

For in a Cloud I will appear upon the Ark-cover. (16:2)

The *Aron HaKodesh* was situated within the confines of the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*, Holy of Holies, a place where only the *Kohen Gadol* could enter on the holiest day of the year, *Yom Kippur*. Otherwise, it was off limits, even to the *Kohen Gadol*. *Ki be'anan eiraeh*, "For in a cloud will I appear": Simply, this means that no one may enter the inner sanctuary because Hashem's Glory is manifested in the Cloud of Glory that hovers over the Ark. Entering such a place should inspire one with extraordinary fear and awe, for he stands in the Presence of the Divine. Familiarity might lead to complacency considering that, while in the wilderness, *Klal Yisrael* was privileged to be exposed to constant Revelation of the *Shechinah*. Apparently, this exceptional relationship with Hashem did not seem to be an issue. Why was the *Kodesh HaKedoshim* singled out more than anything else?

Horav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Shlita, explains that the revelation of the *Shechinah* emanated from the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*. It was the *makom HaShechinah*, place where the *Shechinah* reposed, thus granting it the greatest level of *kedushah*, holiness. It is for this reason that one is forbidden to gaze upon the *Kohanim* during *Bircas Kohanim*, Blessing of the *Kohanim*. The *Shechinah* rests upon the fingers of the *Kohanim* during the blessing.

We take *kedushah* for granted. It is related that **Horav Zaidel Epstein, zl**, could not fathom how people could visit the *Kosel* daily. He felt that this last remnant of the *Bais Hamikdash* deserved extra special treatment, and, by regularly visiting the site, one was diminishing his awe of the holy place. He would visit the *Kosel* upon occasion. When going to the *Kosel*, he would not engage in conversation, his mind would be deep in thought. Indeed, he once commented to someone who was accompanying him that he could not understand how people were not shaken by the experience. This was a remnant of the place in which: the *korbanos* were sacrificed; the *Yom Kippur* service took place; the *Akeidas Yitzchak* was carried out; Avraham *Avinu* transmitted to all of his future progeny the requirement to be devoted to *mitzvos* to the point of self-sacrifice. As he stood in awe, he pointed toward the other side of the *Kosel* in the direction of the place where the *Kodesh HaKodoshim* was situated and remarked, "We wait daily for the time when we will be there".

Once, the legendary philanthropist *Reb Moshe Reichman, zl*, offered his private plane to **Horav Elazar M. Shach, zl**, so that he could fly to Lithuania to pray at the grave of the *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* looked at him and said, "Do you think that this is the only *mitzvah* that I am missing? I am afraid to approach his grave. It is *adamas kodesh*, holy ground!" He added that, when he lived in Vilna prior to moving to *Eretz Yisrael*, he never once went to the grave of the *Gaon*, in deference to awe of this holy site.

How far we have strayed from such a sublime attitude to -- and appreciation of -- *kedushah*. Today, this holy site (*Kosel Maaravi*) is subject to the abuse of secular groups, who, although estranged from everything religious, are determined to defile the *Kosel* with mixed prayer services led and

accompanied by women wearing *Tallis* and *Tefillin*. I wonder if *Shabbos* and *kashrus* have equal meaning. They are so determined to make a statement that they do not care if they denigrate and profane this holy site. This is why I refer to them as secular.