

# The Recital Of Kaddish By Women

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The kaddish, long associated with death and mourning, conjures up the image of a solitary figure reciting the *yitgadel ve-yitkadesh* at graveside or as a mourner in the synagogue. However widespread this practice, it is not reflected in the original use or purpose of the kaddish. The kaddish is and always has been a part of the daily liturgy, with an intrinsic value of its own not in any way associated with any extraneous occurrence.

As a prayer, the kaddish is an ancient paean to the hallowed Ineffable Name of G-d, and contains within it a hope for the future aggrandizement of that Name. Additionally it contains a call to the faithful to acknowledge and venerate what that name of G-d represents. Composed after the destruction of the First Temple, by the sages and prophets of the Great Assembly, it is a response to the desecration of G-d's name that resulted from the destruction of the Holy Temple, with the attendant destruction of the land of Israel and the dispersion of the Jewish nation to the four corners of the earth. We pray that G-d's Great Name be magnified and sanctified and restored to its pristine state in this world.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Aruch Ho-Shulchan, Orach Chaim 55:1* (See *Yalkut Shimoni Isaiah 296*. For variations on this theme see, for example, *Levush, Hilchet Berachot 56:1*. The kaddish itself has many forms. Parts and themes were composed in different eras and serve different functions. The most ancient formula of the kaddish is the *יְהוָה רַבּוֹ מוֹרֵךְ יְהוָה שְׂמַיָא רַבּא מוֹרֵךְ* formulation. This is the essence of the kaddish prayer. Its source is cited in the *Targum Y. ben Uziel* (*בְּרַאשִׁית בְּשָׂא*) as Yaakov Avinu.

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Originally, kaddish was recited seven times each day – three recitations during *Shacharit*, one after *Yishtabach*, one after *Tachanun*, and one after *U'vah le-zion*.<sup>2</sup> It was only at a later time that the kaddish after *Aleinu* was added, ostensibly because of the proliferation of orphans.<sup>3</sup> Be that as it may, the kaddish in the minds of most Jews is the prayer for the dead. It is recited by the children of the deceased as a means of elevation of the soul of the dearly departed.

The matter of a daughter saying kaddish for her father first appears in halachic literature in the 17th century. Rav Yair Chaim Bachrach, author of *Chavot Ya'ir*, writes that he was confronted with the following circumstance:

Something very strange occurred in Amsterdam and was highly publicized there. A person died leaving no sons. Before he died he left instructions in his will that during the year of mourning a *minyán* should be hired to learn *mishtamayot* in his house; after the learning his daughter should recite the kaddish. (*Chavot Ya'ir* # 222)

Before rendering his own decision on the case Rav Bachrach reports how the matter was handled in Amsterdam.

The rabbinic scholars and the lay leaders of the city did

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(See *משאת כפי* by Rav Dovid Cohen for parallels between this sentence and *ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד* (ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד). Also see *Berachot* 3a, *Shabbat* 119a and *Sifrei, Ha'azinu* 32:3. The association of kaddish and mourning is indeed found in a number of early sources. The most often quoted source is a story of Rabbi Akiva (other versions have Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, which makes the source much earlier) and a spirit in *Kallah Rabbati* chapter II.

2. *Levush, Hilchot Berachot* #55:1. It is based upon a tradition found in the *Sefer Ha-aggur* #98 who quotes the *Ra'avad*, who explains the placement of the kaddish at those breaks in the service.

3. *Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim* #55:4.

not protest the girl's recitation of the kaddish.

He goes on to say that the girl's recitation of the kaddish might be justified on the grounds that kaddish is a prayer associated with *קידוש השם*, the sanctification of G-d's name, and therefore women are also included in that precept. Moreover, the fact that there are ten men present creates a *bona fide* circumstance under which the kaddish might be recited. He goes on to support the theoretical thinking of the Amsterdam rabbinate by stating that even though the association between kaddish and the dead is based upon the story of Rabbi Akiva and the son of a dead man, one could successfully argue that a daughter, too, could achieve for the parent the same that a son does.

However, after making that case, he rejects the ruling of the Amsterdam rabbinate and explains that a negative by-product of allowing the daughter to say kaddish will be the weakening of Jewish custom in general. Since heretofore daughters did not say kaddish after their parents, the novelty of this girl's saying kaddish will create an environment whereby,

Each individual will build his own altar – based upon his own whim [logic] – and all rabbinic matters will become debased and people will denigrate them.

