

Kever Avot Memorial Service *Grave of our Fathers*

Mt. Sinai is pleased to welcome you to our annual Kever Avot Memorial Service.

Meditation

Memorial services are for letting the music come back, softly and sweetly.

Memorial services are to hush us and heal us, because we are very tired under the burden which death has brought.

Memorial services are to hush us with the quiet strength of prayer.

Memorial services are to heal us with the wisdom that death gives urgency to life.

Then sit quiet, without bitter tears, and let the silence flow in, bringing more love than grief, more gratitude than rebellion.

— Adapted from Rabbi Jacob Philip Rudin's
"Remembrance" in Religion and Bereavement

Reflecting...

At this most sacred season, when we pray for a year of life, health, and joy for ourselves and our dear ones, when we pray for the well-being of our people and all mankind, our thoughts turn not only to the living but also to the deceased. The Jewish people do not forget their debt to past generations. That may account for their miraculous survival. Perhaps that is why Israel is eternal. A people who remembers their past, their traditions, their ideals, and holds fast to them, cannot die or vanish from the face of the earth.

Every day we live is a gift from G-d. We best honor our departed if, in their memory, we make every hour count and every day worthwhile. When we continue the noble work of our parents, when in tribute to our dear ones who have died, we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, free the oppressed; when we are loyal to our faith, when we devote ourselves to truth and justice for all people- then indeed our departed live on. Then indeed we give life to our departed and add life to our own years.

Prayer Upon Visiting the Cemetery

O G-d, Source of all life and love,
We turn to You for help
In times of pain and sorrow.

Give us strength in this hour of remembrance,
As we seek to pay tribute to our departed.

Help us to remember the words of our Bible:
“The human soul is the light of the Lord.”

In Your keeping, the souls of the departed still glow,
“As brightly as the heavenly firmament.”

May this faith help to dispel the darkness,
When sadness descends upon us.

“By Your light, may we see light,”
During this visit and at all times.

May the memory of our departed abide with us
As a lasting benediction.

Psalm 23 *A Psalm of David*

יְיָ רֹעִי, לֹא אֶחְסֶר. בְּנְאוֹת דָּשָׁא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי
עַל-מֵי מְנַחֹת יִנְהַלֵּנִי. נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּבֵב
יִנְחֵנִי בַמְעַגְלֵי-צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ.
גַּם כִּי-אֵלֶךְ בְּגִיא צַלְמוֹת לֹא-אִירָא רָע
כִּי-אֵתָה עִמָּדִי שִׁבְטֶךָ וּמִשְׁעַנְתֶּךָ הַמָּה
יִנְחֵמֵנִי. תַעֲרֹךְ לְפָנַי שְׁלֹחַן נֶגֶד
צִרְרֵי דְשִׁנְתָּ בְשִׁמּוֹן רֹאשִׁי כּוֹסֵי רְוִיָה.
אֵךְ טוֹב וַחֲסֵד יִרְדְּפוּנִי כָל-יְמֵי
חַיִּי וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית-יְיָ לְאָרְךָ יָמִים.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul;
He guides me in straight paths for His name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the
Shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of
my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.
Surely goodness and loving kindness will Follow
me all the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

Prayer

We turn our thoughts to yesterday...
To a world that lives only in our memory.
As we recall the days gone by, we know the past is
irretrievable.
Yet, through the gift of memory,
We recapture treasured moments and images. We
are thankful for the happiness we knew with those
no longer here,
And with whom we lived and laughed and loved.

We praise the Eternal wellspring of life Who links
yesterday to tomorrow.
We affirm that despite all tragedy bound up with
living,
It is still good to be alive.
We understand that there can be no love without
loss,
No joy without sorrow.
May we have the courage to accept the all of life,
The love and loss – the joy and sorrow, As we
remember.

— Evelyn Mehlman

Birth is a beginning and death a destination.
But life is a journey — a going, a growing from
stage to stage.

*From childhood to maturity and youth to age. From
innocence to awareness and ignorance to knowing;*

From foolishness to discretion
And then perhaps to wisdom.

