

Yizkor

Liturgy



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We are grateful for the efforts of Rabbi Amy Loewenthal for producing this excerpt in tandem with the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association under the leadership of Rabbi Elyse Wechterman.

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YIZKOR / MEMORIAL SERVICE

Traditionally Yizkor, the memorial service, is recited after the Haftarah in the Torah service on the morning of Yom Kippur, but recitation of Yizkor can be shifted to any other time in the day. Yizkor prayers are customarily said while standing. Some congregations read a list of those who are to be remembered. Others publish a remembrance book.

יְהוָה מְה־אָדָם וַתִּדְעֵהוּ

ALMIGHTY ONE, what are human beings
that you take note of them,

בְּנֵי-אָנוּשׁ וַתַּחֲשִׁבֵהוּ:

the children of humanity
that you should think of them? ↩

COMMENTARY. Calling to mind the memory of relatives or friends who have departed and giving *tzedakah* in their memory is a long-standing custom. It is mentioned in the medieval work *Midrash Tanhuma* as a Yom Kippur custom, though the *Yizkor* prayers themselves are somewhat later in origin. Recitation of *Yizkor* on the Pilgrimage Festivals began in European communities after the bloody destruction associated with the Crusades.

Because it was superstitiously believed that being present for *Yizkor* when one's parents were living could hasten their death, it used to be the case that only those required to say *Yizkor* because of the death of an immediate relative remained in the synagogue. After the Holocaust, which left so many with no one to say *Yizkor* for them, liberal congregations have encouraged everyone to join in reciting *Yizkor*. People are encouraged to recite *Yizkor* for each person whose memory is cherished. The traditional phrase said of the dead, *zikaron livrahah*/the memory for a blessing, reminds us that part of our purpose in remembering is to have our memories influence us to do good. This influence is made tangible in the custom of giving *tzedakah* in memory of loved ones before the holiday begins.

D.A.T.

יְהוָה...עוֹבֵר / ALMIGHTY ONE...shadow (Psalms 144:3-4).

אָדָם לְהֵבֶל דָּמָה

A human being is like a momentary breeze,

יָמָיו כְּצֵל עוֹבֵר:

a person's days are but a passing shadow.

בְּבֹקֶר יִצְיָן וְחָלָף

At dawn, life blossoms and renews itself,

לְעֶרֶב יְמוּלֵל וַיִּבֶשׁ:

at dusk, it withers and dries up.

תָּשֵׁב אָנוֹשׁ עֲדַד־פָּא

You return a person unto dust.

וַתֹּאמֶר שׁוּבוּ בְנֵי-אָדָם:

You say: Return, O children of humanity!

We turn our thoughts to yesterday...to a world that lives only in our memory.

As we recall the days gone by, we know the past is irretrievable. Yet—through the gift of memory, we recapture treasured moments and images.

We are thankful for the happiness we knew with those no longer here, with whom we lived and laughed and loved.

We praise the Eternal wellspring of life who links yesterday to tomorrow. We affirm that despite all the tragedy bound up with living, it is still good to be alive.

We understand that there can be no love without loss, no joy without sorrow. May we have the courage to accept the all of life—the love and the loss—the joy and the sorrow, as we remember them.

Evelyn Mehlman

יָוֵב...בְּבֹקֶר / At dawn...dries up (Psalms 90:6).

אָדָם...חָשַׁב / You return...humanity (Psalms 90:3).

My protector, you are our abode,
one generation to the next,
since before the mountains came to birth,
before the birthpangs of the land and world.
From eternity unto eternity, you are divine.

Truly, a thousand years are in your eyes
like yesterday—so quickly does it pass—
or like the watchman's nighttime post.

You pour upon them sleep, they sleep.
When morning comes, it vanishes like chaff.

At dawn, life blossoms and renews itself,
at dusk, it withers and dries up.

Years of our lifetime are but seventy
—perhaps, among the strongest, eighty years—
and most of them are toil and fatigue,
then quickly it all ends, we fly away.

Who knows the full strength of your fury?
Is our fear of you the equal of your wrath?

Oh, let us know how to assess our days,
how we may bring the heart some wisdom.

Let your accomplishment be visible to those who serve you,
let your beauty rest upon their children,

let our divine protector's pleasure be upon us,
and the labor of our hands, make it secure,
the labor of our hands ensure!

