AHAVAH NITZCHIT

אהבה נצחית

LOVE DOESN'T DIE

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INTRODUCTION

> Some learn earlier than others that only the ones we love are essential to life. We simply become who we are through the ones we have loved and love. It is the warmth of loving and being loved which defines and becomes us forever.[1]

My first experience with death happened when I was 15. My childhood cantor, Stephen Dubov, who was a mentor, friend, and my greatest role model, died unexpectedly at 55 years old. After his funeral, which was one of the most defining, albeit challenging, days of my life, I knew that my future cantorate would be forever impacted by him and his death. I knew then that my foundation as a cantor would one day be set in all of the ways that he inspired me during the years that we got to spend together.

Today, my cantorate continues to be inspired by Cantor Dubov's untimely death. Through the gifts that he has given me both while he was alive and since he died nearly 12 years ago, I have learned to infuse everything that I do with his memory – especially carrying on his angelic, larger-than-life singing voice. For many years, I have looked forward to being able to use my voice to help others through the tragic deaths of their loved ones. While I had deemed it very important and knew it would be a large part of my cantorate, I hadn't yet realized how necessary it would be to provide a framework through which to experience the death of a loved one.

Eleven years after Cantor Dubov died, my grandmother died – and that is when my fascination with this work came to life. Because I was older, was further steeped in

[1]Quote by Eleanor Dashevsky, from *30 Days: A Journey of Love, Loss and Healing.*

the work of a cantor, and was much more on the interior with funeral arrangements, shiva, and familial relations than I was when Cantor Dubov died, my grandmother's death gave me new insight into the realities of death. While my family coped as well as they knew how, being with them and observing them during the days and months surrounding her death allowed me deeper insight into Reform Judaism's lack of framework to help people through this often dark and challenging part of life after the formalities of the funeral, shiva and *sh'loshim*, the thirty-day period after burial. Over the course of the months following my grandmother's death, it became apparent to me that many of my family members simply did not know how to grieve and, even more, did not recognize this themselves. I determined that there had to be many individuals in the same position and, as such, I decided to devote my last year of cantorial school delving further into this.

In addition to the deaths of my grandmother and Cantor Dubov, my inspiration for my thesis came from the summer that I spent doing Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Northwestern Memorial Hospital in Chicago. While nearly every patient I spent time with helped to shape my view on life, the family of one in particular led me to realize the unparalleled power of music as it relates to death. About halfway through the summer, I met the interfaith family of Sam, a middle-aged man who was dying after complications with a kidney transplant. (Sam's story, via an interview that I conducted with his wife, Sue, is discussed further throughout the thesis). Since Sam was on life-support during the time that I spent with his family, I never got to have a conversation with him; however, he and his family will always have a special place in my heart after having impacted my cantorate in such a strong way. Shortly before the doctors removed the machines that

were keeping Sam alive, Sue told me that she wanted Sam to receive the Catholic last rites and a Jewish blessing, which she wanted me to sing, as he was taking his last breaths. I sat with Sam's family as the doctors removed the machines, and then together, we went into his hospital room. As the priest finished giving Sam his last rites, I walked over to him, put my hands on his body, and began singing Debbie Friedman's *L'chi Lach.* I looked around the room as I sang, and I will never forget the looks of desperation and heartbreak from Sam's family. After I was through singing, I left the room to give Sam's family privacy, and I reflected on what had just occurred: I had used my voice to help Sam's family through one of the most difficult moments of their life.

In each of my experiences, I chose to express myself in the way I know best how to: with my voice. I feel blessed to be able to use music in such a powerful way and, through my research, have learned about the most impactful and meaningful ways to do so. This thesis is meant to suggest a relatively chronological framework through which mourning, grieving, and healing may occur following the death of a loved one. The experience is brought to life, in part, by means of the most universal language: music. It is important to note that each mourner's journey is unique and the order presented is, therefore, simply a suggestion that I have arrived at from my research. My hope is that the material presented will shed comfort and light to those in mourning, and that it will help them keep their deceased loved ones a part of them forever.

CHAPTER 1: THE FUNERAL AND DAYS SURROUNDING THE DEATH

> They say funerals are not for the dead but for the living. Those rites are what permit you to move on, so if you don't deal with the remains, you can never deal with the memories.[2]

In a Jewish context, funerals are the first time that the bereaved are given to publicly grieve the death of their loved one. Typically taking place very shortly after the death, the family of the deceased often does a lot of planning for the funeral in a short amount of time. A core Jewish value is *kavod hameit* – honoring the dead – and arranging for the funeral to take place shortly after the death is one of the several ways in which Jews do so.

For the loved ones of the deceased, the days between the death and the funeral can be very intense and emotionally taxing. They are filled with details such as writing an obituary, discussing what kind of casket and clothing the deceased would want to be buried in, and reflecting on the life of the deceased with the officiating clergy in hopes of making the funeral just what he or she would want. This period can help to keep the deceased's memory alive and, although this process might prolong the time before the reality of the death settles in, it can also evoke a sense of comfort that is what the bereaved need in the days immediately following the death.

In some cases, dying is a gradual process; everyone, perhaps even including the person who is dying, knows that the time is coming. So some families see this as an opportunity to have open conversations with the dying person about their death and the

[2] Ann Aguirre, *Aftermath.* (New York: Ace Books, 2011), chapter 5, Kindle.

funeral. How will be the body be handled? What, if anything, will be put in the casket with the deceased? Where will the funeral be? What songs will be included? What will the *shiva* look like? (please refer to Chapter Two: "Community Support," for further information about shiva.) Though often difficult, if the opportunity presents itself, these conversations can be an act of healing for the whole family. Furthermore, knowing the deceased's wishes for his or her funeral might alleviate some of the family's burden in their attempt to make the funeral just as the he deceased would want.

Jewish tradition offers a rich set of beautiful funeral liturgy and customs; however, the real beauty is in the adaptability that allows for each funeral to be unique for the deceased and the family. As a reflection of kavod hameit, the casket usually remains closed during the ceremony and the body of the deceased is not seen, while the funeral itself is typically filled with beautiful music, stories, and photographs. For some, it is at the funeral that reality sets in: even if the *n'shamah* – the soul – of the deceased will always be a part of everyone who loved him or her, the realization that the body is just inside the casket can be shocking. While others might not have such a visceral reaction, the nature of a Jewish funeral allows, even encourages, the bereaved to take the first step in the oftentimes dreadful process of moving through life after the death of a most cherished loved one.

Clergy oftentimes play an important role in helping a funeral come to life. In addition to the staff at a funeral home, it is usually by means of the clergy – a rabbi, a cantor, or both – that a family's wishes for a loved one's funeral are realized. The music, psalms, and emotions that will be discussed in this chapter are typically embodied as a result of the work that clergy do.

Furthermore, clergy are often present for the family every step along the way. They are, as such, in the unique position of being able to take care of both the deceased and the living. Rabbi Phyllis Sommer of Am Shalom in Glencoe, IL, explained the significance of the clergy's role.[3] She said, "When a congregant dies, we as clergy have a unique experience of being with the family for an inordinate amount of time. It allows us to journey through the experience with the family." What is perhaps most beautiful, though, is the clergy's responsibility to help the family recognize that, while their loved one is no longer alive in body, he or she is alive in spirit and will very much be a part of them forever. Put simply, as Rabbi Steven Stark Lowenstein said, "We [clergy] are in the business of taking care of the soul."[4]

Oftentimes, for musicians and non-musicians alike, music is among the most memorable and important parts of a funeral. When reflecting on funerals in the past, without being prompted to do so, both families of the deceased and clergy who have officiated funerals recalled a specific piece of music that brought up poignant memories. Much of this music is associated with personal stories that date prior to the funeral. In most cases, this is what helped to make the given piece of music so special.