*From weakness to strength or strength to weakness
– And often back again.*

From health to sickness and back we pray,
To health again.

*From offense to forgiveness, from loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude, from pain to compassion and
grief to understanding –
From fear to faith.*

From defeat to defeat to defeat until, looking
backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies not at some high place
along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage, A
sacred pilgrimage.

*Birth is a beginning and death a destination
But life is a journey, a sacred pilgrimage
Made stage by stage
To life everlasting.*

— Rabbi Alvin Fine

Yeish Kochavim

There are stars up above
So far away we only see their light
Long after the star itself is gone.
And so it is with people that we loved.
Their memories keep shining
Ever brightly, though their time with us is done.

But the stars that light up the darkest night-
These are the lights that guide us
As we live our days-these are the ways
We remember, we remember.

— Words by Hannah Senesh

The Dance

The dance we shared beneath the stars above,
For a moment all the world was right.
How could I have known you'd ever say goodbye?
And now I'm glad I didn't know
The way it all would end, the way it all would go.
Our lives are better left to chance.
I could have missed the pain
But I'd of had to miss the dance.

— Garth Brooks

Death is not the enemy of life, but its friend,
for it is the knowledge that our years are
limited which makes them so precious.

*It is the truth that time is but lent to us which makes
us, at our best, look upon our years as a trust
handed into our temporary keeping.*

We are like children privileged to spend a day in a
great park, a park filled with many gardens and
playgrounds and azure- tinted lakes with white
boats sailing upon tranquil waves.

*True, the day allotted to each of us is not the same
in length, in light, in beauty. Some children of earth
are privileged to spend a long and sunlit day in the
garden of the earth. For others the day is shorter,
cloudier, and dusk descends more quickly as in a
winter's tale.*

But whether our life is a long summery day or a
shorter wintry afternoon, we know that inevitably
there are storms and squalls which overcast even the
bluest heaven, and there are sunlit rays which pierce
the darkest autumn sky.

*The day that we are privileged to spend in the great
park of life is not the same for all human beings, but
there is enough beauty and joy and gaiety in the
hours if we will but treasure them.*

— Rabbi Joshua L. Liebman

Life and Death

If some messenger were to come to us with the offer that death should be overthrown, but with one inseparable condition that birth should also cease; if the existing generation were given the chance to live forever, but on the clear understanding that never again would there be a child, or a youth, or a first love, never again new persons with new hopes, new ideas, new achievements; ourselves for always and never any others - could the answer be in doubt?

We shall not fear the summons of death; we shall remember those who have gone before us, and those who will come after us.

‘Alas for those who cannot sing, but die with all their music in them’. Let us treasure the time we have, and resolve to use it well, continuing each precious moment — a chance to apprehend some truth, to experience some beauty, to conquer some evil, to relieve some suffering, to love and be loved, to achieve something of lasting worth.

Help us, Lord, to fulfil the promise that is in each of us, and to conduct ourselves, that generations hence, it will be true to say of us: The world is better because, for a brief space, they lived in it.

Cantorial Interlude

Remembering...

We can cherish hopes, embrace values and perform deeds which death cannot destroy.

May we all be charitable in deed and thought in memory of those we love who walk the earth no longer.

May we live unselfishly, in truth and love and peace, so that we will be remembered as a blessing,

As we this day lovingly remember those whose lives endure as a blessing.

Our generations are bound to each other as children now remember their parents.

Love is strong as death, as husbands and wives now remember their mates, as parents now remember their children.

Memory conquers death's dominion as we now remember our brothers and sisters, grandparents and other relatives and friends.

The death of those we now remember left gaping holes in our lives. But we are grateful for the gift of their lives. And we are strengthened by their blessings which they left us, by precious memories which comfort and sustain us as we recall them this day.