Selections from Psalm 90

אֲדַנִּי מֵעוֹן אַתָּה הָיִיתָ לָּנוּ בְּדֹר וָדֹר:
בְּטָרֶם הָרִים יִלְדוּ וּתְחַוִּיל לְאָרֶץ וּתְבַל
וּמֵעוֹלָם עַד-עוֹלָם אַתָּה אֵל:

כִּי אֶלֶף שָׁנִים בְּעֵינֶיךָ כִּי אֶתְמוּל כִּי יַעֲבֹר
וְאִשְׁמוּרָה בְּלִילָה:

זָרְמַתֶּם שָׁנָה יִהְיוּ בְּבִקְרָה פְּתַצִּיר יִחַלֶּף:
בְּבִקְרָה יִצִּיץ וּחַלֶּף לְעָרֵב יְמוּלֵל וַיִּבֶשׁ:

יְמֵי-שָׁנוֹתֵינוּ בָּהֶם שְׁבַעִים שָׁנָה וְאִם בְּגִבּוֹרוֹת שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה:
וְרָהַבְּם עֵמֶל וְאֹן כִּי-גֹז חֵיֶשׁ וּנְעֻפָה:
מִי-יִוָּדַע עַז אֶפֶךָ וּכְיִרְאָתְךָ עֶבְרָתְךָ:
לְמַנּוֹת יִמְיָנוּ כֵּן הוֹדַע וּנְבִיא לִבִּב חֻקָּמָה:

יִרְאָה אֶל-עֲבָדֶיךָ פְּעֻלָּךְ וְהִדְרֶךְ עַל-בְּנֵיהֶם:
וַיְהִי נֶעַם אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנְנָה עָלֵינוּ
וּמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כּוֹנְנָהוּ:

It is customary to rise for Yizkor prayers, El Maley Rahamim, and Kaddish.

Prayer in remembrance of a male:

יְזַכֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נַשְׁמַת _____ שֶׁהָלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ:
אֲנָא תְהִי נַפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצָרוּר הַחַיִּים וְתְהִי מְנוּחָתוֹ כְּבוֹד: שֶׁבַע
שְׁמַחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ נְעִימוֹת בְּיַמִּינְךָ נְצַח. אָמֵן:

Let God remember the soul of _____ who went to his place of eternal rest. Please let his soul be bound up with the living in the continuum of life, and may his rest be honorable. Grant him abundant joy in your presence, and sweet pleasures at your right hand for eternity. Amen.

Prayer in remembrance of a female:

יְזַכֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נַשְׁמַת _____ שֶׁהָלְכָה
לְעוֹלָמָהּ: אֲנָא תְהִי נַפְשָׁהּ צְרוּרָה בְּצָרוּר הַחַיִּים וְתְהִי מְנוּחָתָהּ
כְּבוֹד: שֶׁבַע שְׁמַחוֹת אֶת-פְּנֵיךָ נְעִימוֹת בְּיַמִּינְךָ נְצַח. אָמֵן:

Let God remember the soul of _____ who went to her place of eternal rest. Please let her soul be bound up with the living in the continuum of life, and may her rest be honorable. Grant her abundant joy in your presence, and sweet pleasures at your right hand for eternity. Amen.

KAVANAH. *Yizkor*, a time to mourn our lost loved ones, is for some a time to mourn relationships that were not fully loving. We pray, זכרון לברכה / *zikaron livrahah* / "may the memory be a blessing." We hope that with the passing of time we can let go of our pain and disappointment in the shortcoming of our deceased loved ones and see them as blessings in our lives, distilling the goodness in them which may now be overshadowed. In coming to terms with difficult relationships, we are blessed with peace, and memory becomes blessing. B.P.T.

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת פניי
השכינה במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הקריע מזהירים
לנשמות יקירינו וקדושינו שהלכו לעולמם: אנא בעל הרחמים
הסתירם בצל כנפיך לעולמים וצור בצרור החיים את נשמתם:
יהוה הוא נחלתם וינחו בשלום על משכבם ונאמר אמן:

God filled with mercy,
dwelling in the heavens' heights,
bring proper rest
beneath the wings of your Shehinah,
amid the ranks of the holy and the pure,
illuminating like the brilliance of the skies
the souls of our beloved and our blameless
who went to their eternal place of rest.
May you who are the source of mercy
shelter them beneath your wings eternally,
and bind their souls among the living,
that they may rest in peace.
And let us say: Amen.

For the Martyrs, Soldiers of the People Israel, and Victims of the Holocaust:

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים שׁוֹכֵן בְּמַרְוָמִים הַמְצִיא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה תַחַת כַּנְּפֵי
הַשְּׁכִינָה בְּמַעְלוֹת קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים כְּאֵהָר הַרְקִיעַ מְזֵה־יָרִים אֶת־
נַשְׁמוֹת חַיְלֵי צָבָא הַהֲגָנָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל וְכָל־אֱלֹהֵי שְׁמֹסְרוֹ אֶת־נַפְשָׁם
עַל־קְדוּשַׁת הַשֵּׁם וְשִׁנְהֵגוּ בְּשׂוֹאָה: אָנָּה בְּעַל הַרְחָמִים תְּסַתִּירֵם
בְּצֵל כַּנְּפֵיךָ לְעוֹלָמִים וְצָרוּר בְּצָרוּר הַחַיִּים אֶת־נַשְׁמוֹתֵם וַיְנַחֵם
בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל־מִשְׁכְּבְּכֶם וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן:

God filled with mercy, dwelling in the heavens' heights, bring proper rest beneath the wings of your Sheḥinah, amid the ranks of the holy and the pure, illuminating like the brilliance of the skies the souls of Israel's soldiers, and all those who have given up their lives in affirmation of your holy Name, and all destroyed in the Shoah. May you who are the source of mercy shelter them beneath your wings eternally, and bind their souls among the living, that they may rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

COMMENTARY. In this *El Maley Rahamim* specific references to those who have died fighting in Israel's wars and those murdered in the Holocaust have been added to the traditional phrase "all those who have given up their lives in affirmation of your holy Name." These events of our time demand special recognition. Sanctification of God's name through voluntary martyrdom was an altogether too common phenomenon in the rabbinic and medieval periods, which were often punctuated by savage persecution. Death in the Holocaust was qualitatively different because it could not be averted by the victim—even conversion had no power to save. Many contemporary Jews view the tragic events of the Holocaust as a lessening of God's presence in the world, though acts of bravery, piety, and caring manifested the divine even then.

