

(NOV.1. 08)*

“KADDISH: A DIALOGUE WITH GOD”

A NEW TEXT WRITTEN AND NARRATED

BY

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FOR LEONARD BERNSTEIN’S SYMPHONY NO.3

I. INVOCATION

SPEAKER:

**ALMIGHTY GOD, OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN:
THIS PERSONAL KADDISH,
INSPIRED BY THE NOBLE PRAYER OF ANTIQUITY,
IS WRITTEN FOR THE MONUMENTAL SYMPHONY
COMPOSED BY LEONARD BERNSTEIN,
A BELOVED FRIEND AND A KINDRED SOUL,
WHO WANTED MY LIVING TESTIMONY,
DRAWN FROM THE LOWEST DEPTHS
OF HUMAN SUFFERING,
TO RESONATE IN YOUR KINGDOM
WITH HIS CELESTIAL MUSIC. //**

- >> MINE IS A LAYMAN'S KADDISH, FATHER
MODERN, UNIVERSAL, AND DEDICATED
TO YOUR TORMENTED CHILDREN:
JEWS, CHRISTIANS, MUSLIMS AND ALL OTHERS
-- BELIEVERS AND NON-BELIEVERS --
YEARNING FOR PEACE, FREEDOM AND JUSTICE
IN A CHAOTIC, FRATRICIDAL AND SUICIDAL WORLD. //**
- >> I WEEP FOR THEM ALL, AS I UTTER THIS LAMENT
WITH GRIEF AND ANGER WELLING UP
FROM MY OWN TRAUMATIC PAST,
AND THE DELUGE OF HATRED, VIOLENCE AND FEAR
THAT IS ENGULFING US AGAIN. //**
- >> MY FIRST TEARS ARE FOR MY FAMILY AND MY PEOPLE,
PERPETUAL VICTIMS OF RELIGIOUS
AND ETHNIC PERSECUTION,
THAT REACHED ITS HISTORIC CLIMAX
DURING MY CHILDHOOD,
DESTROYING EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING AROUND ME,
WHILE YOU, SUPREME RULER OF THE UNIVERSE,
STOOD IDLY BY. //**

>> EQUALLY INDIFFERENT WERE YOU,
WHEN I AGONIZED,
IN AUSCHWITZ, MAIDANEK AND DACHAU,
WHERE EICHMANN'S AND MENGELE'S
GRUESOME REALITY
ECLIPSED DANTE'S VISION OF INFERNO. //

>> TO THIS DAY I AM HAUNTED BY GUILT
FOR HAVING SURVIVED,
WHEN SO MANY OF MINE WERE MURDERED.

NOW I MUST ATONE
FOR THE RITUAL MOURNERS KADDISH
I COULD NEVER RECITE,
BECAUSE I HAD NO DATES OF THEIR DEMISE,
NO CLOSURE /
NO GRAVES FOR A STONE /
A FLOWER, A PRAYER --
A PRAYER FOR THEIR REDEMPTION. /

YIT'GADAL V'ITKADASH SH'ME RABA. //

KADDISH 1**SPEAKER :**

- >> **MAGNIFIED... //**
- >> **AND SANCTIFIED... //**
- >> **BE HIS GREAT NAME. //**
- >> **AMEN! //**

CHORUS: Full Aramaic Kaddish**SPEAKER:**

- >> **AMEN! AMEN!**
- MAY ABUNDANT PEACE DESCEND ON US ALL.**
- AMEN! //**
- >> **THE LOVED ONES I MOURN TODAY ARE MANY:**
- MY FATHER, DAVID,**
- TORTURED, EXECUTED BY FIRING SQUAD,**
- AND TOSSED INTO A MASS GRAVE.**
- MY MOTHER, HELENA,**
- DEPORTED BY CATTLE-TRAIN TO DIE**
- WITH MY LITTLE SISTER FRIEDA,**

WHO HAD HARDLY LIVED.

MY GRANDPARENTS, UNCLES, AUNTS, COUSINS,

AND EVERY ONE OF MY SCHOOLMATES. /

WHY THEM? AND WHY NOT ME, O LORD?

