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Research Paper

Holiness (Qadosh) in the Bible: Genesis, Explosion, and Establishment in the Kingdom

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ABSTRACT: *This article is about Roman Catholic teachings on holiness (Qadosh) as rooted in the Scriptures. It reviews the twelve-part presentation "Holy is His Name," delivered by Catholic theologian Scott Hahn in 2023 as part of the annual Lenten series for the Virtual Catholic Conference. The series explores the concept of holiness throughout Scriptures, spanning from the Old to the New Testament. This review is presented in four articles, each covering three lessons, highlights the theological insights and practical implications of living a holy life. This first article summarizes the key points from Lessons 1-3.*

KEYWORDS: *Holy, Kadosh, Qadosh, Holiness.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the 2023 Lenten series presentation "*Holy Is His Name*," Scott Hahn examines the concept of holiness, referred to as *Qadosh* in Hebrew, during the annual Virtual Catholic Conference (VCC). Through twelve structured lessons, Hahn [1] leads the audience in exploring the definition of holiness (*Qadosh*) as it is presented in the Scriptures to deepen the understanding of our connection to holiness. In ancient biblical Hebrew, the term *Qadosh* (Kadosh) signifies something that is holy, set apart, or sacred. The lessons are structured in the following manner:

1) The Genesis of Holiness
2) The Holiness Explosion
3) Holiness in the Kingdom
4) Not Wholly Holy
5) Holiness in the Prophet
6) Holiness in Person
7) Becoming Holy, Becoming "Gods"
8) The Body of Holiness
9) His Type of Holiness
10) Holiness and Priesthood
11) Holiness in Hebrews
12) Holiness Today

This article is presented in the following format. Section 1 is the introduction. The next three sections are the reviews on the above outlined first three lessons. Finally, the last section is the conclusion.

II. LESSON 1 – THE GENESIS OF HOLINESS

In this section, Scott Hahn [1] takes us through his quest to find the meaning of holiness. Finding modern definitions elusive, he then turns to the Scriptures. What he discovered in the book of Genesis, though holiness is only used once, yet it is quite significant.

Hahn [1] will explore the little-understood term, in our Catholic faith, *holiness*. Holiness of God. From the earliest lesson of Catechism, Catholics are taught to pride *His Holiness*, to admire in others, and to strive for

their own lives; but never quite told what holiness is. We read the biography of holy saints and that holiness is common in their lives. We see holy people do good things and avoid bad things. We see they feed the poor, sheltered the homeless, they are sometimes martyred because they refused to comply with unjust laws. We might conclude that holiness is the same thing as goodness or courage or philanthropy. But then we learned of saints like the irascible Jerome, or the scheming Cyril, or the intolerant Epiphanius, or the rather brusque Padre Pio, and we realized that it isn't so simple. The great seismic event in the Church of the last century was the Second Vatican Council. Many people argue about its effects, but the pope at the same time, Saint Paul VI, made clear its meaning and central message.

The council was all about "the universal call to holiness." In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, we hear the summons: "*All the faithful of Christ are invited to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state* (*Lumen Gentium*, 42)". Indeed, they have their obligations to strive. This is something that is obviously important to our lives, and yet, not even the Second Vatican Council, in all its documents, ventured a definition.

The theme of holiness has been with God's people from the beginning of recorded history. So, we should be able to figure out what it is and in the course of these presentations. In article 2809 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) hints at what we will find along the way. The holiness of God is the inaccessible center of his eternal mystery. What is revealed of it in creation and history, Scripture calls "*glory, the radiance of his majesty*." In making man into the likeness of his image [the Book of Genesis], God "*crowned him with glory and honor*," but by sinning, man fell "*short of the glory of God*." From that time on, God was to manifest his holiness by revealing and giving his name, in order to restore man to the image of his Creator.

The stakes are high as we take up our study, but it is not a slog. It is not just a point of academic interest. It is a story, and it is a story of your life and ours. A reformed evangelical Protestant author, R.C. Sproul, he told stories but delivering difficult points of philosophy, theology, and Scripture. In his masterpiece, "*The Holiness of God*" book which years later was published as his 1985 book, at the podium, Sproul referred to the work of Rudolf Otto, a German Protestant theologian who was best known for his book, "*The Idea of the Holy*." Otto spoke of God's holy presence as the "*Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinans*" (a mystery that makes us tremble yet also fascinates us). It attracts us, and then it repels us. So, St. Peter could honestly say to Lord Jesus, "*Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death*" and yet also, "*Depart from me Lord, for I am a sinful man*." That makes sense as it left us a deep desire for God but also a keen sense of our own weaknesses and propensity to sin. Otto attempted to describe the experience of "*the hushed, trembling, and speechless humility of the creature in the presence of, whom or what?*" In the presence of that which is a mystery inexpressible and above all creatures. Otto cited Scriptures that portray God as fearsome, fierce, and mighty. As the Lord told the Israelites: "*I will send my terror before you and will throw into confusion all the people against whom you shall come, and I will make all your enemies turn their backs to you* (Exodus 23:27)." And Job begged the Lord, "*Withdraw your hand far from me, and let not dread of you terrify me* (Job 13:21)."

In nowadays Churches we are not taught much about sin, or God, except to mention that he was love and that he wanted us to love one another. All of that was true, but it does not seem to be the whole truth. This is not something new.

In 1937, the Protestant theologian H. Richard Niebuhr, had summarized the unspoken creed of American Christianity: "*A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross*." By the 1970s, that attitude had begun to seep even into the Catholic Church. Avery Cardinal Dulles recalled an incident at a parish church outside of Baltimore. He wrote, "At the end of my Sunday Mass, I came into the body of the church to make my thanksgiving, and as I knelt in the pew, I noticed that the pulpit from which I had preached had on its front a banner with the inscription '*God is other people*,' he continued, if I had a magic marker within reach, I would not have been able to resist the temptation to insert a comma after the word OTHER." – *God is other, people*!

