

Service for *name* date

Opening Words

Our gathering here this afternoon -- the family and friends of -- *name* is for the purpose of paying tribute to his life and mourning his death. Life, as we see clearly on an occasion such as this, is always lived in the presence of death, and the brightness of life is highlighted by the shadow of death.

*Let us hear the words of the Psalmist, who in the 90th Psalm wrote of the brevity of even a long human life such as *name*'s, in contrast with the infinite and eternal.*

Psalm 90 (verses 1-12, adapted)

*God, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or the land and the earth were born,
From everlasting to everlasting, You are God.
You turn us back into dust by saying
"Return, you children of earth, to what you were!"
For a thousand years in your sight are like a single day;
As a yesterday now past, or like a watch in the night.
You sweep us away like waking dreams from a sleep;
We fade away suddenly like the grass.
In the morning it is green and flourishes;
And by evening it withers and fades.
The years of our life are threescore and ten,
Perhaps in health even fourscore years;
Yet is their span but labour and sorrow,
For they pass away quickly,
And soon we are gone.
So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.*

Death is a natural phenomenon at the end of each cycle of life. As soon as we are born, we are old enough to die, yet few of us consciously recognize that all life, not only the years after three score and ten, all life is a fragile and precious gift. Mortality is built into the fibre of all things living. I should like to share with you some words from a modern writer, Chaim Potok, in his novel My Name is Asher Lev)

I remember the way my father once looked at a bird lying on its side against the curb near our

house. It was Shabbos and we were on our way back from the synagogue.

"Is it dead, Papa?" I was six and could not bring myself to look at it.

"Yes," I heard him say in a sad and distant way.

"Why did it die?"

"Everything that lives must die."

"Everything?"

"Yes."

"You, too, Papa? And Mama?"

"Yes."

"And me?"

"Yes," he said. Then he added in Yiddish, "But may it be only after you live a long and good life, my Asher."

I couldn't grasp it. I forced myself to look at the bird. Everything alive would one day be as still as that bird?

"Why?" I asked.

"That's the way the Ribbono Shel Olom made His world, Asher."

"Why?"

"So life would be precious, Asher. Something that is yours forever is never precious."

Meditative Reading

As we have come together for a common purpose today, united not only in commemoration of *name* but also in our knowledge that each one of us is mortal, let us listen to the reading "We Need One Another".

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

WE NEED ONE ANOTHER WHEN WE ARE IN TROUBLE AND AFRAID.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again.

WE NEED ONE ANOTHER WHEN WE WOULD ACCOMPLISH SOME GREAT PURPOSE, AND CANNOT DO IT ALONE.

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

WE NEED ONE ANOTHER IN THE HOUR OF DEFEAT, WHEN WITH ENCOURAGEMENT WE MIGHT ENDURE AND STAND AGAIN.

We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.

ALL OUR LIVES WE ARE IN NEED, AND OTHERS ARE IN NEED OF US.

And here are the words of a wise man, from the book of Ecclesiastes:

To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven
A time to be born and to die; a time to plant and to harvest
A time to kill, and to heal; a time to break and to build
A time to weep, and to laugh; a time to mourn and to dance
A time to cast away stones, and to bring stones together
A time to embrace and to be apart; a time to get and to lose
A time to keep silence and to speak
We should therefore rejoice in our works, for that is our portion.

For *name*, *date of death*, was the time to die, at the age of *age*,

(words about the deceased)

In honour of *name*, and in recognition of *his/her* life, I invite you to hear another meditative reading:

Beatitudes

Blessed are the upright and the trustworthy, the spirit of whose promise is never broken and the meaning of whose words is sure.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HONOUR ALL PERSONS, AND SPEAK UNTO OTHERS AS THEY WOULD OTHERS SHOULD SPEAK UNTO THEM

Blessed are the merciful who remember their own need of mercy; who judge not harshly and are slow to take offense.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO ARE TENDER IN SYMPATHY, IN WHOM THE WELLSPRINGS OF PITY AND CONSOLATION NEVER DRY UP.

Blessed are they who are considerate of all creatures, who never thoughtlessly inflict injury or pain.

BLESSED ARE THE PATIENT AND THE FOREBEARING, THE PEACEMAKERS, WHO BY TIMELY SPEECH OR SILENCE HEAL THE STRIFE OF HUMANITY.

Blessed are the husbands and wives, friends and companions, who care tenderly for each other while respecting their differences.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO FAITHFULLY COMFORT EACH OTHER IN SORROW AND REJOICE TOGETHER IN PROSPERITY.

Blessed are the fathers and mothers who guide their households well, sharing their children's interests with a sincere mind.

BLESSED ARE THEY WHO HONOUR THEIR INHERITANCE, AND ADD TO THE GROWING TREASURE OF HUMANKIND.

Each person here has their own memory of *name*, as relative, associate, friend. As we now listen to some music for meditation, let us think of *his/her* life, of the preciousness

and fragility of our own lives, and what we believe about the meaning of life and of death.
Music for Meditation (2-3 minutes)

Let us remember *name* and *his/her* life as we pray together:

Eternal source of life and love, we give thanks this day for the life of *name*. We are grateful and give praise for the memories we have of *him/her* and of all those dear to us who have lived their days and departed this earth.

May those who mourn be consoled, and may the wounds of their loss be healed.

