

The Jubilation of Rashby's Entourage on Parshas Kedoshim according to the Chasam Sofer's Incredible Insight

In this week's parsha, parshas Kedoshim, we read (Vayikra 19, 1): "וידבר ה' אל משה לאמר, דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם, 'Hashem spoke to Moshe, saying: Speak to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael and say to them: You shall be kadosh (holy), for I, Hashem, your G-d, am holy. Based on the Toras Kohanim, Rashi comments: This teaches us that this portion of the Torah was said at a gathering of the entire assembly of Yisrael, because the majority of the essentials of the Torah depend upon it. According to the Siftei Chachamim, Rashi deduces this fact from the unusual wording employed by the passuk: 'דבר אל כל עדת'—**speaking to the entire assembly of Bnei Yisrael**—rather than the usual wording found throughout the Torah: "דבר אל בני ישראל"—**speaking to Bnei Yisrael**.

Lag BaOmer is now less than thirty days away. Hence, it is only fitting that we examine a pertinent passage from the Zohar hakadosh (Kedoshim 81a). We are taught that with the arrival of parshas Kedoshim, Rashb"y's holy entourage became euphoric. Here is a Hebrew translation of the passage: תנא רבי אבא, פרשה זו היא כללות כל התורה וחותם האמת. בפרשה זו נתחדשו סודות עליונים, בעשרה מאמרות וגזירות ועונשים ומצוות עליונות, שכאשר הגיעו "this parsha presents the general principles of the Torah and the seal of truth—"emet." Esoteric information—exalted secrets—is revealed in this parsha. When the colleagues reached this parsha, they were elated.

Parshas Kedoshim Was Delivered to the Entire Assembly— Emphasizing Discretion within the Community

Regarding the elation of the holy group of disciples upon the arrival of parshas Kedoshim, I was struck by a wonderful idea. In

Toras Moshe, the incredible Chasam Sofer, explains the practical significance of the fact that parshas Kedoshim was delivered to the entire assembly. He teaches us not to misconstrue the implication of being "kadosh." While it means being removed and separated from matters of Olam HaZeh; it does not mean that we should distance ourselves from the community and remain alone and isolated in forests and deserts. After all, every Jew is obligated to learn and to teach others Hashem's Torah and mitzvot. Rather, the Torah is teaching us that even when a person finds himself in public situations, within the assembly--"בהקהל"—he can still remain isolated in his thoughts with his Maker—remaining intimate and connected. Here are his inspirational words of insight:

"דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל וגו' קדושים תהיו, ופירש רש"י פרשה זו בהקהל נאמרה, לפי שרוב גופי תורה תלויים בה. ויש לומר על פי מה שכתב החובות הלבבות (שער הפרישות פ"ג) בגודל מעלת הפרישות והבדידות, שאין רצון הקב"ה להיות פרוש, דהיינו שילך במקום שאין אנשים, למדבריות ויערות, לבחון ולהשכיל את מעשה ה' כי גורא הוא, כי לא תוהו בראה לשבת יצרה.

אלא רצון ה' יתברך להיות אוהב את הבריות ולחבר עמהם, ללמדם בינה והשכל בתורת ה', ואם אמנם שממעט בזה להשלים עצמו, אפילו הכי הוא רצון ה' להיות אוהב הבריות, שעל ידי זה מקרבן לתורה בחיבור ובדביקות זו, ואם כוונתו רק לתכלית זה, אז יהיה בחיבור עם אנשים ולבו דבק בה', ואף על פי כן [יהיה] פרוש מכל תענוגי עולם הזה, וזה הפרישות בחר ה'.

וזה שביאר כאן באמרו קדושים תהיו, שתהיו בפרישות, ונוכל לטעות שענין פרישות היינו בדידות הגוף, לכך נאמר דבר אל כל עדת וגו', והיינו פרשה זו בהקהל נאמרה, שיהיה פרוש אבל מעורב עם בני אדם, והטעם מפני שרוב גופי תורה, שיקויים התורה בגוף, תלויים בזה ללמוד וללמד ולהיות ממלכת כהנים."