Holiness was the word used by scholars and preachers when they described the awe, and even terror, inspired by God in such encounters. What exactly '*Holiness of God*' is? The multivolume interpreter's dictionary of the Bible informed Hahn, that holiness is: "The 'given' undergirding and pervading all religion, that it is the distinctive mark and signature of the divine, that it gives expression to the essential nature of the sacred, that it is the innermost reality when all others were related." It spoke of the word's etymology, usage, and associations. Altogether, the article occupies ten oversized pages of small print. But no definition. The dictionary told Hahn what holiness was not, what it was like and what it was unlike, where the word came from, but not what it was. For that, Hahn would need to go looking in the pages of Sacred Scripture.

God is what we are not. We are sinners, we must die. He is without beginning; we celebrate birthdays. He is eternal; we live in time and occupy history. Though the Book of Genesis tells us that we are made in God's image, after his likeness, we are far more unlike God than we are like him. In fact, we have to strain to find the similarities that must be there, if Scripture to be believed. In what sense can we say we resemble an

undying. Unoriginated, transcendent, perfect Being? God is the ground of all being, the creator of everything that is. But that means he must exist apart from all things created.

Otherness is the original meaning of holiness. In Scripture, the word translated as holy in Hebrew, is "Kadosh", and it is the root of other terms that imply separation, to be set apart. Marriage, for example, is *kiddushin*, not only because it is sacred but because in marriage, a man and woman are "set apart" by their bond. They are "other" than their families of origin. They are a distinct unit within their village or their tribe. God, however, is entirely distinct from his creation. So, *Kadosh* describes this quality of distinction, and it is properly applied only to God and to objects associated with God. When linguists look for equivalent words is English, they keep coming back to terms like separateness, apartness, otherness, peerlessness. Everything else is something. Only God simply is. We have our being, but he is being itself. And this is what inspires awe in those creatures who have the ability to think about it. God is also unique in all other separate ways. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-good. Any of these will seem overwhelming to those of us whose powers, knowledge, and goodness are limited and finite. In the presence of the absolute and otherness of God, we will feel very keenly the absolute poverty of our own qualities. The divine quality, with the typical human response, appears everywhere in Scripture. Of course, the iconic moment is when Moses encountered God at the burning bush, "Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian, and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed And Moses said, I will turn aside and see this great sign, why the bush is not burnt When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, Moses, Moses! And he said, here am I. Then He said, do not come near; put-off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. And He said, I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God" (Exodus 3:1-17). At first Moses was moved by curiosity (I would turn aside and see this). But then a voice informs him that the site is "holy," and it is made so by the presence of God. Moses' curiosity vanishes, and he is suddenly filled with fear and awe. Moses' encounter is iconic. It was the narrative that everyone remembers. But it arrives somewhat late in the narrative of salvation history. The story takes place in the second book of the Bible, the Book of Exodus, and by then the idea of holiness, along with the typical human response, has been around for a while, the entire patriarchal period, in fact. Kadosh, holiness, makes its lexical debut on the first page of Scripture.

The Book of Genesis, the book that launches the biblical canon, begins with the account of God's creation of "the heavens and the earth." Over six days, the story goes. First fashioned with light and darkness, until the last, creation of man and woman. Then at the beginning of the second chapter, holiness makes its entrance, and so on, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. So, God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it, God rested from all his work which he had done in creation (Genesis 2:1-3). God set the seventh day apart and blessed it. He dedicated it to himself in his rest. And the verb from this action is derived from the Hebrew, *Kadosh*. Thus, the seventh day, the Sabbath, would be considered holy because it is especially inhabited by God.

We read this passage in the later books of the Bible, and it seems rather unremarkable to us. For example, the Book of Exodus speaks much about observing the Sabbath and the regulation of the seventh day plays no small part in the drama of Jesus' own life in the Gospel. But this passage is remarkable for many reasons. First, because it represents the only instance in the entire Book of Genesis when a word derived from Kadosh is used to describe holiness. Though the Bible, and especially the Old Testament (OT), abounds in the word and its cognates, Genesis mentions holiness only once, in this verse. The entire patriarchal history passes, in 50 chapters, without so much as a second mention of the word "holy" in any of its forms. Holiness takes center stage for a moment, a Sabbath, and then it vanishes. At least the word vanishes. Throughout the Book of Genesis, we still find the phenomena associated with holiness. For example, Jacob dreams of the ladders of angels and he awakened with a profound sense of God's presence. He says, surely the Lord is in this place; and I didn't know it. And he was afraid and said, how awesome this place is! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven (Genesis 28:16-17). Now the word 'awesome' has lost some of its edge from overuse and irony. But Jacob's feeling a Bethel are more akin to a trauma. Other translations render the same word as 'dreadful or terrible'. Because the patriarch was overwhelmed with the experience and was moved to consecrate that site and rename it 'The House of God'. With the sense of God's presence comes a keen sense of one's own unworthiness. This we can see also in Abraham's negotiations with the Lord (Genesis 18:27). When the patriarch dares to challenge God's judgement on the city of Sodom, he acknowledges, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes." In these passages, we see the typical response to the holiness of God. In later books of the Bible, the word "holy" would surely have appeared. Abraham would have explicitly acknowledged the holiness of God, or Jacob would have pronounced Bethel to be a holy place. But in Genesis this does not happen. The term occurs on creation's seventh day, and that is the only instance.