Based upon this consideration, the author of *Chavot Ya'ir* objects to the recitation of the kaddish by the daughter and declares that it should be stopped.

In the next century, the case of a girl saying kaddish appears again in the responsa literature (*Shevut Yaakov* #93). Rav Yaakov Reischer was asked by another rabbi how to handle the situation, where a man died leaving two young daughters, the older one four years old. Before he died he asked the rabbi to see to it that the older daughter say kaddish, albeit not in the synagogue.

However, the father of the deceased laid claim to the right to say kaddish at synagogue services for his son. Since only children have the right to demand their share of the recitation of

the kaddish at the synagogue, how should the claim of the deceased's father be handled?

Rav Reischer first analyzes the appropriateness of a father's saying kaddish for his son, and his relationship to the other mourners who are reciting kaddish for their parents. He comes to the conclusion that only where there is an established custom allowing a father to recite kaddish among the mourners is it permissible. However, in the absence of such a custom, as in the case at hand, the father may not recite the kaddish in shul. He cites, however, a ruling of his brother-in-law (*Eliyahu Zutah, Orach Chayim*) that a father should be given a kaddish at the end of the services "להפיק דעת המתים ח"ו בלי בנים" "assuage the grief of one who dies leaving no children." He ends the discussion by commenting that in the case in question there is no need to appease troubled minds, because

שכבר הניח בת שאומרת קריש בבית אצל מנ"י אבל בירידן שלפנינו וכי בבית הכנסת אין להניח לה לומר קריש כלל, אם כן כבר יש לו מיום דעת בזה ונראה גם לענין התפלה יש לאביו גם להפלה רק בבית אצל המנ"י שאומרת הבת קריש.

In our case, where there is a female child reciting the kaddish at home in the presence of a *minyán* (because in the synagogue she is not allowed to say kaddish at all), there is no longer any need to appease the deceased [by the father saying kaddish]. Therefore the father should only recite the kaddish at the same *minyán* together with his granddaughter.

It is obvious from this responsum that the idea of the young girl saying kaddish at home was not a point of contention for the author of *Shevut Yaakov*. The recitation of the kaddish in the synagogue by a girl, even a very young girl, was, however, not seen as an allowable option. The fact that Rav Reischer does not quote the objection of the *Chavot Ya'ir* can be attributed either to his not being aware of the latter's position or to the possibility that young girls saying kaddish in their own homes was not seen as an issue.

Rav Elazar Fleckeles, the prime disciple of Rav Yechezkel Landau, author of the *Nodah Bi-Yehudah*, makes the following observation in his *Teshuvah Me-Ahavah* (229:10): although the *Chavot Ya'ir* does not permit a daughter to say kaddish, in the city of Prague there developed a custom by which the only daughters of a deceased person would go to the area where older men and women and others who did not work remained in shul after *shacharit* until noon and recited the entire book of Psalms, and afterwards the girls would recite the kaddish.

ואמרים בכל יום כל ספר תהילים ונוהגים מי שלא הניח אחריו בנים כי אם בנות קטנות חמש ושש שנים אומרים שם הקריש אבל בבית הכנסת המיוחד לתפלה לא ראינוהו מעולם ואינו נכון וכו'.

Rav Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini in his work *Sedei Chemed (Ma'arechet Aveilut #160)* cites both the opinions of *Chavot Ya'ir* and *Shevut Yaakov* and sides with the decision of Rav Bacharach that a girl is forbidden to recite the kaddish not only in the synagogue but even at home. He comments that the lenient decision of R. Reischer was a solitary opinion and should be disregarded.<sup>4</sup>

The literature is silent about the matter of a woman saying kaddish until the mid-20th century.

In 1942, the then Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Ben-Zion Meir Chai Uziel, was asked his opinion about a person who leaves behind only daughters to say the kaddish. His answer is

4. The *Ba'er Heitev, Orach Chaim*, 132:2, note 5, cites the *Knesset Yechezkel* about the propriety of a girl reciting kaddish. He notes that a woman may not recite kaddish in Shul but, "ואם רוצים לעשות לה, מנין רשות בידים". However, the *Sedei Chemed, Ma'arechet Aveilut*, no. 160, writes that the actual responsum of the *Knesset Yechezkel* states that a girl may not recite kaddish under any circumstance. Thus the only source that permits a girl to say kaddish at a private *minyán* in a home is the *Shevut Yaakov*.

based upon his understanding of the efficacy of reciting kaddish after a deceased parent. He explains that the practice of reciting kaddish after a parent is based solely on Rabbinic tradition, without which one would never have associated the kaddish with mourning. This being the case, we are not in a position to change that tradition or create our own new models in the matter. It is obvious, he writes, that kaddish and the dead have a mystical connection, and therefore arriving at a decision by means of logical extension is out of place. Hence,

הלכך אין לחדש מנהג זה של הגדת הקריש מפי הבנות.

