

Limmud - What is the 'Kedusha' all about?

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A. The vision of Yeshayahu

[4] ישעיהו ו'

(א) בשנת־מות' המלך עזיהו ואֶרְאָה אֶת־אֲדוּשֶׁם יֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא רָם וְנֹשָׂא וְשׁוּלְיוֹ מְלָאִים
אֶת־הַהֵיכָל: (ב) שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים | מִמַּעַל לֹו שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם שֵׁשׁ כְּנָפַיִם לְאֶחָד בִּשְׁתֵּי | יְכֶסֶה
פָּנָיו וּבִשְׁתֵּי יְכֶסֶה רַגְלָיו וּבִשְׁתֵּי יְעוּפֹף: (ג) וְקָרָא זֶה אֵלֵיָּהּ וְאָמַר קְדוֹשׁ | קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ
ה' צְבָאוֹת מְלֵא כְלֵי־הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ: (ד) וַיִּנָּעוּ אַמּוֹת הַסָּפִים מִקּוֹל הַקּוֹרָא וְהַבַּיִת מְלֵא עָשָׁן:
(ה) וְאָמַר אוֹיְלִי כִי־נִדְמִיתִי כִי אִישׁ טָמֵא־שִׁפְתָיִם אָנֹכִי וּבִתְוֹךְ עַם־טָמֵא שִׁפְתָיִם אָנֹכִי
יּוֹשֵׁב כִּי אֶת־הַמֶּלֶךְ ה' צְבָאוֹת רָאוּ עֵינַי: (ו) וַיַּעַף אֵלַי אֶחָד מִן־הַשְּׂרָפִים וּבִידּוֹ רִצְפָּה
בְּמִלְקָחַיִם לְקַח מֵעַל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: (ז) וַיִּגַּע עַל־פִּי וַיֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה נֹגַע זֶה עַל־שִׁפְתֶיךָ וְסָר עוֹנֶךָ
וְחִטָּאתְךָ תִּכָּפֵר: (ח) וְאֶשְׁמָע אֶת־קוֹל אֲדוּשֶׁם אֹמֵר אֶת־מִי אֲשַׁלַּח וּמִי יִלְדֶּגְלֵנוּ וְאָמַר הִנֵּנִי
שְׁלַחְנִי: (ט)

שול = hem, edge הֵיכָל = palace, temple; יְעוּפֹף = flutter;

מְלֵא = fullness; וַיִּנָּעוּ = tremble, shake; אַמּוֹת = door pillars; סָפִים =

thresholds; דְּמָה = nif'al: be lost, speechless; רִצְפָּה = glowing coal; מְלִקָּחַיִם =

pair of tongs

B. What are 'Serafim'?

[5] תרגום יונתן על ישעיהו ו':ב'

שְׁמַשִּׁין קְדִישִׁין בְּרוּמָא קְדָמוּהִי שְׁתָּא גַפִּין לְחַד שְׁתָּא גַפִּין לְחַד בְּתָרִין מְכַסִּי אַפּוּהִי דְלֵא
חַזִּי וּבְתָרִין מְכַסִּי גּוּיְתִיָּה דְלֵא מִתְחַזִּי וּבְתָרִין מְשַׁמֵּשׁ:

Holy servants were on high before Him; each had six wings. With two he would cover his face so that he would not see, and with two he would cover his body so that he would not be seen, and with two he would minister

[6] במדבר כ"א:ו'

וַיִּשְׁלַח ה' בָּעָם אֶת הַנְּחָשִׁים הַשְּׂרָפִים וַיִּנְשָׁכוּ אֶת־הָעָם וַיָּמָת עַם־רַב מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל:

Rashi: **burning serpents** — so termed because they burn (cause fever in) a person through the poison of their fangs.

C. The Midrash (and Jan Steen) connect Moshe Rabeinu with Yeshayahu



[7] דברים רבה ב:ד'

'אין לך גדול בנביאים ממשנה וישעיה'

D. The vision of Yechezkel

[8] יחזקאל א:א-ג'

(א) ויהי | בשלשים שנה ברביעי' בחמשה לחדש ואני בתוך הגולה על-נהר-כבר נפתחו השמים ואראה מראות אלקים: (ב) בחמשה לחדש היא השנה החמישית לגלות המלך יויכין: (ג) הנה הנה דבריה' אלי-יחזקאל בן-בוזי הכהן בארץ כשדים על-נהר-כבר ותהי עליו שם יד-ה':

[9] Robert Alter's literary Tanach Commentary

The **pivotal moment** in Yechezkel's life was the **deportation** of King Jehoiachin/Jechoniah and the Judean elite (including Yechezkel himself) in 597 BCE,

much more so than the eventual destruction of the First Temple ten years later in 587 BCE.

