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Yom Kippur, 1980.

Yom Kippur
Daniel Jeremy Silver
September 19, 1980

Yom Kippur is clothed in white. The pulpit is dressed in white. The parochet, the curtain, in front of the ark is white. The Torah scrolls are mantled in white. In ancient times not only were the furniture and the fabric of the synagogue decked in white but there was the sense of whiteness in the congregation. As you know, the nearly-all-white prayer shawl, the tallit, which is normally worn only during a morning service is worn ~~on~~ Kol Nidre night during worship. In the medieval synagogue men wore a garment ~~which was~~ called a kittel. The kittel is a flowing white robe which covered worshippers from their neck to their feet. No wonder then that our people came to call Yom Kippur the Great White Fast.

Since religion must speak to the heart, it must use not only words but the logic of melody and the logic of ritual and symbol. Obviously, the white is a symbol. As a symbol what does it signify?

Being Westerners our instinctive association of white is with purity and innocence. The Romans dressed their Vestal Virgins in white. White is still the color of the wedding gown. In medieval paintings angels were clothed in flowing white robes. Until quite recently all medical personnel were dressed in white, not that garments of other colors cannot be cleaned with equal thoroughness; but physicians understood that we associate white with cleanliness and purity, and they wanted to make us feel comfortable.

The problem with this association is that our religious tradition does not lift up purity as a God-mandated attainment. Purity is beyond our reach. The Torah says it directly: "There is no one on earth so righteous that he sins not." The prototypical couple, Adam and Eve, were given a single commandment, not to eat of the forbidden fruit; and they could not resist. The book of Proverbs is equally direct: "Perverse is the heart in all things and desperately weak." Next year's Yom Kippur is already scheduled and all of us will be able to say that day, as we said tonight: "We are not so presumptuous and stiff-necked as to say before you that we have not

sinned, for verily we have sinned. We have sinned. We have transgressed. We have done perversely."

Angels are creations of the imagination and we have created them without ego or libido. They can be colored white. The human is a complex creature. God made us so. Color us gray. Sometimes by discipline we can lighten the gray, but we can never completely remove the darker hues; and, I suspect, that God did not intend it otherwise.

A delightful midrash describes the sixth day of Creation. On that day God ~~began~~ to have second thoughts about Adam. Should He create the human being? So he summoned the senior angels to a conclave. The angel Love said, "Go ahead. Man will be caring and passionate. He will love and be loved." The angel Mercy agreed; "Go ahead. At times man will be great-hearted and charitable. Create Adam." The angel Truth disagreed and described in detail all the failings and sins of which we have shown ourselves capable. What did God do? God took the Angel Truth, ejected him from Heaven and went ahead and created man. God must have known what He was doing.

There are, to be sure, religious traditions which establish purity as the ultimate human goal. Buddhism, Hinduism and monastic Christianity assume that we are made of two different kinds of stuff. There is the body and there is the soul. Our body is of the earth. The spirit is divine. According to these teachings the goal of life is to free that which is pure, the soul, from its prison in the impure. These traditions suggest that this be accomplished by mortification of the flesh, by vigils, by fasting and by a life of celibacy and denial. There have been among Jews individuals and groups who were attracted to the ascetic life. There are always people who are deeply disturbed by the vulgarity and the passion of their age and who find they cannot handle their emotions and feelings unless they suppress them. But the basic tendency of Jewish life has been to accept the human being as a unitary creature who is as God intended him. We know that we will fall and fall again. The question is have we the strength to rise up again and push onward.

The Hasidim told a story of one of their noble tzadikim, righteous men, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev. At one point during the contemplative week between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur this saint left his study for a moment to stand by his door and catch a breath of air. A cobbler happened to pass in the street. The cobbler called out: 'have you anything to mend?' Without thinking Levi Yitzhak answered directly: 'no, nothing, thank you.' Then he suddenly took the question in another and more serious vein. In fact, he had things to mend. His soul needed mending. He saw all the scuff marks and tears in his soul. He was conscious that he had become impatient with the adulation and devotion of his simple followers. He recognized that he was becoming comfortable with their approval and had begun to take it for granted. He knew that at times he would give advice without thinking whether or not that advice was fully applicable to the petitioner.

