



WORDS TO THE WISE

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Emor: Kiddush Hashem; a Monument to G-d

There is a powerful essay by R' Shmshon Raphael in his masterpiece *Horeb* titled "Profaning and Hallowing of the Holy Name". In the essay Rav Hirsch implores the Jewish people to live a modest, wholesome Torah lifestyle. He explains that by doing so, they will sanctify the Name of G-d and be a light unto the nations. In his words, the goal is "To become a blessed monument to G-d and humanity among the peoples of the earth so that [the Jewish people] should be a 'kingdom of priests, and a holy nation'." By living a lifestyle that is centered on Torah values, we represent that which is G-dly. Rav Hirsch eloquently explains that the word of G-d represents "everything that is beautiful and good, to truth, to justice and to love." Living with these values sanctifies the name of G-d. On the other hand, when one does not live with these values one profanes the Name of G-d. Or in more classic Rav Hirsch prose, "If you harbor lies and selfishness in your mind and heart... if your pleasure is mean, if your deeds are heartless, if you profane the Crown of Sinai, just to indulge... you destroy its sacred acknowledgment in the mind of your brother."

In the last paragraph of the essay, Rav Hirsch explains that since "Israel is the bearer of the Most Holy," it stands to reason that each Jew must be committed to inspiring others in his community to live by the values of the Torah as well. Rav Hirsch continues with this line I love, "It is not enough to salvage your own individual saintliness from the shipwreck of error...you must never pause ...until in every Jewish circle G-d's will reigns supreme and all of Israel serves as a monument to this."

Rav Hirsch sources this obligation from the end of the verse in *parshas Emor* where we are commanded to sanctify the name of G-d. In that verse, G-d charges us to sanctify His name, "*Mitoch bnei Yisroel, from among the children of Israel*". Rav Hirsch understands that "*Mitoch bnei Yisroel*" obligates all of us to share the beautiful Jewish lives we lead with our brethren, the children of Israel. Everyone can lead by example. When less-affiliated Jews see the "monument to G-d" that is represented by the Jewish lives we lead, they too can join us in sanctifying the Name of G-d. They can do so by pursuing a Torah lifestyle, a life that is, of course, beautiful, good, true and just.

We tend to feel that the lives we lead as observant Jews are limited to our own homes. We separate the mission of *kiruv*, bringing our brethren close to Torah and observance, from our own personal *avodas Hashem*, service of G-d. Rav Hirsch highlights that these two missions are somewhat conflated. When we lead a wholesome life of Torah and mitzvos and uphold our values in a tumultuous world, we profoundly influence those around us. By living in this exalted way, we not only choose a beautiful, exalted path for ourselves and our families, we also fulfill our directive to sanctify the name of Hashem to our brethren. A simple Jew who leads a meaning Torah lifestyle serves as an extraordinary beacon of light for others.

"Words to the Wise" is dedicated as a zechus for the safe return of the hostages in Gaza and as a zechus for refua sheleima for Yeshaya ben Rochel Freida.

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