The words **Demut** - likeness - and **Mar'eh** - appearance - are insisted on again and again... the prophet wants to make clear that... what he has seen... can be represented only by analogy.

As the vision proceeds, it becomes progressively difficult to sort out visually what these creatures and the moving composite they make up, look like... **A certain bewilderment may well have been Ezekiel's intention...**

This four-sided moving structure, with wheels below and a kind of platform above, is what led tradition to call it a "chariot," **Merkavah**. To moderns, it may seem like a bizarrely composite hovering helicopter.

[10] יחזקאל א':ד-ז'

(ד) וַאֲרָא וְהִנֵּה רוּחַ סְעָרָה בָּאָה מִן־הַצָּפוֹן עָנָן גָּדוֹל וְאֵשׁ מִתְּלַקַּחַת וְנֹגֵה־לּוֹ סָבִיב וּמִתּוֹכָהּ כְּעֵין הַחֹשֶׁמֶל מִתְנוֹד הָאֵשׁ: (ה) וּמִתּוֹכָהּ דְמוּת אַרְבַּע חַיּוֹת וְזֶה מֵרְאִיָּהוּן דְמוּת אָדָם לְהִנָּה: (ו) וְאַרְבַּעָה פָנִים לְאַחַת וְאַרְבַּע כְּנָפַיִם לְאַחַת לָהֶם: (ז) וּרְגְלֵיהֶם רֵגֶל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכַף רֵגְלֵיהֶם כַּכַּף רֵגֶל עֹגֵל וְנִצְצִים כְּעֵין נְחֹשֶׁת קָלִיל:

4) I looked, and lo, a stormy wind came sweeping out of the north—a huge cloud and flashing fire, surrounded by a radiance; and in the center of it, in the center of the fire, a gleam as of amber. (5) In the center of it were also the figures of four creatures. And this was their appearance: They had the figures of human beings. (6) However, each had four faces, and each of them had four wings; (7) the legs of each were [fused into] a single rigid leg, and the feet of each were like a single calf's hoof; and their sparkle was like the luster of polished bronze.

[11] יחזקאל א':י'

וְדְמוּת פָּנֵיהֶם פָּנֵי אָדָם וּפָנֵי אַרְיֵה אֶל־הַיָּמִין לְאַרְבַּעֹתָם וּפָנֵי־שׁוֹר מִהַשְּׂמֹאל לְאַרְבַּעֹתָן וּפָנֵי־נֶשֶׁךְ לְאַרְבַּעֹתָן:

(10) Each of them had a human face [at the front]; each of the four had the face of a lion on the right; each of the four had the face of an ox on the left; and each of the four had the face of an eagle [at the back]



[12] Lamassu: Human-headed winged bulls from Sargon II's palace. The lamassu were household protective spirits of the common Assyrian people, becoming associated later as royal protectors, and were placed as sentinels at entrances. (Louvre collection)

E. The vision of Yechezkel as reconfirmation of all previous covenants

[13] יחזקאל א':כ"ח

כְּמֵרָאָה הַקֶּשֶׁת אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בְּעֵנָן בַּיּוֹם הַנֶּשֶׁם כֵּן מֵרָאָה הַנִּגְהָ סָבִיב הִוא מֵרָאָה דְּמִוּת
כְּבוֹד־ה' וְאֵרָאָה וְאֶפֶל עַל-פָּנַי וְאֶשְׁמַע קוֹל מְדַבֵּר: {פ}

Like the appearance of the **rainbow** that shines in the clouds on a day of rain, such was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. That was the appearance of the semblance of the Presence of GOD. When I beheld it, I flung myself down on my face. And I heard the voice of someone speaking.

יחזקאל ג':י"ב

וַתִּשְׁאַנֵּנִי רוּחַ וְאֶשְׁמַע אַחֲרַי קוֹל רָעַשׁ גָּדוֹל בָּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד־ה' מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:

(12) Then a spirit carried me away, and behind me I heard a great roaring sound:
"Blessed is the Presence of the LORD, in His place,"

יחזקאל ג':ט"ו

וְאֵבֹא אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה תֵּל אַבִּיב הַיֹּשְׁבִים אֶל־נְהַר־כְּבָר וְאֵשֵׁב הֵמָּה יוֹשְׁבֵי שָׁם וְאֵשֵׁב שָׁם
שִׁבְעַת יָמִים מִשָּׁמַיִם בְּתוֹכָם:

(15) And I came to the exile community that dwelt in Tel Abib by the Chebar Canal, and I remained where they dwelt. And for seven days I sat there stunned among them.