The point of the story is this. Levi Yitzhak was a truly noble soul and it is the noble soul who fully recognizes his sinfulness. One of the paradoxes of our nature is that those who are careful with their souls and spend much energy on their character are those who are most conscious of moral deficiencies. The rude person does not recognize how much he offends those he elbows aside as he makes his way through life. The vulgarian does not recognize how others cower before his language and avert their eyes from his actions. On the other hand, good folk are conscious of sins of omission as well as sins of commission and of the subtler consequences of their behavior. And so unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, I don't know, it's a paradox, Yom Kippur is most meaningful to those who have the least need of it.

Those of you who are comfortable tonight had best look to your souls.

White does not suggest purity. What then does it symbolize? Some authorities associate whiteness with the purity of atonement. According to the Torah "on this day shall you be cleansed of all your sins." The prophet Isaiah described the many failings of his contemporaries. He also said to them: "Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Then though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." The

sense of forgiveness, that the slate is wiped clean, is one of the most liberating of all the feelings associated with Yom Kippur.

A dramatic scene took place in the Jerusalem Temple on Yom Kippur. The High Priest made confession for his sins and the sins of the community. He then laid the sins of the people upon the shoulder of a goat called the Azazel, the scapegoat. Attendants would drive the goat outside the temple compound and beyond the city gates. Symbolically, the goat took with him the sins of the community and the community could start the new year with a clean slate.

We associate white and a clean slate. As parents we know that if we constantly remind our children of their failings and mistakes we will destroy the very confidence which they need in order to grow and to mature. If we are unforgiving and burden a man with the sins of his youth we consign him to a life of inadequacy and frustration. If we drag our past with us, ultimately the burden becomes too heavy for us and we are paralyzed. Color forgiveness white.

But the whiteness of forgiveness is a bit too pristine to represent the forgiveness theme of Yom Kippur. The promise of this day is that if our repentance is honest and we undertake a stricter ethical and spiritual discipline, God will forgive. But if God is forgiving, we are not equally so. We are not guaranteed that our neighbors will be as considerate. Our sages taught that we must go out and ask forgiveness of every one we have wronged for the human side of the slate to be clean. That task will never be completed. Some we have wronged are no longer among us. Some feel too badly used to even give us an audience. Those who believe that you can make a clean start are innocents. It takes a long while to prove to our neighbors or our family that we are no longer the callow, cruel, arrogant person or the indifferent, careless and selfish person we once were. Once judgments are made they are terribly hard to revise. As we grow older doors close to us. There is always a tomorrow. There is always opportunity. But in real life the slate is never as clean as we might wish it to be.

What then does the white symbolize? The white stands a for a hard and cruel truth. White stands for death. This became clear to me in China, of all places. As we drove along I noticed large wreaths of white flowers standing on easels in front of certain stores and apartments. I was told that these were funeral wreaths. In most of Asia and almost all of the Middle East white is the color of death. The kittel, the long white robe which was worn in the synagogue on Yom Kippur night, was originally the shroud in which the worshipper would be buried.

We are asked tonight to think of ourselves as among the worshipping dead. According to the Shulhan Aruch, the great medieval compendium of Jewish law and practice, the reason the Jew is to wear his kittel is to costume him as among the worshipping dead so that his imagination will be stirred to consider how his life will seem when he looks back on it. The Shulhan Aruch assumes that this exercise will leave us heartbroken.

When Joseph Karo edited the Shulhan Aruch he and all medieval Jews were confident of an afterlife and of a final judgment. They believed that there would be a day of reckoning when each and every person would have to render account before God for his life and face a judgment as to his fate for eternity. The Jew was to wear white tonight to drive home the warning: 'be prepared to meet your Maker.' Here was the reminder that though many sins go unnoticed, no one gets away with anything. There is a ledger. It is all written down. Yes, there are some who are so rich and powerful that no citizen can bring them to account; but there is always someone more powerful than they are. They will stand before God on Judgment Day.

We are no longer medievals. Many of us do not believe in an afterlife; and even if we do we do not take literally the kind of judgment described in this ancient drama. But use your imagination. Religious life requires a rich imagination. Imagine yourselves dead. Think what it will feel like when you look back at your life. Won't you shed a tear for words spoken in anger and hate? Won't you shed a tear for the opportunities to help another which you spurned and for the opportunities to be of service which you turned aside? Won't you shed a tear for all the times that you said:

'I'm too busy.' 'Not now.' Won't you shed a tear for the occasions when you turned a cold shoulder to those who needed you? Won't you shed a tear for the life that might have been?

