

Illuminating Man's Inner World

THROUGH THE LENS OF THE PARSHA

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This week's Dvar Torah is dedicated for a Refuah Shleima for Esther Miriam bas Sarah and in honor of my grandfather Shlomo ben Dovid's 6th yahtzeit.

Parshas Emor: Kiddush Hashem Revisited

The past couple of weeks I have been dedicating these pages in speaking about the basic idea of man's sanctity. Sefer Vayikra is the book that is most linked with the notion of holiness be it in the responsibilities of the kohanim, the halakhic status of the mother following the birth of a child, the necessity of perceiving kedusha in others - the word holiness winds its way throughout the entire Torah and especially in these parshiyos.

This imperative raises the simplest of questions. What is holiness? How does man become holy? What capacity does physical man have to create holiness? And what does the Torah mean when it commands us in parshas Emor that וְלֹא תִחַלְלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹרַת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְשְׁכֶם: How is a person capable of sanctifying G-d's name? We speak about these concepts incessantly, but do we stop and reflect on just how complex such a concept is?

The answer to this question is far from simple. Holiness and the pursuit of holiness is not a uni-dimensional or linear pursuit Chazal and the meforshim seemingly divide the obligation into three parts.

The first is the obligation to not engage in certain behavior. Rashi writes that kedoshim tihyu is fulfilled by separating ourselves from inappropriate sexual behavior colloquially known as perushus. In one of his most famous comments on the Chumash the Ramban describes the obligation as removing ourselves from gluttony and overindulgence and overall living a life of restraint and moderation. Even the classical example of Kiddush Hashem, defined as the necessity under certain circumstances of

being prepared to sacrifice one's life, is a necessity to abstain from certain behavior no matter the consequences and repercussions. Hence kedusha is generally defined as restraint, restriction and abstaining.

The second category is the recognition that our behavior reflects on G-d's name and perception - literally being mekadash **shem** Shamayim. This is the impression presented in the gemarah at the end of the Yoma and in the Rambam in hilchos Yesodei HaTorah (5:11) The Rambam writes that:

יְכֵן אִם דְּקִדְקַת הַחֹכֵם עַל עַצְמוֹ וְהִיא דְּבִוּרוֹ בְּנִחַת עִם הַבְּרִיּוֹת וְדַעְתּוֹ מְעֻרְבֶת עִמָּהֶם וּמְקַבְּלֵם בְּסִבָּר פְּנִים יְפוֹת וְנִעְלָב מֵהֶם וְאִינוּ עוֹלָבִים. מְכַבֵּד לָהֶן וְאִפְלוּ לְמַקְלִין לוֹ. וְנוֹשֵׂא וְנוֹתֵן בְּאַמְנֶהָ. וְלֹא יִרְבֶּה בְּאַרְיָחוֹת עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ וְיִשְׁיבֶתָן. וְלֹא יִרְאֶה תְּמִיד אֶלָּא עוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרָה עֲטוּף בְּצִיצִית מְכַתֵּר בְּתַפְלִין וְעוֹשֶׂה בְּכָל מַעֲשָׂיו לְפָנִים מְשׁוּרָת הַדִּין. וְהוּא שְׂלֵא יִתְרַחֵק הַרְבֵּה וְלֹא יִשְׁתּוּמֵם. עַד שְׂיִמְצָאוּ הַכָּל מְקַלְסִין אוֹתוֹ וְאוֹהֲבִים אוֹתוֹ וּמִתְאַיִם לְמַעֲשָׂיו. הֲרִי זֶה קִדְשׁ אֶת ה'

Conversely, if the scholar restrains himself, speaks politely to his fellow men, and when among them acts like one of them, and receives them pleasantly, takes abuse from them but never gives abuse to them in return, respects them, even those who do not respect him, acts in business honestly, does not remain in company with the unlearned, nor visits their assemblies, and is rarely seen otherwise than to be engaged in the study of the Torah, wrapt in the prayer-garment and adorned with phylacteries, and performs his duties exceedingly more than the law requires, provided he does not go to extremes and does not act so ridiculously, so that all praise him and love him and crave to imitate his actions, behold he doth sanctify the Lord,

In other words, the Rambam is not writing that we sanctify HKB'H directly but that our behavior reflects G-d, his people, his Torah, and his presence in the world. We sanctify or defame G-d's name and presence in the universe.

The third category is the greatest chiddush. Namely that our behavior somehow creates a חלולת קדושה in the world. We are charged to not just amplify or bring recognition to G-d's name but to expand G-dliness in this world. Building the Beis HaMikdash or a shul, being makdish an animal, transforming food into מאכלי קודש, tefillah (according to the Nefesh Hachaim), berachos and a whole host of other behaviors are fundamentally expansions of divinity. How this is quantified is exceedingly complicated - we cannot 'expand' HKB'H per se - but clearly what is at stake are acts that in some way impact the cosmic and metaphysical nature of the universe.

So, to answer the question of what it means to be a mekadesh, it means either restraint, elevating G-d's name or having some actual impact on the unseen but palpable spiritual dimension through expanding G-dliness itself.

In a way the range of opportunities for sanctification might be surprising but, in a way, seems perfectly in keeping with man himself. On the one hand we say about man מנה אנוש כי תזכרנו - who is Man that you should be mindful of him? He is nothing more than עפר ואפר. He is like a broken shard and a passing dream.

On the other hand, the Yerushalmi records that the Angels at first wanted to say קדוש, קדוש, קדוש not to G-d but to man. According to the medrash הוה אמינה יכול כמוני - one would have thought that we were like G-d. Man is a universe to himself and his value is limitless. The gemarah writes that one rips keriah in the presence of a niftar because each person by definition (even the biggest rasha) is comparable to a sefer Torah. Sometimes we speak

to G-d from a distance and other times we speak directly using the informal 'you' - ברוך אתה ה'.

It is no wonder that the options for being mekadesh shem Shamayim are so vast. Sometimes all we can do is refrain and not do. Sometimes that is all that man is capable of and that restraint and limitations placed on our physical self in and of itself is a form of greatness and sanctity. However just being a poreish is not man's ceiling. We have the capacity to live an ethical and exalted life that allows people to perceive and connect with the shem Hashem. But even that is not the ceiling. Miraculously we were endowed with the capability of somehow being partners in the sanctification of the universe and in the amplification of G-d's presence in that very universe.

Those range of options reflect the range of both our own self-perception as well as the complex nature of man's existence. The basic duality that man was created both from dust as well as from the process of by G-d breathing life into us shows up in every piece of our life including in the way that we now become obligated in our own processes of creation and sanctification. The mindfulness of this reality is at the same time both overwhelmingly daunting as well as incredibly uplifting.

Everyone should have a good Shabbos

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