



KEVER AVOT

קבר אבות



HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

High Holy Days – 2019 / 5780

COMMUNAL CEREMONY

I turn my eyes to the mountains;
from where will my help come?

My help comes from Adonai,
maker of heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot give way;
your guardian will not slumber.

See, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!

Adonai is your guardian,

Adonai is your protection at your right hand.

By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.

Adonai will guard you from all harm;

God will guard your life.

Adonai will guard your going and coming now and forever. (Psalm 121)

אָשָׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים, מֵאֵין יָבֵא עֲזָרִי.
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יי, עֲשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.

Adonai is my shepherd, I shall not want.

God makes me lie down in green pastures,

leads me beside still waters, and restores my soul.

You lead me in right paths for the sake of Your name.

Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil, for You are with me.

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You have set a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the House of God forever.

(Psalm 23)

Oh Adonai, this hour revives in us memories of loved ones who are no more. What happiness we shared when they walked among us! What joy, when, loving and loved, we lived our lives together.

Their memory is a blessing forever.

Months or years may have passed, yet we feel near to them. Our hearts yearn for them.

Though the bitter grief has softened, a duller pain remains, for the place where once they stood is empty now forever. The links of life are broken. Though the links of love and longing cannot break.

Their souls are bound up in our forever.

We see them now with the eye of memory, their faults forgiven, their virtues grown larger. So does goodness live and weakness fade from sight. We remember with gratitude and bless their names.

Their memory is a blessing forever.

And we remember as well the men and women who but yesterday were part of our congregation and community. To all who cared for us and labored for the well-being of our people and of humanity, we pay tribute. May we prove worthy of carrying on the tradition of our people and our faith, for now, the task is ours.

Their souls are bound up in ours forever.

In gratitude for all the blessings our loved ones – friends, teachers, and the martyrs of our people – have brought to us, to our people Israel and to all humanity, we dedicate ourselves anew to the sacred faith for which they lived and died, and to the tasks they have bequeathed to us. Let them be remembered for blessing, Adonai, together with the righteous of all peoples, and let us say: Amen.

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination.
And life is a journey:
From childhood to maturity
And youth to age;
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
And then perhaps, to wisdom;
From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness-
And, often, back again;
From health to sickness
And back, we pray, to health again;
From offense to forgiveness
From loneliness to love

From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion.
And grief to understanding —
From fear to faith;
From defeat to defeat to defeat —
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage.
A sacred pilgrimage.
Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
And life is a journey,
A sacred pilgrimage —
To life everlasting.

God of abundant mercy,
God Most High, may the souls of
our loved ones, who have gone
into eternity, find the gift of
perfect peace in Your embrace,
together with the holy and pure,
whose light shines like the
radiance of heaven.
Compassionate God, hold them
close to You forever, so that
their souls may be bound up in
the bond of life eternal! May
they find
a home with You; and may they rest in peace.
Together we say: Amen.

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים.
המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה,
עם קדושים וטהורים, כזהר הרקיע מזהירים,
לבשמות יקירינו שהלכו לעולמם.
בעל הרחמים יסתירם בסתר כנפיו לעולמים,
ויצור בצרור החיים את-בשמתם.
יי הוא נחלתם, ויגוחו בשלום על משכבם.
ובאמר: אמן.

(Silent Remembrance)

O God of Life, amid the ceaseless tides of change which sweep away the generations, Your living spirit remains to comfort us and give us hope. Around us is life and death, decay and renewal; the flowing rhythm that all things obey.

Our life is a dance to a song we barely perceive. Its melody courses through us for a little while, then it ceases. Whence the melody, and whither does it go? In darkness as in light, we turn to You, Source of all life and all mysteries.

(Rabbi Chaim Stern, adapted from Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise)

OUR CEMETERIES

In 1849 the Jewish residents in Toronto, now numbering some 35 in total, raised funds to create the first Jewish burial grounds in the city. A plot of land 60ft wide and 400ft deep was purchased for just 20 pounds! The deed for the land was given and Abraham Nordheimer, a music dealer and talented musician from Bavaria, and Judah Joseph, a jeweler from England were appointed as trustees. When Judah Joseph died in 1857, Abraham Nordheimer was approached by Lewis Samuel, a board member of the newly established Holy Blossom Temple, about turning over the cemetery over to the new congregation. After a series of negotiations, an arrangement was completed in 1858 and the cemetery became part of the congregation; as did Mr. Nordheimer.

