

YIZKOR:
FROM MOURNING OF MEGA-DEATH TO SOUL-GUIDING



Reb Simcha Raphael, Ph.D.
© DA'AT INSTITUTE, 2013



Dedicated to two men who have come before me

**My Father
Harold Paull, z"l**

**My Father-in-Law
Mitchell Robinson, z"l**



PREFACE

When I began writing this paper, I had no idea it would turn out to be as long as it is. I only knew I wanted to learn something about the history of Yizkor, and offer ideas for creative implementation of a Yizkor service.

As I began research and then writing, something else seemed to take over. I found myself fascinated with what I was discovering, and had a great time sifting through sacred texts, books of Hebrew prayer, scholarly articles, academic studies, and the dusty old pages of the 1904 edition of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Even as I write at this very moment, there are over one dozen *Siddurim* and *Mahzorim* scattered at my desk, and almost as many secondary source books or encyclopedia volumes piled nearby. I love doing this kind of research and have had a great time creating this paper. Even if I juggled to squeeze it in, between preparing for lectures, correcting student papers, seeing psychotherapy clients, caring for a child and trying to balance my bank book - as well as cleaning the house for *yontif*, sharing meals with friends and family, getting in some *davennen*' and even building a *sukkah*.

I have been involved in studying and teaching about Jewish death rituals, in various forms, for over twenty-five years. It is my hope and prayer to one day write a book I envision calling *Jewish Death Rituals: Past, Present and Future*. This paper is a work-in-progress, and a gentle step in that direction.

Simcha Raphael, Ph.D.
Melrose Park, PA
October 12, 2008
13 Tishrei, 5769

YIZKOR:
FROM MOURNING OF MEGA-DEATH TO SOUL-GUIDING
OUTLINE

PREFACE

OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF YIZKOR

- i) Prayers for the Dead - Early Textual References
- ii) Crusades, Black Plague and Memorialization of Collective Trauma
- iii) The Communal Family Liturgical Memorial
- iv) Communal Family Liturgical Memorial Extended - *Matnat Yad* as a Redemptive Charitable Contribution

STAGES IN THE EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT OF YIZKOR

- i) Original Liturgical Structure of *Hazkarat Neshamot*
- ii) *Hazkarath Neshamot* in the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book
- iii) *Adonai Mah Adam* and the Influence of the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book
- iv) Twentieth Century Yizkor -
Minhag Amerika and Expiation of Guilt for Leaving the Homeland
- v) Yizkor and Remembrance of the *Shoah*

STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND TENOR OF YIZKOR IN CONTEMPORARY MAHZORIM

- i) A Structural Approach to Jewish Liturgy
- ii) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Mahzor Zikhron Yosef* -
The Complete Artscroll Machzor (Orthodox)
- iii) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in
Mahzor for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur (Conservative)
- iv) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Gates of Repentance* (Reform)
- v) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Kol HaNeshamah Prayerbook*
for Days of Awe (Reconstructionist)

MOVING FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TO THE “SOUL-GUIDING” FUNCTION OF YIZKOR

- i) Towards a Spirit-Based Paradigm of Life, Death and Afterlife
- ii) Spiritual/”Soul-Guiding” Function of Yizkor
- ii) A Meditation/*Kavannah* for Yizkor
- ii) Yizkor Vision - A Poem for Yizkor

CONCLUSIONS

YIZKOR: FROM MOURNING OF MEGA-DEATH TO SOUL-GUIDING

INTRODUCTION

Yizkor is a Hebrew word which means “remembrance”. It refers to special memorial services which take place four times each year in honor of those who have died. *Yizkor* services are traditionally held during morning services in synagogue on Yom Kippur and the last days of Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot. (Yizkor is observed one day earlier in Reform and Israeli practice).

It is customary to recite Yizkor for a deceased parent, child, sibling or spouse. It has also become common practice to recite Yizkor prayers on behalf of the six million Jewish martyrs of the Holocaust.

In addition to the reciting of the Yizkor prayers, there are two other specific customs associated with Yizkor. As with Yahrzeit, it is common at the time of *Yizkor* to contribute to *tzedakah* in memory of the departed, and to kindle a memorial lamp on the sundown of the festival when *Yizkor* is recited.

For many Jews, the highlight of the High Holy Day season is the communal Yizkor service, recited in the waning hours of Yom Kippur morning. The practice of remembering deceased loved ones draws observant, traditional, liberal, secular and large numbers of “twice-a-year” Jews to synagogue year after year for a short and intense, often somber, liturgical service. The ambiance of Yom Kippur makes this day perfect for contemplating life and death and for remembering those who have transitioned from this world to the world beyond.

Many often assume that Yizkor, or *Hazkarat Neshamot* as it is traditionally called, is an ancient prayer, forever part and parcel of the historical legacy of Jewish High Holy Day liturgy. Undeniably the mournful chanting of the *El Maleh Rachamim* seems to resonate

throughout time, connecting contemporary men and women with generations of Jews who have gathered on Yom Kippur for centuries, reflecting upon “who shall live and who shall die”. However, it turns out Yizkor as practiced today is little more than five hundred years old, a relatively new addition to the liturgical compilations of Yom Kippur. Yizkor has an interesting and somewhat obscured history; since its emergence in Jewish life in the early medieval period, the liturgical practice of remembering the dead has continually changed and evolved, and is, in fact, continuing to evolve in our times.

In the twenty-first century, as the spiritual lives of contemporary North American Jews goes through a process of renewal and rebirth, Yizkor is in a very fertile and dynamic process of change. Certainly in the liberal Jewish community, there are continual new developments both in terms of how Yizkor is practiced in many communities, and in terms of emerging liturgical innovations.

OUTLINE

In this paper I shall:

- 1) survey the historical origins and later evolutionary development of Yizkor;
- 2) present an overview of the structure and content of the Yizkor service, as found in Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist *Mahzorim*;
- 3) discuss the spiritual function of Yizkor as a “soul-guiding” ritual; and
- 4) offer practical guidelines for implementing a meaningful liturgical Yizkor experience.

In the final analysis, my intention in writing this paper is to demonstrate the evolution of the Yizkor service from past to present to future. From its earliest stages as a ritual antidote to the trauma of mega-death in the time of the Crusades; to a practice of psycho-spiritual healing of the bereaved, as it is practiced today; to a ritual for attuning to souls in the world beyond, as it can be thought of in the future, as seen through the lens of mystical spiritual renewal.

HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF YIZKOR

i) Prayers for the Dead - Early Textual References:

The earliest known reference to an actual prayer on behalf of the dead dates back to Hasmonean times. In the Second Book of Maccabees, we read of how after “gathering up the bodies of the fallen [to] bring them back to lie with their relatives in the graves of their forefathers” (II Macc. 12:39), Judah Maccabee and his cohorts offered prayers and Temple sacrifices on behalf of their fallen comrades “that they might be set free from their sins” (*Ibid*, 12:45).

In Rabbinic tradition, there is further development of the idea that human beings could, through their actions, purify and redeem souls of the dead. According to Kaufman Kohler, an early American Reform Rabbi and Biblical scholar, it was likely some form of charity that would have been offered as an atonement to redeem the dead.¹

“[T]he dead too require an atonement” says *Midrash Sifre* (*Piska* 210 on Deut. 21:8). In *Pesikta Rabbati* (*Piska* 20) we see that prayers of mercy can be offered, successfully, on behalf of the dead. *Midrash Tanhuma* (*Haazinu*), which dates from the 9-10th century CE, goes even further in asserting that the living have responsibility to redeem the dead; and on Yom Kippur we remember the dead, and offer charity on their behalf, “in order to save them from Gehenna and cleanse them from their sins.”²

This notion that the living could help redeem that dead was complemented by a belief that, in their turn, the dead could intercede in human affairs, and help the living. In *Sotah* 34b, Caleb prostrates himself on the graves the Patriarchs and Matriarchs at Hebron, petitioning their assistance; and *Taanit* 16a makes it clear that one goes to the cemetery “in order that the dead should intercede for mercy on our behalf.”

For our ancestors a mutual benefit system between the living and the dead was in place. There were no existential or philosophical questions about whether there was a life after death; it was simple - the living prayed for the souls of the dead, and the dead were available to serve as benevolent intercessors for the living.³ This philosophical and spiritual point of view underlies the tradition of saying Yizkor on Yom Kippur, a liturgical practice that did not exist prior to the eleventh century C.E.

ii) Crusades, Black Plague and Memorialization of Collective Trauma:

Historical emergence of the Yizkor service is clouded in the murky mists of the early medieval period. However, scholars tend to agree that the liturgical practice of memorializing the dead began in the Rhineland following the First Crusade (c. 1096 CE).

In an article entitled “*Hazkarat Neshamot*” Solomon B. Freehof traces specific steps in the evolution of communal memorialization rituals, showing how *minhagim* of Yizkor were in a continual state of flux for centuries. Originally, there were specific Shabbatot to honor the fallen martyrs; eventually Yom Kippur emerged as a day to memorialize deceased family members, first in German and later in Sephardic communities; and subsequently, Eastern European Jewish communities extended this practice to the last days of the *shalosh regalim*, the three pilgrimage festivals of Sukkot, Pesach and Shavuot.⁴

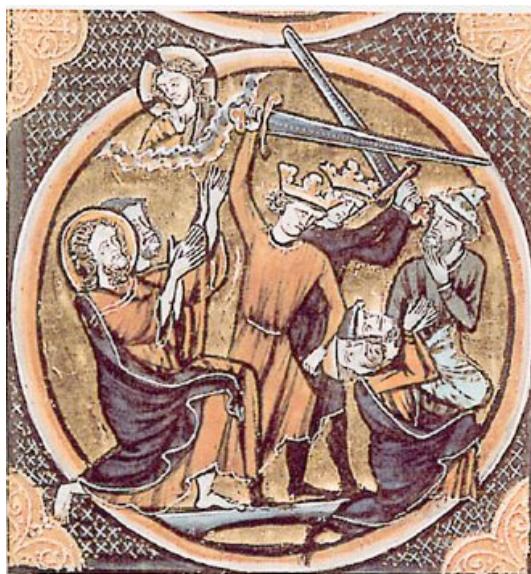
In the First Crusades of 1096, upwards of ten thousand Jews were massacred by marauding bands of drunken youth throughout Jewish communities of Northern France and the Rhineland. Centuries later, at the time of the Black Death in 1348, Jews were accused of poisoning the wells, and over 6,000 people slaughtered in mob riots throughout Europe.

