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YIZKOR



Why of all articles am I writing about “Yizkor”?

To be straight forward with you, it is because it was brought to my attention, more than once, that many people simply do not know its significance and are kind of “uneasy” with this part of the 3 Pilgrimage Holidays of Passover, Shavu’ot and Sukkot and that of the Yom Kippur service.

Let me try to explain briefly the meaning and the source of this Yizkor prayer.

The name of the prayer “Yizkor” means “May He remember” (He, being G-d) in Hebrew. It is also Judaism’s memorial prayer recited for deceased parents, siblings, children or other relatives at several times throughout the year.

It likely became a formal part of the prayer service during the Crusades of the eleventh century, when many Jews were killed as they made their way to the Holy Land. The earliest mention of Yizkor can be found in the eleventh-century *Mahzor Vitry*. Some scholars believe that Yizkor actually predates the 11th century and was created during the Maccabean period (around 165 BCE) when Judah Maccabee and his fellow soldiers, after losing the battle against the Roman legions, prayed for their fallen comrades.

The original practice was to recite Yizkor only on Yom Kippur. This is because as “*Yom hakippurim*” (the day of atonements-plural), the day effects atonement for both the living and the deceased. This is especially true through the act of giving charity, which is both an integral part of the atonement process and an important theme of the prayer Yizkor.

The roots of Yizkor can be found in the Midrash Tanchuma, where it cites Deuteronomy 21:8, “*Atone for Your people, Israel, whom You have redeemed*”. We are told that the first part of the verse refers to the living of Israel,

while the second part refers to the deceased. The Midrash continues, *“ Therefore, our practice is to remember the deceased on the 3 Pilgrimage Holidays (Shalosh Regalim), of Passover, Shavu’ot, Sukkot and Yom Kippur by pledging charity on their behalf”*.

We are then told not to think that charity no longer helps the departed, but rather, when one pledges charity on the deceased’s behalf, he ascends as quickly as an arrow shot from a bow.

Yizkor was extended from Yom Kippur alone to the three Festivals (Shalosh Regalim) of Sukkot, Passover and Shavu’ot, which is thematically appropriate.

The Torah tells us in Deuteronomy 16:16-17 that when we make our pilgrimage to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem for the holidays, we are not to appear empty-handed. Each person was to make a donation according to his ability. We see from this that charity is also an integral part of the festivals and therefore a fitting occasion for Yizkor with its emphasis on charity as a merit for the soul’s departed.

The theme of Yizkor is that we ask G-d to remember our relatives and to include them in the “bond of life” in Gan Eden, in Paradise alongside the Patriarchs, Matriarchs and other departed Tzadikim (Righteous). In exchange for this, we commit (Bli Neder, without making a vow) to donate charity on their behalf.

For those of you who are, like me, interested to delve a little deeper on the meaning of Yizkor, here are some Kabbalistic insights.

Kabbalah, in its deep and ancient wisdom, teaches us that between the world of the living and the world of the dead there is a window and not a wall.

Unfortunately, our culture of scientific materialism teaches that dead is dead, and after death, the channels of communication between us and our loved ones who have died are forever ended – a brick wall!

But, like the rituals of Shiva, **Kaddish**, and Yahrzeit, **Yizkor** opens windows to the unseen worlds of the dead.

Yizkor creates a sacred space and time wherein we can open our hearts and minds to the possibility of a genuine inter-connection with beloved family members and friends who have left behind the world of the living.

Yizkor is a window.

Close your eyes for a moment, direct your thoughts to ascend to the Other World, take a deep breath and prepare to open that window...

As you recite **Yizkor** prayers, with Kavanah, (and it is quite all right to use your own words if you prefer) let your senses and imagination serve as the vehicle of inter-connection. That is how Jewish tradition captures the secret of prayer in the Hebrew term Kavanah. But what exactly is Kavanah? Since it comes from the Hebrew root KaVeN, “to direct” — in the sense of “directing one’s heart” to G-d — we tend to think that prayer must emanate from the heart. G-d wants the heart, the Baal Shem Tov used to say. Prayer must be heartfelt.

For whom are you saying **Yizkor** today?

Can you imagine that person’s face before your eyes?

See their smiles, visualize how they might be carrying their body standing next to you.

