

Personal meditations: a self-paced visit to the cemetery



In this season of return (teshuva), when we pray for a year of life, health, and joy for ourselves and our dear ones, when we pray for the well-being of our people and all humankind, our thoughts turn not only to the living but also to the dead. It is customary to visit the cemetery to pay our respects to those who, having finished their earthly course, now repose in this consecrated earth. We hope this self-paced guide may assist you on this visit to the cemetery.

The Temple B'nai Brith Cemetery Committee



Do not stand at my grave and weep I am not there.

I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.

I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush I am the swift uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry; I am not there.

I did not die.

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep by Mary Elizabeth Frye

Psalm 23

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד ה' רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר:
בְּנֵאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי עַל מֵי מְנוּחוֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי:
נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבָב יִנְחֵנִי בְּמַעְגְלֵי צֶדֶק לִמְעַן שְׁמוֹ:
גַּם כִּי אֵלֶּף בְּגִיָּא צִלְמוֹת לֹא אֵירָא רָע כִּי אֵתָה עִמָּדִי שְׁבֵטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֶנְתְּךָ הִמָּה יִנְחֵמֵנִי:
תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שְׁלֶחַן נֶגֶד צִרְרֵי דְשִׁנְתָּ בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רִוְיָה:
אֵךְ טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָּל יְמֵי חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית ה' לְאֶרֶךְ יָמִים:

God is my shepherd; I shall not want.
God lays me down in green pastures. God leads me to still waters.
God renews my life and guides me in right paths – for that is God's way.
Though I walk through a valley as dark as death, I fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.
You spread a table before me in full view of my foes;
You anoint my head with oil, my cup is overflowing.
Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in God's house forever.

*Adonai ro'ee lo echsar
Bin'ot desheh yarbitzeini, al mei menuchot yenhaleini,
Nafshi yeshovev, yancheini v'ma'aglei-tzedek l'ma'an shemo.
Gam ki eleich b'gei tzalmavet lo eera rah ki atah imadee.
Shivtecha umishantecha heima yanachamuni.
Ta'aroach l'fanay shulchan neged tzorerai. Dishanta vashemen roshi kosi revayah.
Ach tov vachessed yirdefuni kol yemei chayay, v'shavti b'veit Adonai l'orech yamim.*

Personal meditations

At the cemetery, we bury the bodies people inhabited during their lives, and we erect memorial stones stating their names and the span of their years.

These graves and these stones provide us with concrete symbols of the life of those we loved and of their death. We return, from time to time, to the site of these symbols, because they spark our memories and aid our meditation on the important things these people did, on the joy we felt in their presence in our lives, on the sadness we feel in their absence.

Perhaps we contemplate their example and wonder if we are living up to their expectations. Perhaps we continue an ongoing conversation we had with them which was cut short, speaking our hearts to them and imagining how they would respond. Perhaps we

consider the things we would want to share with them about our lives, if they were here, dwelling on the pleasure they would have taken in various events and developments. We all have different needs, different fears and different hopes to dwell on in remembering those whose lives are symbolized by these graves, these monuments, these wall plaques.

Darshan Phil Weiss

✧ *Take a few minutes of quiet contemplation, to evoke the memories of your loved ones who have died, and to commune with those memories in your own private ways.*

El Malei Rachamim

✧ *If you don't have your loved one's Hebrew name use the name you know them by*

✧ *Use the pronouns that best reflect your loved one's gender identity*

Force full of compassion who lives in the heights,
establish proper rest beneath the wings of your Presence.

On the levels of holy ones and pure ones, with sky-like radiance, may they shine upon the spirit of _____ who has gone to his/her/their eternity.

May his/her/their resting place be the Garden of Eden.

Please, cultivator of compassion, shelter him/her/them in the shelter of your wings eternally and knot their spirit into the knot of life.

God is his/her/their inheritance May he/she/they rest in peace where he/she/they lie.

And let us say: Amen.

