

Yizkor 2011 – A Tip from Dad

Yizkor – we remember - our ancestors Abraham Isaac Jacob Sarah Rivka Rachel and Leah

Yizkor - We remember – our parents over whom we commemorate a yahrtzeit

Yizkor - We remember – the victims of the holocaust

Yizkor – we remember - the victims of terror.

Yizkor – we remember - the soldiers of the IDF who lost their lives protecting Israel

Yizkor - We remember - Gilad Shalit – who is alive but dead

Yizkor – we remember - those of our congregation who we have lost this past year

I would like to wish long life to

1. Andrew Silvers on the loss of his father Klaus Silvers
2. Nick Sterling on the loss of his mother Susan Szilas
3. Zvika Churlupski on the loss of his father Hillel Charlupski
4. Tony Potok and Mrs Lianne Potok on the loss of Jerzy Potok
5. Arthur Fridman on the loss of his mother and grandmother Faina Segal & Gabriella Segal
6. Harry Abrahams on the loss of his wife Anita
7. Manny Rosenfeld on the loss of his wife Debrah
8. Tamara Pollack on the loss of her mother Henya Shaw
9. Jenny Elliot on the loss of her father Avraham Aurgarten
10. Fiona Brown on the loss of her father Albert Solomon
11. Vivien Charlupski and Janine Levy on the loss of Eddie Goldstein
12. Mark Waine on the loss of his parents Fred and Betty Waine
13. I remember my late father Nossan Gestetner

14. It is with utmost sadness that we remember Ilana Nathan & Benny Glattstein ; Benny the son of our members Nathan and Chana was Bar Mitzva, d here. Benny tragically lost his life in a terrible air accident at the age of 28. Flying a plane as a pilot doing what he loved.

15 people are a lot of people to lose for a small shule.

It is strange and surreal that I join you today for Yizkor; I thought that I would always be amongst those going outside for the Yizkor service, a non participant - forever. I was always under the mistaken illusion that death does not strike close to home, I have officiated at many funerals but it was always someone else, I guess I have always been a kid at heart and I hope I did justice to the mourners at the funerals I officiated and I hope I was able to provide some level of comfort and assist others to grapple with their grief at the time. But death touches everyone sometime someplace;

There is birth and there is death, there are tears and there is joy; mi yichye mi yamut; Losing a parent takes the little boy out of you.

In my personal loss I was at peace, as my father had Parkinson's and was physically declining, ultimately he passed away suddenly of a heart attack at the Shabbat table on the 3rd of Shevat this year. I was in Israel, One is never prepared, but that is the human condition.

The human condition is also one of resilience; the dead have left us with a legacy; and as long as we are alive so too are they. If nothing else our parents have given us life, which means that indomitable spirit of dreams and hope to live and grow to succeed, and to make a difference.

Being communal minded is in my genes; my father was the President of the Chevra Kadisha and founder and active Board member of his synagogue. I too have followed, I became a Rabbi (although he was not that happy about that – What kind of job is a Rabi for a Jewish boy) and I am also involved on different community Boards.

My fathers passing started a movement at Coogee, or should I say a Shabbat afternoon service to assist me in saying Kaddish with a minyan. Many of you kindly or should I say bravely offered your time to come to sholosh seudos the 3rd meal and make an extra Shabbat afternoon service so that I could say the Kaddish; I am grateful, we have not missed once. David Brem took on the task to prepare the herring, chips and vodka each

week and following the afternoon prayers we sit down for a drink, song and story. It is secret Men's Business; a kaddish fraternity, like a men's club, where, men, yes even men, can try to get in touch with their spirituality.

John Williamson in his famous song touched on a similar idea to our age-old shalosh seudos minyan. I don't agree with everything he said but He said it like this

"Yeah, all Australian boys need a shed

A place where he can go, somewhere to clear his head

To think about the things his woman said

Yeah, all Australian boys need a shed

A joint to learn to read an' write, to work on his bike at night

To grow up as he likes, to grow anything under lights

A place to keep his tools, nuts and bolts and drills

To hang a hide, to hide the dry or hang to pay the bills

Yeah all Australian boys need a shed

Yeah, There is a whole bunch of us here at Coogee some saying kaddish and others as support; all of us committed to the saying of Kaddish to a parent lost and I trust we find solace in each others loss. I trust that the extra minyan that you created is like a shed or the old village square or local café, a third place for encounters; outside of work and home.