By 1920 the congregation recognized the need for additional burial space. On October 1, 1921, a site on the west side of Brimley Road north of Kingston Road was purchased, but because of financial set-backs, it took another seven years before the cemetery was dedicated by Rabbi Isserman on June 23rd, 1929. This cemetery contains among many, the graves of Leo Frankel (President, 1908-1928), Rabbi Maurice Eisendrath (Senior Rabbi, 1929-1942), Edmund Scheuer (Educator, Honourary President, 1934-1943), Heinz Warschauer (Director of Education, 1943-1973) Nathan Phillips (Mayor of Toronto, 1955-1962), Rabbi Gunther Plaut (Senior Rabbi, 1961-1977), The Right Honourable Bora Laskin (Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada 1973-1984), as well as countless other influential individuals.

In 1973, a very large Jewish community cemetery, Pardes Shalom, was established on the east side of Dufferin Street in Richmond Hill. Holy Blossom purchased a section of this new cemetery and reserved adjacent land that will meet the congregation's needs for generations to come.

עֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שָׁלוֹם עִלֵּינוּ,
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל [וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תִבְלִי]. וְאַמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Kaddish Y'tom:

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא.
בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ,
בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזַמַּן קָרִיב. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעַלְמֵי עַלְמֵיָא.
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא,
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא,
לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמַתָּא,
דְּאִמְרוּן בְּעֵלְמָא. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמֵיָא, וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ,
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

May the Source of peace grant peace to those who mourn and comfort
to the bereaved among us, and let us say: Amen

PRIVATE REFLECTIONS

To this sacred place we come,
drawn by the eternal ties that bind our soul to yours.
Death has separated us.
You are no longer at our side
to share the beauty of the passing moment.
We cannot look to you to lighten our burdens,
to lend us your strength, your counsel, your faith.
And yet what you mean to us neither withers nor fades.
For a time we touched hands and hearts;
still your voice abides within us,
still your tender glance remains a joy to us.
For you are part of us forever;
something of you has become a deathless song upon our lips.
And so beyond the ache that tells us how much we miss you,
a deeper thought compels — we were together.
We hold you still in our minds,
and give thanks for life and love.
The happiness that was,
the memories that do not fade,
are a gift that cannot be lost.
You continue to bless our days and years.
We will always give thanks to you.

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am in a thousand winds that blow,
I am the softly falling snow.
I am the gentle showers of rain,
I am the field of ripening grain.
I am in the morning hush,
I am in the graceful rush
Of beautiful birds in circling night,
I am the starshine of the night.
I am in the flowers that bloom,
I am in a quiet room,
I am the birds that sing,
I am in each lovely thing.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there. I do not die.
- Author Unknown

For Our Rabbis, Teachers and Leaders

Rabbi (Judah the Prince) would dispatch R. Asi and R. Ami to inspect and repair the cities in Eretz Yisrael. They would come to a community and say: 'Summon the guardians of the city'. The community would bring its military and political leaders. Whereupon R. Asi and R. Ami would exclaim: 'are those the guardians' of the city?' The community would then inquire: 'Who are the guardians of the city?' They would answer: 'The scholars and teachers who study and teach, and keep the Torah day and night. (Midrash Eikhah)

There are stars up above, so far away we only see their light long, long after the star itself is gone. And so it is with the people we loved- their memories keep shining ever brightly though their time with us is done. But the stars that light up the darkest night, these are the lights that guide us. As we live our days, these are the ways we remember. (Hannah Szenes)

The Psalmist said that in his affliction, he learned the law of God. And in truth, grief is a great teacher, when it sends us back to serve and bless the living. We learn how to counsel and comfort those who, like ourselves, are bowed with sorrow. We learn when to keep silent in their presences, and when a word will assure them of our love and concern. Thus, even when they are gone, the departed are with us, moving us to live as, in their higher moments, they themselves wished to live. We remember them now; they live in our hearts; they are a blessing. (Rabbi Chaim Stern adapted from Prof. Israel Bettan)

Placing a Stone

It is customary for Jews to place a stone by the graveside of one they respect and love. Some say that this is just a marker to commemorate the visit. Some say that it is to weigh down the spirits of grief that haunt us, anchoring our pain so that we do not dismiss our destiny and walk the path of a mourner forever. I like to believe that the stone has more to do with "foundation," the first brick, laid in building a future that at one time seemed inconceivable: a future where _____ is not at the table, at our side, a phone call away, a world without their radiance.

That future once seemed inconceivable but here we are, and these stones say: today we begin to build a new future a future where our spirits are clothed in {his/her} love, our hearts are branded with {his/her} goodness, a future in which _____ is woven into us, wrapped around us, lighting our way, where we know that every joy we encounter is celebrated from on high as well.

Like a flower, a pebble is a sign of love and remembrance.
But unlike flowers, which wither...
Stones persist.
Stones are eloquent mementos;
substantial as loss,
heavy as grief,
enduring as memory.