HOLY MOLY

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PROBLEMS WITH ‘HOLINESS’

- The different things to which it applies
- Family resemblance
A [rabbinic text] was recited before Ravina [regarding the blessing said to sanctify a festival that falls on a Sabbath. The rabbinic text laid out the formula of the blessing as follows]: “[Blessed are You, Eternal One,] who sanctifies Israel and the Sabbath and the seasons.” He [Ravina] said to him [i.e., the person who recited the text]: “Is the Sabbath sanctified by Israel? Isn’t the Sabbath already sanctified and established? Rather [the text should be emended so as to] say, “who sanctifies the Sabbath, Israel, and the seasons.” Rav Yosef says that the law follows Ravina’s emended reading of the rabbis.
But what about?

Exodus 20:8
- Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it
  זָכֹר אֶת־יָומֵי הַשַּׁבַּת לְקַדְשָׁם

Deuteronomy 5:12
- Guard the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Eternal, your God, has commanded
  שָמְרוּ יָומֵי הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְשָׁם וְיִתְעַנְגוּ מִטּוֹבֶךָ. כֻּלָם יִשְׁבְּעוּ וְיִתְעַנְגוּ מִטּוֹבֶךָ.
HOLINESS AND AWE

Subjective and Personal Holiness
Rabbi Hanina said: “A holy one will come and enter into the holy place, and sacrifice before the Holy One, and atone for the holy people.” A holy one will come—this refers to Aaron [the priest], as it is said: “Aaron the holy one of the Eternal One” (Psalm 106:16). And enter into the holy place—this refers to the Sanctuary, as it is said: “The sanctuary, O Eternal, which Your hands have established” [the word for “sanctuary” here, mikdash, shares its root with k’dushah] (Exodus 15:17). And sacrifice before the Holy One—this refers to the blessed Holy One, as it is said, “for holy am I, the Eternal your God” (Leviticus 19:2). And atone for the holy people—this refers to the Israelites, as it is said, “You shall be holy” (Leviticus 19:2).
You shall not profane My holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people—I the LORD who sanctify you,
For many people, and not only those who would consider themselves religious, there is something holy about the objects of awe experience—childbirth, a great symphony, the Grand Canyon. There is, moreover, a feeling of horror associated with the thought of destroying such objects, events, and so on. To do so—even to allow such a thing—would be sacrilege.
Rabbi Judah ben Pazi said: Why are the commandments concerning illicit sexual relations (Leviticus 18) juxtaposed with the laws of holiness (Leviticus 19)? Only to teach that wherever you find people erecting barriers against sexual licentiousness, there too will you find holiness. This goes along with the saying of Rabbi Judah ben Pazi: Anyone who erects barriers against sexual licentiousness is called a holy person. Rabbi Joshua, son of Levi, brought a proof from the case of the Shunamite woman. This is what is written: “And she said to her husband: ‘Now I know that he is a holy man of God’” (2 King 4:9). Rabbi Jonah said: [“He is a holy man” implies that] he was a holy man, but his servants were not holy, as it is written: “Gehazi [Elisha’s servant] came near to push her away” (2 Kings 4:27)—[but] in pushing her away, he touched her breasts...
Vayikra Rabba 30:6

To what is one who takes a stolen lulav compared to? To a thief [...] who one time stole everything a tax collector had on him. Eventually he was caught [...] the tax collector came to him said to him and said, "Return the money to me, and I will defend you before the king. The thief said, "I have nothing left from what I took except for a saddle." [...] The next day, the thief was brought before the king, and the king asked him if he had anyone to defend him. The thief says that the tax collector would. The tax collector said, "I was out collecting, and this thief took all of my money. The saddle still in his possession is proof that he stole it all." All those present cried, "Woe to the one whose defense attorney becomes his prosecutor!" So too someone who takes a lulav to gain merit – if the lulav was stolen, it cries out to Hashem saying "I’m stolen property!" and the angels say, "Woe to the one whose defense attorney becomes his prosecutor!".
THE GENUS AND SPECIES OF HOLINESS

Holiness

Absolute-holiness

Relative-holiness

Legal-holiness

Subjective-holiness

Personal-holiness
Every type of holiness, I believe, has something to do with being brought into the field of God's attention. Classical Jewish philosophy describes God contemplating God's self, and in so doing, somehow knowing all that there is to know (Guide to the Perplexed I.68). God is centrally, and constantly, within the field of God's own attention. This is the key, I suggest, to God's absolute-holiness.

It is a land which the LORD your God looks after, on which the LORD your God always keeps His eye, from year's beginning to year's end (Deuteronomy 11:12)
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