

קדיש

Kaddish

1. Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot 21b*

יכן אמר רב אדא בר אהבה: מנין שאין היחיד אומר "קדושה" — שנאמר: "ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל", כל דבר שבקדושה לא יהא פחות מעשרה.

Similarly, Rav Adda bar Ahava stated: From where is it derived that an individual may not recite *kedusha* alone? As it is stated: "And I shall be sanctified among the children of Israel" (Leviticus 22:32), any expression of sanctity may not be recited in a quorum of fewer than ten.

2. Anita Diamant, *Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort the Dying, Bury the Dead, & Mourn as a Jew*

Jews who never pray say Kaddish. Atheists say Kaddish...

It is simply impossible to understand the impact or value of saying Kaddish without first doing it. The mystery of Kaddish is revealed every time it is spoken aloud with others. The truth is that the sounds of the words are more important than their definitions. The text is secondary to the emotional experience of its recitation. The meaning only comes clear when given communal voice.

3. Half Kaddish, Siddur

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא (אָמֵן)

בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי-בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךָ מְלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזָמַן קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעַלְמֵי עַלְמֵיָא

יְתַבְרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרַומֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקוּדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא לְעֵלְא מוֹ-כָל- בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחְמָתָא דְאָמִירוֹ בְּעֵלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Enlarged and sanctified be His great name

In this world which He created according to His will. May His majesty be made sovereign in your lifetime and your days and the days of all the House of Israel, quickly and soon, and say: Amen.

May His great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever.

Blessed and praised and extolled and exalted and elevated and glorified and uplifted and lauded be the Holy One's name, blessed be He, beyond every blessing and song and praise and consolation that we say in this world, and say: Amen.

4. Leviticus 19:1-2

וַיְדַבֵּר יְקוֹק אֱלֹהֵי מֹשֶׁה לְאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל-כָּל-עַדְת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי יְקוֹק אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

The Eternal spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them: You shall be holy, for I, the Eternal your God, am holy.”

5. David A. Kunin, “*L’eilla L’eilla (Higher and Higher): The Kaddish as Allusion to Tikkun,*” in *Kaddish (Mesorah Matrix Book 4)*, Ed. David Birnbaum and Martin S. Cohen

Yet the word “Kaddish” also creates an intertextual link to a specific section of Torah, namely Leviticus 17–26, often called the Holiness Code. The Holiness Code contains a wide variety of laws, spanning both the ritual and the secular, which the biblical author states are necessary to create a holy society. The biblical text, however, does not actually define the concept of holiness (k’dushah). Rather, it provides a hint of its meaning, stating: “You shall be holy (k’doshim) for I, the Eternal your God, am holy (kadosh)” (Leviticus 19:2). The verse suggests that holiness is not merely a state of being, but rather is actualized only through action. It suggests that we achieve holiness when we model our lives, to the best of our abilities, after our perception of God’s actions in the world.

6. Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah 14a*

לְהִלָּךְ אַחַר מְדוּתוֹ שֶׁל הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: מָה הוּא מְלַבֵּשׁ עֲרוּמִים, דְּכַתִּיב: “וַיַּעַשׂ ה’ אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כְּתָנוּת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם” — אַף אַתָּה הַלְּבִישׁ עֲרוּמִים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא בִּיקָר חוֹלִים, דְּכַתִּיב: “וַיֵּרָא אֵלָיו ה’ בְּאֵלֵי מִמְרָא” — אַף אַתָּה בִּיקָר חוֹלִים. הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא נִיחָם אֲבָלִים, דְּכַתִּיב: “וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אַבְרָהָם וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹקִים אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ” — אַף אַתָּה נִיחָם אֲבָלִים.

