THE KADDISH

by

JENNIFER ADELE SCHWARTZBERG

(Under the Direction of David S. Williams)

ABSTRACT

This thesis traces the history and significance of a Jewish prayer, the Kaddish. The Kaddish plays several important roles in Jewish liturgy, and by researching its history and role within Judaism I hope to demonstrate its uniqueness and importance. The Kaddish plays the primary role of the memorial prayer for the dead, but it does not mention death or bereavement, warranting examination of its origin as the prayer for the dead, as well as its interaction with Jewish mourning. This thesis researches the linguistics, history and concepts of the Kaddish, as well as detailing the prayer's effect on the Lord's Prayer and its role in the Holocaust.

INDEX WORDS: Kaddish, Lord's Prayer, Holocaust, Jewish liturgy, mourning

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to Magnus Lowell Cotten.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

The Kaddish is a prayer of paradoxes. It is the only Aramaic prayer within a service of Hebrew liturgy. It serves as the prayer for the dead, but does not mention death. There are centuries of commentary that claim that the prayer's line יהא שמה רבה מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא – May His great name be blessed forever and ever- is among most important lines in the liturgy, yet this phrase has no clear Biblical or Talmudic basis. Its history is unclear, and years of research have done little to explain its origin and evolution.

But because of the capacity in which the Kaddish serves it is, for many Jews, the most emotional and spiritual prayer within the prayer service. The Kaddish is not a prayer to G-D, it is a prayer for G-D. It accepts the human condition while acknowledging, and urging others to recognize, the perfection of G-D. Hayim Halevy Donin writes that: "No prayer in all of Jewish liturgy arouses greater emotion than Kaddish. No prayer instills greater reverence. No prayer projects more mystery."[1]

This sentiment is shared by many. David Blumenthal asserts that the Kaddish evokes deep feelings and arouses the congregation to moments of spiritual awareness, and that it has "penetrated into non-religious Jewish culture as a political and cultural statement... [and] thus penetrated to all corners of Jewish civilization."[2] Evelyn Garfiel claims that no prayer is as

[1] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 261.
[2] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 45-6.

widely known among Jews as the Kaddish, and that none remains quite so thoroughly misunderstood.[3]

Apart from the unique emotions which the Kaddish often provokes, it is unusual in more visible ways. Baruch Graubard wrote that the style of the Kaddish is absolutely different from the majority of the synagogue liturgy because it is one of the rare prayers preserved in Aramaic and uses appellations and epithets of G-D not found elsewhere in the liturgy.[4] These linguistic irregularities of the Kaddish only heighten its mystery and distinctiveness.

David de Sola Pool even went so far as to declare that the Kaddish fulfills the bases of Judaism as laid out in Pirke Avot: "Shimon the Tzadik was from the last of the Men of the Great Assembly. He would say: The world stands on three things: Torah, worship, and deeds of kindness."[5] De Sola Pool asserted that the Kaddish has become in itself the three pillars upon which the world stands: "HaTorah as the doxology of the study house, HaAvodah (prayer) as an integral part of the synagogue service and Gemilut Chasadim (deeds of loving-kindness) as the mourner's prayer for the dead."[6]

My own fascination with the Kaddish began during preparations for my Bat Mitzvah. As I learned prayers and studied Hebrew with my Rabbi, I grew enthralled with the liturgy as a whole – these words seemed to carry more weight and meaning than normal language. But it was the Kaddish that seemed most out of reach – the Rabbi explained to me that the Kaddish is not customarily recited by Bar and Bat Mitzvahs as part of their ceremony.

I saw this as a challenge. I explained to the Rabbi my fascination with this prayer – the prayer for the dead that does not speak of death, which sounds so different from all of the

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[3] Garfiel, *Service of the Heart*, 114.
[4] Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer," 82-3.
[5] Pirke Avot: Ethics of the Fathers, 1:2.
[6] De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*, 10.

other prayers, and the one whose mournful melodies still remind me of countless Friday nights in synagogue. The Rabbi agreed to let me recite the Kaddish if I would write a letter that he would read at my Bat Mitzvah, explaining why I wanted to recite the Kaddish. I can say without a doubt that my recitation of the Kaddish during my Bat Mitzvah was the most memorable and meaningful part of that ceremony.

So what is it about the Kaddish that evokes this kind of emotion and makes it such a cornerstone of Jewish prayer? There is not a single answer. The reasons are found in the Kaddish itself – within its language, history, and content. I have prepared this thesis as a survey of the Kaddish - to provide a brief history of the prayer's origins and development, to examine its linguistics, and to research the theological and eschatological content of the prayer. But I also wanted to include some content that shows the importance of the Kaddish as it is used within Judaism – specifically, the ways in which the Kaddish influenced the Lord's Prayer, and the role that this prayer for the dead played during and after the Holocaust.

By examining these aspects of the Kaddish, I hope to produce a comprehensive picture of the importance and uniqueness of this prayer. Its form and usage has changed throughout history, but the Kaddish has always been an integral part of Jewish liturgy. My goal is to present a thorough study of this "prayer of paradoxes" in order to examine the significance of the Kaddish to Judaism as a whole.

## CHAPTER TWO

## THE CONTENT OF THE KADDISH

The opening words of the Kaddish are drawn from Ezekiel 38:23: "I will magnify Myself, sanctify Myself, and make Myself known in the sight of many nations; and they will know that I am the Lord."[7] The Kaddish glorifies and praises G-D's name like many other supplications in Jewish liturgy, but it also takes on an additional level of meaning – it is considered to be the prayer for the dead. There is no mention of death or bereavement in the Kaddish, so the origins of its place and meaning in the liturgy are somewhat of a mystery. Scholars differ in their reasoning to explain why the Kaddish serves its present purpose. I will address four topics in this chapter that address this issue: the connotations of the Kaddish, the theological implications of the Kaddish, the idea of community in the Kaddish, and what is considered to be the most important phrase in the Kaddish. Examining these areas of the Kaddish as interpreted by different scholars will help to make sense of its use as a prayer for the dead.

### FINDING MEANING IN DEATH

Abraham Idelsohn explains that the Kaddish has as its underlying thought the hope of redemption for mankind and the sanctification of G-D's Name throughout the world.[8] This interpretation signifies the paradox of the Kaddish – it does not deal with death or mourning, but suggests an optimistic outlook for times of sadness and bereavement. In Idelsohn's

[7] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 216.
[8] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and its Development*, 86.

opinion, the Kaddish's content was the reason that the prayer became a memorial for the dead. He writes that the ideas of the Kaddish were so close to the hearts of the oppressed Jews in all parts of the world that they gradually began to recite the Kaddish upon occasions of personal or national distress. Whenever a member of a family died, the Kaddish was recited as a source of consolation, since it announces that G-D will redeem and console the whole house of Israel, and in a broader sense, the whole world.[9] In this view, the words of the Kaddish serve as solace to the bereaved, since the prayer speaks of the redemption of Israel.

Baruch Graubard found significance not only in the use of the prayer, but also in its words and message. He wrote that the Kaddish contains an appeal for sanctification of G-D's name which clears a space for sanctity in the secular area. The sanctification creates a holy space, differentiated from the profane, but also endows the profane with vitality.[10] In this view, the Kaddish carries with it the sanctity of G-D's will so the communities of mourners who recite this prayer are imbued with the sanctification that they address to G-D.

The comforting words of Kaddish are essential, because they help to numb the vulnerability and pain that are part of the grieving process. David Blumenthal discusses the pain of death in relation to the Kaddish. "There are some deaths with which we can reconcile ourselves," he writes. Blumenthal reasons that deaths such as an aging parent or a very sick loved one are easier to deal with than the "death of a young parent, the sudden death of a loved one, the unbearable death of a child, and the mass death of our people."[11] It is these severe situations which the Kaddish addresses – when death seems irrational and senseless, the Kaddish is the ultimate Jewish statement of trust in G-D's will, even if we cannot understand it.

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[9] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 86.
[10] Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer,"67.
[11] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections,"40.

Rochelle L. Millen addresses this issue and writes that the Kaddish, in its most abstract sense, serves as a statement of the unknowability and justification of G-D's ways. Reciting the Kaddish becomes a significant component of the bereavement process, which serves as a cathartic yet simultaneously self-affirming exercise.[12] By reciting this prayer, one performs the liberating act of accepting G-D's will, though it is not understandable or logical. But the Kaddish represents a full recognition of divine action, and a relinquishment of blame or anger towards G-D.

**THEOLOGY**

Marvin Luban wrote that the Kaddish addresses the "basic religious problem of man's difficulty in finding G-D's presence" by revealing man's "inability to behold the full presence of G-D in this world". He believed that the recital of the Kaddish is but a response to the realization that for us G-D's name is at present not yet fully sanctified.[13] Even more so, it affirms a belief in G-D at a time when the individual feels most distant from and even abandoned by G-D. Luban cited three avenues of prayer: faith - to believe that G-D's presence already exists, petitional prayer – beseeching G-D's help, and sanctification of G-D's name. The Kaddish obviously fits into the last category, but Luban stated that this prayer also utilizes faith and petitional prayer.[14] The Kaddish is a proclamation of faith while acknowledging suffering –belief in G-D's power even through times of crisis. The reciter prays for relief from worldly troubles and anticipates the day of G-D's establishment of His kingdom on earth. But not only is the Kaddish a prayer to G-D, it is also a prayer for G-D – for the sanctification of His name and the acknowledgement of His power.

[12] Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice*, 117.
[13] Luban, "The Kaddish: Man's Reply to the Problem of Evil,", 202.
[14] Ibid., 211.

Similarly, Hayim Halevy Donin offers an explanation that "the Kaddish is an expression by a bereaved person of his acceptance of the Divine judgment." At a time of loss, there is the potential for one to become bitter toward the Lord and reject Him, but the reciter of the Kaddish chooses instead to rise to praise Him and publicly to affirm belief in the righteousness of G-D and His will.[15] In this same vein, Joel Wolowelksy writes that the Kaddish is a response to death: "Instead of resigning oneself to a sense of meaninglesness that accompanies a confrontation with death, one turns to tradition and its call to action."[16] He quotes Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, who during a eulogy said that "through the Kaddish we hurl defiance at death and its fiendish conspiracy against man."[17] These commentaries, which focus on the fact that the positive and uplifting words of the Kaddish seem out of place as a prayer for the dead, prove that is exactly why it is important that the Kaddish serves as it does. Instead of commemorating the deceased with a somber, mournful prayer, Judaism commands its followers to praise G-D in the most affirming, positive manner possible.

## COMMUNITY

For Abraham Idelsohn, the Kaddish is "a great bulwark which strengthened Judaism in the heart of Jews."[18] The author believes that no matter how far a person may have drifted away from Jewish life, the Kaddish is a link to Judaism that will not be broken.[19] From this point of view, the Kaddish is seen as a common thread for Jews, no matter their level of observance or attitude. Because this prayer was seen as a communal expression of faith, usually recited at the most emotional times, it has come to unify Jewish community as a whole.