A variety of memorial prayers honoring the martyred dead are found in *Halakhic* compendia from this era. The reading of name lists of those who died “for the sanctification of the Name” (*al Kiddush HaShem*) was incorporated into the liturgy of

certain specified Sabbaths. In one of the “Memor Books” (German: *Memorbuch*; Hebrew: *Sefer Zikharon*) from this time period we find the following:

Therefore all the house of Israel is in duty bound to remember them (*lehazkiram*) between Passover and Shavu'oth, on the Sabbath nearest to Shavu'oth and also a second time on the Sabbath between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av, on the Sabbath nearest the 9th of Av, the Sabbath that we call 'the Black Sabbath'. (*Shabbat Shakhor*).⁵

Since the slaughter of Jews in the Rhineland occurred close to Shavuot, it made sense to declare the Shabbat prior to Shavuot, already part of the Omer period, a “martyrs Shabbat”. Although the Jewish massacres at the time of the Black Plague went on throughout the year (during 1348-1349), the largest rampage took place at Mainz, in August, prior to Tisha B’Av. Thus a second day of communal memorial - *Shabbat Shakhor*, Black Sabbath - was established on the Shabbat nearest to Tisha B’Av.⁶ These two memorial days became fixed in German Jewish liturgical rite.



The prayer *Av HaRachamim* dates from this time, and first appears in a Siddur dating from 1290 CE.⁷ In the words below, one can sense the intensity of grief and outrage embodied in this prayer, mourning what had been the most traumatic experience of mega-death known by the Jewish people up to that time:

The Father of mercy who dwells on high
 in His great mercy
 will remember with compassion
 the pious, upright and blameless
 the holy communities, who laid down their lives
 for the sanctification of His name.
 They were loved and pleasant in their lives
 and in death they were not parted.
 They were swifter than eagles and stronger than lions
 to carry out the will of their Maker,
 and the desire of their steadfast God.
 May our Lord remember them for good
 together with the other righteous of the world
 and may He redress the spilled blood of His servants.
 as it is written in the Torah of Moses the man of God:
 "O nations, make His people rejoice
 for He will redress the blood of His servants
 He will retaliate against His enemies
 and appease His land and His people" (Deut. 32:43).
 And through Your servants, the prophets it is written:
 "Though I forgive, their bloodshed I shall not forgive
 When God dwells in Zion" (Joel 4:21).
 And in the Holy Writings it says:
 "Why should the nations say, 'Where is their God?'"
 Let it be known among the nations in our sight
 that You avenge the spilled blood of Your servants. (Ps. 79:10)
 And it says: "For He who exacts retribution for spilled blood
 remembers them
 He does not forget the cry of the humble". (Ps. 9:13)
 And it says:
 "He will execute judgment among the corpse-filled nations
 crushing the rulers of the mighty land;
 from the brook by the wayside he will drink
 then he will hold his head high". (Ps. 110:6-7).⁸

iii) The Communal Family Liturgical Memorial:

Slowly but surely over the next two centuries, the process of memorializing the dead expanded. In Germanic Jewish communities, names of community leaders and benefactors were entered into communal memorial books and prayers for the dead offered on their behalf as well. Whereas martyrs who died in "sanctification of G!d's Name" were not in need of redemption from sin, these dead were seen to be in need of atonement. And the

time for such atonement? Certainly not at the same time when the martyrs were being memorialized, but rather - on Yom Kippur! There were two valid textual bases for choosing this date. First, the Torah reading for Yom Kippur begins with the words “*Aharei Mot*”, “after the death”.⁹ Secondly, Ber. 6b teaches: “The merit of a fast day lies in the charity dispensed.” The dead were redeemed through giving of *Tzedakah*, Yom Kippur was a day of fasting and a time to give *Tzedakah*. Thus, “the perceived need to atone for these dead also led to the institution of a memorial prayer for them on the Day of Atonement.”¹⁰

Over time this idea of prayers for the dead became ubiquitous. Not only were martyrs and *makhers* memorialized: “it was natural that the desire should arise for every family to memorialize by name their deceased relatives who were neither martyrs nor great communal benefactors.”¹¹ Thus, emerged the practice of, what Freehof calls “the family memorial liturgy” - and it is this which, almost four hundred years after the Crusades, is the paradigm of our present-day “*Hazkarat Neshamot*”. But the association of Yizkor with Yom Kippur is a clearly later development in the history of Yizkor, not much earlier than the 16th century.

iv) Communal Family Liturgical Memorial Extended - *Matnat Yad* as a Redemptive Charitable Contribution:

Whereas the Yizkor memorial for deceased relatives was originally limited to Yom Kippur, in Eastern Europe this custom expanded to include final days of the pilgrimage festivals. By way of dating this change: in Moses Isserles’s (1525-1572) glosses on *Shulkhan Arukh* there is no mention of Yizkor other than at time of Yom Kippur; the situation is similar in the *Matteh Moshe*, by Rabbi Moses Meth of Przemys (d. 1606). Freehof notes that the oldest source to speak of Yizkor held four times a year is Rabbi Mordecai Jaffe (1530-1612), in his *Levush* (*Ateret Zahav* 346:3) where he says “it is our custom to memorialize the dead even during festivals.”¹²

While initially a day of Festival celebration may have seemed anomalous for mourning and memorializing the dead, a link was made with the Torah passage read on the last days of Pesach, Shavuot and Shmini Atzeret, which ends with the following sentence: “Three times a year shall all your males appear before YHVH. Each according to his gift” - “*ish kematnat yado*”, literally “according to the gifts of his hand” (Deut. 16:17). The singular form of this phrase, “*Matnad yad*”, “gift of the hand” came to be understood as tithing or gifts of *tzedekah* one made at the time of the Festivals and on Yom Kippur for the upkeep of the congregation, and in memory of the dead. It was good for the dead; for the community; and for the bereaved. The recitation of the liturgy of *Hazkarat Neshamot* three times a year worked on both a functional and spiritual level, and did become an established custom, first in Eastern Europe, and then throughout the (Ashkenazi) Jewish world.¹³

Thus, over the course of centuries Yizkor slowly emerged as a liturgical experience, held immediately after Torah reading on Yom Kippur, Shmini Atzeret, and the last days of Pesach and Shavuot at which time one offered prayers and money to *tzedakah* in order to remember and redeem souls of the dead.

STAGES IN THE EVOLUTIONARY DEVELOPMENT OF YIZKOR

i) Original Liturgical Structure of *Hazkarat Neshamot*:

In its earliest traditional version, *Hazkarat Neshamot* is a very simple and concise service. It consists of:

1) The silent “*Yizkor Elohim*” prayer said in memory of a deceased father or mother:

The text is simple, said for either parent:

May G-d remember the soul of my father [mother], my teacher (mention Hebrew name and that of his [her] mother) who has gone to his [her] [supernal] world, because I will donate charity for his [her] sake. In this merit, may his [her] soul be bound up in the bond of life with the souls of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, and with the other righteous men and women who are in Gan Eden; and let us say, Amen.¹⁴

This prayer includes a promise to donate money to charity on behalf of the deceased. The understanding here, consonant with Rabbinic tradition, is that the acts of the bereaved on behalf of the deceased have a beneficent effect on the state of the soul in the world beyond.

2) The “*El Maleh Rachamim*” prayer:

O G-d, full of compassion, Who dwells on high, grant true rest upon the wings of the Shechinah (Divine Presence), in the exalted spheres of the holy and pure, who shine as the resplendence of the firmament, to the soul of (mention his [her] Hebrew name and that of his [her] father) who has gone to his [her] [supernal] world, for charity has been donated in remembrance of his [her] soul; may his [her] place of rest be in Gan Eden. Therefore, may the All-Merciful One shelter him [her] with the cover of His wings forever, and bind his [her] soul in the bond of life. The Lord is his [her] heritage; may he [she] rest in his [her] resting-place in peace; and let us say: Amen.¹⁵

The *El Maleh Rahamim* is a profoundly soulful prayer, especially when chanted in a dirge-like melody. Although it has become a familiar standard in contemporary Jewish life its background history is obscure. Elbogen¹⁶, Millgram¹⁷ and Reif¹⁸ mention the prayer, but provide no information as to its origins. Idelsohn dates the use of *El Maleh Rachamim* to “the seventeenth century in the Eastern European countries”¹⁹; and according to *Encyclopedia Judaica* this prayer “originated in the Jewish communities of Eastern and Western Europe where it was recited for the martyrs of the Crusades and Chmielnicki massacres.”²⁰ No more specific information than that could be found.²¹

According to Philip Birnbaum, there are twenty-two versions of the *El Maleh Rahamim*, listed in Davidson’s *Thesaurus of Medieval Hebrew Poetry*.²² The prayer appears in some modern Orthodox *Siddurim* and *Mahzorim* and not in others; and there are also discrepant versions of the *El Maleh Rachamim*. However, a comprehensive history of Jewish death liturgy has not been written, and the *El Maleh Rahamim* has received little scholarly

attention. Yet its sustaining power lies in the connection it seems to evoke between the realm of the living and the realm of the dead.

And finally, the third prayer of the traditional Yizkor service is:

3) The “*Av Ha- Rachamim*” prayer:

As noted earlier, this prayer was written specifically to memorialize those martyred at the time of the Crusades. While this prayer is included in the *Hazkarat Neshamot* service in Orthodox prayer books, it has been dropped completely from contemporary Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist *Mahzorim* and *Siddurim*. As we shall see below, more recent prayers remembering martyrs of the Holocaust seemed to have replaced the *Av HaRahamim*.

ii) ***Hazkarath Neshamot* in the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book:**

Once established as a regular liturgical practice, the *Hazkarat Neshamot* prayer service began undergoing change and expansion (and has continually done so in the past two hundred years). The watershed experience for almost all early modern liturgical innovation was the 1819 Hamburg Temple Prayerbook. A number unique features of *Hazkarat Neshamot* in this prayer book influenced subsequent developments of the Memorial Service liturgy in the 19th and 20th centuries.

First, the Hamburg *Siddur* was the first to incorporate the Yizkor prayers within a full liturgy of hymns, psalms and other prayers in a specific Memorial Service, “*Todten-Feyer*”, for Yom Kippur.²³ Today, all but the most traditional Orthodox *Siddurim* and *Mahzorim* have a separate Yizkor service, following in the tradition first set out by the early Reformers. Secondly, it is now common practice to end *Hazkarat Neshamot* service with the recitation of *Kaddish Yatom*, the Mourner’s Kaddish; we assume this to be normative. But it was only

in the Memorial Service in the Hamburg Temple on Yom Kippur in 1819 where this was done for the first time.

