



Words of
Comfort

דברי נחמה

from Temple Judea's
Caring Community

Temple
Judea



A Tradition of Comfort

The death of a loved one is painful. Judaism, with its astute sensitivity to the place where spirituality and psychology converge, has designed a rhythm of rituals that follows a loss and supports and uplifts mourners. At the heart of this process is community, because to suffer grief is to feel alone.

Community means that comforters support mourners at the funeral, piercing their loneliness. Community means helping with the burial by putting earth into the grave. Community means that during Shiva—the seven days of mourning— you do not have to seek out community because community comes to you. At Shiva, you need at least ten adults to say Kaddish, so the mourners are not on their own. Judaism is “a tradition of comfort” and so we offer you these “Words of Comfort” that we pray will help in your healing.

This booklet is a tangible reminder that you are part of a community that cares about you and that you have rabbis and cantors that love you and are here for you.

זִכְרוֹנָם לְבְרָכָה Zichronam livracha
May your loved one's memory be a blessing.

The Clergy of Temple Judea

Temple Judea Is Here For You

My wife, Ellen, died suddenly in August 2010. After 21 years of marriage, I was alone and a single dad of a 16 year old son. I thought, “Wow, how did this happen and what do I do next?” I was fortunate to have family, friends, an employer with a sense of humanity, and Temple Judea.

Ellen was a strong supporter of Temple Judea. No surprise that I turned to the temple upon her passing. Help came from across the temple community, clergy, sisterhood, Caring Community, my havurah, and others. From Mi Sheberach prayers in the hospital, the service graveside, the Shiva minyans, to the creation of the Ellen M. Rose Caring Community Fund – Temple Judea was there for me.

I share my story with you in the hopes that in your time of loss, you allow Temple Judea to be a part of your healing. They are here to help you through this time of need. Allow them in, take their hand as they guide you, comfort you, and bring you hope for the future – as they have done for me.

Eric Rose
Temple Judea Member



Pain

Pain stuffed inside of me
Can't let anyone near me
Can't let anyone see the real me
Can't let anyone even hug me

All this pain that's held in me
Why can't someone just hold me

All this pain that's eating me
Can't let go of the pain in me
Can't get this pain out of me

When will the pain stop hurting me
Why can't I just feel me
Why can't I just be me
Why can't someone take this pain from me.

By Kimberly J. Russell



As You Face the Days Ahead

As you face the days ahead, please keep in mind that every loss is different and every person grieves differently. Grief is as unique as each person's life. While there may be responses to grief that are considered typical, there is no such thing as a common loss. You and your loved one were individuals and unique, as was your relationship.

At the time of a loss, things move quickly and you may have many responsibilities. Even though you may feel as if you are in a fog and cannot believe the loss is real, you have gotten the necessary tasks done. When the funeral and shiva are over, the loss may become more real.

There is nothing static about loss; it keeps changing as we change. It is a process. But loss and grief are part of life, and the more you understand what you are experiencing, the more you will feel hope. You could not control losing a person you loved, but you can control how you live with their loss.

Some possible responses to grief include one or more of the following:

- Feel your mood change over the slightest thing
- Feel as though you need to take care of other people by politely avoiding the subject of your own feelings of loss
- Feel guilty at times, and angry at others
- Feel restless and look for activity, but find it difficult to concentrate



- Feel as though the loss isn't real, that it didn't actually happen
- Sense your loved one's presence, like finding yourself expecting the person to walk in the door at the usual time, hearing their voice, or seeing their face
- Wander aimlessly and forget or don't finish things you've started around the house
- Have difficulty sleeping and dream of your loved one
- Feel a tightness in your throat or heaviness in your chest
- Have an empty feeling in your stomach and lose your appetite
- Cry at unexpected times

Remember that what you experience is yours and yours alone as was the love you shared. Though time seems to pass slowly, the days will add up to weeks, and the weeks to months. Many people find the following suggestions helpful.

Keep a journal

Maintain and/or develop friendships

Get daily physical activity

Consider joining a support group

Above all, remember to be patient and loving with yourself.