One should not introduce the custom of daughters reciting kaddish.

This is not to say that daughters do not have the ability to accrue merit for their departed parents, he asserts. On the contrary, women have great ability in that area. It is merely regarding kaddish that they are limited because the tradition limits the benefits of kaddish to recital by the son.

ואולם אעפ"י שאין לו יד בנסתרות יש למצוא טעם בדבר על יסוד מה שאמרו רז"ל ברא מוכה אבאי' (מנהרין ק"ד).

He explains that the reason the Rabbis say, "a son can accrue merit for the father" but do not include daughters in this category, is that the kaddish is a means of *kiddush Ha-Shem*, sanctifying G-d's name. When a person recites the kaddish he calls out to the assembled to pray for the name of G-d to be sanctified. When they respond to his call, the reader is credited with bringing about the *kiddush Ha-Shem*. The father (or mother) who bore him are in turn credited with having raised one of their offspring to the level where he is the means by which G-d's name has been sanctified.

Rav Uziel draws a conclusion from this idea that since a woman can never be considered one of those who makes a quorum whereby a kaddish will be recited, she was not included in the practice of saying kaddish.

דבר זה כמובן אינו מתמלא אלא על ידי הבנים שהם מצטרפים לעדה מישראל ולא על ידי הבנות ולכן אינן אומרות קריש בעיבור.

However, he does suggest that where there are no sons, only daughters, the girls should accrue merit for their parents by doing acts of charity and kindness. Additionally, writes Rav Uziel, a person who has no sons should support a Torah-learning institution and lend his name to it so that the merit of the Torah shall be his and in that way his soul will ascend in the world to come. (*Piskei Uziel, She'elot Ha'zeman 3*)

Rav Yosef Henkin, the great decisor of Jewish law, published a monograph in the rabbinic journal *Ha-Pardes* in Adar 1963 in which he wrote that a girl may say kaddish in the following fashion:

התחפץ לומר גם קריש בפני הנשים בזמן שאומרים קריש בבית הבנסה של האנשים אמר שאין קפידא.

If she would like to say kaddish in front of the women when kaddish is being said in the men's shul, perhaps there is no objection.

In an earlier article on the same subject, written in 1947 and first published in 1989 in a collection of writings of Rav Henkin entitled *Teshuvot Ibrah*, he addresses the question of a young girl saying the kaddish. He says that although the latter rabbis have discussed this matter (and frowned upon a girl's saying kaddish) he recalls in his youth that a girl said kaddish in a congregation of saintly and pious men. Furthermore, he writes to the questioner that in theory anyone who recites the kaddish has to qualify as a שליח ציבור (delegate of the group) – and if not, it is questionable if he may recite it. But ultimately, he argues, whoever recites the kaddish is *ipso facto* a שליח ציבור and must meet the requirements of that function. Yet we are not strict in this regard and do not demand that one have the worthiness of a שליח ציבור before we allow him to say kaddish. This is because we want the people to come to shul to say kaddish. We know

that were it not for the kaddish, many people would not bother to teach their children how to *daven*, and they would never come to shul. By coming to shul to say kaddish, the mourners are drawn to Judaism. The same logic might be applied to a girl, who could be drawn to Judaism by coming to shul for the purpose of saying kaddish.

He stipulates, however, that the girl must stand behind the *mechitzah*. Unlike earlier times when only one person recited the kaddish, we now have the custom that many people say the kaddish, and therefore if a girl says the kaddish together with the men, there is no reason to object.

Rav Shlomo Wahrman in his *She'eirit Yoseif* (volume 2, 1981 pp.296-300) discusses the question of women saying kaddish. When he cites the decision of Rav Henkin, he is bothered by a halachic objection and a philosophical-sociological problem.

