

Meeting Place
Yizkor 5771, Rabbi Zoë Klein

This is a place of meeting.
A place of suspension.
A place of in between.
This is a timeless place,
It is no place at all,
It is a hovering over,
A dream-state,
An encounter.

You may be a rational mind.
You may be someone who avoids words
Like spirituality,
Who likes things that can be measured
And understood,
Who doesn't yearn to be mystified,
And never suspends belief.

And it's wonderful,
If that's who you are.
Who you are is beautiful.

And, yet, here we are,
Stepping into a deep, deep pool
Called Yizkor,
And it is warm, enveloping,
Tingling and strange.

It is vibrant with emotion.
Buoyant with memory.
Salty with tears.

And somewhere
In the midst of it,
The waves of music and harmony,
The swimming words...

Is a place of suspension.
A place of in between.
This is a timeless place,
It is no place at all,
It is a hovering over,
A dream-state,
An encounter.

For some,
The idea of encounter
Is not welcome.

*Some remember a loved one
With mixed feelings.
Lives that sadly were troubled,
Times shared and not shared.
Intimacy that escaped you,
Parting happened with words
Left unsaid,
With no real reconciliation or healing.
There was potential, but it remained
Out of reach.
For some for whom memory is painful,
Stormy, punctuated with lasting hurt,
Yizkor is an opportunity to pledge
To live our lives more honestly and lovingly,
With more kindness towards others,
using our words to build rather than tear down.¹*

For some,
Encounter, in vision,
In dream state,
Is all we ever, ever want.
Another touch.
Another embrace.
One chance to see the curve of that cheek,
The glint of that eye,
To hear that beautiful laugh,
To pat a kerchief to that warm brow,

¹ Based on a reading from the Hillside Memorial Park Yizkor Service

To kiss those lips,
To just see that smile
One more time.

Yizkor is a place of encounter.
We step timidly,
With all our fears and doubts,
All our words and worries,
Into this pool of souls,
Lit from a deep, internal source,
Luminous waters,
Supernal mikvah,
We slip in,
Eyes closed,
Eyes open,
Either way,
It's your visit,
Feet on the ground,
Or not,
It's your time,
Your way,
Hands together,
Or apart,
Comfortable,
You are not alone,
The pool is full of searchers,
Yearners...
And yet, for each of us,
Our grief is so private,
So poignant,
So personal,
No one knows,
Our children,
Our friends,
Our family,
No one knows the particular grief
That is yours and yours alone,
And yet, we are all here.

The water,

It becomes light,
Like mist,
You are inside a cloud,
And you can breathe deep
In this cloud,
Even as you float,

In this place of suspension.
This place of in between.
This timeless place,
This no place at all,
This hovering place.

Is it real?
Is it absurd?
Is this you?

All these questions
Which matter so much in the every-other-day
Matter so little when we enter Yizkor.

The water, the mist, God's breath
Washes over you,
*Your toes, feet, ankles, calves,
Legs, thighs, hips,
abdomen, chest,
arms, hands, fingers,
shoulders. neck, your head,
your mouth,
nose, eyes, ears, hair.*

*Breathe in the glow of topaz
Deep into your lungs.
Topaz is the stone that is said
To have brought light into Noah's ark.
Feel its reflection in the waters around you.
This light comes from within you and shines outward.
It is brilliant.*

Breathe out

*The glow of topaz,
And see how this light brings clarity,
Radiance.²*

In this light, you can see,
In this light you can see that there is a door.
A gate, a passageway.

Open it.
Enter.
And find there
Someone who is also waiting,
And wanting,
To meet you again
In this place of encounter.
Look at this person.
Look at the texture of their skin,
Breath in the scent of their warmth.
Look at how they have changed,
And how they have not changed at all.

Unbound by complex histories,
Unbound by illness, by death,
Outside the bonds of mortality,
Touch one another.
Let go of the tears that you usually control so well,
and give them to the clouds for rain,
give them to the mist for beads,
give them to the sky for stars,
give them to brides for diamonds,
give them for beauty,
because there is no gem
more precious than the tear
mined from innermost heart.