Do you recall the sound of their voice? Hear their words as you stand in prayer.

Feel their presence right in this moment.

In your mind, in your heart, allow a conversation between the two of you to unfold.

It might take a little time for that “connection” to actualize, but it will happen...just close your eyes and let your mind along with your wild imagination wander a little...as I said, it will happen.

What needs to be reported and communicated this year?

What is the message you need to hear today?

What are the silent prayers of the heart?

What remains unspoken?

Speak. Listen. Let your closed eyes express their feelings, let the tears cover your face...it's ok to cry...there is nothing wrong with that, on the contrary, it will ascertain that this moment is real...

Take your time. There is no reason to hurry.

This is a timeless moment, because the current moment is all we have for sure.

Let all the radiance of their love to be with you right now and drag it as long as you can...it will be a precious moment to memorialize.

Many times, I have been asked if one should say Yizkor during the first year of losing a relative? Or should one step out from the synagogue if one is not saying Yizkor?

A number of aspects of Yizkor are the subject of difference of opinion among the various rabbinical authorities.

For example, some follow the practice not to recite Yizkor during the first year following a death while the emotional wounds are still quite fresh, (and for deeper Kabbalistic reasons; let me try to explain this briefly).

Paradoxically, *Body* and *Soul* are opposites, although the *Soul* loves the *Body*, at the same time, the *Soul* wants nothing more than to escape heavenward, to leave its existence in this world and reunite with its Infinite Source. As the soul of the departed is still hovering over its body resting in the grave, having a difficult time being detached or separated from its body, or being nostalgic of its former condition of being attached to a physical body which allowed it to elevate itself in holiness by the performance of Mitzvot, which it can no longer do at this particular point, as the Alter Rebbe explains in Tanya, when the soul separates from its body and reaches the Gan Eden after the 11 months of cleansing, the only benefit it will have is to enjoy the "*Ziv Ha'Shechinah*", the Radiance of the Divine Glory of Hashem, which in other words, is only a Reflection of G-d, the Alter Rebbe's source is from the Talmud, Tractate Brachot 17a *{In the World to Come, there is no eating and no drinking, no childbearing and no work, no jealousy, no hatred and no competition. Rather, the righteous sit with their crowns on their heads and enjoy the Glory of the Divine Presence, as it is stated, They gazes at Hashem...}* one does not even visit the gravesite during that same period, in order not to "disturb" this difficult moment between soul and body and also out of "*Kevod Hamet*", out of respect for the deceased).

Other maintain that Yizkor should be recited during the first year, the same as in all subsequent years, (and subsequently also visit the grave of the departed during the eleven months one is saying Kaddish for).

One familiar custom is for those not reciting Yizkor, to leave the room while the mourners are saying it. Some will tell you that it is a sign of respect for one's living parents not to remain inside while Yizkor is being recited for the deceased. Others will say that it is from fear of the "*Ayin Hara*", (the evil eye) and that those with living parents step out as not to tempt fate.

Opponents of this custom say that stepping out is based on superstition, or perhaps it's just insensitive to those reciting it. In addition, there are prayers at the end that are recited for victims of the Holocaust, the Fallen soldiers of the IDF and the victims of terrorism, and other martyrs. These apply to all members of the congregation, not just to those who have lost close family members. Some would advise staying inside in order to recite those prayers, or to step out and return for them.

In both of these matters, one should follow one's own family custom (Minhag) or the practice of one's community.

Please, do not hesitate to consult me, should you have any concerns or doubts.

In conclusion, I would highly suggest that while it is always preferable to pray (daven) in Shul, in community with a Minyan, there are many legitimate reasons that prevent people from attending, such as infirmity or advanced age. In those cases, there is absolutely no reason not to say Yizkor in the privacy of one's home. It is also still appropriate to commit to donate to the synagogue or another worthy Jewish charity in merit of the departed.

This year, we are going to be reciting YIZKOR on the second day of SHAVU'OT, Saturday May 23, 2026. Please, I am urging you to make an effort to attend services for this important holiday celebrating the Giving of the Torah (Matan Torah) on Mount Sinai, on the 6th of Sivan 2448, or about 1312 BCE.