But a tear is not yet a broken heart. I'd like to leave you tonight with a hard thought. As you look back at your life I wonder how much pain you will have, not because of any hurt you willfully inflicted but because of the pain and the hurt that you caused when you thought you were **doing the right**. I speak of the evil that good men do.

Love nurtures. Love sustains. Without love the spirit withers, but love can smother. Advice can help our children over the obstacles of life, but it can also deprive them of the opportunity to make their own mistakes and so deny them the chance to recognize that they have judgment. It may be a good thing to offer your children a job or a share in the business, but are you depriving them of the chance to know the pride of making it on their own? Pain often comes along with the good intentions.

Someone said to me recently: 'This has been the kind of year that gives religion a bad name.' I agree. A lot of people ~~this year~~ who thought they were doing the good and who knew that they were right have caused a great deal of pain and harm to others. The Ayotollah Khomeini is a religious man. He is revered as a man of probity and of character by millions of Shiite Muslims. Yet, he organized drum head courts which sent hundreds of people to their death and it was his moral authority which encouraged the year-long captivity of the American hostages. The Muslim religious world is run largely by men known as imams. Many of these religious leaders are men of learning and much respected; yet, many of them rose in their pulpits during the course of the year and preached a jihad, a holy war, against Israel. Much pain and much harm is precipitated by men and women convinced of the right.

The Pope is a holy man to hundreds and millions of Roman Catholics and to many others; but during the course of this year he censured and censored two of the finest minds among Roman Catholic theologians: Hans Kung and Shilleⁿbeeck. How many men, religious folk, of how many faiths are responsible for continuing the taboos

against birth control which consign hundreds of millions of earthlings to malnutrition and early death?

On this night of all nights let us not see only the sins of others. Let us remind ourselves of the rabbis who ^{lead} ~~led~~ the Gush Emunim, the block of the faithful, ~~And~~ who are so convinced of the rightness of greater Israel that no questions of policy or prudence can stop them from establishing settlements on the West Bank or demanding full sovereignty over Jerusalem.

In our own country those who are pro-life are so convinced of the morality of their position that they are prepared to ride rough-shod over the freedoms of others who are equally sensitive and moral and convinced of their position. And what did these good folk achieve this year? Through the Hyde Amendment they managed to deprive the poor of rights the rich enjoy and forced many poor women to bear children for whom they cannot provide. How many unwanted children will be raised in inadequate homes because of their convictions? The evil that good men do.

Tonight of all nights let us be conscious of one fact and humble before it. The Truth is hidden. The Torah says it straight out: "God's ways are not our ways and that God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts." No one, no human, knows The Truth. Yet, millions of human beings are prepared to sacrifice millions of other human beings in order that their religious doctrines or economic ideology or political theory or concept of morality - their truth - be imposed upon the world?

Tonight take to heart the humbling truth that when you think you are most right you may be doing great harm.

Obviously, we cannot live in perpetual doubt. Doubt paralyzes. We must move on. We must have convictions. We must act on our convictions. But let us act humbly. Wed your convictions to compassion. Marry your principles to patience. The Talmud

contains a delightful aggada. An ascetic scholar by the name of Simeon bar Yohai lived during a time of intense Roman persecution. When the Romans began to imprison Jewish teachers, Simeon Bar Yohai hid himself in a cave. He was used to vigils so he survived for a year in hiding. When the evil times abated and Simeon came out of the cave he saw his fellow Judeans buying and selling, arguing and quarreling, living much the way that they had lived before the persecutions. Simeon was one who believed, as the prophets had believed before him, that defeat comes to Israel only when Israel does not live up to the terms of God's covenant; and here the people were living just as they lived before. They had learned nothing, so Simeon turned to God and asked God to bring further persecution upon the people until they had accepted correction. What did God do? God sent Simeon back in the cave and told him to stay there until he learned compassion.

Every ideology creates a Gulag Archipelago. Every absolutist doctrine precipitates an Inquisition. Every group of doctrinaires ultimately set out on a crusade. The evil that good men do.