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[15] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 222.
[16] Wolowelsky, "Women and Kaddish," 283.
[17] Ibid., 283.
[18] Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy*, 86.
[19] Ibid., 86.

The idea of community is also discussed by Rochelle L. Millen. She reasons that, because the Kaddish has become an established part of the observance of mourning, it has come to serve important psychological functions.[20] Millen continues that the Kaddish "compels the mourner to reaffirm connection with the community through daily prayer precisely when despair and alienation are the most profound."[21] As part of the community of mourners, the reciters of the Kaddish testify to their continuation within the tradition of which the deceased was a part.[22] This emphasis on community often occurs in discussion about the significance of the Kaddish, because the words of consolation within the prayer are echoed literally and figuratively by the company in which Jewish mourners pray.

Baruch Graubard, in his article "The Kaddish Prayer," also remarked on the significance of the Kaddish as a universal theme for the Jewish community. He maintained that Jews find in the Kaddish the historical connection of generations, which creates a relationship between the present and the past. "In the Kaddish," wrote Graubard, "there exists a tie with the deceased who were close to us, and with the martyrs of all times who surround our history with a special aura."[23] In the author's opinion, it is the function of the Kaddish to unite past and present Jewish communities, so that the prayer serves as a hallmark for Judaism as a whole. This connection, Graubard explained, is represented by the fact that there are few Jews who exempt themselves from saying Kaddish for the dead.[24] The author reasoned that this is because the Kaddish is "a prayer of hope," where "the worshipper is united with the dead, with the time of sanctification."[25] But the prayer also emphasizes that sanctification exists not only

[20] Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death*, 117.
[21] Ibid., 117.
[22] Ibid., 117.
[23] Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer,", 71.
[24] Ibid., 71.
[25] Ibid., 71.

in dying, but also in daily life.[26] In this way, the Kaddish has a universal appeal – the reciter forges a connection with past generations, while expressing hope for the future.

Lawrence Hoffman agrees with this important aspect of the Kaddish, and states that the fact that "Jews...choose to remember – the preferred word is to memorialize – these generations by 'saying Kaddish,' testifies to a human desire to see ourselves as the continuers of a heritage that surpasses our own meager immediate life-space."[27] In this view, the connection between generations is not only a backward-looking glance at our ancestors, but also a looking forward to future generations, and in this way, a continuation of our own lives. The tradition of reciting Kaddish acknowledges both past generation and those to come, as it is a prayer of memoriam, but also of hope for the future.

David Blumenthal also writes about the generational aspect of reciting Kaddish. Just as Baruch Graubard wrote about how the prayer forged a connection between past and present Jewish communities, Blumenthal remarks that reciting the Mourner's Kaddish forces one into the presence of ancestors, for it was also their custom to say this prayer. It reconnects us with the generations, in the repetition of the same prayer throughout the generations. Blumenthal writes: "I said the Kaddish for my father, as he said it for his father and mother, and his father said it for his father and mother, and so on back to some remote point in Jewish time."[28] In this view, the physical recitation of the Kaddish is just as important in forging a generational connection as are the words and meaning of the prayer.

In these times of need, the Kaddish serves as consolation from G-D, and also from family and community. The communal recitation of the Kaddish brings needed comfort to mourners. Blumenthal writes that "we need the closeness of family and the presence of

[26] Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer," 71.
[27] Hoffman, *Beyond the Text* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), 75.
[28] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 47.

community. We must belong to something greater than ourselves. We must fit into a context that transcends our loss, especially when it is severe."[29] So in this view, it is not only the consoling words and concepts of the Kaddish that help mourners, but in the practice of reciting the prayer among loved ones, G-D sends peace to those who mourn.

**MAY HIS GREAT NAME BE PRAISED**

The phrase יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא "May His great Name be praised forever and ever" is arguably the most important expression in the Kaddish. This is the heart of the Kaddish – the earliest documented section of the prayer, and, according to Jewish tradition, the most important phrase of the entire prayer. Ismar Elbogen writes that "the nucleus of the Kaddish is the blessing 'May His great name be blessed forever and ever,' in which can be heard clearly the echo of Dan. 2:20; the Hebrew equivalent is found in Ps. 113:2 and in the blessing that was customary in the Temple: ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד 'Blessed be the name of His majestic glory forever.'[30] Indeed, Baruch Graubard stated that in ancient sources the Kaddish is not referred to by name, but is called "May his great name be praised."[31]

All of the Talmudic references to the Kaddish are through this one phrase, to which, according to Elbogen, they attribute great importance. "May His great Name be blessed" is, to the rabbis of the Talmud, the hymn of hymns, Elbogen writes.[32] Joel Wolowelsky agrees with this viewpoint, and adds that it is the declaration of the communal response יהא שמה רבא

[29] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 47.
[30] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History*, 80.
[31] Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer," 65.
[32] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 80.

מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא which is traditionally seen as the main merit of saying Kaddish.[33] The importance of this one phrase is evident through these references, and is considered by scholars to be the earliest and most important section of the Kaddish.

Additionally, David Blumenthal cites three Talmudic sanctions which stress the importance of reciting the central phrase of the Kaddish: "When Israel enters their synagogues and houses of study and responds 'May His great Name be blessed,' the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes His head and says, 'Happy is the King Whose people praise Him so in His house! Woe unto the Father Who has exiled His children and woe unto the children who have been exiled from the table of their Father;' 'He who responds 'May His great Name be blessed' is promised to be one of those admitted to the world-to-come; and He who responds 'May His great Name be blessed' with all his strength will have the heavenly decree against him torn up."[34] According to these Talmudic passages, the reciter of the Kaddish is automatically put into G-D's good graces and is assured a place in the world to come, which further emphasizes the importance of this core phrase of the Kaddish.

Rochelle L. Millen approaches this phrase from the idea of Kiddush HaShem, or sanctification of the Name.[35] Millen explains that this concept has three aspects in Jewish law: It can refer to martyrdom, to ethical perfection beyond the minimum standards set by rabbinic law, or to liturgical formations that emphasize sanctifying G-D's name.[36] The last aspect pertains especially to two prayers: the Kedushah and the Kaddish. The part of the Kaddish that fulfills this requirement of sanctifying G-D's name is ""May G-D's great name be blessed

[33] Wolowelsky, "Women and Kaddish," 285.
[34] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 40.
[35] Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death*, 119.
[36] Ibid., 119.

forever and to all eternity," which is considered Kiddush Hashem.[37] Therefore, the recitation of the Kaddish is not just a mourning ritual or a segment of the prayer service, but also a mitzvah, because of this phrase.

In examining the content of the Kaddish, one does not find anything unusual or extraordinary. It addresses the typical Jewish theme of praising G-D and expressing eschatological wishes, acts as a bridge to unite Jewish communities, and offers consolation to mourners who recite its words. In doing so, it serves a similar purpose to most of Jewish liturgy. But it is when this prayer is viewed within the context Jewish history and liturgy that it becomes remarkable, as I will explain in the following chapters.

[37] Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death*, 119.

# CHAPTER THREE

# THE LINGUISTICS OF THE KADDISH

The language of the Kaddish is a fascinating aspect of the prayer because it is written mostly in Aramaic, which is unusual for Jewish liturgy. The vocabulary and grammatical style of the Kaddish also sets it apart from most Jewish prayers. Additionally, the phrase "May His great Name be Praised" is the source of much rabbinic debate, as are the blessings contained in the Kaddish. In this chapter I will address these issues, as well as a few others, which highlight the uniqueness of the Kaddish, as well as provide more insight into its contextual and historical background.

## HEBREW AND ARAMAIC

The Kaddish is written in a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew – languages which are similar enough to prompt debate over which portions of the prayer are composed of which language. Identifying the language of the Kaddish helps to date it – the scholarly language of Hebrew and the dialectal Aramaic were each used in different capacities in Jewish history. David de Sola Pool's breakdown of the language of the Kaddish, which is accepted by many scholars, shows a pieced together prayer that utilizes the common language of many Jews, while retaining particular passages of Hebrew. De Sola Pools stated that the original paragraph of the Kaddish and its response are composed in Aramaic. It is followed by a chain of Hebrew

phrases (יתברך to יתהלל), then by a composite Aramaic and Hebrew paragraph (יהא שלמא), and the closing verse (עושה שלום) is entirely Hebrew.[38]

One opinion about the choice of language for the Kaddish, voiced by Marvin Luban, is that Aramaic is the "symbol of exile, of...struggle with hostile environments."[39] Aramaic was spoken by Jews in Palestine, Syria, and Babylon, who comprised not only the vast majority of Jews, but that part which handed on and developed the traditions of Jewish learning and study.[40] But the Aramaic vernacular spoken by Jews is very different from the "hebraizing, literary jargon Aramaic of the Targumim" in which the Kaddish was composed, just as the Hebrew of the prayer service is very different from spoken Hebrew.

There are folklore-based explanations for the language of the Kaddish, such as one suggested by David Telsner, which rationalizes that the reason the Kaddish is composed in Aramaic is because it is a great prayer and a fine tribute to the Almighty. Telsner explains "Hence it was instituted in the Aramaic language so that the angels would not understand it and become jealous of us."[41] But scholars view these explanations as anecdotal answers, and look to the historical bases of Hebrew and Aramaic for the answer to this question.

The Aramaic and Hebrew mixture of the Kaddish has many explanations, because this interchange of languages is far from being the only example in Jewish liturgy.[42] David de Sola Pool further explained that we may well assume the Aramaic of the Kaddish to be original because of an explanation given by Zedekiah ben Abraham in the 13th century text *Shibbole Haleket*. Ben Abraham explained that the Kaddish was translated into Aramaic from an

[38] De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*, 10.
[39] Luban, "The Kaddish," 209.
[40] De Sola Pool, "The Kaddish," 11.
[41] Telsner, *The Kaddish*, 36.
[42] De Sola Pool, "The Kaddish," 15.

originally Hebrew text during a time of persecution to disguise the language of prayer from the persecutors of the Jews. De Sola Pool theorized that this occurred under the rule of the Byzantine Empire, specifically in the reign of Emperor Justinian (518-527), because Justinian issued decrees forbidding the recital of the Shema and prohibited all aggadic teaching, which, he reasons, would naturally extend to the Kaddish, the doxology of the Aggada.[43]

The opening phrase of the Kaddish, יתגדל ויתקדש is at first glance a Hebrew hitpael conjugation, but David de Sola Pool argued that this phrase, in the language of the Targum, would be identified as Aramaic.[44] This phrase is written with Hebrew root letters and conjugation, but using an Aramaic vowel pattern.[45] The Hebrew hitpael, a causative reflexive conjugation, which is also used to infer a passive intention, has an identical conjugation in Aramaic.[46] These two words take the Aramaic vowel pattern of a patach rather than a qamatz, use the consonant pattern of both conjugations, and use the consonantal root letters of Hebrew.[47]

One reason for this may be that since parts of this prayer are based upon biblical passages, the original Hebrew root letters have been retained, in order to stay as close as possible to the original text. In the first word, the root גדל (to grow large) is used, instead of the Aramaic equivalent רבה. Therefore, an Aramaic pronunciation of the Hebrew word is an adequate means of assimilating the otherwise unfamiliar word into the Aramaic prayer. The second word, קדש is the root for "holy" in both Hebrew and Aramaic, so there is no difference between translating the word in either language.