Rabbi Sommer, for example, explained her family's connection to a special piece of music that was included in her son, Sam's, funeral. When Sam got very sick, their family started singing Mah Tovu's setting of "Hashkiveinu" every single night before bed. After she explained that, to this day, they still sing it every night, she said, "When Sam died, our family had a big discussion about what music to choose for the funeral... we knew that [if we included it], we would associate that "Hashkiveinu" with his funeral for a

[3] Personal interview with Rabbi Phyllis Sommer, June 30, 2017.
[4] Personal interview with Rabbi Steven Stark Lowenstein, July 17, 2017.

long time. We decided to use it for the funeral, and it took a really long time for me to be able to hear it again on the *bimah* without emotional impact. But that piece of music... this is what we needed. And I think there's something to be said for us choosing to share that piece of music. We were all a total mess, but I think there is something to be said for opening the door to that mess. A piece of music can do that."[5]

Aleksandra Dubov, a singer whose father was a cantor, also recalled a special piece of music from her father's funeral – "R'tzei" by Cantor Stephen Richards. As was the case with the Sommer family, "R'tzei" held a special place the life of Cantor Stephen Dubov; it was among his favorite pieces of cantorial music. He shared it with those he loved and who he knew would similarly love it, including his daughter, Aleksandra. It was, therefore, no surprise that it was a part of his funeral. A recording of him singing it was played while Dubov sang with the recording. She recalled that moment and said, "I go to these places when I sing where I just release and I just become the song, and become the breath... it's almost like I am in a different space."[6]

Furthermore, mourners often have memories with pieces of music that are not Jewish in nature but that they want included in their loved one's Jewish funeral nevertheless. More times than not, this is also because of a family's prior relationship with a song that evokes past memories with the deceased. Rabbi Lowenstein told me about a time when he played "Because You Loved Me" by Celine Dion at a funeral. The funeral was for a 58-year-old mother; the song was the soundtrack for several memorable moments she and her daughter shared together, including the time that she pulled her daughter out of school for a Celine Dion concert, and when the two of them danced to that

[5] Personal interview with Rabbi Phyllis Sommer, June 30, 2017.
[6] Personal interview with Aleksandra Dubov, July 28, 2017.

song at her daughter's wedding. In his liturgy class at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), Dr. Rabbi Lawrence Hoffman teaches that prayer is about the experience, not about the text itself. On the day of this funeral, "Because You Loved Me" became prayer.

For the "Funeral" section of my senior recital, I chose to sing three different texts that are usually included in funeral liturgy. Each of the settings, very different from one another, beautifully gives voice to the emotions present within each piece of liturgy. Together, they accompany the listener down the oftentimes challenging emotional journey of a funeral. There are times when the music is jolting, and other times when the music personifies comfort, as to represent the presence of God in each of the three funeral psalms. Because of the musically elaborate nature of each of these pieces, I would not use any of them in an actual funeral unless they were specifically requested; however, since they so accurately represent the reality of being a mourner, I decided to sing them in my recital.

The first piece of funeral liturgy in the recital was a setting of Psalm 121, "Esa Eynai," by Max Janowski. A distinguished composer of synagogue liturgy, Janowski wrote this piece with brilliance. Through the intricate melismas and the accompaniment that captures a wide range of emotions – fear, unsettledness, anxiety, comfort, hope – the text of Psalm 121 is brought to life. Dr. Louis J. Swichkow, who was a rabbi at Beth El Ner Tamid Synagogue in Milwaukee while Janowski served as Director of Music there, writes, "Standing virtually alone in the valley of helplessness and despair, the Jew found this remarkable hymn a reflection of Israel's anxieties and fears, disappointments and frustrations, oppressions and suffering. In it he saw a mirror of our people's age-long

struggle to remain steadfast in maintaining its sacred ideals in the face of overwhelming odds, and its endless striving to conquer despair by resolute and indomitable faith in God." [7] In his writing, Janowski captured just this. He used the Hebrew text to create a conversation among the cantor, organ, and choir that is reminiscent of precisely what the "soul stirring" psalm, as Swichkow wrote, embodies. The text asks, "From where will my help come?" And then proclaims and reinforces throughout, "My help will come from God."[8] The music conveys a sense of despair and uncertainty while also providing a feeling of warmth and wholeness.

Perhaps even more jarring was the next piece I sang, "Psalm XXIII" by Herman Berlinski. Written for soprano and flute, the tonality and relationship between the musicians represents the stark reality of death. Never have I experienced such an intense method of word painting (when the musical writing reflects the meaning of the text). The music throughout the whole piece so precisely personifies what I consider to be the core of the psalm: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for God is with me."[9] Very infrequently do the tonal center of the voice part and the tonal center of the flute part match one another. This is, in part, what makes this piece so powerful. The contrasting nature of the two different musical lines represents the fear and uncertainty of walking through this dark valley.

While Psalm 121 similarly offers ways to find comfort in God's presence amidst the uncertainty, unlike in Janowski's setting of "Esa Eynai" – which uses the accompaniment, vocal line, and choral part to create a warm sensation, allowing the

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[7] Dr. Louis J. Swichkow, foreword for *Esa Eynai* (Chicago: Friends of Jewish Music Publication, 1962).
[8] Translation is my own
[9] Translation is my own

listener to feel wrapped in love and held up by God's presence – Berlinski's "Psalm XXIII" does not offer this same sense of comfort through the music. The piece does not have any accompaniment to support the harsh sounds; the vocal line and flute line are, therefore, left to their own devices to make music, and seldom do they sound resolved together. Because of this, it is precisely reminiscent of what a mourner might experience at a funeral: although finding a sense of comfort must be an option, in the middle of a funeral, when the death is so raw, this feeling of comfort might be terribly difficult to draw upon. I therefore placed this piece in the middle of the funeral section rather than at the beginning or the end when a mourner might have space to experience other various emotions as well.

Lastly, as every funeral ends with a recitation of *Eil Malei Rachamim* – God, Full of Compassion – so did the "Funeral" section of my senior recital. This stunning piece of music so delicately sends the deceased off to eternity by way of masterful word painting; the composer, Cantor Israel Goldstein, wrote the music to portray exactly what the text of the prayer means. The height of this word painting is on the words "*…et nishmat [name of deceased] shehalach/chah l'olamo/ah " – that the soul of [name of deceased] has entered into eternity.* The way in which Cantor Goldstein wrote for the voice to go up an interval of a 6th on the word *nishmat* and then to so delicately come back down on the deceased's name, only to then climax on even higher notes over a major chord on "*shehalach/cha,"* to then finally cadence on "*l'olamo/ah,*" is simply magnificent. It is as if the deceased's soul is quite literally being sung off to eternity.

Experiencing the death of a loved one is far from easy, and funerals are, oftentimes, a mourner's first chance to really sit with the reality of life without the

deceased. In *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul,* Daphne du Maurier writes, "I would say to those who mourn... look up each day that comes as a challenge, as a test of courage. The pain will come in waves, some days worse than others, for no apparent reason. Accept the pain. Do not suppress it. Never attempt to hide grief."[10] While "accepting the pain," that comes with death, as she writes, might be one of the most challenging things a mourner will ever do, it is crucial. The only way that the bereaved may heal and make eventual peace with death is to allow the grief to become reality; the funeral, by means of everything discussed in this chapter, can be a catalyst for the entirety of such an experience.

Once the funeral has ended, the days, months, and even years ahead can bring uncertainty and fear. Mourners must rely on their loved ones and communities. Grief can be an awfully dark and difficult road, and nobody should have to go through it alone.

[10] Daphne du Maurier, *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul* (Cos Cob, CT: Chicken Soup for the Soul Publishing, 2012), 77.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY SUPPORT

> Then the funeral was over. You've buried your son, and you go back to work. The world goes on. But things don't mean the same.[11]

When a person dies, the grieving process eventually becomes less about the deceased and more about the mourners. Although the deceased will always remain an important part of the grieving process, the focus eventually shifts to how the mourners will live their day-to-day lives without the deceased and how their community can support them. In her story, "What You Can Do for a Grieving Friend," Jo Coudert writes, "After a person has died, your thoughts turn to what you can do for the survivors... Be there. Listen to them. Accept their grief."[12] This day-to-day survival can often be an excruciatingly painful process, and nobody should have to do it alone.