First, if Rav Henkin maintains that the girl may recite the kaddish before the women in the women's section while the men are saying the kaddish, it turns out that the girl is saying the kaddish without the benefit of a *minyan*. He explains that the *ezrat nashim*, (the women's section), is considered as a separate domain from that of the men's section. The girl is therefore saying kaddish in front of the women, which does not constitute the requisite quorum for the kaddish to be recited.<sup>5</sup>

Rav Wahrman has another objection to Rav Henkin's position, which is a sociological evaluation of contemporary social political forces within Judaism. He asserts that even if Rav Henkin is

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5. Rav Yitzchak Weiss, in his *Minchat Yitzchak* vol.IV #30, disagrees with Rav Henkin's thinking. He writes that that even though a case can be made for the mourner's kaddish to be recited by many people so that its purpose is not to include the entire congregation in the fulfillment of their obligation, (להוציא את הרבים ידי חובתם), even so to recite kaddish before the women only is an anomaly.

correct in theory for allowing women to say kaddish, we still must contend with the egalitarian movement within Orthodoxy that has put on trial the traditional Torah attitudes and laws concerning women. He contends that within that movement there exists a negative philosophy that seeks to usurp the tradition and replace the Torah values with the values of Western civilization. Consequently, once kaddish will be recited by women, the next move will be to count women for a *minyan* or at least allow them to have a *minyan* of women where kaddish and *kedusha*, *borchu*, and *kriat ha-Torah* will be recited. Furthermore, Rav Wahrman says that he discussed this matter with Rav Eliezer Silver ז"ל, who concurred with him and shared with him a conversation that he had with Rav Henkin, where Rav Silver had expressed his disagreement with his ruling on women saying kaddish.

Rav Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky, in his work on the laws of mourning, *Gesher Ha-Chaim*, writes that many places will allow a young girl, less than 12 years old, to recite the kaddish.<sup>6</sup>

The Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv, Rav Chaim Halevi, writes in *Aseh Lecha Rav* (vol. V p. 234-6) that he does not allow a girl to say the kaddish. Even though he maintains that the idea of a daughter reciting the kaddish does indeed have efficacy in purely theoretical terms, however, practically speaking, there exists the complication of the girl being of necessity in the presence of men, which is problematic from the standpoint of the Jewish laws of modesty.

הטעם פשוט ביותר שלא יתכן לעסוק ברבוי קדושה ובמקום קדוש בצורה

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6. See chapter 30, no. 5. He cites a custom that he says many places have, where a young girl less than twelve years old says kaddish after *aleinu* or after *korbanat*, before *baruch she-amar* of *shacharit*. He says however that no place allows an older girl or woman to recite the kaddish in shul.

ובדרך העלולים לנרום ההרור עבירה אפילו על שבקלים ובמית הכנסה  
מעיים כל מיני בני אדם כמובן מאליו.

Based upon this reasoning, Rav Halevi does allow a girl to say kaddish in the presence of a *minyan* consisting of family members only. Even in a house of *shiva* he does not permit the daughter to say kaddish since non-family members usually make up the *minyan* in the mourner's house.

Rav Eliezer Yehudah Waldenberg (*Tzitz Eliezer* vol.XIV:7) has an interesting response to the request of an author of a book on modesty and Jewish law for an approbation. Rav Waldenberg does not grant him his request, pointing out what he feels are errors in the author's halachic approach. One area where Rav Waldenberg takes issue with the author is the matter of girls reciting the kaddish. He cites the opinion of Rav Efrayim Zalman Margolis of Brod in his monumental work, *Matey Efrayim* (*dinei kaddish yatom* ה' שער ה' סעיף ה' #27), in the case of one who had only a daughter and requested before he died that ten men should be hired to learn Torah in his house after he died, and that his daughter recite the *kaddish d'Rabbanan* afterwards. The *Matey Efrayim* ruled that one should not accede to this request. He cites the commentary of *Elef La-Mateh* who adds that in this generation of great promiscuity one should not allow these kinds of practices.

In addition, he cites the decision of Rav Yosef Chaim Al Chakkam of Baghdad (*Ben Ish Chai*) in his work *Torah Li-Sh'mah* (#27). He was asked the question about a young woman (over 12 years old) whose father asked that she recite the kaddish after the learning that would take place in his house after his demise. He ruled that this could not be done because this might lead to some confusion on the part of those present who might quite naturally assume that if it is permissible for her to recite the kaddish, it must also be that she can be included in making up the *minyan* required for the recitation of kaddish.