WHAT CRIMES, WHAT SINS

COULD THEY HAVE COMMITTED

AT SO YOUNG AN AGE? //

>> ALL WIPED OUT, IN ONE FELL SWOOP //

>> ACCORDING TO THE UNFATHOMABLE LOGIC

THAT REIGNS IN YOUR REALM. //

CHORUS: Kaddish

II. DIN TORAH

SPEAKER :

>> LORD, TODAY I REACH OUT TO YOU

WITH THE SAME VISCERAL VOICE,

AND THE SAME CLENCHED FIST,

I ONCE RAISED AGAINST YOU BLASPHEMOUSLY,

**AS A SKELETAL KID WITH SHAVED HEAD
AND HOLLOW EYES,
TREMBLING IN THE SHADOW
OF A BIRKENAU GAS CHAMBER. /**

**TREMBLING AND DEMANDING TO KNOW:
WHY DO YOU ABANDON US?
HOW CAN YOU ALLOW SUCH CARNAGE? /
DO YOU EVEN CARE?! /**

**AT THAT CURSED PLACE AND TIME,
WHERE I SAW THE PROUD BARGE
OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION GO UNDER,
WHEN I ENDURED SO MANY TORTURES
AND HUMILIATIONS,
YOU FAILED ME, FATHER.
AND IN MY ABYSMAL DESPAIR
I LASHED OUT AT YOU,
LIKE MOSES SMITING THE ROCK
IN THE SINAI DESERT,
LIKE JOB, PROTESTING
HIS UNDESERVED PUNISHMENT.**

**HALLUCINATING FROM HUNGER, PAIN AND FEAR,
WHILE THE CREMATORIA SPEWED FIRE AND SMOKE,
I EVEN GAVE UP PRAYING.**

**HOW COULD I GO ON MURMURING
THAT GOD IS GREAT,
AND THE OTHER PIOUS VERSES OF ADORATION
I HAD ABSORBED WITH MY MOTHER'S MILK,
LIKE ALL THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM,
SINCE ISAAC AND ISHMAEL,
SINCE MARY AND JESUS.**

**NO, I COULD NOT. I WOULD NOT. NOT THERE.
NOT AT AUSCHWITZ.**

**CAN YOU PARDON MY SINS, LORD? /
CAN I PARDON YOURS,
AFTER OUR LONG AND STORMY ESTRANGEMENT?
I CAN PARDON, BUT I CANNOT FORGET.
THE WOUNDS OF MY FLESH AND MY SOUL
MAY HAVE HEALED LONG AGO.
BUT THE WOUNDS OF THE HEART,
THAT BLEED FOR LOVED ONES,
WILL NEVER HEAL.**

**AS ONE OF THE LAST SURVIVORS
OF THE GREATEST CATASTROPHE
EVER PERPETRATED BY MAN AGAINST MAN,
MY LIFE IS NO LONGER ENTIRELY MY OWN.
THOSE WHO PERISHED ALSO LIVE WITHIN ME.
AND MY MEMORY IS THE ONLY TOMB THEY HAVE.**

**I MUST HONOR THEIR LEGACY AND WARN THE LIVING
-- OF EVERY RACE, COLOR AND CREED --
AGAINST THE CATASTROPHES
THAT MAY STILL LIE AHEAD.
FOR THE UNTHINKABLE IS AGAIN BECOMING POSSIBLE. //**

**>> LORD, DO YOU REMEMBER
THE LAST BLOOD-CURDLING "SHEMA"
OF THE MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN
THAT SHOOK YOUR HEAVENS, DAY AFTER DAY,
AS THE GAS CHOKED THEM TO DEATH?
I WAS THERE, AND I HEARD IT WITH MY OWN EARS.
THEY DIED WITH YOUR NAME ON THEIR LIPS:
"ADONAI ELOHEINU, ADONAI EHAD!"
(THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE).**

>> AFTER THE STEEL DOORS WERE SHUT,
THEY HAD ONLY THREE MINUTES TO LIVE.
YET THEY FOUND ENOUGH STRENGTH
TO DIG THEIR FINGERNAILS INTO THE WALLS
AND SCRATCH IN THE WORDS:
“NEVER FORGET!” //

>> THOSE CRIES, THOSE WORDS,
AND THEIR MYRIAD ECHOES
THAT STILL REVERBERATE IN SPACE AND TIME,
IMPOSE SACRED OBLIGATIONS ON YOU, AS ON ME.
THE AUSCHWITZ NUMBER ENGRAVED ON MY ARM
REMINDS ME OF IT EVERY DAY.
AND TODAY, FATHER, I REMIND YOU! //

CHORUS: Cadenza

SPEAKER:

>> HOW CAN ONE EVEN BE SURE
THAT THE SHOAH WAS TOTALLY MAN-MADE?
WE KNOW FROM THE BOOK OF GENESIS

**HOW WRATHFUL AND VENGEFUL A GOD YOU CAN BE,
WHEN YOU LOSE YOUR NOTORIOUSLY
SHORT TEMPER. /**

**IS IT ANGER OR INDIFFERENCE THAT EXPLAINS
YOUR PERPLEXING SILENCE WHEN WE WERE
DEFAMED, DEHUMANIZED AND DECIMATED?**

**FAR BE IT FROM ME TO ACCUSE YOU
OF CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY,
BUT THIS FAILURE TO ASSIST
A HELPLESS PEOPLE IN PERIL
MAY HAVE CONVINCED MANY A PERPETRATOR,
AND A LARGELY UNCARING WORLD,
THAT GENOCIDE AGAINST JEWS,
AND OTHER HELPLESS NATIONS,
WAS AND IS ACCEPTABLE –
EVEN TO THIS DAY. //**

KADDISH 2

SPEAKER:

>> I STILL REMEMBER MY GRANDMOTHER'S SWEET VOICE,
 SINGING ME A LULLABY ABOUT HOW GOOD,
 HOW LOVING, HOW MERCIFUL A GOD YOU ARE.
 HOW YOU WOULD ALWAYS BE THERE
 TO COMFORT ME IN NEED.

I HAVE OFTEN TRIED TO SUMMON HER VOICE
 WHEN I NEEDED YOUR COMFORT. /
 THAT SWEET VOICE, SO BRUTALLY SILENCED
 IN THE OVENS OF TREBLINKA. //

SOPRANO SOLO AND BOYS' CHOIR: Kaddish

SPEAKER:

>> THE MEMORY OF MY GRANDMOTHER'S LULLABY
 HAS ALWAYS SOOTHED ME TO SLEEP,
 EVEN WHEN I BECAME AN ADULT.
 BUT IN MY DREAMS, ALL I COULD SEE
 WERE HER EYES, RAISED IN PRAYER TO YOU,
 AS THE KILLERS TOOK HER AWAY.

 YIS'GADAL V'IS'KADASH SH'ME RABA!

III. SCHERZO

SPEAKER :

**>> O LORD, HOW LADEN WITH SORROW
IS THE HISTORY OF YOUR “CHOSEN PEOPLE.” //**

**>> LET US LOOK TOGETHER AT THE CALAMITIES
THAT HAVE COME DOWN UPON US,
SINCE TIME IMMEMORIAL. //**

**>> THE SLAVERY IN EGYPT,
THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY,
THE ROMAN CONQUEST,
THE MARAUDING CRUSADES,
THE SPANISH INQUISITION,
THE RUSSIAN POGROMS,
THE NAZI GENOCIDE,
AND NOW THE SPECTER OF JIHAD. /**

**THE LIST IS ENDLESS, FATHER,
AND NEW DEMAGOGUES,
CALLING THE SHOAH A “MYTH,”
ARE AGAIN THREATENING TO WIPE US OUT. /**

**IN THEIR EYES WE ARE ALWAYS GUILTY.
GUILTY, WHEN WE RECOGNIZED YOU
AS THE UNIQUE AND ETERNAL GOD,
PROCLAIMED YOUR LOFTY COMMANDMENTS
TO A PAGAN WORLD
AND ENGENDERED TWO OTHER GREAT
MONOTHEISTIC FAITHS.
GUILTY IN THE DIASPORA,
WHEN PEACE-LOVING AND UNARMED,
WE WERE SLAUGHTERED LIKE LAMBS.
GUILTY IN THE PROMISED LAND,
WHEN WE TOOK UP ARMS,
SO WE WILL NEVER BE SLAUGHTERED AGAIN.

TRUE, WE HAVE NO MONOPOLY ON SUFFERING;
NOR ON VIRTUE.
THE LIST OF ATROCITIES INFLICTED
ON OTHER PEOPLES
IS ALSO PAINFULLY LONG.
AND THEY, TOO, HAVE AN HONORED PLACE
IN MY KADDISH. /**

**SUCH ATROCITIES ARE NOW COMMITTED
NOT ONLY BY ATHEISTS, LORD.
RELIGIOUS EXTREMISTS OF VARIOUS STRIPES,
PARADING AS HOLY MEN,
PROFANE THEIR FAITH
BY KILLING AND MAIMING INNOCENTS --
EVEN THEIR OWN KIN. /**