Planning for the funeral, sitting shiva, and the traditions of sh'loshim and shiva arrangements can prolong the point at which the reality of life without the deceased sets in. So, painful as a funeral may have been, the real challenge often comes once the funeral is over. Simple tasks, such as getting out of bed every morning, can seem impossible and pointless. The bereaved, therefore, need people who can become a "sanctuary" and provide a safe space for them. They need those who will help make day-to-day survival possible, especially when things "don't mean the same."[11]

Jewish mourning practices allow the mourner to receive support from loved ones and cherished communities. Usually the period immediately following the funeral is the first built-in support time as family and friends of the deceased begin the custom of

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[11] Richard Morsilli with Jo Coudert, *I Still See Him Everywhere,* from *Chicken Soup,* 180.
[12] Jo Coudert, *What You Can Do For a Grieving Friend,* from *Chicken Soup,* 53.

sitting shiva. In fact, what is discussed in this chapter and what is discussed in the previous chapter ("The Funeral") might even happen simultaneously for some. As they are separate entities and are not always experienced together, I have chosen to look at them individually.

In Hebrew, *shiva* means "seven" and refers to the seven-day period immediately following the burial. Some Jews choose to follow tradition and make a number of lifestyle changes during this period; generally, this is the period of time (sometimes seven days and sometimes fewer) when the mourners receive condolence calls. Shiva often takes place in the home of the mourners and includes mourning rituals such as (but not limited to) burning one *yahrzeit* candle throughout the entirety of shiva, receiving meals and comfort food, covering mirrors, and sitting low to the ground. Many mourners choose to observe only aspects of traditional shiva that they find meaningful. Above all else, though, shiva serves as set-aside time during which the mourners can count on their communities to provide them with comfort. Additionally, shiva provides a built-in daily *minyan* (prayer service) during which time *Kaddish Yatom,* the Mourner's Kaddish, can be recited. Family and friends of the deceased customarily recite Kaddish for a given period of time after the burial, and filling the mourners' home with loved ones alleviates the family's burden of having to search for such a minyan during the days immediately following the death. Sometimes clergy or lay leaders from the family's synagogue visit the shiva home to facilitate the minyan. This is just one of many ways by which the mourners' synagogue communities can offer support.

Shiva is also meant to add structure to the mourners' days and to help them ease back into living their normal lives. Many families designate hours of the day during

which to receive shiva calls and use the remaining hours for immediate family time, alone time, and time to begin returning to work and responsibility. Dr. Jorge Casariego, a board-certified psychiatrist, explains, "Psychologically, it is imperative that a mourner experiences a gradual normative process of disengagement from the image of the deceased that would additionally help avoid pathological mourning."[13] That is, easing back into normal routine when the time is right is of utmost importance in managing the intense symptoms of mourning. Cantor Richard Cohn spoke about how his community of family and friends brought him comfort in this way after the death of his mother and his father. He explained that, when his parents died, his family observed a full seven days of shiva; this allowed Cantor Cohn to gradually ease back into work during the daytime, and in the evening, family and friends stopped by the shiva house to pay their condolences. He noted just how comforting it was to have people around in the evenings.[14]

While the support of friends and family during the period of shiva is perhaps both the first and the most common way in which community support manifests, the possibilities are many and also vary circumstantially. While shiva often serves as a way for communities to offer mourners support, support might also come from within the immediate family unit itself. At times, individual members of a family in mourning might need support in a way that is only noticeable by those close enough to the situation to understand – namely, by the immediate family members who are likely intensely mourning right alongside one another.

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[13] Dr. Jorge Casariego, "How Sitting Shiva Can Help," accessed August 1, 2017, https://www.shiva.com/learning-center/sitting-shiva/shiva-can-help/

[14] Personal interview with Cantor Richard Cohn, July 25, 2017.

I came to recognize this private yet powerful embodiment of community support when I spoke with Meara Lebovitz, a third year cantorial student at HUC-JIR, about her memories surrounding the death of her father, who died from cancer when she was just 9 years old.[15] Lebovitz spoke with conviction about the decision she had made shortly before her father's funeral not to cry during the service; she made that decision in order to be the strongest possible support system for her mother for whom the day of the funeral would be so difficult. After I told her how remarkable and brave I thought she was, she said, "I was only 9... but I wasn't young."[16]

Though the support that Lebovitz provided for her mother was an individual act, it very much embodies the idea of community support. When simply trying to make it from one day to the next after the death of a loved one, mourners must turn to support from everyone around them – literally and figuratively, near and far, individuals and masses of people – to make survival seem all the more possible. "Community" can be any and every manifestation of a support system.

Furthermore, community support can manifest in a very intense and obvious way when a community of people comes together to grieve the death of a common public figure. When a person of great fame dies, for example, frequently, the deceased's world-wide fan club unites in grief by means of television, internet, and social media. This is also the case when award shows like the Oscars and the Emmys include an "In Memoriam" video in tribute to famous individuals who have died during that year. In such cases, the in-person and virtual audiences come together as one community to share in sorrow the lives being remembered. Even though the deceased's fans are widely spread

[15] Personal interview with Meara Lebovitz, October 5, 2017.
[16] Lebovitz, interview.

and may not know one another, creating a community in which to virtually share in memories and love of the deceased they hold in common can bring a sense of comfort to all who mourn.

Such a process can be especially poignant on a smaller scale when the public figure has personally touched so many lives. This happens, for example, in faith communities when a beloved clergy person dies. When Cantor Stephen Dubov died, nearly 2,000 mourners gathered at Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield, Michigan to remember his life and offer condolences to his family. However, while the service was beautiful, the presence of thousands of mourners at the funeral made the experience feel far from intimate.

Having created a congregation from the ground up just several years prior to his death, Cantor Dubov had a much smaller group of dedicated congregants who were now a community of mourners longing so badly to be led by their fearless, beloved, and now deceased cantor. So, after his funeral service at Congregation Shaarey Zedek, approximately a hundred of Cantor Dubov's most cherished congregants – most of whom were at the large funeral service earlier that day – gathered in their old sanctuary to share memories of their beloved and deeply missed cantor. As one people, they channeled their grief through shared songs and stories. In this case, there was no single person in that sanctuary for whom this group was offering support; rather, each and every single one of them deeply needed support, and the perfect people to share in that came from the very same cherished community.

Yet another powerful example of community support comes from the Sommer family and their journey with their beloved son and brother, Sam. Sam died from

leukemia when he was just 8 years old. Throughout the duration of his illness, Sam's mother, Rabbi Phyllis Sommer, documented their family's journey on her blog, *Superman Sam*.[17] Because both of Sam's parents are rabbis and public figures in their communities, *Superman Sam* and his childhood cancer journey became widely known.

Rabbi Sommer recalled the weekend that Sam died and how powerful community support was.[18] Sam died during the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) Biennial which was in San Diego, CA that year; although Rabbi Sommer and her husband, Rabbi Michael Sommer, were not at the Biennial, many of their friends were. Sam died at 12:30am on Saturday morning, but because of the 2-hour time difference between San Diego and the Sommer family's hometown of Highland Park, IL, all of their friends and rabbinic colleagues were together at the Central Conference of American Rabbis reception when he died. Rabbi Sommer called a friend who was there, and within minutes, everyone there knew.