Another innovation of the early Reformers, incorporated in today's Yizkor services, was the addition of scriptural passages in Hebrew, and contemporary readings in the vernacular which served to communicate the philosophical worldview with regard to death and afterlife.

In the Hamburg Temple Prayerbook, the service begins with a hymn in German, followed by a lengthy prayer, which Petuchowski translates into English, and suggests is more like a sermon on the immortality of the soul²⁴:

Great Spirit, whose ways are beyond searching out! Ruler over life and death! Thou didst call forth the infinite universe out of nothing. Thine almighty word did adorn it with magnificence and beauty. Thy breath breathed into it living beings of innumerable shapes; and man towers supreme above all. Thou hast created him in Thine own image, and Thou hast given him the power of command over the work of Thy hands. Thou didst kindle within him the divine spark of reason, so that he might recognize Thy might and greatness in all creation. Yet, in Thy wise providence, it hath pleased Thee to apportion a finite time unto all Thy creatures; and thus didst Thou set a limit also for man. ... But Thou, Almighty, hast not created Thy works in order to give them over to destruction. Nothing is destroyed. Nothing will be lost which was created by Thy creative hand. Everything dies in order to be newly formed: not a mote of dust will lose its being, seeing that Thy creative breath hath formed it. How, then, should man, the masterpiece of all creatures, be annihilated by death? How wouldst Thou, who only createst, but destroyest nothing, destroy the spirit living in man, which is a part of Thine own being? No! Thou raisest the spirit unto Thyself, and only the fragile shell which contained the divine spark, only the body which is mortal, rests in the lap of the earth, and will turn into the dust out of which it was created...

Through death, a purer and better life begins for us in the blissful abodes of peace. No cover of earth limits the pure spirit. ... Death is a gate which leads from darkness into pure light, ... where the soul, saturated by pure joy, will cast its glance into eternity, and will acknowledge more deeply and more ardently the perfection of the Eternal, and proclaim Thy praise in the choir of the spirits, O Thou Unsearchable One! ...

Commenting on the Yizkor prayers for deceased relatives - “*Yizkor Elohim*” - found in the Hamburg *Siddur*, Petuchowski writes:

In [the Hamburg Temple prayerbook] unlike the original, the worshiper does not pray that God grant the deceased a blessed repose in Paradise [Gan Eden], on the strength of the prayers or charity offered by the living. Only at the end of the prayer does the worshiper mention a pious gift. At that point, instead of spelling out that his gifts earn merit, to be credited to the dead, as in the original yizkor, the worshiper merely devotes it to the memory of the departed, and asks that God find his gift acceptable.²⁵

In other words, according to the Hamburg Prayer Book one no longer donates to *Tzedakah* at the time of Yizkor in order to elevate the state of the soul of the deceased, but rather because it is good for the bereaved. Although this topic goes far beyond our intentions in this paper, in the transition from traditional to Reform liturgy of the Memorial Service, we see a slow stripping away of a spiritual understanding of the dynamic and interactive relationship between the world of the living and the world of the dead. Since the “retention of the gift clause in the 1819 prayer no longer serves its theological purpose ... some later versions of the yizkor deleted the reference to pious gifts completely.”²⁶

iii) *Adonai Mah Adam* and the Influence of the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book:

Yet another innovation found in the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book has become standard liturgical fare in our times. Following the above prayer are a series of Scriptural passages beginning with Psalm 114:3: “O Lord, what is man that you should take notice him? What is mortal man that you should consider him?” The Hebrew begins with the phrase “*Adonai Mah Adam va’Teyda’ayhu*”. This particular prayer which either introduces, or is incorporated into the *Hazkarat Neshamot* today, can be found in Reconstructionist²⁷, Reform²⁸, Conservative²⁹ and even Orthodox³⁰ *Siddurim* and *Mahzorim*.

While it makes sense to assume that Conservative and Reconstructionist liturgy adopted Reform practices, it is not so clear that that is quite how it happened. Tracking the movement from the Hamburg Siddur of 1819 to Orthodox *Mahzorim* of the twentieth

century has been interesting. As it turns out, it is certainly a possibility (if not likely) that the Conservative and Reconstructionist movements adapted *Adonai Mah Adam* from an earlier Orthodox version of *Hazkarat Neshamot*.

Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, at the turn of the 20th century was the German-born Herman Adler; born 1839, he was Chief Rabbi in London from 1891 until his death in 1911. Rabbi Adler was succeeded by Rabbi Joseph Hertz (who created the “Hertz Humash” - *The Pentateuch and the Haftorahs* - the first English language Torah commentary, which educated and entertained Shabbat morning Jews for over half century). In Hertz’s *Daily Prayer Book* he acknowledges replicating the *Hazkarat Neshamot* service arranged by his predecessor, Rabbi Adler. *Adonai Mah Adam* appears in the Orthodox Hertz *Siddur* and, we can assume, also in Rabbi Adler’s (though I have not been able to track down this earlier prayer book). In other words, Rabbi Adler adapted for his *Hazkarat Neshamot*, a variation of the version found in the Hamburg *Siddur*. And while *Adonai Mah Adam* does not appear in all Orthodox *Siddurim* and *Mahzorim*, it is certainly included in the *Siddur* and *Mahzor* edited by Philip Birnbaum; in the Hertz *Siddur*; and in *Mahzor Zikhron Yosef - The Complete Artscroll Machzor*³¹, all used extensively by modern Orthodoxy of the twentieth century.

Below is a translation of the *Adonai Mah Adam* prayer from the Birnbaum Orthodox *Mahzor HaShalem*, which dates from 1951.³² A shortened version appears in the Harlow, Silverman, *Gates of Repentance* and *Kol HaNeshamah Mahzorim*, all derivations from the Hamburg Temple Prayerbook.³³

O Lord, what is man that you should take notice him?
 What is mortal man that you should consider him?
 Man is like a breath;
 His days are like a passing shadow. (Ps. 114:3-4)
 He flourishes and grows in the morning;
 He fades and withers in the evening. (Ps. 90: 6)
 So teach us to number our days
 That we may get a heart of wisdom. (Ps. 90: 12)
 Mark the innocent, look upon the upright;
 That there is a future for the man of peace. (Ps. 37:37)
 Surely God will free me from the grave [Sheol];
 He will receive me indeed. (Ps. 49:16)
 My flesh and my heart fail;
 Yet God is my strength forever. (Ps. 73:26)
 The dust returns to the earth as it was;
 But the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Ecc. 12:7)

iv) Twentieth Century Yizkor- *Minhag Amerika* and Expiation of Guilt for Leaving the Homeland:

With Jewish migration to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jews began to evolve what Rabbi Isaac M. Wise called *Minhag Amerika*. In 1866 Wise published his *Minhag Amerika for the Day of Atonement*,³⁴ which included a mostly English language *Hazkarat Neshamot* service that was:

... the focus and fulcrum of the Yom Kippur Eve Service, being positioned between the stirring piyyut, *ya'aleh tahananenu*, and the finishing *Aleynu*. Anomalous as the location may appear, it is not without precedent. The Sephardim have long carried the option of holding a Memorial Service of sorts, with its various Hashkavot, just after the chanting of Kol Nidre.³⁵

In a sophisticated and well-documented essay entitled “The Atonement Memorial Service in the American Mahzor” Eric L. Friedland delineates the style and content of various forms of *Hazkarat Neshamot* in America. While it would wonderful to further explore the evolutionary development of early and mid-20th century Yizkor liturgy, this is far more than we can do in this (supposedly) short paper. Suffice it to say, Friedland shows how the American Yizkor service became increasingly “ceremonious” - “on a somewhat grander scale and more involved and imposing”³⁶ than the traditional Yizkor liturgies of

Eastern and Central European Jewry. His explanation as to why that occurred is quite fascinating, providing a sociological glimpse of the American Jewish community in the first half of the 20th century.

Given that Jews were essentially an immigrant community at that time, Friedland suggests that the ornate, elaborate quality of Yizkor services emerged out of a need for worshippers to ward off or be cleansed of guilt for having left behind “the parental hearth in the old country to try their luck in another land across the seas where boundless opportunity beckoned.”³⁷ In other words, memorializing dead parents and relatives served as a *kapparah* between the generations, assuaging guilt for having abandoned the old world. This was true for both the early German Jewish immigrants in the mid- and late-1800’s; and again for those Eastern European Jews who arrived on the shores of America in the early decades of the 20th century. This idea of atonement through Yizkor, while psychologically efficacious in an immigrant community, is at the same time fully consonant with the themes of Yom Kippur.

With the an acute eye of observation, Friedland writes:

Hence, from a psychological perspective, the amplified Memorial Service, in a profound sense, represented less of an intrusion into the daylong Yom Kippur liturgy than a level of wanted expiation that involved family and loved ones. The role of the Yom Kippur Yizkor Service as an occasion for catharsis was to last a fairly long time, if not at least an entire century, chiefly because of the two major waves of immigration and their overlap.³⁸

Finally, to mine a few more scholarly tidbits of information from Friedland’s comprehensive research, in summary he notes essential characteristics of the late 19th and 20th century American Yizkor Service, as compared to that of its European predecessors. Again, quoting Friedland:

1. Prayers directed to the deceased are turned to God instead.
2. The notion of joining the departed in paradisiacal bliss and communion goes unmentioned.
3. Prayers of intercession are not resorted to in today's prayerbooks.
4. Victorian melodramatics are dismissed, almost as an embarrassment.
5. Talk about an afterlife is put in cautious, circumlocutory terms. A kind of tactical agnostic language is adopted. Eternal are memory, values and the like.

Essentially what we see in the early decades of the 20th century is an increasing psychologization and secularization of Yizkor. By the 1950's and 1960's Yizkor had become a family bereavement ritual, often populated by "Yizkor Jews". Congregations would announce Day of Atonement Yizkor times in local newspapers, and on public synagogue display signs. No longer was there a collective concern with the fate of the souls of the dead. For many, even today, this is the Yizkor service we have inherited.

v) Yizkor and Remembrance of the *Shoah*:

Another phenomenon evidenced in the more recent evolution of Yizkor liturgy is the inclusion of prayers in memory of victims of the Holocaust. This has developed in the last three decades of the 20th century.

