



“You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy”

The Elation Experienced by Rashbi’s Entourage with the Arrival of Parshas Kedoshim based on the Explanation of the Zera Kodesh

On the upcoming, auspicious Shabbas Kodesh, we will read the double parsha of Acharei Mot-Kedoshim. Since we are within thirty days of Lag BaOmer, the day on which we celebrate the passing of the divine Tanna Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, it is fitting to focus on a related passage in the Zohar hakadosh (Kedoshim 81a). It describes the immense joy experienced by Rashbi’s entourage upon reaching parshas Kedoshim: **Rabbi Abba taught: This parsha encompasses the general principles of the entire Torah and the seal of truth—“emet.” Exalted secrets are revealed in this parsha related to the ten utterances, decrees and punishments, and heavenly mitzvos. When the colleagues reached this parsha, they were elated.**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject regarding the elation that overcame Rashbi’s holy entourage by introducing a fascinating passage in the Midrash (V.R. 24, 8) related to the opening passuk of parshas Kedoshim (Vayikra 19, 1): **“וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל: “Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying, “Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy.”** According to this Midrash, the concluding statement—**“for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy”**—refers to the three times the heavenly malachim, the holy seraphim, utter the word **“kadosh”** in their daily

praise of HKB”H (Yeshayah 6, 3): **“קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבאות—מלא כל הארץ כבודו”**—**holy, holy, holy is Hashem, Master of Legions; the whole world is filled with His glory.** Here is the passage:

It is analogous to the people of a country who made three crowns for the king. What did the king do? He placed one on his own head and two on the heads of his children. Similarly, every, single day, the heavenly beings coronate HKB”H with three sanctities. What does HKB”H do? He places one on His own head and two on the heads of Yisrael. As it is written: “Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy.”

In the passuk cited at the end of this passage, it says **“קדושים תהיו”—you shall be holy.** Here, HKB”H addresses Yisrael and tells them to be holy employing the plural term **“קדושים”**. As we know, this indicates a minimum of at least two. Thus, HKB”H is telling Yisrael to sanctify themselves with the two sanctities that He has placed on their heads. Why? As the passuk goes on to explain: **“כי קדוש אני ה'—אלקיכם.”** Note that here the passuk employs the term **“קדוש”** in the singular, since it is referring to the third crown, the third sanctity, which He took for Himself, so to speak.

Now, it is incumbent upon us to endeavor to explain and understand the significance of these three “Kedushos”

(sanctities) alluded to by the heavenly seraphim with the threefold utterance: "קדוש קדוש קדוש". Additionally, we must endeavor to understand the practical significance of the command to sanctify ourselves with the two crowns HKB"H placed on our heads.

The Intriguing Dream of a Divine Kabbalist Concerning the Three Utterances of "Kadosh"

With the utmost reverence and deference, I would like to propose an explanation based on several precious teachings from our sacred rabbis, zy"a, which will aid us in deciphering our sages' enigmatic words. We will begin by introducing something brought down by the brilliant Gaon Chida, ztz"l, numerous times in his sacred works. He describes an intriguing dream dreamt by a renowned kabbalist. His source is found in Ohr Tzaddikim, authored by Rabbi Meir Papirsh. Here is what he writes:

I found it written in the name of a distinguished Rav, Rabbi Avraham Epstein, z"l, who was a Rav in the holy community of Brisk in Lita: On Rosh Chodesh Adar 5775, I had a dream, I was studying in a yeshivah-gedolah searching for the significance of the kedushah we refer to with the threefold utterance "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh," and the fact that we do not say "Hashem, Master of Legions; the whole world is filled with His glory" until after the third one.

It was revealed to me that the reason is because the three utterances of "kadosh" correspond to the three buildings of the Beis HaMikdash. It is because each time the Beis HaMikdash was built, there was a singular union of kedushah and a separation among the forces of the klipah. The source of the klipos is the four-hundred men that accompanied Eisav HaRasha (Bereishis 32, 7) and is alluded to by the passuk (Ovadiah 1, 18): "בית עשו לקש" (the house of Eisav is compared to straw); the gematria of ק"ש is four hundred.

This is the significance of the term קדו"ש: The two letters ד"ו in the middle represent the holy union,

in keeping with Chazal's statement (Kiddushin 41a): טב למיתב טן ד"ו כו'—it is better to live as two together; the letters ק"ש representing the (400 forces of the) klipos are separated from each other. This first קדו"ש represents the building of the first Bayis; the kedushah was united and the klipah was separated. Subsequently, due to our transgressions, the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed. Hence, it is not fitting to say "Hashem, Master of Legions..." immediately after this utterance of "kadosh."

