

Rabbi Daniel Berman Temple Reyim
Yizkor 2024

Boker tov, *g'mar chatimah tovah* and Shabbat shalom.

Yizkor is just different this year.

There has been so much loss.

crying graveside, giving eulogies, tearing clothing, placing stones, covering mirrors,
sitting low, bringing meals, saying kaddish again and again and again.

Ecclesiastes doesn't quite resonate right now.

You know how he begins:

לְכָל זְמַן וְזְמַן וְעַתָּה לְכָל־חַפְזֵי תַחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם

There is a time for everything, every experience under heaven:

A time for love...

A time for hate...

Honestly, this year it has felt like half of each of King Solomon's verses were excised
from the text

Like it was only an

עַתָּה לְהַרְוֵג וְעַתָּה לְפָרוֹץ

A time for slaying and tearing down

Only an

עַת לְבָכוֹת וְעַת סְפוּד

A time for weeping and giving eulogies

Only an

עַת לְהִשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים וְעַת לְרַחֵק מִחֶבֶק

A time for throwing stones and rejecting embraces;

Only an

עַת לְאֶבֶד וְעַת לְהִשְׁלִיךְ

A time for losing, a time for casting away

Only an

עַת לְקַרֹּעַ וְעַת לְחֹשׁוֹת

A time for ripping and silence

Only an

עַת לְמוֹת

A time for death.

But it's also true - there has also been so much joy this year. There have been births,

smachot, celebrations, new love and new music and art that has been helpful and

hopeful.

There have been constant acts of courage and service and kindness.

People care for their children in the morning, their parents in the afternoon, and their children again in the evening, falling asleep for a few hours and doing it again the next day and month.

People drive family to their appointments at Dana Farber; giving tzedakah when they learn someone is in need.

Still, the heaviness has been overwhelming. The beauty hasn't felt enduring enough to shift the feeling in Jewish community that this is an only

עת לשנא ועת מלחמה

A time for hating and a time for war.

I wonder if we are missing the fullness of our individual experiences because of the constant anguish of the collective, the communal. How do we tend to all of it?

If you have been in Israel in springtime, you know that on Yom HaZikaron, memorial day, a siren goes off in every neighborhood throughout the country at the same time.

It is a loud, jarring, piercing sound. It doesn't matter where you are or what you are doing - while the siren wails, you stop working or walking or driving or whatever

you are doing and stand in silence. Everyone around you is doing the exact same thing.

I've been thinking a lot about the experience of *collective mourning*, the initial shock of tragedy and then the wide-reaching aftershock of communal grief. There is a risk when communal loss is great or one loss is followed quickly by another - there is a risk of losing sight of the life and death of every single person. When there is so much loss, at some point, it can be hard to remember whose shiva was held last night and whose burial is tomorrow.

We become indistinguishable. It's possible to lose the individual in service of the whole.

As a student many years ago, I used to participate in a ritual on Yom HaShoah. We stood on the campus lawn and read the names of every Jewish person who had been killed. We couldn't read every name of six million; that would have taken months. So every year, we started reading names a few weeks ahead of Yom Hashoah, and we read as many names as we could, until the following year, when we picked it up again.

It was a very dark ritual. Excruciating for many reasons - in part because at some point, you get tired, and the names start to sound alike. It becomes hard to distinguish one name from another, one person from another. When reading the names becomes kind of rote and your mind wanders, it is hard to tell whether we were remembering every person, honoring their memory, or just blending everyone together, as if the point was to get through the list.

My third year, we read the final names, last names starting with W, X, Y and Z. We finished. That was it - *eleh ha'shemot* - these were the names we would not forget. I remember stepping back and out of the spot where we said the names feeling more hopeful than when we started.

Hopeful because it felt so final - I couldn't imagine there would ever be another event in the world that would cause us to stand in one place and read thousands of Jewish names.

Twenty five years later, which is this past spring, I printed Yizkor booklets for Pesach that had the names of everyone killed in Israel on and since October 7.

I spent most of the service looking at all the names, imagining their lives.

I also knew the list was incomplete.

Incomplete because in just the few days since the names were printed, the names of many more people already needed to be included.

And incomplete because even though Yizkor - like the Mourner's Kaddish - is our own, a time to focus on the distinctive feel of loss within the Jewish community, it still felt like so many other names were absent. There has been so much death this year *that is not even ours*.

One impact of the tragedy on October 7 and the ensuing wars in Gaza and Lebanon is that we have repeatedly been forced to choose whose pain matters more.

Whose loss we can *even acknowledge* let alone be willing to absorb as part of our own.

Who is more deserving of our compassion.

We will always mourn for our family in ways that we cannot mourn for others.

That's not unexpected; it's not immoral.

But what then is left for anyone and everyone else? In periods of mourning, who gets remembered - and who gets lost or left behind? Who gets comfort and who is ripped out of King Solomon's Ecclesiastes, excised from the text, left on empathy's cutting room's floor.

Many years ago, a close friend of mine lost her father. He was an older man, and his loss was not unexpected. She was very close to him, and his death was extremely hard for her. Soon after her father was buried, one of our mutual friends lost her son in a tragic accident. He was a freshman in college.

Our community turned immediately to support her in grieving her son. We were there with her family at burial and shiva, at their house and at their shul. We sat next to them during *tefila* in the morning so they didn't wail alone.