The Conservative *High Holiday Prayer Book* (Silverman), and Orthodox *Mahzor HaShalem* (Birnbaum) both published 1951; and the *Reconstructionist Festival Prayer Book*, published in 1958, do not contain any Yizkor liturgy related specifically to Holocaust memorialization. There is an *El Maleh Rachamim* for Jewish martyrs who "sacrificed their lives for the sanctification of the holy Name", "*al kiddush HaShem*", but no specific mention of the Holocaust, either in the Yizkor, or even in the Martyrology liturgy, in Musaf. At this point in time, historically, less than a decade after the liberation of Auschwitz, there is still only minimal awareness about the Holocaust in America, and in the world.

However, over the next three decades a number of powerful events and cultural phenomena catapulted an awareness of Holocaust into the center of American culture. In 1960-1961, the capture and trial of Adolph Eichmann began bringing the horrors of Holocaust out of the closet. Soon after, Richard Rubinstein's ground-breaking theology in *After Auschwitz*,³⁹ as well as writings of Emil Fackenheim⁴⁰ and Elie Wiesel⁴¹ catalyzed a passionate wrestling for both meaning and memory in the Jewish community. While in the surrounding culture, creation of Jimmy Carter's Presidential Commission on Memorialization of the Holocaust (1978); and television and movie entertainment -the TV mini-series "Holocaust" (1978); "Sophie's Choice" (1982); Lanzmann's documentary "Shoah" (1985); and, the piece de resistance, Spielberg's Oscar-winning "Schindler's List"(1993) - shaped and transformed the image of Holocaust in the American life.⁴²

These cultural milestones were reflected in the changing, evolving nature of Yizkor liturgy. Around this same time, Elie Weisel, the spokesperson par excellence for Holocaust memory, composed an *El Maleh Rachamim* lament for the six million "souls of all our brethren, men, women and children of the House of the Israel who were killed, massacred, burnt and suffocated". This *El Maleh Rachamim* has been incorporated in various versions into the growing assemblage of commemorative Holocaust and Yom HaShoah liturgy.⁴³

By the late 1970's new Holocaust memorial liturgies developed in the Reform and Conservative and Reform movements were published in the *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* by the Rabbinical Assembly (1972), and in *Gates of Repentance* by the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1978).

Gates of Repentance does not include any Hebrew prayers to memorialize victims of the Holocaust. There is an English reading for martyrs (which we include below) which alludes to Holocaust, but does not ever name it. However, the Martyrology service held

later in the day on Yom Kippur, includes additional English readings and Yiddish poetry memorializing victims of the Holocaust.

Perhaps this is a reflection of the Reform community in the 1980's and 1990's, having a less significant population of Holocaust survivors and children of Holocaust survivors than that found in more traditional congregations.

One of the most widely read Yizkor liturgies commemorating the Shoah is found in the Harlow *Mahzor*, replicated in *Siddur Sim Shalom*. Found here is a variation on Elie Wiesel's *El Maleh Rachamim*:

אַל מָלֵא רַחֲמִים שׁוֹכֵן בְּמְרוֹמִים הַמָּצֵא מְנוּחָה וְכֹנֶה תַּחַת
כְּנָפֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה בְּמַעְלֹת קְדוּשִׁים וְטְהוּרִים כְּזֹהֵר הַרְקִיעַ מְזִהֲרִים,
אֶת־נִשְׁמוֹת כָּל־אֲחֵינוּ בְּגִי יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲנָשִׁים וְנָשִׁים וְטָף, שְׁנֵהֲרֹגוּ
וְשֵׁנִיבְחוּ וְשֵׁנִשְׂרְפוּ וְשֵׁנִחַנְקוּ. בְּגֵן עֵדֶן תְּהִי מְנוּחָתָם. אָנָּה בָּעַל
הַרְחָמִים, הַסְתִּירָם בְּסֶתֶר כְּנָפֶיךָ לְעוֹלָמִים וָצָרָר בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים
אֶת־נִשְׁמוֹתֵיהֶם. יְיָ הוּא נִחַלְתָּם, וַיְנַיְחוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכְּבוֹתֵיהֶם.
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

Interestingly, there are two variations in the Harlow *El Maleh Rachamim*. On one hand, the Conservative movement *Siddur* and *Mahzor* amended Weisel's *El Male Rachamim* prayer. In the original, the six million are identified by the phrase, “*shemeitu al kiddush HaShem*” - those who died in sanctification of the Name. Harlow clearly rejects the theological classification of the six million as martyrs, and eliminates reference to “*kiddush HaShem*.”⁴⁴

The other curious, but not surprising shift in Harlow's *El Maleh Rachamim* is a kind of “sanitizing” of the Hebrew as it is translated into English. References to wings of the Shechinah, an other-worldly Gan Eden, and comfort under the God's sheltering wings are all

eliminated, and a list of horrendous ways of murder, reduced from four to two, making the English conform with the more tame spiritual aesthetic of America in the early 1970's.

Below is another version of the Holocaust *El Maleh Rachamim* for martyrs of the Holocaust,⁴⁵ expressing some of the righteous indignation and outrage of the trauma of the Holocaust. The emotional tenor of this particular version of the prayer is closer to the original *Av HaRachamim*, from time of the Crusades.

God full of mercy who dwells on high
Protector of widows and father for the fatherless
Please be not silent and show no restraint
on behalf of the Jewish blood that has been spilled like water.
But grant perfect rest on the wings of Your Divine Presence
In the lofty abode of the holy, pure and valiant
who shine as the brightness of the heavens
to the souls of our brothers and sisters
Six million Jewish
men, women and children
Who were put to death, slaughtered, burned,
starved, buried alive
Or who suffered other forms of unnatural death
at the hands of the accursed Nazis
and their associates - may their name be wiped out!
In Auschwitz, Treblinka, Maydanek, Malthausen
and in other death camps in Europe
And who gave up their lives in order to Sanctify God's name.
Because we are at one with their memory
and we pray for the elevation of their souls
Their resting place shall be in the Garden of Eden.
Therefore, shall the Master of mercy care for them
under the protection of His wings for all time
And bind their souls in the bond of everlasting life.
O Earth! Do not conceal their blood
and let there not be a resting place for their cry
In their merit shall the remnant of Israel
return to its rightful place
And as for the holy ones, their righteousness
shall be in front of the Lord as an everlasting memory
They will come in peace and will rest in peace
They will meet their rightful destiny at the end of days
and let us say Amen.

Thus far we have traced a number of the major twists and turns along the path, as the liturgy of Yizkor has meandered through history to present times. Next, we shall explore the structure, content and tenor of three contemporary *Mahzorim*.

STRUCTURE, CONTENT AND TENOR OF YIZKOR IN CONTEMPORARY MAHZORIM

i) A Structural Approach to Jewish Liturgy:

When I was growing up, there were basically three flavors of ice cream available - vanilla, chocolate and strawberry. It was a far simpler than today, when Ben and Jerry's or Baskin and Robbins offers dozens of flavors, with all kinds of possible cones, toppings and syrups. Life is increasingly complex, and we have to make choices from an abundance of options.

It seems that a similar thing has happened with the development and sophistication of traditional Jewish liturgy over the years. Now that long ago, and to some extent even today within some Orthodox congregations, Yizkor was as simple as ice cream once was - three prayers, that was it: *Yizkor Elohim*, *El Maleh Rachamim*, and the old favorite from Crusader times, *Av HaRachamim*. But in the Reform *Mahzor* today, the Yom Kippur Memorial Service, as it is termed, is eighteen pages long; in the Conservative *Mahzor* Yizkor is eleven pages long; and in the Reconstructionist *Kol HaNeshamah Prayerbook for Days of Awe* the Yizkor options reach a new all-time high of 29 pages. Almost as many flavors as Baskin and Robbins.

Years ago I learned from my teacher, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, to explore the deep structure of liturgy. As a liturgical innovator, and the spearhead of Jewish spiritual renewal for the past forty years, Reb Zalman has emphasized the importance of discovering and uncovering the inherent structure of traditional liturgy, to be able to use that structure as a basis for creative improvisation. His rationale has always been that the more one is

grounded in a working knowledge of tradition, the more authentically one can innovate and experiment, envisioning the future, while honoring the past.

With this in mind, it is my intention to flesh out, even if only in schematic form, the structure of Yizkor liturgy in 3 contemporary *Mahzorim*. The goal in doing so is to see the deep structure of the liturgy of Yizkor, as expressed in contemporary practice. I shall explore these three *Mahzorim* in order of their publication dates.

ii) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Mahzor Zikhron Yosef - The Complete Artscroll Machzor*⁴⁶ (Orthodox):

Yizkor in the Artscroll *Mahzor*, while based on the traditional Yizkor, has expanded somewhat from the original three-fold Orthodox service and consists of:

***Adonai Mah Adam va'Teyda'ayhu.** Here this prayer is seven verses long, as opposed to four in both Conservative and Reconstructionist *Mazhorim*.

***Psalm 91**

***Yizkor Elohim** in memory of father, mother, relatives, extended family, martyrs, and for members of the Israel Defense Force. The latter is taken from *Minchas Yerushalayim Siddur*. There is certainly a whole tradition on this type of Yizkor memorial; I have not given been able to give consideration to the historical development of specific Israel-based Yizkor traditions .

***El Maleh Rachamim** for an individual, a group, and for martyrs of the Holocaust. The latter includes the following text: **"for the souls of all my relatives, both on my father's side and my mother's side, the holy and pure one who were killed, slaughtered, burned, drowned and strangled for the sanctification of the Name, through the hands of the German oppressors, may their name and memory be obliterated."**⁴⁷

***Prayer for the Rabbi.** Interestingly, here there is a *Mi she-berakh* for the Rabbi. The introductory note reads: "At the conclusion of the Yizkor service, it is customary for the

gabbai to recite a prayer on behalf of the rabbi of the congregation.” I do not know the origins of this particular prayer; it seems to be a way of acknowledging the Rabbi in the middle of a long day of hard work on Yom Kippur.

Finally, the Yizkor service ends with the nine hundred year old prayer from the time of the Crusades:

****Av HaRachamim.***

Overall, the theology here is traditional. There are references to giving tzedakah and offering prayers on behalf of the deceased. One footnote commentary reads: “Through our prayers and deeds we hope to earn God’s compassion upon the departed soul.”⁴⁸

iii) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Mahzor for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur* (Conservative):

Yizkor Service in *Mahzor for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur* was arranged by Rabbi Jules Harlow, with a number of new English prayers written by Harlow himself. The content of this service is as follows:

****Adonai Mah Adam va’Teyda’ayhu***

****English responsive reading, “There is a time for everything”,*** based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-10.