In memory of a loved one who identified as male

אל מלא רחמים שוכן בפרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת פנפי השכינה במעלות קדושים וטהורים בזהר הרקיע
מזהירים את נשמת _____ שהלך לעולמו, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתו. אָנָּה בעל הרחמים
הסתירהו בסתר כנפיד לעולמים, וצור בצרור הסיים את נשמתו, ה' הוא נחלתו, ויגום בשלום על משכבו,
ונאמר אמן:

*Eil malei rachamim, shochein bam'romim, ham-tzei m'nucha n'chona tachat kanfei
Hash'china, b'ma-alot k'doshim ut-horim k'zo-har haraki-a mazhirim, et nishmat (Name
of the Deceased) she-halach l-olomoh, b'Gan Eden t'hei m'nuchato; Ana Ba-al
Harachamim has-tire-hu b'seter k'nafcha l'olamim, u'tz-ror bitz-ror hacha-yim et
nishmato, Ado-nay hu na-chalato, v'yanu-ach b'shalom al mishkavoh. V'nomar: Amen.*

In memory of a loved one who identified as female

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת פנפי השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים, כזהר הרקיע
מזהירים את נשמת _____ שהלכה לעולמה, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתה. אָנָּא בעל הרחמים
הסתירה בסתר כנפיד לעולמים, ויצרור בצרור הסיים את נשמתה, ה' הוא נחלתה, ונתנו בְּשָׁלוֹם על משכבה,
ונאמר אָמֵן:

*Eil malei rachamim, shochein bam'romim, ham-tzei m'nucha n'chona tachat kanfei
Hash'china, b'ma-alot k'doshim ut-horim k'zo-har haraki-a mazhirim, et nishmat (Name
of the Deceased) she-halcha l-olomah, b'Gan Eden t'hei m'nuchatah; Ana Ba-al
Harachamim has-tire-ha b'seter k'nafecha l'olamim, u'tz-ror bitz-ror hacha-yim et
nishmatah, Ado-nay hu na-chalatah, v'tanu-ach b'shalom al mishkavah. V'nomar: Amen.*

In memory of a nonbinary loved one

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה, תחת פנפי השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים, כזהר
הרקיע מזהירים את נשמת _____ שהלכה לעולמה, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתה. אָנָּא בעל הרחמים
הסתירה בסתר כנפיד לעולמים ויצרור בצרור הסיים את נשמתה, ה' הוא נחלתה, ונתנו בְּשָׁלוֹם על משכבה,
ונאמר אָמֵן.

*Eil malei rachamim, shochein bam'romim, ham-tzei m'nucha n'chona tachat kanfei
Hash'china, b'ma-alot k'doshim ut-horim k'zo-har haraki-a mazhirim, et nishmat (Name
of the Deceased) she-halche l-olomeh, b'Gan Eden t'hei m'nuchateh; Ana Ba-al
Harachamim hestireh b'seter k'nafecha l'olamim, u'tz-ror bitz-ror hacha-yim et nishmateh,
Ado-nay hu na-chalateh, v'nuach b'shalom al mishkaveh. V'nomar: Amen.*

A contemporary El Malei

Merciful, compassionate G-d: Hold our loved ones close to your heart.
Let them be at peace.
May their deeds and teachings live in us always.
May they inspire us to live with justice and mercy as our twin polestars.
Let their souls and our souls be bound as one.
And we say: Amen

Additional Readings

For Those We Remember with Love: Blessings of Memory and Hope by Rabbi Debra Smith

May you know that you are always remembered for the good you have done.
May you know that you are missed beyond measure.
May you know that we see your face, hear your voice, feel your touch.
May you know that we bring what you have taught us into our lives.
May you know that you continue to travel our journey with us.
May you know that by your presence in our lives, you have changed us.
May you know that we honor your name and your memory today and always.

We Remember Them by Sylvan Kamens & Rabbi Jack Riemer

At the rising sun and at its going down; We remember them.
At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter; We remember them.
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring; We remember them.
At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer; We remember them.
At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of the autumn; We remember them.
At the beginning of the year and when it ends; We remember them.
As long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as 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 decisions that are difficult to make; We remember them.
When we have joy we crave to share; We remember them.
When we have achievements that are based on theirs; We remember them.
For as long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as, We remember them

When All That's Left Is Love by Rabbi Allen S. Maller

When I die	Letting me live in your eyes
If you need to weep	And not on your mind.
Cry for someone	And when you say
Walking the street beside you.	Kaddish for me
You can love me most by letting	Remember what our
Hands touch hands, and	Torah teaches,
Souls touch souls.	Love doesn't die
You can love me most by	People do.
Sharing your Simchas (goodness) and	So when all that's left of me is love
Multiplying your Mitzvot (acts of kindness).	Give me away
You can love me most by	

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☆ This guide does not include the kaddish, as it requires the presence of a minyan. This guide does not contain God names that require genizah and may be recycled. Created by Rabbi Eliana Jacobowitz 2023