I want to take a moment to pay tribute to our President Andrew Silvers who is part of our kaddish fraternity who recites the kaddish together with all of us. He has taken on the mantle of leadership and started his own shul-legacy. I know that his father is extremely proud that his son is President of an orthodox synagogue and says kaddish every week.

There is a real fair dinkum Australian shed movement. It has grown to a membership of over 50,000, and is government funded with Tim Mathiesen as patron. Maybe that is why it is government funded. Sheds are springing up all over the country in many towns and suburbs. The Australian government has realized the demonstrable benefits of a shed movement, a place where fathers husbands and sons can find bonding to hammer and yarn, it has health gains for the elderly , fostering a sense of belonging and dampening Australian male suicide and depression.

Attending Yizkor and saying kaddish, is much the same; it is a sense of fraternity and common cause. Kadish is more than just remembering.

Kaddish give us the tools, to let go of the pain speak it out, shout it out if you have to, even if no one is listening, It allows us to fulfil our parents dream to rise out of their shadow, to succeed and grow; to have children and grandchildren, to create a legacy and to prosper.

That is what they want. Just as we as parents intuitively know that there comes a time to let go of our children; kaddish gives us the tools to find comfort and to come to terms with death to graciously honour our parents memory and let go.

Letting go does not mean forgetting, for we will always remember. Our past will never be lost. And despite the boasting of the young, and the current modern digital dazzlements of glitzy technology of iPods and 3D and everything else bigger better and brighter there will still always be a grip on the past, there will still be audiences for orchestras and people will still go to the museum and the movies. AM radio will survive FM and digital; books will linger on despite Kindle eBooks; as will the newspapers. Theme parks don't threaten the ancient pyramids, Venice will outdraw Vegas and Jerusalem will always be eternal:

And for all the seductions of Google, it will not replace history and we will always choose to live with one foot in the past with the memory of our loved ones carved in our hearts.

We love our parents for all the unsolicited advise that they lovingly shared; how do I know because I do the same we all do the same to our children; we don't give advice we just offer suggestions and they never listen.

- Eat your vegetables
- Don't drink and drive and don't do drugs
- Get up in the morning say berochos and see the daylight it is better for your body clock;
- If the share market is down buy BHP shares and put them in the bottom drawer.
- Keep a torch and yarmulke in the glove box
- Try not to live on your credit cards; they don't learn that from me.

- You are what you eat, but also what you read and watch and hear, don't feed your brain rubbish, at least not all the time
- Don't rent space in your head on people you dislike move on;
- Never get into a fight with your neighbours , buy them a case of beer , anything

It is probably the most difficult chapter in the Torah to understand. The sacrifice of Isaac by his father Abraham on Mt Moriah. The context is Avraham and Sarah have waited years for a child. God has promised them repeatedly that they will have many descendants, as many as the stars of the sky, the dust of the earth. They wait. No child comes.

Avraham has a child Ishmael by Hagar yet God says this is not the one. Sarah is 90 and angels come and promise her a child, she laughs and a year later Isaac is born.

Then the fateful words come. God says to Avraham Take your son your only son the one Isaac and go to Mt Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering. Avraham takes Isaac and bounds him on an alter, and lifts the knife. At that moment, the angel of the Lord calls to him.

Avraham Avraham – Do not lay a hand on the boy. Now I know that you fear God because you did not withhold from me your son your only son. The trial is over. It is the climax of Avrahams life, the supreme test of faith.

But it is deeply troubling. It is completely incongruous of God to have asked Avraham to undergo such a cruel act in the name of a test? Why did Avraham a kind man not protest?

There are many answers given, among them we learn about absolute love, about the unconditional love that exists between Man and God. Among them we learn that sometimes we must sacrifice. Through sacrifice we mature

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik learnt that we must not expect always to be victorious. Sometimes we must experience defeat.

All these interpretations are surely correct. They are part of our tradition. I want, share a thought in part offered by Judy Levitan, Nick Sterling's daughter in law last week in a shiur held here; and I dedicate this part of the speech to the memory of Nicks mother Shoshana bat Rachel.

My explanation will sound a little different, she only had 10 minutes to speak.

Throughout Tenakh, the gravest sin is child sacrifice. The Torah and the prophets consistently regard it with horror. It is what pagans do. Jeremiah and Micah openly rile against this abhorrent but prevalent pagan custom. How can the Torah regard as Abraham's supreme achievement that he was willing to offer a child sacrifice?

