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Storyteller and performer Faye Lane was once a flight attendant. In late September, 2001, she was working a flight from New York to Los Angeles, and she writes:

*A passenger with a garbage bag entered the plane. I think to myself, "Really sir, a garbage bag?" He goes to row 2 and opened the overhead bin and put the garbage bag inside. My thought was, what was in the garbage bag? This was late September, 2001, and we were still on edge. He put it in the overhead bin and closed it, stood there and held his hand on it---A pet peeve of flight attendants. Hello, the overhead space is shared space, and if you hog up all the space, there won't be any room for the other passengers. Somebody's bag is going to get checked. It's not nice. You're taking someone else's space. My thought was to say to him, "Sir, please sit down!" But I just let it go. I just said to myself, "Smile and be kind. And if we need the space, I'll deal with it later." I didn't say anything.*

*I also didn't say anything when he got up while the seatbelt sign was still on and waited for the bathroom. If the seatbelt sign is on it's because the captain knows something we don't know. Even if the flight is smooth, he's probably heard from a pilot up ahead that there is turbulence. I had a friend who broke his ankle even though the flight was smooth. So I went up to him and said, "Sir the seatbelt sign is on." He said "I know I know but I really have to go." I thought, let it go, just let it go. I just wanted to read my book.*

*It was awkward, because he was standing there and I thought I should say something. So I said, "Are you traveling for business or pleasure?" And he said neither. He said, "I live in California. But I came to NY because my son was a first responder at Ground Zero and he died there. I came to pick up his uniform, which is all I have left of him and it's in a bag in the overhead bin."*

At this Yizkor hour we who mourn have come here with what we have left of them. We have come with our memories. We have come with our dreams of them, with beautiful recollections of the special times. And we have come with broken hearts for the special times they missed and will miss.

We also come with what is missing. The phone calls we made but can't make anymore. The sound of their laughter. The way they could calm us down, or drive us nuts. How, just catching a glance of them, our eyes meeting, could center us could make us smile, and let us know everything would be ok.

We even guard the harsher and unsettled times. The things we should have said, and the things we wished we'd never said. We guard it all, we protect it all like that father and his plastic bag.

Yizkor arrives now, and we allow ourselves to open up that plastic bag, to allow it all to come through us. Yizkor's hope is that the human spirit can cope with grief, can transcend grief, and that the human spirit renews and heals. So, we find a way to be grateful for the good times. We find a way to forgive them for the painful times, and even to forgive ourselves for the moments we'd like to take back. We may even realize that they tried their best, and we tried our best.

Yizkor's hope is that we can think first about the good times, allowing the best of them to shape how we live our lives. That we can move forward, step by step, moment by moment, nourished and supported by family and friends, by the blessings and the love and joys here and now.

And finally, we will hold tight in prayer, asking the Holy One to sustain us...as we take each step forward, as we learn to live with both loss and with gratitude, and together glimpse a new year that can be a good year, so our memories of them will inspire us to live each day as a blessing. Amen.