

Menachem Persoff

Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh!

This week's Parsha opens with Hashem addressing Moshe: "Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be holy (K'doshim Tihyu), for holy am I, Hashem, your God."

In and of itself, the plain meaning of this command is clear. Hashem's Will was to rest His Sh'china among our people so that we could fulfill our mission to serve Him as individuals and as a nation. To achieve this goal, we were (and still are) to avoid spiritual contamination (as outlined in the Parsha and elsewhere). To cite Rashi, wherever there is such separation, there is holiness.

In that way, we might achieve the goal of becoming a "kingdom of kohanim and a holy nation". Moreover, expressing that we should be holy "because Hashem is holy" implies that we should try to emulate the Almighty's attributes, observe His commandments, and behave morally. We might thus become elevated in this world and, concomitantly, advance the material aspects of our worldly existence to a higher spiritual level.

The root word KADOSH indicates something set apart, generally, in a

positive sense. For example, we associate K'dusha with Shabbat, Yom Kippur, the Holy of Holies, the sanctity of marriage, and offerings set aside for the Kohanim in the Beit HaMikdash.

When we recite the K'dusha prayer in the repetition of the Amida, we proclaim (together with the angels in the upper spheres), Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh Hashem Tz'va'ot - "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts" (Yeshayahu 6:3). Rabbi Dr. J. A. Hertz described this chant as "a cry of eternity, proclaiming the ineffable nature, supreme majesty, and universal sovereignty of God."

The threefold repetition indicates that Hashem's influence pervades

(1) eternity (the dimension of time) and physical space - the upper and lower spheres;

(2) Heaven and

(3) Earth.

Or perhaps, to paraphrase Rabbi Hertz, we thus understand Hashem in His most superlative: indescribable, unsearchable, and infinite holy (separate, detached, transcendent).

But if Hashem is distant and separate, how do we perceive Him, and how does He permeate our existence?

The answer lies in the second part of Yeshayahu's proclamation that "the whole earth is filled with His glory". Thus, Hashem's "Glory" is His manifestation in our world; it is the outward expression and radiation of His divine power. Indeed, for Rav Elie Munk, the entire world is "a dull afterglow of Hashem's hidden light, the unfolding of the divine immanence, God's raiment of glory."

So, when we next look at heavenly galaxies or reflect upon a human birth or, unexpectedly, see the hand of God in our lives, let us dwell on the dual and dialectical aspects of Hashem's essence in awe and love as we strive to bring K'dusha into our lives. **MP**