For all of us we pray that our feet may be set on a steady pathway and that death may be swallowed up in life's larger victory. May we have the courage so to rejoice in the love of companions now gone that against the riches of abundant life the forces of death may not prevail. As we mourn, may the gladness of memory melt grief into hope. May the love which was shared with *name* now flow outwards to others; may we treasure *his/her* living spirit among us as our sign of devotion to that love of life which conquers even death.

Amen.

In a spirit of celebration of life, and with resolve to live as fully as we can, let us hear the reading Miracle of Life:

Life brings its freshness as an ineffable gift.

Every moment renews our vision.

Life bursts again into flower:

WE ARE AMAZED AT THE WORLD'S WEALTH.

Death is permission granted to other life,

So that everything may be ceaselessly renewed.

The ploughshare of sorrow breaks up the heart,

AND OPENS UP NEW SOURCES OF LIFE.

Without sacrifice there is no resurrection.

All we try to save in ourselves wastes and perishes.

The possible is striving to come into being:

NOTHING GROWS AND BLOOMS, SAVE BY GIVING.

All things ripen for the giving's sake,

And in the giving are consummated.

The possible and the future are one.

ALL THAT CAN BE, IF WE HELP, WILL BE.

AMEN.

The Continuity of Life

The task before us now is to commit the memory of *name* to the special place which it will always have in our hearts, as we shall commit *his/her* body to its final resting place.

Forasmuch as the spirit of *name*, dwells no more in mortal form, we commit the memory of *his/her* life, now taken from us, to the safekeeping of our hearts and the hearts of all those whom *s/he* touched.

The torch *s/he* lit we now carry forward, as others will also pass along ours, in the sure knowledge that the great gift of life flows ever onward.

Life is given, and life is taken away; blessed be life and love, above all, forever.

Spirit of Life, grant that the best which was in *name* be renewed in strength in us. May we now give to others the love we can no longer show *him/her*, for the lives that we now lead are *his/her* honour and memorial. May our time of pain issue in a larger peace, as we greet tomorrow's dawn with praise.

Benediction

**You shall go out with joy and be led forth in peace;
The mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing,
And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.
Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree;
Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle;
And it shall be to God for a memorial,
For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.**

**May the truth that makes us free,
the hope that never dies,
and the love that casts out fear
lead us forward together
until the dayspring breaks and the shadows flee away.
Go in Peace.**

Amen.

Words of Committal

Forasmuch as the spirit of *name*, dwells no more in this mortal form, we commit *his/her* body to the purifying flame, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.

or:

**It is from the earth that we come;
It is on the earth that we walk;
It is in the earth that we toil;
It is to the earth that we eventually must return.**

**The circle of life is now complete for *name* as it will be for us.
We came from the earth in silence, and in silence we return to it.
And between these two spheres of eternal silence
Is the short span of consciousness we call life.
So let it be.**

**Ample make this bed.
Make this bed with awe;
In it wait till judgment break
Excellent and fair.
Be its mattress straight,
Be its pillow round;
Let no sunrise' yellow noise
Interrupt this ground.**

*Down, gently down,
Softer to sleep
Than bed of night,
From littleness -- go.*

*Down, gently down,
Wider to wake
Than need of Sun,
Into greatness -- go.*

from Meditations of the Heart by Howard Thurman

For a Time of Sorrow

**I share with you the agony of your grief,
 The anguish of your heart finds echo in my own.
 I know I cannot enter all you feel
 Nor bear with you the burden of your pain;
I can but offer what my love does give:
 The strength of caring,
 The warmth of one who seeks to understand
 The silent storm-swept barrenness of so great a loss.
This I do in quiet ways,
 That on your lonely path
 You may not walk alone.**

We Need One Another

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

WE NEED ONE ANOTHER WHEN WE ARE IN TROUBLE AND AFRAID.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our
best selves
again.

**WE NEED ONE ANOTHER WHEN WE WOULD ACCOMPLISH SOME
GREAT PURPOSE, AND CANNOT DO IT ALONE.**

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our
triumphs.

**WE NEED ONE ANOTHER IN THE HOUR OF DEFEAT, WHEN WITH
ENCOURAGEMENT WE MIGHT ENDURE AND STAND AGAIN.**

We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the
journey.

ALL OUR LIVES WE ARE IN NEED, AND OTHERS ARE IN NEED OF US.

The Span of Life

The span of life passes, and the time of our years is all too brief. Let us, therefore, make
room . among us for those who have need of our
love. **LET US MAKE ROOM FOR ALL IN NEED.**

Make room for the uprooted ones who have rejected their past but cannot find a future.

Make room for the withdrawn, who alone know their troubles and have not yet
found the

courage to share them.

MAKE ROOM FOR THE ROOTLESS AND THE WITHDRAWN.

Let them sense that we are not engaged in judgment. Each of us is troubled by conduct we
regret and stands in need of forgiveness.

Make room for the proud, who think they know all the answers, and for those who have no
answers at all.

MAKE ROOM FOR THE GUILTY, THE PROUD AND THE FEARFUL.

Make room for the sophisticates who think they know how to act, and for those who are too
confused to act at all.

MAKE ROOM FOR THE CONFIDENT AND THE CONFUSED.

Make room for the critical who disturb the status quo, and for the uncritical who accept it.
MAKE ROOM FOR EACH OF US IN OUR HUMAN CONDITION.

Let us deal gently with each other, and let us make room in our fellowship for each other.

For the span of life passes,
AND THE TIME OF OUR YEARS IS ALL TOO BRIEF.

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