

Kinder Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Vayishlach

Kaddish

“We have now reached the end of the Korbonos section of the morning tefillos, Avi. What comes next?”

“Kaddish DiRabbanan, Abba.”

“Excellent, Avi!”

“Abba, the *Shliach Tsibbur* (representative of the congregation who leads the prayers) says *Kaddish* so many times during the *tefillos* of the day. We answer ‘amen’ and ‘yeheh shmey rabba ...’ to the various sections of *Kaddish*. I have always wanted to know the meaning and purpose of this prayer to improve my understanding of what is being said, and the *kavannah* of my responses.”

“Very good, Avi. I am prepared to help you. Let us begin with the source of *Kaddish*. The sefer Chayei Adam states that the Anshei Kineses HaGedola (Men of the Great Assembly) decreed that *Kaddish* be said every day. The source is a verse in Parashas Emor, ‘I will be sanctified amongst the Children of Israel’ (Vayikra 22:32). Let us look into the meaning of the words of *Kaddish* to see how it sanctifies Hashem. The first sentence is ‘*Yisgadal vi’yiskadash shmei rabba*’ (may His great Name grow exalted and sanctified). The Tur (Orach Chaim 56) cites the source – a verse in sefer Yechezkel which describes the war of Gog and Magog. In the midst of that final war, the Almighty will reveal Himself, ‘I will be exalted (*vihisgadilti*) and I will be sanctified (*vihiskadishtti*) and I will make Myself known in the eyes of many nations; and they will know that I am Hashem’ (Yechezkel 38:23). After the initial revelation His Name will grow, as the verse states, ‘On that day Hashem will be One and His Name will be One’ (Zechariah 14:9). His Name can only be complete after Amalek is vanquished (in that final war) as the verse states, ‘For the hand is on Hashem’s throne.’¹ When we say the first sentence of *Kaddish* and answer *amen* we are declaring that that great day should come, when Hashem will reveal His greatness to the entire world and destroy Amalek.”

“That is tremendous, Abba.”

“It is indeed, Avi. The *Kaddish* then proceeds to elaborate that the Creator should reign in this world speedily in our lifetimes.”

“Amen.”

“That is precisely the beginning of our response, Avi! ‘*Amen, y’hei shmei rabba mivrorach li’allam u’l’allmei allmaya!*’ (May His great Name be blessed forever and ever). This reply is extremely important.”

“In what way, Abba?”

“Firstly, one of the *dinim* of *Kaddish* is that it must be said in the presence of a

minyan. It is a *davar she’bi’kedusha* (a holy statement). The gemoras (Berachos 21b and Megilla 23b) list *devarim she’bi’kedusha* – *Kaddish*, *kedusha*, *borchu*, and *kriyas HaTorah*, among others. All of them require a *minyan*. This shows their great significance. The *Shliach Tsibbur* recites the *Kaddish*, *kedusha*, or *borchu*, and the congregation responds.”

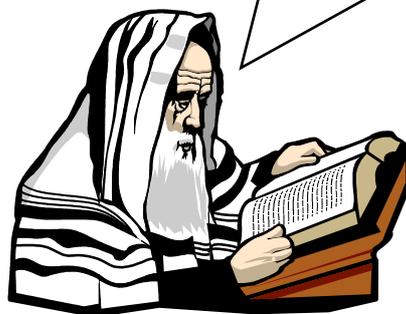
“Abba, what is the difference between the response to *Kaddish* and the other responses?”

“Very good question, Avi. The response of the *Kaddish* – ‘*Amen, y’hei shmei rabba ...*’ is greater than the others in that it has the power to tear up evil decrees. The gemora (Shabbos 119b) relates that Hashem tears up a harsh judgment (of even seventy years!) and changes it to a good ruling for one who answers ‘*Amen, y’hei shmei rabba ...*’ with all of his might (all of his heart, soul, and limbs).”²

“That is phenomenal!”

“It certainly is, Avi. The *Kaddish* continues to declare that the glory which is appropriate for the Name of the Holy One blessed be He is beyond any praise or

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blessing that is uttered in this world. Finally, this holy prayer concludes with two requests for peace to descend from heaven down to us and all of Israel.”

“Amen! I have two more questions, Abba. Why is the *Kaddish* said in Aramaic instead of Hebrew? Also, how many *Kaddishes* do we recite each day?”

“The answer to the first question is two-fold. Firstly, the angels do not understand Aramaic. The *Kaddish* was specifically written in a language that they do not understand so that they cannot be jealous or accusatory of Klal Yisrael when we praise the Almighty. Secondly, *Kaddish* was normally said after a *drasha*. Some of those who attended the *drasha* were not learned and could not understand *Loshon HaKodesh*, therefore the Sages ruled to say *Kaddish* in Aramaic, so that all could understand what was being said. Now we come to your second question, Avi. We

say a minimum of seven *Kaddishes* each day. The Beis Yosef (Orach Chaim 55) quotes the Gaonim who cite the source in the verse ‘Seven times a day I have praised You’ (Tehillim 119:164). The Mishna Breura (55:5) lists them: (1) after *Pesukei DiZimra*, (2) after *Shmoneh Esray*, (3) after *Kedusha Di’Sidra*, (4) after *Al-einu*, (5) after *Ashrei of Mincha*, (6) after *Shmoneh Esray of Mincha*, (7) after the evening *Kriyas Shema* before *Shmoneh Esray*.”

“Thank you, Abba. Do you mind another question?”

“Of course not, Avi! It is my pleasure to answer your questions!”

“Okay, Abba. I noticed that there are four types of *Kaddishes* – *Chetzi Kaddish*, *Kaddish Shalem (Tiskabel)*, *Kaddish Yasom*, and *Kaddish D’rabannan*. What are the rules governing when we say each one?”

“Avi, the Siddur Iyun HaTefillah (p.45) has a concise summary of these rules. *Chetzi Kaddish* is said at a place where we need to break between two sections of *tefillah* or after the completion of an important mitzvah. Besides those places already listed, we say it after *Kriyas HaTorah*. *Kaddish Tiskabel* is said after the completion of each *Shmoneh Esray*. This is understood from the words, ‘*Tiskabel ts’loss’hon u’vavus’hon dichal Beis Yisrael*’ (Accept the prayers and supplications of the entire Family of Israel). *Kaddish Yasom* (for orphans and other mourners) is said after the learning of verses from Tanach. It serves to elevate the *neschama* (soul) of the *niftar* (deceased); therefore it was given to mourners. Leading the congregation in prayers (*Shliach Tsibbur*) is actually a bigger elevation for the *niftar*. Those who are not capable of that can say *Kaddish Yasom*. Finally we come to *Kaddish D’rabannan*, which we say after learning *divrei Aggadata* (from our sages).”

“Abba, you have given me a veritable fountain of information about *Kaddish!*”

“Avi, may you merit to use it to bring greatness to Hashem’s Name.”

Kinderlach . . .

Kaddish is a very special tefillah. Learn the meaning of its Aramaic words and know them. When the Shliach Tsibbur says the Kaddish, pay attention to the words and answer, ‘Amen, y’hei shmei rabba ...’ with all of your koach! What a mitzvah! What nachas for Hashem! What a yeshua (salvation) it will bring you! Make Kaddish your daily encounter with the Almighty and His Holy Name.

¹ Shemos 17:16 – see Rashi’s explanation

² Mishna Breura 56:1