

The Rebbe's Discourses

Free Summaries of the Rebbe's Chassidic Discourses בלי אחריות כלל וכלל
ד"ה ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל תשכ"ה קונטרס י"ג אייר תש"נ מוגה

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INVOLUNTARY HOLINESS

THE SEDRA TELLS US THAT G-D SAYS “AND I WILL BE SANCTIFIED BY THE JEWISH PEOPLE, I AM G-D WHO sanctifies them” (Lev.22:32). Rabbi Shneur Zalman explains that G-d's being sanctified means the revelation of Divine holiness in the heart of the Jew, that his or her heart flames with enthusiasm to be absorbed in G-d's infinite holiness. This is a movement from below to above, from the individual towards G-d. G-d responds with a flow of holiness from above to below, a double flow of Torah and of Mitzvot. The flow of Torah is in the inwardness of the worlds; in order for the outer aspect of the worlds to be infused with holiness, there is the flow of Mitzvot.

Thus in the morning prayers one quotes from Isaiah 6:3, "Holy, holy, holy is the L-rd of Hosts". The first term Holy is the movement upwards towards G-d, and the second and third terms express the Divine response of Torah and Mitzvot.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman² explains the spiritual source of these three dimensions of holiness. The first level, towards which the Jew yearns, is the level of Keter, Crown, the transcendent aspect beyond the Sefirot. The second level of holiness, expressed in the Torah, flowing from G-d to the world, is from the level Keter of the intermediary Sefirot (Zeir Anpin). The third level, expressed in the Mitzvot, derives from Keter of Malchut, Kingship.

¹ *Venikdashתי Emor 5725*, published (edited by the Rebbe) as *Tract for 13 Iyyar* (Yahrzeit of the Rebbe's brother Yisrael Aryeh Leib) 1990. Published in *Dvormalchut Emor* (Diaspora) 5782.

² *Likkutei Torah, Emor*, 33b.

The reason why each of these is from the level of Keter, Crown, the Transcendent, is because holiness is always a step beyond, transcendent. So each of the three expressions of holiness relate to Keter.

A Midrash³ discusses the idea of the holiness of G-d and of the Jewish people, as expressed in the verse Holy, Holy, Holy, with an image of a King whose subjects made three crowns for him. One he put on his own head; the other two he gave to his people. The Midrash links this with the verses '[You should be holy because] I am holy' (Kedoshim 19:2) and "you should sanctify yourselves and be holy" (Kedoshim 20:7).

This can be further understood from a discussion concerning the topic of holiness in last week's Sedra Kedoshim, where we read "You should be holy, because I G-d am holy". The Midrash⁴ comments further on this: you should be holy, do you think you can be as holy as Me, the Torah says "for I G-d am holy" My holiness is greater than yours. The Tzemach Tzedek⁵ comments on this Midrash "surprising".

His comment seems to mean that it is surprising that a puny human being could in any way imagine that his holiness might be similar to that of G-d. Indeed, how could the Midrash make such a suggestion (even though it goes on to dismiss it).

The discourse explores the relation between the Divine holiness and that of the Jew. What is the source of the holiness of the Jew? Is it indeed the movement from below to above as described earlier? If so, we could say that on the one hand, G-d is holy. As a consequence, the individual yearns to be absorbed in that holiness. Then as described earlier, there is the double flow of holiness from G-d to the Jewish people in the form of Torah and Mitzvot. The discourse declares that this is true in the case of the Tzaddik. The Tzaddik yearns to be closer to the Divine. This is his or her reaching from below to above, the first term 'Holy', followed by the double response from G-d.

But what if this first step is not a flow from below to above, but from above to below? The discourse explains that this is the case for the Baal Teshuvah, the repentant person. Here [it seems] we are not speaking of a conscious yearning form of Repentance, but rather a step forward in Jewish practice which has the effect of bringing the person to a higher level almost without realising it. "One thing led to another, and we began eating kosher..."

³ Vayikra Rabbah 24:8

⁴ Ibid, 24:9.

⁵ In his Or HaTorah, beginning of Kedoshim.

In this case the initial holiness is not outside the person in such a way that he or she longs for it. It is inside the person, and it suddenly reveals itself in his or her practical life

This is the background to the Midrash suggesting that the holiness of man might be like the holiness of G-d. Because in this second mode, the Divine holiness is within the person and prompts their actions to follow a new path, that of repentance.

We can now look again at the Midrash about the King and the people, and the two verses it quotes about holiness. In the first mode, G-d declares that He is holy, in the first verse, and then in the second verse, on a distinctly lower level, there are the two kinds of holiness of the Jewish people. That describes the process for the righteous, the spiritual people who yearn for G-d.

The second mode is that of the Repentant. Looking at the same Midrash, in the first verse, G-d declares that because He is holy, the Jewish people should be holy. The holiness of the Jew is integrally part of the holiness of the Divine. This derives from a higher level, from the Essence, beyond all levels of Keter. The Tzaddik yearns for the holiness of Keter; the Baal Teshuva, without realizing it, manifests the sanctity of the Essence of the Divine.

Torah teachings are holy – please treat these pages with care