F. Comparion of Yeshayahu's vision and Yechezkel's vision

[15] חגיגה י"ג ב:ה'

אָמַר רַבָּא: כָּל שְׂרָאָה יְחִזְקֵאל, רָאָה יִשְׁעִיָּה. לָמָּה יְחִזְקֵאל דּוֹמָה — לְבֵן כְּפָר שְׂרָאָה אֶת
הַמֶּלֶךְ, וְלָמָּה יִשְׁעִיָּה דּוֹמָה — לְבֵן כְּרִד שְׂרָאָה אֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ.

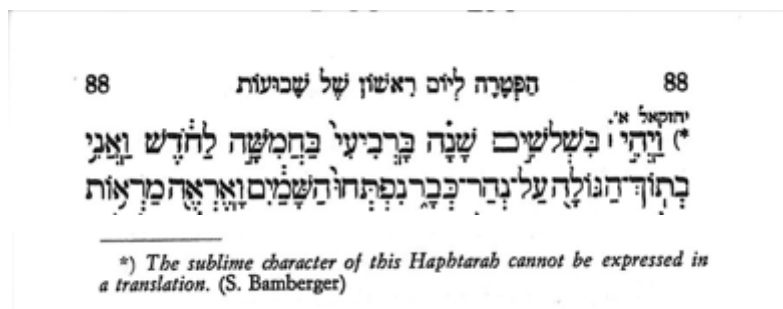
Chagigah 13b:5

§ **Rava said:** All that Ezekiel saw, the prophet **Isaiah** saw as well, but the latter did not find it necessary to describe his vision in such detail. **To what may Ezekiel be compared? To a villager who saw the king** and is excited by all the extravagances of the king's palace and everything it contains, as he is unaccustomed to them. **And to what may Isaiah be compared? To a city dweller who saw the king.** Such an individual focuses on the encounter with the king, and is oblivious to all the distractions.

[16] Commentary of R. Joe Wolfson

There is a significant difference between 'Melo chol ha'aretz kevodo' and 'Baruch Kevod Hasheem Mimmekomo'. Yeshayahu in Eretz Yisra'eil experiences the Shechina to be present everywhere. Yechezkel, excited in Bavel experiences that the Shechina is only present at a specific place. Sometimes we feel that God is near, and sometimes we feel a great distance. **The beauty of the Kedusha is that it combines both experiences** in the center of our daily prayer service

G. The controversy around the 'sublime' Haftara of Shavu'ot



[1] משנה מגילה ד:י

אין מפטירין במרכבה (יחזקאל א), ורבי יהודה מתיר.

One may not read as Haftara the account of the Divine Chariot (Ezekiel, chapter 1), so as not to publicize that which was meant to remain hidden. But Rabbi Yehuda permits it.

H. The connection between the Haftara and Matan Tora

[2] תהילים ס"ח:י"ח

רָכַב אֱלֹקִים רִבְתִּים אֶלְפֵי שָׁנָאן, אֲדוּשָׁם בָּם סִינִי בִקְדֹשׁ:
תַּרְגוּם: אֲרִתִּיכִין דְּאֵלֵּהָ תַרְיִין רַבְבִּין דְּנֹר דְּלִיק, תַּרְיִין אֶלְפִין דְּאֲנְגְּלִיא מְדַבְּרִין לְהוֹן, שְׁכִנְתָּא דִּי שְׁרָת עֲלֵיהוֹן עַל טוֹרָא דְּסִינִי בִקְדוּשָׁה:

The chariots of God are two myriads of burning fire, two thousand angels guiding them; the presence of the LORD rests on them, on the mountain of Sinai, in holiness.

[3] פסיקתא רבתי פסקא כא

רָכַב אֱלֹקִים רִבְתִּים אֶלְפֵי שָׁנָאן אֲדוּשָׁם בָּם סִינִי בִקְדֹשׁ (תהלים ס"ח י"ח)... בשעה שירד הקדוש ברוך הוא על הר סיני, ירדו עמו עשרים ושנים אלף מרכבות, וכל מרכבה כמרכבה שראה יחזקאל.