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[43] De Sola Pool, "The Kaddish," 20.
[44] Ibid., 29.
[45] Scherman, *The Kaddish Prayer*, 28.
[46] Arnold, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax,* 49.
[47] Johns, *A Short Grammar of Biblical Aramaic,* 38.

**REPETITION**

There is a lot of repetition in the ideas of the Kaddish –בחייכון וביומיון "In your lifetime and during your days", ובזמן קריב "swiftly and soon", and the eight adorations יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתנשא ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל - to be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up, adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped. The reiteration does serve a purpose, in emphasizing the most important lines of the prayer, but these repetitions are even more evident when hearing the words pronounced, which gives the prayer a rhythmic sound.

Other features, such as the repetition of the suffix כוֹן and the prefix יִת also add to this sound. These grammatical constructions are repeated throughout the Kaddish. The prefix יִת is the mark of the hitpael conjugation. This conjugation is most often used to infer a reflexive meaning, but the Kaddish uses the hitpael as a causative conjugation. In this manner of looking at the grammar of the Kaddish, the chain of adorations in this prayer are anticipating a time when all people will pray the Kaddish in order to sanctify G-D's Name.

**MAY HIS GREAT NAME BE PRAISED**

The title of the prayer, which means "sanctification," doesn't appear in any Talmudic literature, but the phrase יהא שמה רבה מברך "May His great name be praised" does.[48] This phrase can be translated literally, but was originally meant to be an appellation for G-D. It uses the Aramaic adjective רבה instead of the Hebrew גדל, such as in the Hebrew phrase הגדל

[48] Luban, "The Kaddish," 199.

שמה, which is a name for G-D used in Jeremiah 44:26.[49] This phrase, in its longer version – יהא שמה רבה מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא -"May His great name be blessed for ever and ever" echoes the sentiment of many Biblical and Talmudic passages, but is not exactly derived from any of them.

The Hebrew text of Psalms 113:2 is identical to this phrase, as it reads "May the Name of the Lord be praised from now forever." But its translation into Aramaic in the Targum does not resemble this phrase in the Kaddish.[50] Similarly, Job 1:21 and Daniel 2:20 contain similar passages whose Aramaic does not parallel this phrase in the Kaddish. Job uses only the first part of the phrase, but its Aramaic is very close to that of the Kaddish. However, the passage in Daniel echoes the same theme, but its Aramaic is structured completely differently.[51]

**AMEN**

The word "Amen" is an integral part of the Kaddish – its utterance is usually prompted by the imperative phrase ואמרו אמן "and now say Amen." The only time where this is not the case is in the first line after the opening phrase. Nosson Scherman theorizes that this is because these first four words of the Kaddish contain the essential message of the prayer – that G-D's Name be sanctified to the ultimate degree.[52] Scherman explains that the response אמן "Amen" is a folk etymological acronym for אל מלך נאמן "the trustworthy King."[53]

Additionally, David de Sola Pool stated that the Hebrew אמן is used in the Kaddish in

[49] De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*, 31.
[50] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 39.
[51] Ibid., 39.
[52] Scherman, *The Kaddish Prayer*, 30.
[53] Ibid., 30.

the same way that it was used in the Deuteronomy, 1 Kings, Nehemiah, Jeremiah, and Numbers – to seal closing doxologies. De Sola Pool wrote that אמן was "used constantly in daily life and in the synagogue service, and great importance was attached to it as a response, since it is equivalent to saying the whole blessing."[54] Scherman takes the idea even further by suggesting that when congregants respond "Amen" after a prayer, not only does the listener agree that G-D alone has the power to answer prayer, but he, the listener, joins the reader in praying that the desired result will be granted.[55]

**TRANSLATION**

One of the difficulties in translating the Kaddish is that the literal translations that are often used do not match the prayer's intention. For example, the first word in the prayer, יתגדל, "May...be magnified" is commonly translated as "May...be exalted." The Hebrew root גדל literally means "to become large," but translating the phrase as such could be interpreted to mean that G-D and His Name have the capacity to become greater, which conflicts with the traditional Jewish belief that G-D is perfect and exemplifies greatness.[56] Similarly, the word יתקדש, "May...be made holy" could be misinterpreted in the same way. Instead of a prayer for G-D and His Name to become holier, it is a prayer for all people to acknowledge the ultimate holiness of G-D.

Another translation issue arises from the use of the trilateral root system found in Hebrew and Aramaic. The trilateral root system uses three letter root words as a base from which to conjugate and expand vocabulary. For example: from the root נשא (to lift), the

[54] De Sola Pool,The Kaddish, 42.
[55] Scherman, *The Kaddish Prayer*, 30.
[56] Ibid., 28.

Hebrew words נשיא (a prince – one who is lifted up), משאה (a cloud – that is lifted up), and משא (a burden – something that is lifted up) are derived. Translations often try to portray in English the subtle implications from the root words of Hebrew and Aramaic. This does not always present an accurate picture of the original text, and can create problems in discrepancies between different translations.

The unusual language structure of the Kaddish is another facet that sets it apart from other prayers in the liturgy. Its elements of repetition and staccato syllables create a unique sound, which sets the Kaddish apart from other prayers in the liturgy. Its vocabulary is similar to other prayers, but different enough to warrant a closer look at why its authors chose the particular terminology that they did. In order to put the composition and development of the Kaddish into context, I will next examine the origins and development of this prayer.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## THE HISTORY OF THE KADDISH

The history of the Kaddish is not clear. There are many different opinions concerning how, when, and why it was written and recited. There is an overall consensus that the Kaddish originated in the post-Talmudic period as a public liturgical text associated with the rabbinical academy and the study of Torah and commentary, for calling down special blessings on leading rabbinic figures.[57] It eventually acquired a function as a communal doxology which could only be recited in the presence of a *minyan* – ten adult Jewish males.[58] I will examine the three most commonly used versions of the Kaddish – the Half Kaddish, the Full Kaddish, and the Mourner's Kaddish.

### ORIGINS

The idea that the Kaddish's roots are in the house of study, not the house of prayer, is supported by the fact that the appellations for G-D usually found in prayer, such as יהוה and אלוהים, do not appear in the Kaddish. Instead, less formal names, such as קדשא בריך הוא (Blessed be He) and שמה (His Name) are used in this prayer.[59] Different verses, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, were added to transform the Kaddish into a prayer that could be used for a

[57] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 38.
[58] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer,* 210.
[59] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 218.

variety of occasions. When rituals began to be standardized and formalized, each version of the Kaddish was appointed a specific occasion and purpose.[60]

With the addition of a variety of alternative verses, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, the Kaddish could take on different forms and these were ideal for use as concluding prayers, as well as for marking intermissions. The formalization of synagogue rites in the late medieval period posed the problem of what to do with the number of prayers that had variant texts that had, apparently, previously existed as valid alternatives. The solution to this problem was to assign each of them a unique function within the liturgy.[61] By adding short phrases onto the base of the original Kaddish text, the prayer was adapted to serve several different purposes.

The earliest and shortest version of the Kaddish is the Half Kaddish (חצי קדיש). It reads as follows[62]:

> May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will. And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen. And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever. May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up, adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He. Over all blessings, songs, and praises and sorrows declared on earth. Now say Amen.[63]

The name Half Kaddish is misleading, as this is the original complete text of the prayer. This prayer actually presents the original full text, since the additional verses in the other forms of

[60] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 210.
[61] Ibid., 210.
[62] All translations in this paper, unless otherwise noted, have been done by the author.
[63] The original Aramaic/Hebrew text of this and other versions of the Kaddish can be found in the appendices.

the Kaddish are all later additions.[64] These later additions (which will be discussed below) adapted the use and specification of different versions of the prayer. The basic form of the original Kaddish was set to mark pauses between sections of the liturgy, to indicate the middle of the prayer service, and it is recited before the Amidah, also known as the Shemoneh Esrei or simply Tefilah (prayer), the central benediction of the liturgy.[65]

The Full Kaddish (קדיש שלם) is recited after the Amidah and usually marks the conclusion of public worship by the reader.[66] It reads as follows:

> May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will. And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen. And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever. May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up, adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He. Over all blessings, songs, praises and sorrows declared on earth. Now say Amen. May the prayers and requests of all of the House of Israel be accepted before their Father in Heaven. Say Amen. May there be great peace from Heaven and life upon us and upon all Israel. Say Amen. May the maker of peace in the high places make peace upon us and upon all Israel. Say Amen.

The three supplications at the end of this prayer are not in the Half Kaddish. The first ("May the prayers...") gives the Full Kaddish a sense of closure that is not found in the Half Kaddish.

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[64] Telsner, *The Kaddish*, 43.
[65] Ibid., 49.
[66] Ibid., 50.

Although the shorter version does include the same supplications that are found in the longer prayer (up to this point), the Half Kaddish does not specifically request that G-D accept the prayers of His petitioners. By including this phrase, the prayer takes on a feeling of finality, which is in accordance with its use as a concluding prayer for worship services.

The Mourner's Kaddish (קדיש יתום) is recited throughout the eleven-month mourning period, and thereafter on Yahrzeit, the anniversary of a death.[67] It reads as follows:

> May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will. And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen. And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever. May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up, adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He. Over all blessings, songs, praises and sorrows declared on earth. Now say Amen. May there be great peace from Heaven and life upon us and upon all Israel. Say Amen. May the maker of peace in the high places make peace upon us and upon all Israel. Say Amen.

The usage of the Kaddish as the mourner's prayer is the latest and least closely linked with the original nature of the prayer.[68] In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss this concept, as well as scholarship concerning the use of this version of the Kaddish as a mourner's prayer.