Psalm 121

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת:
אֲשָׁא עֵינַי, אֶל-הַהָרִים-מֵאֵין, יבֹא עֲזָרִי.
עֲזָרִי, מִעַם יְיָ עֲשֵׂה, שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ.
אֶל-יְהוָה לְמוֹט רַגְלֶךָ; אֶל-יְנוּם, שִׁמְרֶךָ.
הֲנִיחַ לֹא-יְנוּם, וְלֹא יִישָׁן-שׁוֹמֵר, יִשְׂרָאֵל.
יְיָ שִׁמְרֶךָ; יְיָ צִלְּךָ, עַל-יַד יְמִינֶךָ.
יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יִבְכָּה; וַיְרַח בְּלִילָהּ.
יְיָ יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל-רָע: יִשְׁמַר, אֶת-נַפְשֶׁךָ.
יְיָ יִשְׁמַר-צֵאתְךָ וּבואֶךָ מֵעַתָּה, וְעַד-עוֹלָם.

A Song of Ascents. I turn my eyes to the mountains; from where will my help come? My help comes from Adonai, maker of heaven and earth. G-d will not let your foot give way; your guardian will not slumber. See, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps! The Lord is your guardian, The Lord is your protection at your right hand. By day the sun will not strike you, nor the moon by night. Adonai will guard you from all harm; G-d will guard your life. Adonai will guard your going and coming now and forever.

Each of Us Has a Name

לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ אֱלֹהִים וְנָתַן לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ וְאִפֵּן חִיּוּבוֹ וְנָתַן לוֹ הָאָרֶיג,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ הַהָרִים וְנָתַן לוֹ כְּתָלָיו,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ חֲטָאָיו וְנָתַן לוֹ כְּמִיתוֹ,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ שׁוֹנְאָיו וְנָתַן לוֹ אֲהַבָּתוֹ,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ חֲגִזוֹ וְנָתַן לוֹ מְלֹאכְתּוֹ,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ תְּקוּפּוֹת הַשָּׁנָה וְנָתַן לוֹ עֲרוּנוֹ,
לְכֹל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ הַיָּם וְנָתַן לוֹ מוֹתוֹ.

Each of us has a name given by G-d and given by our parents.

Each of us has a name given by our stature and our smile and given by what we wear.

Each of us has a name given by the mountains and given by our walls.

Each of us has a name given by the stars and given by our neighbors.

Each of us has a name given by our sins and given by our longing.

Each of us has a name given by our enemies and given by our love.

Each of us has a name given by our celebrations and given by our work.

Each of us has a name given by the seasons and given by our blindness.

Each of us has a name given by the sea and given by our death.

— Zelda

We Remember Them

In the rising of the sun and in its going down,
We remember them.

In the blowing of the wind and in the chill of the winter,
We remember them.

In the opening of the 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 the leaves and in the beauty of the 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 sick at heart,
We remember them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make,
We remember them.

When we have achievements that are based on theirs,
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.

— Rabbi Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Riemer

In Memory of the Victims of the Shoah

May G-d remember our brothers and sisters of the House of Israel, who gave their lives for the sanctification of the Divine Name and the honor of Israel. Grant that their heroism and self-sacrificing devotion find response in our hearts and the purity of their souls be reflected in our lives. Here we remind ourselves again that no earth covered multitudes of murdered Jews, that no Kaddish was recited, that no kin was left to remember them. Now, on this hallowed ground, we pledge to remember. We pledge to bear witness. May their souls be bound up in the bonds of eternal life, an everlasting blessing among us. Amen.

El Malei Rachamim

אל מלא רחמים שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפיו
השכינה, עם קדושים וטהורים כזוהר הרקיע מזהירים, לנשמות
יקירינו שהלכו לעולמם. בעל הרחמים יסתירם בסתר כנפיו
לעולמים, ויצרר בצרור החיים את-נשמתם, יי הוא נחלתם, וינחור
בשלוש על משכבם, ונאמר: אמן.

O G-d full of compassion, Eternal Spirit of the universe,
grant perfect rest under the wings of Your Presence to our
loved ones who have entered eternity. Source of Mercy, let
them find refuge for ever in the shadow of Your wings, and
let their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life. The
Eternal G-d is their inheritance. May they rest in peace, and
let us say: Amen.

