

Tefillah Focus Of The Week:

שמנה עשרה

Inhabiting a Holy World

**MEANING:** The simple translation of the prayer

You are holy and Your Name is holy, and holy ones praise You every day, forever.\* **Blessed are You, Hashem, the holy G-d** [from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur substitute: the holy King].

\*(Nusach Ashkenaz)

אתה קדוש ושמוך  
קדוש וקדושים בכל יום  
יהללוך סלה: ברוך  
אתה ה', הא-ל  
(בעשי"ת המלך)  
הקדוש.

**WORD TO THE WISE:** Meaning within the word

**T**ur (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 114) writes that there are 14 words in the blessing of אתה קדוש (nusach Ashkenaz), which correspond to the 14 words of the verse in Yeshaya (6:3) וקרא זה אל זה ואמר קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבקות מלא כל הארץ כבודו. "And they called out one to the other and said *Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh...*" Thus, in our personal recitation of this blessing in Shemoneh Esrei, we are emulating the holiness that the congregation proclaims when it says *kedushah* as a minyan. The concept of holiness is a very important one.

The Torah commands us to be holy for G-d is Holy. This is indeed our primary mission in life and from it flows all our other responsibilities toward mankind. The *Sforno* (on *Shemos* 19:6; *Vayikra* 11:44; and *Devarim* 26:19) adds a unique dimension to the concept of *kedushah* as it applies to G-d and Israel—that of eternity. In *Vayikra* (11:44), *Sforno* states that "...holiness is everlasting and eternal." Since Hashem says that the people of Israel shall be a "kingdom of priests and a holy people" (*Shemos* 19:6), the nation will never perish; it possesses the force of eternity, which is an integral part of *kedushah*.

**THEME:**

An essential concept of the prayer

*Recognizing Holiness*

By proclaiming Hashem's holiness, we recognize the holiness He has invested in the world and in us.

**INSIGHT:**

Deeper meanings of the theme

*Bringing Heaven to Earth*

**W**e conclude this third blessing of Shemoneh Esrei with an expression of thanks to Hashem for being Holy, ברוך אתה ה', הא-ל הקדוש "Blessed are You, Hashem, the holy G-d." By praising Hashem's holiness, we show that despite the overwhelming presence of materialism in our world, we accept our mission to recognize Hashem operating behind the scenes.

When we accomplish that mission, we in effect integrate Hashem's presence with the physical world. We thereby bring to fruition the purpose of this world, which is to unite everything physical with its spiritual function. This blessing of אתה קדוש teaches us the true purpose of our material physical world. Thus, the concept of Hashem's holiness and our own holiness has a practical, tangible effect on how we live our lives.

The Torah (*Vayikra* 19:2) states, "*Kedoshim ti'hiu* - You shall be holy, for I, Hashem your G-d, am holy." *Kedushah* is the force which arouses in us thoughts of lofty spiritual pursuits, piousness, and sacred rituals. Rav Yisrael Salanter, the great founder of the mussar movement, teaches that holiness does not pertain only to spirituality and heavenly pursuits. What makes a Jew holy? The Torah teaches: "Don't steal; pay your workers on time; don't lie; deal honestly with others..." Hashem demands that we be holy down here on earth, sanctifying our lives through our dealings with others. The more we understand Hashem's holiness, the more we recognize our own potential holiness as individuals; we are "*tzelem Elokim*," and as nation, we are Hashem's emissary to the world.

**VISUALIZE:**

Images that bring the prayer to life

*Connecting to Holiness*

\* **T**he ride was over. The taxi driver pulled over the curb and told the passenger that the fare was \$20. The passenger took out the money and paid the driver the fare plus a reasonable tip.

\* Supper time had arrived. The mother called her family to the table and put down before them a platter of chicken, a bowl of rice and a chicken salad



that she had prepared.

Neither of these episodes would seem to rise to the description of holiness. However, The Chofetz Chaim taught that even the most mundane activities contain great spiritual potential, if only we are aware of it.

If the passenger pays the driver simply because that's what passengers have to do, it is a mundane act. However, if he pays him to fulfill the Torah's directive to promptly pay for services rendered, his act is rooted in holiness. Likewise, the mother might see serving dinner as a chore, or she might see it as a chesed that brings good health and happiness to her family enabling them to learn Torah and perform mitzvos.

**Try This!**

▶ The holiness that exists in the world and that is invested in each of us is discernible in the good feeling a person gets from doing a *chesed*, performing a mitzvah with special *mesiras nefesh* or davening with great *kavannah*. Think of that feeling when you thank Hashem for the holiness and say ברוך אתה ה', הא-ל (בעשי"ת המלך) הקדוש.

**Did You Know**

▶ *Dealing With a Distraction*

Proper *kavannah* is the most important element of prayer. Therefore, if a *sefer* falls to the floor and that interferes with one's *kavannah*, he may pick it up after finishing the blessing in Shemoneh Esrei that he is presently reciting (*Mishneh Berurah* 96:7). This is so even if he needs to take a few steps in order to pick up the *sefer* (*Be'er Moshe* 3:13). If, however, the fallen *sefer* does not disturb his *kavannah*, then he may not pick up the *sefer* during Shemoneh Esrei

(*Mishneh Berurah* 96:7).