

## Kaddish

The most common prayer in pretty much every denomination of Judaism is the Kaddish prayer, the prayer commemorating the dead, but does it (commemorate the dead)? If one actually takes the time to read the Kaddish closely one quickly realizes that it does nothing of the sort. Its focus is actually the sanctification of God and the coming of the redemption, the Kaddish doesn't mention the dead at all, not even once! There are several different types of Kaddish, but even the Kaddish designated as the mourner's Kaddish doesn't focus on deceased human beings, this is because Kaddish wasn't originally a prayer to commemorate the dead, it was a prayer Rabbis said after learning, which was gradually expanded to other settings. It only became a mourner's prayer in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

I've never quite comprehended the hold the Kaddish prayer has on otherwise secular Jews, but I got an inkling, when I participated in a shiva call (a visit to a mourner's house) to a secular friend's house in Israel. They asked me to translate the words of the Kaddish that they'd just uttered over their relative's grave, and were disproportionately grateful when I elucidated the Aramaic words. I began to understand that people generally recite the Kaddish as a magic mantra without understanding what the words mean. As someone interested in meaning what I say, that is untenable, but I guess for some, the cadences are calming.

One way of tackling this issue is copy-editing theistic sentiments out of the Kaddish, this may be a little difficult since the focus of the prayer, as I said above, is God's sanctification. Even if one manages to do this, are we necessarily left with a memorable prayer with which we can commemorate our deceased loved ones? I suggest that this is one place where personal choice should be exercised, I chose a song that was particularly meaningful to me – the Partizaner Himn (the Partizan Anthem) by Hirsch Glick, but I am sure every person has a piece of poetry, a song or a text that for them evokes remembrance.

I understand, however, that the cadences of the original kaddish resonate with some, and thus have emended it, based on the kaddish uttered at the end of learning a passage of scripture. This Kaddish puts humans and enduring social justice at its center.

## Kaddish

Let the world which constantly renews itself and resuscitates all who live in it, be praised and preserved.

Blessed are those who build Jerusalem and establish righteousness with in it. Blessed are those who eradicate evil from the world. In your life time and in the days of all who dwell in this world, in a time close at hand. And let us say Amen. Let their name be blessed forevermore

Let those who care for their communities be blessed, extolled, and praised, indeed they are to be revered, more than any song or paean we offer in this world.

## הקדיש

יתגדל ויתקדש שמה רבא דעלמא די עתיד לאתחדא וילאחזאה מתוהי, וילאסקא יתהון לחיי.

ברוכים הם דעתידיו למבנה קרתא די ירושלים, וילשכלא מוסר בגוה, ולמעקר רשעים מן ארעה, בתיכון וביומיון ובחיי דכל יתבי עלמא בעגלא ובזמן קריב, ואמרו אמן יהא שמהון מקרד לעלם ולעלמי עלמא. יתברד וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתנשא ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל שמה דעסקין בצרכי ציבורא בריוה הוא וברוכה היא. לעלא מן כל ברכתא ושירתא תשבחתא ונחמתא דאמירו בעלמא. ואמרו אמן.

יהא שלמא רבא מן שמיא ומן ארעה ותיים עלינו ועל כל יתבי עלמא. ואמרו אמן: עושי שלום בעולמם ביאו שלום עלינו ועל כל בני האדם ואמרו אמן: