

Yizkor

Shavuot

6 Sivan 5781/17 May 2021

RETURN AGAIN

Return again, return again
Return to the land of your soul
Return again, return again
Return to the land of your soul

Return to what you are, return to who you are
Return to where you are
Born and reborn again
Return again, return again,
Return to the land of your soul
Return again, return again
Return to the land of your soul...

The Wisdom of Our Tradition

Our tradition shows great wisdom in teaching us to gather for services of remembrance on Yom Kippur and on the three pilgrimage festivals (Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot). These moments that mark the seasons of the year—and the seasons of our lives—they awaken strong memories of love and family: the holidays we shared with parents, grandparents, children, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, and cherished friends.

When loved ones are gone, we can still affirm the beautiful and lasting values we learned from them. One of the ways we do that is by coming together as a community of comfort and care.

From its inception a thousand years ago, when it was prayed by Ashkenazic Jews on the morning of Yom Kippur, Yizkor has had two profound themes: God's embrace of the loved ones who are beyond our reach; and our commitment to do the good deeds that are within our reach by giving tzedakah in their memory. When we say Yizkor, "May God remember ..." we proclaim our faith that those who have died have significance now and forever.

I WOULD TERM the experience of Yizkor a conversation with the dead. . . . Inside each of us there speaks a small voice, part of which is a father, a mother, or some other loved one. If we listen to that voice, we get a sense of how to deal with [our] situation. Thus our conversations with the dead not only guide us, but also reconcile us with the moral decisions we make.

Rabbi Barry Freundel

Introduction

Meditations

THIS IS the hour of memory —
and this is our house of comfort.
Wounded by loss, we retreat from life;
our synagogue gathers us in.
Into this place we bring stories and prayers,
unanswered questions,
tears that need to be shed.
Lives recollected and carried within us —
moments of courage and laughter and pain —
this day embraces them all;
this place embraces us all.
Now the heart opens in sorrow,
for we are time's subjects,
and all that we love we must lose.
So let us hold fast to the love that remains,
and cherish the light of the sun.
Today all of us walk the mourner's path;
together may we find strength.

Did you ever notice that no two waves hit the same place on the sand?
One wave laps at the shore.
The next one rolls in – hitting lower, or maybe reaching past it.
Each wave leaves a delicate curved edge on the sand.
We don't know where until the wave comes in.
Each one is a surprise.
We know the waves are unpredictable.
Still, we get caught by surprising waves.

Memories are like waves.
We can't predict their timing, height or force.
We never know when memories will wash upon us or how.
Will our recollections gently touch us, or will they hit us hard?

Waves of memory arrive at different times.
Holidays invite the waves and carry us back in time
even as we are squarely living in the present.
Yizkor allows us return to those unique individuals who played roles in our lives.
Their paths, their lives, their deaths impact us
precisely because their lives impacted us.
Yizkor is a sacred time to stop amidst a busy world
and remember those lives, their paths, their deaths.

Yizkor is a place, to be alone with our recollections and our emotions,
yet to be alone in the supported space of community.
We let the waves of memory come in
and leave their unpredictable edges along our shores –
whether they wash low and gently over our souls or hit high with force.

Yizkor allows us to remember, to feel,
to experience the impact of our memories on our souls and our lives.

(Rabbi Lisa S. Greene)

REFLECTIONS

Eli, Eli

Eili, Eili,

shelo yigameir l'olam:

hachol v'hayam,

rishrush shel hamayim,

b'rak hashamayim,

t'filat haadam.

אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי

שֶׁלֹא יִגְמַר לְעוֹלָם

הַחֹל וְהַיָּם,

רִישְׁרִישׁ שֶׁל הַמַּיִם,

בְּרַק הַשָּׁמַיִם,

תְּפִלַּת הָאָדָם.

Eli, Eli, I pray that these things

never end —

the sand and the sea,

the rush of the waters,

the crash of the heavens,

the prayer of the heart.

THE DEATH OF A LOVED ONE is the most profound of all sorrows. The grief that comes with such a loss is intense and multifaceted, affecting our emotions, our bodies, and our lives. Grief is preoccupying and depleting. Emotionally, grief is a mixture of raw feelings such as sorrow, anguish, anger, regret, longing, fear, and deprivation. Grief may be experienced physically as exhaustion, emptiness, tension, sleeplessness, or loss of appetite.

Grief invades our daily lives in many sudden gaps and changes, like that empty place at the dinner table, or the sudden loss of affection and companionship, as well as in many new apprehensions, adjustments, and uncertainties.

The loss of a loved one throws every aspect of our lives out of balance. The closer we were to the person who died, the more havoc the loss creates. Love does not die quickly. Hence to grieve is also “to celebrate the depth of the union. Tears are then the jewels of remembrance, sad but glistening with the beauty of the past. So grief in its bitterness marks the end . . . but it also is praise to the one who is gone.”

Judy Tatelbaum

My Dead

הם בלבד בותרו לי, רק בהם בלבד
לא ינעץ המוות סביבו החד.

במפנה הדרך, בערב היום
יקיפוני חרש, ילונני דם.

ברית אמת היא לנו, קשר לא נפרד
רק אשר אבד לי – קניני לעד.

They alone are left me; they alone still faithful,
for now death can do no more to them.

At the bend of the road, at the close of day,
they gather around me silently, and walk by my side.

This is a bond nothing can ever loosen.
What I have lost: what I possess forever.

Rachel

Together

Together
We were like
two guy wires
supporting a fragile
sapling.

Our tenuous lives,
dreams, fantasies
entwined as one.

Slowly, the sapling
flourished, rooted,
produced two sons.

One day, after forty-two years,
without warning,
you let go.

Dora Kushner

The Death of a Parent

Move to the front
of the line
a voice says, and suddenly
there is nobody
left standing between you
and the world, to take
the first blows
on their shoulders.
This is the place in books
where part one ends, and part two begins,
and there is no part three.
The slate is wiped
not clean but like a canvas
painted over in white
so that a whole new landscape
must be started,
bits of the old
still showing underneath —
those colors sadness lends
to a certain hour of evening.
Now the line of light
at the horizon
is the hinge between earth
and heaven, only visible
a few moments
as the sun drops
its rusted padlock
into place.

Linda Pastan

Separation

Your absence has gone through me
Like thread through a needle.
Everything I do is stitched with its color.

W. S. Merwin

Yahrzeit Candle

You've lit a candle on the counter between us,
a twenty-four-hour mantra to your mother's passing
from one realm to another twenty years ago,

distillation of grief, wick of suffering,
remembrance of how, after the stark drama
of her last illness, the tragic final act,

we ushered her out of her suburban home
like a pilgrim and handed her over to darkness,
releasing her spirit to the air, a wing,

and turning back to each other in light
of our fresh role as keepers of the dead,
initiates of sorrow, inheritor of prayers

Lord, which we recite but cannot believe,
grown children swaying to an archaic music
and cupping the losses, our bowl of flame.

Edward Hirsch

Not Waving but Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man,
But still he lay moaning:
I was much further out than you thought
And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking
And now he's dead
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,
They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
(Still the dead one lay moaning)
I was much too far out all my life
And not waving but drowning.

Stevie Smith

We Die

I

We die despite appointments and feuds,
while our toddler,
who has recently learned to say No,
opens and shuts drawers
a hundred times a day
and our teen braces
for the rapids of romance.

We die despite the contracts
and business trips we planned,
when our desk is untidy,
despite a long list of things to do
which we keep simmering
like a rich broth.

We die despite work we cherish,
marrying whom we love,
piling up a star-spangled fortune,
basking on the Riviera of fame,
and achieving, that human participle
with no known object.

II

Life is not fair, the old saw goes.
We know, we know, but the saw glides slow,
one faint rasp, and then at length another.
When you died, I felt its jagged teeth rip.
Small heartwounds opened and bled,
closing as new ones opened ahead.
Horror welled, not from the how but the when.