One should follow the attributes of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Just as He clothes the naked, as it is written: “And the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21), so too, should you clothe the naked. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, visits the sick, [as it is written with regard to God’s appearing to Abraham following his circumcision]: “And the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre” (Genesis 18:1), so too, should you visit the sick. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, consoles mourners, as it is written: “And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed Isaac his son” (Genesis 25:11), so too, should you console mourners. Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, buried the dead, as it is written: “And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab” (Deuteronomy 34:6), so too, should you bury the dead.

7. David A. Kunin, “*L’eilla L’eilla (Higher and Higher): The Kaddish as Allusion to Tikkun,*” in *Kaddish*

Each of the behaviors included in this text by which we imitate God are *mitzvot* (commandments) “between one human and another.” They imply that we can most successfully imitate God only when we act together to build a strong and caring community. It is also not coincidental that comforting mourners and the burial of the dead come at the conclusion of this list, as these are communal obligations performed by the community at the time of a mourner’s greatest

vulnerability and need. They are also enacted as people join together to comfort and support each other by reciting and responding to the Kaddish.

8. Rashi, Leviticus 19:2

דבר אל כל עדת בני ישראל. מלמד שנאמרה פְּרָשָׁה זו בְּהַקְהָל מִפְּנֵי שָׂרֵב גּוֹפֵי תוֹרָה תְּלוּיִין בָּהּ (ספרא):

“Speak to the whole Israelite community” — This (the addition of the words כל עדת – the whole community) teaches us that this section was proclaimed in full assembly because most of the fundamental teachings of the Torah are dependent on it (contained in it) (Sifra).

9. R. Kalonymus Kalman Halevi Epstein of Krakow, *Maor Va-Shemesh, Parashat Kedoshim, Leviticus 19:1-2*

What this means is that the topic of this very section—the quest for holiness—must be “in full assembly,” that is, within community. For it is impossible for a person to achieve holiness unless he first joins a community devoted to sacred service. [As Rashi continues,] “because most of the fundamentals of the Torah are dependent on it”—referring to communal prayer and similar activities.... holiness can only be achieved in a community of God-seekers...

...The very basis of sacred service is joining together with virtuous, upright Jews; by this means, learning from their good deeds, one comes to serve God in truth...

10. Ezekiel 38

וְהָיָה י בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בְּיוֹם כּוּא גּוֹג עַל-אַדְמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹאֵם אֲדֹנָי יְיָ יִקְרָא תַעֲלֶה חֲמַתִּי בְּאַפִּי: וּבְקִנְאָתִי בְּאִשׁ-עֵבְרָתִי דְבַרְתִּי אִם-לֹא י בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יִהְיֶה רַעַשׁ גָּדוֹל עַל אֲדָמַת יִשְׂרָאֵל: וְרַעַשׁוּ מִפְּנֵי דְגִי הַיָּם וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וְחַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה וְכָל-הַרְמֵשׁ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאֲדָמָה וְכָל-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה וְנִהְרְסוּ הַהָרִים וְנִפְלוּ הַמְּדַרְגּוֹת וְכָל-חֹמֶה לְאַרְץ תִּפּוֹל: וְקָרָאתִי עָלָיו לְכָל-הָרִי הַרְבִּי חֶרֶב אִישׁ בְּאַחִיו תִּהְיֶה: וְנִשְׁפָּטִי אֹתוֹ בְּדָבָר וּבְכֶסֶם וּבְגֶשֶׁם שׁוֹטֵף וְאֶבְנֵי אֶלְגָבִישׁ אֵשׁ וְגַפְרִית אֶמְטִיר עָלָיו וְעַל-אַגָּפָיו וְעַל-עַמִּים רַבִּים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ: וְהִתְגַּדְּלְתִּי וְהִתְקַדְּשְׁתִּי וְנִודַעְתִּי לְעֵינֵי גוֹיִם רַבִּים וְיָדְעוּ כִּי-אֲנִי יְקִוָּק: {ס}

