

CONGREGATION AGUDATH JACOB

NOVEMBER 2026 CHESHVAN-KISLEV 5787

Phone: 254-772-1451 **Fax: 254-772-2471**

Email: cajassistant@grandecom.net **Website:** www.agudathjacob.org

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner **President Jeff Levin**

cajrabbi@grandecom.net levin@grandetx.com

From the Desk of

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner





HOW DOES A MEMORY BECOMES A BLESSING?

Three years ago, a familiar phrase appeared everywhere.

May their memory be a blessing.

It is a phrase we say in the face of loss. Whether the loss is horrific and earth-shattering, like that of October 7th, or comes in the normal course of life, these are the words we reach for.
Jews say them at funerals. We write them after the name of a parent or grandparent. Many people of other faiths have taken them up too.

But what do they really mean? And what do they ask of us?
Here is the heart of it.
A memory does not become a blessing on its own. It becomes a blessing when we carry it forward.
Let me show you what I mean.

First, Where the Words Come From

The phrase comes from the Bible, from the Book of Proverbs.
Proverbs is a collection of short sayings about how to live wisely. Tradition attributes many of them to King Solomon.

One of those sayings reads:
זֵכֶר צַדִּיק לִבְרָכָה

Zecher Tzaddik Livrachah.

"The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing." (Proverbs 10:7)
In English, this sounds like a finished statement: good people are remembered well.
But the Hebrew is shorter and more open. It is only three words, and there is no verb.
Word for word, it says: "Memory. Righteous person. For a blessing."
That last word holds a small surprise. The Hebrew word for "for" also means "to" or "toward." It's the same little word you would use to say you are heading toward a city.
Think of a road sign that says "To Waco".
The sign tells you which way to go. It does not get you there. You still have to make the drive.
I read our verse the same way. A memory points toward a blessing. Whether it gets there is up to us.

How It Became Something We Say

How did a line from Proverbs become the words we say after the names of those we have lost?
The answer comes from the Talmud.
The Talmud is the great collection of conversations among rabbis, written down about 1,500 years ago, that has shaped Jewish life ever since.
In one of those conversations, the rabbis ask a tender question: how do you honor your mother or father after they have died?
Their answer is about something we all do. We quote our parents.
"As my father used to say…"
"My mother always told me…"
The rabbis said: when you quote a parent who has died, don't just say "Dad said." Say it with honor: "So said my father, my teacher."
And after the first year of mourning, add these words: "May his memory be for a blessing."
Over the centuries, that phrase traveled from quoting a parent to naming anyone we have lost. In writing, Jews often shorten it to "z"l," from the Hebrew *Zichrono Livrachah*.
But look at where it began.
A child is repeating a parent's words. The phrase was born at the very moment a lesson was being passed on.
You probably have a saying like that, something a parent or grandparent always said.
Every time you repeat it, and live by it, their memory becomes a blessing.

How We Carry a Memory Forward

Jewish mourning customs grow out of this idea. Each one takes a memory and moves it forward into the world.

We say their name.

In many synagogues, the names of those who have died are read aloud on the anniversary of their death. A name spoken is a life remembered.

We say Kaddish.

Kaddish is an ancient prayer said by mourners. Surprisingly, it never mentions death. It praises G-d.

It is traditionally said only with a group of at least ten people present. No one is meant to grieve alone.

We light a Yahrzeit candle.

Yahrzeit is a Yiddish word meaning "yeartime". On the anniversary of a death, we light a small candle that burns for about a day.

Proverbs gives us the image: **"The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord"** (Proverbs 20:27). **נר ה' נשמת האדם**

We give Tzedakah in their memory.

Tzedakah is usually translated as "charity." But it comes from the same Hebrew root as *Tzaddik*, the "righteous person" in our verse.
When we give in someone's name, their goodness keeps doing good.

We name children after them.

Many Jewish families name a new baby after a beloved relative who has died. The name continues into a new life.

We tell their stories.

After a funeral, Jewish families observe shiva, a week when friends and neighbors come to the home to sit with them. Much of that week is spent telling stories.
None of this brings back the person we lost.
But each of these lets their life keep touching the world.
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, who served as Chief Rabbi of Great Britain for more than twenty years, put it beautifully:
" *Those we remember live on in us: in words, gestures, a smile here, an act of kindness there, that we would not have done had that person not left their mark on our lives*".

Remembering October 7th

Three years ago, on October 7, 2023, some 1,200 people were killed in southern Israel.
It was the morning of a Jewish holiday, Simchat Torah, when Jews dance with the Torah scrolls in joy.

Those who died were young people at a music festival. Families asleep in their homes in small farming communities, Kibbutzim. Grandparents and children. IDF Soldiers and police officers. Workers from other countries who had come to farm the land.
Each one had a name. A family. A favorite song. A way of laughing that the people who loved them will never forget.