****English responsive reading, “When I stray from you”,*** written by Jules Harlow.⁴⁹
This is preceded by and based on Psalm 16:8-9 - “*Shviti Adonai l’Nagdi Tamid*”.

****English personal meditation,*** a preparation for the *Yizkor Elohim* prayers to follow. The content here focuses predominantly on the grief wounding of the mourner - “**The death of those we now remember left gaping holes in our lives**”, “**we are strengthened by the blessings which they left us, by precious memories which comfort and sustain us**” - with no references at all to the idea of connecting with, or redeeming the soul of the deceased.

****Yizkor Elohim prayers*** in memory of father, mother, husband, wife, son, daughter, other relatives and friends, and for martyrs. Notice here there are gender specific prayers, thus acknowledging that there are women saying Yizkor, very different than what we saw earlier in the Orthodox *Mahzor*.

****English prayer in memory of congregants who died in the past year.*** “Help all of us to perpetuate the worthy values in the lives of those no longer with us, whose names we respectfully recall.” This is following by a reading of names of recently deceased congregants. This an interesting innovation. On one hand it has resonance with the memorial name lists, the “Memorbuchs” of the early medieval central European Yizkor service. On the other hand, what is being remembered are values of the life lived, no longer is there any notion of the living redeeming or atoning for the souls of the dead.

****El Maleh Rachamim prayers: the first is in memory of the six million*** (with no designation as martyrs, as noted earlier); the ***second is in memory of all dead.*** Although the Hebrew keeps the traditional designation of Gan Eden, the heavenly Garden of Eden, in the English translation souls now go “to their eternal home”.

****Responsive reading in English and Hebrew of Psalm 23.*** This is unique, in that it is inter-lineal, one line read in English, one line in Hebrew. Liturgically, this is a very powerful moment in the service, which then ends with a

****Mourner’s Kaddish.***

The Harlow Yizkor “works” as a liturgical package. First of all, as a replacement for its predecessor in the Silverman *Mahzor*, it is much more “user-friendly”. Harlow eliminates King James English translations of the Silverman *Mahzor*, and in its visual layout is simpler, easier to use for Rabbis and congregants. It is small enough to be said in its entirety, and is

reasonably consistent Jewish tradition. The *Av HaRachamim* prayer has been eliminated; and liturgy memorializing the Shoah added.

When first published in 1972, Rabbi Jules Harlow's *Mahzor* brought a breath of fresh air to the American Jewish liturgical legacy. Thirty-six years later "the old is making way for the new", as preparations are being made to "de-commission" the Harlow *Mahzor*. In early 2009 the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism will introduce a new *Mahzor* to the American Jewish community.⁵⁰ Rumors are it will make an important new contribution to the evolution American Jewish liturgy. What its Yizkor service will consist of remains to be seen.

iv) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Gates of Repentance* (Reform):

The Reform *Mahzor*, *Gates of Repentance*, was published in 1978. Designed to replace *The Union Prayerbook, Part II*, which had last been revised in 1945, it was based on both that volume, and on *Gates of Repentance* published in London, 1973.⁵¹ There is a long Yom Kippur Memorial Service in this volume; and a significantly smaller, and entirely different *Hazkarat Neshamot*, Memorial Service in *Gates of Prayer*, the *Siddur* of the Reform movement published in 1975.⁵²

There are approximately twenty separate liturgical selections for Yizkor in *Gates of Repentance*. At first we find seven different sets of a Psalm followed by a meditation or responsive reading in English, some selections of which have appeared elsewhere. Then there is the more familiar flow of *Yizkor Elohim*, *El Maleh Rachamim* and *Kaddish Yatom*.

In what may well be a Jewish prayerbook publishing innovation, this *Mahzor* uses different typesets to designate and differentiate between "Reader", "All-Reading" and sung passages.⁵³ It is clear what we have here is a "cookbook" compendium of variable liturgical options for Yizkor, designed for both congregational reading and choir.

Outline of the Yizkor Service in *Gates of Repentance* is as follows:

**Psalm 103:15-17, in Hebrew and English*

**English responsive reading, “Lord, I yearn only to be near You”*

**Psalm 63:2-5; 8 in Hebrew; English translation responsive reading*

**English responsive reading, “Lord [how] insignificant we are in your sight”*

**Adonai Mah Adam va’Teyda’ayhu*

**English responsive reading, “We are strangers in your sight, O God”*

**Psalm 90 responsive reading in Hebrew and English intermittently*

**English responsive reading, “O God...our wisdom is small, our vision is short”*

**Psalm 121 in Hebrew and English*

**English responsive reading, “If some messengers were to come to us...”*

**Meditation/textual reading of Mishna Avot 2:20 in Hebrew and English*

**English Meditation based on Ecc. 12:7*

**Meditation/textual reading of Selichot prayer in “HaNeshama Lakh” in Hebrew and English from Yom Kippur Maariv service*

**English responsive reading, “In You, Lord, do I seek refuge”*

**Psalm 16:8-11 in Hebrew and English*

**English responsive reading, “Let us call to mind the great and the good”*

**English reading/poem, “I continually think of those who were truly great”*

**English responsive reading, “O Lord of life, bless the memories we cherish”*

**English reading, “O Lord of life, our times are in your hand”*. This is a longer

liturgical piece, different in tone than all that has come so far. This is a lament for martyrs and, without ever specifically mentioning the six million, is clearly a memorialization of those killed in the atrocities of World War II.

Here is the complete text:

O Lord of life, our times are in Your hand. One generation comes into the world to be blessed with days of peace and safety; another goes through the valley of the shadow of enduring the cruelties of persecution and war. Heart-breaking have been the times that have fallen to our lot, O God. We have lived through years of tyranny and destruction; we are schooled in sorrow and acquainted with grief. We have seen the just defeated, the innocent driven from their homes, and the righteous suffer a martyrdom as merciless as any ages have witnessed.

At this hour of memorial we recall with grief all Your children who have perished through cruelty of the oppressor, victims of demonic hate: the aged and the young, the learned and the unlettered – all driven in multitudes along the road of pain and pitiless death. Their very presence on earth was begrudged them, for they brought Your covenant of mercy and justice to recollection of Your enemies; they perished because they were a symbol of Your eternal law; their death has brought darkness to the human soul.

They lie in nameless graves, in far-off forests and lonely fields. And the substance of many was scattered by the winds to the earth's four corners. Yet they shall not be forgotten. We take them into our hearts and give them a place beside the cherished memories of our own loved ones.

This memorial liturgy is followed by another English responsive reading that has become a more familiar standard in both Reform and Conservative communities, attributed to Sylvan Kamens and Jack Riemer⁵⁴, that begins with the phrase:

**In the rising of the sun and at its going down, we remember them.*

In the rising of the sun and its going down,	We remember them.
In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter,	We remember them.
In the opening buds and in the rebirth of spring,	We remember them.
In the blueness of the sky and in the warmth of summer,	We remember them.
In the rustling of leaves and in the beauty of autumn,	We remember them.
In the beginning of the year and when it ends,	We remember them.
When we are weary and in need of strength,	We remember them.
When we are lost and are sick of heart,	We remember them.
When we have Joys we yearn to share,	We remember them.
So long as we live, they too shall live,	
For they are now a part of us,	As we remember them.

**Yizkor Elohim prayers* - one simply for “my dear ones...who have gone to their eternal rest”; a second for “our brothers and sisters of the House of Israel who gave their lives for the Sanctification of the Divine Name”. And finally,

**El Maleh Rachamim; and*

**Mourner's Kaddish*, which appears here with an English transliteration.

While this is a long list of prayers, clearly it is designed to be used by selecting various individual readings. Throughout these prayers the motifs expressed emphasize human distance from God, the frailty of embodied life, the experience of grief and loss, and the healing efficacy of memories of a beloved deceased. In twenty-five pages of liturgical text, 70% of which is in English, the word “soul” appears half dozen times; the words “eternity”, “eternal” and “eternal rest” appear scattered occasionally. This Reform Yizkor says nothing about souls in the afterlife. In Temples of the Reform movement in the late 20th century, the window between the worlds has been closed.

v) Structural Outline of Yizkor Service in *Kol HaNeshamah Prayerbook for Days of Awe* (Reconstructionist):

Kol HaNeshamah Mahzor le'Yamim Noraim - Prayerbook for Days of Awe, published in 1999, is the largest and most voluminous *Mahzor* available today. It is not light-weight: being 1275 pages, and over 2 inches thick, it weighs 2 lbs. 6 oz. (By way of comparison: The *Art Scroll Mahzor* weighs 1 lb. 12 oz; Harlow - 1 lb. 10 oz.; *Gates of Repentance* - 1 lb. 4 oz. Perhaps there is some unknown mystical significance in these numbers.)

Over the course of ten years, from 1989-1999, the Jewish Reconstructionist Federation re-wrote all the original Reconstructionist Prayerbooks - Shabbat, Daily, Festivals and High Holidays - created by Mordecai Kaplan.⁵⁵ The *Mahzor* is the final publication in this series, which as a whole, represents a major and unique development in American liturgical creativity.⁵⁶

The compilation of *Yizkor* material in this *Mahzor* is unlike anything we have seen thus far, and twice the amount of that found in the Festival Prayerbook *Kol HaNeshamah Shabbat v'Hagim*.⁵⁷ It is much more of an anthology of *kavannot* [prayerful intentions] and

poetry, than a liturgical service per se. Its motifs are of personal grief and loss; as well as mourning and memory; in this sense it is not unlike *Gates of Repentance*, though in a more folksy language characteristic of Reconstructionism on the cusp of the 21st century. Here is the outline of material found in this Mahzor, beginning with:

****Three Kavanot for Yizkor, designed to introduce the Hazkarat Neshamot service.***

One of those was authored by Simcha Paull Raphael, and I will discuss that further below.

See also Appendix I.

**** Poem in English, “If I could hold your face”, by Robert Grant Burns.***

****Adonai Mah Adam va’Teyda’ayhu as a responsive reading with Hebrew and English interspersed***

****English reading, “We turn our thoughts to yesterday” by Evelyn Mehlman***

****Poem in English, “The Five Stages of Grief”, by Linda Pastan***

****Poem in Hebrew and English, “Little Ruth,” by the modern Israeli poet, Yehuda Amichai***

In a number of places in this *Mahzor*, and other Reconstructionist prayerbooks Israeli poetry has become Jewish liturgy, in itself a significant development.

