

Drasha for Yizkor 5784

As we gather at this solemn and meaningful time in the service, to remember our loved ones, it is time to reflect upon our relationships with those who are gone and those who are still with us. As we sit today, we all conjure up the memories of our loved ones. Oh, to have one more conversation with them, to hear their voice, to feel their touch. But alas that cannot be.

So how do we approach this time and what should we think about on this Yizkor?

We all know that the time passes too quickly, it is January then December. It's Rosh Hashanah then Pesach and Rosh Hashanah again. Our days may be long, but the months and years are short.

So how do we defeat and conquer time?

This year on my TIKTOK feed I was introduced to an ultra-marathon runner and now motivational speaker called, Jesse Itzler. And he offered his audience an elixir to defeat time.

He said:

Time is undefeated, no one has ever defeated time. And the only way you can attempt to beat time is the one thing that time cannot do, and that is to take away the things that you have done.

If I get sick tomorrow, time cannot take away the ultra-marathon that I just finished. Time cannot take away the trips I made with my kids.

When I was in my twenties, my mum had her dream which was to go to a castle in England with the family. I was like mum, I can't do that now. I have a record deal. And in my 30s, my mum said, let's go but I said I was building marquis jet - cats in the cradle stuff. And in my 40s let's go now... I have kids, I have a young family. I can't pick and go to a castle. They can't travel. And in my 50s my mum can't do it.

The only way to put a little dent in time is to do things that it can't take away from you. That is important to remember when you are making a decision.

So, lesson number one is Carpe Diem, seize the moment. Make the time. See the friend. Have that coffee.

Here is a frightening statistic: 75% of the time we will spend with our children will be spent by the time they are 12. Think about how much time will be spent with them during the rest of your life?

One of the saddest experiences that I must deal with in my role is meeting the family when they have lost their loved one. The reason for my sadness is that I never got to meet this amazing person.

But then, I think about the relationship that I have with my own parents and inner circle, and I ask the question, do I really know them? Can I answer the following questions:

1. What was your favourite childhood memory?
2. What was your favourite movie?
3. Who is your favourite author?
4. What is your favourite Jewish experience?
5. Tell me your favourite story that you heard from a grandparent.
6. Who had the biggest influence on your life?

Just a few weeks ago, I made a point to go and sit with Mark Fisher. For those who did not know him, Mark was Mr North Shore Jewry.

A humble man who built our community, serving as president and board member. Who sourced the land in St Ives and building of the College. We sat for almost three hours as he regaled in a trip down memory lane, as I questioned him about the names of the past, who they were and what they contributed? It was an incredible afternoon, and I looked forward to a follow up session. But it was not to be as he passed away three weeks ago.

I share this story with you as a warning. We don't know how long we will have with our loved ones. Don't delay getting the stories!

That is part one for this morning. Part two is to reflect on legacy, our legacy. How do we want to be remembered by our children and grandchildren? What are we doing to hand over the values and traditions that we have received? Are we creating the memories for our children, in the same way as our loved ones created for us?

Let us make sure that we dedicate time for them. Life is not that busy and nothing should be that important that we can't find the time to be with them. For it is those memories that we form with them that will live in their hearts as our loved ones live in ours.

While I was in South Africa, I met an old friend of my father, Harry Gurwitz, who shared with me the following poem. I haven't been able to find who wrote it, but the words are telling, especially for this morning.

There's a man of wisdom who roams the countryside walks from dawn to sunset

In countries far and wide.

When we met, he was good words of wonderful truths

Hearts that glow with kindness will light the lamp of youth

Time is only a lantern lighting you on your way

Make the most of your future and live for every day!

Life is such a good thing like a Patch wood dream don't look back in sorrow to things that might have been.

There are wars and weddings, there are sighs and songs

But there is one place only where mortal man belongs

Time is only a lantern lighting you on your way.

Make the most of your future and live for every day!

When the book of living is written and on the shelf, time provides a mirror and to see himself

Was his life worth living, were his days worthwhile?

As he walked life's highway there is treasure every mile.

Time is only a lantern lighting you on your way

Make the most of your future and live for every day!

As we pause to recite Yizkor, let's commit to the coming year to make the most of every day, create the memories and engage with helping to build our community. For there are incredible people here who enrich my life every day. Why don't you join me and meet them too. For you won't be disappointed

