



Prayer- Mourner's Kaddish

By Steve Cohen

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About the Mourner's Kaddish

The Kaddish is a prayer praising God and expressing a yearning for the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. It is recited at funerals and by mourners. Sons are required to say Kaddish for eleven months after the death of a parent.

The word Kaddish means sanctification, and the prayer is a sanctification of God's name. Kaddish is only said with a minyan (prayer quorum of ten men), following a psalm or prayer that has been said in the presence of a minyan, since the essence of the Kaddish is public sanctification.

The one who says Kaddish always stands. Whether other worshippers sit or stand depends on the congregation. It is customary for all the mourners in the congregation to recite Kaddish in unison. A child under the age of thirteen may say the Mourner's Kaddish if he has lost one of his parents. Most religious authorities allow a daughter to say Kaddish, although she is under no religious obligation to do so.

The Mourner's Kaddish is recited for eleven months from the day of the death and also on the *yahrzeit* (anniversary of a death). A person may say Kaddish not only for parents, but also for a child, brother, or in-law. An adopted son should say it for adoptive parents who raised him.

History

The first mention of mourners saying Kaddish at the end of the service is in a thirteenth century writing called the *Or Zarua*. The Kaddish at the end of the service became designated as Kaddish *Yatom* or Mourner's Kaddish (literally, "Orphan's Kaddish").

The opening words, *yitgadal t'yitkadash*, were inspired by Ezekiel 38:23 when the prophet envisions a time when God will become great in the eyes of all the nations. The response of the listeners to the first lines of the mourners is a public declaration of the belief that God is great and holy: *Yehei Shmei rabba mevorakh l'olam ul'almei almaya* (May His great Name be blessed forever and ever). This response is central to the Kaddish and should be said out loud.

Although Kaddish contains no reference to death, it has become the prayer for mourners to say. One explanation is that it is an expression of acceptance of Divine judgment and righteousness at a time when a person may easily become bitter and reject God. Another explanation is that by sanctifying God's name in public, the mourners increase the merit of the deceased person. Kaddish is a way in which children can continue to show respect and concern for their parents even after they have died.

Customs

Customs for reciting the Mourners' Kaddish vary markedly among various communities. In Sephardi synagogues, the custom is that all the mourners stand and chant the Kaddish together. In Ashkenazi synagogues, the earlier custom was that one mourner be chosen to lead the prayer on behalf of the rest, though most congregations have now adopted the Sephardi custom. In many Reform synagogues, the entire congregation recites the Mourners' Kaddish together. This is sometimes said to be for those victims of the Holocaust who have no one left to recite the Mourner's Kaddish on their behalf.



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In some congregations (especially Reform and Conservative ones), the Rabbi will read a list of those who have a Yahrzeit on that day (or who have died within the past month), and then ask the congregation to name any people they are mourning for. Some synagogues try to multiply the number of times that the Mourners' Kaddish is recited. Other synagogues limit themselves to one Mourners' Kaddish at the end of the service.

It is important to remember that the Mourners' Kaddish does not mention death at all, but instead praises God.

The ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. "I, even I, am he who comforts you." -- Isaiah 51:11-12

Mourner's Kaddish

Yit'gadal v'yit'kadash sh'mei raba (Cong: Amein).

b'al'ma di v'ra khir'utei v'yam'likh mal'khutei b'chayeikhon uv'yomeikhon uv'chayei d'khol beit yis'ra'eil ba'agala uviz'man kariv v'im'ru: Amein.

May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified (Cong: Amen.) in the world that He created as He willed. May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days, and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say: Amen.

Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varakh l'alam ul'al'mei al'maya Yit'barakh v'yish'tabach v'yit'pa'ar v'yit'romam v'yit'nasei v'yit'hadar v'yit'aleh v'yit'halal sh'mei d'kud'sha B'rikh hu. l'eila min kol bir'khata v'shirata toosh'b'chatah v'nechematah, da'ameeran b'al'mah, v'eemru: Amein.

May His great Name be blessed forever and ever. Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, mighty, upraised, and lauded be the Name of the Holy One Blessed is He. Beyond any blessing and song, praise and consolation that are uttered in the world. Now say: Amen.

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya v'chayim aleinu v'al kol yis'ra'eil v'im'ru: Amein.

May there be abundant peace from Heaven and life upon us and upon all Israel. Now say: Amen.

Oseh shalom bim'romav hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol Yis'ra'eil v'im'ru: Amein.

He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace, upon us and upon all Israel. Now say: Amen.



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For More Information

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