**YIZKOR TALK - YOM KIPPUR 5786**
**RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ**
**TEMOLE SHOLOM - VANCOUVER BC CANADA**
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**Video link:**
**https://www.youtube.com/live/JSunEArbz2U?si=rwe-V2v4YMAZY2Wi&t=9089**

G-d, source of life and memory, we gather this afternoon in the quiet tension of presence and absence. The world outside moves on — the prayers continue, the sun will set, the calendar will turn — yet we are arrested here, in this room of remembrance, confronting the paradox Yizkor holds: life and death, memory and grief, continuation and rupture.

This year my heart is drawn to the role of the Jewish mother — not to exclude fathers, siblings, spouses, children, each beloved — but in particular to remember my mother-in-law, Susan Mishler, of blessed memory, who died this past February.

Susan was a nurse, a homemaker, the consummate Shabbat dinner host. Later in life, she became a devoted adult Jewish learner, a communal volunteer, a political organizer, even a parks board commissioner. She contained multitudes.

And yet, what we miss most are not her résumés but her recipes. Not her public roles but her presence — her laughter, her sardonic sense of humor, her biting commentary and argumentative nature, the embodiment of her New York personality carried with her

even sixty years after she left Sunnyside, Queens. A call to her Los Angeles number could have been mistaken for a call to New York until her very last days.

It has been hard without her. Grief comes in rogue waves — suddenly, unannounced. The phone call we cannot make. The story we cannot share. The empty chair at the Shabbat table. The joy our children feel but yearn to tell her. I see Sharon miss her mother with an ache I cannot mend. I see my father-in-law lonely without his life's companion. I see my children searching for their grandmother in the stories we tell.

It is in moments like these that the words of the poem We Remember Them return with new poignancy:

*When we have joy we crave to share; We remember them.*
*When we have achievements that are based on theirs; We remember them.*

I had read those lines so many times that they dulled. But now they strike with full force. For memory is not static. It is triggered by recipes, smells, seasons, music. Even in death, memory is alive. It is a profound and heavy blessing.

Last Sunday, at our cemetery memorial service between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I read, as I often do, the words of Eshet Ḥayil — "A Woman of Valor, who can find?" (Proverbs 31).

For so many of our parents' generation, this was the coin of the realm. Before doors of education and career opened more fully, this was how women made their mark: not with degrees or corner offices, but with kitchens, cribs, grocery lists, and the thousand unseen acts that knit a family together.

Anyone who has spent even one day alone with a child knows how impossibly difficult, exhausting, and thankless that work can be. And yet Eshet Ḥayil insists — it is holy work.

In modern society, many of these tasks are undervalued or invisible. But in a generation not so distant from our own, these were not trivial. They were central. A homemaker was a pillar, a force, an anchor. Education, careers, public leadership were, for many women — my mother-in-law among them — closed doors or narrow corridors. The home became the primary space to pour energy, express care, shape the next generation.

Those very tasks — cleaning, cooking, laundry, tending to children, paying the bills, soothing quarrels, creating ritual, holding emotional life — are among the hardest any soul can bear. To sustain a home is to wage constant war with chaos. To raise children

is to wrestle with cowardice, frustration, fatigue, and failings. To maintain dignity in small acts, day in and day out, over decades, is heroic — even if silent, even if dismissed.

Perhaps especially now, in our time of publicity, ambition, and hyper-visibility, it feels counterintuitive to elevate what seems mundane. But Jewish tradition does not side with the spectacular. Eshet Ḥayil teaches: greatness can live in the quiet center.

I also think of the biblical mitzvah of kavod — honor. We are told to honor our parents, not to love them. The Torah could have commanded love. It does so many times: love of God, love of neighbor, love of the stranger. These are emotional imperatives as well as moral ones. But with parents, the Torah commands honor.

Kavod is often translated as honor or respect, but in Hebrew it also means weight — the dignity, the burden of what is due. To give kavod is to acknowledge the gravity of a life, the invisible ledger of time, energy, love, and pain.

When we say to a parent, “I honor you,” it must mean more than polite deference. It must mean: “I see what you carried, often invisibly. I see the cost. I bow to the weight of your life.”

Judaism commands us to honor our parents even when they are gone. That command is not fulfilled only by words, but by memory, by legacy, and by letting their sacrifices inform who we are.

In some ways, Yizkor is among the highest acts of kavod. We remember. We call out their names. We recite the prayers. We sanctify memory. But memory is not merely recalling facts — it is re-entry, re-living, reinvesting. It is carrying forward, so that their presence is not only in the past, but alive in us, shaping our choices, our compassion, our presence.

To honor a loved one — parent, spouse, sibling, child — is to preserve not just their name, but their values, their hidden work, their caring, their vulnerabilities, their aspirations. The qualities of Eshet Ḥayil are timeless — and not bound to one gender.

This past year my family and I have been asking, as so many of you have asked before us: How is it possible that the world keeps going without them? How can we keep going? And yet somehow, we do. Jewish ritual helps us: yahrzeit candles, placing stones, saying Kaddish, being here for Yizkor. These rituals allow us to remember without being paralyzed. They let us grieve and live at the same time.

There is no end to grief, just as there is no end to love. But both change shape. Over time, the extremes soften; the memories deepen. What remains is not only the pain of absence, but the blessing of presence that once was.

Memory, then, is often the only path forward. But memory must be active, not passive. We don't merely recall — we carry. We carry them in our minds, our values, our children, our acts of kindness. We carry their narratives forward, not as museum pieces but as living legacies.

This afternoon, as we recite Yizkor, I invite you to remember mothers, fathers, siblings, spouses, children, friends. Not only for the grand or public things, but for the quiet, daily acts of care: the way they served the soup, folded the laundry, listened at the end of a long day, kept a household together, taught you how to live, even if the example was — complicated.

In a few moments the cantor will chant El Malei Rachamim and we will say Kaddish.

We will claim *Zikhronam liv'racha* — their memory is for blessing. The pain is proof — proof that we loved, that we were loved.

May the loved ones you remember this afternoon be bound in the bond of life. May their absence sharpen your witness to the living. May their hidden labors rise in honor through your words, your acts, your devotion. And may Yizkor not only memorialize them, but renew in each of us who mourn the responsibility to carry their presence forward into tomorrow and into every day still to come.

And may their memory indeed be for a blessing.