We need a healthy ego. We need to walk out and we need to accomplish. We need to improve the social order. We need to rectify economic disadvantage. We need to reform many of our institutions; but let's do it humbly. Let us be conscious at all times of the needs and rights of others, and never be so convinced that we are right that we callously manipulate others in order to achieve what we need to achieve or cause unnecessary pain to those who stand in our way. The truth of the matter is that after every revolution there is the need for another revolution. The truth of the matter is that as long as there is human life on this earth the human being will remain a human being, conflicted, full of contradictions, capable of hurting others. The truth of the matter is that utopia means 'no place.' U-topos. There is no such place.

The Torah stops detailing the history of our people on the other side of the Jordan. They have not yet entered the Promised Land. The Torah sets out instructions on how to live for people on the way. The Commandments prescribe means rather than

ends. The Torah details the commandments necessary to family and community life, it does not provide a blueprint of how the world must be, nor does it command us to conform to its plan.

Three hundred and sixty-four days of the year believe in yourself and do what you feel is right. The rest of the year commit yourself to what you think is the good. But remember during those days the whiteness of Yom Kippur. You may be wrong, and if you are wrong when you look back on your life won't your heart break at the pain that you caused others out of the best of intentions? So be sensitive. Be compassionate. Be patient. Don't be the purist who insists that there is only one way. Yesterday's reform will plague tomorrow's citizens. Civil liberties can be achieved without quotas. Conservation can be achieved without shutting down the economy. Allow yourself the suspicion of a doubt when you are most convinced that you are right.

God is immortal. Man is mortal. God is infallible. Man is fallible. To be human is not to know. Let your heart break a bit tonight for the certainties of the past and resolve to pursue the good with patience and compassion. I suspect that if we could put the evils that are deliberately caused on one side of a scale and the pain caused by those who are certain they are right on the other side of the scale, the balance would be almost even.

We cannot help thinking on Yom Kippur about evil, wickedness and sin. Tonight let us think also about the sins of the convinced and the self-righteous. Let us examine our certainties and convictions. The color white says to me: 'you are human. You are fallible. You may be wrong. Be careful.'

Yom Kippur Announcements
September 20, 1980

BRANCH

READINGS AND DISCUSSION on the theme, "If Not Higher - The Holidays in Literature", will be held in the Lounge of the Main Temple today beginning at 12:30. This opportunity of thoughtful discussion and meditation will continue until the afternoon services begin.

A CHILDREN'S SERVICE will be held today at the Main Temple at 1:30. Parents are requested to sit with their children. A pre-school experience for children ages four through six will be held in the Social Hall at the same time. Parents are requested to bring pre-schoolers to the Social Hall and to leave them with our staff. After the Children's Service they may pick up their pre-schoolers in the Social Hall.

AFTERNOON SERVICES will be held at 2:45 P.M. today at the Main Temple and will be followed by the Yizkor (Memorial) Service. Bring your Branch tickets and present them to the ushers.

THE DOORS OF THE TEMPLE will be closed at the start of the Memorial Service and will remain closed until the end of the day.

The Mr. and Mrs. Club will decorate the sukkah and hold a family Sukkot Evening on Wednesday, September 24, at the Branch, beginning at 4 P.M. Families will provide their own picnic suppers. Beverage and dessert will be provided.

Sukkot services will be held on Thursday, September 25, at the Branch. Members of the Temple Seniors group will conduct the service. Rabbi Klein will speak. Kiddush will follow in the outdoor sukkah. After service the Seniors will enjoy lunch and hold an afternoon program featuring Del Donahoo.

CONSECRATION AND SIMHAT TORAH services will be held at 10:30 A.M. on Thursday, October 2, at The Temple Branch.

STEFANIE C. L. JEWEL
JEWEL C. L. JEWEL
JEWEL C. L. JEWEL

[illegible]

to 6th day of October - but apparently had some
second thought about making him, as he asked
advice of his senior angel. The Angel then said:
his release: when would he have a passport & money
notes. The Angel then agreed: when would he
signatures - passport - - But the Angel then
advised against even - and advised to let,
notes, and signatures which were being made
of him. And he said too, the time to travel of
the land of Israel & land abroad.

The time around you become a house
being - - But the
Here we have all the right to be one to
be in the house being it is an
person to be one?

