

# Saying Kaddish without a Minyan

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When the Coronavirus evolved there was a discussion regarding saying Kaddish without a minyan. I had done some research on this subject years ago and I am enclosing below a dialogue I had with the Chair of the Talmud Department of Chovevi Torah regarding this issue which is so relevant today.

There isn't that much halachic discourse on Saying Kaddish without a minyan and if the JTS library was open I would check additional sources – but if I recall (did this research about 9 years back) I could not find a single historical event where the Rabbis condoned Kaddish Yachad – either a version of the Kaddish we currently recite or Rav Amrams (9th century Sura, Iraq) Kaddish La'Yachad below.

The Shulcha Aruch (OH Siman 55) and many other sources make it absolutely clear that one doesn't say Kaddish without a quorum of 10 adult males.

A couple of issues are raised in Kaddish Yachad

- Is it Bracha La'vatata?
- Is it a Dvar Sha'bikdash (Gittin 59:B)?

The Nishmas Yisreal mentions in the name of the Maharshag that there is no issue of Bracha L'vatata in reciting Kaddish since there is no mention of G-d's name (but R Amrams kaddish does have G-d's name mentioned frequently).

מרקחים)שכתב שלאחר פטירתו לחיי העוה"ב לאחר לימוד משניות הרגיל)בין מנח"ה מעריב)ואחר שי אמרו קדיש ילמדו עוד משנה לטובת נשמתו ויאמרו אחרי" קדיש, וכן הי' המנהג בבית מדרשו בשעה שלמד משניות עם הציבור בין מנחה מעריב א"ם נזדמן שהי' כמה יארציטע" וכשאני לעצמי חשבתי טעם לחלק דאין איסור במרבה בקדישים דלא דמי כלל להא דאין להרבות בברכות שבברכה למגני יש בה איסור ברכה לבטלה)דלהרמב"ם הוא איסור תורה ולשאר פוסקים הוא איסור דרבנן(, משא"כ באמירת קדיש שאין בה הזכרת שם שמים כלל אם כן לכאורה אין איסור כן ל כך באומר קדיש לבטלה [וכן ראיתי בשו"ת מהרש"ג (ח"ב סי' מ' ד"ה הנה) שאין חשש איסור בר כה לבטלה כשאומר קדיש שלא בעשרה) עיי"ש שמה"ט מיקל בשעה"ד לצרף קטן לאמירת קדיש)גר ידא)לבעל יא"צ(] וממילא י"ל רכל שכן דאין איסור במרבה בקדישים, שו"ר

While the Nishmas Yisrael believes that there is no issue (quoting the Maharshag), he himself seems to indicate that if so, one should be able to say Kaddish without a quorum of ten. This seems to me a minority opinion and the only source that seems to indicate that saying Kaddish wo a quorum is acceptable.

The majority opinion (among others the Bach, Hida (Birkei Yosef), The Taz, Mishnah Berurah, and more indicate that Kaddish is a Davar She'bikdusha and a prayer with this degree of holiness requires a quorum (Megillah 23:2).

My takeaway?

I was recently asked by the women who run the Bikur Cholim at Lenox Hill Hospital about an institution that can be counted to say kaddish for a year— as she is often asked by very ill non-religious patients.

I responded that there is no single reliable one that I know who doesn't bundle these kaddishim together and just recites one general kaddish.

What would be far better is for her or a designated person to do a specific deed in merit of the deceased. Its far more than giving an extra dollar to a beggar.

It's actually taking an hour of your time to do something special for others. You should be defined by what you do for others.

This would be my response to a congregant querying you about saying Kaddish at home without a quorum. We have a rule that we can't derive a halacha from Aggadath – and the basis of Kaddish are all based on Agguda – we derive the idea of a son reciting kaddish from a series of stories.

Ma-ikar Hadin there is no clear Halacha that one needs to recite Kaddish—The Rif, Rosh and others do not mention at all the obligation to say Kaddish –

Ovadia Yosef in Volume 1 page 340 of his 3 volume, Hilchuth Avilas quotes that “the actions of a person count a thousandfold more than just reciting Kaddish”

Abraham Hurwitz a 16th century Rabbi, wrote “let the son keep a particular precept given him by his father, and it shall be of greater worth than the recital of the Kaddish”

It evolved as an ongoing tradition of the Synagogue prayers during the 13th century when it became inextricably linked to loss and mourning.

Another issue regarding Kaddish—

There seems to be two reasons for reciting Kaddish— one to be saved from the ravages of hell and one to be raised to a higher level in Heaven. (This is the reason that many communities say Kaddish all 12 months).

Will reciting Kaddish alone accomplish these two goals?

To add to this – an acknowledgement (such as answering Amen) or a response from a quorum is necessary according to classical commentators – saying Kaddish alone will certainly not effectuate this.

So now to put the shoe on the other foot and to give a philosophical and metaphysical reason to say Kaddish alone:

I call it a “stream of Consciousness” (James Joyce, Ulysses ) that arises when a specific moment in time evokes a deep emotional feeling – it can be music or a comment, or a book or a smell just about anything when suddenly everything stops and one is taken back to a moment in time.

If Kaddish does this for you – if it fundamentally touches the nature of reality – and gives you a deep emotional connection to the person whom you are reciting Kaddish for – then go for it. (I am not in any way whatsoever talking halacha or condoning it.)

It’s a metaphysical reason that should be used sparingly.

Let me conclude with a quote from Joyce from his story “The Dead” where Greta, Gabriel’s wife is reminded of her long ago love by a song she hears and gets color in her cheeks and a gleam in her eyes and Gabriel is suddenly aware that at this moment how insignificant he is. His identity as her husband pales in insignificance and at this point in time is dissolving and dwindling.

This song is her Kaddish.

If the emotional impact of Kaddish is that powerful, then by all means recite it.

“His soul had approached that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead. He was conscious of, but could not apprehend, their wayward and flickering existence. His own identity was fading out into a grey impalpable world: the solid world itself, which these dead had one time reared and lived in, was dissolving and dwindling.”