

“They shall make a Sanctuary for Me – so that I may dwell among them.” (25:8)

The *kedushah*, sanctity, of the *Mikdash*, Sanctuary, is commensurate with the amount of “*li*,” for Me, that one puts into it. When we refer to *kedushah*, invariably we tend to think of something spiritual, surreal, with no tangibility. Consequently, it cannot have any effect on us. This is where we are wrong. That something is intangible does not preclude its ability to suffuse us with its properties and values. Let me take the liberty to illustrate this idea.

The *Midrash in Parashas Toldos* relates an incident that took place during the Roman destruction of the *Bais HaMikdash*. The Romans knew that destroying the Jewish Temple was a prerequisite to their success in destroying the Jewish State. They, however, needed a guide, since they did not know their way around. A Jew by the name of Yosef Meshisa, a traitor to his G-d and to his People, showed them around the *Bais HaMikdash*. This is a sad commentary on our history, in which often it has been the assimilated secular Jew, who due to his insecurity concerning his own disavowal of Judaism is provoked to act in such a traitorous manner. The Romans told him that as payment for his “noble” work, he could take for himself anything that he wanted from the spoils of the *Bais HaMikdash*.

Yosef Meshisa did something indescribable – he took the golden *Menorah* for himself. This demonstrates the nadir of depravity to which this Jew had sunk. The Romans, however, had more decency than he did. They refused to give it to him, claiming that it was inappropriate for a commoner to have such a holy object in his house. “Go back and take something else – anything – just not the *Menorah*,” they said.

One would think that he would have run right back and grabbed something else. He did not. He replied, “I cannot return; I cannot go back in.” They became upset. All of a sudden, he was becoming *frum*, observant. After all, let us be realistic: this was the epitome of evil. They promised him that the income from the next three years’ tax collection would be his, as long as he went back in. He persisted. “I cannot go back in. Is it not enough that I angered my G-d ‘once’ and defiled His Temple; now you want me to do it once again? No! I will not return.”

The Romans became quite incensed. He had no right to become *frum*. He was an apostate. They tortured him, and he continued to refuse to go back. Finally, his heart gave out, and he died. During the entire time that he was being tortured, he kept on crying out, “Woe unto me, for I have angered my Creator!”

“What happened here?” asks the *Ponevezher Rav*, z.l. What made Yosef Meshisa do *teshuvah*? Why did he suddenly make an about-face and repent? He was clearly a scoundrel, who manifested no sensitivity towards Jewish values. Suddenly, he repented and died a martyr’s death. What transpired that would create such a metamorphosis from a *rasha merusha*, evil incarnate, to a

tzaddik, righteous person?

The Ponevezher *Rav* answered that the mere fact that Yosef Meshisa entered the Holy Sanctuary, his exposure to *kedushas Bais HaMikdash* transformed him. He confronted holiness. He entered the *Bais HaMikdash* for the worst of reasons and with the worst of intentions; yet, he exited a changed person. The *rasha* that entered did not exit – someone else did. One cannot be in the *Bais HaMikdash* without becoming inspired. There is something real about *kedushah u'taharah*, holiness and purity. Exposure to the *Shechinah* can and does change a person's life.

Yes, *kedushah* is real – its power is dependent on how much of Hashem we allow in, how much “*li*” there is. *Horav Yissachar Frand, Shlita*, adds that this power is not restricted to the *Bais HaMikdash*. Even today, something comparable exists, perhaps on a smaller scale, which can instantaneously affect one's spirituality. He cites the following true story:

Franz Rosenzweig, who died in 1929, records this story about himself in his book, *The Star of Redemption*. He was a totally secular German Jew, a prolific author, thinker, a great philosopher. He was so far- removed from his People that he was preparing to convert to Christianity as part of his engagement to a non-Jewish woman. As a captain in the German Cavalry during World War I, he happened to be stationed in a Polish town on *Yom Kippur* night. He decided that since he was Jewish and it was *Yom Kippur*, he might as well enter the Polish *shtiebel*, small synagogue, as an observer, to see what it was like.

He entered the *shul* out of curiosity; he walked out of that *shul* as a *baal teshuvah*, a repentant returnee, to Judaism. Consequently, he broke his engagement and became an observant Jew, committed to the religion of his ancestors, the religion that he had totally rejected until that fateful *Yom Kippur* night. *Rav Frand* points out that this was not America in 1990, when it was a common phenomenon for acculturated and assimilated Jews to return to their faith. This was Germany in 1915, where it was almost unheard of for a secular Jew to embrace the faith that he had heretofore shunned.

What occurred in that *shtiebel*? Was it the *davening*, fervent prayer, the outpouring of Jewish emotion, the tears streaming down the faces of pure Jews on the holiest day of the year? No. That was not necessarily the factor that transformed Franz Rosenzweig. It was the same as the situation involving Yosef Meshisa. He was exposed to *kedushah*, introduced first-hand to *taharah*. A person who was totally secular, who was about to marry out of the faith and accept another religion, went into a *shul* for one purpose – to observe – not to pray, not to participate in any way – merely to be a casual observer. Yet, this exposure changed him. It must be because *kedushah* is real, *taharah* is real.

Kedushah is not only found in the *Bais HaMikdash*. A *minyan* of genuine Jews, praying with sincerity and heartfelt emotion to Hashem *Yisborach* imbues the walls of a building with *kedushah*. *Kedushah* is manifest in spiritual integrity. It takes “*li*,” *lishmi* – for My Name – Hashem's Name.