You died at the top of your career,
happy, blessed by love, still young.
Playing by evolution's rules, you won:
prospered, bred, rose in your tribe,
did what the parent gods and society prized.

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Yet it didn't save you, love or dough.
Even when it happens slow, it happens fast,
and then there's no tomorrow.
Time topples, the castle of cards collapses,
thoughts melt, the subscription lapses.
What a waste of life we spend in asking,
in wish and worry and want and sorrow.

A tall man, you lie low, now and forever,
complete, your brilliant star eclipsed.
. . . . Lost friend, you taught me lessons
I longed to learn, and this final one I've learned
against my will: the one spoken in silence,
warning us to love hard and deep,
clutch dear ones tighter, ransom each day,
the horror lesson I saw out of the corner of my eye
but refused to believe until now: we die.

Diane Ackerman

Shir hamaalot:

Mimaamakim k'raticha, Adonai.

Adonai, shimah v'koli.

Tiyenah oznecha kashuvot

I'kol tachanunai.

שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת:

מִמַּעַמְקִים קְרָאתִיךָ, יי.

אֲדֹנָי, שְׁמָעָה בְּקוֹלִי

תְּהִינָה אָזְנוֹךָ קְשׁוּבוֹת

לְקוֹל תַּחֲנוּנָי.

A poem for reaching up

Out of the depths, I cry to You:

Hear me, hear my voice.

Let my plea reach Your ear.

Psalm 130:1-2

WORDS OF TRADITION

I have taught myself to be contented. . . .

Psalm 131:2

Psalm 90

Adonai, through all generations, we have found our home in You.
Before the mountains rose up, before the birth-pangs of the earth,
You alone have been with us, steadfast and constant for all time.

In the end You return us to dust, saying: "Come home now,
daughters and sons of Adam and Eve — you are mortal."
In Your sight a thousand years pass in an instant,
like a fleeting watch in the night. But how brief the span of our lives!
Our years flow by in a dream; we sleep away our days.
In the morning we blossom in beauty; in the evening we wither away.
Burnt like grass in the blasting heat of summer,
we perish like chaff on the wind.

A human life may be three score years and ten;
or four score years, for those who are blessed with strength.
So many days consumed by toil and troubles —
then our time is cut short; and too soon we go into the dark.
So teach us to number our days,
that we may bring home a heart of wisdom.
Give us a sense of Your presence; nourish us with Your compassion.
Knowing Your love at the dawn of our life, let us live our days in
contentment.
May our moments of joy surpass the times of struggle.
May we taste the sweetness of each precious day.
May the work of our hands bring fulfillment.

Psalm 121

Shir lamaalot:

Esa einai el-heharim:

mei-ayin yavo ezri?

Ezri mei-im Adonai —

oseih shamayim vaaretz.

Al yitein lamot raglecha;

al-yanum shom'recha.

Hineih: lo-yanum v'lo yishan

shomeir Yisrael.

Adonai shom'recha;

Adonai tzil'cha al-yad y'minecha.

Yomam hashemesh lo-yakeka,

v'yarei-ach balailah.

Adonai yishmorcha mikol-ra —

yishmor et-nafshecha.

Adonai yishmor-tzeit'cha uvo-echa,

mei-atah v'ad-olam.

A song for reaching up

I turn my eyes to the mountains;
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Eternal,
maker of heaven and earth.
God will not let your foot give way;
your guardian will not slumber.
See, the guardian of Israel
neither slumbers nor sleeps!
The Eternal is your guardian,
The Eternal is your protection
at your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.
The Eternal will guard you from all harm;
God will guard your soul.
The Eternal will guard your going and coming now and forever.