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner



President's Message

As religiously observant Jews we find ourselves living, it seems, in two distinct worlds. There is the outside, secular world in which we go about our daily life, with its own norms and values and rhythms. This is the world in which we go to work, interact with colleagues, and otherwise go about our daily business. It is full of bustle and obligations and distractions, and other things which in the moment seem to matter and require our focus.

But there is also the uniquely Jewish world in which we are embedded: a place or space, one might say, with its own values and cycles of time and relationships—with our friends, with our congregation and worship life, and with Jewish history. As well as the so-called real world, we live in this other world—a place that perhaps we, and certainly non-Jews, cannot see or touch but that is very much “there” and that we do or at least can experience in every moment, provided we maintain our Jewish identity at the forefront of our consciousness. This begs the question as to which of these worlds is the “real” one, but that’s a philosophical or metaphysical question that I cannot attempt to answer here.

A more significant question for all of us is how to maintain our identity as Jews while living simultaneously in both worlds. How do we affirm our Jewishness and commitment to Judaism while having to go about a daily life of attending to things that seem to take us away from what we know, deep down, are the things that really matter? None of us lives a cloistered life. There is of course no monastic tradition within Judaism, and even young people learning in *yeshivot* or seminaries still have to negotiate their way through the outer world. So how do we keep our priorities straight? To be frank, I do not have an easy answer, but I can think of a maxim that we have all heard that holds a lot of truth: to be in the world but not of it.

This adage originates as a paraphrase of verses in the New Testament, in the gospel of John, but like so much of this material it has its provenance, or origins, in ideas found in the Torah. There we are told to live up to our identity as a “holy people unto the L-rd” and as a “kingdom of priests and as a holy nation.” We are not to escape the material world, as is a goal within some Eastern faiths, but to live within it and prosper while at the same time upholding our deep-seated values and not letting ourselves succumb to ideologies which are alien to us and to passing cultural fads and obsessions which are mostly empty or worthless. I think that in some ways this may be one of the messages in the story of Nadav and Abihu and the *esh zarah* (strange fire). It is quite easy to get lured away into doing things and believing things and valuing things which are not for us, and there is danger that in so doing, G-d forbid, we may lose ourselves.

Is there an antidote for this or, better, a preventive, akin to a vaccine? I believe that our greatest security can be found in living a life in close connection to our fellow Jews and sacred texts, maintaining communal relationships, and joining together to do *mitzvot*. These things bind us together, reinforce our Jewishness, and enable us to support each other, keeping us from getting too lost in the sensory inputs and values of the outer world. Being a part of and active in a synagogue, where we come together as a group on a regular schedule, is

the best way that I know of for ensuring that our Jewish identity and Jewish religious principles remain at the forefront of our lives.

By each of us joining together with all of us, supporting each other on our Jewish journey, we benefit both our own spiritual life and also the life of every other Jew with whom we commune with, both at *shul* and out in the community.

L'shalom,
Jeff Levin



AMERICANS AND THE HOLOCAUST

WHAT DID
AMERICANS KNOW?

WHAT MORE COULD
HAVE BEEN DONE?



April 13 – May 20, 2026
Baylor University Libraries

Check out our programming lineup:
tinyurl.com/bu-aath

This exhibition was made possible by the generous support of lead sponsor Jeannie & Jonathan Lavine. Additional major funding was provided by the Bildners—Joan & Allen z"l, Elisa Spungen & Rob, Nancy & Jim; and Jane and Daniel Och. The Museum's exhibitions are also supported by the Lester Robbins and Sheila Johnson Robbins Traveling and Special Exhibitions Fund, established in 1990.



May Service Schedule

Friday, May 1

Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	7:51 pm

Saturday, May 2

Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	8:48 pm

Friday, May 8

Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	7:56 pm

Saturday, May 9

Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	8:54 pm

Friday, May 15

Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	8:00 pm

Saturday, May 16

Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	8:59pm

Thursday, May 21

Erev Shavuot	
Candle Lighting	8:04 pm

Friday, May 22

Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	8:05 pm

Saturday, May 23

Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	9:04 pm

Friday, May 29

Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	8:09 pm

Saturday, May 30

Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	9:09 pm



May 2

Miguel Perez

May 4

Emma Risko-Juarez

May 7

Steven Draher

May 9

Kim Hawkins

May 11

Wendy Dziejdaszek

May 14

Avigail Via

May 20

Betty Bauer

May 4

George & Kathleen
Keller

May 4

Joseph & Mary
Settle



THANK YOU for your donations in April!

