

Welcome!

Filling the Empty Chair: Honoring and Remembering Grandparents and Loved Ones Who Have Died



Wednesday, January 15, 2025

with presenter Rabbi Melanie Levav





Shomer
COLLECTIVE

Filling the Empty Chair:

Honoring and Remembering Grandparents
and Loved Ones Who Have Died

Rabbi Melanie Levav, BCC, LMSW

Remembering

Honoring

Living/Dying



Exodus 20:8

זְכוֹר אֶת־יּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.

Deuteronomy 5:15

זְכוֹרָתְךָ כִּי־עָבַדְתָּ הָיִיתָ בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם וַיֹּצִאֲךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ מִשָּׁם בְּיָד
חֲזָקָה וּבְזֵרַע נְטוּיָה

Remember that you were a slave in the land of
Egypt and your God freed you from there with
a mighty hand and an outstretched arm

When do we remember?

“It’s in these moments, joyous holiday meals and family celebrations, that we remember them. It is in the smell of spices so fragrant, the taste of sweet wine, and the shadow of candles flickering, that we recall the days when they sat next to us and sometimes we can still feel their warmth.”



What do we remember?

“We can’t help but want to set a place for them at the table, hoping that they will walk in the door years after they’ve departed. We can’t help but want to hear their voices singing, laughing. We can’t help but want to smell their perfume, to taste their cooking, to see their smile.”

How do we remember?

“While our memories are but meager substitutes for the warm hug we so long to experience, may we find solace and comfort in knowing that while they may be gone, our memories endure.”

Pesach Yizkor: Redemptive Remembrance, Rabbi Jen Gubitz

<https://ritualwell.org/ritual/pesach-yizkor-redemptive-remembrance/>

Talk about grief

Normalizing the experience of grief

- is vital in teaching grandchildren that it is healthy to miss someone
- gives permission to express feelings about a loved one who has died.

Telling stories of the deceased

- can help bring their memory to life,
 - *especially* for children who were born after they died.

Memories are for blessings

Place value on remembering

- It is traditional to say, “may their memory be for a blessing” after someone dies.
- Enact this wish in reality:
 - recall family traditions or recipes
 - use ritual or other inherited objects in family activities
 - talk about traditions and objects at family

Death is a part of life

Your family is not alone

- Helping children see their experience as one that is shared
- Everything alive will eventually die

Pictures

- Look at photos/ videos together.
- Display pictures at home.
(or share online)
- Gift copies of photos.



Names

- Talk about names.
- What were the names the people in the pictures were called?
- Who in the next generation is named after someone from an earlier generation?

Rituals

- Celebrate family traditions
- What holiday traditions observed in your family today were also celebrated in earlier generations?
- Share a special family tune for a song or prayer or a recipe handed down over several generations.

