

Too many Kaddishes.

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On the last days of this strange and difficult year I want to dedicate a column to the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. The text is actually very uplifting. It praises HaShem and does not mention death at all. It is recited to elevate the soul of a deceased loved one, especially for close members of one's family, but also for significant persons in one's life. Reciting Kaddish requires a minyan, a quorum of ten people, at the graveside during the funeral and afterwards when it is recited in the community, in a synagogue. For parents one recites Kaddish for a year (actually, 11 months) and for others less long. Kaddish is said on every yahrzeit (anniversary of date of death). I am sitting at my drafting table and making a kaddish for my Maggid teacher M'Yitzhak Buxbaum, who passed away this month. Earlier this year I lost my father, for whom I am creating a series of oil paintings about the Kaddish, I made one for my friend Miriam Riccarda Giraudi, whose Kaddish drawing is still in New York and at this moment inaccessible for me because I am in Europe during a

lockdown, and I am thinking of several others who passed away this year, many of them as a result of a Covid infection.

I have created kaddish art before. I write the text in the center of a sheet of paper, sometimes white, other times grey, ochre, or grayish-blue. Most kaddishes are made in ink and pastel, colorful, and some are black and white, in ink. I add an empty chair to the text symbolizing the void the dear deceased left, a tear, plus some attributes, like a Sefer for a man, shabbat candles or challot for a woman, and some personal references. In the top of the drawing I often paint a shtetl, or a house, in the bottom there might be a minyan saying kaddish in a graveyard.

Some of my kaddishes have a very different approach, like a series I made for the attacks on 9/11, but they will be discussed in a different article.