In the sequence of the next eight entries, the increasingly personal and individual nature of this Yizkor service is very apparent. Clearly, this is designed for one to pick and choose the kind of grief tale one is personally carrying. Most of the poetry offered could just as well be included in a manual or newsletter for a bereavement organization. This shows the extent to which Yizkor become an increasingly efficacious psychological bereavement ritual in our times.

****Poem in Hebrew, “For a Grandmother,” by the Israeli poet, Lea Goldberg, English translation by Marcia Falk.***

****Poem in English, “For a Grandfather”, by Dana Shuster***

****Poem in English, “For a Parent”, by Linda Pastan***

****Poem in English, “In many houses... I see my mother and father”, author unknown***

****Poem in English, “For a Child”, by Su Yung P’o***

****Poem in English, “For a Spouse/Partner”, by Hannah Kahn***

****Poem in English, “For a Suicide”, by Adrienne Rich***

****Poem in English, “On Healing” by Marjorie Pizer***

Following these poems, the service winds towards completion with more traditional Yizkor liturgy:

****Yizkor Elohim prayers*** - interestingly there are only two selections here, offered in memory of a either a male or a female, they are not relationally specific, the poetry above having served that task. At the bottom of these prayers is another

****Kavannah, by Betsy Platkin-Teutsch.*** This brief *Kavannah* demonstrates even more fully the emotional, psychological understanding of the internal processes of grief inherent to this Reconstructionist Yizkor liturgy. The tenor expressed here represents another evolutionary leap in the development of Yizkor traditions. Exuding from the pages of the *Mahzor* we find the integrated wisdom of Sigmund Freud and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross:

Yizkor, a time to mourn our lost loved ones, is for some a time to mourn relationships that were not fully loving. We prayer zicharon livrahah/“may the memory be a blessing”. We hope that with the passing of time we can let go of our pain and disappointment in the shortcoming of our deceased loved ones and see them as blessings in our lives, distilling the goodness in them which may now be overshadowed. In coming to terms with difficult relationships, we are blessed with peace, and memory becomes blessing.

****El Maleh Rachamim*** for all who have died, followed by

****El Maleh Rachamim*** for the “Martyrs, Soldiers of the People Israel, and Victims of the Holocaust”.

This is an all-inclusive *El Maleh Rachamim*, and in the introductory title itself, referring to “Soldiers of the People Israel” we see some of the Reconstructionist hesitancy

or reticence about Zionism and the Land of Israel.⁵⁸ To resolve Harlow's dilemma about the meaning of martyrdom and *Kiddush HaShem*, here the Reconstructionists speak of "all those who have given up their lives in affirmation of your holy Name, and all destroyed in the Shoah."⁵⁹

Finally, in a gentle liturgical landing, Yizkor finishes with three more pieces:

****In the rising of the sun and at its going down, we remember them by Jack Riemer and Sylvan D. Kamens***

This is the one contemporary English Yizkor liturgy that appears in Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist *Mahzorim*.

****Mourner's Kaddish***

****Psalm 23 in English and Hebrew.***

Having examined various stopping point along the history of Yizkor liturgy, it is overtly clear that in the pages of this *Mahzor* that there is no mention of Gan Eden, nor any giving of *tzedakah* on behalf of the deceased. In fact, elsewhere in the *Kol HaNeshamah - Mahzor*, p. 352, in a commentary on the *U'netaneh Tokef* prayer, Rabbi Richard Hirsch writes:

Reconstructionism rejects the superstitious dimensions of prayer, and we do not believe either that "all is decreed" or that "*teshuvah*, and *tefillah*, and *tzedakah* can magically mitigate what may happen. But we do accept, as this prayer suggests, that though there are things beyond our control, we do retain control over how we react to those things."⁶⁰

What we see here is a clear Kaplanian understanding of the universe; human beings cannot do anything to affect the state of the dead. The service is well-designed to meet psychological and emotional needs of bereaved Yizkor congregants. Having been a participant in Reconstructionist communities, I know there is a warm, psychological efficacy to these Yizkor services. But like *Gates of Repentance*, this *Mahzor* has traveled very far, spiritually and cosmologically from the view of the universe of the Rabbis, and medieval mystics. Published in 1999, this was the very last *Mahzor* created by Jews of the 20th

century. Even with its 2 lbs. 6 oz. of creative liturgy and psychologically-savvy humanism, *Kol HaNeshamah Mahzor le'Yamim Noraim - Prayerbook for Days of Awe* lacks soul. Or perhaps more accurately, lacks an understanding of the invisible relationship between the living and the evolving disembodied soul that served as the basis upon which Yizkor prayers were originally founded.

If Judaism is an evolving civilization, as Mordecai Kaplan would have it, perhaps it is time to re-evaluate the spiritual needs of people today, and think about new ways of re-infusing an understanding of the evolution of the soul and a knowledge of the post-mortem journey of consciousness back into Yizkor practices. It is this which we shall now explore in the final section of this paper.

MOVING FROM THE PSYCHOLOGICAL TO THE “SOUL-GUIDING” FUNCTION OF YIZKOR

i) Towards a Spirit-Based Paradigm of Life, Death and Afterlife:

We have traced the evolution of Yizkor liturgy over a journey of nine centuries. In the shadow of the Crusades, we saw the emergence of *Hazkarat Neshamot* as a communal ritual memorializing the collective trauma of mega-death. Slowly, in incremental stages Yizkor was transformed into a ritual to remember and redeem souls of deceased loved ones. Next, in the late 19th and early 20th century in a community of immigrants cut off from “the old country”, Yizkor came to serve a dual role, both as a way of memorializing the deceased, and as a process of the expiation of guilt for the bereaved.

In our time, first through *Gates of Repentance*, and then more firmly with the publication of the Reconstructionist *Mahzor Kol HaNeshamah*, Yizkor has been re-contextualized as a psychologically-efficacious public bereavement ritual, having little to do effecting changes in the realm of the dead.

The idea of a soul's survival after death; a realm of the afterlife; the postmortem journey of the soul; and communion between the living and dead cannot and do not exist in a paradigm of the universe in which consciousness is limited to the body, and death is the end of conscious knowing and being. That is the scientific-materialistic paradigm, the "Newtonian-Cartesian" worldview that has been at the basis of Western culture since the Enlightenment.⁶¹

But as the twenty-first century unfolds, a new paradigm of spirit is emerging, one that understands consciousness is not limited to the body, and death is but a transition to another realm of existence, another way of being and knowing. The work of hospice,⁶² studies of near-death experiences,⁶³ and cross-cultural views of dying and afterlife⁶⁴ are all contributing to the emergence of a spirit-based paradigm. This emerging paradigm understands that there is consciousness after death, and - as our Jewish ancestors knew - the relationship between the living and the dead continues long after the body begins its process of decomposition.

Evidence from three millennia of Jewish textual traditions on death and the afterlife indicates that, in fact, Judaism has *always upheld a view of some form of existence after death*, except when influenced by and adopting the cultural worldview of modernity, scientific-materialism, and secular humanism.⁶⁵ According to the legacy of our sacred texts, notions of postmortem survival of the soul are inherently part of Judaism.

Thus if we begin with the assumption that consciousness does survive bodily death, how do we view the ritual of Yizkor - *Hazkarat Neshamot*, "Remembering of Souls" - today? How can we honor *both* the bereavement dimension of Yizkor, so well implemented in the Reconstructionist *Mahzor*, and simultaneously, bring to the Yizkor service a spiritual

component that consciously affirms and endeavors to actualize the connection between the living and souls of the dead?

To answer these questions, it will be helpful to clarify the difference between the *psychological function* and *spiritual function* of Yizkor. Once we understand that, we can see what it is that needs to be done beyond the psycho-emotional level.

ii) Psychological Function of Yizkor:

At a psychological level, Yizkor provides a sacred time to remember and honor those who have died. In today's intensive lifestyle, it is easy to be pre-occupied with daily demands of living: incessant email, voicemail, junk mail, text messaging and the ordinary stuff of life make it difficult to find time to consciously remember the dead. Whether we are mourning a parent, sibling, spouse, partner, or G!d-forbid, a child, we are all in varying stages of bereavement with regard to loved ones who have died.

Yizkor establishes fixed moments on the calendar to attend to our ongoing process of bereavement. Devoting time and attention to feelings and thoughts about the ones for whom we are saying Yizkor, continues the subtle internal transformations of grief. Yizkor provides an external and public setting among other mourners that, paradoxically, allows us to connect inwardly and privately with our memories, thoughts, feelings about a person who has died. Yizkor is a process of sacred time within a sacred space that enables us to wrestle with mourning and meaning, and reflect upon a person's life and legacy.

Through the saying of Yizkor, even as we mourn our losses, the bond of the generations between the living and the dead is strengthened. This bond links us to the past and the present; and allows us to anticipate the future with hope, feeling connected deeply to our tradition, and to those whom we have known and loved.

Capturing the essence of Yizkor on Yom Kippur, Rabbi Leonard Gordon writes:

At Yizkor, we face the mystery of the elusive past, the aching absences created by those who were once with us and have vanished, as we will someday disappear from the lived experience of those who will mourn us. The liturgy and the fasting and other self-deprivations of Yom Kippur want us to really face these mysteries of past and future and grieve the losses of what had been and the losses that will be. Our frame of mind should become awe.⁶⁶

Psychologically, saying of Yizkor has depth, power and potency. There is no doubt about it; that is part of the lure Yizkor has held for centuries. However, beyond the psychological dimension, it is helpful to understand the spiritual dimension of Yizkor.

ii) Spiritual/"Soul-Guiding" Function of Yizkor

The spiritual function of Yizkor - what I call the "soul-guiding perspective"- takes as a given all of the above psychological dimensions, but goes further in recognizing that consciousness survives bodily death, and the soul travels through a panoramic journey in the afterlife. As this postmortem journey unfolds, the living and the dead - animate human beings and deceased disembodied souls - continue in some mysterious form of relationship. Even with passing of seasons and cycles of time the dead are aware of the presence of the living, and the living can impact the state of the soul in the afterlife, just as the dead can watch over the living. We see these traditional Jewish ideas reflected throughout the entire cycle of mourning:

At the time of funeral: Rav told his colleague Rabbi Samuel ben Shilath: "Be fervent in my funeral eulogy, for I will be standing there" (Shab. 152b). During the week of Shiva, teaches the Zohar: "for seven days the soul goes to and fro from his house to his grave from his grave to his house, mourning for the body" (Zohar I, 218b). During this seven day period, corresponding with Shiva, mourners study Mishna. Since the word Mishna has the same letters as *neshama*, soul, it is taught that the spiritual merit of sacred study can be transferred to the account of the deceased, to assist in the process of postmortem judgment.⁶⁷ Then, throughout the year of saying Kaddish - in *Yoreh Deah* (Isserles' gloss to

YD 376, 4) we read: “when a son prays and sanctifies God, the son redeems his mother and father from Gehenna.”⁶⁸ If the dead want to appear to the living, according to Tosfot to Shabbat 153a, “they are given permission to do so”⁶⁹ And at the time of Yahrzeit, according to the Kabbalists, recitation of the Kaddish “elevates the soul every year to a higher sphere in Gan Eden.”⁷⁰ Since the living assist the disembodied soul in its spiritual peregrinations in the heavenly realms of Gan Eden, among the Hasidim, the custom is to toast a “*L'Chaim*” on a Yahrzeit, saying “*de neshomah zol hobben an aliyah*” - “may the soul further ascend”.⁷¹

In all of the above examples, we see repeatedly the notion that the veil between the worlds of living and the dead is transparent, not opaque. Even more so, this seems to be the case at specific moments of sacred time - birthdays, anniversaries, Yahrzeit and at the times of saying Yizkor. Thus, a “soul-guiding perspective” on Yizkor regards Yizkor liturgies as having the capacity to function as a vehicle of communication and interaction between the worlds, between the embodied living, and the disembodied souls of the post-mortem realms.