On a day like this, we can feel there is nothing we can do.
Our 3000-year-old Jewish tradition gently says otherwise.
We can learn one of their names, and one thing about their life.

We can light a candle tonight.
We can give tzedakah, or do one act of kindness, in memory of someone who died that day.
We can hold in our hearts the families who still mourn, who wake up every morning to an empty chair.

"Those we remember live on in us: in words, gestures, a smile here, an act of kindness there, that we would not have done had that person not left their mark on our lives."

That is how a memory becomes a blessing.

Not all at once. One name, one candle, one kindness at a time.

May their memories be a blessing. זכרונם לברכה

And may we be the ones who make it so.

May HaShem Bless You and Protect You All!

Rabbi Ben-Zion Lanxner



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

"As I write this, I am preparing to head back to Israel for a week, G-d willing, and have been reflecting on the sad spectacle of members of our tribe who have gone over to the other side, so to speak. We are all familiar with this: Jews-by-birth-only who actively voice support for Hamas and deny the right of Israel to exist and condemn those who support Israel and the IDF. Some go even further, standing beside those who openly despise Jews and call for our persecution. Some, too, parrot the same lies and blood libels about us spread by our enemies. This includes politicians and commentators who then use their nominal Jewish ethnic identity to proclaim in public forums that "as a Jew" they authentically represent "the Jewish perspective" on these matters.

Then there is another type: those of Jewish heritage and perhaps some minimal religious observance who believe that we should keep quiet, not rock the boat, just stay down. They seem too afraid to speak out. This, too, includes politicians and public figures who, while in no way anti-Semites, essentially give cover to Jew-haters in order to protect their own positions in society. Again, we can probably identify such folks, so there is no need here to name names.

Why does this go on? There has been much written about the first group, and I have little to add. Is it about virtue-signaling? Are they victims of disinformation and their own lack of a Jewish education? Do they wish to maintain their political viability or standing in polite society? Is it self-hatred? I am not a psychiatrist, and anyway there is little reason to speculate. The beliefs that they hold and the policies that they support seek our destruction, so there is not much left to say in analysis. There have always been folks like this among us. As the expression goes, it is what it is.

The second group, though, is more confounding. They support things, unwittingly or by a desire to stay silent and "pass" for tolerant or enlightened, that are just as destructive. Their goal, apparently, is surrender and total assimilation. Yet, as we know, this is contrary to Torah, which calls on us to be "a holy people unto the L-rd," as we are instructed in a few places in *Sefer Devarim*.

The existence of such folks, of both types, is also not new. For some insight, I would encourage you to look up the history of a defunct organization known as the Association of German National Jews (whose German acronym was VnJ). These were Jews in the 1920s and 1930s who gave support to Hitler and the Nazi party. They believed that they would be viewed as "the good Jews," not like those "religious fanatics" who had embarrassing traditions and rituals, spoke Yiddish and prayed in Hebrew, kept to themselves, and supported establishment of a Jewish state and who were worried about the rise of anti-Semitism. So, they looked the other way ("things aren't really that bad"), made excuses for Hitler's policies ("he doesn't really mean what he's saying"), and stridently condemned religiously observant Jews and Zionists ("we aren't like them"). Note: the members of VnJ all soon enough ended up in the ovens.

The moral descendants of such Jews are still with us today. They are in politics, in the news media, in entertainment, in the academic world, in the rabbinate (yes, really), and unfortunately here in Texas. For me personally, if I may add, these

folks are a mystery and a great source of frustration. I wish I knew how to respond to them, but they seem intransigent, perhaps locked into their position through fear or ignorance or both. Again, the first group is concerning, of course, but I do not lose as much sleep wrestling with their presence: these are Jews who have chosen to side with evil and there is little nuance there. We can all see who they are. But the second group of Jews is much larger and is seemingly growing. Moreover, as they grow and as their position solidifies, they begin looking more and more—perhaps not intentionally—like the first group. They may not share the same motives, but they are furthering the same cause.

As my term as President of CAJ is winding down and I reflect on these messages that I have written over the past three years, I recognize that I have put forth a simple takeaway. Namely, that as observant Jews it is beholden on us to proudly and unapologetically maintain our *emunah* (faith) and *bitachon* (trust in G-d) and live a religiously and ethically Jewish life, no matter the shifting whims and opinions and prejudices of the larger society. Hashem has sustained us for 4,000 years, and we have seen our enemies fold—one after another the civilizations which persecuted us have fallen. This is as true a fact of history as anything that historians can identify. So let us not stop now simply because once again we are under assault. Through our steadfast faith and trust, the One who created us will continue to sustain us and see us prevail. So let us joyously keep going, living proud Jewish lives, learning Torah and doing *mitzvot*, and supporting Israel, each other, and the work of our wonderful *shul*.