Religion in the house to give
- but also Buildings & houses X 2 -
including 1st, 2nd, to religion of,
Now to let all the people &
in the house to religion - religion
the religion as religion for the house -
to religion - religion - It religion to religion

counter - was ^{in any sense} ~~not~~ - people would
want to be free of united power & who
for inclusion - but who were lost of an
kind. You had credit for business needed in
the days when he needed was to order
creases lost as was - - & so on teachers
as one of no relation out of the notification of
the place - - many - H. J. Lander - a
unfortunate - and an important landmark
to the past - - One person can be so
sublimated with contribution of not needed with.
To be seen should have little more
a very clear and the needed Tzohar - very
one - L.Y. in R. - Does the last employment
days between N.Y. & Y.K. It happened to be
studies - a kind of the have when a condition
passed by - a clear cut - HAVE you any thing
that needs working - L.Y. concerned
the specific a method teacher - No - Not they
Thank you - and the will be a
told a large number and even can be be

So in the necessary business which I have to
be right - which I did -- one of the things of
Y.K. is that we can also have the perfect need for
reputation and the best course of the same.

L.Y. we are not serious - There are no suits -
We can expect to get - but our goal is to reach the best possible result -
X 21 which has been agreed of many -- for the best
proper suggest Y.

Some have suggest that Y.K. is not right at
for ATONEMENT - God's occurrence of an event -
The perfect found in the world about the same of
his time - but the color has been changed let
it may come to be evil and let us to be
well -- Be your sins like carriers - they
shall be now even white. -- In the future
Y.K. should be highly desired instead of being
which the same 1 the same even appearing
passed on the shoulder. It is just - the exposed -
which can be done only if the same is
and if the is under pressure changes and
which has to be of the same year

The same that we can now get out
from under the indemnities - matter of the part;
can be a purifying one. As far as the total discovery
of things in a field: judgment is a sure way
to destroy the confusion they may not need to know.

White should have stood for a long while -

but he is right, judgment is also needed, but
also we must be sure people who will come
under notice - - There will be many more

things will be done in the future;
but we must be sure people who will come
under notice - - There will be many more
things will be done in the future;
but we must be sure people who will come
under notice - - There will be many more

things will be done in the future;
but we must be sure people who will come
under notice - - There will be many more
things will be done in the future;
but we must be sure people who will come
under notice - - There will be many more

[illegible][illegible]

He's making - Few of us already before
as said, judgment Day - But I feel that the
process of induction, deduction does - just ^{knows} ~~knows~~
my heart - He's not lost it's a part of deduction -
But I never, never to help could look at
what it does - & I feel but upon it.

The real spirit of things - the uniqueness,
I feel myself remembering what it's about some
right to be like when some religion or LY4 or
appears to remember current - this would opposed to
a time - But knows a mission also to help that
day, look on it to be done in concern - it's
a great deal - it's how many times - my
prediction will do it to be done because I
think about it - and there's another section of
my mind and such - the whole is what
will be to be done there - but
The land said was to be done in the
my own mind - so we will do

So - a judgment of what we
are concerned - The same when we say

and in which respect he failed his duty - when
since then as part of our community, under
his duties were to be self-evident

On Y.H. he made a lot of the confusion
and was not the person a leader was - O-Y.H.
he spoke - he advised against these new
of which was no success was. - the end with
great fill de - & can you think of any thought
now being to break your heart can be possibly
but you will attend some mis judged.

What is the main problem here - you
can see another WRHS AMERICAN JEWISH
And is not confused can great advice and
which my always remot can great advice
advice make it is possible to be to make
notice - is given up or there can

It is not to support an advice - but
advice can support can also may for
can be supporting by proving advice

Someone said to be clear advice
It's been the kind of you can see advice.
a bad name, which is not very of

saying: that a very much more difficult
to meet for doubt to me saying the press cannot
by people feel of great importance - the can be
by an eye.

The A.K. is a real man - modest & sincere
as concerned of his unity - character - yet he has
survived many hard times & the history of the
line, history - 2 can see that but
they feel un really right in the action -
Therefore the Mid East - help can - second

un re al ity the man is pro posed to be seen as an agent
direct - and they are con cerned of the
system of the can be

The top - members of W.H. are
only men - 6 men will never be able
will of point - the can be seen as
concerns of 24 to just history and
by the can be - because they need to
to the action of 1948 in the East - to
my can be seen as an agent to
feel - the action of the can be

To-day's letter is not only full of interest
also - it is the most certain of Daniel's. I hope
we 6.8 - the idea of the Balance - which has
found the same of substance - the real
Book & substance in journal - agents
of policy - policy has not given the
substance of the substance which is the substance
center.

and in our country there are also
consider low life - and we have seen
how the substance is substance & the substance
substance substance of substance by the substance
concept of substance in substance and the
equally substance & substance -- & the substance
it is substance that substance substance substance
has substance substance substance substance substance
and the substance is to be a substance substance --
the substance substance substance substance substance
century of substance substance substance substance substance
development of a substance substance - the substance
it will substance substance substance substance substance
also no substance substance substance substance substance

Have well on confrontation seen when
the confrontation is shut down?

