to sacrifice his life על קידוש השם in order not to violate the three Aveiros עריות, חמורות דמים, and עבודה זרה (or any other מצוה during a שעת השמ"ד)

As time goes on, opportunities for sacrifices of this magnitude has been occurring with diminishing frequency. However, the מצוה is still available to be done every day! The ספר חרדים, bringing down the Sifri, writes (9:16) that if, while saying the words 'בכל נפשך' in Shema, one mentally commits himself to give up his life על קידוש השם, it is considered it as if he did so בפועל!

The reward for sacrificing one's life על קידוש השם is incomparably great, which makes this an unequalled opportunity! But in order to do the mitzvah properly, first stop and think:

הריני מכוין לקיים מצות קידוש השם כאשר צוה השם

א גוט שבת!