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת:
אֲשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים,
מֵאֵין יָבֵא עֲזָרִי.
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יי,
עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.
אֲלִי־תֵן לַמּוֹט רַגְלֶךָ
אֲלִי־נֹחַם שֹׁמְרֶךָ.
הִנֵּה לֹא־יָנוּחַ וְלֹא יִישָׁן
שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל.
יי שֹׁמְרֶךָ
יי צִלְךָ עַל־יַד יְמִינֶךָ.
יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יִכָּפֵה
וַיָּרַח בַּלַּיְלָה.
יי יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל־דָּע
יִשְׁמֹר אֶת־נַפְשֶׁךָ.
יי יִשְׁמֹר־צֵאתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ
מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם.

WE REMEMBER

Today we remember.

We remember those we adored & those we struggled to make peace with.

Those who fought us & those who taught us.

We remember the places they held in our lives,

each of them unique, their life journeys unique.

So too the life lessons they bequeathed to us, in life and in death.

"Each death [we experience is]... a tearing away of part of [ourselves]...

When people die, they cannot be replaced.

They leave holes that cannot be filled,

for it is the fate...of every human being to be a unique individual,

to find his own path, to live [her] own life, to die his own death."ⁱ

Today we remember.

We remember those we adored & those we struggled to make peace with.

Those who fought us & those who taught us.

We remember the places they held in our lives,

each of them unique, their life journeys unique.

So too the life lessons they bequeathed to us in life and in death.

RECITATION OF NAMES

Remember.

Remember the blessings of those who no longer walk this earth.

Remember each name, each life-story.

Remember on behalf of those whose memory fails.

Remember with love the sweet and the bittersweet.

Remember with forgiveness the hurt and misunderstanding.

Remember with insight so you might experience deeper meaning.

Remember through the pain until you can touch the joy and find comfort.

Remember through dreams left unfulfilled and choose one to fulfill.

Remember through your heart.

Remember through your actions.

Remember through living with kindness, generosity and forgiveness.

Remember through your children and grandchildren.

Remember by planting memories and helping them take root in the living.

Remember by opening your heart even if you thought it was closed forever.

Remember to live your own life as a blessing.

Remember to do all this.

Remember and you will be remembered.

Remember.

(Rabbi Nina Mizrahi)

TIMELESS WORDS OF PRAYER

YIZKOR Elohim nishmot yakirai יִזְכּוֹר אֱלֹהִים נְשָׁמוֹת יַקִּירַי
shehal'chu l'olamam. שְׁהַלְכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם.
Ana tih'yenah nafshoteihem אָנָּה וַתְּהַיְיָנָה נַפְשׁוֹתֵיהֶם
tz'rurot bitz'ror hachayim צָרוּרוֹת בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים
ut'hi m'nuchatam kavod. וַתְּהִי מְנוּחָתָם כְּבוֹד.
Sova s'machot et panecha, שִׁבַע שְׂמַחוֹת אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ,
n'imot bimincha netzach. Amen. נְעִימוֹת בְּיַמִּינְךָ נֶצַח. אָמֵן.

MAY GOD REMEMBER forever my
who have gone to their eternal rest.
May they be at one with the One who is life eternal.
May the beauty of their lives shine forevermore,
and may my life always bring honor to their memory.

Memorial Prayer

El malei rachamim, אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים,
shochein bam'romim, שׁוֹכֵן בַּמְרוֹמִים.
hamtzei m'nuchah n'chonah הַמְצֵא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה
tachat kanfei hash'chinah — תַּחַת כַּנְפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה
im k'doshim ut-horim עִם קְדוֹשִׁים וְטְהוֹרִים
k'zohar harakia mazhirim — כְּזֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזֹהֲרִים
l'nishmot yakireinu לְנִשְׁמוֹת יַקִּירֵינוּ
shehal'chu l'olamam. שְׁהַלְכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם.
Baal harachamim yastireim בַּעַל הַרַחֲמִים יִסְתִּירֵם
b'seiter k'nafav l'olamim; בְּסֵטֶר כַּנְפָּיו לְעוֹלָמִים,
v'yitzror bitzror hachayim וַיִּצְרוֹר בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים
et nishmatam. אֶת נִשְׁמָתָם.
Adonai — hu nachalatam. יְיָ הוּא נַחֲלָתָם.
V'yanuchu b'shalom al mishkavam. וַיְנַוְחוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכָּבָם.
V'nomar: Amen. וְנֹאמַר: אָמֵן.

