



# FROM THE VIRTUAL DESK OF THE OU VEBBE REBBE

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לעילוי נשמת  
יואל אפרים בן אברהם עוזיאל זלצמן ז"ל

## Learning During *Kaddish*

**Question:** I give a *shiur* to a few people before *Shacharit* and aim to finish when *davening* begins, with *Rabbi Yishmael/Kaddish D'Rabbanan*. Sometimes we are not quite finished then, in which case, we try to answer *Kaddish's* main recitations, although we sometimes get caught up and fail to respond. Someone complained that continuing to learn during *Kaddish* is *assur* and a disgrace to *Kaddish* and the people listening to it. I don't see it that way but said I would ask.

**Answer:** It is good that you plan to finish by *Kaddish*. Hopefully you learn with your *tallit* and *tefillin* on and have *davened* up to there. It would be a shame to either need to skip parts of *P'sukei D'zimra*, speed through it, or be behind the *tzibbur*. We will focus on *Kaddish*, as you ask.

There are three possible objections to a *shiur* continuing during *Kaddish*: 1. Listening/answering *Kaddish* has innate precedence over learning; 2. The learning

can transmit one's rejection or disregard for *Kaddish's* content. 3. The learning can disturb those trying to focus on *Kaddish*.

1. One may/should answer the main responses of *Kaddish*, *Kedusha* and *Barchu* in the midst of almost any part of *davening* (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 66:3). The only debate is whether this is so if one who is *davening* in one *minyan* should respond to what he hears from another *minyan*. On the one hand, there is no *Kaddish* quota, so that any prompt makes responding important (Igrot Moshe III:89). Others say that the sources on non-participants responding are to permit answering, not obligating it, and so in multi-*minyan* locations (e.g., the *Kotel*) one does not have to harm his *tefilla* by having his focus wander from *minyan* to *minyan* (see Tzitz Eliezer XI:3; Yabia Omer VI, OC 20).

Only the study of the loftiest scholars (see Shabbat 11a) can push off the normal requirements of *tefilla* (Igrot Moshe OC II:27). Some people opt to learn Torah during *chazarat hashatz*, and even there most *poskim* oppose it (Mishna Berura 124:17; Kaf Hachayim, OC 124:16). On the other hand, the problem may be that less learned people will speak/not listen without a good reason (Mishna Berura *ibid.*). Therefore, some permit learning Torah in one's head (see Dirshu 124:27). However, during *Kaddish* and *Kedusha*, one's mind must be only on them, not learning

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(Mishna Berura 125:1).

2. If one is among a *minyan* who are up to *Kri'at Shema*, he must say the first *pasuk* along with them, even if he has already recited *Kri'at Shema*, in order to not appear reluctant to recite his allegiance to Hashem (Shulchan Aruch, OC 65:2). *Poskim* extend this idea to other central parts of *davening*, including such a major joint recitation of praise to Hashem as *Kaddish* (see Igrat Moshe *ibid.*). When one is at a *minyan*, not answering a different *minyan* need not look a rejection (Tzitz Eliezer *ibid.*). However, in your case, learning audibly in the beginning of your *minyan* is publicly indicating that joining everyone in declaring praise of Hashem is not at the top of your priorities, which is included in this problem.

3. The local *rav* or *gabbai* can best consider the technical and communal elements of what is an unacceptable disturbance to others. However, the concept is generally applicable. We note that the Mishna Berura (566:12), regarding the *minhag* to collect *tzedaka* on a fast day as a “*kofer nefesh*,” says that the *gabbai* should not go around announcing it during *chazarat hashatz* because it disrupts concentration.

The remaining question is whether these matters apply to the entire *Kaddish* or just the public's responses. Regarding *chazarat hashatz*, *l'hatchila* one is to listen to every word but answering the *berachot* (while knowing which one is being said each

time) is sufficient *b'di'eved* (Mishna Berura 124:17). However, regarding *Kaddish*, the need to listen to every word seems stronger (Mishna Berura 125:1).

In terms of bottom line, your *shul*-mate is right. Since stopping learning “on a dime” is difficult, try to stop a little earlier, making *Kaddish* the **absolute** endpoint. ■

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