Scholars differ in their opinions of where the Kaddish is first cited as the mourner's prayer. Ismar Elbogen admits that he does not know when the petitions were composed, but argues that their very simple form of eschatology, their simple wording, and their lack of any

[67] Telsner, *The Kaddish*, 50.
[68] Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer*, 210.

allusion to the destruction of the Temple are signs of their antiquity.[69] David Blumenthal writes that the Kaddish was so well known by the time of the Talmud (third to fifth centuries CE) that only the details of its use and its theological importance are discussed, and that by the middle ages, the regular liturgical recitation of the Kaddish was clearly known and accepted.[70] David de Sola Pool also claimed that the Kaddish was a very early prayer, and that written prayer manuals began to supersede the older system of recitation by heart probably by the 7th century, and in the major early written record of the liturgy, Massecheth Soferim, the Kaddish already holds an assured place in the synagogue service.[71]

However, Hayim Halevy Donin states that the first mention of the custom that the Kaddish was recited at the end of the liturgical service is found in *Or Zarua*, a thirteenth century halakhic work,[72] while Evelyn Garfiel argues that the first specific mention of the Kaddish as a mourner's prayer is found in the Mahzor Vitry, a 13th century compendium of Jewish prayers.[73] The range of opinions on the issue of the Kaddish's date of origin and of inclusion in the prayerbook widely differ. Some scholars base their arguments on grammatical and syntactical linguistic observations, while others research texts to find mention of the Kaddish's phrases. Overall, this scholarship is mostly inconclusive, since it is impossible to prove the exact date of the Kaddish.

**DEVELOPMENT**

The development of the Kaddish into a prayer for the dead is not a clearly traceable path. A 9th century siddur (prayerbook) by Rabbi Amron Gaon included a version of the

[69] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 81.
[70] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 39.
[71] De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*, 10.
[72] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 222.
[73] Garfiel, *Service of the Heart*, 114.

Kaddish for recitation in the cemetery, which is the first prayerbook that used the Kaddish specifically as a prayer for the dead.[74] The Shulhan Arukh, a 16th century book of commentary on Jewish law, also offered an explanation for the usage of the Kaddish as a memorial prayer: "When a son prays and sanctifies G-D's name in public, he redeems his father and mother from Gehinnon."[75] Another suggestion is that in the years following the Crusades, Jews used the Kaddish to voice both personal and communal grief.[76]

Some theorize that it was during the Middle Ages that the Kaddish became a more often used prayer and, in popular practice, a prayer for the dead. This was in part due to the fact that Christian mourning rituals were so much part of the religion of the people around them and that Judaism had no equivalent institution.[77] This speculation, which characterizes the Kaddish as a Jewish substitute for Christian mourning rituals, is not widely held by other scholars, as most see the popularization of the Kaddish as a response to situations within Judaism, not as a response to Christianity.

A different reason for the Kaddish's transition from a scholarly prayer to a prayer for the dead is found in an earlier burial tradition. This custom of honoring a deceased scholar at the close of the mourning period with a scholarly eulogy delivered at the house of mourning was followed by the usual dismissal, the Kaddish.[78] But this caused dissension within the Jewish communities who followed this ritual, because the absence of such a discourse at the end of the mourning period implied that the deceased was wanting in scholarship. In order to alleviate this public embarrassment it was ordained that a discourse be delivered or a religious

[74] Luban, "The Kaddish," 227.
[75] Ibid., 219.
[76] Alexander,"Saying Kaddish," 422.
[77] Garfiel, *Service of the Heart*, 114.
[78] Millgram, *Jewish Worship,* 155.

text studied during the mourning period of every deceased Jew. Eventually, this democratically inspired practice spread to all Jewish communities.[79]

Another theory is that the Kaddish was considered to be appropriate for mourning ceremonies because of the eschatological petition at its beginning; the sanctification of the name of G-D and the coming of G-D's kingdom are intimately connected with resurrection, and so understood as relating to the comforting of mourners.[80] Even though the Kaddish doesn't blatantly speak about death, its words suggest themes of eschatology and resurrection, which is a satisfactory substitution for a prayer which specifically speaks of death.

A legend about Rabbi Akiva, a scholar who lived in the second century C.E., is often cited in discussions of the Kaddish's origins. Hayim Halevy Donin retells this story: Rabbi Akiva once met a man who was carrying a heavy load of wood. The Rabbi asked the man why he was made to do this labor, but the man would not say, and begged Akiva to let him finish his work. The Rabbi again asked him about his situation, and the man admitted that he was a soul condemned to Hell, and the only way for him to be freed was for his young son to say in public יתגדל ויתקדש and the others would answer יהא שמה רבה מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא. So Rabbi Akiva searched for and found the man's child, taught him Torah and prayers, and the boy recited the Kaddish in front of the congregation. The man appeared to Rabbi Akiva in a dream and thanked him by saying, "May it be G-D's will that you rest in peace for you made it possible for me to be at peace."[81]

[79] Millgram, *Jewish Worship,* 155.
[80] Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy*, 82.
[81] Donin, *To Pray as a Jew*, 224.

This story follows the tradition that Jews whose parents are deceased are required to recite the Mourner's Kaddish at all public ceremonies for eleven months.[82] The ideal of the Kaddish hinges on the fact that the children of the deceased recite the prayer in synagogue – because the Kaddish recited by a child does not request a good fate for his father, but demonstrates why the father deserves a good fate: namely, because he taught the son to sanctify G-D before the congregation.[83] The reasons why the mourning period lasts for eleven months vary, but one suggestion is because the mourner needs one month to prepare for the *yahrzeit* (one year anniversary of a death).

Another facet of the Kaddish is that it must be recited by a minyan – a minimum group of ten adult Jewish males. This is not always the current practice, but it has been historically enforced for particular prayers that require this minimum number of participants. These prayers have been designed specifically for community use and, according to Jewish tradition, are to be recited only when a group representing the community is present.[84] These designated prayers deal with the holiness of G-D, and sanctifying G-D's name is a public act. Thus those prayers that proclaim the holiness of G-D, such as the Kaddish, can only be said in the presence of a minyan.[85]

The concept of the all male minyan has created problems, particularly in dealing with the Kaddish. In recent times, Reform and Conservative Judaism have not strictly uphold the gender requirement of the minyan, but it is local rabbis who have the jurisdiction to decide whether women may recite Kaddish. Daughters saying Kaddish for their deceased parents is

[82] Olitzky, *An Encyclopedia of American Synagogue Ritual*, 99.
[83] Alexander, "Saying Kaddish," 424.
[84] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 15.
[85] Ibid., 15.

not a new practice, but it has never been universally accepted.[86] Particularly in the last decade, there have been decisively different responses to this issue.[87] Rochelle Millen compares this debate to the situation several decades ago where traditional Orthodox communities argued whether Bat Mitzvahs should be allowed, "as they are now de rigueur, even within right-wing sects."[88]

The first recorded opinion on this issue is from the late 17th century, written by Rabbi Yair Bachrach, which concerned a man who died, leaving only daughters. The family asked that a special minyan be set up so that the daughters could recite Kaddish for the man, and the lay officials, scholars, and the Rabbi found no problem with this scenario. But Bachrach ultimately denied the plea for a special minyan based on his fear that "such an innovation might weaken allegiance to existing Jewish customs."[89]In a more recent ruling written in 1993, Rabbi Aaron Soloveitchik expressed concern that if Orthodox communities forbade women to recite Kaddish, it may drive congregants to more liberal synagogues that would allow them to recite the prayer. He decided therefore that "it is prohibited to prevent a woman from saying Kaddish."[90]

Disagreements over detail aside, the Kaddish is an old and well-known prayer that is firmly established in the liturgy. But that is not to say there have not been instances of adaptation of the prayer. As Eric Friedland writes, "The Kaddish has been subjected to much tinkering in the past century."[91] He details the work of one of these "tinkerers," Joseph Krauskopf (1858 – 1923), who constructed his own version of the Kaddish, adding biblical

[86] Wolowelsky, "Women and Kaddish", 287.
[87] Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice*, 113.
[88] Ibid., 113.
[89] Wolowelsky, "Women and Kaddish", 284.
[90] Millen, *Women, Birth, and Death in Jewish Law and Practice*, 122.
[91] Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song: Studies in Liberal Jewish Liturgy,* 188.

verses pertaining more directly to the themes of death and immortality.[92] Krauskopf's Kaddish reads as follows:

> Exalted and hallowed be the name of the Lord. Man is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth as a shadow, and continueth not. All are of dust, and all turn to dust again. There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the fettered are free; there they hear not the voice of the oppressor. The small and the great are there. The dust alone returns to dust; the spirit returns to G-D, who gave it. In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death.
>
> May the Lord of the Universe grant plenteous peace, and a goodly reward, and grace and mercy, unto Israel, and unto all who have departed from this life. Amen.
>
> May He who maintains the Harmony of the Universe vouchsafe unto all of us peace for evermore. Amen.[93]

Joseph Krauskopf formed this version of Kaddish by adding sections of Job 14, Ecclesiastes 3:20, Job 3:17-19, Ecclesiastes 12:7, and Proverbs 12:28.[94] He keeps some sections of the original Kaddish while discarding others.

Krauskopf explains, in the Preface to his earliest liturgical work, *The Service Ritual*, his rationale: "The compiler has taken the liberty of omitting parts of the time-honored Kaddish, and of substituting instead such Bible verses as are appropriate to the meaning which the Kaddish has acquired in our days, namely a prayer of consolation. An experience extending over a number of years has proven that appropriate introductions to the Kaddish are a great

[92] Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song,* 188.
[93] Ibid., 182.
[94] Ibid., 182.

comfort to mourners, and for that reason they are incorporated in this ritual."[95] In Krauskopf's view, it was completely appropriate to adapt the Kaddish's language to (what he considered) better fit the current use of the prayer. But he did not receive support from other rabbis or scholars, and he only implemented his version of the Kaddish during his tenure as rabbi at a synagogue in Philadelphia.[96]

By researching the history and development of the Kaddish, one learns of its widespread importance within Judaism's history. But it is not just in the liturgical history that the Kaddish plays an important role, but also within the house of study and within Jewish communities. Because the Kaddish was and is so integrated into many facets of Jewish life, traditions which originated from Judaism may have looked to the Kaddish as an example of Jewish prayer. I will address an example of this scenario in the next chapter.

[95] Krauskopf, *The Service Ritual*, 2.
[96] Friedland, *Were Our Mouths Filled with Song,* 188.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## THE LORD'S PRAYER AND THE KADDISH

Jakob Petuchowski, in his article "A Rabbi Looks at the Lord's Prayer," writes about an interesting way that he introduces his classes to the similarities of the Lord's Prayer to traditional Jewish prayer: "It is in connection with the discussion of...prayer that I will, on occasion, recite the following to my class: Abhinu shebashamayim, Yithqaddash shemekha. Tabho malkuthekha, Ye'aseh retsonekha, Ka-asher bashamayim gam ba-arets, etc. After my recitation, I immediately ask my students: 'Is that prayer part of the liturgy in the temples from which you come?'"[97] Inevitably, he continues, at least a few Jewish students raise their hands, while those conversant in Hebrew chuckle at his play on words. Petuchowski's recitation translates to "Our Father who is in the heavens, may your Name be sanctified. Your kingdom will come, and your actions will be done just as in the heavens and also on the earth."[98]

The similarity in sound between the Kaddish and this translation of the Lord's Prayer into Hebrew is not a coincidence – the two prayers share many concepts, have similar vocabulary, and can be compared in many other ways. This idea is not revolutionary or new – scholars have remarked on the similarities between the prayers for several hundred years, and the idea that Jesus would have known the Kaddish is not surprising. In this chapter, I will compare the content, structure, and language of the Kaddish and the Lord's Prayer in an

[97] Petuchowski, "A Rabbi Looks at the Lord's Prayer," 97.
[98] This is my translation of Petuchowski's Aramaic version of the Lord's Prayer

attempt to show that they stem from the same ideas and are patterned in the same manner.[99] I will also look at scholarship that discusses Jesus' familiarity with the Kaddish. To set the stage for the discussion to follow, here is the text of the Half-Kaddish:

> May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will. And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen. And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever. May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up, adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He. Over all blessings, songs, and praises and sorrows declared on earth. Now say Amen.

