1. Questions.
2. While much attention is paid to the *content* of the message hidden in the word קדשים at the beginning of the second of this week’s two פרשיות, the *context* of this message is also important. רש"י writes: מלמד שנאמרה פרשה זו בהקהל מפני שרוב גופי תורה תלויין בה – all of תורה is for the entire Jewish people, but the message to become קדשים could not be tweeted out or shared by word of mouth – it had to be done in a large group. Why does this message in particular have to be given to masses at one time?
3. Hashem doesn’t just tell us to be holy but explains *why* we are commanded to be holy – "כי קדוש אני". The מדרש has a startling comment – "יכול כמוני ת"ל כי קדוש אני, קדושתי למעלה מקדושתכם" – one might think that we should be holy like Hashem Himself. What is the הו"א? Why would anybody ever think that they can be holy like ה'? In what way would we think we can be holy like ה'?
4. Each of the triumvirate of great Jewish leaders in the מדבר brought us a unique blessing. מרים’s merit brought us the באר, Moshe’s זכות brought us the מן, and אהרן brought us the ענני הכבוד. Each figure must in some way be connected to the special miracle that was brought about through him. What do clouds have to do with the special מדה of אהרן הכהן – the אוהב שלום ורודף שלום?
5. We often have a fundamental misunderstanding of what קדושה means. We rightfully point to Rashi who defines קדושה in multiple contexts as פרישה, but this does not mean that we should separate ourselves from humanity. We separate ourselves from עבירות, from עריות, from טומאה – but not from other people. In fact, one can only really achieve קדושה, that small spark of the divine, in the context of a group. I believe there are four reasons for this:
6. First, if we accept the Ramban’s definition of קדושה as being מקדש עצמך במותר לך, the idea of קדושה is to avoid self indulgence. One is best equipped to avoid self indulgence when his primary concerns are not about himself, but about other people.
7. Second, in a similar vain, the opposite of self aggrandizement and gluttonous self gratification is to be נושא בעול עם חבירו – when we not only don’t try to indulge ourselves with excessive pleasure, but take upon the pain and suffering of others, we achieve קדושה. When we look at the picture of the little boy on the cover of the FTJT this week, hugging his father’s grave, and we feel his pain, when we hear about the family in Boca who suffered the loss of a sweet innocent 12 year old girl and we mourn with them, we touch on קדושה.
8. Third, there is a certain energy that can only be achieved in a ציבור. I am sure many of us saw the video of the national anthem sung in Boston this week before the Bruins game. If you haven’t seen it, go and see it – goosebump inducing. Had the bombing never happened the man who sang the anthem, no matter how good a job he may have done, would have been quickly forgotten. The moment itself would not have had any special meaning. For this man it may have felt special because he was performing in front of 20,000 people, but he would have been forgotten as soon as it was over. Instead, there was a moment that nobody there will ever forget. And what role did the singer play? He PUT DOWN THE MIC! Specifically by retreating into the crowd and singing along with them he was able to achieve something he otherwise never would have been able to achieve.
9. Finally, joining with a כלל allows a person to become a קדוש because all קדושה begins with Hashem who is infinite. No matter how great the person, if his accomplishments are exclusively for himself, it will not outlast the 70, 80, 90 or 120 years that he is on this earth. He will be a blip on the screen. But when somebody sees himself as part of an עם קדוש, a link in a chain that represents the nation of God, he is part of something eternal. I received an email from Elliot Bekritsky on ערב שבת and his writing makes it so clear why it is important to be part of something bigger.
10. “There is a very real comfort that comes fron just being here - a few sparks gathered back to their source. I live in a city named after a place menoned in sefer Yehoshua that must have been somewhere near here based on the description and proximity to Yerushalayim. We spend time off at a natural spring that feeds the Dead Sea just south of river that Bnei Yisrael crossed on their way to take the land promised to their fathers - at the command of G-d himself. If I am having difficult times or reason to praise G-d, the kotel is a short drive away. This is unquestionably my country, my people, my heritage, my future, and that of my children.

And what of the challenges? What of East Jerusalem right across the valley from me and the dome that sits upon har habayit that I see each day to and from work not knowing what to feel? what of the sirens and bomb shelters that persist even in our day? What of the tremendous gap between the current cultural realities and the dream of malchut Dovid restored and of the Beit Hamikdash rebuilt?
There are many many answers that can be proposed to explain or help to deal with the gap but to me the simplest is patience. It took hundreds of years from the crossing of the Yarden until the inauguration of the Beit Hamikdash. Avraham died with a promise from G-d of great progeny and a beautiful land but nothing to show for it but one son to follow his path and ownership in a burial plot. Patience. The realization of the greatest aspirations of mankind are worth it.

But with this slow process of redemption I beleive there is a hidden a gift from G-d - the same gift he grants to us every day with the mitzvot - the oppprtunity to participate in the process. In a world controlled by Him for reasons that only He can understand, where even our greatest efforts can yield so little that is lasting, what a tremendous gift what a tremendous honor to be able to play a role in His magnificent plan. It is visible here. If you look past the headlines you see it unfolding.”

1. Now the answers to our three opening questions are obvious:
2. The need to gather all the people in order to teach them about being קדשים is to demonstrate how one reaches קדושה. It can only be done in the context of a group.
3. The הו"א of "יכול כמוני" is that we may have thought that we should remove ourselves from humanity to achieve קדושה, the same way Hashem is removed, but we are reminded that such a separation runs counter to how a human achieves קדושה.
4. אהרן’s connection to the ענני הכבוד may relate to the function of the ענני הכבוד. When our enemies try to hurt us the clouds would protect us from the arrows. Our greatest comfort and protection in times when our enemies carry out senseless attacks is to connect to the מדה of אהרן – to be אוהב שלום ורודף שלום. We intuitively do this as a reaction to being attacked, but true קדושה comes when we pre-empt the attacks with this מדה.