What is so holy then about the Sabbath? And once the day is hallowed, why do none of the patriarchs recognize that fact and mark it as a holy day, as Israel does in the very next book? Exodus. The ancients would have known, though we, in the modern age, miss all the cues I the text. The act that bound ancient cultures was covenant. In antiquity, a covenant was a sacred kinship bond between two parties established by a sworn oath. It created a family relationship or renewed one. Marriage was a *covenant*; by its power, two seemingly unrelated people became husband and wife. Adoption was a covenant; it formed a parent-and-child bond where no biological relationship existed. But so was a treaty between tribes or nations. Each covenant-imposed obligations on those who entered the relationship, and there were rewards for fulfillment and punishments for failure. In swearing an oath together, both parties invoked God as their witness. This invocation gave the covenant its binding power and solemnity. All the terms of the covenant would now, at the request of both parties, be enforced by God. God was present in the invocation, and that presence provoked the "*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*." Meaning: the mystery that both terrifies (or inspires awe) and fascinates. Again, these or similar oaths were the foundation of all ancient societies, Hebrew, Egyptian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman. Inscribed stones bear witness to this, as do later parchments. Sacred Scripture tells the story of many human covenants, initiated by men but sworn before God. But the overarching story that binds all the books of both Testaments is the story of God's covenants with human beings. The Church recognizes these as two-fold: the Old and the New. But the story of the Old stretches out over millennia, and the covenant is broken and renewed many times in the books that we know as the OT. The ancients agreed, however, that it had been established at creation. The Book of Genesis makes this clear, in its own archaic way, by using terms that its first hearers would have understood as covenantal. Why does God pronounce his blessing on the seventh day? And why is that day "hallowed"? Why is it invested with a holiness that makes it essentially different from all the other days? The answer may be traced back to the Hebrew word for seven, "*Sheva*". It also serves as the verb for swearing an oath, literally to "seven oneself." The first covenant between men appears in Genesis 21, and it involves the exchange of seven lambs; and ever afterward "that place was called Beer-Sheba," that is, the well of the seven or the well of the oath, because there both of them swore an oath, they made a covenant at Beer-Sheba.

At the climax of creation, then, God himself is establishing the primordial form of covenant. He is blessing the cosmos and creating a family bond with these special creatures he had made in his own image and to his own likeness. By blessing the seventh day then, God was entering into a covenant with humanity. Like all the later covenants, the story of creation has a mediator: Adam. It has a sign: the Sabbath. Then it creates obligations. Adam was to serve as God's son and vice-regent, with dominion over all the earth. Adam will enjoy rewards upon fulfillment of the terms and the conditions of the covenant; but he was also being punished for failure. This is where the human story begins. *It begins with a covenant*. If we don't see this, we will not understand the rest of the story. God's later covenants – with Noah Abraham, Moses, and David – do not make sense apart from his hallowing of the seventh day. Every oath finds its form in that moment, as does every human family relationship. "*God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it*." This is the truth that preceded original sin. God shared his holiness with his creation, and with it came peace, fruitfulness, and integrity. Adam sins and violates the covenant, and the consequences are immediate and lasting. Man and woman will live in discord with nature. Work becomes arduous. The earth seems to resist human efforts to fill and subdue it. Human love and childbearing are attended by pain and suffering. What is more, the very mentioned of holiness – which had only been briefly introduced – now vanishes from the scriptural record, at least for the rest of the Book of Genesis.

Genesis is a book of mysteries and enigmas. As a work of literary art, it is the interpretive key to every other masterpiece. It is a necessary prelude to the story that immediately follows, the story of the Exodus. According to the ancient tradition, the first five books of the Bible, the *Torah*, are one integral whole. They tell a single story that is complete in itself, though its resolution will only come much later, in the fullness of time. If we are to understand the biblical meaning of holiness, we must first recover a sense of the literary unity of the Torah. It is not an anthology of five disparate works. Much less is it a patchwork assemblage of laws from rival factions and tribes and ideologies. Even if it is crafted from several older sources, it is still the work of a careful and deliberate artist.

Exodus completes Genesis. The story of creation concludes with the establishment of God's covenant with creation on the seventh day. But the covenant would find full expression only with the Exodus, when God established his sanctuary not only in time but also in space – and when God took a people, Israel, and declared them to be holy and to be his own. We will discuss that in next lesson.

III. LESSON 2 – THE HOLINESS EXPLOSION

In this section, we see, as its title suggests, an explosion of holiness, or Kadosh in Hebrew. Where in Genesis there is a singular mention of the holiness of the Sabbath, in Exodus we read about all the things consecrated for the service of God's presence on earth, bringing to completion to his covenant with creation.

In previous section, we talked about the idea of holiness which is very important topic to Christians. But almost no one will come straight to us and tell what it is. In these series, we explore the biblical understanding of God's holiness. Of course, we begin with Genesis. We saw something of the thing but only one solitary Hebrew word for holiness, Kadosh, when God blessed the Sabath and hallowed it, at the end of creation account.

The contrast between Genesis and Exodus could not be more striking. In Exodus, we see a venerable explosion of holiness, *Qadosh (Kadosh)* and its variant appeared in a total of 98 times, 70 times as nouns and 28 times verbs, the equivalent of English word sanctify or consecrate. In fact, if there is a single word most characteristics of the Book of Exodus, it is Kadosh (holy). This is a significant change, and it is a sudden change. Remember there is literary a continuity between the first two books of the Bible; Exodus continues the story told in Genesis. The first book ends with Hebrew people migrating towards Egypt. The second book begins with their enslavement in that foreign land. The ancient traditions held both books; indeed, all five books of the Torah were written by the same hand. We would expect them to be similar in their word view and vocabulary. And yet, here we see the difference so conspicuously. As so seemingly important as to demand an investigation, an explanation, as it seems very significant. But what does it signify?