This same scenario was repeated with the second Bayis represented by the second utterance of "kadosh." Once again, it is not fitting to say "Hashem, Master of Legions..." immediately after this "kadosh." The third utterance of "kadosh" represents the third Beis HaMikdash, which will be built swiftly, in our times; the kedushah will be united and intact, while the klipah will be separated and will be incinerated and cease to exist forever. This building will be eternal; as such, it is fitting to say after this "kadosh": ה' צבאות מלא "כל הארץ כבודו"—Hashem, Master of Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory. This dream was a minor prophecy.

The Suboptimal Union of the Second Beith HaMikdash Was Still Preferable to Galus

As mentioned, the Gaon Chida mentions this dream several times in his sacred works. In Midbar Kedeimos, he adds that the letters ד"ו allude to the magnificent union of HKB"H with the congregation of Yisrael, where HKB"H is like a "Chasan," and the congregation of Yisrael is like the "kallah." This is the depiction in the passuk (Yeshayah 62, 5): "ומשוש חתן על כלה ישיש עליך אלקיך"—and like a bridegroom rejoicing over his bride, so will your G-d rejoice over you. In this scenario, the letter "dalet" represents the congregation of Yisrael; without HKB"H, she is lowly and poor ("dalah") and possesses nothing on her own accord. The letter "vav" represents HKB"H, the conduit providing influence and abundance. This then is what was revealed in the dream: The middle letters, ד"ו, of the term קדו"ש,

representing the union of HKB”H with the congregation of Yisrael, separate the letters ק”ש from each other, thereby disrupting the 400 forces of Eisav and the klipah.

In this manner, the Chida explains at greater length in his sefer Mar’et Ayin (Kiddushin 41a) the deeper meaning of the statement from the Gemara mentioned in the dream: “אמר ריש לקיש טב למיתב טן דו מלמיתב ארמלו” —**Reish Lakish said: It is better to live as two together than to live alone.** Rashi explains that this was a common saying and feeling among the women expressing the fact that it is preferable to be married to an unexceptional husband than to live life alone.

The Chida is surprised that such a distinguished Amora as Reish Lakish, Rabbi Yochanan’s frequent adversary in the Gemara, would make such a statement. Nevertheless, he justifies the statement based on the teaching in the Gemara (Yoma 21b) that five prominent features were absent in the second Beis HaMikdash—the Aron, Kapores and Keruvim; the heavenly fire; the Shechinah; the “ruach hakodesh” of nevuah; and the Urim V’Tumim. This was the profound message conveyed by Reish Lakish with the words “טב” למיתב טן דו”. Even though, these vital elements were conspicuously absent in the second Beis HaMikdash and, as such, the holy union was not as complete as it was in the first Beis HaMikdash; nevertheless, it was still preferable for HKB”H to dwell with the congregation of Yisrael in the Beis HaMikdash as a virtual couple—represented by the letters ד”ו—**“than to live alone”** and apart as they would after the churban, like a lonely widow.

The First Two Batei Mikdash Prepared the World for the Kedushah of the Third Beis HaMikdash

With this introduction, let us now revisit the passage in the Midrash cited above stating that the malachim adorn HKB”H daily with the three crowns of “קדוש קדוש קדוש”. He places two of the crowns on the head of Yisrael and places one on His own head, so to speak. We will refer to an important principle taught by the Yismach Moshe (Tetzaveh) concerning the three Batei Mikdash.

It is written (Shemos 27, 20): ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל: “and you shall command Bnei Yisrael that they shall take for you clear olive oil, crushed for illumination, to light a lamp continually. The Ba’al HaTurim interprets the words “כתית למאור” as an allusion to the two Batei Mikdash. For, the first Mikdash stood for 410 years—ת”י—and the second Mikdash stood for 420 years—ת”כ. Together, these two designations form the word כתית”ת. Thus, the passuk states that the lamp would be lit in the Beis HaMikdash for כתית”ת years—420+410.

The Yismach Moshe then addresses the conclusion of the passuk **“to light a lamp continually”** based on a statement of Shlomo HaMelech. When he built the first Beis HaMikdash, he said (Tehillim 127, 1): אבם ה' לא יבנה—**if Hashem will not build the house, the builders will have labored in vain.** Note that the passuk begins with the word “יבנה”—**“He will build”**—in the future tense but concludes with the word “עמלו”—**“they labored”**—in the past tense.

