



1. The Rabbi Akiva Story, as told at <https://outorah.org/p/4591/>

Rabbi Akiva once saw (what he thought was) a man struggling with a heavy burden on his shoulders and bemoaning his lot in (what Rabbi Akiva thought was) life. Concerned that this might be an overworked slave deserving to be freed, Rabbi Akiva asked the man what his story was. The oppressed laborer replied that he was the soul of a person who committed every conceivable sin and that if he stopped to talk, he'd get in even more trouble.

The punishment of this particular sinner was to gather wood, which was used to burn him every day. Rabbi Akiva asked if there was any way to free this soul and the deceased replied that the only way was if he had a son who would stand in front of the congregation and say "Barchu es Hashem hamevorah" or "Yisgadal v'yiskadash...", after which the congregation would reply, "Baruch Hashem hamevorah l'olam voed" or "Yehei shmei rabbah...", respectively. (These are the prayers of Barchu and Kaddish, in which the leader of the service calls upon the congregation to praise G-d, which they then do.)

Finally, Rabbi Akiva asked the man who had survived him; the spirit replied that his wife had been pregnant when he died. Rabbi Akiva recorded the name of the deceased, the man's wife, and his hometown so that he might investigate the matter.

Hurrying to the man's city, Rabbi Akiva discovered that the deceased was particularly reviled by the townspeople. He had been a corrupt tax collector who took bribes from the rich and oppressed the poor. Among his more notorious deeds, the man had violated a betrothed girl on Yom Kippur! Rabbi Akiva located the widow, who had given birth to a son. So despised was her husband that no one had even circumcised the child. Rabbi Akiva took care of this grievous omission and, when the child was old enough, he taught him Torah and how to daven in shul, including the prayers the man had specified.

As soon as the boy recited the appropriate prayers, his father's soul was relieved of its harsh punishments. The man's spirit re-appeared to Rabbi Akiva in a dream to thank the scholar for saving him from the tortures of Gehinnom.

History

2. Vayikra 22:32, Yechezkel 38:23

...ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל אני ד' מקדשכם:

והתגדלתי והתקדשתי ונודעתי לעיני גוים רבים וידעו כי אני ד':

...And I will be sanctified among the children of Israel; I am Gd, who sanctifies you.

And I will be elevated and I will be sanctified and I will be known before the eyes of many nations, and they will know that I am Gd.

3. Daniel 2:20

ענה דניאל ואמר להוא שמה די אלקא מברך מן עלמא ועד עלמא די חכמתא וגבורתא די לה היא:

Daniel declared and said: Blessed be the name of Gd forever, for wisdom and might are His.

4. Talmud, Berachot 3a

בשעה שישראל נכנסין לבתי כנסיות ולבתי מדרשות ועונין יהא שמייה הגדול מבורך, הקב"ה מנענע ראשו ואומר "אשרי המלך שמקלסין אותו בביתו כך, מה לו לאב שהגלה את בניו, ואוי להם לבנים שגלו מעל שולחן אביהם!"

When Israel gathers in synagogues and study halls and they declare, "May His great Name be blessed," Gd shakes His head and says, "Fortunate is the king who is praised in His house thus; what shall be for the Father who exiled His children, woe for the children who have been exiled from their Father's table!"

5. Tosafot (12th-13th century Western Europe), Commentary to Berachot 3a **ועונין**

מה שאומר ר' העולם לכך אומרים קדיש בלשון ארמית לפי שתפלה נאה ושבח גדול הוא על כן נתקן בלשון תרגום שלא יבינו המלאכים ויהיו מתקנאין בנו, וזה אינו נראה שהרי כמה תפלות יפות שהם בלשון עברית! אלא נראה כדאמרין בסוף סוטה (דף מט.) "אין העולם מתקיים אלא אסדרא דקדושתא ואיהא שמייה רבא דבתר אגדתא," שהיו רגילין לומר קדיש אחר הדרשה ושם היו עמי הארצות ולא היו מבינים כולם לישון הקודש, לכך תקנוהו בלשון תרגום שהיו הכל מבינים שזה היה לשונם.

People say that this is why Kaddish is in Aramaic, because it is a beautiful prayer and great praise, and so it was enacted in Aramaic lest the *malachim* understand and be indignant against us. This does not appear correct, for there are many beautiful prayers in Hebrew! But it appears as per Sotah 49a, "The world endures only for the order of Kedushah and 'May His great Name' after *aggadata*," for they would recite Kaddish after the lecture, and the laity were present and not all of them understood the sacred tongue. Therefore, they enacted it in Aramaic, so that all would understand, for this was their tongue.

6. Rabbi Shlomo ibn Aderet (13th century Spain), Responsa of Rashba 5:54)

ומה שמוסיפין בכל מקום כפי רצונם בין בלשון ארמי בין בלשון הקודש באיזה לשון שלבם חפץ אין הפסד בדבר. גם אלו שמעתיקין עכשיו מעיקר הקדיש מקצתו בלשון הקודש אין חשש בדבר שעתה אין אנו מדברים בלשון ארמי חזרו כל הלשונות אצלנו אחד.

That which they add everywhere as they wish, whether in Aramaic or the sacred tongue in whatever tongue they wish, there is no loss in it. Also those who now copy part of the essential kaddish into the sacred tongue, there is no concern with this, for now we do not speak Aramaic, so all languages have become the same for us.

7. Talmud, Berachot 57a

העונה יהא שמיה רבא מברך מובטח לו שהוא בן העולם הבא.

One who responds "May His great Name be blessed" is guaranteed to be a member of the next world.