Here is the text of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:19-13):

> Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

**CONTENT**

Geza Vermes writes that the Lord's Prayer "follows on in the pattern of the ancient hymn of praise, the Kaddish, which expresses the wish that G-D's Name may be sanctified and his sovereignty established."[100] This theme is clear in both prayers – the basis of each piece of liturgy is the prayer for G-D's kingdom to be established on earth, and that His Name be

[99] Unless otherwise noted, I will be using the Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:19-13)
[100] Vermes, *Jesus in his Jewish Context*, 38.

consecrated. This statement cannot prove anything further about the connection between the Lord's Prayer and the Kaddish, but their similar eschatological stance is affirmed.

Baruch Graubard agreed with this evaluation, and writes that both the Kaddish and the Lord's Prayer "spring from the same source," and so the "essence" of both prayers is the same.[101] They are "at home in one and the same world of belief." While scholars agree that both prayers share a similar theological basis, it is really only the first two sentences of the Lord's Prayer that fit into this schema.

## LANGUAGE

The similarity in the terminology at the very beginning of the Kaddish prayer ("Magnified and sanctified be His great name") and in the Lord's Prayer ("Thy name be hallowed") is striking.[102] The Aramaic linguistics of this comparison will be addressed later in this chapter, but the English similarities are obvious, as both the Kaddish and the Lord's Prayer open with very similar petitions.

Jakob Petuchowski reasons that it follows quite logically that, in both prayers, the petition for the coming of G-D's kingdom is placed immediately after. G-D's kingdom will be established on earth, once G-D's holiness is perceived by all his human children, and once those human children will endeavor to live their lives in accordance with G-D's will.[103] This idea is expanded upon in the Kaddish, but not in the Lord's Prayer. The Kaddish goes on to raise

[101] Graubard, "The Kaddish Prayer," 62.
[102] Petuchowski, "A Rabbi Looks at the Lord's Prayer," *Notes from New Visions*, 106.
[103] Ibid., 106.

G-D's Name "above all blessings," and so on, but the same idea does not continue in the Lord's Prayer. One logical explanation for this is that the Lord's Prayer is shorter, and so it does not devote the same space to this idea as does the Kaddish.

Kenneth W. Stevenson also comments on the similarities between the language of the two prayers, writing that the parallels with the first part of the Lord's Prayer - the name, the kingdom, the will - are obvious.[104] Stevenson adds that these parallels are "more than linguistic, for they penetrate into the lifeblood of the Lord's Prayer and demonstrate its Jewish setting in a tradition inspired by certain norms but allowed to develop according to different needs and circumstances."[105] Stevenson's theory is interesting, and would answer the issue raised in the previous paragraph – that the Lord's Prayer is an adaptation of the Kaddish which pays homage to its source, but has been modified to deal with current issues.

Anton Vögtle, in his chapter "The Lord's Prayer: A Prayer for Jews and Christians?" theorized that Jesus has purposefully placed the main concerns of the Kaddish prayer emphatically at the beginning of his instruction for prayer by means of his significantly formulated petitions.[106] Vögtle recognized the same thematic similarities as Petuchowski and Stevenson, and connects the two prayers through this correspondence. In this way, there is an immediate connection between the two prayers, although the later formulation of the Lord's Prayer then discusses different issues.

## STRUCTURE

James H. Charlesworth writes on the similarity of structure between the Kaddish and the Lord's Prayer, stating that "it is sane to recall that one of the most beautiful Jewish models

[104] Stevenson, *The Lord's Prayer: A Text in Tradition*, 26.
[105] Ibid., 26.
[106] Vögtle, ""The Lord's Prayer: A Prayer for Jews and Christians?" 102.

for prayer was composed by Jesus of Nazareth, and that 'the Lord's Prayer' (Matthew 6:9-13, and Luke 11:1-4) displays all of the characteristics of Jewish private prayer."[107] Charlesworth acknowledges that the Lord's Prayer is modeled after Jewish concepts and is frequently similar to the Kaddish. He references Joseph Heinemann's article "The Background of Jesus' Prayer," in which the author compared the style and language of the Lord's Prayer to its Jewish predecessors.[108]

In this article, Heinemann stated that "There can be no doubt that the prayer of Jesus in Matthew 6:9 displays all of the characteristics of Jewish private prayer: it opens with an address employing one of the epithets used frequently in private petitions; it addresses G-D in the second person; its style is simple; it is quite brief, as are its component sentences; it lacks the form of the 'liturgical benediction.'"[109] All of these characteristics of Jewish prayer are very noticeable in the Lord's Prayer, and Heinemann made a very strong case for the Kaddish to be its direct precursor.

Heinemann continued that Jesus' prayer appears to have been modeled upon the pattern employed in the set synagogue prayers and the actual wording of the preamble may have been inspired by the Kaddish.[110] It is not certain if, by the time of Jesus, the Kaddish was included in the synagogue prayers, but it is definitely plausible that Jesus would have been exposed to earlier versions of the prayer. I will discuss this issue further in the next section of this chapter.

[107] Charlesworth, "A Prolegomena to a New Study," 285.
[108] Heinemann, "The Background of Jesus' Prayer," 88.
[109] Ibid., 88.
[110] Ibid., 86.

David de Sola Pool examined the similarities between the two prayers by looking at the Catechismus Romanus issued by the Council of Trent, which understands the first half of the Paternoster thus[111]:

Hallowed be They Name}

Thy Kingdom come} as in heaven so on earth

Thy Will be done}

De Sola Pool stated that "without a doubt, the Kaddish must be construed similarly according to the predominant thought and not strictly according to the order of the words[112]:

"eternity" בעלמא {יתגדל ויתקדש שמיה רבא

(both heaven and earth) May His great Name be magnified and made holy"

{וימליך מלכותיה

"May he establish His kingdom"

By comparing these two diagrams, the shared pattern of thought is made evident – the ideas of sanctifying G-D's name and establishing His kingdom on earth as in heaven are explicitly stated in both prayers. But de Sola Pool could have drawn an even more convincing parallel if, in his diagram of the Kaddish, he would have included the phrase די ברא כרעותה

"Which He created in His will," which could have strengthened his comparison of the two prayers even more. The mention of G-D's will in the Lord's Prayer could have been matched by this phrase with the same thought in the Kaddish.

[111] De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*, 27.
[112] Ibid., 27.

## JESUS AND THE KADDISH

Evelyn Garfiel states that something of the Kaddish is probably familiar to many people through the Pater Noster (Our Father). She recognizes that both the phrasing and the order of ideas closely resemble the first sentences of the Kaddish."[113] Garfiel recognizes the fact that the historical connection between the Kaddish and the Lord's Prayer has not been a focus in Christianity, although Christians would certainly find the ideas in the Kaddish to be familiar. In this light, other scholars who study the Kaddish in relation to Jesus' ideas shed more light on the connection between these two prayers.

In another article by James H. Charlesworth, he states that "The Lucan 'Father,' the Matthean 'our Father who art in heaven,' and other forms, like 'our Father' are found in Jewish texts antedating the Mishnah. These were prayer formulae of Jesus' Jewish contemporaries.[114] This concept of referring to G-D as Father or our Father is traditionally linked, according to Charlesworth, to Rabbi Akiva, who "allegedly stated that Israel is made clean solely by the merciful actions of 'your Father in heaven.'"[115] The Mishnah also carries a reference to this type of address, in tractate Sota which asks, "On whom can we depend? Only on our Father in heaven."[116] So this idea of addressing G-D in this way was clearly established by Jesus' predecessors, pointing strongly to the theory that Jesus purposefully constructed this prayer after the Jewish style to which he was accustomed.

David de Sola Pool, in his work *The Kaddish*, also touched upon the similarities between these two prayers. He wrote that he hoped to contribute towards a fuller appreciation of the New Testament, by showing from a fresh point of view its Jewish background and framework,

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[113] Garfiel, *Service of the Heart,* 75.
[114] Charlesworth, "A Caveat on Textual Transmission," 6.
[115] Ibid., 6.
[116] Ibid., 6.

the Jewish coloring of much of its most characteristic phraseology, and especially by a consideration of the form and origin of the Paternoster, the twin sister of the Kaddish.[117] And because the author drew these comparisons, he argued that the Paternoster implies that a Kaddish-like prayer was in existence at the period of the rise of Christianity. From this, de Sola Pool concluded that "the Kaddish of the Aggada is based directly on an old formula that goes back into pre-Christian times."[118]

Edward Ullendorff, in his article "Some Notes on the Relationship of the Paternoster to the Qaddish," states that "The fact that the Lord's Prayer is dependent on the Qaddish (and not the other way around) is clearly shown in early references embodied in the Hebrew Bible."[119] The author, later in this article, furnishes these "early references" in order to compare them with similar phrases from the Kaddish.

I will examine two of the biblical passages that Ullendorff compares with the Kaddish here.[120] He cites similarities between the text of Ezekiel 38:23 and the Kaddish – this likeness is quite obvious, and has been commented on previously. The first part of Ezekiel 38:23 reads: והתגדלתי והתקדשתי "I will magnify Myself and sanctify Myself." This passage corresponds to the first two words of the Kaddish: יתגדל ויתקדש "May…be magnified and sanctified." The similarities in vocabulary are obvious – both the opening lines of the Kaddish and this passage from Ezekiel use the verbs גדל and קדש, and both use the hitpael construction. The construction of the phrases is slightly different, because when G-D speaks in Ezekiel, he directs these verbs back at Himself, through the use of the reflexive verb and pronominal suffix.

[117] De Sola Pool, *The Kaddish*, VIII.
[118] Ibid., 21.
[119] Ullendorff, "Some Notes on the Relationship," 122.
[120] Ibid., 122-123.

In the Kaddish, the same conjugation is used, but with a difference in the verb prefix (י instead of the customary ה) and suffix (Ezekiel uses the reflexive תי suffix, while the Kaddish omits one). There is also a slight difference in the meaning. The Kaddish specifically refers to the magnification and sanctification of G-D's Name, while the passage in Ezekiel has G-D refer to the magnification and sanctification of Himself. This discrepancy really does not pose a problem, because it is common in Jewish liturgy for the concept of "G-D's Name" to represent G-D Himself as a whole.