In his own sacred, inimitable way, he explains that the world was incapable and not ready to receive the immense kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash. Hence, it was necessary to pave the way for it with the respective kedushahs of the first two Batim. Once that level of kedushah had blessed the world, it was possible to receive even the incredible kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash.

He explains: We need to address the question that troubled our predecessors. Were the first two Batei Mikdash that were destroyed totally for naught, chas v’chalah, or did they serve some unknown purpose? The matter can be understood based on the following parable: A man plants seed for an exotic tree; once it blossoms and begins to bear fruit, he uproots the tree. In its place, he plants seed for a second tree; once again, he waits until it bears fruit and then uproots it, as well. Now, he acquires seed for a tree of indescribable quality and beauty. This time, he plants it and cares for it so that it will last forever. During the uprooting of the first two beautiful, seemingly healthy

trees, observers could not comprehend what this fellow was up to nor what his reasoning might have been.

Accordingly, the Yismach Moshe interprets the statement of Shlomo HaMelech: **אם ה' לא יבנה בית שוא עמלו** "אם ה' לא יבנה בית שוא עמלו" **בוניו בו**. The fact that we have witnessed the building and destruction of two Batei Mikdash should give us ample hope and anticipation of salvation. HKB"H would not have done that for naught, chas v'shalom; it is obviously because He is destined to erect a more splendid third Beis HaMikdash in their place; the first two Batei Mikdash prepared the way for the building of the third Beis HaMikdash.

So, this is the interpretation of the passuk: **כתית למאור** "כתית למאור" **להעלות נר תמיד**. The first two Batei HaMikdash are alluded to by the word "כתית"—the **410 and 420** years they stood respectively—because they were destined to be "**crushed**" ("כתית") and destroyed. That, however, might lead us to conclude that they were built and existed for naught. Therefore, the passuk reassures us that this is not true. On the contrary, they provided illumination for the world **כתית** years as a marvelous preparation "**להעלות נר תמיד**"—for the eternal light of the third Beis HaMikdash that will be built in the near future. This is the gist of his sacred remarks.

The Two Kedushahs on the Head of Yisrael Are the First Two Batei Mikdash The One Kedushah on the Head of HKB"H Is the Third Beis HaMikdash

The remarks of the Yismach Moshe should provide all of Yisrael in this difficult prolonged galus tremendous moral support and "chizuk." While it appears superficially that the two Batei Mikdash were destroyed, he teaches us that they left a lasting, vital impression in the world. Their inherent kedushah prepared the world to receive the incredible kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash that will characterize the future geulah.

This provides us with a very nice understanding of the exposition in the Gemara (Megillah 29a) of the passuk in the Navi (Yechezkel 11, 16): **ואהי להם למקדש מעט, אמר רבי** "ואהי להם למקדש מעט, אמר רבי" **יצחק אלו בתי כנסיות ובתי מדרשות שבבבל.** "Yet, I have been for

them a 'Mikdash m'aht' (a miniature Sanctuary)." **Rabbi Yitzchak said: These are the synagogues and study halls in Bavel.** This teaches us that the kedushah of the Beis HaMikdash left a lasting impression and endures in the Batei Kenesses and Batei Midrash, where Yisrael study Torah and come for tefilah.

In this light, we can understand the Midrash above: **Every, single day, the heavenly beings coronate HKB"H with three sanctities. What does HKB"H do? He places one on His own head and two on the heads of Yisrael. As it is written: "Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy."** The three kedushahs with which the malachim coronate HKB"H correspond to the three Batei Mikdash, which HKB"H established to illuminate this physical, material world.

The desired ideal is the third Beis HaMikdash. It is destined to be brought down from the heavens by HKB"H as a fiery structure that will endure forevermore. In the words of Rashi (Succah 41a): **The future Mikdash, which we await, built and perfect, will be revealed and come from the heavens, as it says (Shemos 15, 17): "A Sanctuary (Mikdash), Hashem, that Your hands established.** That is the one crown that HKB"H, so to speak, places on His own head as an assurance to us that He is destined to build the third Beis HaMikdash. That is the third "**kadosh**" which the malachim utter, which is followed immediately by the declaration: **"ה' צבאות מלוא כל הארץ כבודו" —Hashem, Master of Legions, the whole world is filled with His glory.**

Yet, as explained, since the world is incapable of receiving the extraordinary level of kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash, it was necessary to build two predecessors ahead of it. They are represented by the first two crowns that HKB"H placed initially on the head of Yisrael. They were tasked with building the first two Batei Mikdash. This instilled a degree of kedushah in the world that would enable it to receive the extraordinary kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash.

