



How is the World Compelled to Come Closer to Kedusha (Holiness)?

Separation Leads to Holiness

Holiness is something to which the world is gradually becoming opened after a long period of mayhem in the wake of the 'enlightenment.' People have long mistaken spirituality for holiness, and the world is replete with spirituality, which is not necessarily holy. It is possible to be involved in all kinds of spiritualism that actually draws energy from what we call 'the other side' – the side of impurity. Voodoo, seances, divinations and tarot cards etc. are examples of such spirituality prohibited in the Torah from the mitzvah, "You shall be pure with Hashem Your G-d" (*Devarim* 18:13). The first time you find the root ק-ד-ש/*kuf-dalet-shin* – 'holy' in the Torah is ... *וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיְקַדְּשֵׁהוּ* "G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified (ק-ד-ש) it..." (*Bereishit* 2:3). Shabbat is the quintessence of holiness. We initiate the holiness of Shabbat into our homes by making kiddush (sanctification). Kiddush on Shabbat denotes that Shabbat is separated from the weekdays. It is separated and elevated above the mundane week, through Hashem's completing the Creation and resting. Therefore, On Shabbat we emulate Hashem by resting from creative works. This teaches us that holiness is about separation. Separation leads to holiness and holiness is separateness and elevation. Due to the Corona pandemic, with its social distancing, we are being opened to understand the importance of separation. The Talmud states, "Torah leads to Watchfulness; Watchfulness leads to Zeal; Zeal leads to Cleanliness; Cleanliness leads to Separation; Separation leads to Purity; Purity leads to Saintliness; Saintliness leads to Humility; Humility leads to Fear of Sin; Fear of Sin leads to Holiness..." (*Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 20b). The famous book, "The Path of the Just" by Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto shares practical teachings for how to attain these steps of character perfection and reach the level of *kedusha* – holiness. Lately, we have been compelled to become zealous about separation, and purity, as we have been sanitizing doorknobs and plastic wrapping in order to separate and protect ourselves from the invasive virus. This ingrains within us the awareness of separation on a physical, emotional, social and spiritual level. It also propels us closer to attaining the level of holiness. We may ask ourselves, "what is the essence of life, and the most important existential values? What do I want to hang on to and what do I want to separate from my life?"

Must Men and Women Sit Separately at a Wedding?

A while ago an alumna student who was getting married consulted with me regarding separate seating at her wedding. She asked,

"My chatan (groom) wants separate seating. I'm interested to know whether this is a *chumra* (stringency) or halacha (Jewish law)? I understand that of course women's dancing must be separate and screened off from the eyes of the men, but what about the seating? I feel weird about splitting up families, but I think this is what we will be doing as it is the norm in my chatan's community. Let me know your thoughts!"

The following is my response to her: "The more kedusha the better, when you marry, you need to follow your husband's halacha and minhag. Therefore, I would go with the halacha/minhag of your husband- to- be. Furthermore, separate seating is a good way to start a holy marriage, by increasing kedusha. There are even halachic sources that state that at a wedding where men

and women sit together, we don't recite the special wedding blessing *בְּמַעוֹנוֹ שֶׁהַשְּׂמֵחָה*/she *hasimcha b'meono* – 'that the happiness is in our abode' prior to the Grace after Meals, because there is no happiness when the *yetzer hara* (negative impulse) rules (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 149:1). However, more modern commentaries note that we do not keep this stringency today, since nowadays it is customary that men and women mingle. Since men are now used to seeing women, there is less risk that it will cause them impure thoughts of sin (*Levush haChor, Likutei Minhagim* 36). Nevertheless, Rashi on *Parashat Kedoshim* teaches that wherever you find a separation fence against inappropriate sexuality, you find kedusha – holiness:

רש"י על ויקרא פרק יט פסוק ב' דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל - (ויקרא רבה. ת"כ) מלמד שנאמרה פרשה זו בהקהל מפני שרוב גופי תורה תלוין בה: קדושים תהיו - הוּו פרושים מן העריות ומן העבירה (ויקרא רבה) שכל מקום שאתה מוצא גדר ערוה אתה מוצא קדושה (ויקרא כא) אשה זונה וחללה וגו' אני ה' מקדשכם. (שם) ולא יחלל זרעו - אני ה' מקדשו. (שם) קדושים יהיו - אשה זונה וחללה וגו':

You shall be holy: Separate yourselves from sexual immorality and from sin, for wherever one finds a barrier against sexual immorality, one finds holiness. [for example, the Kohanim] "shall be holy to their G-d... they shall not marry a woman who engaged in forbidden sexual relations or one who was profaned...I, Hashem, Who sanctifies you [am holy]"... (*Vayikra* 21:6-8); (Rashi, *Vayikra* 19:2).

If separate seating would really make some family members uncomfortable, I would make a special, small, mixed family section for them. At my son's wedding, we had three sections: one for men, another for women, and a third for the family members who would feel uncomfortable if men and women would have to be separated. There are accepted halachic authorities who permit mixed seating at a wedding (*Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim* 1:41), however, this only pertains to assigned seats, where families sit together, but not to situations like receptions and buffets where people walk around and intermingle (*Ibid.* 39).

The Redemptive Points of Corona Bringing Us Closer to Kedusha

It is interesting to note that the Jewish marriage ceremony is called *kedushin* (holiness) because it separates the wife from being available to other men, while dedicating her to her husband alone. When husband and wife guard the sanctity of marriage, by keeping a fence from others of the opposite sex, they sanctify their holy marriage unit. Limiting contact between unrelated men and women precludes them from inadvertently experiencing natural attraction and prevents flirting and more... Despite the hardship of the Corona epidemic, it has brought us closer to kedusha and served as a great fence against sexual immorality. When the bars and discotheques are closed and there is a curfew for leaving our homes, incurring monetary fines, people are forced to stay within the family unit. I know a couple that have been living in a paperless marriage for years, who are now required to remain separate as they each have their own apartment. Had they been married with a Chuppah and Kedushin, and moved in together they would have been able to remain together. Due to the epidemic, the opportunities for men and women to date is limited and certainly any physical contact between them is barred, by the requirement to keep two meters apart. The world is certainly experiencing a great upheaval. While our planet is being devastated by illness and panic, from within the hardships peek redemptive points. People are talking about how the Corona virus has reduced pollution in the world greatly. The choking smog of major cities in China – caused by the extensive burning of coal by factories – has been greatly diminished. [On Feb. 20, daily coal consumption of six major power plants was 42.5% less than the same period last year.](#) Although it can't be measured as easily, I will venture to say that Corona has reduced not only the physical but also the spiritual pollution of immoral sexual behavior outside the sanctity of marriage. We are certainly living in redemptive times as portrayed by the prophet, "...the spirit of contamination I will remove from the earth" (*Zechariah* 13:2).