Citing the Chovos HaLevavos, he states that it is not HKB"H's will that we isolate ourselves from other people

by living in deserts and forests, while searching for Hashem and investigating His greatness. Rather, it is Hashem's will that we love others and reach out to teach them Hashem's Torah—even at the cost and sacrifice of one's own personal edification. Nevertheless, a person should distance himself from the pleasures of this world; this is the separateness that Hashem desires.

This is the meaning of "קדושים תהיו"—**you shall be holy (kadosh)**; you shall remove yourselves and be separate. We might mistakenly interpret this directive as referring to physical isolation. Therefore, it was commanded that this passage be delivered to the entire assembly—indicating a form of separateness, while still together with others. The reason for this command was because this passage contains essential Torah precepts that must be learned and fulfilled and taught to others.

When Aharon Exited the Kodesh HaKodashim He Stripped Off the Garments of Isolation

In parshas Acharei Mot, we find more wonderful insights on this subject in the writings of the Chasam Sofer. He elucidates the passuk describing the Kohen Gadol's exit from the Kodesh HaKodashim, after performing his avodah on Yom Kippur (Vayikra 16, 23):

"ובא אהרן אל אהל מועד ופשט את בגדי הבד אשר לבש בכבואו אל הקדש והניחם שם ורחץ את בשרו במים במקום קדוש ויצא ועשה את עולתו ואת עולת העם. יאמר על פי מזה שכתב חובות הלכבות, הגם שהבדידות הוא ממעלות הרמות, מכל מקום יותר מזה הוא ההתחברות עם עובדי ה' להורותם הדרך ילכו בה, דזכותם יהיו תלוי בו, והאריך מאוד בזה בדוכתי טיבו.

ומכל מקום כתב בשער הפרישות שיהיה צהלתו בפניו ואכלו בלבו, פירוש מכל מקום לבבו יהיה בודד לה', רק בפניו יסביר להם פנים כדי שיקובלו דבריו. והנה להיות כי הכהן גדול היו מפרישים ז' ימים קודם יום הקדוש הזה והיה מתבודד בהם, אמר לו שלא ירבה לעשות כן כל ימות השנה, כי יותר טוב לו ללמוד דעת את העם, כדכתיב יורו משפטיך ליעקב.

וזהו אחר תשלום עבודת יום הכיפורים אמר, ומעתה ובא אהרן אל אהל מועד הוא בית המדרש, ופשט בגדי הבד, הבדידות, אשר לבש בכבואו אל הקודש, שהיה פרוש ז' ימים, עכשיו יפשוט אותן הבגדים, פירוש לא ישתמש במדה ההיא, רק והניחם שם, על דעת שבגדי הבדידות יהיו מונחים בקודש עד שנה הבאה אבל לא בשארית השנה."

The Torah says: **"Aharon shall come to Ohel Moed; he shall remove the linen garments that he had worn when**

he entered the Sanctuary, and he shall leave them there. He shall immerse his flesh in the water in a sacred place and don his garments; he shall go out and offer his own olah-offering and the olah-offering of the people, and shall provide atonement for himself and for the people." Based on what the Chovos HaLevavos wrote, it can be said that although "bedidus" (seclusion and isolation) is one of the superior qualities, nevertheless, connecting with those who serve Hashem in order to demonstrate for them the path they should follow is even more so. For, their merit will depend on him. He elaborates on this point in many places.

Nevertheless, in Sha'ar HaPerishut, he wrote that he should show his joy on his face but maintain his apprehension in his heart. In other words, his heart should remain secluded with Hashem; only he should show the people a friendly face, so that they will accept his words. Now, since they secluded the Kohen Gadol for seven days prior to this holy day, and he would remain isolated during those days, he was told not to do so too often during the rest of the year. For, it is preferable that he impart knowledge to the people, as it is written: "They will teach Your laws to Yaakov."