8. Talmud, Shabbat 119b

אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי כל העונה אמן יהא שמיה רבא מברך בכל כחו קורעין לו גזר דינו...

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: Anyone who answers "Amen, may His great Name be blessed" with all of his strength, they tear up his decree...

9. Teshuvot haGaonim haChadashot (Emanuel) 35

וצדוק הדין מצוה שחייבין הצבור כדאמרין (מגילה ג:) "מבטלין תלמוד תורה להוצאת המת ולהכנסת כלה," וצריכין לקדש עליה... ואם יש את נפשך לומר למה לא יאמרו קדיש בהכנסת כלה לחופה שהיא מצוה והיא בעשרה, אי אפשר לומר כן, שהרי הצבור אינם באים אלא לכבוד בעלמ' ואינם אומרי' מאומה ועל מה יקדשו?..."

And justifying the verdict is a mitzvah incumbent upon the community, as Megilah 3b says, "We cancel Torah study to bring out the dead and marry off a bride," and one must recite Kaddish for it... And if you wish to say, "Why don't they say Kaddish at a wedding, which is a mitzvah involving ten," one cannot say this, for the community comes only for honour, and they recite no [verses], so on what would be the Kaddish?...

10. Teshuvot haGaonim, Gaonim Kadmonim 118

ולומר קדיש בשורה בין או' צידוק הדין ובין לא או' ציד' הד', יפה הוא, ואין איסור בכך.

Saying Kaddish on the [consolation] line, whether they say the justification of the verdict or not, is good, and there is no transgression in it.

11. Rabbi Yosef Karo (16th century Israel), Beit Yosef Orach Chaim 55

השיב הראב"ד טעם על הקדישים שאומרים בתפלה: אחד אחר פסוקי דזמרה שיש לשם הפסק דפסוקים, וקדיש אחר סיום תפלת שמונה עשרה שהיא מצוה בפני עצמה ואינה דבוקה לאחריה, וקדיש אחר קריאת התורה כי הוא מצוה בפני עצמה...

Raavad explained the Kaddish recitations in prayer: One after *pesukei d'zimra* where there is an interruption of the verses, and Kaddish after the amidah which is its own mitzvah and is not connected with what follows, and Kaddish after the Torah reading, which is its own mitzvah...

12. Rabbi Yisrael Isserlein (15th century Austria), Terumat haDeshen 15

ונראה דסדר קדושה וקדיש שאח"כ מיקרי גמר תפלת י"ה ולכן אין אומר ש"ץ קדיש שלם עד אחר סדר הקדושה ואותו קדיש שלם חוזר אתפלת י"ה שהרי אומר תתקבל...

And it appears that the order of Kedushah [in *uva l'Tzion*], and Kaddish which follows it, are called the conclusion of the amidah, and therefore the leader does not say a Full Kaddish until after the order of Kedushah, and that Full Kaddish refers back to the amidah, as he says "May it be received"...

The Value of Kaddish

13. Rabbi Moshe Sofer (18th-19th century Pressburg), Chatam Sofer 1:Orach Chaim 159

י"ל דעיקור זכייה שמזכה אבותיו איננו באמירה דידיה, כי אם במה שהוא מזכה הציבור שעונים אחריו אמנים טובא ויהא שמיה רבא מברך דנפיש חילי' וברוך ד' המבורך, וע"י שנעשה הוא סרסור לצבור עי"ז מזכה אבותיו.

One could say that the essential merit for his fathers is not in his recitation, but in the way he enables the community who respond many "Amen"s and "May His great Name be blessed," which is of great power, and "Blessed by Gd, who is blessed." Because he becomes an agent for the community, in this way he provides merit for his ancestors.

14. A sage named "Ovadia" whose responsa is cited in Binyamin Zeev 202

הקדיש הזה אינו תפלה שיתפלל הבן על אביו לפני ד' שיעלהו משאול מטה, אלא זכות ומצוה הוא לאב כשאחד מיוצאי חלציו יקדיש ד' הגדול הנכבד והנורא לעיני כל העדה ובסבתו יהיה ד' א' ושמא א' לפני הקהל שיענו אחריו "אמן יהא שמיה רבא". זו היא כפרה גדול' לנפש האב כיון שעצ' מעצמיו ובשר מבשרו הוא גורם היות ד' הגדול והנורא מתקדש שמו ברבים...

This Kaddish is not a prayer of the child for his father before Gd to bring him up from the netherworld, but a merit and mitzvah for the father when one of his progeny sanctifies the great, honoured and awesome Gd before the eyes of the entire community, and because of him Gd is one and His Name is one before the community which responds "Amen, may His great Name." This is a great atonement for the father's soul, since bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh causes the Name of the great and awesome Gd to be sanctified in public...

15. Midrash, Devarim Rabbah 8:2

ומנין שטעונה ברכה לאחריה? א"ר שמואל בר נחמן בשם ר' יונתן שכתוב אחר השירה וזאת הברכה מששנה להן את התורה ואח"כ בירך הרי ברכה לאחריה...

And how do we know it requires a blessing afterward? Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachman said, citing Rabbi Yonatan: After the song, it says, 'And this is the blessing.' After he reviewed for them the Torah, he then blessed. This is the blessing afterward...

Review Questions

- Which biblical passages are sources for the language of Kaddish?
- Why is Kaddish partly in Aramaic?
- What was the original function of Kaddish?
- How does Kaddish provide merit for the deceased?
- What is the common denominator in the different forms of Kaddish?
- Why doesn't Kaddish mention death?