

# Kedushah or Holy?

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**FOR MANY YEARS** I have been interested in the language and structure of the prayerbook/siddur. There is a history to the prayers as found in the Siddur and sometimes we find that the language has varied over the course of the centuries.

I would like to look at one linguistic aspect of our daily *tefillot*. Before we recite the Shema in the morning, we recite two blessings. Included in the first of these blessings is what is known as the Kedushah of Yotzer שביוצר קדושה or Seated Kedushah מיושב קדושה. The prayer describes the angels on high praising G-d in the heavens above following the description found in Isaiah Chapter 6:1-3: "In the year that King Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he did fly. And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."

The source for the wording of Kedushah of Yotzer is found in the *Seder of Rav Amram Gaon* who died around 875 C.E. He was the Rosh Yeshiva in Sura and was the author of *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* which was a response to the desire of the Jews of Spain for guidance in the wording of the daily, Shabbat and Holiday prayers. This work remains the major source for the Siddur we still use today.

The Hebrew text for this part of the service in *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* was:

כלם מקבלים עליהם עול מלכות שמים זה מזה. ונותנים רשות זה לזה להקדיש ליוצרים **בנחת רוח בשפה ברורה ובנעימה קדושה** כלם כאחד עונים באימה ואומרים ביראה.

This version is almost identical to the standard Ashkenaz version of today:

וכלם מקבלים עליהם על מלכות שמים זה מזה, ונותנים רשות זה לזה, להקדיש ליוצרים **בנחת רוח, בשפה ברורה ובנעימה, קדושה** כלם כאחד עונים ואומרים ביראה.

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ArtScroll translates this passage: “Then they all accept upon themselves the yoke of heavenly sovereignty from one another, and grant permission to one another to sanctify the One Who formed them, **with tranquility, with clear articulation, and with melody. All of them as one proclaim His holiness** and say with awe:”

The version printed in our Siddurim has the added advantage of the nikud (vowel signs) and modern punctuation – all of which are lacking in *Seder of Rav Amram Gaon*. The difference though is found in one word. In most modern siddurim it is printed קדושה, a noun, but in *Seder of Rav Amram Gaon* it is printed קדושה which would normally be read קדושה, an adjective. In this case the translation would be:

*Then they all accept upon themselves the yoke of heavenly sovereignty from one another, and grant permission to one another to sanctify the One Who formed them, with tranquility, with clear articulation, and with holy melody. All of them as one proclaim and say with awe.*

Is the word קדושה a noun or is the word קדושה an adjective?

So far, we have the reading of *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* who seems to be saying it is קדושה an adjective.

In favour of קדושה an adjective we have Rabbi David ben Rabbi Yosef Abudraham who lived in 13<sup>th</sup> century Spain. In his work entitled *Abudraham* he explains each of the descriptive parts of this passage:

להקדיש ליוצרים בנחת רוח לשון חכמים היא על שם (שמות טו, יג) נחית בחסדך. בשפה ברורה ע"ש (תה' סג, ו) ושפתי רננות יהלל פי ואמר ברורה ע"ש ודעת שפתי ברור מללו. ובנעימה קדושה פירוש ובנעימת קול קדושה וטהורה ע"ש (תה' קמא) ושמעו אמרי כי נעמו. וכתב ונעים זמירות ומפני שקרא לשפה ברורה קרא גם כן לנעימה קדושה דרך העברה. ויש יחידי קורים קדושה כולם כאחד וכו' והראשון נכון.

*“To sanctify the One Who formed them with tranquility” is Rabbinic language à la (Exodus 15: 13) “You guided in Your kindness”. “With clear articulation” à la (Psalms 63: 6) “and my mouth shall praise you with joyful lips” and say clearly à la (Job 33:3) “and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.” “And with holy sweetness (adjective)” meaning with a pleasantness of voice holy and pure à la (Psalm 141:6) “then they will hear how sweet were my words.” And it is written “pleasant songs.” Now since the text refers to clear language it also figuratively refers to holy melody. And there are individuals who read **Kedushah** (noun) – All of them as one proclaim and the first is correct.”*

While Abudraham clearly favours the wording of קדושה an adjective he takes note of the alternative reading.

In his commentary on Isaiah 6:3 Rashi explains:

וקרא זה אל זה - נוטלין רשות זה מזה שלא יקדים האחד ויתחיל ויתחייב שריפה אלא אם כן פתחו כולם כאחד וזהו שיסד ביוצר אור קדושה כולם כאחד עונים כו'.

“And one cried to another” each took permission from each other so that none would start before the others and suffer being burned therefore they all opened in unison. This is the basis for the Kedushah of Yotzer which says “**Kedushah all of them as one proclaim.**”

From Rashi's comment, it would seem that he treats קדושה as a noun, they recite the Kedushah.

Rabbi Yosef Karo wrote in his Beit Yosef (16<sup>th</sup> century) commentary on the Tur – he cites the Orachot Hayim:

בשפה ברורה ובנעימה קדושה כך כתוב בפרקי היכלות וכן שמעתי מגדולי הדור שאומרים עכ"ל.

**With clear articulation, and with holy melody (קדושה, an adjective).** So it is written in the Chapters on the Heichalot (an early rabbinic mystical work) and so have I heard from the great ones of the generation who say it this way.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Chizkiyah Di Silva wrote in the Pri Chadash that in his day it seems the general practice was to read קדושה as קדושה (**a noun**). He then notes the comments of the Beit Yosef in regard to Orachot Chayim that it should be **קדושה (an adjective)** and the Pri Chadash suggests this is the correct formulation. For if it were read קדושה (**a noun**) it would be part of the next phrase, in which case the text should have said: בשפה ברורה ונעימה: without the letter ב"ת introducing the word.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem that the preponderance of the sources prefer to see the word as **קדושה an adjective**. Indeed the phrase: בשפה ברורה ובנעימה קדושה **with clear articulation, and with holy melody** is often used in a non-liturgical setting to suggest proper behaviour and attitude. Nonetheless most siddurim today have קדושה as a noun. Either rendition is in the end a statement of the angelic beings joining together to sanctify the name of G-d. Perhaps by using the noun form קדושה, the prayer emphasizes that we here on earth join together with the angels saying the Kedushah and that vision gives us a greater sense of participation with the angels and influenced that version.

In any case we should try our best when davening to recite all of our *tefillot* with clear articulation, and with holy melody. To seek to pronounce every word clearly, without mumbling and without forgetting that our words should be holy.

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1. בית יוסף אורח חיים סימן נט.  
2. מה שהעולם קורין קדושה כולם כאחד הדלת בשורק, אבל בב"י [ד"ה כתוב בא"ח] הביא בשם ארחות חיים שכתוב בפרקי היכלות [פ"ט אות ג] בשפה ברורה ובנעימה קדושה הדלת בחולם, וכן נראה דאי מילת קדושה קרינו בשורק ונמשכת למטה, א"כ היה לו לומר בשפה ברורה ונעימה בלא ב"ת, אלא ודאי כדאמרן. ולזה הסכים בספר שיירי כנסת הגדולה [הגב"י אות ג]. ועיין בתוספות דריש פרק ב' דחגיגה דף י"ג [ע"ב] ד"ה מזיעתן יעויין שם: