

SUPPLEMENT

SUMMARY OF THE ORIGINS OF קדיש יתום

קדיש יתום was established so that minors and individuals who were not qualified to be a שליח ציבור could perform a religious act that would benefit a deceased parent. Why was קדיש chosen as the act by which minors and those not qualified to be a שליח ציבור could perform a religious act that could benefit a deceased relative? Two factors came together. First, after the מעשה ברבי עקיבא became well known, a custom developed that a mourner would be the שליח ציבור so that through his efforts the congregation would be reciting ברכו and קדיש. Second, as part of a child's חינוך, he would be invited to recite the final קדיש in synagogue. The custom first began as a part of תפלת מעריב after שבת and was then expanded to include the conclusion of the daily תפלת שחרית and תפלת מעריב.

Why did חז"ל choose being a שליח ציבור to be the method by which a child benefits a deceased parent? Prior to the invention of the printing press, תפלה was led by a שליח ציבור who recited the תפילות from memory. His recitation had to be error free. To qualify to be a שליח ציבור, an individual needed to memorize the תפילות and practice them to deliver them error-free. Because that effort resulted in the individual becoming an asset to the community, it was considered the kind of action that could lead to כפרת המת. In which era were there so many orphans under the age of 13 that חז"ל felt compelled to institute the practice of mourners reciting קדיש so that minors could fulfill the obligation of ברא מזכה אבא? The introduction of קדיש יתום appears to parallel the era of the Crusades.

Why was reciting קדיש considered an act that can benefit a decedent? קדיש was authored after the הרבן בית שני to be a תפלה by which the congregation could perform קידוש השם. It was based on a מדרש that indicated that the רבוננו של עולם shared the pain that the Jewish People was suffering in the גלות. The מדרש serves as an important example of the steps that חז"ל took to counteract the theological damage that was caused to Jewish thought by the destruction of the בית המקדש. Initially קדיש was recited only after לימוד תורה and in particular after learning

אגדתא. Its purpose was later expanded to include performing קידוש השם after performing a מצוה such as קריאת התורה or פסוקי דזמרה. At the same time it was

included in burials either because ten people had assembled to perform the מצוה of קבורה or because דברי תורה were spoken in honor of the deceased. When the lesson of מעשה ברבי עקיבא spread and the concept of ברא מזכה אבא became popular, the custom grew that an אבל should be the שליח ציבור in order to recite ברכו and קדיש.

The fact that the custom began that a minor should recite the final קדיש even if he was not a mourner in order to train the child to be able to recite קדיש reflects the problem that Judaism faced in educating children before the invention of the printing press. Handwritten manuscripts of religious material including סידורים were not that readily available. In fact, historians tell us that a handwritten סידור was often given as a wedding gift. As a result, Jewish education must have been quite different at that time than it is now. Teachers must have recited material repeatedly to the students until the students could repeat the material on their own. The only way teachers could know if students were learning the material was by having the students recite the material from memory. Hence, the custom to have a minor recite the final קדיש arose so that a minor would learn to recite קדיש.

Tracing the origin of קדיש יתום reveals how חז"ל never hesitated to innovate in reaction to historical events. קדיש was authored to ease the theological issues that arose after the destruction of the בית המקדש. The concept that a child can relieve the punishment of a deceased parent must have grown popular when a large number of Jews began dying על קידוש השם. In reaction to the fact that decedents were leaving behind minors, חז"ל then felt compelled to provide a means by which even a minor could perform some act that would benefit the deceased parent.

That קדיש is now recited by all mourners does not take away from the significance of reciting it. It reminds us of the pain we feel each day and that the רבנו של עולם feels each day because of the destruction of the בית המקדש. But perhaps חז"ל meant to teach us one additional thought. When the time comes that the רבנו של עולם has to extinguish a life, He too shares in the sadness that the family feels.

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UNDERSTANDING KADDISH YASOM

A Tshuva by Rabbi Shlomo Chaim Hachohen Aviner

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Question: I was commemorating a *yahrzeit* and was leading the services as *schaliach tzibbur*. When the time came to say the Mourner's Kaddish, I heard a guest start to say Kaddish in a loud voice. What conduct should I have followed: Attempt to say Kaddish louder than the guest in the hope that my voice would also be heard or should I have remained silent and allowed the guest to recite Kaddish by himself?

Answer: It is important to recite the Mourner's Kaddish. The practice is based on a report in the *gemara* that Rabbi Akiva had a dream in which he saw a man who appeared very disturbed. The man explained to Rabbi Akiva that while alive he had been a great transgressor and had therefore been judged to a sentence in *gehenom*. When Rabbi Akiva awoke, he sought out the son of the man that he had seen in the dream and instructed the son to say Kaddish. As a result, the man in the dream was rescued from *gehenom*.

The deceased are rescued from a negative judgment when their children recite Kaddish because their children are saying a *davar sh'bekedusha*, a holy prayer, in honor of their mother or father, on the day of the *yahrzeit* and during the 12 months after their demise. By doing so, the soul of the departed rises through levels of judgment until they reach *gan eden*.

Nevertheless, despite the importance of reciting Kaddish, there are more important acts that a child can perform. As it is

written in the *Kitzur Schulchan Aruch*: although the recitation of Kaddish and other prayers are important for the departed, those acts are not what is most essential. What is most important is that the child walk in the correct path. When a child follows the correct path, he increases the honor of the departed. As it is written in the *Zohar* quoting from a *pasuk* in *Malachi*, 1, 6: a son should respect his father and as it is written in *Exodus* 20, 6: honor thy mother and father. After each parent departs, should a child believe that he is suddenly absolved from honoring that parent? That is not so. After a parent is deceased, there is an even greater obligation to honor the parent. If the son follows along the sinful path, certainly he dishonors his parent and he certainly embarrasses his family. But if the same son walks along the righteous path and does the correct things, he honors his parent both in front of those in this world and in front of those in the next world who stand in the presence of G-d. G-d will then have pity on the parent and honor the parent by giving the parent a place near G-d's seat of honor.

The Mishneh Breura wrote: If one can be the Schaliach Tzibbur, that is preferable to just reciting Kaddish. Despite this, the Kaddish plays a special role, as it was written in the book Yaish Nochlin: Our sages instituted a practice (saying Kaddish) that they thought every man was capable of performing. They hoped that at a minimum every child would recite Kaddish for his deceased parent because Kaddish was a prayer which was simple to learn (especially when everyone spoke Aramaic). Everyone is familiar with the prayer from the time they were young. The Yaish Nochlin continued: if a person is capable of being the Schaliach Tzibbur, he honors his parent in a greater manner. But the child can take steps on his own to honor his parents in other ways. In particular, studying Torah out of respect for the deceased is seven times more beneficial than being a Schaliach Tzibbur. It hastens the entry of the deceased into gan eden. And if the son has the ability to author new Torah ideas, it is an even greater benefit to the parent.

Therefore in answer to the question, since you were the Schaliach Tzibbur, which was more important than simply reciting Kaddish, you should have allowed the guest to say the Kaddish by himself.

There are however, some congregations, and in particular, congregations that follow the Sephardic tradition, in which all the mourners say Kaddish together, word by word. About this the Gesher Chaim wrote: That is not the practice followed in other congregations, particularly Ashkenazic congregations. Where you find two say Kaddish or when many say Kaddish, one

often gets ahead of the others, and the sound becomes confusing to the point that no one in the congregation can clearly hear the Kaddish. As a result the congregants do not know when to say “y’hai shmai raba...” In such a situation, not only was there no purpose in their reciting Kaddish but the mourners converted what was to be praise of G-d into something derogatory. And the Chasam Sopher made the same point that when the mourners do not read in unison, they destroy the purpose of the Kaddish.

As a result, two mourners should never compete with each other. It is preferable that the mourners divide the reciting of the Kaddishes for each prayer. That was the original custom among Jews as described by the early poskim. So if a guest comes and interferes with the recitation of the Kaddish by the others, it is better that everyone defers to the guest and stops saying the Kaddish or says Kaddish quietly rather than to compete with the guest and to cause confusion. If despite this, you still feel strongly that you should say Kaddish, then say Kaddish quietly while the Schaliach Tzibbur says Kaddish, repeating word for word. When the congregation answers amen to the Schaliach Tzibbur they will also be answering amen to you. That is the way we practice in our Beis Medresh, Hasidim Bet El, that the Schaliach Tzibbur says the Mourner’s Kaddish as representative of the mourners. If someone attempts to recite Kaddish with him, he would cause confusion. So the Rabbis there ruled that anyone who needs to say Kaddish should follow word for word silently along with the Schaliach Tzibbur.