Meditation Before Kaddish

I'm afraid that when it is my time to go
I'll have no son, I'll have no daughter
I'll have no link to the Jewish world.

*And they say my soul won't rest
Despite what happened on earth
Unless someone says Kaddish for me.*

I'm afraid that when it is my time to go
I'll have no lover, I'll have no family
I'll have no link to the living world.

*And they say my soul won't rest
Despite what happened on earth,
Unless someone says Kaddish for me.*

I'll know that when it is my time to go
I'll have friends who love me,
I'll have memories of loves past
I'll have touched others in a positive way.

*And they say my soul won't rest
Despite what happened on earth
Unless someone says Kaddish for me.*

Can this be true, I wonder;
For it seems unreasonable that my soul
Should be vulnerable to the words of
Those I leave behind.

*I suspect my soul will thrive
If it is enriched by my actions while I am still here
I suspect my soul is a bridge.*

Between what I have taken and what I give;
A bridge that gets sturdier or weaker
As I attempt to build it while alive.

*So I'll live on earth
Seeking to enrich others,
And seeking to enrich my soul in the process.*

And perhaps the people who have done
Nothing for humanity
Will rest, because someone said
Kaddish for them.

*But I'm not going to wait
And depend on the words spoken by others
After I'm gone.*

I won't count Kaddish to take the place
Of the building I must do
To enrich my soul.

*But they still say my soul won't rest
Despite what happened on earth
Unless someone says Kaddish for me.*

So if Kaddish must be said, I will say it now,
For me, and for all those who are waiting
For someone to say Kaddish;
It will be my advance reservation for soulful peace,

*But I won't count Kaddish
To take the place
Of the building I must do
To enrich my soul.*

Kaddish

<i>Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'meih raba.</i>	יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא.
<i>B'alma di v'ra chiruteih,</i>	בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרֵעוּתָהּ,
<i>v'yamlich malchuteih,</i>	וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ,
<i>b'chayeichon, uv'yomeichon</i>	בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן
<i>uv'chayei d'chol beit Yisrael,</i>	וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
<i>ba'agala uvizman kariu. V'imru: Amen.</i>	בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב. וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.
<i>Y'hei sh'meih raba m'varach</i>	יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ
<i>l'alam ul'almei almaya.</i>	לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.
<i>Yitbarach v'yishtabach, v'yitpa'ar</i>	יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר
<i>v'yitromam v'yitnasei,</i>	וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא,
<i>v'yit'hadar v'yitaleh v'yit'halal</i>	וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל
<i>sh'meih d'kudsha b'rich hu,</i>	שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא,
<i>l'eila min kol birchata v'shirata,</i>	לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בְּרִכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא,
<i>tushb'chata v'nechemata,</i>	תְּשׁוּבַחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא,
<i>da'amiran b'alma, v'imru: Amen.</i>	דְאִמְרוּן בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

*Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya,
v'chayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael.
V'imru: Amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav,
hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu,
v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru: Amen.*

אֵל שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שָׁמַיָא,
יִים עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל.
מְרוּ: אָמֵן.

זֶה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוּמָיו,
אֵל יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ,
לְכָל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

Exalted and hallowed be G-d's great Name in the world which G-d created, according to plan.

May G-d's majesty be revealed in the days of our lifetime and the life of all Israel – speedily, imminently, to which we say: Amen.

Blessed be G-d's great Name to all eternity. Blessed, praised, honored, exalted, extolled, glorified, adored, and lauded be the Name of the Holy Blessed One, beyond all earthly words and songs of blessing, praise, and comfort. To which we say: Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and all Israel, to which we say: Amen.

May the One who creates harmony on high, bring peace to us and to all Israel. To which we say: Amen.