Israeli soldiers generally understand their sacrifices to be for the sake of their families and their people rather than as part of an effort to make God manifest. Nonetheless their sacrifices, which have revived and preserved Israel as a Jewish home, have a meaning to Jews everywhere far beyond that of acres of land. They have kept alive a dream we share—our land, not only free, but at peace.

D.A.T.

In the rising of the sun and in its going down, we remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.

In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.

In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.

In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn, we remember them.

In the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.

When we have joys we yearn to share, we remember them.

So long as we live, they too shall live, for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

Jack Riemer and Sylvan D. Kamens

KADDISH YATOM / THE MOURNER'S KADDISH

Reader: Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon. And say: Amen.

Congregation: May God's great name be blessed, forever and as long as worlds endure.

Reader: May it be blessed, and praised, and glorified, and held in honor, viewed with awe, embellished, and revered; and may the blessed name of holiness be hailed, though it be higher by far than all the blessings, songs, praises, and consolations that we utter in this world. And say: Amen.

May Heaven grant a universal peace, and life for us, and for all Israel. And say: Amen.

May the one who creates harmony above, make peace for us and for all Israel, and for all who dwell on earth. And say: Amen.

Love is not changed by Death,
And nothing is lost and all in the end is harvest.

Edith Sitwell

קְדִישׁ יְתוֹם

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרֵעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיף
מְלֻכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוּן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוּן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן
קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא :

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדַּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה
וְיִתְהַלַּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא
לְעֵלְא לְעֵלְא מְכַל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא דְאִמְרִין
בְּעֵלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמְרוּ
אָמֵן :

עוֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַל
כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֶל וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

Yitgadal veyitkadesh shemey raba
be'alma divra hirutey veyamliḥ malḥutey
beḥayeyḥon uvyomeyḥon uvḥayey deḥol beyt yisra'el
ba'agala uvizman kariv ve'imru amen.

Congregation: Yehey shemey raba mevarah le'alam ulalmey almaya.

Yitbarah veyishtabah veyitpa'ar veyitromam
veyitnasey veyit-hadar veyitaleh veyit-halal
shemey dekudsha berih hu
le'ela le'ela mikol birhata veshirata
tushbeḥata veneḥemata da'amiran be'alma ve'imru amen.

Yehey shelama raba min shemaya veḥayim aleynu ve'al kol
yisra'el ve'imru amen.
Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu ve'al kol
yisra'el ve'al kol yoshvey tevel ve'imru amen.

A psalm of David.

THE ETERNAL is my shepherd; I shall never be in need.

Amid the choicest grasses does God set me down.

God leads me by the calmest waters,

and restores my soul.

God takes me along paths of righteousness,

in keeping with the honor of God's name.

Even should I wander in a valley of the darkest shadows,

I will fear no evil.

You are with me, God. Your power and support

are there to comfort me.

You set in front of me a table

in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing.

Surely, good and loving-kindness will pursue me

all the days of my life,

and I shall come to dwell inside the house

of THE ETERNAL for a length of days.

Psalm 23

מִזְמוֹר

לְדָוִד יְהוָה רָעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר: בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצְנִי

עַל־מִי מִנְחֹת יִנְהַלְנִי: נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב
יִנְחֵנִי בַמַּעְגָּלִי צְדָק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צַלְמֹת לֹא־אִירָא רָע
כִּי־אֲתָה עִמָּדִי שְׁבֻטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֵתְךָ הִמָּה יִנְחַמְנִי:
תַּעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי שְׁלֶחַן נֶגֶד צַרְרִי
דִּשְׁנֵת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רוּיָה:
אֶךְ טוֹב וְחָסֵד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי
וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה לְאֶרֶךְ יָמִים:

Mizmor ledavid adonay ro'i lo ehsar. Binot deshe yarbitzeni
al mey menuhot yenhaleⁿi. Nafshi yeshovev
yanh^eni vemageley tzedek lema'an shemo.
Gam ki eleh begey tzalmavet lo ira ra
ki atah imadi shivteha umishanteha hemah yena^hamuni.
Ta'aroh lefanay shulhan neged tzoreray
dishanta vashemen roshi kosi revayah.
Ah tov va^hesed yirdefuni kol yemey hayay
veshavi beveyt adonay le'oreh yamim.