Kadosh first appears in Exodus chapter 3 in the famous scene of the burning bush. Moses was told to take off his sandals because the ground that he is standing on is holy and hence it begins. The word used to describe Sabbath in Genesis is now applied to a small patch of ground in Mount Horeb. The word used in Genesis to describe an interval of time is now used to describe a small measure of space. The burning bush, like the seventh day, is hallowed. It is a created thing. In doubt with the quality that is peculiar to God. Holiness. Why? Because in a burning bush, God manifest himself in a more powerful and in an immediate way. Unlike Abraham's dialog nor Jacob's dream, at Mount Horeb, God's presence imposes a series of obligations on the man standing nearby. He must keep a certain distance, and he must remove his sandals. We can only conclude there is a qualitative difference in this event. A different in type, not just degree. A difference in magnitude. God is drawing near to man in a new and unprecedented way. Now, the bush is hardly the last object to describe only in Exodus. No, throughout Exodus, the instances of Kadosh is various, and it begins to multiply. A wide range of materials objects are spoken of as holy. We read Holy Assembly (Exodus 12:16), of Holy Abode (Exodus 15:13), of Holy Sabbath (Exodus 16:23), Holy Nation (Exodus 19:6), Holy Place (Exodus 26:33), Holy Garments (Exodus 28:2), Holy Offerings (Exodus 28:38), Holy Gifts (Exodus 28:38), Holy Vessels (Exodus 30:27-29), Holy Oil/Salt/Incense (Exodus 37:29), Holy Tent (Exodus 29:44), Holy Furniture (40:9), Holy Altar (Exodus 29:37), and Priest who wear Holy Crown (Exodus 29:6) and eat Holy Bread (Exodus 29:32-33). Such phrases such as holy place and holy garments appear many times. What all these items have in common is their use in sacrificial worship. They are set apart for that *purpose*. They are designated as 'other', distinct than any other ordinary functions. Items of holiness was set apart for the service of God. They are not to be employed for any other purpose whatsoever. The chalice is used to pour life basin for example, cannot be set as merely human banquet, not even for the wedding of national or tribal leader. Why? Because they are reserved for God alone or rather for God in his encounter with his covenant people. This is especially true for the holy objects most often mentioned in Exodus such as the holy place, the sanctuary, the tabernacle.

From the time of Exodus 4, the sanctuary was a holy place on earth, where legitimate sacrifice could be offered. It is unique at the earth as a special dwelling of God's Own Presence. Worship was geographically restricted in a way there have not for the patriarch. In Genesis, Abraham could have established a tree of shrine; Jacob could anoint a stone for the same purpose, but now God's people required to fix their sight out of one place and that place was holy. The sanctuary was the only place God could be served and encountered. He could be found there, alone, by his chosen people. Hence, in the Book of Exodus, we see God adopting a people of his own. He is setting them apart from the general population among whom they have been dwelling. He is taking them out of the land of Egypt to the "Promised Land". He is reserving them for a special purpose in salvation history. Collectively, they will now become His children. And so collectively, they will be holy. His means of setting them apart is the covenant, which takes us back to the seven days back in the Book of Genesis. As we saw in the first episode, a *covenant* is a *sacred* kinship owned between two parties, to establish a solemn oath. On the seventh day, God made a covenant with all creations, represented by Adam and Eve. By resting on the seventh day, in effect, God "seventh himself". He swore a binding oath of faithfulness to his creatures. But that primal couple broke the covenant through their disobedience, and that had catastrophic consequences. Spiritual death, the loss of Sanctifying Grace. Later, gradually, God began to renew that first covenant, with the household of Noah and then with the tribe of Abraham. And now, in Exodus, God is calling forth a "holy nation" and he makes his covenant with them. It is a covenant recorded in a book and *sealed* with *sacrificial* blood. When the time comes for God to seal the covenant, however, he returns to the sign of his original blessing. The sign of his covenant with Israel is a reprise of the sign of his primordial covenant with creation. As the Lord says to Moses:

"*Therefore, the sons of Israel shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign for ever between Me and the sons of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed*" (Exodus 31:16-17).

So, what is happening here? Why does the Exodus narrative suddenly harken back to the day hallowed by God at the end of the creation narrative in Genesis? Rabbi Joshua Berman, a contemporary biblical scholar and a friend of Theologian Scott Hahn, summarizes the understanding of ancient Israel like this.

"*On one level, creation ended on the Sabbath. On a second level, however, it only truly concluded once the Tabernacle was completed. The composite parts of the physical world were completed on the sixth day of creation, but the ultimate purpose of these elements – to be dedicated to the service of God – is only realized once the Sanctuary is built, to serve as a universal focal point for the service of God*."

Thus, when God makes his covenant with Moses, he is bringing creation to completion. He has now established a sanctuary in space to match his sanctuary in time, which is the Sabbath. Now too, for the first time, he commands the observance of the Sabbath. In the beginning, God rested on the seventh day. But now he invites his chosen people to share in his rest. They are to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy," as we read in the '*The Commandments*' as God "blessed and hallowed it." It is the end of one era, and it is the beginning of another. It is the end of the era of the patriarchs, and the beginning of the period of the law. There were, of course, laws before the time of Moses. In Genesis 9, God issues commandments related to his covenant with Noah. Later rabbis would discern the seven "Noahide Laws" in that text. The first five prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, murder, adultery, and robbery. The sixth requires the institution of courts for the administration of justice. The seventh forbids the eating of flesh cut from a living animal. These are mostly ethical concerns. The law given to Moses, however, is much more elaborate – and it is almost entirely devoted to right worship. Yes, it includes many commandments concerning moral behaviors, but even these are presented as liturgical concerns and subordinated to worship. The people must live and act in a way that they maintain *purity* and remain "*holy*" and *worthy* to participate in worship and common life as God's *chosen* people.

