

Departing Cemetery

As one leaves the cemetery, it is customary to place a stone on the grave. This demonstrates the fact that the person has been visited. As ancient graves were often simply piles of stones, to place a stone is to tend to the gravesite.

Another interesting custom practiced by some is to detach some grass and throw it behind one's back, saying "Remember God, we are but dust of the earth."

*The life of mortals is like grass,
they flourish like a flower of the field;
the wind blows over it and it is gone*

-Psalm 103:15

Giving Tzedakah (charity)

In Jewish tradition, prayer is a prelude to action, and therefore it is an accepted custom to give *tzedakah* in memory of a loved one. Through the acts of kindness and good deeds, the soul of the loved one is elevated.

May the memory of your loved ones be a blessing to you and to all that they touched.

Visiting the Cemetery: Suggested Readings



This booklet provides prayers, readings, rituals and reflections you may choose to use when visiting the grave of a loved one.

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How to Plan a Visit to a Cemetery

The purpose of a visit to a cemetery is twofold. The first reason is to remember the life of someone who we loved and inspired us. Visiting the place where they are buried provides us a place and a time to reflect on the meaning of their lives. The second dimension is often overlooked. Going to a cemetery is intended to remind us of our own mortality. We are meant to reflect upon the passage of time and ask ourselves if we are living a life of value and meaning to the fullest extent. Jewish prayers therefore reflect both of these aspects.

It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart. -Ecclesiastes

In the following pages, we will suggest ways you can frame your own visit, either alone or with family or friends. You may choose to use some of these materials for an

unveiling as well. The materials are both

traditional as well as contemporary, and we encourage you to choose that which you feel speaks to you.

Here is a suggested structure. You may adapt it according to your needs:

- 1) Introductory prayer
- 2) Suggested Psalms and meditations
- 3) Words about the deceased
- 4) Lighting yahrzeit Candle
- 5) Recitation of El Maleh Rachamim
- 6) Prayer upon leaving cemetery
- 7) Giving Tzedakah

I feel the responsibility today of carrying the light of my loved one with me, sharing it with all. In this way too, the soul of my loved one will endure the inexorable passage of time.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: In my dark places, I will remember this candle, this light, and I will be graced with hope. I will carry the light of my loved one with me throughout my life.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: In lighting this candle, I pray that God will accompany me with His light, blessing me with the knowledge that in spite of the pain I feel, I feel God's hand on my shoulder, as I travel the road towards wholeness and renewal. I pray that I feel God's comforting light today and every day of my life.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

-Rabbi Frederick L Klein

El Maleh Rachamim

This prayer is recited at funerals, Jewish holidays, and other occasions when we want to remember our loved ones. (Note the Hebrew is in the masculine form.)

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה על כנפי השכינה במעלות
קדושים וטהורים קזוהר הרקיע מזהירים את נשמת פלוני בן פלוני שהלך
לעולמו, בעבור שנדבו צדקה בעד הזכרת נשמתו, לכן בעל הרחמים יסתיירו
בסתר כנפיו לעולמים, ויפרץ בצרור החיים את נשמתו, ה' הוא נחלתו
ינוח בשלום על משכבו, ונאמר אמן

God filled with mercy, dwelling in the heaven's heights, bring proper rest beneath the wings of your presence, amid the ranks of the holy and the pure, illuminating like the brilliance of the skies to _____ [son/daughter] of _____ and _____ who has gone to his/her eternal place of rest. May You who are the source of mercy shelter him/her beneath your wings eternally, And bind his/her soul among the living, that he/she may rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

Lighting the Yahrzeit Candle

The light of the candle represents the soul of a human being, which according to Jewish tradition is immortal. The following is a suggested litany.