There is an alternative way of looking at this test.
It is the principal of God's ownership over the entire universe.

God is the creator and sovereign of the entire universe and ultimately, all that is in it belongs to him. We therefore acknowledge this and thank God by making a brocha, a blessing before partaking of anything from his planet.

God particularly owns the land of Israel. That is why the land can not be sold permanently in Israel and is returned to its original owners in the Jubilee year:

The land must lie fallow on shmita because the land is my land.

This is also an argument to keep Israel as a Jewish state,

parenthetically when the state of Israel was declared in 1948 the Jews had spent a century in the building of the land ; the chalutzim and kibbutzim revitalized the land; and infrastructure was built . The UN in 48 only declared what already was a defacto state. In 48 we were ready; Are the Palestinians ready for a state mentally and have they emotionally prepared for the state, but I digress;
the point being God has ownership over the land of Israel.

God also has ownership of the people; God owns the children of Israel, since He redeemed them from the slavery of Egypt and saved them from the red sea. Therefore the Israelites could not be turned into slaves for others, because they are my servants my people, whom I brought out of Egypt:

This is the argument that one cannot wantonly chop down a tree - it is not your tree, it does not belong to you, it is God's.

You can't have a permanent tattoo, it's not your body.

You can't decide to cremate your body because again it is not yours to decide.

Abortion in Jewish thought is not solely a woman's right; it is a decision shared by three partners, wife, husband and God.

God's ownership of the world is a defining principle in Biblical times.

In the ancient world, up to and including the Roman Empire, children were considered the legal property of their parents. Children had no rights. They were not legal personalities in themselves. A father could do whatever he wished with his child, including putting him to death. Infanticide was well known in antiquity. It is this principle of parent ownership of child that underlies the entire practice of pagan child sacrifice.

The Torah is horrified by child sacrifice, which it sees as the worst of all sins. It therefore seeks to establish, in the case of children, what it establishes in the case of the universe as a whole, the land of Israel, and the people of Israel.

We do not own the universe, we do not own the land and we do not own the people, God does.

We also do not own our children. God does.

We are merely their guardians on God's behalf.

I never understood the UN charter of the rights of the child, but viewed with Torah logic the rights of the child makes very much sense.

Only a most dramatic event could revolutionize and change the character of the ancient world's preoccupation with child sacrifice. That is what the story of the binding of Isaac is about. Isaac belongs to neither Abraham nor Sarah. Isaac belongs to God. All children belong to God. Parents do not own their children. They are the guardians.

God does not want Abraham to sacrifice his child. God wants him to renounce ownership in his child. That is what the angel means when it calls to Abraham, telling him to stop, *lo chosachto es bincha es yechidcha*, "You have not withheld from Me your son, your only son."

The story of the first Jewish child establishes a principle that applies to all children. G-d creates legal space between parent and child, because only when that space exists do children have the room to grow as independent individuals.

Judy put it this way she said you have to be able to let go of your child to give your children both roots and wings roots where you come from and wings to fly away and soar .

Some more advice that our children don't listen to but they will tell their children the same;

1. Clean your teeth ; don't spend all day on the mobile because one day we will find that it causes cancer
2. Don't be tight with your money when it comes to friends and charity
3. never ignore an invitation to dance and say Lechaim
4. make an effort to visit Israel
5. stand up for Jewish principals; it will bring out your best side

Coming to a shed, I mean a shule is where generations can merge. A shule is equalizing both parent and child can pray and lead the service; both parent and child can have lollies, both can go out and play; And where else do you learn to drink but in a shed, I mean a shule. It is uncanny how often I see myself in my children grandchildren and they in me.

It is not just genetic characteristics but it is values and customs. When you come to a shed, I mean a shule you cease to be afraid of mortality because you realize that you live on through your children and your parents will live on through you.

In 1944 during WW2 in a small town of Gyor Hungry my grandfather said to my father

Nosson I don't have a good feeling; I am not happy that you join us on the Nazis trucks that will take us to the arbeit lager in the morning Go hide in the attic Take these watches.....

lechaim ulesholom blieb a frum und ehrlich yid. For life and for peace remain a frum and upstanding Jew

Before I left to Israel, in January this year to participate in my brothers
simcha,

My father said to me, at the time I thought nothing of it , they were his last
words to me; lechaim ulesholom for life and for peace.....bleib a frum
und ehrlich yid remain a frum and upstanding Jew

I will now join you for the Yizkor service.