

Pray and Mean It is an occasional listserv – every 1 to 2 weeks. Its aim is to build an understanding of and connection to Jewish prayer step by step. It is administered through googlegroups. If you are not already on the list, you can sign up at <http://groups.google.com/group/prayandmeanit/topics?lnk=gschg> or you may e-mail me at CantorJC@aol.com and I'll be happy to add you to the list. You are welcome to share this with others who might find it interesting or valuable. Recipients will NOT be able to respond to the entire list, but may correspond with me.

Thanks and best wishes – Cantor Jack Chomsky, Congregation Tifereth Israel, Columbus Ohio

Pray and Mean It 6

This is the 6th installment in this series.

We have begun a sequence of discussions about the blessings of the Amidah, noting that the Amidah always begins and ends with (essentially) the same blessings (3 at the beginning and 3 at the end). We're therefore focusing on these 6 blessings prior to examining the 13 blessings in the middle.

The 3rd b'rachah of the Amidah (weekday or Shabbat or festival) is *k'dushat hashem* -- sanctification of God's name. Because of our communal tendency to focus on public prayer rather than private prayer, we may be particularly familiar with the "aloud" form of *k'dushat hashem* -- which is the *k'dushah*.

K'dushah comes in different forms depending on the occasion. The simplest is for weekdays (Shacharit and Minchah). Shabbat Shacharit is a little more elaborate, Shabbat Musaph even more so, Festival Musaph adding beyond that. In each case, *K'dushah* reminds us of the visions that our prophets had -- of the angels and mysterious heavenly beings praising God "up close and personal."

Yet we would do well to focus on the simplest form -- the "silent" form of *k'dushat hashem* --

אַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קָדוֹשׁ, וְקְדוּשֵׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהַלְלוּךָ סֵלָה.
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הָאֵל לְקְדוּשׁ.

*Atah kadosh v'shimcha kadosh, uk'doshim b'chol yom y'hal'lucha selah.
Baruch Atah Adonai, ha-eil hakadosh.*

You are holy, and your Name is holy, and the holy ones praise You every day (Selah). Praised are You, Adonai, the holy God.

Obviously, *holiness* is the main point here. And there are few things that we need more in the world today than an increased awareness of holiness. The world in which we function is so often coarse and nasty. Holiness?! Not something we run into in our daily life -- unless we look for it and unless we seek to foster it.

Thinking about holiness on a daily (or thrice daily) basis can be a powerful tool to help *find* holiness -- and perhaps to move us toward performing holy acts in our daily life. When the prayer says *k'doshim b'chol yom y'hal'lucha*, we can understand that as "holy ones praise you every day" or *all day* (as in all the time). And when we say holy ones, we might certainly first

think of angels -- because of the imagery of the *kedushah*. Yet can't *we* be holy ones -- or at least strive to be?

I know that each and every day, I have opportunities to make the lives of everyone with whom I come into contact a little -- or perhaps a lot -- more pleasant. A classic way I think about this is "the toll collector." If I'm driving through a toll booth, I'll pay the toll no matter what. I hardly envy the person whose job it is to collect the toll. I can ignore him/her. I can grudgingly provide what I owe. Or I can pay the toll, smile at the person, and thank them (especially so if I'm traveling on a holiday, etc.) This is much like prayer. In theory, we have to "pay the toll" no matter what -- recite those prayers. But do we really get anything out of it if we offer our prayers grudgingly?!

One of the challenges of contemporary life is made clear by the anachronistic nature of this analogy, though: those of you who pay tolls every day know all too well that you don't even see the toll taker any more. You just speed through with your E-Z Pass! And such is the nature with prayer as well -- if we allow it to be.

Every human encounter is an opportunity to embrace holiness. Everything that we observe, even in the inanimate world, is an opportunity to appreciate holiness. But it's hard to do if we never use the word "holy." So the simple recitation in the 3rd brachah of the Amidah provides a great opportunity for increasing our awareness of and appreciation of our world, of God's role in it, and our potential for being participants in holy acts:

You are holy, and your Name is holy, and the holy ones praise You every day (Selah).
Praised are You, Adonai, the holy God.

May each of us add daily to the holiness present in our world.

If you wish to respond, you may e-mail me at CantorJC@aol.com.