



Arts and Humanities

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Religion

Charney, Leon H. & Saul Mayzlish.

The Mystery of the Kaddish: Its Profound Influence on Judaism.

Barricade. 2006. c.236p. ISBN 1-56980-300-5. \$22.95. REL

This thoughtful book is a refreshing walk through Jewish history, the legal practices of Judaism, and religious psychology. It is also a stoical, philosophic attempt to triumph over death and remove its sting by appealing to community in an age of alienation, fracture, and unsettledness. Attorney, author, and TV host Charney and Mayzlish trace the origin, history, and growth of the Kaddish, traditionally thought to be a prayer for the dead, to meet the spiritual needs of Jews across the ages. Their book is not a superficial cotton-candy examination of profound ideas in the Kaddish but a well-written, positive contribution to the subject in general; it will warrant space next to Leon Wieseltier's *Kaddish* as well as more popular books on the subject by writers such as Ari Goodman. While it is bound to be controversial, as more traditional scholars will opt for an earlier date than the Dark Ages for the wide practice of the Kaddish, it deserves to be read by all thoughtful Jews and non-Jews interested in ultimate transcendence over mortality.

—David B. Levy, M.L.S., Brooklyn, NY