Reader: *Ner Hashem Nishmat Adam* – The candle of God is the soul of a person (Proverb 20:27). As we light this candle, I remember my loved one, who was a source of light

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: I gaze into the heart of the flame, and try to recapture the essence of my beloved. My beloved was my spouse, my parent, my child or my friend. I feel these bonds stronger today than ever before.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: I remember the light, the joy, the comfort, the support, the smiles and the gentle touch of my loved one. As I gaze into the essence of the flame, I can hear the voice of my loved one.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: I remember that just as this flame brings warmth and illumination during this long dark night I must travel, I hope to feel the soul of my beloved in ways large and small, reminding me that I am not alone.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: I remember that although our loved one no longer has a body, his or her spirit is eternal. As I gaze into the flame, I experience the loss, but also the consolation in the knowledge that my beloved will endure.

Response: *The Candle of God is the Soul of a Person*

Reader: I realize that my beloved is like this flame, reaching upwards and heavenward, searching and seeking its source.

Introductory Prayers

Traditional Verses

וְנָחַךְ יְקוֹנֶה תְּמִיד וְהַשְׁבִּיעַ בְּצַחְצְחוֹת נַפְשְׁךָ וְעֲצַמְתֶּיךָ יְחַלִּיץ וְהִיִּית כֶּגֶן רוּחַ וְכַמּוֹצָא
מִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּזְבוּ מִמִּי:
וּבְנוּ מִמֶּךָ חֲרָבוֹת עוֹלָם מוֹסְדֵי דוֹר־דּוֹר תִּקְוָמָם וְקִרְא לָךְ גֹּדֶר פֶּרֶץ מְשַׁבֵּב נְתִיבוֹת
לְשִׁבְתָּ:

And the Lord will always guide you,
and satisfy your soul in scorched places,
and resurrect your bones;
And you will be like a watered garden,
and like a spring of waters that never fail.
From you [i.e., your good deeds] will rebuild
the ancient ruins;
The generations-old foundations
you will reestablish;
They will call you "the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of the ways of civilization"
-Isaiah 58: 11-12

For both life and death are aspects of a greater mystery, the mystery of being, the mystery of creation. Over and above the preciousness of particular existence stands the marvel of its being related to the infinite mystery of being or creation.

Death, then, is not simply man's coming to an end.
It is also entering a beginning.

-Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

Suggested Introductory Reading

We are gathered here to remember _____. We have come to reflect on his/her life. A chord has been broken, but we affirm that God, the source of all life and existence will continue to care for _____. Through our remembrance today and our good deeds, we ensure that his/her spirit continues to be an animating and important force in our lives.

In being here, we recognize the fleeting nature of our own lives, and at the same time we are reminded of the sacred nature of every moment. Our lives embody the great contradiction described by the Psalmist:

לִמְנָצַח עַל־הַגִּתִּית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד: יְקֹוֹק אֲדִינִי מִה־אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר תִּנָּה הוֹדֶךָ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם: מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וַיִּנָּקִים יְסֻדְתָּ עַז לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם: כִּי־אֲרָאָה שְׁמֶיךָ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֶיךָ יָרַח וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנָתָה: מִה־אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ וּבֶן־אָדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ: וְתַחֲסֶרְהוּ מַעַט מֵאֲלֹהִים וְקִבּוֹד וְהָדָר תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ: תִּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כֹּל שֶׁתָּה תַּחֲת־רַגְלֵיוֹ: צָנָה וְאֵלֶּפִים כָּלֵם וְגַם בַּהֲמוֹת שָׂדֵי: צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וְדָגֵי הַיָּם עֶבֶר אֲרָחוֹת יָמִים: יְקֹוֹק אֲדִינִי מִה־אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ:

For the leader; on the *gittith*. A psalm of David.

O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name throughout the earth, You who have covered the heavens with Your splendor!

From the mouths of infants and sucklings You have founded strength on account of Your foes, to put an end to enemy and avenger.

When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You set in place,

What is man that You have been mindful of him mortal man that You have taken note of him, that You have made him little less than divine, (or, "the angels") and adorned him with glory and majesty;

You have made him master over Your handiwork, laying the world at his feet,

Sheep and oxen, all of them, and wild beasts, too; the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, whatever travels the paths of the seas.

O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!

- Psalm 8

heart to all generations.

