

A CHANGE IN KADDISH

The recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish is an incredibly meaningful part of services. Our sanctuary becomes filled with names: the names of our loved ones whose memories will be a blessing as long as we are conscious about reserving time to remember them. In fact, one of the euphemisms for God in the prayer is *shemay rabbah*-the Great Name, which can be envisioned as all of the names of all of the people who have spent time on Earth. When we stand and say Kaddish for a specific person, his or her name on that great spiral of names is illuminated and that light shines down, not only on the mourners, but also upon the entire congregation.

Although the Kaddish prayer was around for six hundred years or so before it became associated with mourners in the 13th century, and although the prayer itself makes no mention of death and is actually a doxology, a prayer completely devoted to heaping praise on God, the emotional connection we have with Kaddish is by now understandably intense. So much so that many people still say the prayer from deep in the collective *kishkes*, with the Ashkenasik pronunciation (*yiskadal, ve yiskadash*) that fell out of favor for most other prayers when Israel made Sephardic pronunciation (*yitkadal, ve yitkadash*) more kosher. We pay the greatest attention to the Kaddish when we are most vulnerable, most in need of ancient traditions to lean on; most ready for an assurance that holiness still exists.

Clearly then, even in a congregation such as ours that is normally open to liturgical change and expansive interpretations, making a change in the Kaddish would seem difficult. However, we have done exactly that. As you know, the last line of the Kaddish is a Hebrew (the bulk of the prayer is in Aramaic) prayer for peace: *Oseh Shalom bimromav* (May the maker of peace in the heavens) *hu ya-aseh shalomaleyenu, ve-al kol yisrael* (make peace over us and over all the people of Israel), *ve-imru amen* (and let us say amen). In the latest revision of our CRC prayer book (and soon in the B'nai Mitzvah service template as well), we have added four Hebrew words: *ve-al kol yoshvey tevel* (and over all who dwell on Earth).

In this instance, we are not pioneers. As early as 1967, the Reform Movement in Great Britain added the line *ve-al kol benai adam* (an over all humanity) to the Mourner's Kaddish. Israeli Reform synagogues followed suit, solving the gender issue of using Adam by referring to all who dwell on Earth. In the States, the Reconstructionist *siddur* has made the change, as have many communities with whom we feel kinship, including B'nai Jeshurun in Manhattan.

This addition reflects Judaism's ancient prophetic concern with all people, and it certainly is congruent with CRC values and our work for shalom-justice, peace, compassion and love-for our own sacred community, for the Jewish people, and...for all who dwell on Earth. It is true that actions speak louder than words,

but words are important. They demonstrate integrity, and they articulate our version of moral responsibility to all who attend our services, members, seekers, and guests.

We want always to be a *sukkat shalom* for our mourners, and I pray that these additional four words will be quickly absorbed and that the prayers and the presence of our holy community continues to provide more than a measure of comfort in our times of greatest need. May the names of our loved ones whom we mention at Kaddish permeate our sanctuary and inspire us to continue the work of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world for and with all peoples.

B'Ahavah (With Love),

Rabbi Randy