In the Book of Exodus, God dictates, down to the most minute details, the construction of the tabernacle, the "place of holiness." The component parts are to be fashioned from the most precious metals and costly wood, draped with the finest linen and smell of incense prepared by qualified professionals using only pure ingredients. To modern sensibilities, the instructions seem practically absurd – extreme overkill perhaps. God, after all, is sufficient unto himself. He stands in need of nothing. And yet he appears here to be as demanding as the most finicky houseguest. But it is not that he needs the best of everything. Rather, it is that we need to give him the best of everything, and we are disinclined to do so. The institution of the tabernacle was God's way of focusing the attention of his covenant people. Now there was one single focal point. The construction and decoration of the tabernacle represent God's way of keeping Israel focused. Perhaps we can understand these commandments better in the light of the burning bush. Moses' proximity was not threat to God, nor was there anything intrinsically offensive about his sandals. Yet he was told to remove his sandals and come no closer. This was God's way of hallowing that time and place. The special instructions were for Moses' sake, not God's. The very sight of the burning bus was an implicit sign of God's presence and his holiness. But the spoken command made everything explicit. The revelation, with the commandment, engaged Moses' attention entirely. Established on Mount Sinai, this pattern is discernible throughout the rest of the Book of Exodus – and indeed throughout the rest of the whole Pentateuch. Ritual worship makes up for an attention deficit that seems natural to the fallen human condition. The Israelites in Egypt were the heirs of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And yet, over the years, the centuries, they grew first distracted by, and then attached to, Egyptian ways. They adopted Egyptian morals, and they worshipped Egyptian gods. Still, they tried to hold claim to their ancestral identity and dignity. They were profoundly conflicted. In the desert, when they found the burdens of freedom too heavy to bear, what happened, they reverted to the idolatry, and sinful pleasures they had indulged as slaves. They made a golden calf and worshipped it with an orgy. Such were the habits God sought to overcome by means of these ritual laws. He issued commands that required the people to consistently reserve their best efforts and material goods for God, and God alone. Worship for Israel, involved the sacrificial offering of first fruits, firstlings of the flocks, and unblemished animals. Again, this was not because God is fussy, but because Israel, like all fallen humans, had a tendency to prefer the gifts of creation to the Giver of the gifts. It was true in the lifetime of Moses, and it is still true today. When people refuse to offer up their gold and their calves, they usually end up worshipping some combination of both. Today, they turn to money, sex, and power, all represented by the golden calf, the Apis bull worshipped by the ancient Egyptians.

Ritual worship, liturgical worship, as prescribed by God in the Book of Exodus, turns the assembly's attention away from the gifts, and fixes it on the giver. If the people harbored an unhealthy love for gold, then in their worship they saw the object of their love subordinated to God. If they loved luxuries or finery, or choice meats and fine wine, they saw it all returned to the Lord as thanksgiving. There could be no mistaking the proper object of worship. Israel's liturgy gathered all the powers of nature and culture and placed them in the service of the Lord God. So, the natural realities became signs – pointing from the visible to the invisible, from

the earthly to the heavenly. Religion in the Exodus became something deeply different from the natural religion found in the history of the patriarchs back in Genesis. By the terms of the covenant, Mosaic religion was oriented by means of nature to the supernatural – by the human to the divine, by the visible to the invisible, from earth to heaven.

In the Exodus, God reveals his holiness – his transcendence, his otherness, and his power. When he appeared, he appeared with thunder and lightning, clouds and fire. It required no effort for him to part the Red Sea. In Exodus, he also revealed his name, "I AM," which confirmed to truth of the creation account: that all beings are dependent upon him. He manifested his power. Not to cow the people with whom he would make a covenant. He did it so that they could know him in truth – know him as he really is. The Exodus reveals something of a paradox. God is no less "other" when he draws near to humankind. He is in the mysterious bush, burning yet not consumed. He requires outward acts of reverence and abasement from those who approach. Yet we, in the person of Moses, find ourselves drawn, nonetheless. God is '*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*'. We are frightened. We are awestruck, but we are also fascinated. At the burning bush, Moses "hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God." But 30 chapters later we learn that, in time, "*The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend*" (Exodus 33:11). In renewing the covenant with the Lord God, Israel agrees to live with him in their midst. They consent to the demands of building an earthly sanctuary worthy of its divine occupant.

In Genesis, God had revealed himself through his works – the creation of the cosmos, the call of Abraham, the election of Jacob. In Exodus, however, he has revealed his name to Israel and shown his face to Moses. In Exodus God takes up his residence in the midst of his people – not as one of them, not yet, but permanently with them, in the holy place. Holiness is now an earthly reality, visible as fire and audible as thunder, but also visible by association with otherwise everyday objects: pots and pans, slaughtered animals, and tent cloth. Israel came by holiness the same way – not through any natural virtue or particular achievements but from its covenant with God. The covenant at Sinai set Israel apart from all other nations – and "setting apart," consecration, that is the root sense of Kadosh. In Exodus, the children of the patriarchs became "*a Kingdom of Priests and a holy nation*." The story of the Exodus is not confined to the book that bears its name though. The narrative continues in the remaining three books of the Torah – Leviticus, numbers, and Deuteronomy – and all of them are deeply concerns with holiness. In fact, Leviticus Chapters 17-26, are so saturated with the term Kadosh and its derivatives that modern scholars have come to call it the "holiness code." The story of holiness extends beyond the five books of Moses. And so, we must move on. In the next lesson, we will look at the story in the times of the Judges, and in the days of King David and his son Solomon.