Thus, after completing the Yom Kippur avodah, Aharon is instructed to go to the Beit Midrash ("Ohel Moed"), and strip off his attitude of seclusion ("bigdei habad": alluding to his "bedidus"), which he wore during the seven days prior to entering the Sanctuary. Now, he should remove those garments. In other words, he should not employ that quality; rather, he should leave them there, with the knowledge that the garments of seclusion will remain there in the Sanctuary until next year—but not during the rest of the year.

Rabbi Shimon Sofer's Reliable Testimony

We will now introduce the magnificent words of his son, the great Rabbi Shimon Sofer, zy"l. In a letter to his cousin, the great Rabbi Yehudah Leib Eiger, ztz"l, he presents his holy father's (the Chasam Sofer's) explanation regarding the fact that parshas Kedoshim was said in the presence of the entire assembly. He attests to the fact, that his father truly practiced what he preached. Here is what he writes:

”וכך היו דרכי אבותינו ורבתינו הקדושים זי”ע, עם עוצם קדושתם חסידותם ופרישותם, גדלה צניעותם הצנע לכת עם ה’, ובאו בחדריו בחדרי לבבם ובמשכיות כליותיהם ומחשבותיהם, ועל פני כל העם נהגו מנהג דרך ארץ כפי מה שיסבלו הבריות. וזהו בכלל הדבק במדותיו של הקב”ה יתברך שמו הגדול, המנהג עולמות בחסד וברחמים לפי כח המקבלים, וצמצום האור בכל עולם ועולם לפי כוחו.

ושמעתי מפה קדוש אדוני אבי מורי ורבי מאור הגולה זצ”ל, אמה שפירש רש”י ריש פרשת קדושים, פרשה זו בהקהל נאמרה, על דרך שכתב בספר חובות הלכות, החכם מתבודד והוא במקלהות וחברת בני אדם, צהלתו בפניו ואכלו בלבו. וכך היתה מדתו של אדוני אבי מורי ורבי זצ”ל זי”ע, כל מי שהיה מתבונן בדרכיו ראה, כי תנועותיו בדביקות גדולה בה’ ותורתו על פי כתבי האר”י וזוהר הקדוש, באופן שבני אדם הפשוטים לא הרגישו בו שום השתנות ממנהג הציבור.”

This was the way of our forefathers and our Rabbis, zy”a. Due to their extreme kedushah, piety and separation, their private, intimate relationships with Hashem grew. They entered His chambers in their hearts and minds. Yet, in dealing with the public, they demonstrated cordiality. This exemplifies the principle of adopting HKB”H’s midot; for, He conducts the universe with chesed and rachamim, according to the capability and level of the recipients.

I heard from the holy mouth of my master, my father, and my teacher—regarding Rashi’s comment at the beginning of parshas Kedoshim, that this passage was delivered to the entire assembly—based on what was written in the Chovos HaLevavos, that the wise man secludes himself, while he is in the company of others; his joy is on his face and his apprehension is in his heart. This, indeed, was the manner of my master, my father, my teacher, ztz”l, zy”a. Everyone who observed his ways saw that his behavior reflected his extreme attachment to Hashem and His Torah . . . such that ordinary people did not sense in him any change from the behavior of the general public.

This then is the message of the Gemara (A.Z. 19b). There they expound on the words of David HaMelech, who extols the virtues of those who engage in the study of Hashem’s Torah day and night (Tehillim 1, 3): “ועלהו לא יכול - אפילו שיחת חולין של תלמידי (3): “**And whose leaf never withers**” . . . **even the casual conversations of Torah scholars requires study.** Even through their casual conversation, they transmit lofty notions extending far beyond the mundane.

