

Why Recite Yizkor?

The Jews are known as the "Eternal People." This eternality results from the fact that we have never severed ourselves from the past. Our attachment finds its noblest and most inspiring expression in the recitation of the memorial service.

We have come to recite Yizkor today to reflect the profound emotional attachment that we feel to our sacred dead. And yet if our prayer is but an expression of sentiment no matter how noble, it is barely serving its purpose. For we are commanded to honor our parents after death as well as during their lifetime, and this obligation can best be fulfilled through paying tribute to the ideals that motivated their truly dedicated lives. In the process of remembering, we ourselves must become inspired to emulate the very noble example they have set for us.

No one need apologize for reciting Yizkor. On the contrary, he must prove worthy of the privilege by feeling spiritually challenged in the process. Only by following in their footsteps can we prove worthy of the sacred dead whom we memorialize today.