Happy is the nation whose God is the Lord; the people whom He hath chosen for His own inheritance.

The Lord looks from heaven; He beholds all the sons of men; From the place of His habitation He looks intently upon all the inhabitants of the earth;

He that fashioned the hearts of them all, that considers all their doings.

A king is not saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by great strength.

A horse is a vain thing for safety; neither doth it afford escape by its great strength.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is toward them that fear Him, toward them that wait for His mercy;

To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul hath waited for the Lord; He is our help and our shield.

For in Him doth our heart rejoice, because we have trusted in His holy name.

Let Thy mercy, O the Lord, be upon us, according as we have waited for Thee.

Words of Praise about the Deceased

At this point it is proper to speak words of praise and reminisce about our beloved. Everyone is encouraged to express themselves, including children. It is important to give permission to those present to express how they feel in their own words. Here are a few questions you might want to ask those present.

- What were the three gifts that you received from your beloved?
- How are you different for the good because you knew this person?
- What stories stand out which express something significant about this person?
- If you could tell them something now, what would you say?
- What Biblical verse or figure are you reminded of when you speak of your loved one?

Psalm 33 A Psalm of Gratitude and God's Enduring Kindness

רננו צדיקים ביקוק ליִשרים נאֹה תהלה
 הוֹדוּ לִיקוֹק בְּכִנּוֹר בְּנֶבֶל עֲשׂוֹר זָמְרוּלוֹ:
 שִׁירֵי־לוֹ שִׁיר חֲדָשׁ הִיטִיבוּ נֶגֶן בְּתִרְעוּהָ:
 כִּי־יִשָּׂר דְּבַר־יְקוֹק וְכָל־מַעֲשָׂהוּ בְּאֱמוּנָה:
 אֱהַב צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט חֶסֶד יְקוֹק מִלֵּאָה הָאָרֶץ:
 בְּדַבַּר יְקוֹק שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ וּבְרוּחַ פִּיו כָּל־צָבָאִם:
 כָּנַס כְּנֶד מִי הַיָּם נִתַּן בְּאֲצֻרוֹת תְּהוֹמוֹת:
 יִירָאוּ מִיקוֹק כָּל־הָאָרֶץ מִמֶּנּוּ יִגְוֹרוּ כָל־יֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל:
 כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי הוּא־צָוָה וַיַּעֲמֵד:
 יְקוֹק הַפִּיר עֲצֵת־גּוֹיִם הִנִּיא מַחֲשָׁבוֹת עַמִּים:
 עֲצָת יְקוֹק לַעֲוֹלָם תַּעֲמֵד מַחֲשָׁבוֹת לְבוֹ לְדֹר וָדֹר:
 אֲשֶׁר־י הִגִּיד אֲשֶׁר־יְקוֹק אֱלֹהֵיו הָעַם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לוֹ:
 מִשְׁמַיִם הִבִּית יְקוֹק רָאָה אֶת־כָּל־בְּנֵי הָאָדָם:
 מִמֶּכֶן־שִׁבְתּוֹ הִשְׁגִּיחַ אֶל כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ:
 הִיצִיר יִחִיד לִבָּם הִמְבִּין אֶל־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂיהֶם:
 אֵין־הִמְלִיךְ נוֹשַׁע בְּרַב־חַיִּל גִּבּוֹר לֹא־יִנָּצֵל בְּרַב־כֹּחַ:
 שָׁקַר הַסּוֹס לַתְּשׁוּעָה וּבְרַב חֵילוֹ לֹא יִמְלֹט:
 הִנֵּה עֵין יְקוֹק אֶל־יִרְאָיו לְמִי־חַלִּים לְחֹסְדוֹ:
 לְהַצִּיל מִמּוֹת נַפְשָׁם וּלְחַיּוֹתָם בְּרָעַב:
 נִפְשָׁנוּ חִתָּה לִיקוֹק עֲזָרְנוּ וּמִגִּנָּנוּ הוּא:
 כִּי־בֹ יִשְׁמַח לִבָּנוּ כִּי בְשֵׁם קֹדְשׁוֹ בִּטְחָנוּ:
 יְהִי־חֶסֶדְךָ יְקוֹק עָלֵינוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר יַחֲלֹנוּ לָךְ:

Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous, praise is comely for the up-right.

