Yizkor

Yizkor is a special memorial prayer for the departed, is recited in the synagogue (but may be recited at home if one cannot attend synagogue) four times a year, on the last day of Passover, on the second day of Shavuot, on Shemini Atzeret and on Yom Kippur.

Yizkor, in Hebrew, means "Remember." It is not only the first word of the prayer, it also represents its overall theme. In this prayer, we implore G-d to remember the souls of our relatives and friends that have passed on.

When we recite Yizkor, we renew and strengthen the connection between us and our loved one, bringing merit to the departed souls, elevating them in their celestial homes.

The main component of Yizkor is our personal pledge to give charity following the holiday in honor of the deceased. By giving charity, we are performing a positive physical deed in this world, something that the departed can no longer do.

The soul gains additional merit if the memory of its good deeds spur their loved ones to improve their ways.

In addition to reciting Yizkor for one's parents, one may recite Yizkor for any Jew who has passed on, including relatives and friends. When reciting Yizkor for more than one person, repeat the Yizkor paragraph each time, and substitute the words (my father), or (my mother), with the appropriate title.

For a father (and all males) say:

Translation:
May G-d remember the soul of my father (or other relative), my teacher (mention his Hebrew name and that of his mother) who has gone to his [supernal] world, because I will — without obligating myself with a vow — donate charity for his sake. In this merit, may his soul be bound up in the bond of life with the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and with the other righteous men and women who are in Gan Eden; and let us say, Amen.
For a mother (and all females) say:

Yizkor elo-him nish'mas imi mo-rosi
(mention her Hebrew name and that of her
mother) she-hol'chôh l'oî-dôh,
ba avur she'bî lî neder etayna tţ'dôkôh
ba-adôh, bis'char zeh t'hay naf'shôh
tz'ërôh biz'tôr ha-cha-yim, im
nishmas avrôhôm yit-zôkôh
v'ya-akôv, sôrôh riv-kôh rô-châyl
v'lô-yôh, v'îm shôr tza-dîlâm
v'tzid-kôni yôs she-b'gan ayden,
v'înoz: Omayn.

Translation:
May G-d remember the soul of my
mother (or other relative), my
teacher (mention her Hebrew
name and that of her mother) who
has gone to her [supernal] world,
because I will - without obligating
myself with a vow - donate charity
for her sake. In this merit, may her
soul be bound up in the bond of
life with the souls of Abraham,
Isaac and Jacob, Sarah,
Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and with the other righteous men and women who are in Gan Eden;
and let us say, Amen.

Continue here:

Or hórach-a-mîm sho-chayn
m'onîm, b-ra-chamîv hō-at-zûmîm,
hu yî-fked b'ra-chamîm,
hr-cha-sidîm v'ha-yô-shînîm
v'ha-îm-mîn, k'hîlos ha-kôdesh
she-mos'tû naf'shôm al k'dôshas
ha-shaym, ha-ne-ehôvîm v'han'îm
b'chay-y-hem, uv mozom lo nî-f-rodu:
mîn'shôrîm kôtu, uny-arô-yôs
gâ-vayu, la-asô r'tson kônôm
v'chay-fez tse-rôm. Yizkî'aym
e lo-haynu l'îovôh, im shôr tsadîkay
elem, vî-yîn-kôm nîk'mas dam avôdôv
ha-shôûtîch. Ka-kôsuw b'tôsor moshîh
ish ho-ehôlîm: Har-nînu yô-gîm amo.
ki dam avôdôv yîkôm, vî-nôkôm yêsîv
l'tzôrîv, v'chîper ad môso amo. V'al
y'day avôdecho han 'îm-kôsuw
lay-mon: V'nîkaysî dêmêm lo nîkaysî
v'adonîy sho-chayn b'tzôyôm:
Uv chîs'vay hakôdeh ne-emar: Lômôh
yômî'ru ha-gô-yîm a'yay elo-haynîm,
yîv'dâh ba-gô-yîm
l'yîn-naynu nîk'mas dam avôdôchô
ha-shôûtîch. V'mayr: Ki dorôsh
demîm osom zôcher, lo sho-chach
tse-akas anô-vîm. V'mayr: Yôdîn
ba-gô-yîm mîlôy g'vî-yôs môchât
rôsh al etze tâbô. Mîn-nachal
ba-derech yîsh'teh, al kây
yôrîm rôsh:

May the All-Merciful Father Who dwells in the
supernal heights, in His profound compassion,
remember with mercy the pious, the upright
and the perfect ones, the holy communities
who gave their lives for the sanctification of the
Divine Name.

They were beloved and pleasant in their lives,
and [even] in their death were not parted [from
Him]; they were swifter than eagles, stronger
than lions to carry out the will of their Maker
and the desire of their Creator.

May our G-d remember them with favor
together with the other righteous of the world,
and avenge the spilled blood of His servants,
as it is written in the Torah of Moses, the man
of G-d: O nations, sing the praises of His
people, for He will avenge the blood of His
servants, bring retribution upon His foes, and
 placate His land — His people.
And by Your servants the Prophets it is written
as follows: I will cleanse [the nations of their
wrongdoings,] but for the [shedding of Jewish]
blood I will not cleanse them; the Lord dwells
in Zion.

And in the Holy Writings it is said: Why should
the nations say, "Where is their G-d?" Let
there be known among the nations, before our
eyes, the retribution of the spilled blood
of Your servants. And it is said: For the Avenger
of bloodshed is mindful of them; He does not
forget the cry of the downtrodden. Further it is
said: He will render judgment upon
the nations, and they will be filled with corpses; He
will crush heads over a vast area. He will drink
from the stream on the way; therefore [Israel]
will hold its head high.

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