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Kiddushah or Holiness is by all means the most important principle of Judaism. The highest ideal to which any person can aspire is that of Holiness. All the commandments of the Torah were given so that Israel could become a "GOY KADOSH", a Holy Nation. And if Holiness is really this important, if it is incumbent upon every person to try for Holiness - K'DOSHIM TIHIYU, "you shall be holy", as the Bible puts it in today's Portion - then it is important to us to understand the Meaning of Holiness.

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The first thing to be said about Holiness is that it means something higher and nobler. Our Rabbis explained K'DOSHIM TIHIYU as PERUSHIM TIHIYU, "you shall be separated, above, higher". Holiness means rising above the commonplace and the vulgar, being exalted above the everyday and the secular. It means taking the soul off to a side and purifying it from the dross which it gathers in the rough and tumble of daily existence. An idea is Holy when it is above other ideas. A human being is Holy when he is separated from and higher than other human beings.

A corollary of this idea, is that we are not to tamper with that which is Holy if we are to keep it Holy. A Sefer Torah is not sacred in and of itself, but only because of what man gets from it and the attitude he takes towards it. No wonder therefore that Jewish law prevents us from touching the scroll with our hands. Take too free and liberal an attitude with what is sacred, and it becomes profane. The first of today's Portions records a commandment to the High Priest himself to keep that which is Holy above everyday use and common handling. VA'YOMER HA'SHEM EL MOSHE DABER EL AHARON ACHICHA VE'AL YAVO BE'CHOL EIS EL HA'KODESH, G-d told Moses to speak to his brother Aaron and tell him not to enter the Holy Temple whenever he so wished at any time. That which is Holy is to be approached with reverence, it must be "PERUSHIM", above, separated and isolated.

The story is told of a young girl who had been studying at an American College and came from a wealthy home. One summer her father took her on a tour of famous European cities and came to the home ~~of~~ where Beethoven lived and composed his great music. When the young lady noticed the piano which the guide told her was Beethoven's, she approached it with ecstasy and began playing the finest score she had learned in school. After she was finished she asked the guide, "I suppose all the greatest pianists of Europe come here to play on the piano of Beethoven". "No", said the guide, "Just last week Paderewsky was here, and when I told him whose piano this was he refused to play on it, because he said that he was not worthy enough to touch it". Indeed that which is Holy to a person must be respected and revered, and never dealt with casually. It must be kept above and be Holy. If a synagogue is Holy it must be entered not with boisterous good-fellowship, but with hushed reverence. If Tefillin are Holy they must not be dismissed as an extra burden, but put on with the deepest respect. It must be kept aloft and from a distance - and the distance is up, not down.

Now the question is how does one attain this Holiness, this state of being exalted and higher? Does it just "happen" to you? The answer is decidedly, no. You cannot just sit around, wish for it, and have it descend upon you. Our second point is that you have got to act and act hard in order to obtain this most cherished of all feelings.

A good illustration at this point would be a comparison of two mountains which are famous in Jewish history. They are Mt. Sinai in the Sahara Desert, and Mt. Moriah in the middle of Jerusalem. Mt. Sinai was that mountain about which the Israelites gathered and waited about for three days until, in the words of the Bible, G-d descended upon the mountain in a pillar of fire. In a breathtakingly dramatic scene G-d came down upon Mt. Sinai and delivered a Torah to a waiting people. The excitement was great, the atmosphere tense, and the event historic.

Such is the importance of Mt. Sinai. The history of Mt. Moriah revolves around Abraham and his son Isaac. Here G-d did not come down to give greatness to Man. It was Abraham who was commanded to sacrifice his beloved Isaac atop this mountain, and it was a three day journey, - not three days of waiting around - but a three day struggle with his conscience, three days of wrestling with himself, three days of thunderous conflicts between his mind, his heart and his soul. And Abraham came to the top of the mountain and lifted his hand ready to slaughter his son in accordance with G-d's wish - until the angel stopped him just in time, saying that he had proved his loyalty to G-d. Here G-d did not come down to man, but man rose up to meet G-d. This is the story of Mt. Moriah. No wonder therefore that Mt. Sinai was never Holy to the Jews and today atop of that mountain there is not a Temple but a Christian Monastery. But Mt. Moriah remains the Holy center of Zion atop which there rose the Beth Hamikdash, the Holy Temple itself.

So that Holiness means a state of being higher and nobler and detached, and that Holiness does not come automatically; it requires hard labor.

