



RABBI AARON

Editor, Torah Tidbits

GOLDSCHIEDER

## *Kedusha* Is A Human Endeavor

Hermann Cohen, a 19th century philosopher whose viewpoints influenced Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik's zt"l thought<sup>1</sup>, comments on the opening verse in parshat Kedoshim. He draws a distinction between its two clauses:

*"You shall be holy, / for holy am I, Hashem, your God (19:2)*

Concerning God, holiness is inherent or intrinsic - *'I am holy.'* However, regarding man - *'you shall be holy'* should be understood to mean that you are to *become* holy. Holiness for man is a task, it is an attainment. (Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason: Out Of The Sources of Judaism*, p.96).

In this same vein Rabbi Soloveitchik said, "Holiness is created by man, by flesh and blood" (*Halachic Man*, p.47). *Kedusha* is actualized by man. Man's greatness is that he can invest an object, a place, and even time with sanctity.

A conspicuous example where there

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1 Rabbi Soloveitchik studied in the University of Berlin, writing his doctorate on the philosophy of Hermann Cohen.

appears to be inherent *kedusha* is *kedushat Shabbat*. Certain sources claim that in this case *kedusha* is *not* dependent on man. The Talmud describes Shabbat holiness as *keviah ve'kayama (Pesachim 117b)* - that its sanctity has been 'set and established' from the very beginning of creation.

Seemingly, the holiness of Shabbat should present a serious challenge to the Rav's theory. However, the Rav held fast to his argument that the key component in all holiness is man's participation. He offers the following three authentications to the idea that man plays the essential role in establishing the holiness of Shabbat:

Firstly, consider the way Shabbat is described in *Vayikra* 23:2-3. The Torah includes the Shabbat with the festivals: "...these are my appointed festivals. For six days labor may be done, and the seventh day is a day of complete rest." It appears that in addition to the sanctity of Shabbat that was ordained at the end of creation, Shabbat is listed first among the festivals that the Jewish people are to sanctify. (OU Jewish action, Kiddush-Positive Testimony)

Rabbi Soloveitchik in "*Shi'urim Lezekher Abba Mori*," posits that the *kiddush* that we recite on Friday night adds holiness to the preexisting holiness of Shabbat. Thus, even Shabbat has a layer of human

sanctification. One of Rabbi Soloveitchik's main proofs for this is the talmudic passage which discusses why it is preferable to recite kiddush as early as possible on Friday night, but there is no similar preference regarding the *havdala* that is recited on Saturday night:

There is a difference between ushering the day in and ushering it out. Ushering it in, the earlier we do so the better, as it shows that we cherish it. Ushering it out, we delay it, so that it should not appear as a burden upon us. (*Pesachim* 105b)

The Gemara asserts that on Friday night it is preferable to recite *kiddush* early, so as to usher in the holy day of Shabbat as early as possible. Rabbi Soloveitchik asks: If *kiddush* is merely a recitation of words of praise, why then is it preferable to recite it early? This passage proves that on a certain level, *kiddush* bestows holiness upon the day, its sanctity being incomplete until *kiddush* is recited (Chaim Navon, Holiness, Etzion.org).

Based on the above sources, Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that the *kiddush* on Shabbat is more than just a recitation of the praise and acknowledgement of the sanctity of Shabbat. Rather, *kiddush* is actually man's participation with God in the sanctification process.

How does man sanctify that which is already holy? The answer is that perhaps the holiness of Shabbat has two aspects: the prohibition against work and a sanctity akin to that of the festivals. That labor is forbidden on the seventh day is ordained by God alone, regardless of any-

thing done or said by man; this aspect of Shabbat holiness is endowed exclusively by God. However man is called upon to invest the day with an additional festive character of 'moed.' In this respect Shabbat resembles the other festivals, which are totally dependent on Israel's sanctification. (Ibid.)

The Rav's third proof regarding man's role in sanctifying the Shabbat is the notion of *Tosefet Shabbat* - "that we add from the profane onto the holy" (*Rosh Hashana* 9a). How is it that we can add additional hours to the holiness Shabbat? Is it not the twenty four hour span of time predetermined by the Torah? Apparently the answer is that *kedusha*, even the *kedusha* embedded in Shabbat, is determined by the Jew. Through a Jew's intent and his engagement, the day is infused with holiness. ■

   
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