On that day, when Gog sets foot on the soil of Israel—declares the LORD God—My raging anger shall flare up. For I have decreed in My indignation and in My blazing wrath: On that day, a terrible earthquake shall befall the land of Israel. The fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, all creeping things that move on the ground, and every human being on earth shall quake before Me. Mountains shall be overthrown, cliffs shall topple, and every wall shall crumble to the ground. I will then summon the sword against him throughout My mountains—declares the LORD God—and every man’s sword shall be turned against his brother. I will punish him with pestilence and with bloodshed; and I will pour torrential rain, hailstones, and sulfurous fire upon him and his hordes and the many peoples with him. **Thus will I manifest My greatness and My holiness (v’hitgaddilti v’hitkaddishti)**, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations. And they shall know that I am the LORD.

11. Rav Hai Gaon in Louis Ginzberg, *Ginzei Shechter*, vol.2, p.164

At first [in the Kaddish] one requests from God to hurry His promise, as He promised us through his prophet: “Thus will I manifest My greatness and My holiness, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations” (Ezekiel 38:23). ”

12. Elie Kaunfer, “Mourner’s Kaddish: A New Framing,” in *Kaddish*

What is clear from this context is that God’s name is not, according to the prophet, currently “magnified” or “sanctified.” Rather, God will magnify and sanctify God’s own name—and only at the end of this cataclysmic war with Gog. The Kaddish prayer, then, is not a praise of God’s name as currently great and holy. It is a request for God to hasten the arrival of the end of time and make God’s name holy, which will only be achieved when all nations recognize that God is the Supreme Being...

The prevalent framing of the Kaddish as a praise of God—as opposed to a plea for God to become great...—has a deep impact on the worshippers’ understanding of what the purpose of the prayer is. If the prayer is praise, it may be stoic praise—a declaration of faith—in the face of otherwise difficult emotions. But if the prayer is request, it may resonate with the experience of mourning: of yearning for a different time, a new world.

13. R. Avi Weiss, *Holistic Prayer*, 30-31

Shmeh can homiletically be read as a compound of the words “*Shem Hashem*” – “the Name of the Lord,” the code term for bringing God and God’s system of ethics into the world. The opening words of *Kaddish* – *Yitgadal veyitkadosh Shmeh rabbah*” – can be understood, “May we do our share to magnify and sanctify God’s great name by bringing ethical monotheism into the world.” When the leader of the service recites *Kaddish* and the congregation responds, “Amen,” we declare our intention to partner with God to fulfill this mission. *Kaddish* concludes each section of the service as a refrain, reminding us over and over that prayer is about the assumption of this responsibility. The words of the *Kaddish* are cast in the future tense, indicating that this responsibility continues into the future.

While many people associate prayer with what God does for us, prayer is also a way to access our inherent goodness and increase our personal commitment to God, our people, and humankind. In this way, prayer is multidimensional. As much as we seek God in prayer, God, through prayer, seeks us, encouraging us to partner with Him in redeeming Israel and the world.

Thus, prayer includes aspects of commitment. This is “prayer as responsibility.”

14. Daniel 2:17-20

אָדִין דְּנִיאַל לְבֵיתָהּ אֲזַל וְלִחְנֻנְיָהּ מִיִּשְׂאֵל וְעִזְרָיָהּ חֲבֵרוֹהִי מִלְּתָא הֹדַע: וְרַחֲמִין לְמַבְעָא מִן־קֳדָם אֱלֹהֵי
שְׁמַיָא עַל־רִזָּא דְגָּהּ דֵּי לָא יְהוּבְדוּן דְּנִיאַל וְחֲבֵרוֹהִי עִם־שְׂאֵר חַפְיָמִי כָּבָל: אָדִין לְדְנִיאַל בְּחֻנְיָא
דִּי־לִילְיָא רִזָּא גְלִי אָדִין דְּנִיאַל בְּרַד לְאֱלֹהֵי שְׁמַיָא: עֲנָה דְנִיאַל וְאַמְר לְהוּא שְׁמַיָּה דִּי־אַלְהָא מְבַרַךְ
מִן־עֲלְמָא וְעַד עֲלְמָא דֵּי חֲכְמָתָא וּגְבוּרָתָא דֵּי יְהֵ־הִיא:

Then Daniel went to his house and informed his companions, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, of the matter, that they might implore the God of Heaven for help regarding this mystery, so that Daniel and his colleagues would not be put to death together with the other wise men of Babylon. The mystery was revealed to Daniel in a night vision; then Daniel blessed the God of

Heaven. Daniel spoke up and said: “**Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, for wisdom and power are His.**”

15. Babylonian Talmud, *Brakhot 3a*

תַּנְיָא, אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסֵי: פְּעַם אַחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בְּדֶרֶךְ וְנִכְנַסְתִּי לְחֹרֶבָה אַחַת מִחֹרְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְהִתְפַּלֵּל. בָּא אֵלָיָהּ זְכוּר לְטוֹב וְשָׁמַר לִי עַל הַפֶּתַח, עַד שֶׁסִּימַמְתִּי תְּפִלָּתִי. לְאַחַר שֶׁסִּימַמְתִּי תְּפִלָּתִי אָמַר לִי... בְּשַׁעַת שִׁשְׁרָאֵל נִכְנַסִּין לְבֵיתִי כְּנִסְיוֹת וּלְבֵיתִי מְדַרְשׁוֹת וְעוֹנִין “יְהֵא שְׁמִיָּה הַגָּדוֹל מְבוֹרָךְ,” הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִנְעִנֵעַ רָאשׁוֹ, וְאוֹמֵר: אֲשָׁרֵי הַמְּלָךְ שֶׁמְקַלְסִין אוֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ כֶּה, מַה לוֹ לָאֵב שֶׁהִגְלָה אֶת בְּנָיו, וְאוֹי לָהֶם לְבָנִים שֶׁגָּלוּ מֵעַל שׁוֹלְחַן אֲבֵיהֶם.

It was taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Yosei said: I was once walking along the road when I entered a ruin among the ruins of Jerusalem in order to pray. Elijah, of blessed memory, came and guarded the entrance for me and waited at the entrance until I finished my prayer. When I finished praying, he said to me... When Israel enters synagogues and study halls and responds: “**May His great name be blessed,**” the Holy One, Blessed be He, shakes His head and says: “Happy is the king who is thus praised in his house. How great is the pain of the father who exiled his children, and woe to the children who were exiled from their father’s table!”

16. Elie Kaunfer, “Mourner’s Kaddish: A New Framing,” in *Kaddish*

The source reflects the complex emotions that are embedded in the recitation of the line. This is a line that was associated with the presence of God; reciting it meant that God’s name—the embodiment of God’s immanence—was at hand. Yet it is recited not in the world of the Temple and the High Priest, but rather in a world in which Jerusalem is in ruins. The line has morphed from a reaction to God’s presence to a painful reminder of God’s absence. God is no longer available in this world in the way that God once was.

Significantly, the sufferer in this text is not limited to the “children”—that is, to Israel. Indeed, God is one of the suffering parties, along with Israel. Both experience woe. This is a far cry from the framing of Kaddish as a testimony to faith in a God whose actions cause us to suffer for reasons we can’t understand. It is, rather, a prompt that reminds God of the brokenness of the world. By reciting this line, then, the mourner invites God into the emotional experience of remembering better times and of grief for the current, unredeemed state of the world.

17. Michael Marmor, “The Kaddish as a Speech Act,” *Kaddish*

From its earliest days, the Kaddish has lived on the edge, at the end, on the border. In study and in ritual settings, it has served as a line of demarcation between one state and another. It denotes both conclusion and transition. It may even be the case that this aspect of its function has as much to do with its acceptance as the great signifier of death and collective mourning than any intrinsic liturgical meaning to be adduced from its words. It is my contention that in its grammar and phrasing, the Kaddish reflects this role in liminal spaces...