But the third point to consider is: Just how does one "rise" to K'DUSHAH? What is it that can make a man determine to work hard in order to obtain Holiness? And the answer is: Challenge. When the Torah tells us K'DOSHIM TIHIYU, it means not to be a hermit or recluse, not to escape from life; but, quite the contrary, to accept life as a challenge, meet it on its own grounds, face it and rise above it. No, not escape but involvement is the technique for attaining Holiness.

Our Rabbis meant just that when they observed that in the Book of Daniel, Heaven is referred to only once as being possessed of K'DUSHAH, whereas concerning the TACHTONIM, this world in the here-and-now, we are twice told to be Holy: KDOSHIM TIHIYU and VE'HISKADASHTEM. And our Rabbis explain that by saying: HA'ELYONIM L'FI SHE'EIN YETSER HA'RA MATSUI BA'HEM OMRIM K'DUSHAH ACHAS - In heaven, where there is no

Evil Urge, K'DUSHAH is mentioned only once, whereas BA'TACHTONIM SHE'YETSER HA'RA SHOLET BA'HEM, on Earth where man is faced with the challenge of the Evil Urge, the challenge of temptation and ambition and greed, there K'dushah is mentioned twice. For not only is Holiness necessary to combat the Evil Urge, but the Evil itself is the challenge which spurs Man onto greater Holiness; much as a crass stone will sharpen the blade of an expensive knife. And in order to illustrate this point, our Rabbis tell the story of a King who appointed guards for his wine-cellar - half of them N'ZIRRIM, people who never drink alcoholic beverages, and the other half SHIKORIM, chronic alcoholics. After the day's work, he paid the SHIKORIM twice as much as the N'ZIRRIM - because it required twice the energy, twice the perseverance and twice the will-power for the SHIKORIM to resist the temptation to taste the wine.

It certainly is easy for a man of wealth and substance to observe the Sabbath. If he so does, he is a good Jew - but not necessarily a Holy one. But let a poor man, who would go hungry if he did not work on Shabbos, let him observe the Sabbath - and he is Holy. For he has met the YETZERHA'RA and conquered it. Thus SHTEI K'DUSHOS, he is Holier than others.

This congregation knows how I feel about people who center their entire religious lives about the saying of KADDISH. And yet I cannot help but see a spark of K'DUSHAH in a man who has not visited a synagogue in years, or perhaps even in decades, a man who has forgotten his IVRA and can read only with the greatest difficulty, come to Shul to recite the KADDISH despite the stares that greet his faltering recitation and perhaps the sneer and ridicule of those who are more accustomed to Prayer. It is a challenge for a man of that sort to rise to the saying of KADDISH - and if he does, more power to him - twice K'DUSHAH!

And this matter of accepting the challenge to Holiness is not restricted to only Shabbos or Kaddish. It covers the entire world of human endeavor. In all phases of life - whether personal or community,

individual or collective - it holds true that the greater the challenge, the greater the Holiness.

The simplest answer to our quest for the Meaning of Holiness, the one which includes our three points of being above, requiring action, and resulting from challenge, lies in the entire Portion we just read. Would you like to know how K'DOSHEM TIHIYU, how to be Holy? - Then read on: ISHES IMO VE'AVIV TI'RA'U - revere parents and treat them with respect; ES SHABSOSAI TISEMORU, observe the Sabbath, no matter what the cost; AL TIFNU EL HA'ELILIM, do not worship the idols of our day, whether they be profit and money, or science and quack cures for the spirit; observe the commandments of LEKET ^U PEIAH, be charitable and philanthropic, not miserly and parsimonious; LO TIGNOVU, do not steal; LO S'KACHASHU, do not be treacherous and two-faced, do not be a fence-sitter; LO S'SHAKRU, do not lie or otherwise conceal the truth; LO SALIN PE'ULAS SACHIR AD BOKER, pay your laborers on time, cut out the sweat-shops and do not exploit the less fortunate; do not put a stumbling-block under the blind man; do not obstruct justice; do not slander one another and talk evil of a man behind his back; do not hate another man; and, finally, VE'AHAVTA LE'REIACHA KAMOCHA, love thy neighbor as thyself. All of these sound everydayish and ordinary. Yet Holiness is their result. Meet the challenges of life in these matters and you will have risen to the ethereal heights of Holiness.

Such, then, is the eminently practical Meaning of Holiness in Judaism. Respect it, work for it, accept it as a challenge - and it will give you that uplift which spells the difference between a life boring in its monotony and one thrilling in its adventurous elevation.