Indeed, this applies magnificently to the spiritual level of David HaMelech himself, as depicted in the sefer Butzina

D’Nehora, in the name of the great Rabbi Baruch of Mezhibuzh, zy”a, regarding the passuk (Divrei HaYamim I 29, 10): **”ויברך דוד—then David praised Hashem in the presence of the entire congregation, and David said . . . Even when David HaMelech addressed the public regarding mundane, secular matters, he had in mind lofty thoughts regarding HKB”H. This then is the interpretation of the passuk: “ויברך דוד את ה’—in his inner thoughts, he privately praised Hashem, while: “לעיני כל הקהל”—to the public eye, it appeared as if: “ויאמר דוד”—he was addressing mundane matters.**

The Wisdom of Kabbalah Aims at Uniting with Hashem with Every Utterance

If we pay careful attention to the language employed by Rabbi Shimon Sofer, zy”a: **כי תנועותיו בדביקות גדולה בה’ ותורתו על פי זי”ע**—he associates his father’s conduct and behavior with the writings of the Arizal and the Zohar hakadosh. Thus, it should be apparent to us that the lofty spiritual level depicted by the Chasam Sofer with regards to the fact that this parsha was uttered in the presence of the entire assembly only really applies to the elite among us—those who have advanced to study and comprehend “Toras hanistar”—the concealed, mystical aspects of the Torah. Such scholars, even while they are in the midst of others are still able to seclude themselves with their Maker. Even in their conversations regarding mundane, everyday matters, they are able to focus on holy, divine names connecting them with Hashem.

It is appropriate to add another link to this elegant chain from the teachings of the Chasam Sofer. He applies this concept to explain what we have learned in the Gemara (Berachot 35b): **”רבי שמעון בן יוחי אומר, אפשר אדם חורש בשעת חרישה, וזורע בשעת זריעה, וקוצר בשעת קצירה, ודש בשעת דישה, וזורע בשעת הרוח, תורה מה תהא—עליה—Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Can it be that a man plows at the time of plowing, and sows at the time of sowing, and harvests at the time of harvesting, and threshes at the time of threshing, and winnows at the time of the blowing wind? What will become of the study of Torah?!** Here is the explanation he provides in Ach Pri Sevuah (Eikev):

”ושמעתי בשם הרב הגאון בעל מחבר חתם סופר ז”ל, דהיינו שאם האדם יהיה חורש בשעת חרישה, שלא תהיה כוונתו בשעת חרישה רק לחרוש בלבד, ולא תהיה לו כוונה אחרת, תורה מה תהא עליה, רק צריך בשעת חרישה גם כן לחשוב בדברים עליונים.” When a person is occupied with everyday

activities such as plowing, and focuses and thinks solely of the activity at hand—namely plowing—what will become of the Torah? Instead, even while plowing, he should also think about spiritual matters.

Based on what we have discussed, we can suggest that the divine Tanna, Rashb”y, the author of the Torah of mysticism, is of the opinion that in all everyday, material, human activities, it is imperative that a person focus on connecting exclusively with Hashem. As a result, while plowing, he won’t really be in the field plowing. Instead, he will transcend to where his thoughts are—in the heavenly spheres. This is the meaning of “kedushah” for a Jew. He separates himself mentally from all earthly matters; for all of his activities and speech are “l’shem shamayim”—for the sake of Heaven. Thus, he exists entirely in the heavenly spheres.

Regarding this matter, the divine kabbalist Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a, writes in his sefer Sur MeiRa Va’aseh Tov—citing Rabbi Chaim Vital, zy”a--that the tenth prerequisite for studying the wisdom of Kabbalah is to refrain from uttering anything that is unnecessary or not related to a mitzvah. Nevertheless, he writes that this, in fact, is the purpose of the study of Kabbalah—for a person to be able to relate the name of Hashem to each and every utterance. Here is what he writes:

“ולחבא יתבאר לך, אשר אם תזכה להשגת החכמה, איך יהיה דיבורך קודש, כי תיחד דיבורך מחשבתך ונעשה יחוד... וזהו אמרם ז”ל (אבות פ”ו מ”א) כל העוסק בתורה לשמה זוכה לדברים הרבה, רצה בזה, כי כל דיבור שיצא מפיו יעשה בו יחוד... ואז יזכה שיוכל לדבר הרבה למען יתייחד שמו ברוך הוא וברוך שמו...”