IV. LESSON 3 – HOLINESS IN THE KINGDOM

This section focuses on the unfurling of God's plan for the holiness of Israel. Dwelling with His people in a mobile tabernacle as they wonder in the desert, the Ark of Covenant finally finds its resting place. Now established as a kingdom, Israel's central activity is the worship in the Temple.

Last time we were looking at the explosion of holiness language in Exodus when God called his people out of Egypt explicitly in order to raise them up as a holy people, set apart for Himself. Today we will see how that story continues in the age of the Judges and the United Kingdom of Israel. Often historians want to reduce the Exodus to a human scale story of political liberation, an ancient Declaration of Independence or Emancipation Proclamation. But the actual plot of the book is not that simple.

In Moses' initial plea to Pharaoh, neither he nor the Lord God was seeking manumission. Thus said the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Let my people go, that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness' (Exodus 5:1-2). All Moses asked – and all God wanted – is the *freedom* to celebrate the liturgy. Pharaoh, of course, obstinately refused, and his refusal brought about astonishing, awe-inspiring, terror-provoking interventions of God: the plagues, the Passover, the parting of the Red Sea, and the revelation of the Law amid cosmic signs like thunder and fire. With the Exodus, God had established a chosen people, a people set apart for divine service – a holy people. Among them the Lord would dwell, and his presence would be the source and proof of their holiness. To the ancient rabbis, this was the completion of creation. God to the Hebrews, was transcendent. He was Being itself; he revealed his name as, "I Am." In transcendence he was omnipresent. Yet he had designated one place to be the locus of his special presence on earth. It was the Ark of the Covenant, contained withing the Holy of Holies, which was contained within the sanctuary, which was contained within the tabernacle, or tent – which stood at the center of the people, wherever they were encamped (Figure 1).

Fig 1. An Illustration for the 'Holy of Holies' Location of the Ark of the Covenant.

Thus, there were concentric rings of divine presence and holiness, extending outward and gradually diminishing. It was perfectly calibrated to remind the people of the reverence and awe that were proper to the situation. God had drawn near to his people. That was a reassuring thought, for his power had delivered them from the grasp of the mightiest earthly king. But he had also made known his law and his jealousy – and he has established *purity* and *fidelity* as *conditions* of his *abiding presence*, his *protection*, and a *share* of his holiness. Through the years of the Exodus and the centuries that followed, Israel repeatedly proved itself unwilling to remain pure or faithful. The Ark of the Covenant was a portable shrine designed to hold the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, along with other relics of the Exodus: the staff of Aaron, which had miraculously blossomed, and a golden vessel containing a sample of the manna given by God to feed Israel in the wilderness. The Ark had been crafted, according to Divine specifications, from acacia wood adorned with gold. Its lid was a throne for the Almighty, his "*mercy seat*," which was flanked by golden images of two cherubim (Figure 2, Left Panel).

Fig 2. The Ark of Covenant (Left Panel) and the Cherubim drove out the sinful man and woman (Right Panel).

This detail is extremely unusual, almost unique in Hebrew religion, which in principle was strongly resistant to the use of any images in worship. And yet here the Lord God himself had prescribed the use of sculpture depicting creatures to be placed at the very epicenter of his presence. The imagery, moreover, was not subtle in its implications. The cherubim were clearly intended to evoke the frightful conclusion of the story of creation: the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Figure 2, Right Panel). For at that moment, God "drove out the man; and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life."

In Genesis, God assigns the Cherubim to guard the garden sanctuary, preventing any future desecration. The message of the Ark seems to be that God, by dwelling among his people, was restoring paradise on earth. Paradise was now, as before, defined by his holy presence. The Cherubim were there to enforce the purity required for worship. Through Israel's years of nomadic wandering, the Ark was carried by priests from the tribe of Levi. The Ark was the instrument of power that made the Jordan River part for Joshua as the Red Sea was done for Moses. Also, the Ark was born at the head of the liturgical procession that brought down the walls of Jericho.

After the Israelites had entered the Promised Land, the Ark of the Covenant was installed at Gilgal, then later at Shiloh, then at Bethel, and then Shiloh again (Figure 3).

Fig 3. The Promised (Holy) Land (Left Panel) and the Journey of the Ark of Covenant (Right Panel).

In coming to Israel in this way, God assumed certain "risks" because his holy people – like Adam and Eve before them – remained *free* to make unholy choices. They were chosen but never forced or coerced. The Ark was grand. It was made of gold and the finest wood which were reminders of God's holiness, his otherness and power. Yet in the Ark, God had entered time in a radically humble way. He had rendered himself vulnerable. When Israel went to battle, the Levites carried the Ark in the midst of the advancing ranks of soldiers. In the battle of Aphek, the Philistines routed Israel and captured the Ark, carrying it off to their lands as a trophy of their victory. In doing this, however, they brought disaster upon themselves. Seven months of earthquakes and plague passed before the Philistines finally returned the Ark in fear. In all this time, Israelites was ruled by "Judges," military leaders with charismatic power. As we read, "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6). This decentralized governance was distinctive at the time.

