

On lighting a Yahrzeit candle

The family gathers at sundown on the eve of the anniversary of the death.

One might say:

At this moment, I pause for thought in memory of my beloved...

I give thanks for the blessing of life, of companionship and memory. I am grateful for the strength and faith that sustained me in the hour of my bereavement. Though sorrow lingers, I have learned that love is stronger than death. Though my beloved is beyond my sight, I do not despair, for I sense my beloved in my heart as a living presence.

Adonai Roi, lo echsar.

יהוה רעי, לא אֶחְסָר.

The Eternal One is my shepherd, I shall not want. You make me lie down in green pastures, You lead me beside the still waters. You restore my soul; You guide me in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. Yes, even when I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; with rod and staff you comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have annointed my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Eternal God for ever. [Psalm 23]

A group or individual might tell a story about or share a memory, pictures, or food which remind them of their loved one, and then say:

Sustained by words of faith, comforted by precious memories, I kindle the Yahrzeit light in remembrance. As this light burns pure and clear, so may the blessed memory of the goodness of my dear... illumine my soul.

The light is kindled.

For a male, say:

זְכוֹנוֹ לְבְרָכָה.

Zichrono livracha.

His memory is a blessing.

For a female, say:

זְכוֹנָהּ לְבְרָכָה.

Zichrona livracha.

Her memory is a blessing.

The following might be read or sung:

Yesh Kochavim--יש כוכבים

Music: Jeff Klepper, Danny Friedlander

Text: Hannah Szenesh

There are stars up above so far away we only see their light

Long, long after the star itself is gone.

And so it is, with 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. (2X)

יש כוכבים שְאֹרֶם מְגִיעַ אֶרְצָה
רק כְּאֶשֶׁר הֵם עֲצָמָם אֶבְדוּ וְאֵינָם.
יש אַנְשִׁים שְׁזִיו זְכָרָם מְאִיר
כְּאֶשֶׁר הֵם עֲצָמָם אֵינָם עוֹד בְּתוֹכֵינוּ.
אֲרוֹת אֱלֹהִים הַמְבַּהֲקִים בְּחֹשֶׁכַת הַלַּיִל.
הֵם, הֵם שְׁמֵרָאִים לְאָדָם אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ.

*Yesh kocha-vim sheoram ma-gia artza
Rak Ka'asher hem atzmam avdu v'ainam
Yesh anashim sheziv zich-ram meir
Ka'asher hem atzmam ei-nam odbtochenu
O-ort ele hamavhikim bcheshkat halayil
Hem, hem shema'rim la-a-dam et haderech*

Some selections used from "On the Doorposts of Your House: Prayers and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home." 1994.
New York: CCAR Press. Pp. 192-193.