

3a. Kaddish

Kaddish is the most unique of prayers in a number of ways. It is not directed toward the fulfillment of a particular need of ours; rather, it is aimed at achieving the ultimate objective of the entire Creation—the Revelation of Hashem’s Glory in this world. As such, it is the greatest of all requests, puts all other request into true perspective, and also includes them all (for any lack or problem that we might pray about is simply the result of Hashem’s concealment). Moreover, in this prayer, we remove ourselves from the focus; it is a prayer in which we rise above our personal and specific needs, and focus only on Hashem’s objective (which is ultimately the answer to all our troubles and wants as well). It therefore expresses the greatest closeness between Hashem and us, and causes Him great *nachas*. Let’s elaborate:

We all daven for the Redemption. The Jewish People suffer many troubles, both on the communal front, as well as countless people in their personal lives. And yes, when the redemption comes, things will be better. But that’s just the superficial aspect of it. The true tragedy of the exile, which is actually the root of all the problems, is the fact that Hashem is concealed, and that we are distanced from Him. The world as we know it is not the world in its ideal state. The true state of the world is meant to be a world in which Hashem’s Glory is apparent, obvious to all; and our part in that world is an intimate relationship with Hashem, as His chosen and beloved People. The world as we know it is a world in dysfunction, the defect being that Hashem’s Honor is concealed; all of the other troubles and imperfections stem from that. The only reason we aren’t constantly bothered by that fact is that we were born in this dysfunctional world, and therefore consider it normal.

There are therefore a number of approaches to our prayers for the Redemption. The most superficial is simply praying for the Redemption in order to enjoy the benefits of those times and to be spared the difficulties we suffer today. That is like a child whose father is hospitalized in a faraway land, and the child wants him to come home because he knows he’ll bring him gifts. The deeper level, obviously, is the child who simply longs for the father’s presence and for his relationship with his father; and also simply wants to see his father well due to his love and care for his father. A true lover of Hashem longs to see Hashem’s Honor and Glory reinstated for Hashem’s sake. This is the greatest level of prayer, and brings Hashem the greatest *nachas*, and draws Him closer to us.

In Kaddish, we focus only on the diminished honor of Hashem in this world, and pray for the ultimate Revelation of His Glory. It is the ultimate expression of our “care” for Hashem—not just a focus on our own needs. This, therefore, is one of the most powerful prayers in existence, and arouses Hashem’s love and longing for us in an intense way.

But there’s a problem with all this. It’s hard to “feel for Hashem,” so to speak, when we realize that it’s up to him to reinstate His Glory and solve our problems at the same time. So even if we

care, how can we really feel so distressed about it? Isn't it kind of paradoxical that we're begging Him to bring the Revelation—for His own sake? And let's ask one more question: Can it be that the world exists in a manner that "distresses" Hashem, so to speak, and causes Him "pain"? Here we come to the next level of this discussion.

As we said, Hashem's purpose in creating the world is for His Glory to be all apparent, and for a blissful and intimate relationship with us in this world, in an open way. Yet, the world in its current state is perfect. How so? Before explaining, we'll note that this is actually noted in the Kaddish itself—we say "Let His Great Name become Great and Sanctified... in the world that He created in accordance with His will," signifying that even though we are supplicating that the world reach its ultimate state, its current state, too, is in accordance with His will. It couldn't be otherwise. And as such, it is a perfect world. Now let's explain:

The physical world was created in six days. But that didn't constitute its completion. The world continues to be a work in progress until today. The six days of Creation simply laid down the foundation upon which the next stage could be built. But a most important part of the objective of the Creation was that Man—the purpose of the Creation—be a part of bringing the world to its completion. Therefore, the six days, which culminated with the Creation of Man, was really just an advance to the next stage of Creation. Now, man became the key player in the purpose of the world, and the world awaited the arrival of the man who would "partner" with Hashem in achieving the purpose of the world. This man appeared in the form of Avraham. He was deemed worthy of fathering the Nation who would constitute Hashem's purpose of this world. Therefore, upon his appearance, the Creation went into phase two—preparing the Nation for their role. This began with cultivating the family of Avraham until it developed into a Nation of thousands, and culminated with the Giving of the Torah at Sinai, at which time the Jewish People were indeed charged with their sublime mission—manifesting Hashem's Presence, Oneness and Greatness in this world, and bringing the world to its perfection through the achievements of Man. From there, through the continuation of history, the story of the world was all about our successes and failures in bringing the world closer to its fulfillment, which is, once again, the absolute Revelation of Hashem *through our efforts and actions*. Indeed, everything we do—the tiniest actions—connect to a complex system which Hashem uses, so to speak, to manipulate the Redemption/Revelation, working our successes and failures into the big picture that builds up the completion of the world.