הבא גבי קדיש בדרך צורך הנה היראה אותה אומרת קדיש חושב שהיא  
ששלמה לעשרה גם כן ומצטרפת עמהם ואיך יהשיב הדוא שיובד בקדיש

וממלא מציאה האנשים גם בחיוב קדיש התפלה.

Looking at all the cumulative evidence, it would seem beyond a shadow of a doubt that a woman's saying kaddish is a practice that is frowned upon, if not outright forbidden. However, one writer endeavors to mitigate all of the evidence in favor of a woman saying kaddish, without any reservations at all.

In his work, *Benei Banim* (vol II #7), Rav Yehudah Herzl Henkin (Rav Yosef Henkin's grandson) argues that all of the rabbis from the 17th century onward were operating on the assumption that only one person in the synagogue says kaddish at any given time. This was indeed the practice in earlier times, and was the basis by which all of the halachic decisors concluded that a woman's recitation of kaddish as the *solitary voice in the men's minyan* is incorrect. However, our contemporary custom, whereby all of the mourners recite the kaddish together, casts the woman and her voice into the background as it were, and does not constitute a breach in Jewish modesty or shul etiquette.

Furthermore, Rav Henkin shows that this was the reasoning employed by his grandfather, Rav Yosef Henkin, when he permitted a girl to say the kaddish. Moreover, when this analysis was first published in the rabbinical journal *Hadarom*, vol. 54, Sivan, 1985, a letter to the editor appeared in a subsequent issue from a reader who wrote that indeed the practice of a woman saying kaddish had its adherents in the most pious circles in Eastern Europe where, with the approbation of Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski, women who had lost their parents in the first World War recited the kaddish in shul. He also cites an additional piece of anecdotal evidence, that he spoke to an unnamed rabbi of the Mirrer Yeshiva who also witnessed the recitation of kaddish by women in front of prominent rabbis who approved of this practice.

The writer cites his own experience of receiving a decision from Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik (through a third party), affirming his assent to the practice of a woman's saying kaddish. Allegedly, Rav Soloveitchik expressed the opinion that it made no difference

if the woman said kaddish together with a man (men) or recited the kaddish alone.<sup>7</sup> Subsequently, however, in 1995 in the journal of the Conservative movement, the same writer identifies the sources of his statements. He writes that it is all second-hand information and therefore all hearsay evidence.

In reference to Rabbi Yehudah Herzl Henkin's assertion that all of the early negative decisions regarding a woman's saying kaddish were based solely upon the different practice than that of today, his contention would certainly be enhanced by scholarly evidence showing the historical era and regions where the new custom, of many people saying kaddish in unison, began. If he could demonstrate that when the decisions against a woman saying kaddish were rendered, the local custom was for only one person only to say the kaddish, he might then have a tenable argument.

However, it is important to realize that among the Oriental Jews, (*Sefaradim*), the custom has always been for a group of mourners to recite the kaddish in unison. As early as 1746 Rav Yaakov Emden, in his commentary on the *Siddur*, speaks about the Sephardic custom where many people recite the kaddish together, and he lauds that custom.

Now, while one might make the case that the decision of the Ashkenazic *poskim* was based upon one person reciting the kaddish, this cannot be said for the Sephardic *poskim* who decided

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7. These oblique references are being made rather than citing the names and quotes, because this writer spoke with *Roshei Yeshiva* who studied in the Mir in Europe, who denied that women said kaddish in the manner described. Perhaps what everyone really saw was young girls below the age of twelve who recited the kaddish. See note #6. Furthermore, renowned students of Rav Soloveitchik told me that this was *not* his position on the matter. These contradictory reports at the very least force one to rely upon the written evidence.

against the recitation of the kaddish by a woman. It cannot be said of the *Sedei Chemed*, an eminent Sephardic halachist who was undoubtedly acquainted with both the Sephardic and the Ashkenazic kaddish traditions, and who nevertheless cites the Sephardic and Ashkenazic *poskim* interchangeably as if they had one position. He never differentiates between the two traditions on the basis of two different kaddish models: one person versus many people reciting the kaddish. Certainly then, the *Sedei Chemed* did not see the variation in customs as a factor in forbidding women from reciting the kaddish. The same can be said for the Sephardic rabbis, the *Ben Ish Chai*, Rabbi Uziel and Rabbi Halevi, who do not render a lenient decision based upon the custom of many reciting the kaddish in unison.

