

Yizkor 2026

Yizkor is one of the most intimate moments of our Jewish year.

We come together in this room, yet each of us is somewhere deeply personal in our own memories. We are remembering different people, different moments, different lives. And yet, there is something we share: we know what it means to love someone who is no longer here.

There is a Hasidic teaching often attributed to the Kotzker Rebbe: “There is nothing so whole as a broken heart.”

I find something very moving in that paradox.

A broken heart reminds us of how deeply we have loved. The ache of missing someone tells us something about the place that person held in our lives.

And we don't come to Yizkor to repair that brokenness. We don't have to resolve our grief or find a reason for our loss. We come to make space for it—to remember, to feel, and to be together with others who are carrying their own grief.

And alongside the absence, there is what remains.

Sometimes it is something tangible—a photograph, a piece of jewelry, a recipe written in someone's handwriting.

But often, it is something we carry without even realizing it. A phrase we find ourselves saying. A way of caring for others. A habit we recognize in ourselves and suddenly realize came from someone we love and lost.

I think about my own father in moments like that. There are things I do simply because that is how and who he was. And when I recognize those parts of him in myself, *I realize that he is still with me.*

Perhaps that is part of what makes Yizkor so meaningful. We come to remember those who are gone, and in doing so, we are reminded of the ways they are still present in our lives.

Jewish tradition teaches us that memory can become a blessing. Not because the loss itself is a blessing—it isn't. But because the love and memories we carry can continue to shape the lives we lead.

And one of the gifts of Jewish community is that we don't have to carry any of this alone.

At Temple Beth El, we provide a place where people can come together to pray, to learn, to celebrate, and to care for one another. We put our Jewish values into practice through the ways we support one another and those around us.

We see that in so many ways. Our members collect food and help keep the shelves stocked at St. Al's Food Pantry year-round. Our medical equipment lending program provides hundreds of items to neighbors in need. Through our annual Tzedakah Project, we bring holiday meals to families in our community. We care for one another in times of need, and we create opportunities to learn, pray and celebrate together.

These are expressions of *gemilut chasadim*, acts of lovingkindness, and they are part of the fabric of life at Temple Beth El. *In moments of loss, and in all the moments in between, this is what it means to be part of a Jewish community.*

We are especially grateful today to open our doors and share our community with those of you who are joining us as guests. We are honored to have you with us for this sacred moment of Yizkor.

We hope you will take the opportunity to learn more about Temple Beth El and all that happens here throughout the year. Please take a look at our Horizons program catalog and the many classes, programs and activities we have planned for the coming year. If you are looking for a Jewish community to call your own, we would be delighted to welcome you.

And if membership is not something you are considering at this time, we invite you to consider making a donation to Temple Beth El in memory of the person you are remembering today. Giving *tzedakah* in memory of a loved one is a meaningful Jewish tradition and a beautiful way to honor their life.

Today, as we say Yizkor, may we hold close the people we came here to remember.

May we allow ourselves to feel both the ache of their absence and the gratitude for having known and loved them.

May we each find comfort and meaning in this sacred service.

*And may the memories we carry be a blessing—not because they erase our **grief**, but because they remind us of the love that made that grief possible.*

G'mar Chatimah Tovah. May you and your loved ones be inscribed for a good year in the Book of Life