To sum up: The six days set the stage for the implementers of Hashem's plan to be identified and activated; the Giving of the Torah set the plan in motion, and the completion now depends on us fulfilling our role faithfully.

Kaddish pushes for that ultimate existence. At the end of time, we will see the true power of our *Amen Yehei Shmei Rabbah*'s—how they came together to transform the world into its true and ultimate state. This world-creating property of Kaddish manifests in the following way: There are a number of “world-creating” pesukim in the Torah. The first is most obvious—בראשית ברא אלקים את השמים ואת הארץ. This pasuk contains seven words, and twenty eight letters. As above, the next stage of creation was the Giving of the Torah. The Giving of the Torah is prefaced with the pasuk which encapsulates it, stating: וידבר אלקים את כל הדברים האלה לאמר. This pasuk, too, contains seven words, twenty eight letters. This is not by chance—these numbers in fact contain the properties of the words they represent—the number 28 is the gematria of כח—power, and indeed contains the power of changing the world to a new state, as in each of these pesukim.¹ Yehei Shmei Rabbah is the same: יהא שמה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיה — seven words, twenty eight letters.² Ultimately, we will see how these words were the catalyst of a new world, just that this time, they were uttered by us.

This idea is so stupendous that it seems too presumptuous to even express it. With these words, we declare our centrality in Hashem's ultimate plan, which places us in a greater place than the angels. We acknowledge this by expressing it in Aramaic, which the angels “do not understand,” in order to avoid arousing their attention to what we are saying. [Thus, on a deeper level, by saying it in Aramaic, we express how humbled and inadequate we feel to be expressing such a prayer; and reciting it in Aramaic also expresses that this is something that the angels cannot relate to at all, as the state of the Jewish People at that time will be well beyond that of the angels (see *Maharal, Netzach Yisrael* 22).]

But there is another aspect of significance for the usage of Aramaic for Kaddish. Aramaic represents the mundane and the superficial. Aramaic, in a superficial way, can convey the precise content of Hebrew words. However, it is completely stripped of the inner depth and meaning of the true Hebrew language.³ There are a lot of mundane elements to this world. But

¹ The word כח—power, is used to express the creation of the world, in the pasuk which states כח מעשיו הגיד לעמו—He informed His nation of the power of His deeds (which refers to the creation of the world; see *Rashi* to *Bereishis* 1:1).

² The Poskim indeed state that Kaddish corresponds to the pasuk which states “ועתה יגדל נא כח ה'—and now, may the *strength* of Hashem become great.” And this is also alluded to in Chazal's statement that one must answer *Amein Yehei Shmei Rabba* with all of one's *strength*. This is not just a mere idea, but a central point of extensive discussion amongst the Poskim in determining exactly how Yehei Shmei Rabbah is to be expressed in order to keep to 28 letters. Some maintain that שמה is without a *yud* (we wrote it above); others delete the *vav* of *ul'olmay* etc.

³ There is immense depth lying beneath the surface of the basic words in the Hebrew language. To cite an example: Ramban, in his introduction to his commentary to the Torah, states that the Torah really contains no spaces between words. The spacing of the words of the Torah as we know it expresses a more superficial level of the Torah's content, adjusted for our understanding; but the Torah in fact consists

the truth is that anything mundane is so only on the surface. Everything in this world has an inner, deeper significance, which can be brought out when it is harnessed for the service of Hashem. [Even impurity and temptation are not independent creations that run free, our of Hashem's control, chas v'shalom. They were put here, in our way, by Hashem, for the purpose of providing us with challenges that bring us yet closer to him. Accordingly, when a person avoids temptation, the temptation itself fits into the beautiful larger picture of a world serving Hashem's purpose.] In our prayers, there is much stress on the mundane, on our material needs and wants etc. But with Kaddish, which we recite after each segment of prayer, we put our prayers into their true perspective by stressing that our real underlying request is for the Revelation of Hashem's honor, and that all of our other requests are: a. just the result of His concealment; b. for the purpose of enabling us to bring about His Honor, both by drawing closer to Him through the prayer itself, and by harnessing everything in our lives, even the material aspects of it, toward His service. We therefore express the true meaning and significance of our material pursuit specifically in Aramaic, to show that even what appears to be mundane and material is all really focused toward the great end of Hashem's honor.

Why is *Yehei Shmei Rabba* recited in Aramaic?

Machzor Vitri, Maharal: The Angels would be “jealous” to hear us reciting such an exalted prayer—which refers to when we will be more exalted than angels⁴— and would hinder us, and prevent our prayer from ascending by highlighting our faults. We therefore recite it in Aramaic, which the angels “do not understand.”

