

Rituals for marking a Yahrzeit

by Rabbi Annie Lewis and Rabbi Yosef Goldman,
see more at <http://ritualwell.org/ritual/marking-first-yahrzeit>

The yahrzeit (anniversary of a death) falls according to the date on the Hebrew calendar when a person died, and can be observed any time during the week of the anniversary. Here are a few options for how you might choose to mark the yahrzeit of a family member or loved one:

On your own:

Writing

Dedicate some time to reflect in writing on your love one and on the experience of the past year of mourning. Consider using the following writing prompts:

- *Bring to mind a day or a moment that you shared with the deceased that you want to remember. It can be in the recent or distant past; a remarkable experience or an ordinary one. Tell the story of that day or moment. What qualities of your loved one stand out as you remember that time together?*
- *How has the year of mourning changed you? What have you learned about yourself as you've grieved your loss?*

Candle lighting

Light the yahrzeit candle and recite the following:

"*Ner Adonai nishmat adam.*"—"The human soul is the lamp of God." (Proverbs 20:27) I/we light this candle in remembrance of you, _____, and I/we give thanks for knowing you. I/we light this candle and welcome your presence, on your *yahrzeit*, even as we deeply feel your absence. I/we light this candle to honor your memory. May your memory be a source of comfort, blessing, and light.

Tzedakah (Righteous Giving)

Choose a cause or organization that was meaningful to your loved one to which you'll make a donation on their yahrzeit, in their memory. You can recite:

"We are thankful for the gift of your life, _____, for all that we have learned from you, in life and in death, and for all that we will continue to learn. We donate *tzedakah* to _____ in your memory. Through this act of righteous giving we carry on your name in this world."

You can say a few words about the cause or organization which you have chosen to support.

Hand Washing

The Torah describes the spiritual effects of encounter with death and prescribes purification rituals to help individuals reconnect to life in the aftermath. These rituals usually involve water. One such ritual practiced today is for mourners to wash their hands after burying their relative, before entering the shiva home, marking a transition from proximity with death back into the realm of the living. The first yahrzeit, too, marks a further transition away from proximity with death.

Using a cup and basin, pour water over your hands at this moment of reconnecting to life as you transition out of the first year of mourning.

With others:

Sharing memories and reflections

Take time to share memories of your loved one and reflections on their life, as well as on the process of grief and mourning during the past year. You can begin by sharing selections from your own written reflections, followed by selections from any emails, notes, or letters you may have received about your loved one over the year. You may then open up the space to those present to share memories of your loved one.

Recite Mourner's Kaddish

During the week of the yahrzeit, come join us at Mishkan on a Friday night or Saturday morning, and at the end of the service there will be an opportunity to share the name(s) of the person/people you're remembering and recite Kaddish. You can also sponsor kiddush in their honor!*

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא.
בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ וְיִמְלִיךְ מְלְכוּתָהּ
בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזַמְנֵי קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
Yitgadal v'yitkaddash sh'mei rabba.
B'alma di vra khirutei v'yamlikh
malkhutei, b'chayeikhon u-v'yomeikhon
u-v'chayei d'khol beit yisrael,
ba-agala u-vizman kariv v'imru amen.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמֵי עֵלְמַיָּא:
Y'hei sh'mei rabba m'varakh l'alam u-l'almei almaya.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל
שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא. בְּרִיךְ הוּא.
Yitbarakh v'yishtabbach v'yitpa'ar v'yitromam
v'yitnasei v'yit'hadar v'yitaleh v'yit'hallal
sh'mei d'kudsha b'rikh hu

לְעֵלְמָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא
וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאִמְרֵיךְ בְּעֵלְמָא. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
l'ella min kol birkhata v'shirata
tushb'chata v'nechemata da'amiran
b'alma v'imru amen.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא
וְחַיִּים עֲלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
Y'hei sh'lama rabba min sh'maya
v'chayim aleinu v'al kol yisrael v'imru amen.

עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוֵמָיו
הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְעַל כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:
Oseh shalom bimromav
hu ya'aseh shalom aleinu
v'al kol yisrael
v'al kol yoshvei tevel
v'imru amen.

Magnified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which God has created according to God's will.
May God establish God's kingdom in your lifetime and during your days,
and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say: Amen.

May God's great name be blessed forever and for all eternity.

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One,
blessed be God -beyond all the blessings and hymns,
praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say: Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen.

May the One who creates peace in the celestial heights
also create peace for us, for all Israel, and for all beings; and say: Amen.