Later that morning, at Shabbat morning worship, the service leaders announced that Sam had died. Of the thousands of people in attendance, the number who actually had a personal relationship with Sam and the Sommer family was relatively small. But, because a large number of people had been following Sam's story, the extreme sorrow and sadness was felt by many. Even though Rabbi Sommer and her husband were not physically present at the Biennial, they knew that there was an entire convention of people praying for their son and their family. And, in response to the spontaneous communal mourning that commenced, people who had been selling Superman Sam

[17] Rabbi Phyllis Sommer, *Superman Sam,* http://supermansamuel.blogspot.com/
[18] Rabbi Sommer, interview.

stickers to raise money for childhood cancer research began passing them out to everyone.[19]

While such support from the community certainly can help mourners though the grieving process, some types of expression of support – while heartfelt – can, at times, be counterproductive. In addition to the community at the URJ Biennial, Jews around the country and people from all over the Sommer family's local Chicago community came to "know" and love Sam. He captured so many hearts that when he died, the story was on the front page of *The Chicago Tribune.* During the days following Sam's death, the Sommer family received thousands of messages of condolence. Reflecting on this experience, Rabbi Sommer said, "We had to balance the overwhelming community and people who *thought* they knew us and Sam but didn't really even know us, and then take care of ourselves and the people who *actually* knew and loved Sam."[20]

In her blogpost, "Distracted," from December 20th, 2013, just six days after Sam died, Rabbi Sommer wrote about this outpouring of love and support: "I can't keep up with the messages and emails and texts. I am overwhelmed with them." She continued, "I scroll through my Facebook feed, my email, my texts... and cry. My friends, my sweet wonderful friends, who are doing what they do best." A few lines down, she wrote, "Sammy is famous. I can think of a hundred million billion other ways I would have wanted it to happen."[21]

Another "community" can be one composed of people with shared interests or professional affiliation. One such community comes together every summer at URJ

[19] Rabbi Sommer, interview.
[20] Rabbi Sommer, interview.
[21] Rabbi Phyllis Sommer, "Distracted," *Superman Sam*, December 20, 2013, http://supermansamuel.blogspot.com/2013/12/distracted.html.

Olin-Sang-Ruby Union Institute (OSRUI) for Hava Nashira, the URJ's annual song leading and music workshop founded nearly three decades ago by Cantor Jeff Klepper and Debbie Friedman in collaboration with Jerry Kaye, the immediate past director of OSRUI. Cantors, rabbis, students, Jewish educators, and song leaders come together for 5 days to learn, sing, and pray with a distinguished faculty of cantors, rabbis, educators, and singer/songwriters.

Among these faculty members is Merri Lovinger Arian, who was a close friend of Friedman's. Because Friedman played such a large role in making Hava Nashira what it has become, her untimely death in 2011 hit the Hava Nashira community hard. Arian recalled the first Hava Nashira after Friedman died: "I can't even tell you what it was like... [the faculty] just knew we all had to be together before Hava Nashira."[22] So Jerry Kaye agreed to fly the whole faculty to New York where they spent a couple of days together at Arian's home. She continued, "It was decided that the first Hava Nashira without Debbie Friedman needed to begin with a healing service because everyone needed to feel embraced by the community that was deeply longing for her."

In the "Community Support" section of my senior recital, I sang two pieces: "*Rikmah Enoshit Achat*" and "One Voice." "Rikmah Enoshit Achat," which translates to "One Human Tissue," is an Israeli song by Moti Hamer. It was first performed and made popular by Israeli singer, Chana Alberstien. I first learned about this song when I was in search of a Yom Kippur sermon anthem in August of 2015 after Alison Parker, a reporter, and Adam Ward, a photojournalist, both from a local television station, were

[22] Personal interview with Merri Lovinger Arian, July 25, 2017.

murdered in Roanoke, VA where I was then working.[23] My teacher, Joyce Rosenzweig, introduced me to this powerful piece, and I had been waiting for the opportunity to sing it and share it again.

"Rikmah Enoshit Achat" is most commonly sung during ceremonies for *Yom HaZikaron,* the Israeli Memorial Day, to remember and show deep appreciation for soldiers of the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). The melody is stunning; however, the real power of this piece is in its words. Translated from the Hebrew, the text is:

> When I die, something from me will die in you. When you die, something from you will die in me. Because all of us – yes, all of us – are one living human tissue. If one of us leaves us, something dies in us, and something stays with him. If we knew how to calm the hostility... if only we knew. If we knew how to calm our range despite our pain to say sorry... if only we knew how to start from the beginning. [24]

When I began studying this piece for my recital, I struggled to find appropriate meaning from the text. Although it fit rather seamlessly into the flow of my program, I felt that in order to make it my own I would need to take it out of the context for which it was initially intended. In Israel, because of compulsory military service, almost everyone knows someone who has died in war, but that experience has not been mine. Though the text of "Rikmah Enoshit Achat" does not explicitly speak of fallen soldiers, the weight of the topic left me feeling uncomfortable taking it out of context and making it my own. To do so, I had to mentally shift the context of the piece. My teacher, Cantor Azi Schwartz,

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[23] Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Katie Rogers, "Virginia Shooting Victims Were Hit in Head, Autopsies Show," *New York Times,* August 28, 2015, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/29/us/wdbj-virginia-shooting-bryce-williams-victim-vicki-gardner.html.

[24] Translation is my own

helped me do this while I was working on it in class one day. He symbolically placed my classmates behind and in front of me; behind me, one placed her hand on my shoulder, and in front of me, the other watched as I sang the words of the song directly to her. This gave the piece meaning in a way that intensely resonated with me, as I found myself sandwiched between two people who have taught me how to connect to and care deeply for a community.

On Yom HaZikaron, all of Israel is mourning the tragic death of their soldiers who not only fought and died on behalf of the country but who were also beloved family members and friends of their loved ones. This notion of grieving among others who are also grieving and longing for the same thing is expressed beautifully by Barb Kerr in her story, "What Death Has Taught Me." She writes, "When you lose someone you love, your soul moves to another 'place.' This 'place' is shared by others who have also lost someone they love."[25] Most everyone mourning these deceased soldiers has likely been a part of the IDF and will forever be a part of one another; the community support, therefore, almost happens intrinsically.

I chose to include "One Voice" in my recital so that my classmates and I could sing it together in a visual demonstration of the power of community. Written by Ruth Moody, it was made popular by the Wailin' Jennys, a singing group consisting of three women. The piece begins solo, proclaiming, "This is the sound of one voice." With each verse, another voice is added, and each stanza begins with a proclamation of the number of voices that are singing together. "This is the sound of voices two," the song goes, and then, "This is the sound of voices three." Eventually, all of the voices are singing, and the

[25] Barb Kerr, *What Death Has Taught Me*, from *Chicken Soup,* 214.

next stanza begins, “This is the sound of all of us.” In a poem-like style, each verse talks about how joining in music together fosters a sense of community and can therefore help us through the difficulties of life.

In *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul,* in a story called, “When No Words Seem Appropriate,” an unnamed pediatric nurse writes:

> So what will I say? I will say, ‘I am here. I care. Anytime. Anywhere… I won’t tell you to pull yourself together… No, I don’t know how you feel – but with sharing, perhaps I will learn a little of what you are going through. And perhaps you’ll feel comfortable with me and find your burden has eased. Try me.’[26]

[26] Unnamed pediatric nurse, *When No Words Seem Appropriate,* from *Chicken Soup,* 47.

CHAPTER 3: PRESERVING THE MEMORY OF LOVED ONES

> Death ends a life, not a relationship. Lost love is still love. It takes a different form, that's all. You can't see their smile or bring them food or tousle their hair or move them around a dance floor. But when those senses weaken, another heightens. Memory. Memory becomes your partner. You nurture it. You hold it. You dance with it.[27]

After cherished communities have helped mourners get through what have been some of the most difficult days of their lives, everyone else usually resumes their normal lives. The food, phone calls, and cards stop coming, and the mourners are expected to get back to school, work, and normal life. All the while, the moment when they were last able to physically touch, smell, and hear their loved one gets further and further away. As these days, weeks, and months continue to pass, the bereaved must find a way to simply get out of bed each day. In what sometimes seems like a last resort to hold on to every last bit of their loved one as possible, mourners may cling to all that they have left of them: their memories.