Tosafos: It is recited in Aramaic since it was meant to be understood by all of the common folk [in order to make the belief in the ultimate Redemption and Revelation as real as possible to them (Siddur Chasidei Ashkenaz)].

Kol Bo, Minhagos: It was instituted in a language understood by all, even by non-Jews, since its essence is Hashem's Greatness becoming widespread and known to all.

entirely of Hashem's secret Names which emerge from other arrangements of the spacing, which is in fact represented in a basic way in the information the Torah provides. This is obviously not captured in Aramaic, or in any other translation or rendition of the Torah. In addition, in the Hebrew language, not only the words themselves but also their numerical value contains meaning and deeper significance. This, too, is obviously not captured in any translation. Etc. etc.

⁴ Kol Bo

Kol Bo: This prayer arouses an element of “sadness” by mentioning Hashem’s diminished honor in this world. The angels would prevent us from doing this. Therefore, any mention of שמ-יה is in Aramaic, after which we revert to Hebrew.

Shibolei Haleket: Mourners typically dress in a drab fashion, not elegantly. Since Kaddish represents our sorrow over G-d’s diminished honor, and of the consequent distance between G-d and ourselves, we replace the glorious Holy Tongue with mundane and drab Aramaic.

Zohar (cited by Beis Yosef): It is recited in Aramaic, since Aramaic is the language which represents the forces of impurity.⁵ Kaddish prevails over the forces of impurity and imposes the Oneness of Hashem everywhere; it is therefore recited in the very language of impurity.

R’ Yehudah bar Yakar, Maharal: The Aramaic recitation highlights our greatness over the angels, who cannot relate to Aramaic.

The Angels’ “opposition” to this prayer

- a. It is inherently inappropriate for us to think we can relate to these concepts and to request to be a part of it (Rav Pinkus).
- b. It arouses “envy” over the fact that at that time, our standing will be well over theirs (Kol Bo).
- c. They are disturbed by the sadness, so to speak, that this prayer causes G-d (Kol Bo).

יתגדל ויתקדש שמיא רבא

***Yisgadeil Yeyiskadeish Shmei Rabba*—May His Great Name become Great and Sanctified⁶**
through the ultimate Revelation at the end of days.⁷

⁵ Aramaic is a mundane language, yet it is closely related to Hebrew—so closely related that it is attributed great importance in Torah. As such, in one sense, it represents the dividing line between the Holy and the mundane; in another sense, it represents the place where Holy and mundane merge. For the truth is that everything mundane in fact serves Hashem’s purpose in this world, albeit often in a concealed manner. And at the ultimate Revelation, we will see how even those phenomena that seemed to conflict with Hashem’s will in fact did facilitate Hashem’s will and contributed to His ultimate Revelation.

⁶ The action that G-d will take at the end of days will make it clear to all that He is the Greatest Power in existence. But in addition, He will be sanctified, meaning, through the magnitude of the events, all will come to realize that He is not only greater and stronger than any other power or entity in existence, but that He is in a realm of His own, completely beyond comprehension and incomparable with anything we can relate to (the Hebrew word קדושה—“sanctity,” denotes “completely removed”).

בעלמא די ברא כרעותיה

B'olma di vera k're'usei—In the world He Created, in accordance with His will,⁸

וימליך מלכותיה

V'yamlich Malchusei—and may He implement His reign,⁹

בחייכון וביומיכון ובחיי דכל בית ישראל

B'chayechon uv'yomechon uv'chayei d'chol Beis Yisrael—in your life,¹⁰ and in your days, and in the lifetime of the entire House of Israel,¹¹

בעגלא ובזמן קריב [ואמרו אמן]

Ba'agala uv'zman kariv [v'imru Amen]—suddenly, and in a short time [and say Amen].

יהא שמיה רבא מברך לעלם ולעלמי עלמיה

Yehei Shmei Rabba mevarach l'olam ul'olmei olmaya—May His Great Name be Blessed forever and ever.¹²

⁷ A deeper understanding of this supplication is: May the Great Name of *Yah* (the word שמיה is broken down to שם-יה) become Great and Sanctified. The Name *Yah* signifies—so to speak—a diminishing of G-d's Glory, as the letters Yud and Heh are but a part of the full Name—Yud Heh Vav and Heh. This signifies the diminished state of G-d's glory in this world, when His Greatness can be denied and His will can be defied—which will be rectified at the end of time when Hashem will Reveal Himself in His full glory (*Tosafos*, elaborated in *Kol Bo*). Yet, we refer to the Name *Yah* as His Great Name, since the concept of G-d's glory diminishing is just a form of speech, expressing the way it appears in this world. But the truth is that G-d's Greatness is never truly diminished, Heaven forbid (*Kol Bo*).

