

Kiddush  
קידוש

Isn't it odd how wine - an intoxicating beverage that was traditionally made by people crushing grapes with their feet - became Judaism's tool for marking the sanctification of Shabbat? Or for ushering in the new year, as we do on Rosh Ha-Shana?

Well, this tradition is not anchored in sanctity. Wine had no sacred attributes in the early days of the Second Temple (6<sup>th</sup> century BCE), when it was first used for Friday night *Kiddush* (קידוש). The reason for using wine was simply that every festive meal at that time began with a cup of wine. With time, wine became associated with the occasions that it was used to mark: Shabbat, holidays, circumcision ceremonies and weddings. In other words, it became associated with the function for which it was ceremoniously used. It went through a historical process of sanctification.

*Kiddush* (sanctification) comes from the familiar root *k.d.sh.* (ק.ד.ש.), which gave us many words that denote sanctity and holiness. Something that is holy is *kadosh*. We all know the Jewish liturgy's holy-trinity "*kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*" (קדוש, קדוש, קדוש), which we recite in the morning prayer while lifting our heels. It is taken from Isaiah, chapter 6, verse 1 ("Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts.") Obviously, we all know the *Kaddish* (קדיש) (holy in Aramaic), perhaps the best known Jewish prayer, a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, used to mourn the dead.

And what is more holy than the *mikdash* (מקדש) or *beit ha-mikdash* (בית המקדש) (the holy Temple in Jerusalem)? But there is more: *kidushin* (קידושין) is holy matrimony. When the groom slides the wedding band on his bride's finger, he says "*harei at mekudeshet li*" ("behold you are sanctified, to me," meaning: "you are betrothed to me.")

What happened to *k.d.sh.* (ק.ד.ש.) in modern Hebrew is emblematic of the revival of Hebrew, the biblical language that has been dormant for two thousand of years and often referred to as the Sleeping Beauty. Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and his Zionist friends, the princes who gave *leshon ha-kodesh* (לשון הקודש) (the holy language) a wake up kiss, after so many years of being used only in liturgy, didn't take Sleeping Beauty to a castle to live happily ever after. Instead, they put it to work as a very secular everyday-language. They turned Sleeping Beauty into Cinderella, if you will. Hebrew was secularized and so was its holiest root, *k.d.sh.* (ק.ד.ש.). The word *hakedashah* was coined to denote a dedication (of a book, or other objects, to someone), and the verb *kidesh* (קידש) (*Kiddush* is its infinitive) was used also to denote justifying (as in "the end justifies the means").

There are other examples of secularization in modern Hebrew. Perhaps the most distinctive is the word *heikhal*, which in biblical Hebrew was another word used for the Temple in Jerusalem. In modern Hebrew it is used to denote any big hall or fancy edifice. Tel-Aviv's big indoor stadium is *heikhal ha-sport*, a large bridal beauty-salon is *heikhal ha-kalah*, and a wine-tasting hall at a kibbutz near Jerusalem is *heikhal ha-yayin*. Cheers, Leahayim!