The Kaddish is meant to flow between singularity and plurality. This interplay is accentuated by the fact that in Jewish law a quorum (*minyan*) is required in order for the individual to recite the Kaddish. Hence the individual and the group are both needed in order for the prayer to be enacted. Even if the words are not understood, a dialogue between the one and many is effected as the Kaddish is recited...

It is quite likely that in its earliest iterations the formula known as the Kaddish was rendered in Aramaic for the sake of maximum accessibility. Over time, as the linguistic landscape shifted, the language of the Kaddish became a symbol of profound otherness and difference. In some readings, as we have seen, this very otherness became part of its power and mystique...

Standing on the border between learning and the end of learning, between one liturgical unit and the next, between the words of the Pentateuch and the words of the prophets, between this world and the world of worlds, this speech-act acknowledges the borderline and seeks to reach out across it.

18. Steven Kepnes, “The Kaddish: How We Name the Blessed Holy One,” *Kaddish*

The Kaddish is said both at moments of liturgical transition (from one part of the service to the next) and by mourners at the end of the service, the Kaddish makes a powerful connection between liturgy and life—suggesting that just as liturgy continues from day to day and from generation to generation, so too will our loved ones find a kind of continuity in their transition to death.

19. James Moshe Jacobson Maisels, “Kaddish as Expansiveness,” *Kaddish*

What the Kaddish allows us and calls on us to do is to widen around our experience. *Yitgaddal*, it tells us: get bigger. Kaddish allows us to become a vessel, to create a vessel, that is wide enough to hold the truth of loss, the truth of helplessness to save a loved one, and the feelings of despair, anger, grief, denial, fear, and bitterness that arise. It does not tell us to “get over” our loss, yet nor does it allow us to get lost in it. Rather it helps us to become wide enough, expansive enough, to hold it all without having to reject any part of our experience and without getting trapped in any one aspect of our experience. Kaddish... lets us know... that we are bigger than the bereavement, that the love is bigger than the horror...

It can be a powerful practice to name things as they are in the presence of a loving community, expanding enough around the shame and embarrassment to admit to the fullness of one’s feeling, struggles, and failures in the presence of others... Of course, to do this requires a certain kind of practice of the minyan. It requires spiritual fellows who are willing to hold that which each person expresses... It requires people who will not run from displays of emotion, confusion, failure, and loss and who will not use shame or embarrassment to tamp down “unseemly” emotional outbursts, but who will rather see their task as allowing each individual to fully hold, express, and expand around their suffering and confusion.

20. David A. Kunin, “*L’eilla L’eilla (Higher and Higher): The Kaddish as Allusion to Tikkun,*” in *Kaddish*

Perhaps it is the community of at least ten required for its recitation, which provides the Kaddish’s true power. As the Kaddish is recited with its communal responses, the community speaks with one voice to the mourners, as if saying: “We are here with you in your time of pain. We are here to provide comfort, and to give you the strength to continue to stand with us and with God, as partners in the creation of God’s kingdom.”

These responses, in this way, are as important as the mourner’s recitation of the prayer itself. They are a reminder that all Jews are part of a single people, and that when one suffers all suffer. They are a reminder that *kol yisrael areivim zeh ba-zeh*, that every Jew bears responsibility for every other Jew. The responses are an affirmation to the mourners that life goes on, that the

communal obligation for *tikkun olam* (that is, the “repair of the world”), expressed in the obligations of mutual responsibility, goes on...

Kaddish, meaning “holy” or “sanctification” in Aramaic, is replete with meaning. Like the comfort provided by the prayer, holiness in the Jewish tradition is not found in isolation at some far-off ashram or hidden temple. Rather, it is most often found within the community. Bringing comfort, thus expressing and recognizing our interconnection with other humans, is one means of creating a holy community.