

For a Young Man Taken Well Before His Time

An Introduction to the Mourner's Kaddish

(DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF AVI SCHAEFER)

He will always be a young man,
No matter how old we grow, he will be young,
Prodding us to hold fast to the promise of our own youth,
Remembering the adventure we shared with him,
The strength with which we wrestled with him,
The unbounded belief in the youthfulness of the world
And of ourselves.

He was taken—
Gathered up in the unfathomable arms of God
To show us the way to another state,
A state for which we will always be searching,
Trying to believe that wherever life takes us
We will be taken well, taken care of well,
Taking care of all we find there, well.

He died before his time,
Before a time when Palestinians and Israelis
Will live in peaceful states beside each other,
When God's promise to Abraham
And his two young sons
Will be fulfilled.

The Kaddish affirms God's sovereignty
Over youth and age,
Over Jews and every other yearning people,
Over time, and over peace.

Let us join in Mourner's Kaddish
For a young man,
For everyone,
Taken well
Or taken cruelly
Before their time.

May the time of which they dreamed
Come soon,
In our time.

Rabbi Richard N. Levy