In *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul,* Kathie Kroot shared the story about the impact of her son's death on their family. She wrote about their moving through the grieving process and how, eventually, their memories brought a sense of comfort: "Knowing the good my son had brought into the world made it easier to walk past his room without bursting into tears. It helped the rest of the family, too, and eventually we

[27] Quote by Mitch Albom, from *30 Days: A Journey of Love, Loss and Healing.*

became able to share happy memories of Joseph around the dinner table and at other family gatherings."[28]

Just as Kroot and her family were able to cherish memories of their deceased son and move through their grief, so, too, do other mourners. Memories can come in many forms: old phone messages that capture her laugh and her voice saying, "I love you" just one more time; letters and drawings with his unique penmanship; pillows and tee-shirts that still smell like her; souvenirs to remember the amazing vacations that the mourners and the deceased shared together; and pictures that allow their beautiful faces to really never die. This chapter will touch on some of these types of memories in addition to discussing music that speaks to cherishing the memories.

The concept of holding on to memory by means of photographs became especially poignant to me when Sue Schroeder told me her story.[29] Schroeder's husband, Sam, died rather suddenly after complications from a kidney transplant. After developing a rather strong relationship in a short time span with Schroeder and her family, "Jewish geography" enabled them to find my personal email address after we parted, which then allowed me to contact Sue about my thesis and recital nearly a year after her husband had died.

At the time of his death, Sue Schroeder and her husband had two daughters, high-school and college age. When I asked Sue what was most important to her after her husband died, she said, "The girls and I have tried to preserve his memory in *everything* we do." She continued to tell me about how both of their daughters had a very hard time

[28] Kathie Kroot as told by Heather Black, *Joseph's Living Legacy,* from *Chicken Soup,* 39.
[29] Personal interview with Sue Schroeder, August 29, 2017.

resuming normal life after their dad died. Their older daughter did not want to return to college. Immediately, Schroeder said to her, "I don't think that's what dad would have wanted."

I understood the idea of using pictures as a means to preserve memory and make it from one day to the next when Schroeder told me about how her younger daughter, who was 17 years old when her father died, expressed concern about forgetting what he looked like. This prompted Schroeder to display pictures of him around their house. She expressed how lucky she feels that they have these pictures. She told me about how, in addition to helping her daughters, the pictures have also helped her too. She said, "Our wedding picture used to be in our basement, but now it is sitting there in the living room next to the TV, which is where I fold laundry. So, every week, he sits and watches me fold laundry."[30]

Music, too, can help the bereaved recall memories once shared with their deceased loved ones. For some, such as those who were touched by the life and music of Debbie Friedman, her music can be experienced in a special way. Though hundreds of her melodies began sweeping Reform summer camps and congregations decades prior to her death, for many people, these same melodies became even more powerful and meaningful after her untimely death in 2011 (for more information on Friedman, please refer to Chapter 2: Community Support).

The year after Friedman died, HUC-JIR's cantorial school, the School of Sacred Music, was renamed the Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music (DFSSM) in recognition of Friedman's influence and impact on the school's students, faculty, and

[30] Schroeder, interview.

alumni. Arian said, “When a composer dies, they stay alive through their music.” She continued, “Knowing [Debbie] adds on a whole layer. How lucky am I to have Debbie’s music to be able to almost smell her and hear her and touch her?”[31]

Having been a very close friend of Friedman, Arian has the opportunity to remember her all the time by playing, singing and listening to her music. Even more powerful is her opportunity to preserve Friedman’s memory by actively keeping her music alive. Teaching her music – to DFSSM students, to Hava Nashira participants, and at camps and congregations around the country – is one means of doing this. Another was helping to edit *Sing Unto God: The Debbie Friedman Anthology*. While this project has also helped to enhance Debbie Friedman’s legacy, Arian explained that creating the anthology was cathartic and helped her to work through the death of her friend. “The idea of having all of this music available to everyone,” Arian said, “is such a gift in terms of mourning her loss... it is healing to sing it with others.”

Aleksandra Dubov also used a shared bond of music to preserve memories of her beloved father, Cantor Steven Dubov, after his death. A singer herself, Dubov and her father had a special bond; throughout her life, they would sing all kinds of music together. Since his death, Dubov has been able to preserve memories of her father by singing specific pieces of music that he loved. “My father left a legacy of music,” she explained. “It is both healing and painful to sing.”[32]

In the “Preserving Memory” section in my senior recital, I sang two pieces of music that, while quite different in nature, capture the essence of never letting go of loved ones. The Hebrew text of “*Yeish Kochavim*” is a beautiful piece of poetry by Israeli poet,

[31] Arian, interview.
[32] Dubov, interview.

Hannah Senesh, which was later set to music in 1983 by Cantor Jeff Klepper. "A decade [after I wrote it]," Cantor Klepper writes, "Rabbi Dan Freelander and I created a sing-able English translation."[33] A couple of decades later, Andrea Jill Higgins arranged it for a choir.

My first exposure to this poem and piece of music came when I was sifting through *Mishkan T'filah* and *The Complete Shireinu* in search of accessible material for my grandmother's funeral. While Cantor Klepper's melody for "Yeish Kochavim" is gorgeous, I find the text to be the most powerful part. The use of both the Hebrew and the English allows for heightened accessibility: native Hebrew speakers understand the power of Senesh's poem, and Cantor Klepper and Rabbi Freelander's translation brings the text to life in a way that seems to artfully maintain the magic that Senesh created with the Hebrew. Both the Hebrew and English texts are found in *Mishkan T'filah: A Reform Siddur*.[34] This rendering of the poem is the same used by Cantor Klepper and Rabbi Freelander:

THERE ARE STARS up above,
so far away we only see their light
long, long after the star itself is gone.
And so it is with people that we loved —
their memories keep shining ever brightly
though their time with us is done.
But the stars that light up the darkest night,
these are the lights that guide us.
As we live our days, these are the ways we remember.

יֵשׁ כּוֹכָבִים שֶׁאוֹרָם מַגִּיעַ אַרְצָה
רַק כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם עַצְמָם אָבְדוּ וְאֵינָם.
יֵשׁ אֲנָשִׁים שֶׁזִּיו זִכְרָם מֵאִיר
כַּאֲשֶׁר הֵם עַצְמָם אֵינָם עוֹד בְּתוֹכֵינוּ.
אוֹרוֹת אֵלֶּה הַמַּבְהִיקִים
בְּחֶשְׁכַּת הַלַּיְלָה
הֵם הֵם שֶׁמַּרְאִים לָאָדָם אֶת הַדֶּרֶךְ.

[33] Cantor Jeff Klepper, "Concluding Prayers: (2) Kaddish Meditations Before the Kaddish; Yeish Kochavim," *Union for Reform Judaism*, August 19, 2010, http://tmt.urj.net/archives/4jewishethics/081910.html.
[34] Rabbi Elyse D. Frishman, *Mishkan T'filah* (New York: Central Conference of American Rabbis), 595.

This piece appears among several "meditations" that precede the Mourner's Kaddish. They are, therefore, also accessible to those who may not know the musical setting.

Aside from the fact that that it explicitly states that the deceased live on through memory, the poem notes that they can seem almost attainably close yet, at the same time, also distant; just as mourners can see but not touch the light of stars in the sky, so they can "see" but not physically touch their beloved. When a loved one dies, it is both human instinct and a beautiful coping mechanism to preserve their memories; as mourners move forward in life without the deceased, however, they must also find ways to move on and carry on with life. Memory, through "tangibles" such as photographs and music, is a very powerful way to do just that.

