

The End of Kaddish

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Sunday, June 19, 2016, Fathers' Day, marked exactly eleven months since the day of Shelly's death. Children are obliged to recite the Kaddish, the mourner's prayer, for eleven months following a parent's death. A spouse's obligation is only one month; but I took on the obligation for eleven months. As I write this on the afternoon of Fathers' Day, I have recited the Kaddish prayer thrice today – twice in a special minyan at my local shul, and once – in unison with my son – at Shelly's gravesite. Strictly speaking, the Kaddish can only be recited in the presence of 10 adult Jews. But Shelly was not a stickler for formal rules, and I am sure that she would have approved of the fervently offered, elegantly pronounced, but slightly mournful performance that my son and I put on for her this morning.

Of course, this is not the last time I will say Kaddish for Shelly. There is one coming up on the one-year anniversary of her death – her *yahrzeit*, as there will be on every *yahrzeit*. Also on Yizcor occasions, her birthday, our anniversary, maybe Tisha b'Av and other times when I feel it is appropriate. But today marked the formal end of the mourning period.

My son and I sat on the bench adjoining Shelly's grave and talked about his mom. I told him – and her – how much I missed my wife. The end of Kaddish drives home for me, yet again, the finality of her departure, the exceptional longing my heart continues to experience, the disbelief that my life partner – the beautiful, compassionate, loving and faithful woman with whom I spent 55 years – has shuffled off the mortal coil. I am bereft. But I am also grateful for the half-century of love and companionship that Shelly provided for me. When the tears well up, I try to focus on the great, good fortune I had to share my life with a truly great lady. Reciting the Kaddish helps in that endeavor.