Ilene Blok, MS

Temple Judea Member



These Things I Know

These things I know:
How the living go on living
and how the dead go on living with them
so that in a forest even a dead tree casts a shadow
and the leaves fall one by one
and the branches break in the wind
and the bark peels off slowly
and the trunk cracks
and the rain seeps in through the cracks
and the trunk falls to the ground
and the moss covers it
and in the spring the rabbits find it
and build their nest inside the dead tree
So that nothing is wasted in nature or in love.

The Jewish Mourners Handbook



Do Not Stand At My Grave And Weep

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 glint on snow.
I am the sunlight on ripened grain.
I am the gentle autumn rain.
When you wake in the morning hush,
I am the swift, uplifting rush
Of quiet birds in the circling flight.
I am the soft starlight at night.
Do not stand at my grave and weep.
I am not there, I do not sleep.

By Mary Elizabeth Frye



Reflections

During the days and weeks following the sudden death of my infant daughter Maaike, as the shock and numbness wore off, my tears would come often and sometimes without warning. I cried more than I thought possible and could not imagine a smile on my face ever again. One day, after a phone call from a friend, my weeping so overwhelmed me that I could not stand and I slid down the wall to the kitchen floor.

Then I became scared. I was afraid that my grief would define the rest of my life. I suddenly realized that living the rest of life in misery, without joy, would be worse than losing my daughter. I could not control the fact of her death, but I could control how I chose to live my life. I began to heal.

Ilene Blok
Temple Judea Member



Epitaph

When I die give what's left of me away
To children and old men who wait to die.
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.
If you cannot give me away,
At least let me live in your eyes, and not on your mind.

You can love me most
By letting hands touch hands,
By letting hearts touch hearts,
And by letting go of spirits who need to be free.

Love does not die, bodies do.
So, when all that's left of me is love,
Give me away.

By Merrit Malloy



At First Glance, It May Seem Strange...

At first glance, it may seem strange to utter a blessing at such a heartbreaking moment, upon learning of the death of a loved one. Why would one possibly think to express gratitude?

ברוך אתה הי אלוהינו מלך העולם דיין האמת
Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha Olam, Dayan Ha Emet:

Blessed are You Our God, Ruler of the Universe who is the true Judge

In fact, the actual purpose of saying any Bracha (Blessing) is to acknowledge and reach out to God's presence at a particular moment. When we say a blessing over bread, we become cognizant of God's presence with us as we enjoy the bread God provided. Similarly, in this horrible instance, through uttering a Blessing we seek God's presence to help us cope with the desperate situation in which we find our loved ones and ourselves. Additionally, by acknowledging God's righteousness at a time when we might lose our faith, we are reminded that, as Rabbi Harold Kushner has said, "God is on our side, God is not on the side of illness or death."

E-Hazzan Blog
Share A Prayer: In Times of Tragedy
Chazzan Michael Krausman

Contributed by Sylvia Lezak
Temple Judea Member



A Prayer for Healing

Give ear, O Eternal, to my prayer,
heed my plea for mercy.

In my time of trouble I call You,
for You will answer me.

When pain and fatigue are my companions,
Let there be room in my heart for strength.

When days and nights are filled with darkness,
Let the light of courage find its place.

Help me to endure the suffering and dissolve the fear,
Renew within me the calm spirit of trust and peace.

We praise you, O God, Healer of the Sick.

Gates of Healing: A Message of Comfort and Hope – CCAR
Suggested by Psalm 86



A Yizkor Meditation

...when a relationship was difficult

Dear God,
You know my heart.
Indeed, You know me better than I know myself,
So I turn to You before I rise for Kaddish.

My emotions swirl as I say this prayer.
The parent I remember was not kind to me.
His/Her death left me with a legacy of unhealed wounds,
of anger and of dismay that a parent could hurt a child
as I was hurt.

Help me, O God,
To subdue my bitter emotions that do me no good,
and to find that place in myself
where happier memories may lie hidden,
and where grief for all that could have been,
all that should have been,
may be calmed by forgiveness,
or at least be soothed by the passage of time.