L'shalom,
Jeff Levin

You 're Invited

Jewish Federation Annual Meeting and Brunch



Sunday, December 13

11:00am

AC Hotel Waco 600
Mary Avenue

Minimum Gift $180

Questions? Contact Judy Hersh,
call or 254.744.1543

November Service Schedule

Friday, November 6	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	5:17 pm
Saturday, November 7	
Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	6:12 pm
Friday, November 13	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	5:13 pm
Saturday, November 14	
Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	6:08 pm

Friday, November 20	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	5:10 pm
Saturday, November 21	
Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	6:06 pm
Friday, November 27	
Kabbalat Shabbat	6:00 pm
Candle Lighting	5:08 pm
Saturday, November 28	
Shacharit	10:00 am
Shabbat Ends	6:04 pm



November 1
Benjy Bauer

November 30
Lourdes Perez

There are no Anniversaries this month

THANK YOU for your donations in October!

Shabbat

Carrie Draher
Paty Haessly
Susan Raphael
Jeff Levin
Inez Bonneville
Joseph Settle

Refuah Shlayma

Paul Farmer

Debbie Hersh
Florence Hersh
Ed Rosenwasser

In Memory Of

Harvey & Estelle Goldfeder

Jeff Levin

Elayne Lynn

Justin Lynn
Blake Lynn
Colton Lynn

Stella Somlo Milberger

Susan Raphael

Louis Rosen

Harry Harelik

Mrs. Max Harelik

Harry Harelik

Evelyn Buurchman

Barbara Dankenbring

In Memory Of

Florence Budin Hersh

Jeff Levin

Marsha Lev

Harry Harelik

Joyce Bresler

Steven Wojtal

Wendy Kozol

Jane Allen

Camille Johnson

Dana Jones

Kandance Menning

Jan Michaelis

Brenda Provence

George & Kathleen Keller

Laura Swann

Martin Chodorow

Becky Myers

Linda Kowal

Cheryl Weinstein

David & Nancy Lacy

Jeff Wolf

Melvin Lipsitz

Susan Raphael



YAHRZEIT

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 November 6

Heshvan 26	Joseph Levine
	Joe Harry Lewis*
	Mollie Roberts*
	Max F Starr*
Heshvan 27	Nathan Feldt*
	Jennie Rubin
Heshvan 28	Anne Goodman Feldt*
	Hyman Lyons*
	Harry Smith*
Heshvan 29	Hyman Wolf Fink
	Sarah Smolensky*
	AL Torchin*

Kaddish will be read on November 13

Kislev 1	George Cohen*
	Max Ellis
	Mrs. J Kuttner
	Frank Lipinsky*
	Sam Raphael
Kislev 2	Mrs. Cecil Chazanow*
	Cecilia Fleischman*
Kislev 3	B Kaplan*
	Charles Handelman
	Rachel Lachman
	Minnie Meinstein
Kislev 4	Eva Cohen Adler*
	Secil Chazanow
	Geraldine Harelik
	Mrs. Meyer (Ethel) Koppman*
Kislev 6	Edith Koss
	Pauline Koss*
	Mrs. Toby Novich
Kislev 7	Arthur Schwartz
	Mrs. Edith R Weisberg

Kaddish will be read on November 20

Kislev 8	Mrs. F Chazanow
	Archie David Goldfine
	Isaac Goldstein
	Rosa Genecov Ellis
Kislev 9	Sophie Blank
	Mrs. Isaac Feldt
	Jack Goldberg
	Sarah Holste
	Isidor Israel*
	Wm Petchesky
	Dora Sackett
	Beatrice Segal*
	Mrs. M Wise*
Kislev 10	Joe L Reed*
	Sol Siegel
	Hannah Udashen*
Kislev 11	Carol Mithcell
Kislev 12	Sam Gelberger
	Mina Parven
	Samuel Milberger*
	Mrs. Goldye Solomon*
	Toby Zelda Zeichner
Kislev 13	Miriam Leah Berkman*
	Phillip Stupak*
Kislev 14	Stanley Marmelzadt
	Lilian Mendelsohn

Kaddish will be read on November 27

Kislev 15	Pauline Bartz
	Moses W Cinnamon
	Elihugh Frankfort
	Devorah Lanxner
Kislev 16	B Roddy
	Mrs. Dave Wizig*
Kislev 17	Mary Freidman
	Moze Novich
	Max Reid*
	Robert Weidhorn

Kislev 18	William Goldblatt
	Harold Warren Israel
	H Novich
	Rachel Rosenthal
Kislev 19	Max Corman
	Robert Glick
	Mose Harris
	Jack M Silver*
Kislev 20	Sidney Fleischman
Kislev 21	Flora Epstein
	Toby Schwartz
	Vernon Wolf
	Neal Slansky
	Margaret Ida Fusco Sevick

Plaque on memorial wall.

If you are interested in purchasing a memorial plaque for your loved one, please contact:
Harry Harelik