

Introduction to Yiskor — 2024 Treasure Cohen

I always listened to my sister Becky Lubetkin-of blessed memory. After all, she was my big sister and had considerable authority. She taught me how to drink elegantly from a bottle of coke and when to take my child to a specialist when she was not getting better. She gave me this eternity ring that she also bought for herself and each of her daughters and my daughters when my grandson Andrew died. And I remember the words she shared decades before her death:

She told me: **Everyone dies twice; once when your body dies and once when you are no longer remembered.**

That insight has helped me to understand the words we pray at every service: ***Mi-chai-yay haMayteem/ God gives life to the dead***— —and to paraphrase—**As long as they are remembered, our loved ones live on.**—

They live on, when we carry on their name or name a child after them.

They live on every time we **use** or **wear** or **remember** a keepsake that was passed on to us.

They live on every time we cite some of their wisdom or share a memory or pass on the stories of their lives (as we have the opportunity to do at our Monday night yahrzeit minyan on Zoom).

They live on when we look at their photos or as we pause at the picture of the hostages in our front hall—those we have lost and those we pray for their survival.

They live on when we give tzedakah in their name.

They live on when we kindle a yahrzeit candle and watch it flicker with light.

Our Jewish tradition helps us give those who have died an “eternal life” by offering us regular opportunities to remember them: Every year at their yahrzeit and 4 times/year at Yiskor—translated literally, “May God remember”— that we will soon recite.

You have two books in front of you—one old and one new— which we will be using for Yizkor. Pick up the large one—the machzor— and open it to the front. Look at the name on the bookplate: You will find the name of someone you most likely never knew and who probably is no longer alive, since these books were long ago donated to us after a long life at another synagogue—which itself may or not still exist. And whisper their name, so that they too will be remembered.

When you leave today, take this book with you so that you can give it a new life while honoring the memories of those they were dedicated to, giving them a new life.

At Yiskor, we focus on keeping alive the memories of our loved ones,-- family and friends who have impacted our lives in so many indelible ways.

And today, we also focus on the lives of those we lost in the tragic events of October 7 and its aftermath in Israel.

May their memories be for a blessing. Amen