Cantor Klepper writes that Higgins arranged this piece for professional or volunteer choir; in Jewish synagogues, this is key.[35] Many synagogues have volunteer choirs comprised of congregants who, while committed and talented, might not be able to sing pieces that are more challenging. Though simple, this arrangement has a beautiful and full sound that is both pleasing to the ear and accessible sounding to non-musical congregants. Moreover, the Hebrew-English dynamic heightens accessibility: the English comes first which makes it immediately accessible to many American Jews. Senesh's Hebrew then comes, set to nearly the same melody as is the English. The end of the piece alternates between the words "*Heim heim shemar'im la'adam et haderech"* and its English counterpart, "As we live our days, these are the ways remember."

[35] Cantor Klepper, Kaddish Meditations.

Another piece is "Supermarket Flowers" by Ed Sheeran, which was introduced to me by Rabbi Steven Stark Lowenstein, Senior Rabbi at Am Shalom in Glencoe, IL.[36] Rabbi Lowenstein told me a touching story surrounding a funeral at which he had recently officiated. The funeral was for a 58-year-old woman who died from cancer; during her last days of life, her family played "Supermarket Flowers" for her. After her death, her family decided to play it at her funeral. Though the piece is not intrinsically Jewish, Rabbi Lowenstein noted that this was one of the most powerful moments he has experienced at a funeral because of the relationship between the words of the song and the memories that her family associated with this specific piece of music.[37]

Similar to "Yeish Kochavim," the music of "Supermarket Flowers" is beautiful, but the lyrics are really what make the song so special. While the lyrics suggest that the narrator wrote this song after the death of his mother, he actually wrote it after the death of his grandmother, from the perspective of his mother.[38] The song recalls his thoughts and emotions during the time surrounding her death. Rather than recalling memories that they shared together, though, it talks about how the memories from that time will help Sheeran and his family go on without their beloved mother and grandmother. The lyrics of the chorus refer to her eventual death:

> So I'll sing Hallelujah,
> you were an angel in the shape of my mom.
> When I fell down you'd be there holding me up.
> Spread your wings as you go;
> when God takes you back, He'll say Hallelujah you're home.

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[36] Rabbi Lowenstein, interview.
[37] Rabbi Lowenstein, interview.
[38] Matt Tarr, "Ed Sheeran's Song 'Supermarket Flowers'," *Capitol*, March 07, 2017, http://www.capitalfm.com/artists/ed-sheeran/news/supermarket-flowers-mum-divide/

The song ends with a varied version of the chorus, with words that are slightly different:

So I'll sing Hallelujah,
you were an angel in the shape of my mom.
You got to see the person I have become.
Spread your wings and I know that
when God took you back, He said Hallelujah you're home.

Ultimately, through the memories he shares in the song, Sheeran comes to accept the reality of his grandmother's death.

Similar to Arian and Dubov, as a musician, Sheeran has the unique ability to create his own music as a means to both cope with death and preserve his memories. "Supermarket Flowers" is a result of just that. In an interview with MTV,[39] Sheeran said that his grandmother was in the hospital during the time that he was recording his album, *Divide*. He wrote the song as a personal tribute to her as a means to help him get through the difficult time. It was never supposed to be on the album. When she died, Sheeran's father urged him to sing it at her funeral. After he did so, his grandfather said to him, "You have to put that [song] out; that has to go on the record." Sheeran explained, "It's such a good memory. That's why it has ended up on [the album]." And so, Supermarket Flowers became the final song on *Divide.*

While at times it might seem easier for mourners to simply avoid thinking about their deceased loved ones, facing the memories head on is not only a healthy way to mourn, but it can also encourage mourners to carry on with lives after their loved ones die, as can be seen through stories and musical selections in this chapter.

[39] Tarr, "Supermarket Flowers."

Leslie Marmon Silko writes, “When someone dies, you don’t get over it by forgetting; you get over it by remembering, and you are aware that no person is truly ever lost or gone once they have been in our life and loved us, as we have loved them.”[40] Deceased loved ones will always be a part of mourners’ lives if the mourners want them to be; though they no longer physically live and breathe, there are endless ways through which their loved ones can remember them and help them live on forever.

Once the mourners are able to cherish these memories that they once shared with their loved ones, they might reach an emotional place of being ready to help these memories – and the life that their loved one lived – live on forever. The next phase, then, is the work of enhancing the legacy of their deceased loved one.

[40] Leslie Marmon Silko, from *Chicken Soup*, 67.

CHAPTER 4: ENHANCING LEGACY

> [Death] is not, as I often say, fatal because we keep people alive so much in song and in story... so you keep them alive by... reliving their lives, singing songs, talking about their eccentricities, and therefore they don't die.[41]

Mourners are tasked with the holy responsibility of allowing the deceased to remain alive in spirit forever. Since mourning takes time, the task of enhancing the deceased's legacy is not always put into action immediately. Oftentimes, this process comes after mourners have had a chance to let the reality of the death sink in; they realize that, as much as they wish the deceased were alive, that is not reality. A powerful source of healing can be the determination by the bereaved to live as the deceased would wish, continue to do the work that was left by the deceased, and make sure their amazing lives and names are never forgotten, in other words, enhancing legacy. This is a twofold process: not only does it allow for the deceased to truly never be forgotten, but it can also serve as an outlet for grief and mourning for those left behind. It allows mourners to make real-life meaning from the memories they have been preserving and to put their feelings into action.

When Cantor Stephen Dubov died, a few members of his congregation found a beautiful way to enhance his legacy that served both the community and themselves. Prior to his death, Cantor Dubov had arranged for a bus to transport elderly people from

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[41] Meryl Ain, Arthur M. Fischman, and Stewart Ain, as told by Malachy McCourt, *The Living Memories Project: Legacies That Last* (Milford, OH: Little Miami Publishing, 2014), 9.

their retirement home to his temple once a month for Shabbat services. After he died and the temple closed, the residents of the retirement home no longer had monthly Shabbat services to attend. Shortly after, some of Cantor Dubov's beloved congregants began volunteering their time to lead monthly Shabbat services for the residents at the retirement home. This brought the residents so much joy; it also lifted Cantor Dubov's congregants in ways that they could not have imagined. In these services, they continued to sing the same musical settings of prayers that Cantor Dubov taught them. Every month, they thought of him, channeled him, and felt that he was with them in spirit. This is how they enhanced his legacy – by carrying on the work that he was unable to finish himself.

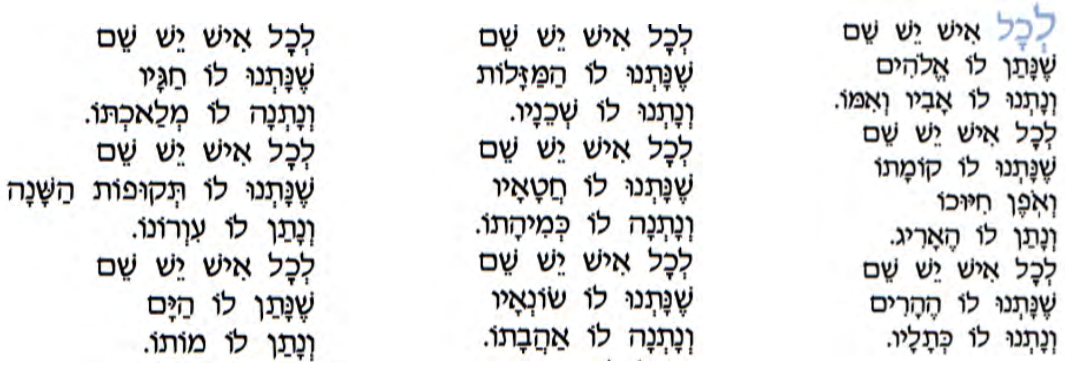
Once the deceased's body is in its final resting place, it becomes the job of the living to care for the soul, just as Cantor Dubov's congregants did for him. As the years pass and memories of life with the deceased are farther in the past, enhancing their legacies enables mourners to keep them "alive" forever. Caring for one's own soul while also enhancing the legacy of the deceased can be a life-long journey and is a beautiful gift that the living can give to their deceased loved ones and themselves.