Be with each other.
This is a moment to keep.
To fold into your heart.

² Based on a Mikveh prayer, author unknown

You will be in this place again.
Maybe not soon.
Maybe not for a long, long time.

There is love in this place.
There is forgiveness.
There is peace in this place.

Memory is sometimes twinned with sorrow,
But this is not memory.
This is encounter.
This is meeting.
This is you, unbound by body,
Flawless, free,
Doubt and dread dissipated into mist,
This is the part of you,
This is the part of them,
This is the part of us
That death cannot touch.

Look at the texture of their skin,
Breath in the scent of their warmth.
Look at that smile you haven't seen for too long.
Be together, for a few quiet moments,
Before it is time to emerge...

[Quiet: 1 minute]

And when you go back through the door,
The gate, the passage,
And emerge from the mist,
The cloud, the pool,
And return to the here, the now,
The moment...

Know that when you are not
In a rare
place of encounter,
know that it is there,
beyond the noise and clatter,

the crying and chaos,
the stress, the sleep,
it is there,
she is there,
he is there,
an inner lantern,
a glow of topaz...

I believe in the sun even when it's not shining,
And colorful ribbons even when there are shrouds.
I believe in the candle even after it's guttered.
I believe in the heavens even when there are clouds.

I believe in the sun even when it's not shining,
I believe in the moon after it's sunk in the sea.
I believe in the child even when she's not playing
But hidden in attics where no one can see,

I believe in a man though he's deep in a cellar,
I believe in a heart though it's beating its last
I believe in dreams even when there's no sleeping
I believe in memory even though it's the past.

I believe in redemption even after the sentence.
I believe in the rain even when nothing falls.
I believe in the oak tree even when it's an acorn,
I believe in friendship even when no one calls.

I believe in freedom even when I'm imprisoned.
I believe in questions even when they're unspoken.
I believe in my family when I'm the only one left.
I believe in your future even when you are broken.

I believe in music even when I can't hear.
I believe in beauty even when I am blind.
I believe in peace even with war around me.
I believe in a smile when all are unkind.

I believe in yes when I hear only no.
I believe in wonder even when there's little doubt.

I believe in purpose even when life is short.
I believe in *with* even when I'm *without*.

I believe in embracing even when man is violent.
I believe in closeness when everywhere's far,
I believe in poetry even when there's no paper,
I believe in wishing even when there's no star.

I believe in God even when He is silent,
My faith does not easily in suffering break.
Only God, pray tell me, if but softly, but swiftly,
Before my last breath, that it's all for Your sake...

I believe in heat when I'm freezing to death.
I believe in you when I'm surrounded by foes.
I believe in myself when my neighbors condemn me,
I believe in a truth that no one else knows.

I believe in spring even when winter comes.
I believe in outside even when there's no door.
I believe in bread even when I am empty.
When adrift on the ocean, I believe in the shore.

I believe in my people even when there are ashes.
I believe in the Torah even when it is burned.
I believe in the Temple even when it is ruined.
I believe in wisdom even when nothing's learned.

I believe in beginnings even when it seems over,
In taking a stand even when my leg's crushed
I believe in myself even when I am hated.
I believe in gentle even when I am pushed.

I believe in wellness even when I am sick.
When I'm thrown to the wolves, I believe in the lamb.
I believe in my voice even when I am muted.
When I'm told that I'm not, I believe that I am.

I believe in comfort even when I am crying.
I believe in my pulse even when I've been bled.

I believe in believing even when I am dying.
I believe in my deeds even after I'm dead.

I believe in renewal even after the fire,
I believe in galaxies even while I'm on earth.
I believe in remembering even when it is painful,
Though I am but dust, I believe in rebirth.

I believe that you will weep for me.
I believe that you will mourn.
I believe when you breathe deep and free
I believe that you'll be born.

I believe that you'll rise up again,
I believe that you'll begin.
I believe words etched on cellar walls
Are written on our skin.

*We are not human beings having a spiritual experience.
We are spiritual beings having a human experience.*³

I believe.

³ *Tailhard de Chardin*