ובפרט אשר אם תזכה ותהיה רגיל ביחודי שמותיו ברוך הוא, יהיה זכר השם לנגד עיניך תמיד למצוא דברי חפץ, ותוכל לדבר עם חבריך במשא ומתן באמונה, כל דבר שיצא מפיו תוכל למצוא בכל דיבור ודיבור, אם תרצה ותזכור ימי חיך, הן בראשי תיבות או בסופי תיבות או במספר או בחלוף אלפא ביתא, איזה יחוד שמותיו ברוך הוא... וזהו (אבות פ”ב מ”ב) וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים, ולא אמר לשמים”.

Thus, we learn that a Jew who merits attaining the wisdom of “Torah hanistar”—the concealed, mystical aspects of the Torah—and to connect with Hashem in thought, speech and deed, is able to fulfill HKB”H’s command of “קדושים תהיו” to the fullest. As the Chasam Sofer explains, even while speaking with other people, he is able to seclude himself and connect intimately with HKB”H by focusing on his relationship with Hashem with every word that he speaks.

Reliable Testimony from the Mahari of Komarna

It is with great pleasure and joy that we now present the words of the great Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac of Komarna, zy”a, the author of Heichal HaBerachah, the loyal pupil and nephew of the great Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a. Being a great kabbalist, he was able to discern when tzaddikim were engaged in ordinary conversation with others how all of their utterances and communications contained loftier intent and content. Let us begin with his testimonial regarding his uncle, Rabbi Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov, zy”a:

“זכזה ראיתי למורי דודי הקדוש רבינו צבי, שהיה אומר על כל דבר קטן וגדול לשם יחוד קוב”ה ושכינתיה בפה מלא, אפילו מועט מים ששתה היה שוהה ואומר כמה יחודים, ועד כשהיה שותה המים היה דוגמא דלעילא, להמשיך מים עליונים לשכינת עוזנו, ממנו להחיות נפש כל חי ברוך חי העולמים, וכן בכל דבר אכילה כל תנועה ולעיסה היה בדוגמא דלעילא, ומועט מועט שיאכל המשיך רב טוב לבית ישראל”.

He witnessed how his holy uncle would utter: “For the sake of the unification of the Holy One, Blessed is He, and His Shechinah” out loud for all occurrences—major or minor. If he even drank a small amount of water, he would linger and utter several sacred names. Thus, he was transformed into a holy conduit conveying the heavenly influences from above to the living creatures down on earth. He would perform this ritual for every activity he engaged in. In this manner, he brought abundant good to the people of Yisrael.

In fact, he relates many such wonderful anecdotes in his sefer Zohar Chai on the Zohar hakadosh (Vayechi) regarding things that he personally saw and heard. He witnessed how his esteemed Rabbis and teachers were vigilant with regards to the words they spoke. Every utterance was associated with loftier intents, divine names and ways to connect with the Almighty. This was true even when they related actual happenings or discussed physical matters. He states that he was almost startled and overcome with trepidation due to the intense light and wisdom contained in their remarks. Even when they appeared to be listening to some lowly person relating mundane, trivial information, they only heard concealed, imperceptible lofty matters—such as the secret of the “eglah arufah” and other enigmas of the Torah.

When discussing with people in need matters related to Olam HaZeh, he saw how his holy uncle would weave into the conversations incredible, intellectual matters containing deeper,

hidden messages. Often his uncle would ask him to leave. Since he comprehended the deeper meanings and intents inherent in his uncle's words, it tended to distract his uncle from conveying the assistance required by that particular party in need.

