

# A LESSON IN HOLINESS

by Ben Goldberg

Last class, we finalized our review of the second bracha of the Shemoneh Esrai, as well as our look at the Kedusha. Today, we will review the third blessing, the last of the first three blessings praising G-d, before starting a new section next class on the middle blessings. As always, let's first review the actual text of the third blessing:

"You are holy and Your name is holy, and holy ones praise You every day, forever. Blessed are You, Hashem, the holy G-d."

As we previously reviewed, the first blessing corresponded to Avraham and his primary trait of *chessed*, of kindness. The second blessing corresponded to Yitzchak and his primary trait of *din*, or justice. This third blessing, focusing completely on the holiness of G-d, corresponds to Yaakov and his primary trait of *Emes*, truth. While *chessed* and *din* are of course important and necessary traits, Yaakov was able to merge the two traits and find the perfect balance between kindness and justice. Once we are able to perfectly merge those two contrasting values and find truth, we will be able to fully comprehend the holiness of G-d.

Rabbi Avrohom Chaim Feuer, who we have cited to many times in this class, makes a wonderful observation of the blessing's focus on holiness. He compares us all to sponges, noting that we soak up our external surroundings, constantly encountering new ideas, opinions, and stimuli. With so much out there, it may seem impossible to know which of these might help us grow and which will only serve to hinder us. The divine trait of holiness allows one to determine which of these external influences are worth keeping and which should be discarded. As we recite this third bracha, we should commit to striving to attain the necessary holiness to help us choose. (We will cover the blessing regarding the wisdom and insight necessary to develop this knowledge in just a few classes.),

Rabbi Feuer also points out the placement of this blessing – right before we segue into the middle thirteen blessings where we make our personal requests. After spending these past three blessings praising G-d, we now prepare to turn to pleas for personal necessities. Although these blessings cover many topics, we should never lose sight of the real reasoning for these upcoming requests: to help further our service of G-d and growth in our Judaism.