Our friend who lost her father later shared that she felt like she had been left behind; that she grieved for her father alone.

It wasn't intentional, of course. Our focus had shifted, almost like care takers in an emergency room, triaging to what felt like a sudden, unanticipated, more urgent need. But people in the waiting room are also there to be called in, to be seen, to be tended to. Otherwise, they just feel the pain alone.

I know our own Reyim community members have suffered losses this past year.

As always, I have seen you show up for each other. This isn't surprising. I think it's the tagline of the shul, right? "We're a little messy, but we show up."

I also know that it has been a very lonely time. Not long after every single loss this year, the attention of the Jewish community has been forced to shift quickly back to the breadth of communal grief.

This has been one of the most painful impacts of the tragedy of October 7. Families have suffered losses of people they love, but then their period of mourning is left behind when the next tragedy takes place.

What I want to offer you - to say to you - is that the life of every person you have lost - and the life of every person you are remembering - matters. We see your sadness.

You are not alone. We have enough space for your grief within our own.

And - and - we will celebrate their lives.

We cannot cut Ecclesiastes in half.

We don't have enough time in our lives to wait for the other half to come in some undefinable unknown future.

אָדָם בְּחַיָּיו אֵין לוֹ זְמַן שְׂיִהְיֶה לוֹ

זְמַן לְכֹל

wrote the great Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai

וְאִין לֹא עֵת שְׁתֵּהִיָּה לֹא עֵת
לְכָל חֶפֶץ. קִהְלֵת לֹא צָדִק כְּשֶׁאָמַר כָּדָּ

A man doesn't have time in his life
to have time for everything.
He doesn't have seasons enough to have
a season for every purpose. Ecclesiastes
Was wrong about that.

אָדָם צָרִיךְ לְשֵׂנָא וְלֶאֱהֹב בְּבֵית אַחַת
בְּאוֹתָן עֵינַיִם לְבִכּוֹת וּבְאוֹתָן עֵינַיִם לְצַחֵק
בְּאוֹתָן יָדַיִם לְזָרֵק אֲבָנִים
וּבְאוֹתָן יָדַיִם לְאַסּוֹף אוֹתָן
לְעֲשׂוֹת אֶהְבָּה בְּמִלְחָמָה וּמִלְחָמָה בְּאֶהְבָּה

A man needs to love and to hate at the same moment,
to laugh and cry with the same eyes,
with the same hands to throw stones and to gather them,
to make love in war and war in love.

And to hate and forgive and remember and forget,

to arrange and confuse, to eat and to digest

what history

takes years and years to do.

We cannot cut Solomon's Kohelet verses in half.

לְכֹל זְמַן וְעֵת לְכָל־חֶפֶץ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם:

A season is set for *everything*, a time for *every* experience under heaven:

עֵת לְלֵדָת וְעֵת לְמוֹת עֵת לְטַעַת וְעֵת לְעֻקּוֹר נְטוּעַ:

A time to give birth and a time to die,

A time for planting and a time for uprooting the planted;

עֵת לְהַרוֹג וְעֵת לְרַפּוֹא עֵת לְפָרוֹץ וְעֵת לְבָנוֹת:

A time for killing and a time for healing,

A time for tearing down and a time for building up;

עֵת לְבָכּוֹת וְעֵת לְשִׂחוֹק עֵת סָפוּד וְעֵת רִקּוּד:

A time for weeping and a time for laughing,

A time for wailing and a time for dancing;

עַת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים וְעַת כְּנוֹס אֲבָנִים עַת לְחַבּוֹק וְעַת לְרַחֵק מִחֶבֶק:

A time for throwing stones and a time for gathering stones,

A time for embracing and a time for shunning embraces;

עַת לְבַקֵּשׁ וְעַת לְאַבֵּד עַת לְשְׁמֹר וְעַת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ:

A time for seeking and a time for losing,

A time for keeping and a time for discarding;

עַת לְקַרֹּעַ וְעַת לְתַפּוֹר עַת לְחַשׂוֹת וְעַת לְדַבֵּר:

A time for ripping and a time for sewing,

A time for silence and a time for speaking;

עַת לְאַהֵב וְעַת לְשִׂנְאָה עַת מְלַחֶמָה וְעַת שְׁלוֹם:

A time for loving and a time for hating;

A time for war and a time for peace.

This is what I want to leave you with these high holy days.

It's not just war and losing and tearing down.

There is also healing and building up sewing together frayed threads.

This year, more than ever, we need to embrace *all of it*.

To see everyone; to move from partiality to wholeness,

During this Yizkor, may those whom you are remembering at this time be a blessing in your life. May all of them - the loss, yes, but also all the beauty - inspire you to live more fully, more courageously, more joyfully.

And may this coming year be a Shanah yoter yoter tovah, a much, much better year.

We lost many members of the Temple Reyim family this past year.

We remember:

Rhea Roazen

Gloria Karas

Daniel Grosser

Ethel Sinofsky

Linda Rakoff

And dear family of our community members:

Harvey Rappaport father of Ellen Tanowitz

Bernard Rome father of Mallory Rome

Virginia Kolker, mother of Martin Kolker

Sonia Rosen, mother of Mara Bloom

Elaine Reiser, grandmother of Rachel Hayward and

David Frim, brother of Gerry Frim

Zichronam livracha

May their lives – and the lives of all those you are remembering - always be a blessing.