A second example that Ullendorff gives is Psalm 113:2, which, he states, is the most persuasive example between a Biblical citation and the Kaddish. He writes that it is "almost the literal equivalent of the congregation's eulogy in response to the introductory passage of the Kaddish."[121] The text of Psalm 113:2 reads: יהי שם יהוה מברך מעתה ועד־עולם "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore." This phrase corresponds to the Kaddish's יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא "May His great Name be blessed forever and ever." The similarity of vocabulary is striking, although there are differences because of the variations between Hebrew and Aramaic. The verse from Psalms specifically mentions "the name of the Lord", while the Kaddish discusses "His great Name." But the Hebrew/Aramaic word choice is virtually identical in the first half of these phrases. The second half also shares similar characteristics – the root עלם is used in both, and the English translations are nearly indistinguishable.

[121] Ullendorff, "Some Notes on the Relationship," 123.

Ullendorff next states that the Greek text of Matthew 6:9-10 gives us no direct clue to an underlying Aramaic version; and it is, therefore, graphically more convenient to present here the literal English translation:[122]

| | |
|---|---|
| Thy name be hallowed | יתקדש שמה רבא |
| Thy will be done | כרעותה |
| Thy kingdom come | וימליך מלכותה |
| On earth as in heaven | בשמיא and מן שמיא and במרומיו |

This Aramaic translation of the first half of the Lord's Prayer is nearly identical to the Kaddish. Both in vocabulary and structure, the similarities between Ullendorff's recreation of an Aramaic Lord's Prayer and the Kaddish are remarkable.

While it is impossible to prove any kind of connection between the Lord's Prayer and the Kaddish, looking at their similarities and differences aids the study of each. There are unmistakable similarities in the themes of both prayers, as well as linguistic and structural parallels. Many scholars believe that Jesus was familiar with early versions of the Kaddish, and incorporated some aspects of Jewish prayer into his formulation of the Lord's Prayer. From this historical viewpoint, the Kaddish can be seen as a precursor of the Lord's Prayer, and the Paternoster can be viewed as a later adaptation of the Kaddish.

[122] Ibid., 123.

## CHAPTER SIX

## THE HOLOCAUST AND THE KADDISH

In the world of post-Holocaust Judaism, the Kaddish takes on an entirely new meaning. In the same way that Jews during and after the Crusades used the Kaddish to voice their personal and communal anguish, the Kaddish now represents an idea much greater than individual grief. David Blumenthal asks, "How does one recite Kaddish for 6,000,000 people? How can one comfort another for the Shoah, and how can one be comforted?"[123]

In this chapter I will examine the impact of the Holocaust on the Kaddish, and explore the role that the Kaddish played within the Holocaust (this chapter's use of the word Holocaust refers particularly to the experiences of those Jews who were deported to death camps). I will address four areas in which the Holocaust and the Kaddish interact: Kaddish as an experience, Kaddish as a memoriam, Kaddish and theology, and Kaddish as a new prayer. I will examine examples in which Jews in concentration camps and ghettoes recite Kaddish for themselves and improvise new methods of mourning in times when traditional Jewish mourning rituals cannot be observed. The section on Kaddish as a memoriam will analyze the article "Witnessing as Shivah" by Rachel Leah Jablon, which theorizes that literature written by and about Holocaust victims can fulfill Jewish mourning requirements. I will discuss how the theological implications of the Kaddish and the Holocaust create conflicts, and how rabbis and scholars address these issues. Lastly, I will address the idea of Kaddish as a new prayer by

[123] Blumenthal, "Observations and Reflections," 49.

examining Yom HaShoah services and variations on the Kaddish that specifically refer to the Holocaust, as well as the fact that the Kaddish stands as the main prayer for specifically memorializing Holocaust victims, and the implications of this.

## The Kaddish as Experience

The process of dying, for many Jews during the Holocaust, was not a simple or quick ordeal. Many of them knew their fate long before they suffered it, and so they were forced to deal with death's ramifications during the last part of their life. This burden of knowledge manifested itself in different ways, such as suicide, rebellion, or loss of sanity. But the realization of impending death forced Jews in this situation to think of death and its implications in a way they never had before, which resulted in new forms of mourning and dealing with death and remembrance.

In this situation, where normal circumstances and tradition are nonexistent, Jews found other ways to cope with the knowledge of their impending death and the fact that their death would not be properly mourned. Death and mourning rituals are integral to Judaism, and the Jews who died during the Holocaust were not granted the proper ceremonies and burial that Judaism requires. And because an important facet of Jewish mourning requires family members to recite Kaddish for the deceased, new methods were required to fulfill this obligation, in a situation where many Jews lost their entire families.

One example of these new tactics was for Jews to say Kaddish for themselves. An example of this is in a story told by Leon Wieseltier in his book *Kaddish*, about a Polish rabbi who addressed his parishioners when they came to Treblinka: "Our journey through life is at an end. We have been brought here for destruction, fathers and mothers and their children,

not a soul will remain. And so I say to you: let us say for ourselves the Kaddish that in normal times our sons and our relatives would have said for us."[124] Wieseltier paints an incredible picture of this experience – these Jews are acknowledging and anticipating their deaths, and instead of panicking or being angry with G-D, they accept the inevitability of their fate and begin a traditional mourning ritual for themselves.

The second example comes from Eli Wiesel's *Night*, as the author describes a Rosh Hashanah service held at the Monowitz concentration camp: "That Rosh Hashanah service ended with the Kaddish. Everyone recited the Kaddish over his parents, over his children, over his brothers, and over himself."[125] The fact that the Rosh Hashanah service ended with the Kaddish is not unusual – it often serves as a closing prayer. But Wiesel emphasizes this fact before of the contrast it creates. Rosh Hashanah is a joyous holiday – it celebrates the new year, but also begins a ten day period before Yom Kippur, which is used for personal reflection and atonement. Beginning the new year with Kaddish in a concentration camp is an intense situation – it juxtaposes new beginnings and celebration with death and destruction.

Another passage in *Night* also addresses this issue. As Wiesel travels with other Jews in a railroad car to Auschwitz, a rabbi begins to recite the Kaddish. Others join, until almost everyone in the car is reciting the prayer. Wiesel writes that, "I do not know if that has ever happened before, in the long history of the Jews, that people have ever recited the prayer for the dead for themselves."[126] Wiesel's response to this self-Kaddish portrays the uniqueness of the situation. If the passengers had recited a prayer for help, the situation would have been unremarkable. But it was the fact that these prisoners spoke the Kaddish that drew Wiesel's attention.

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[124] Wieseltier, *Kaddish*, 471.
[125] Wiesel, *Night*, 65.
[126] Ibid., 43.

These passages are exceptional because of their use of the Kaddish as a blessing performed over oneself, which is not the customary use of the prayer. The Kaddish holds such an important place in Jewish mourning rituals that the Jews in both examples were making sure that Kaddish would be said for them at least once. The implications of this action are enormous: the Jews knew they were going to die, everyone they knew was going to die, and so they did what they could to preserve the dignity of their impending death. To say Kaddish is to accept G-D's will, and so the Jews in these two examples did just that – not necessarily accepting death, but accepting the fate that G-D willed for them. And because mourning requires mourners, these people had no choice but to mourn for themselves.

**The Kaddish as Memoriam**

Rachel Leah Jablon, in her article "Witnessing as Shivah," explores the idea that the readers of Holocaust literature (by or about those who experienced and/or survived the Holocaust) become involved in the mourning process through the experiences of the author or subject of the text. She writes that "Holocaust survivors who write their memoirs...need a community of readers to actualize their experiences, much in the same way that mourners need a community to fulfill certain Jewish mourning rituals."[127] This concept of community draws a particular comparison to the Kaddish, which historically requires a *minyan*, or minimum group of ten adult males, in order to be recited.

Because the Jewish tradition of grieving centers around the idea of communal mourning, Jablon's idea of the reader acting as part of the mourning process is especially significant for those who died during the Holocaust. Most of the victims were not mourned, or even buried, according to Jewish traditions, so in this literature there is an opportunity for

[127] Jablon, "Witnessing as Shivah," 309.

closure and comfort for the survivors and families of those who perished. Judaism has a "structure of mourning that assumes a certain practicality of the grieving process… and the rituals offer time and space for mourning so that mourners can come to grips with the losses they experience."[128] But if this prescribed structure of mourning cannot be performed, then this literature offers another avenue to complete these rituals.

Accordingly, Jablon writes that "these works' writers and producers provide a great service to those victims of the Holocaust who cannot witness their experiences, who cannot mourn for their loved ones, who have no one to mourn for them."[129] So even if Holocaust literature is produced by people who did not experience any of the Shoah firsthand, the fact that they are speaking for those who cannot serves as a gesture of respect for those who are mourned.

This idea is also touched upon in Elie Wiesel's *Night*. One of Wiesel's friends in the camp asks Wiesel and the others in his block unit to say Kaddish for him when he realizes that his death is imminent. Of course, Wiesel and the others agree to do so, but they soon forget under the extreme circumstances [of the concentration camp].[130] In this example, the author agrees to fulfill the mourning ritual for his friend, even though he is not required to do so. Under the horrendous situation of life in the camp, Wiesel does not remember to say Kaddish for his dead friend, but in writing *Night*, the friend's memory is sustained, and Wiesel mourns through his writing. And this is not an isolated incident in the book – Wiesel mentions Zalman, a Polish boy who dies during a death march. Wiesel tries to coax Zalman to stay alive, but is unsuccessful, and Wiesel "quickly forgot him."[131] Then there is Wiesel's own father, who dies "with no

[128] Jablon, "Witnessing as Shivah," 306.
[129] Ibid., 320.
[130] Wiesel, *Night*, 65.
[131] Ibid., 82.

prayers at his grave. No candles...lit to his memory."[132] The irony, states Jablon, of these situations is that all of the people who feature in *Night*, "forgotten" by Wiesel or not, are forever memorialized in the text.[133]

Rachel Jablon writes that "witnessing in this way, providing the testimony necessary to document the lives of those who perished, is a form of *kavod ha'met* – respect for the dead. Wiesel upholds this Jewish tradition by narrating his experiences and the experiences of others to a vast community of readers."[134] This is Wiesel's goal in writing about his Holocaust experiences – he states that he is duty-bound to serve as their [Holocaust victims'] emissary, transmitting the history of their disappearance, even if it disturbs, even if it brings pain.[135] Wiesel acknowledges this because there is a danger for Holocaust survivors to fall prey to the silence that consumes their experiences, but Jewish tradition instructs that quite the opposite to acknowledge, respect, and honor the experiences – however horrific – of victims of the Holocaust.[136]

Rachel Leah Jablon also discusses Anne Frank's case, which is different from Elie Wiesel's in that her literature is her own memorial. Even though the author perished in the Holocaust, her writing is published posthumously, and so serves as a remembrance. Jablon writes that "Frank is both a survivor who produces her memoirs and a victim who is unable to tell her own story; she must rely on others to remember her for her, much like her diary serves to memorialize the other victims of the deportation: the rest of her family, the Van Pels family, and Fritz Pfeffer."[137]

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[132] Wiesel, *Night*, 106.
[133] Jablon, "Witnessing as Shivah," 313.
[134] Ibid., 313.
[135] Wiesel, "*Why I Write,*" 908.
[136] Ibid., 907.
[137] Jablon, "Witnessing as Shivah," 314.

