

## Lesson 9-Introduction To Kaddish

Welcome to this session of Take 5 for Tefila, a program sponsored by the Orthodox Union, as part of their Tefila Education Initiative. In this session, I would like to discuss the meaning and purpose of the Kaddish that is recited during prayer services by the prayer leader.

If you were to search for the text of Kaddish in the Talmud, you would not find it nor would you find more than a fleeting reference to the circumstances under which Kaddish is to be recited. The following excerpt from the Talmud contains one of the few references found in the Talmud to any of the words of Kaddish. Listen carefully as the Talmud explains the reaction felt in the Heavens when we, the Jewish people, recite the words of Kaddish here on earth.

The Talmud says: Every time the Jewish people gather in synagogues and in houses of study and answer: **יהא שמיה הגדול מבורך**, may G-d's great name be exalted, G-d shakes his head and says: Happy is the King who is praised in such a manner in His house; What a tragedy that a Father had to send his children into exile; How sad it is that the children were sent away from their Father's table.

Now you understand the significance of reciting the words: **יהא שמיה רבה מבורך** with conviction. Each time those words are recited, the words cause a tremendous reaction in the Heavens. Are we free to recite those words whenever we please? No. A different excerpt from the Talmud describes the circumstances in which those words may be recited:

The Talmud asks: For what reason does G-d allow the world to remain standing? Because the Jews spend a few extra moments in synagogue each morning studying the verses of Kedushah and translating those words into Aramaic and because the Jews say the words: **Yihei Shmei Rabbah** after a group of ten men study Aggadata, a form of Midrashic literature.

This excerpt from the Talmud is interpreted in two ways. According to one opinion, this excerpt is the source for the rule that: **יהא שמיה רבה** should be recited after ten men study Torah together. It is the basis of the practice to recite the form of Kaddish that is known as **קדיש דרבנן**, the special Kaddish that is still recited after ten men study Torah together.

According to a second opinion, this excerpt from the Talmud is the source for the rule that the words: **יהא שמיה רבה** should be recited after ten Jews perform a **מצוה** together. In their opinion, this excerpt is the source of the practice by which the prayer leader recites the form of Kaddish known as **חצי קדיש** or half Kaddish, at various intervals within the prayer services. In other words, the prayer leader recites Kaddish after Pseukei D'Zimra because ten men completed the Mitzvah of reciting Pseukei D'Zimra. The prayer leader recites

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Kaddish after repeating Shemona Esrei because ten men completed the Mitzvah of reciting Shemona Esrei. The prayer leader recites Kaddish after Kriyas Ha'Torah because ten men completed the mitzvah of Kriyas Hatorah and the prayer leader recites Kaddish Tiskabel after Kedushah D'Sidra, the study of the verses of Kedushah, because ten men completed the Mitzvah of studying verses from Tanach, an example of Torah study and ten men have completed the Mitzvah of reciting Tefila Shacharis.

Both opinions claim that their interpretation of the above excerpt from the Talmud explains the origin of the practice of reciting Kaddish at a funeral. The first opinion explains that initially funerals conducted on behalf of deceased Torah scholars would include lectures on Torah לעלית נשמת the deceased Torah Scholar. When Torah study is conducted among ten men, the words of Torah are followed by the recital of Kaddish. Over time, the communities began to feel uncomfortable distinguishing between those who were considered Torah scholars and those who were not. The decision was then made that words of Torah should be said at every funeral which then led to the practice of Kaddish being recited at every funeral, as well, provided that ten men were present. That practice continues today. Instead of presenting formal lectures, those present recite chapters of Tehillim. The recital of those chapters of Tehillim are an example of the public study of Torah that triggers the recital of Kaddish.

The second opinion maintains that participating in the burial of an individual is a Mitzvah. When ten or more men participate in that Mitzvah even if it is only in answering to the prayer of צידוק הדין, that participation triggers the recital of Kaddish. The anonymous Gaon who expressed this opinion immediately challenged his opinion by asking the following question: why do we recite Kaddish at a funeral and not at a wedding? After all are not the ten men who are present at a wedding also participating in a Mitzvah? He answered by saying that at a wedding the ten men present are not actively involved in the performance of the Mitzvah. Allow me to expand upon the answer given by the Gaon. At a funeral those present are actively engaged in the burial of the decedent. Their actions become a Kiddush Hashem and because ten of them are creating the Kiddush Hashem, their actions trigger the recital of Kaddish. At a wedding, those present are mere spectators. They have absolutely no involvement in the performance of the Mitzvah of Jewish marriage. It is the bride and groom alone who create the Kiddush Hashem by making a commitment to start a Jewish Home and to produce the next generation of Jewish children who will serve the Ribbono Shel Olam. A Kiddush Hashem performed by only two individuals does not trigger the recital of Kaddish.

You may be surprised to learn that the origin of the practice of reciting Kaddish at a funeral did not directly lead to the practice of a mourner reciting Kaddish during the year after his parent's death. More on the origin of the Mourners Kaddish in my next talk.