

Zikhrono livrakha - May their memory be for a blessing  
By Marc Wernick, Chair of the Religious Culture Committee

Growing up, I always looked forward to Yizkor services on Yom Kippur. My parents would shoo me and my sister out of the sanctuary. It was our long-awaited break in the day long service. There's a *hubbe miese* (Yiddish for old wives' tale) that if your parents are still alive, it is bad luck to attend the memorial service. However, there is no evidence of that in Jewish canon. In fact, many rabbis today, including our beloved spiritual leader, Rabbi Gordon, suggest that everyone stay for Yizkor so that the entire congregation can offer the prayers for the martyrs of the Jewish people, honor the memories of those who have no one to say Kaddish for them, and offer moral support to friends and family who may be deeply touched by the memorial service.

Yizkor means "may [God] remember" and is a prayer service recited four times a year in the synagogue: on Yom Kippur, Passover, Sukkot, and Shavuot. There are 4 parts to the service:

1. A series of readings, psalms, and prayers, recited and chanted, that sets the mood for the solemn service.
2. Paragraphs that individuals read silently, recalling the deceased. There are paragraphs for fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, sons, daughters, other relatives and friends, and Jewish martyrs. During the service, each person reads the appropriate paragraph(s).
3. The memorial prayer for the deceased, the *El Male Rahamim* [God full of compassion], is chanted. This is essentially the same prayer said at Jewish funerals.
4. A special prayer, *Av HaRahamim* (Ancestor of Mercies), probably composed as a eulogy for communities destroyed in the Crusades of 1096, is recited by the congregation as a memorial for all Jewish martyrs.

Unfortunately, my father passed in 1999 and, while it was once the service that my parents attended together, I now attend Yom Kippur Yizkor with my mom. Yizkor provides me an opportunity to reflect on how my father shaped my life, through his values and his involvement in the Jewish Community both in Potomac and Annapolis, MD. I feel my dad's presence at Yizkor and feel that I am continuing his legacy through my Jewish communal involvement. I enjoy flipping through the Book of Remembrance, not only seeing the names of my family, but lovingly remembering some BSS congregants, like Agi Rado, Gayle Hafner, and Jeannette Karpay. Yizkor also provides the container for me to reflect on my life and the legacy I want to leave.

What might be some of your personal reasons to pay your respects to loved ones who have passed at our upcoming Yizkor service?

Rabbi Gordon and the Religious Culture Committee invite you to our next Yizkor service. Join us for 30 minutes, either in person or on Zoom, on May 26 at 8:00 am.