Give thanks unto the Lord with harp, sing praises unto Him with the psaltery of ten strings.

Sing unto Him a new song; play skillfully amid shouts of joy.

For the word of the Lord is upright; and all His work is done in faithfulness.

He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the loving-kindness of the Lord.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

He gathered the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deeps in storehouses.

Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him.

For He spoke, and it was; He commanded, and it stood.

The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to naught; He makes the thoughts of the peoples to be of no effect.

The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the thoughts of His

Suggested Psalms and Meditations

Psalm 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדוֹד יְקוֹק רֹעִי לֹא אֲחֻסֵּר: בְּנֹאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל־מִי מִנְחוֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי: נֶפֶשׁ
 יִשׁוּבֵב יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ: גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא־אִירָא רַע כִּי־
 אֶתָּה עֲמָדִי שְׁבֹטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֲנֶתְךָ הֵמָּה יִנְחֵמֵנִי: תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שְׁלֹחַן נֶגֶד צָרְרִי דֹשְׁנֶת בִּי
 שֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כוֹסֵי רִנָּה: אֲךָ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָל־יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְקוֹק לְאָרְךָ
 יָמִים:

The Lord is my shepherd;

I lack nothing.

He makes me lie down in green pastures;

He leads me to water in places of repose;

He renews my life;

He guides me in right paths as befits His name.

Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,

I fear no harm, for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.

You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil; my drink is abundant.

Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
all the days of my life,

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

for many long years.

The days of our years are threescore years
 and ten, or even by reason of strength
 fourscore years; yet is their pride but travail
 and vanity; for it is speedily gone, and we
 fly away...So teach us to number our days,
 that we may get us a heart of wisdom.

Psalm 90

We Remember Them

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 the 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.

- Rabbi Jack Riemer and Rabbi Sylvan D. Kamens

Life after Death

These things I know:

How the living go on living
and how the dead go on living with them
so that in a forest

even a dead tree casts a shadow
and the leaves fall one by one
and the branches break in the wind
and the bark peels off slowly
and the trunk cracks
and the rain seeps in through the cracks
and the trunk falls to the round
and the moss covers it
and in the spring the rabbits find it
and build their nest
inside the dead tree
so that nothing is wasted in nature
or in love.

-Laura Gilpin

A Reflection on Friendship and Companionship

Inscription from a tombstone written by R. Yehudah Ha-Levi (1080-1141); Poem upon Death of poet Moshe Ibn Ezra. We suggest you take a line or two from this poem that inspires you, and relate it to your loved one.

Do these tears know who made them fall?

Do these hearts know who made them recoil?

They recoiled when their shining light sank into the earth,
and the clods of earth knew not what they hold.

They hold a princely man,

a good man, blameless, upright,

a God-fearing man, discreet and wise.

Since you are gone, my friend, I seek in vain for peace;

At your leave-taking, my heart joined you, to share your wanderings.

Were it not that love may hope for the day of your return
the day of parting had been unto me, the day of death.

O Light of the West, come back unto thy West,

Be again a seal on every heart, a signet on every arm!

Behold, the mountains that divide us will testify

That my tears are more abundant upon them than the rains of heaven...

Everyone Has A Name- Zelda

Translated from Hebrew by Marcia Lee Falk

Each of us has a name
given by God
and given by our parents
Each of us has a name
given by our stature and our smile
and given by what we wear
Each of us has a name
given by the mountains
and given by our walls
Each of us has a name
given by the stars
and given by our neighbors
Each of us has a name
given by our sins
and given by our longing
Each of us has a name

given by our enemies
and given by our love
Each of us has a name
given by our celebrations
and given by our work
Each of us has a name
given by the seasons
and given by our blindness
Each of us has a name
given by the sea
and given by
our death.