By examining these examples of remembrance in literature, Jablon theorizes that "the ability of Holocaust survivors to delve into traumatic experiences by exposing them in literary production is a part of the grieving process."[138] In Wiesel's case, the author is grieving for the people he lost by writing about them, while in Frank's case, Anne's father, by publishing her diary, is grieving for her. Reliving these traumatic experiences can be cathartic, and by mourning now, survivors can make amends for the mourning they were not able to do originally.

Jablon further explains that these subjects "each appear to elaborate on their experiences in relation to their losses and suffering, and to integrate those experiences into an awareness of their identities as influence by the Holocaust. The process of mourning that traditional Judaism prescribes enables mourners to reconstitute their identities after such traumatic experiences."[139] So through this process of grieving, survivors also process their own experiences and incorporate their Holocaust experiences into their identity. By confronting the realities of the Holocaust through this literature, survivors are able to deal with their personal losses, as well as to deal with the loss of others.

## The Theology of the Holocaust

The Holocaust presents a conflict for Jewish theology – the divergence between an omnipotent, omnipresent G-D and the horrors of the Shoah. Holocaust literature often addresses this theme, because it is vital in understanding the mentality of Holocaust survivors and their Judaism. In this section, I will examine several scholars and authors who have written about the struggles of Jewish theology after the Holocaust.

[138] Jablon, "Witnessing as Shivah," 321.
[139] Ibid., 321.

Reuven Hammer addresses the issue of the source of evil. He statess that since there is only one G-D, Judaism cannot divide good and evil and say that only the good comes from G-D and the evil has another source. Ultimately everything comes from G-D. This is the problem that has proven problematical for religious thinkers from the time of the author of Job through the present day, when the Shoah has rendered the concept of G-D as the direct source of all that happens obscene and sacrilegious.[140] This concept brings to light a precedent for this theological debate – the Book of Job. Both the author of Job and post-Holocaust theologians have had to deal with the same issues – G-D as omnipotent and the possibility of G-D as the source of evil.

Hammer continues this by examining the Book of Job and its author's theological viewpoint. He states that "The author of Job does not deny that all comes from G-D, but he does make two very important statements: that one cannot assume that human suffering is a sign of human sin and that understanding the ways of G-D is beyond our human abilities."[141] In this light, G-D is still all-powerful and the evils of the Holocaust are understood as part of a larger universal plan, unable to be comprehended by humans. Although this viewpoint does not alleviate the pain or horrendousness of the Holocaust, it puts G-D and evil into a new balance that is able to reconcile Jewish theological beliefs.

Elie Wiesel discusses the conflict between faith and the horror of reality in his book *Night*. He relates a story about Rosh Hashanah prayers at Auschwitz in 1944: Admist the congregation's sighs and tears, Wiesel heard the leader's voice, powerful yet broken: "All the earth and the Universe are G-D's!" As the words came forth, Wiesel recalls that they seemed to

[140] Hammer, Entering Jewish Prayer, 276.
[141] Ibid., 276.

choke in the speaker's throat, "as though he did not have the strength to find the meaning beneath the words." And as Wiesel heard these prayers, he "rebelled in every fibre."[142]

This struggle to retain faith while enduring horrific circumstances is a major theme of literature written by Holocaust survivors. Wiesel especially addresses these issues, as he describes his struggle to find belief in G-D in Auschwitz. In this passage from *Night*, even the man leading prayers is visibly struggling while reciting Rosh Hashanah prayers – those which express hope for the future, which even further complicates this search for faith. John K. Roth comments on this situation, and states that "evil prompts prayer; evil destroys prayer's credibility."[143] The truth of this statement is evident in Wiesel's situation – the Jews at Auschwitz continued to pray, but struggled to sustain faith in their prayers.

Roth continues to analyze Wiesel's reaction to these prayers, emphasizing that this "prayer-provoked rebellion led Wiesel to protest against G-D, a theme that has characterized his religious life and writing ever since."[144] In this way, Roth analyzes how this rebellion "in every fibre" affects the theology of the Kaddish, and how "each is choking," just as the prayer leader at Auschwitz choked on his words. How can a religious person validate their beliefs at times of violence and horror? Roth discusses three ways in which prayer and the Holocaust interact.

The first struggle is "an Auschwitz prayer in which it is affirmed that 'all the earth and the Universe are G-D's' entails the idea that Auschwitz is part of G-D's domain."[145] The idea of omnipotent, all-powerful G-D forces the conclusion that G-D lets the Holocaust happen; in Roth's words, "Auschwitz could exist because of G-D's will; it could exist in spite of G-D's

[142] Wiesel, *Night*, 64.
[143] Roth, "Deliver us from Evil?" 247.
[144] Ibid., 247.
[145] Ibid., 248.

will."[146] This dilemma, over theological beliefs and the horror of circumstances, cannot be resolved in prayer, because there is no answer. Wiesel's situation at Auschwitz represents this dilemma, and its resolution – to still pray, even though it may be difficult, and to have faith even when you can only just choke out the words.

Next, Roth discusses "protest against G-D – calling G-D to account, insisting that G-D should be *G-D*."[147] And in the absence of a response from G-D, Roth theorizes that "the words G-D and divinity refer to nothing real, at least to nothing more real than human ideas," and that "beneath the words lies G-D's nonexistence."[148] It is important to note that this is not an atheistic viewpoint, but one of a person who does believe in G-D and is struggling with that faith because of their situation. It is all the more important because of faith – if one does not believe in G-D, then the action of men is not condoned by a higher power, it is simply a biological and physiological function. But for the believers, a G-D who would allow the Holocaust to happen is a situation without explanation.

Roth next discusses memory as a third way of analyzing the meanings and implications of prayer. In *Night*, the author writes that "everyone recited the Kaddish, and the praying remembered persons who were deeply loved and sorely missed. Remembering them involved recollecting times and places far removed from Auschwitz."[149] These memories, even with their sad recollection of loved ones, are even more depressing because they highlight the stark contrast between Auschwitz and the prewar world. Even more so than remembering lost loved ones, the repetition and familiarity of prayer dredges up memories of childhood and comfort, which must seem so strange and impossible to the inmates at Auschwitz.

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[146] Roth, "Deliver us from Evil?" 248.
[147] Ibid., 248.
[148] Ibid., 248.
[149] Ibid., 248.

Another example of prayer and theological concepts within Auschwitz is found in Primo Levi's *Survival in Auschwitz*. Levi relates a story about Kuhn, a prisoner who is not chosen during a selection at Auschwitz. After the inmates return to their barrack, Levi describes how Kuhn prays "aloud, with his beret on his head, swaying backwards and forwards violently. Kuhn is thanking G-D because he has not been chosen."[150] Levi expresses disgust with Kuhn for thanking G-D while condemned men are sitting all around them. Levi wonders if Kuhn does not "understand that what has happened today is an abomination, which no propitiatory prayer, no pardon, no expiation by the guilty, which nothing at all in the power of man can ever clean again?"[151] Kuhn's reaction for his not being chosen is to thank G-D, which Levi cannot understand – from his point of view, the fact that G-D would let these atrocities happen in the first place calls Him and those who believe in him into question. If Levi were G-D, he writes, "I would spit at Kuhn's prayer."[152]

Michael Goldberg agrees in part with Levi's reaction. He writes about Jews who have taken up a "Holocaust master story."[153] For these people, Judaism is one long history of victimization, and the Holocaust is the most important event that shaped modern Judaism – Goldberg writes harshly against these people, and condemns their narrow view. He writes that: "For even as they recite their Holocaust-Kaddish, they must scrupulously ignore the one to whom the prayer refers and the hope which it articulates. They must assiduously push into the background the Lord of heaven and earth, being mindful only of a litany of inhuman violence, cruelty, and death."[154] This seems like an unexpected reaction from a rabbi – not to find solace

[150] Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz,* 129-30.
[151] Ibid., 130.
[152] Ibid., 130.
[153] Goldberg, "The Holocaust and Survival," 228.
[154] Ibid., 228.

in G-D and have faith that everything will be alright, but to acknowledge the situation and deal with it on a rational, realistic basis.

But Goldberg's view is not wholly pessimistic one, for he writes that "Jews must come to recite Kaddish once more not as a doleful lament, but as a joyous affirmation, proclaiming the hope of its closing line, 'He who makes peace in his heavens, he will make peace for us and for all Israel.'"[155] In this light, Goldberg insists that the message of the Kaddish and its connection with the Holocaust must be turned into a positive one. The words of the Kaddish should be read in remembrance of loss, but also as hope for the future.

**The Kaddish as a New Prayer**

There are two days on the Jewish calendar for Holocaust remembrance: the 27th of Nisan is Yom HaShoah V'HaGevurah (Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Remembrance Day), and the 10th of Tevet, Yom HaKaddish HaKlali, the General Day of Kaddish. Yom HaShoah V'HaGevurah was created by the Knesset in 1951 to commemorate those who died in the Holocaust and the end of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Yom HaKaddish HaKlali was an existing fast day which commemorated the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE. In 1948, the Israeli rabbinate expanded the emphasis of this day to include a Kaddish especially for those who died in the Holocaust who had no family to say Kaddish for them.[156] The role of the Kaddish is evident in the observance of these holidays, and raises an interesting question about the lack of prayers that specifically address the Holocaust.

There is no prohibition against the creation of new prayers in Jewish liturgy, so the significance of the use of the Kaddish to remember the victims of the Holocaust cannot be

[155] Goldberg, "The Holocaust and Survival," 228.
[156] Lockshin, "The Tenth of Tevet: The General Day of Kaddish."

overlooked. New prayers have been created in order to praise G-D for the creation of Israel, to pray for world peace, and other modern themes, so the creation of a specific remembrance prayer for the victims of the Holocaust is entirely possible. But the usage of the Kaddish in this capacity synthesizes the old and new: the traditional liturgy of Judaism is used to represent and acknowledge a modern event.

Reuven Hammer addresses this issue in his book "Entering Jewish Prayer." He writes that "it is unthinkable that Jewish worship should not reflect the major events of Jewish life in this century: the tragedy of the Holocaust and the triumph of the establishment of Israel." But Hammer does stress that one cannot eliminate the framework and language of prayer in the composition of new liturgy.[157] This idea condones both the creation of new prayer, as long as they follow traditional guidelines, and the use of existing prayers to symbolize modern events. So the Kaddish is a purposeful bridge between old and new, as it follows tradition while reflecting modern Jewish themes.