⁸ “In accordance with His will” can be understood in two ways: It can refer to “the world that he created,” i.e. “May His Name become great... in the world he created according to His will.” By saying so, we stress that although we are praying for the ultimate Revelation, the world, as we know it now, was likewise created according to His will, although many phenomena appear to run counter to His Presence and His will (Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, *Bereishis*). In other words, we acknowledge that all of the perceived imperfections and problems of this world are all part of His great plan (hence, “in accordance with His will”); and the reason and depth for it all will become clear to us only at the end of days when His Name becomes openly Great and Sanctified, at which time everything will become clear (*Milchemes Mitzvah*). Alternatively, it refers back to May his Great Name... i.e. it is a part of the supplication that His Great Name be Blessed: “May His Great Name become Great... in accordance with His will,” for it is His will to reveal Himself in His full Glory (Vilna Gaon; *Baruch She'amar*).

⁹ He will reveal it in a manner that will be recognized by all.

¹⁰ When praying for the Revelation, we pray also for the life of the Jewish People, since the time preceding the Revelation will involve many tribulations, and we pray that we all merit surviving them.

¹¹ We pray that these great events be witnessed by *the entire House of Israel*, i.e. even by the dead—we pray that they be brought back to life to see this (*Haminhagos*).

יתברך וישתבח ויתפאר ויתרומם ויתנשא ויתהדר ויתעלה ויתהלל שמיא דקודשא בריך הוא

Yisbarach v'yishtabach y'yispa'ar v'yisromam v'yisnasei v'yis'hadar v'yis'aleh v'yis'halal shmei d'kudsha berich Hu—may it be blessed, praised, beautified, exalted, uplifted, glorified, elevated, celebrated,¹³ the Name of the Holy One,¹⁴ Blessed is He,

לעילא מן כל ברכתא ושירתא תושבחתא ונחמתא דאמירן בעלמא ואמרו אמן

L'eila min kol birchasa v'shirasa tushbichasa v'nechemasa da'amiran b'alma [v'imru Amen]—to a greater extent than all the blessings,¹⁵ songs, praises, and consolations¹⁶ that have been said in the world¹⁷ [and say Amen].

¹² Alternatively: **May the Name of Y-ah become Great** i.e. complete; **and may it be Blessed forever and ever**, both in this world and in the Next (Machzor Vitri; see above, *Yisgadeil*).

¹³ These are eight expressions of praise; the first seven corresponding to the Seven Spheres of Heaven, the eighth corresponding to the highest sphere, which is above the angels (Kol Bo).

And altogether, i.e. if we include the first two praises from the beginning of Kaddish—“Great and Sanctified”—it equals ten expressions of praise altogether, corresponding to the ten statements through which Hashem created the world; and to the Ten Commandments. The reason the first two are separated from the last eight alludes to the fact that the first two of the Ten Commandments were told to us by G-d Himself, while the rest were conveyed through Moshe.

Additional concepts, all related to the theme of the ultimate intimate Existence between the Jewish People and G-d, as revealed in His full Glory, are represented in the number ten: The *ten* times the Jewish People are referred to in Scripture as G-d's bride; the *ten* “garbs” that G-d will wear when exacting revenge from the *ten* Nations responsible for the persecution of the Jewish People throughout history (*Shibolei Haleket*).

¹⁴ We refer to G-d as “the Holy One” here, since the Hebrew word, קדוש, is of the numerical value of 410, alluding to the period of the first Temple, which stood for 410 years. We then add “Blessed is He,” for in the first Temple era His Name was truly blessed in the literal sense — the blessings recited by the Kohanim in the Temple were articulated with the full Name of Hashem (ק-י-ו-ה). We thus request that His Glory be restored to that state (Kol Bo).

¹⁵ We now use four expressions of praise, corresponding to the four letters of G-d's Name (Kol Bo).

¹⁶ Meaning, the ultimate consolation for the sorrow of Hashem and the Jewish People during the exile and period of Divine concealment will be the future day of Revelation. This is the subject of the consolations of the prophets. We thus supplicate: May that great Revelation exceed even the great consolations described by the prophets (*Tur*, see also *Shibolei Haleket* 8; *Siddur Yaavetz*). [Alternatively, *any* of Hashem's praises will only be truly appreciated at the time of consolation—when we will see it fully manifest—and were thus stated primarily in reference to that time. Therefore, the praises are referred to in a general way as “consolations” (*HaPardes [Rashi]* 5).

¹⁷ When His Glory is ultimately revealed we will see that it exceeds any description or praise that we heard about Him all throughout history, for none of them can truly capture its true extent (*Milchemes Mitzvah*).