While enhancing the legacy of the deceased looks different from person to person, there are a number of general categories through which this meaningful work can happen. One way that the bereaved can strive to always keep their loved ones alive is by making sure their names are never forgotten. Names are such an important part of a person's identity; they are the medium through which a person is remembered, both during a person's life and long after he or she dies.

Judaism places great emphasis on the importance of names. It is traditional to name a Jewish baby after a deceased loved one, and this is one of the many ways through which names enhance a person's legacy after their death. Jewish babies are ceremonially welcomed into the covenant specifically by way of the name that is given to them; their names are then used ceremonially to call them to the Torah for the first time when they become a bar or bat mitzvah. Oftentimes, since a Jew is named after a deceased relative, momentous occasions as such are used to remember the deceased, thus continuing to enhance the legacy and family that he or she left.

"*L'chol Ish Yeish Sheim*" ("Each Person Has a Name"), is a beautiful poem by Israeli poet, Zelda. It is one of her most popular works; it has been set to music by a number of composers, and the text is in *Mishkan T'filah*, the Reform Movement's prayer book, as a meditation in the Yizkor service.[42] The text teaches about the power of a name. Throughout the poem, the Hebrew is in the third person singular; the connotation, though, especially as it is placed in the communal Yizkor service in *Mishkan T'filah*, is that the message is applicable to everyone. The first line of the poem says that each person has a name given by God, and the last line says that each person has a name given by his or her death. All of humanity is connected in this way. Everyone is created *b'tzelem Elohim* – in the image of God – and everyone eventually dies. It is, similarly, up to each person to carry on the legacy of those who came before them. The full text and English translation is as follows:

[42] Frishman, *Mishkan T'filah*, 579.



לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ אֱלֹהִים
וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ אָבִיו וְאִמּוֹ.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ קוֹמָתוֹ
וְאֹפֶן חִיּוּכוֹ
וְנָתַן לוֹ הָאָרִיג.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ הֶהָרִים
וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ כְּתָלָיו.

לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ הַמַּזָּלוֹת
וְנָתְנוּ לוֹ שְׁכֵנָיו.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ חֲטָאָיו
וְנָתְנָה לוֹ כְּמִיהָתוֹ.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ שׂוֹנְאָיו
וְנָתְנָה לוֹ אַהֲבָתוֹ.

לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ חַגָּיו
וְנָתְנָה לוֹ מְלַאכְתּוֹ.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתְנוּ לוֹ תְּקוּפוֹת הַשָּׁנָה
וְנָתַן לוֹ עִוָּרוֹנוֹ.
לְכָל אִישׁ יֵשׁ שֵׁם
שֶׁנָּתַן לוֹ הַיָּם
וְנָתַן לוֹ מוֹתוֹ.

EACH PERSON has a name. We each have a name given by God and given by our father and mother. We each have a name given by our stature and smile and given by our attire. We each have a name given by the hills and given by the walls.

We each have a name given by the stars and given by our friends. We each have a name given by our sins and given by our yearnings. We each have a name given by our enemies and given by love.

We each have a name given by celebrations and given by our work. We each have a name given by the seasons and given by our blindness. We each have a name given by the sea and given by our death.

In the "Enhancing Legacy" section of my senior recital, I sang a beautiful setting of "L'chol Ish Yeish Sheim" by Cantor Alicia Stillman. The words *l'chol ish* – "to every person" – are repeated twice at the beginning of every stanza. Those words are repeated almost identically each time and are beautifully stretched over several measures. *L'chol ish* – every single person – has a name that deserves to live on. But a "name" is so much bigger than the name itself; we perhaps will not recognize that until after a person leaves the earth, as the text teaches that "We all have a name given to us by our death."

Alicia Stillman has learned very well about the power of a name. After her daughter, Emily, died from meningitis at 19, she created the Emily Stillman Foundation to raise awareness about organ and tissue donation and to advocate for vaccination. When telling me about the Foundation, Stillman said, "The first part of Emily's life was only 19 years. But the way I have set up Emily's legacy – everything I do, I do with her name –

they'll be saying her name forever. All of this is just giving her a legacy."[43] Stillman then pointed out to me that everything – the Foundation's website, t-shirts, buses, signs – has Emily's name on it.[44]

Stillman and her family have gone above and beyond to work to eradicate meningococcal disease. Emily died from serogroup B of meningitis, a strand for which a vaccine was not yet available in the United States at the time of her death. So, in the years immediately following Emily's death and the creation of the Emily Stillman Foundation, Stillman worked to get federal approval for new meningitis vaccines, ones that, had they been available earlier, might have saved her daughter's life. After years of baby steps, pushing the boundaries, and advocating on behalf of her dead daughter, the vaccine is now approved and available in the United States, thanks to Stillman. When I asked her what sharing her story and constantly talking about her dead daughter was like, Stillman said, "Working with the Foundation is just the way I get out of bed every day. This advocacy has been a part of the grieving."[45]

Robert Meeropol, activist, attorney, writer, and public speaker, originally born Robert Rosenberg, is another individual who has made an effort to enhance deceased loved ones' legacy by means of their name. When he was three years old, Meeropol's parents, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, were charged with giving the secret of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. When Meeropol was six, they were executed. At the time, he had the same last name as his parents. Because their trials and executions had made them so well-known, Robert's childhood was very difficult. Because of his relationship with

[43] Personal interview with Alicia Stillman, August 15, 2017.
[44] Emily Stillman Foundation Website: Foreveremily.org
[45] Stillman, interview.

his parents, nobody wanted to adopt Meeropol and his brother, and so they were moved from one orphanage or shelter to the next. Finally, they were adopted by Abel and Anne Meeropol.[46]

In the book, *The Living Memories Project*, Meeropol wrote about his desire to help children who are in a situation similar to that of his situation when he was a child. He recalls, "I always had this dream of starting a foundation in my parents' name but I never knew what it would do. Now I knew – it would be for kids of targeted prisoners... I decided to name the organization after my parents so they would be associated with a fund that helps children, rather than be remembered as two people executed as spies by the United States." Today, the Rosenberg Fund for Children (RFC) provides financial assistance to institutions and professionals who help the children of people who have been persecuted or whose civil rights are under threat because of their involvement in various progressive movements. On the organization's website, Meeropol's daughter, Jennifer, who is now RFC's Executive Director, writes, "For the first time, many of these children have been able to learn and flourish in a supportive community of sympathetic peers and adults. Attending a school or a summer camp that celebrates struggles for economic and social justice has a powerfully positive impact on a child whose parents have been attacked for participating in such struggles."[47] Meeropol's parents were unable to give him a good life; however, their legacy is helping to give other children the beautiful lives they deserve. Thanks to their son, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg have a "name" and a living legacy given to them by their deaths.

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[46] Meryl Ain *et al*, as shared by Robert Meeropol, *Constructive Revenge,* from *Living Memories, 19-23.*
[47] RFC.org

Another way in which a deceased's legacy can be carried on is through organ and tissue donation. This concept was first brought to my attention by Alicia Stillman when she told me all about the Emily Stillman Foundation. When Emily was declared braindead, the doctors asked Stillman and her husband, Michael, if they would consider donating Emily's organs and tissue. At first, she was appalled that doctors would even ask such a question while her daughter was dying; then, however, Stillman explained that she felt a chill travel through her spine. She just knew that it was Emily sending her a sign. "And so," Stillman said, "We decided to do it." With 6 of her organs, Emily saved the lives of 5 different people. The Stillman family is in touch with each of the recipients of Emily's organs. Stillman is familiar with the recipients' lives and families and some of their amazing accomplishments, thanks to Emily's donations. When the man who received Emily's heart, and his wife, recently had a new baby, they named her Emily.[48]

Stillman created an annual "Organ Donation Shabbat" at her temple, Shir Shalom in West Bloomfield, Michigan, to celebrate life and teach about organ donation. Every year, she invites the recipients of Emily's organs to attend, and before the service she takes them all to dinner. Stillman said, "Sitting at a table where my daughter is living through all of these people is unlike anything I could even describe. It is just so amazing. It is the circle of life in the rawest form."[49] On the Emily Stillman Foundation website, there is a page entitled "Emily's Legacy."[50] This page has pictures of Emily's organ recipients (some of them with the Stillman family) with captions about who they are and which organ(s) of Emily's they received. Thanks to Emily and her family, each of these

[48] Stillman, interview.
[49] Stillman, interview.
[50] http://www.foreveremily.org/organ-donation/emilys-legacy/

people has gotten a second chance at life. As Stillman said, her daughter's legacy will forever live on through each of these people.