**IN THE SANCTIFIED NAME OF YOU?!
OUR COMMON GOD?! //**

**>> SOMETHING IS SERIOUSLY AWRY
IN YOUR HEAVENLY KINGDOM,
AS IT IS HERE, IN OUR GLOBAL BABEL. //**

**>> IF WE HAVE TRANSGRESSED, FATHER,
FORGIVE US, FOR WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE DO.
AND BRING US BACK TO YOUR RIGHTEOUS PATH --
BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE. //**

**>> EINSTEIN HAS ASSURED US
THAT YOU DO NOT PLAY DICE
WITH THE UNIVERSE,**

**BUT WHY DO YOU TOY WITH OUR DESTINY? /
ARE OUR SINS SO GREAT
THAT WE MUST NOW BRACE OURSELVES
FOR THE FINAL SOLUTION OF MANKIND,
WITH NEW PLAGUES OF TOXIC GAS,
AND NUCLEAR MUSHROOM CLOUDS? //**

>> REPEAT AFTER ME, FATHER: /

“NEVER FORGET!” A-MEN!

“NEVER AGAIN!” A---MEN! //

ETERNAL GOD:

AT A TENDER AGE, YOU TESTED ME

BEYOND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN ENDURANCE.

I WAS BRUTALLY SEVERED FROM MY NATIVE ROOTS,

BRAINWASHED BY STALIN, WHO WANTED ME RED,

MUTILATED BY HITLER WHO WANTED ME DEAD. /

LIBERATED BY EISENHOWER’S ALLIED ARMIES,

I FOUND REFUGE AND REDEMPTION

IN THE WARM EMBRACE OF SECULAR FREEDOM. /

YET I HAVE NEVER DESERTED YOUR FOLD.

NEITHER LONELINESS, ANGUISH, NOR TERROR

**COULD SHAKE MY HEREDITARY VOW
TO WORSHIP YOU,
IF ONLY IN MY OWN UNORTHODOX WAYS.
THAT VOW EMBOLDENS ME
TO SAY TO YOU, TODAY: //**

**>> BEHOLD! A GRAVE SPIRITUAL CRISIS
IS INVADING THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF MEN.
MANY BELIEVE THAT THE HEAVENS ARE EMPTY;
OR WORSE, THAT THEY BREED SUPERSTITION,
FANATICISM AND DISCORD ON EARTH;
THAT WITH OR WITHOUT YOU,
WE MUST COUNT ONLY ON OURSELVES. //**

**>> IT IS HIGH TIME THAT YOU REAFFIRM
OUR EVERLASTING COVENANT. //**

**>> THAT YOU RENEW YOUR PROMISE
OF A MESSIANIC AGE. //**

>> RENEW...YOUR...PROMISE..! //

CHILDREN'S CHOIR: Kaddish**SPEAKER:**

- >> IT IS SAID THAT IN ANCIENT GREECE //
- >> WHEN GODS WERE MORE HUMAN,
MEN WERE MORE DIVINE.
IMMORTAL THOUGH YOU ARE, LORD,
CAN'T YOU BE A LITTLE MORE HUMANE?
SO WE CAN BECOME A LITTLE MORE GODLY? //
- >> WE STRIVE TO HONOR THE TEACHINGS
OF YOUR VENERABLE PROPHETS.
WE WANT TO, WE NEED TO,
WE CAN BELIEVE IN YOU.
BUT DO YOU BELIEVE IN US? /
CAN YOU BELIEVE?! //
- >> GRANT US A TOUCH OF YOUR IMPENETRABLE WISDOM,
SO WE CAN CHANT, IN UNISON AND HARMONY,
ARDENT HYMNS AND JOYOUS PSALMS
TO YOUR GREATER GLORY. //

CHILDRENS' CHOIR:**SPEAKER**

>> MAJESTIC DEITY,
WHOEVER YOU ARE, WHEREVER YOU ARE,
YOUR OMNIPRESENCE IN OUR MIDST
IS SO OLD, SO IMMENSE, SO INGRAINED,
THAT I DARE NOT EVEN ASK MYSELF
IF YOU ARE REALITY OR ILLUSION.
EITHER WAY, FOR US MORTALS,
YOU ARE AN INDISPENSABLE SOURCE OF HOPE.

