

On Shavuot

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Spring roses bloom,  
fragrant with heady Torah,  
layers of sevens fluttering  
as we enter  
our *huppah*  
with God.  
My teachers, you escort me.

You taught me  
first words,  
first songs,  
first steps;  
You taught me  
the slow craft  
of doing work well.

You taught me the patience  
to sketch my thoughts;  
You taught me rules  
which I broke and then mended.

You taught me impatience  
with what is unjust.  
You taught me to listen for truth  
and to seek it.

You taught me life lessons  
before they could hurt me;  
You comforted me when they did;  
You were my best listener.

You taught me to hurry  
to do a mitzvah;  
that inconvenience  
in service of others  
is blessed.

You escort me still,  
as you always did.  
You taught me that books  
catch living voices.  
You smiled inwardly  
as I learned  
what has long been known.

Your presence taught me  
to breathe with another;  
to notice their pain  
and to be,  
just be near.

On this splendid day,  
of hearing sights, seeing noise,  
of great laws,  
noble truths,  
I thank you  
for moments of learning,  
still open  
and opening.

This rose  
of learning  
I accept as your student.  
I will plant and  
tend it  
in your name.  
It will release  
to the air  
its rare essence  
stirred by the passing  
of its great gardeners.

—LILLY KAUFMAN

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*The Book of Ruth and Naomi*

When you pick up the Tanakh and read  
the Book of Ruth, it is a shock  
how little it resembles memory.  
It's concerned with inheritance,  
lands, men's names, how women  
must wiggle and wobble to live.

Yet women have kept it dear  
for the beloved elder who  
cherished Ruth, more friend than  
daughter. Daughters leave. Ruth  
brought even the baby she made  
with Boaz home as a gift.

Where you go, I will go too,  
your people shall be my people,  
I will be a Jew for you,  
for what is yours I will love  
as I love you, oh Naomi  
my mother, my sister, my heart.

Show me a woman who does not dream  
a double, heart's twin, a sister  
of the mind in whose ear she can whisper,  
whose hair she can braid as her life,  
twist its pleasure and pain and shame.  
Show me a woman who does not hide

in the locket of bone that deep  
eye beam of fiercely gentle love  
she had once from mother, daughter,  
sister; once like a warm moon  
that radiance aligned the tides  
of her blood into potent order.

At the season of first fruits, we recall  
two travellers, co-conspirators, scavengers  
making do with leftovers and mill ends,  
whose friendship was stronger than fear,  
stronger than hunger, who walked together,  
the road of shards, hands joined.

—MARGE PIERCY

*A Yizkor Meditation in Memory of a Parent Who Was Hurtful*

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.

I do not want to pretend to a love or to a grief that I do not feel, but I do want to do what is right as a Jew and as a child.

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 soothed by the passage of time.

I pray that You, who raise 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.

—ROBERT SAKS

*An Eternal Window*

In a garden I once heard a song or an ancient blessing.

And above the dark trees a window is always lit, in memory

of the face that looked out of it,  
and that face too

was in memory of another lit window.

—YEHUDAH AMICHAJ  
(translated by Chana Bloch)

MEMORIAL PRAYERS

We rise.

We each continue in private meditation, selecting from among the following and adding appropriate names as indicated.

Personal prayers may be added.

In memory of female relatives or friends:

May God remember the soul of יְזַכֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַשְׁמַת

my mother אִמִּי מוֹרְתִי \_\_\_\_\_

my wife אִשְׁתִּי \_\_\_\_\_

my partner בֵּת זִוגִי \_\_\_\_\_

my sister אַחֹתִי \_\_\_\_\_

my daughter בְּתִי \_\_\_\_\_

my grandmother סִבִּיתִי \_\_\_\_\_

my relative קְרוֹבַתִּי \_\_\_\_\_

my friend חֲבֵרַתִּי \_\_\_\_\_

(others) \_\_\_\_\_

שְׁהֲלַךְ לְעוֹלָמָהּ\שְׁהֲלָכוּ לְעוֹלָמָן.  
הִנְנִי נוֹדֵב\נוֹדֵבֶת צְדָקָה בְּעַד הַזְּפָרַת  
נִשְׁמַתָּה\נִשְׁמוֹתֶיהֶן.

אֲנֵא תְהִי נִפְשׁוֹ צְרוּרָה\תְהִינָה נִפְשׁוֹתֶיהֶן צְרוּרוֹת  
בְּצָרוֹר הַחַיִּים וְתְהִי מְנוּחָתָה\מְנוּחָתָן כְּבוֹד,  
שְׁבַע שְׁמַחוֹת אֶת־פְּנֵיהֶ, נְעִימוֹת בִּימֵינָךְ נְצַח. אָמֵן.

who has/have gone to her/their eternal home. In loving testimony to her life/their lives, I pledge *tzedakah* to help perpetuate ideals important to her/them. Through such deeds, and through prayer and remembrance, may her soul/their souls be bound up in the bond of life. May I prove myself worthy of the many gifts with which she/they blessed me. May these moments of meditation strengthen the ties that link me to her/their memory. May she/they rest in peace forever in God's presence. *Amen.*

MEMORIAL PRAYERS

We rise.

We each continue in private meditation, selecting from among the following and adding appropriate names as indicated.

Personal prayers may be added.

In memory of male relatives or friends:

May God remember the soul of יְזַכֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת־נַשְׁמַת

my father אָבִי מוֹרִי \_\_\_\_\_

my husband אִישִׁי \_\_\_\_\_

my partner בֵּן זִוגִי \_\_\_\_\_

my brother אָחִי \_\_\_\_\_

my son בְּנִי \_\_\_\_\_

my grandfather סִבִּי \_\_\_\_\_

my relative קְרוֹבִי \_\_\_\_\_

my friend חֲבֵרִי \_\_\_\_\_

(others) \_\_\_\_\_

שְׁהֲלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ\שְׁהֲלָכוּ לְעוֹלָמָם.  
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**TZEDAKAH** צְדָקָה. The Yizkor service was called *sefer matnat yad*, the service of expressing generosity on behalf of those who have died. That name comes from the closing line of the Torah reading for the final day of the pilgrimage festivals: "Every person giving a gift according to the blessing they have received from Adonai" (Deuteronomy 16:17). Offering charitable gifts and performing acts of justice, love, and care in memory of those who have died provide us with ways of honoring their memory and continuing their influence for good.