This raises some interesting questions to consider with regard to Yizkor and Yizkor liturgy. What does it mean to us today to “elevate the soul of the deceased in Gan Eden”? When the veil between the worlds is open, what is incomplete between the living and the dead, that needs more attention? What are the silent prayers of the heart for healing between the living and the dead? What are the subtle and not-so-subtle synchronistic experiences occurring that suggest communication from the world beyond? Are there communications that take place in dreams around the time of Yizkor?⁷²

Our soul-guiding perspective also recognizes that the dead are intercessors for the living.⁷³ At times of Yizkor, our deceased loved ones are close, open to communication with

and from the human realm, and able to act as intercessors in our lives. What are our human needs for love, marriage and fertility, health, *paranasah*, etc.? Traditionally these are the realms that the dead have been said to offer help and support. How can we begin to re-infuse these kinds of concerns back into our contemporary liturgies of Yizkor? How can Yizkor become a time for deep conversations of things that matter, for both the living and the dead?

These are some of the considerations that emerge in reflecting on the spiritual function of Yizkor.

Below are two liturgical resources for *Yizkor* which can be utilized to evoke the soul-guiding dimension of Yizkor:

iii) A Meditation/*Kavannah* for Yizkor:

In 1998 I was approached by Rabbi David Teutsch and invited to submit a *Kavannah* for Yizkor to the Reconstructionist *Kol HaNeshamah Prayerbook for Days of Awe*, which I did. This *Kavannah* was subsequently included in the Yizkor service. However, my original submission was edited, whittling away any mystical nuances of an objectively real afterlife existence of the soul, and made more metaphoric, humanistic rather than transcendental [see Appendix I].

Below is a *Kavannah* for *Yizkor* which makes no apology for afterlife, and is designed to evoke the soul-guiding dimension of Yizkor:

Jewish tradition, in its 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, in our culture of scientific materialism, we often believe 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. From the depths of imagination, in your heart and mind, see open that window opening...

As you prepare to recite *Yizkor* prayers today, allow your senses and imagination to serve as a vehicle of connection with the mysterious world of souls. For whom are you saying *Yizkor* today? There may be one, there may be many beings who are there for you today. One at a time: imagine that person's face before your eyes. Feel their presence, see their smile, visualize how they are appearing before you today, imagine them sitting next to you. With your hand - literally, viscerally do this right now - reach out through the crack between the worlds, feel yourself touching them, gently...

As you do this, become aware of sounds emerging from the depths. Can you hear, do you recall the sound of their voice? As you go deeper within, hear their words to you today. Feel their presence right in this moment. In your mind, in your heart, there is a conversation between the two of you about to unfold. Allow that conversation to unfold, heart to heart, mind to mind, spirit to spirit. What is it that needs to be communicated this year? What is true in your relationship at this moment? In the silence, listen deeply. What's the message you need to hear today? What's the wounding? What's the healing? What are the silent prayers of the heart? What remains unspoken? Speak. Listen. Take your time. There is no reason to hurry. This is a timeless moment. Let all the radiance of their love to be with you right now.

In a moment we will stand for our *Yizkor* prayers. Before we complete, ask for a blessing from those beings who have come to be with you today...take it in, feel their blessing for you, for your life at this time. This is a timeless moment. Let all the radiance of their love to be with you right now.

Yizkor teaches us to remember the dead. Long after people die, their legacy lives on inside of us. Within the wellsprings of our infinite souls we find the window of connection between the living and the dead.⁷⁴

iv) *Yizkor* Vision - A Poem for *Yizkor*

Finally, I offer the following poem as a Kavannah for *Yizkor*, also speaking of the connection between souls in this world, and the world beyond.

In the crisp autumn air
I went to say
Yizkor prayers today
One of those holy days
Four times a year
We gather in community
Mourners threaded by
Memories of heart and mind
A direct line
To loved ones
In the world beyond.
Four times a year
Ever since the Crusades
When mega-death
Demanded memorialization
Jews have said Yizkor
Remembrance
To honor, remember, elevate
Souls of dead loved ones.
It was fascinating
As I looked around the room
The synagogue was packed
Death, after all is said and done
Is a popular attraction
Yet to my surprise
Through the vision of my eyes
There was hardly
An adult in the room
Those saying Yizkor for parents
I saw on their faces
Pain and love
Of little boys and girls
Lost, lonely
Crying for mommys and daddys
Those remembering dead brothers and sisters
They too were pained children
A little brother
Reaching for his older sister's hand
A little girl, standing next to her sister
Both of them wondering why
Their little brother died
And even that man
Saying Yizkor for his dead wife
For a brief moment
Looked like a lost child
Unsure if someone
Will ever be there
To light the way

So many children
Being cleansed by their tears.
In an instantaneous moment
Of infinite time
Something changed
Reciting the "*el maleh rachamim*"
In mournful dirge
Suddenly the windows opened
Souls ancient, eternal, transcendent
Seemed to stream into the space
Visible on everyone's face
Each lost child
Seemed to be comforted
Through soul's presence
Our prayers invited
A heavenly congregation
Of wondrous, watching, wise beings
Ancestral guides
Mommys, Daddys
Bubbys, Zaydes from the other side
Loved ones who walk with us
Day and night
Easing pain, loneliness and fright
And somehow in the afterglow
Of so many souls
Beckoned and present
As our praying moments
Softly came to an end
Each face, man, woman and child
Looked a little older
A little wiser
Deepened in the interior channels
Of heart and soul
Walking with dignity
The mourner's path
Of our ancient sages
Deepened in knowing
Death and loss
Come what may
Are truly and evermore
Interwoven into
The mystery and the enigma
Of being alive
Of being human.⁷⁵

And with this poem, I end this paper, a work-in-progress and a vision of Yizkor - Past,
Present and Future.

APPENDIX 1 - KAVANAH FOR YIZKOR

Jewish tradition teaches us that between the living and the dead there is a window, not a wall. The culture of scientific materialism teaches that after death, the links 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 loved ones who are no longer with us. 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. Prepare to open that window...

As you recite Yizkor prayers let your senses and imagination serve as the vehicle of inter-connection. For whom are you saying Yizkor today? Can you imagine that person's face before your eyes? See their smile, 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. What needs to be communicated this year? What's the message you need to hear today? What are the silent prayers of the heart? What remains unspoken? Speak. Listen. Take your time. There is no reason to hurry. This is a timeless moment. Let all the radiance of their love to be with you right now.⁷⁶

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ Kaufman Kohler, "Memorial Service" *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1904) p. 463.
- ² A.Z. Idelsohn, *Jewish Liturgy and Its Development* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995; originally published 1932) p. 230.
- ³ In addition, there was also the belief that the dead might could be vengeful, malevolent or at the very least mischievous tricksters, if not properly appeased. As a result, all types of folk level practices emerged to ward off or depotentiate wicked spirits of the dead. See Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York: Athenum, 1977; originally published 1939), especially Chapter XI.
- ⁴ Solomon B. Freehof, "**Hazkarath Neshamoth**" in *HUCA* , Vol. XXXVI (1965), pp. 179-189.
- ⁵ Salfeld, "Martyrologium" p. 81 cited by Freehof, p. 179. On the Memor-Book see: Idelsohn, pp. 374-375, ft. nt. 48; and "Memor-Book" in *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VIII (New York: Funk and Wagnall's Company, 1904) p. 456-458.
- ⁶ Freehof, p. 180.
- ⁷ "Av HaRachamim", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Keter Publications, 1972), p. 954.
- ⁸ This is not the complete translation of this prayer. See *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, (Brooklyn: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, 1978) p. 256. Translation here from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Av_HaRachamim.
- ⁹ Philip Birnbaum (ed.), *Ha-Siddur Ha-Shalem* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1949), p. 601, ft. nt.
- ¹⁰ Michael Edward Panitz, "Modernity and Mortality: The Transformation of Central European Jewish Responses to Death, 1750-1850" Ph.D. Dissertation. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1989), p. 51; Freehof, pp. 184-186.
- ¹¹ Freehof, p. 185.
- ¹² Quoting Shach to *Yoreh Deah* 237:2; also by Ba'er Hetev to *Orah Hayyim* 547:5. All of these primary sources are presented in Freehof, p. 186. **On the origins and development of Yizkor in medieval Halakhic literature see Aaron Levine, *The Complete Yizkor Handbook* (Toronto: Zichron Meir Publications, 1985).**
- ¹³ Freehof writes:
- There is also a third type of memorial which cannot be described as liturgical, namely, as part of the prayer book incumbent upon all worshippers simultaneously. It may be described as an Individual Memorial. A man is called up to the Torah and he has a special prayer recited for his dead. This Individual Family Memorial seems to be the one carried over into the Sephardic world from the Ashkenazic. Among the Sephardim there is the custom that an individual, whether called up to the Torah or not, asks for a prayer which is to be recited before the Ark in memory or in behalf of his departed relative. This the Sephardim call Hashkavah. (Freehof, p. 181)
- ¹⁴ *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 255-256.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 418.
- ¹⁶ Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy - A Comprehensive History*, trans. Raymond P. Scheindlin. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993).