STILL, MY KADDISH IS NOT A CONFESSION
OF SUDDEN RELIGIOUS REBIRTH.
LIKE MOST OF MY FELLOW-MEN,
I REMAIN TORN BETWEEN BELIEF AND DOUBT,
REVELATION AND ENLIGHTENMENT,
FAITH AND REASON.

SINCE MY COMEBACK FROM OBLIVION
PROVIDENCE HAS SMILED UPON ME.

MY CUP TRULY RUNNETH OVER.

BUT IN THE END, WHAT AM I,

IF NOT A HUMBLE MESSENGER

FROM THE WORLD OF MY PARENTS

THAT ONCE COLLAPSED,

TO THE WORLD OF MY PROGENY,

THAT SEEMS HEADED

FOR ANOTHER COLLAPSE?

AND WHAT ENTITLES ME

TO CLAIM YOUR ATTENTION,

IF NOT A DUTY TO SHARE

MY AWESOME TESTIMONY

WITH THOSE WHO HAVE KNOWN

ONLY NORMAL EXISTENCE?

AND WHAT IS MY MESSAGE, IF NOT THAT MAN,

THOUGH CREATED IN YOUR IMAGE,

AND ENDOWED WITH FREEDOM TO CHOOSE

BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL,

REMAINS CAPABLE OF THE WORST, AS OF THE BEST,

OF HATRED AS OF LOVE,

OF MADNESS AS OF GENIUS.

**THAT UNLESS WE CURB
OUR PREDATORY INSTINCTS,
CHERISH THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE,
AND ESPOUSE THE CORE MORAL VALUES
COMMON TO ALL GREAT CREEDS
– SACRED AND SECULAR --
THE HORRORS OF THE PAST WILL RETURN
TO DARKEN OUR FUTURE. //**

IV. FINALE

SPEAKER:

**>> FATHER, FATHER,
DO YOU RECALL THAT WONDROUS SPRING DAWN,
WHEN THE AMERICAN GIs DESCENDED,
LIKE ANGELS FROM HEAVEN,
TO RESCUE ME FROM HELL?
I WAS STILL A BOY,
ALONE IN THE CAULDRON'S OF EUROPE,
LIKE THE YOUNG JOSEPH**

**IN THE DUNGEONS OF EGYPT.
BUT FROM THAT MOMENT ON,
I NO LONGER FELT ABANDONED,
BECAUSE YOUR GODLINESS BECAME
SO DIVINELY HUMANE.**

**YOU PERFORMED DAZZLING MIRACLES,
ON A BIBLICAL SCALE,
DELIVERING THE ENSLAVED, THE OPPRESSED
AND THE DISPERSED
FROM THE CLUTCHES OF TYRANNY,
TO REBUILD YOUR TEMPLE.**

**YOU PERFORMED MIRACLES FOR ME, TOO,
REKINDLING FROM THE ASHES
MY WEAK FLICKER OF LIFE,
INTO A FLAME.**

**YOU OPENED MY SHATTERED MIND
TO THE MAGIC OF KNOWLEDGE,
CULTURE AND BEAUTY.
YOU EVEN TAUGHT ME HOW TO LOVE
AND DREAM AGAIN.**

**ABOVE ALL, FATHER,
YOU BLESSED ME WITH A NEW
AND HAPPY FAMILY,
WITH CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN
WHOSE SPARKLING FACES
AND STERLING CHARACTERS
RESURRECT EVERY DAY
THE MEMORY OF THOSE I HAVE LOST. /**

ONE DAY - MAY THEY - SAY - KADDISH - FOR ME... //

**>> THUS, O GREAT AND UNIQUE GOD OF ABRAHAM:
IT IS WITH RESPECT
FOR THE SINCERE BELIEFS OF ALL,
AND WITH MALICE TO NONE,
THAT I BOW TOWARD ETERNAL JERUSALEM,
ITS SYNAGOGUES, CHURCHES AND MOSQUES,
ITS WAILING WALL,
AND SHRINE OF YAD VASHEM,
TO SING FOR YOU
MY FERVENT PRAYER OF HOPE
DRAWN FROM TORRENTS OF BLOOD.**

BOND WITH US AGAIN, LORD.

GUIDE US TOWARD RECONCILIATION AND TOLERANCE

BROTHERHOOD AND PEACE,

ON THIS SMALL, DIVIDED, FRAGILE PLANET

– OUR COMMON HOME. //

AMEN! AMEN! A -- MEN !!! //

SOPRANO SOLO, CHILDREN'S CHOIR AND CHORUS: Kaddish

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