We can now make sense of the conclusion of the Midrash: **As it is written: “Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy.”** This is what HKB”H requires of us. Even after the churban of the first two Batei Mikdash, while we are in galus, we must continue to sanctify ourselves with the two kedushahs of the two Batei Mikdash—with the remnants of their kedushah that can now be found in our Batei Kenesses and Batei Midrash. With our tefilos and the Torah we study there, we remain connected with that kedushah. Thus, we prepare the groundwork for the building of the third Beis HaMikdash—the third “kadosh,” which HKB”H placed upon His own head.

The Zera Kodesh Explains the Difference between the Anagrams ש”קוד and קדו”ש

With immense pleasure, we will continue this sacred journey by expanding on our explanation of the three crowns “קדוש קדוש קדוש”. We will begin with a precious teaching from the esteemed Rabbi of Ropshitz (his yearzeit is next week on the 11th of Iyar), zy”a, in Zera Kodesh (Kedoshim). He addresses the practical significance of the passuk: “קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם”—by explaining the difference between the word “קדוש” and its anagram “ש”קוד”. (Note that the “dalet” and the “vav” are transposed.)

He teaches us that the “dalet” represents Yisrael, the female counterpart; she lacks any sustenance of her own; she relies on what she receives from HKB”H. Correspondingly, the “vav” represents HKB”H, the male counterpart, so to speak; He is the conduit that provides Yisrael with abundant sustenance. The goal of our avodah is for Yisrael to first perform good deeds—described as an “awakening from below”—to please HKB”H. Hopefully, He will respond with an “awakening from above,” sustaining Yisrael with abundant good in all respects.

Hence, Yisrael are described as “קדושים”, with the “dalet” preceding the “vav”; this indicates that the people of Yisrael are expected to perform actions below to

inspire HKB”H to provide them with bounty from above. In contrast, HKB”H is described as “קודש”, with the “vav” preceding the “dalet”; this indicates that HKB”H is the heavenly provider—the “vav”—sustaining Yisrael—the “dalet”—below. Notwithstanding, the Zera Kodesh adds a wonderful chiddush. Due to His extreme humility, HKB”H yearns intensely for Yisrael’s avodah; He expresses this intense desire by referring to Himself as “קדוש”, with the “dalet” preceding the “vav.” As such, HKB”H, so to speak, is referring to Himself as the needy one longing for the avodah of Yisrael. In other words, He considers Yisrael the “vav,” since they provide Him with pleasure and gratification.

This explains why HKB”H occasionally describes Yisrael with the adjective “קודש”, which is usually reserved to describe Him. An example is found in the passuk (Shemos 22, 30): “ואנשי קודש תהיו לי”—**you shall be a people of holiness for Me.** In other words, HKB”H is requesting Yisrael to be the influencer—the “vav” providing the “dalet” with abundant pleasure, so to speak. Based on this, the Zera Kodesh interprets the passuk that we will read this week: “קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם”:

“You shall be holy”—you shall be like the term ש”קוד, where the “dalet” precedes the “vav,” indicating that you shall request that Hashem have compassion on your poverty and provide for you. Here, the “awakening from below” comes first. Subsequently, He says: “Because I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy”—you should learn from My example that I make Myself in a sense קדו”ש to receive from you.

We can now appreciate to some small degree the elation experienced by the entourage of Rashbi upon reaching parshas Kedoshim. We are taught in our sacred sefarim—the foremost being those of our master, the Arizal—that the aim of “Torah hanistar”—the mystical aspects of the Torah revealed by Rashbi—is to teach us how to unite with HKB”H through our actions below, with proper intent, and with focus on esoteric, divine names. For this reason, the Zohar hakadosh says (Nasso 145a): “מי הוא קדוש ה' זה”

”רבי שמעון בן יוחאי—who is the holy one of Hashem; it is Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai.

In keeping with this discussion, this means that due to the Torah of mysticism that he revealed to the world, it is possible to sanctify ourselves and serve Hashem as ”קדוש”—i.e., we can live up to HKB”H’s expectation of us:

”קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה’ אלקיכם”. Even if we are not on the “madreigah” of Rashbi’s entourage, nevertheless, we must strive to be included in their kedushah. In the merit of that positive thought and desire, HKB”H will associate it with an actual deed; He will provide us with abundant good from above, in keeping with His assurance: **“You shall be holy, because I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy.”**



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