



Alisa Fineman  
a decade of stirring the bread

**Alisa Fineman** *Closing the Distance: Poems, Prayers, and Love Songs* (Cup of Kindness CUP 036 (2004) Okay, here's the scoop: Take Dido, with her dreamy, catchy songs, and mix them with the folksy earthiness and spirituality of Judy Frankel, an overlooked talent who, for the past decade plus, has created a moving body of Sephardic-Jewish music. That's what this release from Alisa Fineman, a soulful folkie, sounds like. but she's an original, even if she does create certain songs around Jewish liturgy. She sings about peace, love and spirituality, but in a folk-pop context, laced at times with Middle Eastern flavorings. The result, such as on her own *Uv'chein, and Then*, or her rendition of *Eit Dodim, A Time of Lovers*, the Sephardic ballad, is catchy and stirring. Moreover, Fineman is blessed with an expressive and memorable voice, which was mixed nicely by Alex DeGrassi, the new-age guitarist who produced this release. To subvert the old Levi's rye bread advertisement, you don't have to be Jewish to appreciate and enjoy this album. (ES)