

Yom Kippur



A Guided Meditative Yizkor Service

Yizkor is a holy moment, when we connect with the souls of our loved ones through memory and prayer. By mentioning their names, we honour their presence in our lives and perpetuate their impact on the world. Here is a guide for a spiritually moving Yizkor that can be said alone. With some soulful reflection we can make this year's Yizkor more powerful than ever, even if we are saying it at home.

Yizkor Prayer

יִזְכֹּר אֱלֹקִים נִשְׁמַת [אָבִא מוֹרִי] (שֵׁם הָאָב בֶּן שֵׁם אִמּוֹ) שֶׁהָלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ, בְּעִבּוֹר
שְׁאַתֵּן בְּלִי נֶדֶר צְדָקָה בְּעֵדוּ. בְּשֹׁכֵר זֶה תִּהְיֶה נִפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצִוּוֹר הַחַיִּים
עִם נִשְׁמַת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שֶׁרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, וְעִם שְׂאֵר צְדִיקִים
וְצַדִּיקָנוֹת שְׁבָגָן עֵדוּ. וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן

זִכֹּר אֱלֹקִים נִשְׁמַת [אִמִּי מוֹרִתִי] (שֵׁם הָאִם בֶּת שֵׁם אִמָּה) שֶׁהָלָכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ,
בְּעִבּוֹר שְׁאַתֵּן בְּלִי נֶדֶר צְדָקָה בְּעֵדוּ. בְּשֹׁכֵר זֶה תִּהְיֶה נִפְשָׁהּ צְרוּרָה בְּצִוּוֹר
הַחַיִּים עִם נִשְׁמַת אַבְרָהָם יִצְחָק וְיַעֲקֹב, שֶׁרָה רִבְקָה רָחֵל וְלֵאָה, וְעִם שְׂאֵר
צְדִיקִים וְצַדִּיקָנוֹת שְׁבָגָן עֵדוּ. וְנֹאמֵר אָמֵן

Remember, G-d, the soul of

[my father/mother/sister/brother/son/daughter...]

(their name, son of their mother's name),

who went to her/his world, because I will - without making
a vow - give charity for her/him. In recompense for this, let
her/his soul be bound with the Binding of eternal life, with
the soul of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca,
Rachel and Leah, and with the other righteous men and
women in the Garden of Eden. And let us say, Amen.

A GUIDED MEDITATIVE YIZKOR SERVICE

1. CREATE THE SPACE

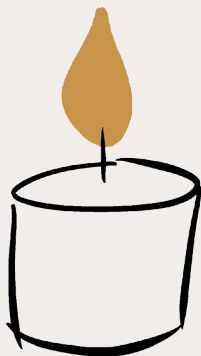
When Yizkor is recited in synagogue, those who have both parents still living are accustomed to exit the shul. The Yizkor service is a sacred space reserved for those who have experienced the loss of a parent. When Yizkor is recited at home, you need to create this sacred space. Find a quiet spot, where you will not be disturbed by any external distractions. With eyes closed, envisage the space around you being emptied. In that emptiness, souls of the departed are congregating, coming down from heaven to participate with you in the Yizkor prayer.

2. ACCEPT YOUR FAMILY

Before reciting the name of our loved one, we mention our familial connection to them: “My mother, my father, my brother, my sister, my grandparent, my child.” When saying these words, recognise that our family was chosen for us by G-d. Accept that we are all human, and no family is perfect. But your family is the right one for your soul. Think thoughts of forgiveness for any hurt you may be harbouring, and think thoughts of gratitude for the blessings you received, including your very existence, from those who came before you.

3. CALL THE NAME

Conjure an image of your loved ones as you would like to remember them. Imagine them in their healthy and strong days, when they were happiest. As you say each name, see their face responding to your call. The Hebrew name is the name of the soul, and should be used if known. When we call out that name, the soul hears and lights up.



4. GIVE A GIFT

What gift can we give to the departed? How can we tangibly express our never-ending love for them?

The best gift we can give them is a good deed in their memory. Souls in heaven can still see, hear, love and be proud. But they can't do a mitzvah. Only we on earth can. When we do an act of kindness in memory of a departed soul, we serve as their body, their continued presence down here on earth. This is why we pledge charity at Yizkor. It is not just a nice gesture, it is essential to the Yizkor service. The good deed done by the living on behalf of the departed makes Yizkor more than a memorial service – it binds generations together in perpetual kindness, and lifts the souls of the departed to higher places of rest.

When you say the words “I will... donate charity for his/her sake” visualise yourself as an extension of their soul, bringing down some of their goodness and their light. You can also think of a particular character trait that they excelled in – whether generosity, love of family, devotion to community – that you would like to emulate and keep alive. And don't forget to give the charity after Yomtov.

5. WELCOME HOME

When you mention the names of the Mothers and Fathers of the Jewish people, allow the soul of your loved one to go upwards, to be welcomed by their holy ancestors into the highest heavens. Take comfort in knowing that they are in a place of eternal happiness, and you have just sent them even higher. Your bond with them has been strengthened, your love expressed in the deepest way.

6. TIME TO LEAVE

Once Yizkor is over, we need to come back to the world outside. Just as in shul, those who went out are invited back in, so too at home, open your eyes and reconnect to your surroundings. You're back in the land of the living. But you aren't the same. You have encountered the other world. Now, appreciate our world, the life we are given in it, and the opportunity to do good that can only happen here. And know that your loved ones have appreciated your gift. They have been remembered, for good, and forever.