Footprints

One night I dreamed I was walking
Along the beach with the Lord,
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes
there were two sets of footprints.
Other times there was only one.
This bothered me because I noticed
During the low periods of my life when I was
Suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.
So I said to the Lord, “You promised me,
Lord, that if I followed you,
You would walk with me always.
But I noticed during the most trying periods
Of my life there has only been
One set of prints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most,
“Have you not been there for me?”
The Lord replied,
“The times when you have seen only one set of footprints
It was then that I carried you.”

Closing Prayer

Almighty G-d, as we remember our loved ones, grant that
we learn from their lives what to do with our own. Give us
Your wisdom to avoid the tragedy of wasted, selfish,
useless life and to fill our own lives with noble purpose,
consecrated living and worthwhile achievement. Strengthen
us to seek the things which death cannot take from us: faith,
love, kindness and riches of a good name. May the
memories of our loved ones remain for a blessing, and may
we so live that future generations shall bless us for the
memories we leave with them.

Oseh Shalom

Oseh shalom bimromav,

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוּמָיו,

hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu,

הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ,

v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru: Amen.

וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ: אָמֵן.

May the One who creates harmony on high, bring peace to
us and to all Israel. To which we say: Amen.

Prayers for Graveside

If you would like to recite

El Malei Rachamim, you will find it on Page 15

Kaddish appears on Page 18

Prayers In Memory of a Father

As I remember you, my dear Father, and the love, care and devotion which you lavished upon me, I am mindful of the profound debt I owe to your blessed memory. In addition to the gift of life, you provided inspiration by word and example to make me appreciate the true meaning of life, and to strive to fulfill the best potential within me. I pray that your memory may reverberate in my life so that I may be a similarly positive example for my children, and others whose lives I touch, that they may be faithful to the cherished ideals and values we have inherited. Amen.

In Memory of a Mother

As I remember you, my dear Mother, and the love, care and devotion which you lavished upon me, I am mindful of the profound debt I owe to your blessed memory. In addition to the gift of life, you provided inspiration by word and example to make me appreciate the true meaning of life, and to strive to fulfill the best potential within me. I pray that your memory may reverberate in my life so that I may be a similarly positive example for my children, and others whose lives I touch, that they may be faithful to the cherished ideals and values we have inherited. Amen.

Prayers In Memory of a Husband, Wife or Life Partner

In remembering the poignant loss of my dear beloved, my pain is tempered by memories of our love, the warmth of shared smiles and laughter, and the joy of our merged lives. Together we built a home and family, creations of our love. Our togetherness gave meaning and depth to our lives, and enabled us to face the hardships of life with greater fortitude, because we confronted them hand in hand. Without you, my life cannot be as full. But I pray that I may not succumb to the despair of loneliness, but rather live in as vibrant a manner as I possibly can, and thus reflect honor upon the memory of one who was so precious to me in life. Amen.

Prayers in Memory of a Son or Daughter

Words cannot express the combination of dull pain and searing heartache I feel as I recall your memory, my beloved child. You were taken from me. Yet I am grateful for the time we had, brief as it was, in which I experienced the wonder of sharing and shaping a growing life. I am especially grateful for the unselfish love you evoked in me, a depth of love I had not experienced until you were born. May your sacred memory inspire me to extend that same unselfish love to those who still need me, and to all others of G-d's children who are in need. Amen.

In Memory of a Brother or Sister

Your passing, dear (brother/sister) is made even more poignant by my memories of our shared childhood years. We grew up together in one home; our family gathered together around the table; and together we celebrated significant and meaningful occasions in our lives. The bonds we forged in our growing years became even stronger as we matured and appreciated what we meant to each other. Though sometimes separated by distance, I always knew that your love was constant and that we could always rely on each other in times of need. Without you, there is a great void in the constellation of my life. I pray that the memory of your love will help me fill that void by extending my love and concern for all our family. Amen.

Prayer in Memory of a Grandparent, Relative or Friend

As I recall your memory, I am acutely aware that life becomes most meaningful through our relationship with others. While I miss you, and the many experiences we shared, I am profoundly grateful for the impact which you had on my life and the fact that my life was fuller and my spirit enriched through our relationship. I pray that in your memory, I may treasure ever more the people close to me, and that I may be an enriching and fulfilling influence in their lives. Amen.