I pray that You, who raises up slaves to freedom,
will liberate me from the oppression of my hurt and anger, and that
You will lead me from this desert to Your holy place. *Amen.*

Rabbi Bob Saks



Support from Others

Don't tell me that you understand.
Don't tell me that you know.
Don't tell me that I will survive,
How I will surely grow.
Don't come at me with answers,
That can only come from me.
Don't tell me how my grief will pass,
That I will soon be free.
Accept me in my ups and downs.
I need someone to share,
Just hold my hand and let me cry,
And say, "My friend, I care."

Author unknown

"Our days are like grass;
we bloom like the flower of the field;
a wind passes by and it is no more."

Psalms 103:15-16



Ascension

And if I go,
while you're still here...
Know that I live on,
vibrating to a different measure
--behind a thin veil you cannot see
through.
You will not see me,
so you must have faith.
I wait for the time when we can soar
together again,
--both aware of each other.
Until then, live your life to its fullest.
And when you need me,
Just whisper my name in your heart,
...I will be there.

By Colleen Corah Hitchcock



Kaddish for my Mother

I grew up as a Methodist, tasting my first bagel at age 12 while babysitting for a Jewish family one summer. About a year before getting married, I decided to convert to Judaism; I wanted to create a Jewish home for our future family.

My mother had no objections, and even celebrated Jewish holidays with us whenever she could. When she passed away suddenly one February, it felt right that my family and I would incorporate the ritual of saying Kaddish into her funeral service. To me, the primary purpose of Kaddish is to provide comfort to mourners, rather than to honor the deceased. My brothers were receptive to the idea.

Unfortunately, a series of winter storms throughout the Midwest caused me to miss the funeral, and when my brother Tom asked if they should still read the prayer in English without me, I only hesitated briefly before saying no. It wasn't that I wanted Kaddish said for my mother, it was that I, as a Jew, wanted to say it for her, along with my family.

Five days later, my husband and I attended Shabbat services at Temple Judea. As I struggled to utter the words of this ancient prayer, my temple community carried me along with the rhythm of their chanting, as together we said Kaddish for my mother.

Beth Fink
Temple Judea Member



Birth is a Beginning

Birth is a beginning and death a destination.
and life is a journey:
from childhood to maturity
and youth to old age;
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 from 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, from birth to death
To life everlasting.

Alvin Fine

Mishkan T'Filah : A Reform Siddur



But Not Forgotten

I think no matter where you stray,
That I shall go with you a way.
Though you may wander sweeter lands,
You will not forget my hands,
Nor yet the way I held my head
Nor the tremulous things I said.
You will still see me, small and white
And smiling, in the secret night,
And feel my arms about you when
The day comes fluttering back again.
I think, no matter where you be,
You'll hold me in your memory
And keep my image there without me,
By telling later loves about me.

By Dorothy Parker



We Remember Them

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

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

In the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring
We remember them.

In the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer
We remember them.

In the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of autumn
We remember them.

At 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 joys and special celebrations we yearn to share
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.

As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us
As we remember them.

Gates of Repentance - CCAR



What does it mean to “say Kaddish”?

When I was growing up, my parents always “said Kaddish” on their parents’ *yahrzeit*. I wasn’t sure what that meant, but I knew it was about remembering someone who died. Then when my dad died almost 50 years ago, I began my own tradition of “saying Kaddish” for him, still not knowing or even thinking about the meaning. I recited the words from memory (in Aramaic, although I thought it was Hebrew), feeling comforted just by uttering them. So imagine my surprise when I learned that the Kaddish prayer does not speak of death or loss or mourning. The theme of Kaddish is, rather, praising God, affirming our faith in God, and praying that God grant peace for us all and for the House of Israel.

“So, how,” I wondered, “could ‘saying Kaddish’ comfort me if the prayer didn’t speak to my loss or grief”?

After some reflection, it became clear to me. No matter that the Kaddish prayer doesn’t mention death or comfort. My comfort from saying Kaddish comes from following the tradition of generations before me, and from honoring the memory of my husband and my mom and dad in the midst of my Temple Judea community.