-
- ¹⁷ Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1971).
- ¹⁸ Stefan C. Reif, *Judaism and Hebrew Prayer - New Perspectives on Jewish Liturgical History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- ¹⁹ Idelsohn, p. 232.
- ²⁰ "El Male Rahamim", *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Keter Publications, 1972) p. 683.
- ²¹ I also sent an email to the H-Judaic list of Jewish academics, asking if someone knew the origins of this prayer. Except for one single Halakhic citation, I received no other information. Usually, when I put out a request like this to the list, I receive 5-10 emails in reply. I have also been in contact with Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman, Professor of Jewish Liturgy, Worship and Ritual at HUC-JIR. He told me there has been little contemporary research done on the history of Jewish death liturgy.
- ²² Philip Birnbaum (ed.), *High Holy Day Prayer Book* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., 1951), p. 732, ft. nt.
- ²³ Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Prayerbook Reform in Europe - The Liturgy of European Liberal and Reform Judaism* (New York: World Union for Progressive Judaism, 1968) p. 330.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 331.
- ²⁵ Petuchowski, p. 332.
- ²⁶ *Ibid*. In my own work tracking the development of Jewish ideas of the afterlife, this innovation of the Hamburg Temple Prayer Book represents an important stage in modernity's stripping away of a numinous universe in which disembodied souls and living human beings are in a dynamic relationship.
- ²⁷ *Festival Prayer Book* (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 1958) p. 342; *Mahzor le'Yamim Noraim, High Holiday Prayer Book: Yom Kippur II* (New York: Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation, Inc., 1948); *Kol HaNeshamah - Mahzor le'Yamim Noraim - Prayerbook for Days of Awe* (Wyncote, Pa: Jewish Reconstructionist Fellowship, 1999), p. 1007.
- ²⁸ *Gates of Repentance - The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1978) p. 480.
- ²⁹ Morris Silverman (ed.), *High Holiday Prayer Book* (Hartford, CT: Prayer Book Press, 1951), p. 321; Jules Harlow (ed.), *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1972) p. 684.
- ³⁰ Joseph Hertz (ed.), *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book* (New York: Bloch Publishing, 1941) p. 1106; Birnbaum (ed.), *High Holy Day Prayer Book*, p. 729. Yakov Davis and Naftali Adler (eds.), *Service of the Synagogue* (New York: Hebrew Publishing Co., n.d.) (1930's? 1940's?)
- ³¹ Nosson Scherman (ed.), *Mahzor Zikhron Yosef - The Complete Artscroll Machzor* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1986). Above the *Adonai Mah Adam* selection in this *Mahzor* is the following note: "Although the following verses are not part of the traditional *Yizkor* service, some congregations have adopted the custom of reciting them before *Yizkor*." (p. 470)
- ³² Birnbaum, p. 729.
- ³³ Verses in the Hamburg Siddur are: Ps.144:3-4; Psalm 90:6, 3: Deut. 32:29; Ps. 49:18; Ps. 37:37; Ps. 34:23. See Petuchowski, p. 331.
- ³⁴ Eric L. Friedland, "The Atonement Memorial Service in the American Mahzor" *HUCA*, Vol. LV 91984) pp. 251.
- ³⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 243-282.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 278.

³⁷ *Ibid*.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Richard Rubinstein, *After Auschwitz: Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1966).

⁴⁰ Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (New York: New York University Press, 1970).

⁴¹ The first book which brought Weisel into the public eye as a spokesperson for remembering the Holocaust was: Elie Weisel, *Night*, trans. Stella Rodway (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961).

⁴² See Judith E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987); and Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁴³ Elie Wiesel and Albert H. Friedlander, *The Six Days of Destruction: Meditations Toward Hope* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988). See also Albert H. Friedlander, "Siddur, Machsor, and the Shoah: Contemporary Responses to the Catastrophe" in *Remembering for the Future - Working Papers and Addenda*, Vol. I *Jews and Christians During and After the Holocaust* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1985) pp. 949.

I have not (yet) been able to track down original source of this *El Maleh Rachamim*. I have assumed Weisel is the original author.

⁴⁴ Shira Lander, "Martyrdom in Jewish Traditions", http://www.bc.edu/research/cjl/meta-elements/texts/cjrelations/resources/articles/Lander_martyrdom/index.html#_ftn75

⁴⁵ http://yizkor.ort.org:8081/html/holoprayer_th.shtml.

No information available on original source of this *El Maleh Rachamim*.

⁴⁶ Scherman, pp. 470-476.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 473.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p 475.

⁴⁹ In both Harlow's *Mahzor* and *Siddur* there are no attributions for the new English material added. However, Harlow's name does appear under specific pieces of Yizkor liturgy in the more recent 1998 Rabbinical Assembly adaptation of *Siddur Sim Shalom* (known fondly as "Slim Shalom"), and in Reuven Hammer, *Or Hadash - A Commentary on Siddur Sim Shalom* (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 2003). The Yizkor service in these newer prayerbooks also contain three additional English responsive readings by one by Harlow, and two by Simcha Kling.

⁵⁰ I have not chosen to give due consideration to yet another contemporary Conservative Mahzor, *The New Mahzor for Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, Mahzor Hadash*, edited by Rabbi Sydney Greenberg and Rabbi Jonathan Levine (Bridgeport, CT: The Prayerbook Press, 1977). Both in theological underpinning and in liturgical style, it is similar to the Harlow *Mahzor*, though it has some additional English prayers.

⁵¹ *Gates of Repentance*, p. x.

⁵² *Gates of Prayer* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis, 1975), pp. 546-553.

⁵³ *Gates of Repentance*, p. xi.

-
- ⁵⁴ See *Mahzor Hadash*, p. 572; and Richard N. Levy (ed.), *On Wings of Awe - A Machzor for Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur* (Washington, DC: B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation, 1985), pp. 381-382.
- ⁵⁵ In 2001 another *Mahzor* was published by Congregation Dorshei Emet, a Reconstructionist congregation in Montreal, Canada. Because the Canadian Jewish community is more traditional than that of the United States, the *Kol HaNeshama* series of prayerbooks did not meet the needs of that congregation. Rabbi Ron Aigen created a both a *Siddur* and *Mahzor*, different than *Kol HaNeshamah*, yet still reflecting Reconstructionist ideology and practice. See Ronald Aigen (ed.), *Mahzor Hadesh Yameinu - Renew Our Days A Prayer-Cycle for Days of Awe* (Hampstead, Quebec: Congregation Dorshei Emet, 2001); and Ronald Aigen (ed.), *Hadesh Yameinu - A Book of Jewish Prayer and Meditation* (Hampstead, Quebec: Congregation Dorshei Emet, 1996).
- ⁵⁶ See Eric L. Friedland, "Were Our Mouths Filled With Song": *Studies in Liberal Jewish Liturgy* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1997) p. 244ff.
- ⁵⁷ *Kol HaNeshamah Shabbat v'Hagim* (Wyncote, Pa: Reconstructionist Press, 1996), pp. 630-645.
- ⁵⁸ See Rebecca T. Alpert and Jacob Staub, *Exploring Judaism: A Reconstructionist Approach* (Wyncote, Pa.: Reconstructionist Press, 1988), pp. 47ff.
- ⁵⁹ *Kol HaNeshama - Mahzor*, p. 1029.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 352.
- ⁶¹ See Stanislav Grof, *Beyond the Brain - Birth, Death and Transcendence in Psychotherapy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985) pp. 1-91; Charles T. Tart, "Some Assumptions of Orthodox, Western Psychology" in *Transpersonal Psychologies*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 59-111.
- ⁶² Kathleen Dowling Singh, *The Grace in Dying - How We are Spiritually Transformed as We Die*. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1998).
- ⁶³ Kenneth Ring and Evelyn Elsaesser Valarino, *Lessons from the Light: What We Can Learn from the Near-death Experience* (Needham, MA; Moment Point Press, 2000).
- ⁶⁴ Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992); Robert F. Thurman, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (New York: Bantam, 1994).
- ⁶⁵ Simcha Paull Raphael, *Jewish Views of the Afterlife* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Publishers, 1994, 1996).
- ⁶⁶ Rabbi Leonard Gordon, "On Facing Solitude" Sermon delivered at the Germantown Jewish Centre, Yom Kippur, Yizkor 5769 (Philadelphia, unpublished, 2008).
- ⁶⁷ Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, "Life in the Hereafter - A Tour of What's to Come" in *The Jewish Almanac*, edited by Richard Siegel and Carl Rheins (New York: Bantam Books, 1980) p. 595.
- ⁶⁸ This is based upon a famous Midrash about Rabbi Akiba teaching a son to recite the Kaddish to free his father from Gehenna. (*Midrash Eliyahu Zuta*, chapter 15:5). See Leon Wieseltier, *Kaddish* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).
- ⁶⁹ *Tosafot* to Shabbat 153a, s.v. *venishmato*, cited by Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid, *Sefer Chasidim - The Book of the Pious*, edited by Avraham Yaakov Finkelstein (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1997) p. 102. See also Rabbi Eleazar Rokeach, *Sefer Chochmat Hanefesh*.
- ⁷⁰ From a ritual code entitled *Or Zarua* by Rabbi Isaac ben Moses of Vienna, and attributed to Isaac Luria; quoted by Tzvi Rabinowicz, *A Guide to Life - Jewish Laws and Customs of Mourning* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1989) pp. 91-92.

⁷¹ Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *op. cit.*

⁷² *Sefer Chasidim*, a medieval ethical manual, speaks of how the dead communicate through dreams. See Rabbi Yehudah HeChasid, *Sefer Chasidim - The Book of the Pious*, *op. cit.* p. 103.

⁷³ Teachings on intercessory prayer between the living and the dead permeates medieval death liturgy, and the medieval Halakhic codes, however, I have not yet begun to do this research.

⁷⁴ Adapted from: Simcha Paull Raphael, "Meditation for Yizkor" in *Kol Haneshamah: Yamim Noraim*, (Elkins Park, Pa.: Reconstructionist Press, 1999) p. 1007

⁷⁵ From Simcha Paull Raphael, *Kaddish Echoes - Poems of Night Time, Poems of Mourning*. Unpublished manuscript.

⁷⁶ Simcha Paull Raphael, "Meditation for Yizkor" in *Kol Haneshamah: Yamim Noraim*, (Elkins Park, Pa.: Reconstructionist Press, 1999) p. 1007