~~Would it not be best you want to be done~~

600

Y.K. Tran Co ~~co~~ company of life, Thailand

K. L. Lee from me - The B. L. O. said it BT 4-10-89

last's day and not your day, last's day
and not your day - just as the law is
higher than the world so the law is higher than

[Handwritten notes:]

you may & be ~~concerned~~ as you ~~would~~

[Stamp:] AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Peter G. ...

No Y 441

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

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pure inaction - The

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C. 1111 - 1111
 1111 - 1111

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7.12.19 Museo Natural Hist.

Y.K.'s under the ground

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A.K - The amount - 100 Page - 100 G.P.

A.K - The United
see only one time - but once

Wade - my son - can ride; not

unconcerned much much - if you
don't - please tell me if you can
not do it - the said S.S. 4. I am
of course you - to see concern

You're also asked you -
you fulfilling - we need to see you
certainly

~~CONNECTIONS - I am, but let them~~



Yizkor Service
Daniel Jeremy Silver
September 20, 1980

We thank You, O God of life and love
For the resurrecting gift of memory
Which endows Your children fashioned in Your image
With the Godlike sovereign power
To give immortality through love.
Praised be You, O God,
Who encourages remembrance.

Yizkor is a private time. Here we focus not on death in the abstract but on our private grief. The background consists of familiar hymns and well-loved psalms. The foreground is full of memories of the good times we shared, the hard challenges we met, and the intimacies which bound us close. This moment teaches us again that all important truth, that death can separate us physically but not our spirit. Our dead have died to the world but not to us and our memories do mitigate the pain of separation.

When we are hurt we feel we have been singled out. Seated here with others who have loved and lost, we are reminded that death enters every home, that no more has been asked of us than of others, ~~and~~ that grief can be overcome and that in time we can love and laugh again. Grief is intimate but death is elemental. The pain is real, but others have surmounted it.

I once prepared a college theme on a long poem by Victor Hugo, Les Chatiments, which he wrote during a period of self-exile from his native France; while doing my research I came across this lovely vignette about the popular author. Hugo's chosen exile was an island in the Channel. Each day he would go down to the seashore, pick up some stones and throw them into the sea. The island children watched ~~each day~~ as the old man performed this ritual. Finally, one got up the courage to ask him for an explanation. The poet answered quietly: "Not stones, my child, I am throwing self-pity into the sea." Being part of a community of sadness and recognizing the universality of death helps us put aside that most unbecoming and unhealthy of moods - self-pity.

When I was a child death was a word, scary because I could not tie it to

[9/20/80]

any reality I comprehended. Not being able to understand death, and knowing that people cried when someone died, I tried to shut death into a little compartment where I kept feelings best avoided; but I couldn't turn off my imagination and whenever I heard of a death the box opened a bit and, like most children, I sometimes conjured up nightmare images and strange fears. Fortunately, most of this was play-acting, trying on emotions for size; and my bad dreams were easily forgotten in the security of a parent's arms. But whenever I think back on such experiences I redouble my effort to encourage parents to talk openly of death with their children and to take them to funerals or on funeral calls. The security of love, the evident fact that trusted adults can face death calmly, helps remove its strangeness.

It is a tragedy if one never outgrows the child's wild imaginings and does not develop a calm faith towards death; yet, I still enter homes where the husband and wife have not faced the fact that one will die ~~probably~~ before the other. There has been no talk about death, funeral arrangements or the survivor's future. If you have never said: "I hope you marry again," remarriage becomes a more difficult decision. If you have never said: "I don't want an elaborate monument", one may be ordered out of misplaced respect. If you have never talked over funeral arrangements these can become, at just the wrong time, a source of family tension as each member projects his or her emotional needs.

Life is a gift of God's and death is necessary to His plans. This year's leaves must fall to make way for next spring's buds. It's sad that life should end, but what other conclusion could there be? There comes a time when life becomes an unwanted burden - when pain is a daily companion and we cry out, "enough." And why need we fear to be with God?