The neighboring people all have kings, but Israel, for centuries, had God alone as its ruler. But it did not always work out well when "*every man doing what was right in his own eyes*." The period of *Judges* lasted more than three centuries, and it was fraud by idolatry, neglect of the Law, and sexual immorality. The Judges themselves were sometimes unjust. Indeed, many readers have judged the time of the Judges to be the most horrifying in salvation history. Finally, tiring of the injustices perpetrated by wicked Judges, Israel sought a solution. They asked the Prophet Samuel, to "*appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations*." Now, the desire for a king was not bad in itself. God had promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have royal descendants: "I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you" (Genesis 17:6). Two generations later, God renewed the promise to Jacob: "King shall spring from you" (Genesis 35:11). And then to the sons of Jacob, the Lord said: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Genesis 49:10). Thus, a faithful Israelite could have wished, and prayed for, a fulfillment of these promises. After all, God himself had made kings an important part of Israel's particular destiny. But that was not the reason Israel clamored for a king in the time of Samuel. They wanted a king so that they could be "*like all the nations*." In expressing this desire, they were rejecting their own special vocation, to be a nation set apart. To be holy, is to be set apart for the service of God. So, what could be less holy than Israel's desire to be like everybody else – to be like the other nations, who were ruled not by God, but by a king? God himself saw the implications of their request and told Samuel: "They have rejected me from being king over them." He also saw the dire consequences it would bring and told Samuel to make those clear. The king would institute a draft and use Israel's soldiers for his own aggrandizement. The king would confiscate farmland to supply the royal table. The most skilled purveyors of every craft would be enlisted for the king's service. The people would essentially be *enslaved* by the king and *taxed* for the privilege. The people's choice seemed to be the very definition of *unholiness* – and it promised to set them back to a condition resembling their servitude in Egypt. God informed their consent, and they granted them what they wanted. But he ensured that his own plan would be accomplished anyway – that he would share his holiness with his people – not simply in spite of their unholy choice, but through it.

King Saul did not solve Israel's problems. He made them worse. In the seven chapters leading up to his anointing, the "Ark of God" is mentioned frequently – 38 times, in fact. The Ark is a rallying point for Israel. It goes among them in battle. There is concern for its reverential upkeep. Its capture causes the Priest Eli to die of grief and his daughter-in-law to go into premature labor. Such was the regard for the holiness of the Ark in the time immediately before the reign of Saul. Then something strange happens. The Ark disappears almost entirely from the narrative for the remainder of Saul's reign. Through the entire account of the 47 years of Saul's reign, the Ark is only mentioned once, when Saul commands that it be brought into his presence: "And Saul said to Ahijah, 'Bring the Ark of God here.' For the Ark of God went at that time with the sons of Israel." It went with the people, but perhaps it wasn't noticed as much as it had been in the past. In any event, it wasn't mentioned. God was present, in all his holiness and with all his power, but Saul was preoccupied with other things. Saul was at first neglectful and then contemptuous of God. Eventually, he directly disobeyed the Lord's command and brought about his own downfall. And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which he commanded you; for now, the Lord would have established your

kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart; and the Lord has appointed him to be prince over his people because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you" (1 Samuel 13:13-14). The man after God's own heart was David, whose reign, according to every surviving account, would stand in stark contrast to Saul's. The contrast between David and Saul could not be more striking. After assuming power, David consulted with his commanders and announced to the assembly of Israel: "Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we neglected it in the days of Saul" (1 Chronicles 13:3).

In Psalm 132, David swore to find a house for the Ark. Saul had reigned from his home city of Gibeah. David, whom God appointed as Saul's successor, at first ruled from Hebron; but his intention was to conquer Jerusalem and establish it as his capital. He succeeded; and he choreographed the transfer of power to make it most memorable for everyone watching along the route. The procession, like all public demonstrations, was designed to communicate something. One clear message was the military might of a unified Israel and its king. Thirty thousand soldiers, "chosen men" made the march, which would have been an unforgettable sight. And then there was festive music. Such spectacle was impressive, but for David it was secondary in importance. Israel's newfound earthly power was subordinate to the divine power that resided in the tabernacle. The soldiers were there to accompany and honor the Ark of the Covenant as it was transported to its permanent home on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the new capital (Figure 4). The musicians were to make "merry before the Lord with all their might." The dominant theme in the procession was not political but religious. It was holiness. Thus, the focus was not Israel's king or his army, but the Ark of the Covenant. It was placed on a new vehicle, produced for the occasion, and there it was attended by priests. Though the Ark was exposed to the public, it lost none of its holiness and power.

Fig 4. The Ark of Covenant was transported to Mount Zion in Jerusalem.

The narrative makes this clear when the oxen pulling the cart stumble along the path and a layman named Uzzah reaches out to steady the Ark. As soon as he touches it, however, he fell down dead, punished because he had dared to touch the Ark of God with hands that had not been consecrated for the purpose. Seeing this, David was moved to fear and trembling. Like Moses and the patriarchs before him, he became immediately aware of God's holiness and his own unworthiness. "And David was afraid of the Lord that day; and he said, '*How can the Ark of the Lord come to me*?' (2 Samuel 6:9)." The episode affected him so strongly that he halted the procession for *three* months. And when he resumed, he offered sacrifice, "and ox and a fatling," every six paces. The most enduring image from the procession, however, is that of King David's personal piety. "And David danced before the Lord with all his might." Nowhere is the contrast between David and Saul so striking. For Saul, the Ark was an afterthought, mentioned only once – as a weapon he could summon, an object he wished to control. David, on the contrary, marveled that the Ark should come his way. All the more striking is the reaction of Saul's daughter Michal, who is David's wife. When she saw her husband "leaping and dancing before the Lord," she despised him in her heart. She thought her husband's behavior was unseemly, beneath the dignity of a warrior-monarch like her father. She said to David: "How the king of Israel honored himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as one of the vulgar fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!" David was undeterred. He explained to his wife that honor is due to the Lord, who made him king. He regretted none of his behavior. He told Michal: "I will make merry before the Lord. I will make myself yet more contemptible than this" (2 Samuel 6:22). Once again, David clearly differs from the family of Saul; his

notion of kingship and worship proves to be more fruitful than those of Michal. With David, the Ark entered Jerusalem, where it would remain in its tabernacle. David then built himself a grand palace, and immediately recognized the incongruity of the situation. "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells in a tent" (2 Samuel 7:2). He resolved to build a Temple to stand as a suitable house for the Lord. Through the Prophet Nathan, however, the Lord responded that his house would be built not by David, but by his son Solomon. But why did David choose Jerusalem as the Ark's resting place? The Scripture do not tell us but they leave us clues.