And though it might seem contradictory to praise God in a time of sadness, it somehow feels right to affirm my faith in God as I’m remembering my loved ones.

Judy Scharf, z’l
Temple Judea Member



Mourner's Kaddish

Yit-ga-dal v'yit-ka'dash sh'mey ra-ba.
B'al-ma dee-v'ra chi-ru-tay.
Y'yam-leech mal-chu-tey, b'cha-yey-chon
Uv-yo-mey-chon uv-cha-yey d'chol beit Yis-ra-el,
ba-a-ga-la u-viz-man ka-reev. V'im-ru: a-men.
Y'hey sh'may ra-ba m'va-rach l'al-mey al-ma-ya
Yit-ba-rach v'yish-ta-bach v'yit-pa-ar v'yit-ro-mam
V'yit-na-say v'yit-ha-dar v'yit-a-leh
V'yit-ha-lal sh-mey d-ku-d'sha. B'reech hu.
L'ey-la min kol bir-cha-ta
V'shir-a-ta tush-b'cha-ta v'ne-che-ma-ta
Da-a-mi-ran b'al-ma. V'im-ru: A-men.
Y-hei sh'la-ma ra-ba min sh'ma-ya
V'cha-yim a-lei-nu v'al kol Yis-ra-el.
V'im-ru: A-men.
O-seh sha-lom bim-ro-mav hu ya-a-seh
Sha-lom a-lei-nu v'al kol Yis-ra-el.
V'im-ru: A-men.

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעֲלָמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְּרַעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל. בְּעֲגָלָא וּבְזָמַן קָרִיב וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:
יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וְלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא:
יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלֵּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ
הוּא לְעָלְמָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחְמַתָּא, דְאִמְרִין בְּעֲלָמָא, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:
יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:
עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוַמְיָו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן:



Mourner's Kaddish

Exalted and hallowed be God's name
in the world which God created, according to plan.
May God'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 God'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.

Mishkan Tefillah 2007 - CCAR



Looking to the Future ...

As you look at the awesome task ahead – how to negotiate the pitfalls and anticipate some of the hazards in the valley of the shadow of death – these are some of the things you should try to learn:

Do those things that give you peace of mind; not necessarily what others suggest or pressure you to do.

Surround yourself with people who understand and make you feel comfortable; who know they can't fix things; who are compassionate; and who don't try to take your grief away from you.

Tell those who care about you what you need in order to survive (they do not automatically know); and accept the fact that not all relatives and old friends will be able to provide what you need at this time (so you may have to give some of them up).

Give yourself permission to do what you feel like doing, as long as you harm no one: cry alone, pray, scream, cry with others, withdraw, express anger, meditate, cry some more.

Grieve when and how you want to, rather than on someone else's timetable.



Do things at your own pace, in accordance with your own feelings, and therefore accept the idea that you may not be able to accomplish everything you used to – at least for now, though perhaps long-term as well.

Maintain open communication with your loved ones, recognizing that we each grieve differently.

Look out for your own needs first; this is one time of life when selfishness is really okay.

Try hard to believe that life really is worth living – whether your rationale be to perpetuate your loved one’s memory; or to resume accomplishing the goals you previously had set for yourself; or to strive toward entirely new goals; or to try to find the answers to the age-old question of “Why?”; or for any other reason that has meaning to you.

Have faith, even on the darkest days, that there will indeed be light at the end of the tunnel; that life may again have meaning as you begin to emerge from the valley of the shadow.

Adapted from Walking Through the Valley of the Shadow
Mort Schrag



Miss Me, But Let Me Go

When I come to the end of the road,
And the sun has set for me.
I want no rites in a gloom-filled room.
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little – but not too long,
And not with your head bowed low.
Remember the love that once we shared.
Miss me, but let me go.

By Edgar A. Guest



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This edition of Words of Comfort
is dedicated to Judy Scharf, z'l,
the guiding light and visionary founder
of the Caring Community.

Words of Comfort Committee

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