

## Intelligent Design and Designation Rabbi Maury Grebenau

The most often mistranslated word in the entire Torah is most probably the word “*Kedusha*.” We often translate *Kedusha* as holiness. This conjures up images of white haired saintly men secluded in the purest of environments, intensely engaged in quiet introspection. It does not seem to describe a way of life that we can relate to, and certain not a life choice that we are able to emulate. But this definition is not really correct. “*Kedusha*” is found in numerous contexts within Judaism. The beginning of the marriage process is referred to as “*Kedushin*” and in fact the phrase that a groom says while placing the ring on the bride’s finger is, “Behold, you are *MeKudeshet* to me..” In a different context we find that any object that is donated to the Temple is called “*HeKdesh*” from the same root. What is the connection between these instances, and how can they help shape our understanding of this critical word?

A more accurate translation of the word *Kedusha*, which emerges from these two instances, is “designated”. The groom designates his bride as his wife and they are joined in an exclusionary relationship. She is to be his wife which precludes her from having an intimate relationship with any other person. So too with objects that are designated to the Temple, they are exclusively for Temple use; other uses are expressly forbidden. *Kedusha* means that something is separated, special and designated for a specific function or task.

In this week’s Parsha we are told, “*Kedoshim Tihyu*” - you shall be “*Kadosh*.” We are asked to apply this word to our own lives. We are charged with the special honor of being designated as Hashem’s messengers in this world. We are a people with a purpose and a mission. The Ramban (a medieval commentary) famously explains this charge by saying that we are even to limit ourselves in that which is allowed to us by the strict letter of the Torah. The Ramban’s message flows directly from the very meaning of “*Kedusha*”. If we are truly designated and set aside for a mission in this world then no action can be taken for granted; every step we take is precious and must be a measured tread that will bring us one step closer to our destination. How can we neglect thinking about our actions in this world when we have such a lofty purpose? Even that which is not expressly regulated and delineated must be examined with the utmost scrutiny in our lives.

In Pirkei Avos (2:17) we are told that, “all of our actions should be for the sake of Heaven.” The commentaries explain that even our mundane actions can be done with G-d in mind. We can eat with the goal of energizing our bodies for the service of Hashem. We can sleep, so that we are rested and able to awake to serve our Creator. Even relaxing can further our mission by allowing us to revitalize our spirit and return to our designated task with renewed vigor. The more mundane aspects of our lives can be just as much a part of our service of Hashem as our more clearly spiritual endeavors.

We make this point three times a day when we recite the Shema. In the first portion of the Shema we are commanded to love Hashem with all of our heart. The Talmud (Brachot 54a) points out that the word “heart” here is plural. The Talmud comments that the word hearts is meant to refer to our two inclinations. We have a good and evil inclination and we are told to serve Hashem with both. It is easy to understand how our inclination to be involved in the spiritual could propel us forward in our mission. But how is it that we are expected to use our inclination for the physical to serve Hashem and further our mission? The Talmud is telling us that we can serve Hashem not only with our spiritual actions but also through our everyday needs. When we sleep, eat and relax we can do so with the goal of serving Hashem. With this lofty goal in mind we can put the term “*Kadosh*” in perspective and strive to fulfill our true designation in this world.