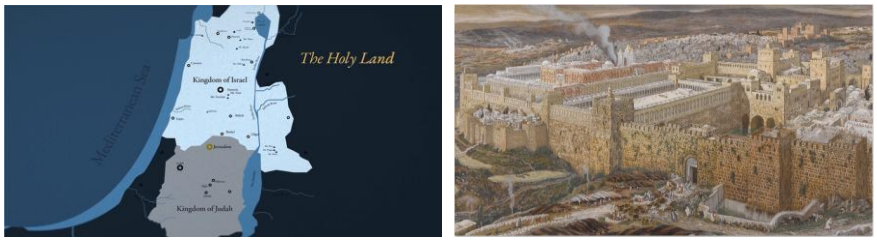

Fig 5. The Promised (Holy) Land (Left Panel) and the Jerusalem (Right Panel).

Through the Prophet Ezekiel, the Lord reveals that *Jerusalem* is the "*center of the nations*", and "*center of the earth*" (Figure 5). The word used for "*center*" here in Hebrew can be translated more literally as the "*navel*." In Genesis 14:18, *Salem*, the primitive form of *Jeru-Salem*, appears as the land ruled by Melchizedek, the first man mentioned as a priest in Sacred Scripture. It is the site of his famous offering of bread and wine, shared with the patriarch Abram. Psalm 76 verse 2 informs us that Salem was, in fact, identical with Mount Zion, the site of the Temple: "His abode has been established in Salem, His dwelling place in Zion." Genesis also refers to the land as "Moriah," the place where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac. And Israel's later histories tell us that Moriah was yet another name for the 'Temple Mount', as we seen in 2 Chronicles 3:1. Moses also indicated that Israels' goal – from the beginning of the Exodus – was not merely the acquisition of the Promised Land, but rather the construction of the Temple at the site of Salem – Moriah, Zion. At the climax of this song of triumph, Moses sang: "You will bring them in, and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O Lord, which you have made for your abode, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established." In time, Solomon did build the Temple, grander than any on earth – and thus appropriate for its purpose. He decorated it with cosmic images evoking the Garden of Eden.

According to the first century Jewish historian Josephus, the Temple veil was embroidered with a map of the stars; the priestly vestments were adorned with sculpture of fruit; the lampstands were positioned in imitation of the planets and other heavenly bodies. The Temple was designed to be an "*imitation and representation of the universe*." As at the entrance to Eden, moreover, there were two imposing cherubim standing guard. In Solomon's Temple, they were 22 feet height. The Temple was designed to inspire awe in worshippers – to communicate that the God of Israel was not some local deity, but rather the one God who created the universe, possessed it, and sustained it in existence. Thus, there was a court for the Gentiles too, to use for prayer. In no sense was he part of the cosmos or contained by it. He had, however, designated this particular place as the site of his special presence on the earth. The Temple was a place apart, where God could be approached according to divinely established rules. The architecture and decorations communicated that message in all their details. Within the sanctuary, however, God's holiness was evident to the priests as a simple palpable fact. There they saw the cloud of God's glory that filled the Holy of Holies. Both king and clergy were struck with awe at God's manifest holiness.

Fig 6. The Holy Temple which Made All (Mt. Zion, Jerusalem City, and Land of Judah) Holy.

It was the Temple that made Mount Zion holy. It was Mount Zion that made the city holy. It was the city that made the land of Judah holy (Figure 6). And the temple was built to be the center of national life for a holy people, a people consecrated to God. The Temple was unique in all the earth – the only place where sacrifice could be offered to the one true God. Thus, it stood in sharp contrast with every other place on the planet – and indeed in the universe. In relation to every place and everything else, the Temple was "other." It was set apart as a reserve for God's holiness. Yet it was also a sign of God's real presence – his commitment, by means of his covenant with Israel, to be present among his people and thus present to the whole world.

Just as Exodus had completed the work of creation, so the kingdom – by establishing the Temple – brought to completion the work of the Exodus. This new stage had been foretold by God on Mount Sinai. Israel would first undergo a period of wandering, but once they had come to occupy the Holy Land, they were to establish a holy Temple in a holy city. "But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there; there you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock; and there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all you undertake, in which the Lord your God has blessed you" (Deuteronomy 12:5-7). This should have happened soon after the Chosen People entered the Promised Land. But it did not.

Rabbi Berman notes that, in fact, it took Israel almost half a millennium to get around to fulfilling God's command. And they were aware of their tardiness. The construction of the Temple, he says, is the "only event in the entire prophetic record explicitly dated." It took place in "the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month." At that time, "he began to build the house of the Lord." Nonetheless, God honored their work and lived among them in glory. The day would come, however, when they would lament because "Your holy people possessed your sanctuary a little while"–only a little while–before their adversaries destroyed it.

V. CONCLUSION

In this article, we review and summarize the first three of twelve lessons from Scott Hahn's 2023 [1] Lenten series, *"Holy Is His Name."* Specifically, these are: (1) *The Genesis of Holiness,* (2) *The Holiness Explosion,* and (3) *Holiness in the Kingdom.* The central message is that a life lived in purity and obedience, set apart for God's purposes, is necessary for a spiritual encounter with God, as He cannot coexist with sin. This message is important for all who willingly seek to be God's holy people (Saints) and to enter heaven. Remarkably, Scripture [2–4] reiterates that "*without holiness no one will see the Lord*" (Hebrews 12:14b); therefore, it is crucial to unpack the meaning of holiness for the benefit of many souls.

DISCLAIMER STATEMENT

This research reflects the author's own work and views. It does not represent the official position or policies of any U.S. Federal agency.

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