Furthermore, if one examines the position taken by Rav Yosef Henkin, one realizes that he did not make one statement on the matter but rather two statements. First, in 1947, he wrote a responsum to the question, if a *young girl* (my emphasis) might recite the kaddish in shul. His first and apparently main consideration was that coming to shul to say kaddish serves an educational purpose whereby the child might develop warm feelings for Judaism and thus be drawn to Judaism (note: it seems obvious that Rav Henkin is addressing a situation where alienation from Judaism is part of a problem that needs to be addressed from a larger perspective, and the recitation of kaddish is only part of a solution being addressed). For that reason alone, he says one should not push away young girls (just as one would not push away young boys from the opportunity to get closer to Jewish practice).

He adds, however, that the girl should *daven* and recite the kaddish while standing in the women's section. It is only after his initial recommendation that he speaks about what was obviously a peculiar possibility that could occur in a loosely run or in an informal prayer situation, or because of the young age of the girl. What would happen, he asks, if the girl were to push her way into the men's section during the recitation of the kaddish?

He answers that

עכשויו שכל אחר אומר במקומו ורבים הם האומרים אין לדחות זה בשתי ידים וכבר כתבתי שבנון שתעמוד אחורי המחיצה.

Now that everyone recites the kaddish in his place and there are many of them, one should not absolutely disallow the practice, rather it is proper for her to stand behind the partition.....

It is clear that his historical insight about the change in the synagogue kaddish customs is being employed only in dealing with a negative situation, and only *post facto*. The reasoning here mitigates the fact that the girl, incorrectly, is in front of the *mechitzah*, where because of being with the men her voice is audible. To that Rav Henkin says that her voice is neutralized by the others saying kaddish, and therefore there is no reason to rebuff the girl.

In his 1963 written statement about the recitation of kaddish by a girl, Rav Henkin speaks only about the usual situation where the girl is standing behind the *mechitzah*, and he permits her to recite the kaddish.

Here he does not speak about the custom of kaddish changing from being recited by one person to being recited many people. The reason is that it does not need to be addressed, since no one would be hearing the girl say kaddish because she was in the women's section, which in Rav Henkin's context means either that she was upstairs in the balcony or in the back behind the *mechitzah* where her voice could not be heard. Even under these circumstances he states "*perhaps* there is no objection."

ותחפוץ לומר גם קריש בפני הנשים. במונ שאומרים קריש בבית הכנסת של האנשים. אפשר שאין קפידא.

This would explain the subsequent reaction to Rav Henkin's decision by the other *poskim*, who could not understand the source that would allow the kaddish to be recited in front of women.

They obviously understood that the woman was totally separated and apart from the men, so that her kaddish could be heard exclusively by the women. There remains therefore no source among the *poskim* that would allow for a woman to recite the kaddish in the synagogue in front of men.<sup>8</sup>

## Conclusion

There is a long history documented in our halachic and responsa literature that deals with the topic of a woman reciting the kaddish. The *poskim* dealt with the matter in their usual sensitive and thoughtful manner. Their collective conclusion was that a woman may *not* recite the kaddish for the host of reasons given above.

It would therefore seem that an attempt to "improve" or alter our sacred traditions and halachic precedents is in reality not a positive move but a negative one. Given the *zeitgeist* that prevails today, which serves as the impetus to change our time-honored laws concerning modesty, identity, and role differentiation, this change is both pernicious and dangerous. The synagogue is an institution that has always served as an educational tool to teach our people authentic Jewish philosophy, cultural attitudes, and behavioral norms. Tampering with the synagogue's customary practices is clearly a step fraught with great danger.

8. However, see *Od Yisrael Yosef Beni Chai* by Rav Aharon Soloveitchik no. 32, where he argues that in the battle for equal rights for women in synagogue participation the demand is currently for women to be called up to the Torah for *aliyot*. Therefore, if the rabbis do not concede the recitation of the kaddish to women, the women then might come under the influence of non-traditional rabbis. The lesser of the two evils is to allow women to recite the kaddish.

As recently as 1992 the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Rav Yisrael Meir Lau, in *Yacheil Yisrael*, vol II, no. 90, writes that one cannot rely upon the ruling of Rav Henkin. He says under no circumstances is a woman permitted to recite kaddish.