

# *Should I Recite The Kaddish?*

“*M*ust I recite the Kaddish for him at the funeral?”

It was more than a question for information  
Her eyes flashed with defiance against the father  
Who had related to her as if she were not.

She sat rigid on a chair in the study  
Her fists clenched tight  
“Yes, I am angry but it is not about vengeance  
It’s just that I would feel like such a hypocrite  
To recite the Kaddish in his memory  
To stand on my two feet  
And standing, honor him.

“Should he now have the last word?  
Should I bow before his sovereignty and  
show him fealty  
This man who dealt out slights and sarcasms,  
humiliations and deprecations  
shouts and silences that frightened me?  
Do I make a mockery before my friends  
Who were witnesses to my shame?”

“Tell me the Law,  
What do the books demand?  
Must I recite the Kaddish?”  
Her anger dissolved into tears  
She had come for an answer from the texts.

I looked into her eyes  
I did not have to open a book  
Recite the Kaddish not for his life or death  
But for the life that could have been  
For you the Kaddish is a prayer  
not for the father you had  
But for the father you never had  
Not for the father you miss  
But for the father you had hoped to find.

Pray for someone who never truly knew you  
But for someone you pined to know  
Pray to magnify and sanctify  
that which could have been and was not  
Pray the Kaddish in the subjunctive mood  
Not directed to the future but to the past  
that should have been.

May the Kaddish sanctify your grief  
May it fill the emptiness in you  
May the heart of the psalmist comfort you  
Even if my father and mother forsook me  
The Lord would take me under His care  
“... Yea, I have faith that I shall yet see the  
goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

She left less in anger than in sadness  
At the grave, her melancholy voice recited:  
“Magnified and sanctified be the name of God.”