He relates that he once saw his holy teacher, Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel of Mezhibuzh, zy" a—the author of Ohev Yisrael—conversing with a widow. He comprehended that on a deeper level, his teacher was discussing the galut of the Shechinah, which is analogous to a widow. Both he and his teacher began to cry.

He also relates an incident related to his teacher and Rebbe, the great Rabbi Naftali Tzvi of Ropshitz. On one occasion, he stood behind him unseen. It was erev Shabbas and the Rebbe wanted to go to the mikveh to immerse. Meanwhile, he was conversing with his wife. He discerned that he was in fact discussing the subjects of bathing in hot water and mikveh. He was overwhelmed by the fact that it was humanly possible to cloak such matters within everyday, practical conversations. Finally, he sensed his pupil's presence, tilted his head towards him and became momentarily silent. Then he continued until he finished conveying all of the special intents and messages pertaining to hot water and mikveh.

In the Cave of Rocks You Stayed, There You Acquired Your Majesty and Your Splendor

Based on what we have learned, we can begin to appreciate and comprehend the wonderful methods of Hashem pertaining to the divine Tanna Rashb"y. We have learned in the Gemara (Shabbas 33b) that after making derisive remarks about the Roman Empire, Rashb"y was condemned to death. He fled and was forced to hide in a cave for thirteen years—separate and isolated from the rest of his generation. In the cave, he amassed his immense knowledge of "Toras hanistar"—the mystical aspects of the Torah. This is described in the piyut "Bar Yochai," authored by the divine kabbalist Rabbi Shimon Lavi, zy" a, and is recited in Jewish communities throughout the world: **בר יוחאי, מושב טוב ישבת, יום נסת, יום אשר ברכת, במערת צורים שעמדת, שם קנית הדרך והדרך**—**Bar Yochai, you settled in a good dwelling,**

on the day you fled, on the day you escaped, in the cave of rocks you stayed; there you acquired your majesty and your splendor. The source for this piyut is found in the Tikunei Zohar (Introduction 2b):

“רבי שמעון הלך לו וברח למדבר של לוד, ונגנז במערה אחת הוא ורבי אלעזר בנו, נעשה נס שיצא להם עץ חרובים אחד ומעיין מים אחד, אכלו מאותו חרוב ושתו מאותם המים, והיה אליהו זכור לטוב בא אליהם בכל יום שתי פעמים ולימד אותם, ולא ידע אדם בהם.”

Rabbi Shimon fled to the desert of Lod. He hid in a cave along with Rabbi Elazar, his son. Miraculously, a carob tree appeared for them and a spring of water. They ate from that carob tree and drank from those waters. Eliyahu HaNavi Zachur LaTov came to them twice a day, everyday, and taught them. No one knew of their whereabouts.

We see that Rashb"y achieved his tremendous knowledge of Torah mysticism while isolated in the cave with his son Rabbi Elazar—separated from the rest of society. Let us explain based on our current discussion. As long as he had not learned and attained the esoteric aspects of the Torah, he had to remain secluded from other human beings. After Rashb"y gained his knowledge of "Toras hanistar," HKB"H arranged for the Roman Caesar to die. This allowed Rashb"y to exit the cave and rejoin his holy entourage of disciples. He began teaching them the secrets of the Torah that he had ascertained in the cave. For, he was now capable of fulfilling the directive of "קדושים תהיו" fully. Even in the presence of the entire assembly, sitting among the masses, he could focus and dedicate his every thought and utterance to Hashem.

We can now rejoice, for we can begin to comprehend the elation experienced by Rashb"y's colleagues upon reaching parshas Kedoshim. They realized that in the merit of this passage being delivered publicly to the entire assembly, they were privileged to learn the secrets of "Toras hanistar" from Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, as part of his exclusive holy entourage. Furthermore, this enabled them to fulfill the directive of "קדושים תהיו" themselves—to focus and direct all of their utterances l'shem Hashem.

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