The Holocaust has changed the Kaddish – its implications, its theology, and its function. These adaptations often manifest themselves in Holocaust-centric versions of the Kaddish, usually within a Yom HaShoah service or a Holocaust remembrance program. One example of the Kaddish as a new prayer is used in a Yom HaShoah service written by Elie Wiesel in his book *Six Days of Destruction*.[158] Wiesel constructs a Kaddish in which the lines of the prayer are interspersed with the names of concentration camps, sites of mass killings, and ghettoes (see Appendix D). This simple addition to the Kaddish adds a new level of meaning, as the words of the prayer are focused on the memory of those who died during the Holocaust. By specifically

[157] Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer*, 299.
[158] Wiesel, *Six Days of Destruction*, 86-7.

recitating the Kaddish to memorialize the victims of the Shoah the prayer is modernized without having to alter its structure.

Another impact of the Holocaust on the Kaddish has been a new interpretation of both within the scope of Judaism. To view the Holocaust as the ultimate triumph of survival through redemption and the Kaddish as an expression of that survival, is to interpret the worst event in Jewish history into a positive light. Michael Goldberg, whose commentary on the Kaddish was previously mentioned, writes that: "Kaddish gives voice to why Jews should survive: They are the hope of the world. They embody such hope. If ever any people had a right to feel the world is a hopeless place, it is surely the Jewish people...If the Jewish people would continue to be the bearer of a master story about redemption – not only theirs, but the world's, not only humanity's, but G-D's – Jews must come to recite Kaddish once more not as a doleful lament, but as a joyous affirmation."[159] In this way, the Kaddish represents both the memory of the Holocaust and absolute faith in G-D's will, retaining the traditional intent of the prayer while including more recent events.

The idea of Kaddish as a "doleful lament" is directly related to its role in the Holocaust. Because there is no prayer that specifically remembers those who died in the Shoah, the Kaddish fills that position. Baruch Graubard, a Jew who hid from the Nazis during World War II, recalled his reunion with friends recently liberated from Auschwitz: "In February 1945, [we] met together, from among the last surviving prisoners from Auschwitz. They wore concentration camp clothes and spoke the Jewish prayer. But when they said the Kaddish I saw millions of dead before me and thought of those who left no trace anywhere, not even in someone's memory. Only in the Kaddish they still exist."[160] This recitation of the Kaddish after

[159] Goldberg, "The Holocaust and Survival," 228.
[160] Graubard, "The Kaddish," 61.

the Shoah was not a praise of G-D or a proclamation of faith – it was solely a way to acknowledge and remember the dead. Graubard admitted that "it has taken [him] a long time to discontinue seeing in the Kaddish nothing but a prayer for the dead," because of this connection with the Holocaust.[161]

The importance of the communal recitation of the Kaddish has been emphasized in post-Holocaust Judaism. Yehuda Amital writes that "the communal Kaddish is the innermost and most authentic expression of the Jewish nation. It demonstrates our faith's attitude towards everything that is bound up with the word 'Holocaust'...by reciting Kaddish as a congregation, the Jewish nation expresses its feelings towards the Holy One in the wake of the Holocaust."[162] In this way, the Kaddish serves as both memoriam and praise, and is able to escape the label of "doleful lament," as it functions as a communal voice to both mourn and praise G-D.

But the most significant way in which the Kaddish and the Holocaust interact is that the Kaddish provides a way for Jews to commemorate the Holocaust and its victims while still professing their belief and faith in G-D. One interfaith Yom HaShoah service includes this commentary on the Kaddish: "This prayer is not a funeral hymn but an affirmation of G-D's everlasting Presence and dominion, praising G-D's existence and creative love. It is in this spirit that we pray the Kaddish to remember the victims of the Holocaust. We also pray for the survivors, whose faith in life enabled them to rebuild in other countries their shattered lives, their destroyed worlds."[163]

The adaptation of mourning rituals to new circumstances is a vital component of Jewish culture. Because the Holocaust was a precedent in so many aspects, it challenged

[161] Graubard, "The Kaddish," 61.
[162] Amital, "A Kaddish for the Martyrs of the Holocaust."
[163] Fisher, "From Death to Hope," 38.

traditional Jewish customs. This forced Jews to rethink the traditional roles of the Kaddish and mourning rituals, and created a different idea of communal bereavement – mourning for the community, not by it. The Kaddish's role shifted yet again, and came to represent remembrance of entire communities and families. But just as this prayer's function has previously changed with historical events, it has once again taken on new symbolism and meaning.

# CHAPTER 7

# CONCLUSION

The Kaddish is unique among Jewish prayers because it is flexible in meaning and in time. It has changed historically and ideologically with Judaism in usage and in its implications, adapting to changes in custom and belief. By examining these facets of the Kaddish – its history, composition, content, and historical interactions – I have attempted to demonstrate its utter uniqueness and significance.

Its importance reaches across the boundaries of normal observance. Jews who do not regularly attend synagogue often go on a relative's yahrzeit (anniversary of death), because the custom of reciting Kaddish at this time is so pervasive and widely observed. Because of this, any Jew, no matter their level of observance or knowledge, knows the Kaddish. As Anita Diamant writes, "Jews who never pray say Kaddish. Atheists say Kaddish."[164] This prayer is so ingrained into the traditions of the religion that it is cemented across the sphere of religious Judaism and becomes a component of cultural Judaism.

This prayer at first appears unremarkable, inseparable from the massive amounts of liturgy. But upon closer inspection, the story of the Kaddish yields a fascinating history. It is not clear or coherent, but shows the centuries-old bond that the Kaddish has formed within communities and in the hearts of Jews. This prayer performs the significant task of comforting

[164] Diamant, "Messages of Kaddish," 82.

mourners at their greatest time of need, whether it be the death of a parent or the massacre of a community during the Holocaust.

Anita Diamant wrote that the Kaddish "is more than the sum of its words. First and foremost, it is an experience of the senses."[165] It is more than a summation of words, history, and linguistics, although those components are vital to understanding the importance of this prayer. It exemplifies Jewish tradition not only through its words, but also its role in history and the bonds of unity that it creates. The Kaddish contains within it the essence of Jewish liturgy – community, belief, and hope.

[165] Diamant, "Messages of Kaddish," 82.

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**APPENDIX A**

The Half Kaddish

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ

May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will.

וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן

And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days

וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא

And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא

May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up,

וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁה בְּרִיךְ הוּא

adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He.

לְעֵלָּא מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא

Over all blessings, songs, and praises and sorrows declared on earth.

וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

Now say Amen.

**APPENDIX B**

The Mourner's Kaddish

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ

May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will.

וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן

And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days

וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא

And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא

May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up,

וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁה בְּרִיךְ הוּא

adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He.

לְעֵלָּא מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא

Over all blessings, songs, praises and sorrows declared on earth.

וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

Now say Amen.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

May there be great peace from Heaven and life upon us and upon all Israel. Say Amen.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל

May the maker of peace in the high places make peace upon us and upon all Israel.

וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

Say Amen.

**APPENDIX C**

The Full Kaddish

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעָלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כִרְעוּתֵהּ

May His great name be magnified and made holy (amen) in the eternity which He created in his will.

וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן

And may he establish his kingdom in your lifetime and during your days

וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּעֲגָלָא וּבִזְמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

and in the lifetime of all of the House of Israel, swiftly and soon. Now say Amen.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא

And may His great name be blessed for ever and ever.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאַר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא

May He be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, lifted up,

וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁה בְּרִיךְ הוּא

adorned, raised up on high, and worshipped, Blessed be He.

לְעֵלָּא מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא תֻּשְׁבְּחָתָא וְנֶחֱמָתָא דַּאֲמִירָן בְּעָלְמָא

Over all blessings, songs, praises and sorrows declared on earth.

וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

Now say Amen.

תִּתְקַבַּל צְלוֹתְהוֹן וּבָעוּתְהוֹן דְּכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל

May the prayers and requests of all of the House of Israel be accepted

קֳדָם אֲבוּהוֹן דִי בִשְׁמַיָּא וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

before their Father in Heaven. Say Amen.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

May there be great peace from Heaven and life upon us and upon all Israel. Say Amen.

עֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם בִּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל

May the maker of peace in the high places make peace upon us and upon all Israel.

וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן

Say Amen.

**APPENDIX D**

The Holocaust Kaddish

| | |
|---|---|
| Yit-gadal | יתגדל |
| Lodz | Lodz |
| Ve-yit-kadash | ויתקדש |
| Gurs | Gurs |
| Shmei raba | שמה רבא |
| Warsaw | Warsaw |
| B'alma divra khri'atei | בעלמא די ברא כרעותה |
| Bogdanovka | Bogdanovka |
| Ve-yamlikh mal-khutei | וימליך מלכותה |
| Ravensbruck | Ravensbruck |
| Be-hayei-kohn uve'yomei-khon | בחייכון וביומיון |
| Vilna | Vilna |
| Uve-hayei di-khol beit yisrael | ובחיי דכל בית ישראל |
| Treblinka | Treblinka |
| B-agala u-vizmon kariv | בעגלא ובזמן קריב |
| Chelmno | Chelmno |
| V'imru amen | ואמרו אמן |
| Ye-hei shmei rabo mevo-rach | יהא שמה רבא מברך |
| L'olam ul'olmei olma-ya | לעלם ולעלמי עלמיא |
| Yit-barakh ve-yish-tabah | יתברך וישתבח |
| Belzec | Belzec |
| Ve-yit-pa-ar ve-yitromam | ויתפאר ויתרומם |
| Buchenwald | Buchenwald |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ve-yitnasei ve-yit hador | ויתנשא ויתהדר |
| Sobibor | Sobibor |
| Ve-yit'aleh ve-yit-halal | ויתעלה ויתהלל |
| Maidanek | Maidanek |
| Shmei di-kudsha brikh hu | שמה דקדשא בריך הוא |
| Mauthausen | Mauthausen |
| L'eila | לעלא |
| Babi'yar | Babi'yar |
| Mikol bir-khata ve-shirata | מכל ברכתא ושירתא |
| Bergen-Belsen | Bergen-Belsen |
| Tush-be-hata ve-nehe-mata | תשבחתא ונחמתא |
| Dachau | Dauchau |
| Da-amiran b'alma | דאמירן בעלמא |
| Auschwitz | Auschwitz |
| V'imru amen. | ואמרו אמן |
| Ye-hei shlama rabab min | יהא שלמא רבא מן |
| Shmaya ve-hayim aleinu v'al | שמיא וחיים עלינו ועל |
| Kol yisrael v'imru amen. | כל ישראל ואמרו אמן |
| Oseh shalom bimromav | עשה שלום במרומיו |
| Hu ya'aseh | הוא יעשה |
| Shalom aleinu v'al kol | שלום עלינו ועל כל |
| Yisrael vi'mru amen. | ישראל ואמרו אמן |