Shabbat

Susan Raphael

Jeff Levin

Chris Culver

Steve & Carrie Draher

In Memory

Murry Hersh

Judy Hersh

Florence Hersh

Bertha Rosen

Harry Harelík

Mandel Citrin

Jeff Levin

Phillip Citrin

Jeff Levin

Mariya Gordon

Semyon & Anna

Papernov

SISTERHOOD

We are planning our next Sisterhood meeting for Sunday, May 17th from 12:00-2:00 at the shul in our special meeting room. This meeting will take the place of our monthly Zoom meeting. We will discuss Shavuot plans for the Saturday kiddish luncheon and we will have a fun day creating a Shavuot themed craft. Please bring your favorite painting shirt (one that you don't care if it gets paint on it). Also, we will have drinks and snacks.

Please RSVP so we know how many craft supplies to have on hand.



The following names of dearly departed will be read aloud by the Rabbi preceding the Mourner's Kaddish on Shabbat morning. It is fitting and customary that the nearest of kin be present in the synagogue for the recitation of this special prayer in their memory. Attendance not only honors the departed but also enhances and guarantees that a Minyan is present to recite the Kaddish.

Kaddish will be read on May 1

Iyar 14	Fannie Genecov*
	David Michael Novy*
	Rhua Settle
Iyar 15	Mrs. E Hoffman*
Iyar 16	Gilford B Fred*
Iyar 17	Julius Berkman
	Jacob Greenspan*
	Samuel Kestner*
	Abe Udashen*
Iyar 18	Jennie Rosenberg*
	N Suravitz*
Iyar 19	Louis Kleiman*
	Ralph Leeds*
Iyar 20	Philo Herbert Pesses
	Sonia Stein

Kaddish will be read on May 8

Iyar 21	Louis Marks*
	Lee Wolkoff*
	Sarah Stein
Iyar 22	Max Hoppenstein*
	Abe Lewis*
	Hyman B Novy*
Iyar 23	Mandel H Citrin
	Mildred Blank
Iyar 24	Mary Budin*
	A Polansky*
	Orpha Starr
	Ida Mae Machac-Keller
Iyar 25	Ryan Younger Blythe
	Otto Levy
	David Harry Rubel

Iyar 26	Sarah Stupak*
	Dave Spreo*
	Melba Howeth Warren
Iyar 27	Phillip M Citrin
	Julius Englander*
	Hannah Lasinker

Kaddish will be read on May 15

Iyar 28	Abe Levy*
Iyar 29	Al Jacobson
Sivan 1	Rosaline Gardner*
	Hennie Genecov
	Rebecca Zoblotsky*
Sivan 4	Morris Brickman
	Max Harris*
	Frances Lebowitz*
Sivan 5	Ervin Graubard*
	Audrey Mendelson
	Hazel Warnstaff
	Esther Zackin

Kaddish will be read on May 22

Sivan 6	Rosa Keen*
	Jake Kirschner*
	Killian Michlowitz
Sivan 7	Betty Birnbach
	Hector Lago
	Mrs. L (Mary) Meinstein*
	Golde Feigel Wizig*
Sivan 9	Esther Neuwirth
	Frank Sifuentes
	David Stein
Sivan 10	Mrs. A Adelman*
Sivan 11	Klaire Kohn Schwarz*

Sivan 12 Louise Grass
Nathan Gurwitz*

Kaddish will be read on May 29

Sivan 13 Esther Greenspan Neuwirth*
Mrs. A (Jennie) Novich*

Sivan 15 Dorothy Kempler Harelik*
Israel Berkman*
Dr. Harvey Spark

Sivan 16 Willie Rosen*

Sivan 17 Sylvia Chernoff
Jacqueline Leeds
Rev J M Rosenberg*

Sivan 18 Louis Fred*
Pearl Esther Goodman*
Rose Todd

Sivan 19 Howard Hoppenstein*
Jacqueline Leeds
Phil Smith*
Zelda Taub