

## Who Will Say Kaddish?

Kaddish is the mourners' prayer which is recited in honor of deceased relatives, namely, parents, siblings, and children. According to Orthodox tradition, Kaddish should be recited in the presence of a minyan consisting of ten men over the age of thirteen. Women, according to the Orthodox may do a specific mitzvah to honor the memory of a loved one however, they do not approve of women saying Kaddish.

On October 28, 1993, my father, David Oblegorski, of blessed memory, passed away. I, as his only child, took on the responsibility to say Kaddish in his honor during the eleven month mourning period. My mother was very proud of this decision.

During the week of Shiva for my Dad, we had many visitors pay their respects to my family. One of the people who visited was a colleague of my husband, Stan. "Dave" came dressed in a black suit and black hat according to Orthodox tradition. He sat down next to me, gave his condolences and then asked me, "Do you have any brothers?" "No", I replied, "I am an only child." "Does your father have any surviving brothers?" Again, I answered no. The next question was "Who will say Kaddish?" "I will," I answered. Dave's jaw dropped at my reply. He offered to say Kaddish for my Dad instead of me. I respectfully declined his offer. I felt disrespected and put down by this conversation.

After the visit from Dave, I thought about my decision. I felt that if G-d wanted my father to have a "Kadishel," who was a male, I would have been born a boy. I felt, in my heart, that G-d knew that I would be diligent about attending minyan to recite Kaddish on a regular basis. During my period of mourning I was joined at our minyan by other women from our congregation who had also lost parents during that year. Unfortunately, it took several years before our Rabbi would allow women to be counted in the minyan or to have an aliyah. But it did eventually happen. A year after my father passed, my beloved mother passed.

Again, I went to minyan regularly to say Kaddish for her. I believe that both my parents were proud to have me recite the Kaddish for them. Women have an important place in our Jewish tradition. We should all value this and have women participate in all rituals and prayers whenever they wish.