Additional Readings

The reality is that you will not grieve forever.

You will not 'get over' the loss of a loved one; you will learn to live with it.

You will heal and you will rebuild yourself around the loss you have suffered.

You will be whole again, but you will never be the same.

Nor should you be the same, nor would you want to.

— Elizabeth Kubler-Ross and John Kessler

Eishet Chayil *A Woman of Valor*

A woman of valor, who can find?
She is more precious than fine pearls.
Her husband trusts in her, and so he lacks nothing;
She does him good, never harm, all the days of her life.
She perceives that her labor is rewarding;
Her candle burns on into the night.
She reaches out to those in need,
And extends her hand to the poor.
She is clothed in strength and dignity,
And she faces the future cheerfully.
She speaks with wisdom; the law of kindness is on her lips.
Her children (and grandchildren) rise up and bless her;
Her husband sings her praises.
Many daughters have done valiantly,
But you excel them all.

— Adapted from Proverbs 31

Meditations

The last word has been spoken,
The last sentence has not been written,
The final verdict is not in.
It is never too late to change my mind, my direction,
To say no to the past, and yes to the future,
To offer remorse, to ask and give forgiveness.
It is never too late to start over again,
To feel again, to love again, to hope again.
It is never too late to overcome despair,
To turn sorrow into resolve
And pain into purpose.
It is never too late to alter my world.
Not by magic incantations or manipulations of the cards
Or deciphering the stars.
But by opening myself to curative forces buried within,
To hidden energies, the powers in my interior self.
In sickness and in dying, it is never too late.
Living, I teach; Dying, I teach.
It is never too late—some word of mine,
Some caress may be remembered.
Some gesture may play a role
Beyond the last movement of my head and hand.
Write it on my epitaph that my loved ones be consoled,
It is never, never too late.

— Rabbi Harold Schulweis

Epitaph

When I die give what's left of me away
To children and old men that wait to die.
And if you need to cry, cry for your brother
Walking the street beside you.
And when you need me, put your arms
Around anyone and give them
What you need to give me.

I want to leave you something
Something better than words or sounds.

Look for me in the people I've known
Or loved.

And if you cannot give me away
At least let me live in your eyes
And not in your mind.

You can love me most
By letting hands touch hands
By letting bodies touch bodies
And by letting go of children
That need to be free.

Love doesn't die, people do.
So when all that's left of me is love,
Give me away.

— By Merritt Malloy

The Dash

I read of a man who stood to speak
At the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on her tombstone
From the beginning to the end.

He noted that first came the date of her birth
And spoke the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all
Was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time
That she spent alive on earth.
And now only those who loved her
Know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not how much we own;
The cars, the house, the cash,
What matters is how we live and love
And how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard.
Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left,
That can still be rearranged.

If we could just slow down enough
To consider what's true and real
And always try to understand
The way other people feel.

And be less quick to anger,
And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives
Like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect,
And more often wear a smile
Remembering that this special dash
Might only last a little while.

So, when your eulogy is being read
With your life's actions to rehash
Would you be proud of the things they say
About how you spent your dash?

— Linda Ellis

Poems

Do not stand at my grave and weep:
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am a thousand winds that blow.
I am the diamond glints on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush
I am the swift uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in circled flight.
I am the soft stars that shine at night.
Do not stand at my grave and cry;
I am not there, I did not die.

— Author Unknown

Perhaps they are not the stars,
But rather openings in heaven where
The love of our lost ones pours through
And shines down upon us to let us know they are happy.

— Eskimo Legend

She's Gone

You can shed tears that she is gone or you can smile
because she has lived.

You can close your eyes and pray that she'll come back or you can
open your eyes and see all she's left. Your heart can be empty
because you can't see her or you can be full of the love you shared.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday or you can
be happy for tomorrow because of yesterday.

You can remember her and only that she's gone or you can cherish
her memory and let it live on.

You can cry and close your mind, be empty and turn your back or
you can do what she'd want:

Smile, open your eyes, love and go on.