Let me put it another way. Death, like life, resists explanation. No one knows what lies beyond. The sum of our knowledge is that death represents an end to pain, that all must die, and that the survivors must have the strength and the wisdom to surmount their grief and turn back to the business at hand. There is no benefit in trying to understand what lies beyond or the "why" of death. There is benefit in

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accepting death for what it is and moving on.

Custom bids us speak good of the dead. It is a wise discipline for who of us fully understands the pressures that they faced. But, in fact, there are differences in the quality of our memories. We have lost some who were noble and good. We have lost others whose lives and virtues were quite modest. By the quality of our life we establish the quality of our immortality. If we loved one who endured prolonged illness with courage and good spirits, how can we cave in ^{when} ~~if~~ we face a similar trial? Where love has been full and open it is easy to love again. Our tradition uses the phrase, "to give life to the living", to describe a mother whose children call her blessed; the father whose work was honorable and who has left a good name; the friend whose encouragement carried us over a rough spot; the child whose openness and eagerness suggested the possibilities of life. We are, to a large degree, what others have allowed us to become. If we care about our children and the future must we not live with care? If death has any lesson it is the warning to use ~~y~~our days wisely. We willingly accept the gift of life, but some are careless of that gift or treat it as a toy. The butterfly people learn, to their surprise, that winter always arrives before we expect it. "The clock of life is wound but once/and no man has the power/to tell just when the hands will stop -/at late or early hour/n~~ow~~ is the only time you own/live, love, work with a will/place no faith in tomorrow for -/the clock may then be still."

Our dead ~~endured the death of loved ones~~ They were no strangers to grief. Yet, they kept going and their strength reminds us not to surrender the fullness of life before we have to. Death rips to shreds the protective fabric of our life and we feel exposed. We are hurt and fear being hurt again. Some feel so defeated that they will not involve themselves emotionally in another life - "I wouldn't go through it again", ~~and in another sense, "it's too hard to love"~~ They want to protect themselves from being bruised again, so they rein in their emotions and deliberately avoid caring too much. They narrow their own future and shrivel their soul. It requires

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a concentration of will and vigorous spiritual discipline to begin the slow, deliberate opening of our spirit to feeling and movement. The poet said it well:

Face it - you must - and do not turn away
From this bright day,
Intolerably glorious and bright,
Red-gold and blue by day, white-gold and blue by night.

Face it, and doing so,
Be wise enough to know
It is Death you face, it is Death whose colors burn
Gold, bronze, vermillion in the season's turn.

But Death with honor, gay
In pomp and fine array,
In glory and pride, spectacular and bright,
Gathering, giving, light.

A pure translation, whose impermanence
Informs the watching sense
Not with despair, but memory and praise
Of the three other seasons' perfect days,

Not only all that lives, but all that dies
Is holy, having lived, and testifies
To bravery in season, spirit, man.
Face it. You must. You can.

I often think of the old Chinese proverb that you cannot prevent the birds of sorrow from flying over your head but you can prevent them from building nests in your hair. I like the simple wisdom of Ecclesiastes: there is a time to be born and a time to die; a time to live and a time to cry; a time to mourn and a time to love again. Our tradition wisely built limits into the mourning rites. There is the shivah, the seven days of mourning; and then it is the Jew's duty to go back to work and to re-enter life. Judaism encourages us to cry and express grief, but it also tells us there is a time to stop feeling sorry for ourselves and to pick up the pieces.

Yizkor is not a sentimental hour. The emphasis is not on the joys that the dead presumably know in Paradise, no one knows what lies beyond; but on our worthiness of their concerns and love. During Yizkor we speak of our gratitude to God for having allowed us to share life with people of decency and quality - who put a little of paradise into our lives - and what we say to God we say to ourselves - you can't let the next generation down.

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One final word. The Yizkor service mentions not only immediate family and close friends but all the generations who were loyal to God and who made possible the books we read, the music that satisfies our souls, the products which have eased life's burdens, the medicines which heal our body, the religious teaching which set out the way we should go, and provide us with a sense of life's ultimate possibilities and meaning. Civilization is the gift of the dead to the living. Are we ungrateful guests who take but do not return? Must we not add to the common good? Are we not responsible to the generations that are yet to be?