Merciful God,
God Most High:
Let there be perfect rest
for the souls of our loved ones who have gone into eternity.
May they find shelter in Your presence among the holy and pure
whose light shines like the radiance of heaven.
Compassionate God, hold them close to You forever.
May their souls be bound up in the bond of life eternal.
May they find a home in You.
And may they rest in peace.
Together we say: *Amen*

Mourner's Kaddish

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'meih raba,

b'alma di v'ra chiruteih.

V'yamlich malchuteih

b'chayeichon uvyomeichon

uvchayei d'chol beit Yisrael,

baagala uvizman kariv;

v'imru: Amen.

Y'hei sh'meih raba m'varach

l'alam ul-almei almaya!

Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpaar

v'yitromam v'yitnasei

v'yit-hadar v'yitaleh v'yit-halal

sh'meih d'kudsha — b'rich hu —

leila uleila mikol birchata v'shirata,

tushb'chata v'nechemata,

daamiran b'alma;

v'imru: Amen.

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya,

v'chayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael;

v'imru: Amen.

Oseh shalom bimromav,

Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu,

v'al kol Yisrael

[v'al kol yoshvei teiveil].

V'imru: Amen.

יִתְגַּדֵּל וַיִּתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא,

בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתֵיהּ.

וַיְמַלִּיךְ מַלְכוּתֵיהּ

בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן

וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,

בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב.

וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

יְהִי שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ

לְעָלָם וּלְעֵלְמֵי עֲלְמַיָּא.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר

וַיִּתְרוֹמֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא

וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּתְהַלָּל

שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא

לְעֵלְא וּלְעֵלְא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא,

תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחַמְתָּא,

דְאָמִירָן בְּעֵלְמָא.

וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

יְהִי שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא,

וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.

וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוַמֵּי

הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ

וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל

[וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל].

וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

AS WE MOVE FORWARD

The *Kaddish* of the Kibbutzim

Dalia Marx

Magnified be the name of the person,
Extolled be the labors of his life,
and *blessed* through our memory
for the sum of his deeds
through his days in the world
And for the actions which he did not
manage to complete.
For dreams that were spun and were then no
more
And for precious virtues and even human
weaknesses that have faded away through the
foggy mists of time.

May the person's memory be radiant and
the reflections of her life be like the
brilliance of the firmament in our hearts-
Let her name endure as long as the sun shines.
What remains of the person is the memory
beyond the limits of time.
Her name shall not be covered by darkness.
The imperative of life's continuity will
bring relief to our inmost pain.
The march of time will be compassionate.
And we shall cherish the fruits of her life for
many a day.
Magnified and sanctified.

ONE MORNING shortly after my mother died, a hesitant tap on the shoulder stopped me as I left the synagogue where I had just finished saying the mourner's Kaddish. I turned to face a fellow morning-service "regular"—a tall, gray-haired gentleman with a football player's thick build. "I don't mean to be presumptuous," he said in a soft voice. "I know you're very sad right now. But I wanted to tell you that I went through that, too, when my father died several years ago. And here's the thing: Believe it or not, I am as close to my father now as when he was alive! Maybe even closer, because I have come to understand him better. He is inside me, I hear his voice. We are still that close." Then he smiled and waved goodbye, leaving me to ponder words that I began to understand only years later.

What he meant, I think, was that our dead inhabit us like ghosts. The trick, as he knew then and I have learned since, is to befriend them rather than have them haunt us. They will greet us on sad anniversaries as well as in joy. We will imagine a deceased parent's response to her grandchild's arrival; or we will call back from memory the words or actions of the one person to whom we would have turned were he or she still there. And eventually, when we hear that voice again, it will bring not just pain but comfort and resolution.

Diane Cole