Another example of enhancing a loved one's legacy through organ donation appears in "Joseph's Living Legacy" by Kathie Kroot. After her young son, Joseph, died suddenly from a brain aneurism, Kroot and her husband, Lou, decided to donate Joseph's organs. A few months after his death, there was one day when Kroot felt as though she could "bear [her] grief no longer." That same day she received a letter from Joseph's transplant coordinator which shared the story of each individual who received Joseph's organs. He saved the life of 5 different people and also gave two children the ability to see again with his corneas. Reflecting, Kroot writes, "...somehow, this helped me understand that my son had not lost his life in vain." She continues, "My son is gone, but in a very real way he still lives on..."[51] Joseph's legacy will always live on through each of the individuals who received his organs.

The bereaved also have the opportunity to enhance their loved ones' legacies by celebrating the life lessons, gifts, and experiences that were passed down to them. Aleksandra Dubov, the daughter of the late Cantor Stephen Dubov, has had the chance to do just this. A singer herself, she experienced her father's death both as a mourner and as a musician who uses her singing voice to heal the souls of others. The timing of her father's death allowed for an almost immediate opportunity to carry on the legacy that he left. Cantor Dubov died in August of 2006, and only a month earlier, he had begun a new job as the cantor at Temple Beth El in Boca Raton, Florida. Just weeks away from the start of the High Holy Day season, Dubov ended up leading the High Holy Day services

[51] Kroot, *Joseph's Living Legacy*, from *Chicken Soup*, 35-39.

in lieu of her father. She recalled the experience, saying that she "loved it so much." Being able to carry on her father's voice and enhance his legacy, she explained, helped her work through the grief. Moreover, Cantor Dubov's family intended to bury him in his High Holy Day robe, she explained, but instead, accidentally buried him in her High Holy Day robe. So, for the High Holy Days immediately following his death, she sang wearing his robe.[52]

Although my research has taught me that "enhancing legacy" frequently comes later on in the process of carrying on with life after a loved one dies, there are, of course, exceptions. Oftentimes, the bereaved find their path to enhancing their loved ones' legacies when they have reached a place of being emotionally ready; in Dubov's case, her and her father's shared love of music allowed it to happen quickly and organically.

Now, more than ten years after his death, Dubov has had space to reflect on the life their family once had. Because of his larger-than-life personality and booming voice, her father was well-known and respected in both the cantorial and metro-Detroit communities. She reflected, "I was once a cantor's daughter, and now I'm Aleksandra. I used to be in his shadow when I was younger, and now I have this whole community of people who never met him and they just see me as a singer, and it's really exciting."[53] She misses her father deeply and will always feel connected to him when she sings. Now, however, she has the opportunity to enhance his legacy in a more intimate and personal manner while still sharing her gifts with others.

Furthermore, through her work, Merri Lovinger Arian has the opportunity to enhance the legacy of her cherished friend, Debbie Friedman, nearly every day. Arian is

[52] Dubov, interview.
[53] Dubov, interview.

on the faculty at the DFSSM at HUC-JIR, and she spends many of her days teaching "Debbie's Torah," as she explained it, to cantorial and rabbinical students.[54]

Arian also had the opportunity to be on faculty at Hava Nashira every year, the annual music conference that Debbie Friedman founded with Cantor Jeff Klepper. (Please refer to Chapter 2: Community Support for further information about Hava Nashira and Debbie Friedman). She explained, "To this day, every year when I get to Hava Nashira, I get off the vehicle that I'm on, go into the Rotunda [the largest gathering area on site], find [Debbie's] picture, and I kiss it. It's kind of like my mezuzah. It helps me connect and reminds me of this work that I'm doing: carrying Debbie's work forward."

Just like Arian, so many people have their own "Torah" – lessons, teachings, experiences, music, gifts – that they were lucky enough to inherit from those who came before them. As such, in the "Enhancing Legacy" section of my senior recital, I sang a magnificent setting of the blessing said upon studying Torah, "*V'ha'arev Na*" by Cantor Gerald Cohen.

The piece is complex with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment that do not always complement one another. Although I do not know if Cantor Cohen intended for his writing to convey this meaning, the juxtaposition between the two lines reflects what one might experience at this point in carrying on with life after a loved one dies. As has been stated, most mourners reach the point of being emotionally ready to enhance their loved one's legacy because they have, to an extent, come to terms with the fact that their loved one is no longer alive despite their profound wish that this were not so. Just as is

[54] Arian, interview.

the case with the vocal line and the piano accompaniment in this piece of music, the relationship between the two represents what might be the emotional rollercoaster that comes with enhancing the legacy of a deceased, a journey that is at times beautiful and natural while also being emotionally difficult.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross writes, “Each one of us is born for a specific reason and purpose, and each one of us will die when he or she has accomplished whatever was to be accomplished.”[55] In enhancing the legacy of their deceased loved ones, mourners are sometimes helped to believe that their loved one had, indeed, accomplished whatever was to be accomplished. The bereaved might even begin to feel a sense of comfort in realizing that their own work now is to help complete what their loved one had set out to do before he or she died. This can foster a sense of, at last, feeling at peace with a death, which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

[55] Eisabeth Kübler-Ross, *Chicken Soup,* 155.

CHAPTER 5: FINDING PEACE WITH THE DEATH

> "Love doesn't die, people do. So, when all that's left of me is love, give me away."[56]

For an outsider – one who has emotional distance from the deceased – perhaps the most poignant part of the grieving process is when the bereaved allow themselves to realize that they will always be able to keep the deceased alive through their unending love. Often this comes much later, after other parts of the grieving journey – the funeral, leaning on cherished communities for support, preserving memories with the deceased, and working to ensure that their essence really never dies – have allowed the intensity of shock and emotional distress to lessen. It is this that allows the bereaved to realize that it is alright to let go, feel the sense of peace, and keep the love alive forever.

Alicia Stillman, the mother of 19-year-old Emily, who died from meningitis, eventually found peace with her daughter's death. This peace came to her and her family after several years of remembering Emily's life, advocating for meningococcal vaccination, helping as many people as they could receive vaccinations, and delving deep into the world of organ donation. While their lives will certainly never be the same, Stillman and her family were finally able to accept the fact that Emily died. Stillman said, "I have peace with her death because I believe it was her time. I don't like that it was her time, and I don't like that we all had to agree to it being her time. But I do believe that was what happened. So it is my spiritual belief that gave me the peace."[57]

As this chapter unfolds, it is crucial to recognize that everyone grieves differently. Some mourners may reach this feeling of peace sooner than others. For some, it might

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[56] Merrit Malloy, *Mishkan T'filah*, 592.
[57] Interview, Stillman.

take years – even decades – until that feeling of peace is reached. And for some people, peace might never come, and that will be their path. Mourning takes time, and finding peace after the death of a loved one cannot be taken lightly; it is a fragile and difficult part of life. Please note that the information and stories in this chapter by no means suggest a prescribed path of mourning; rather, they are observations that simply suggest options.

Once a mourner finds peace, that does not necessarily indicate that the mourning period is over. For many, mourning is a lifelong journey, and no amount of acceptance or peace can or should change that. Many mourners who share their stories years after the death of a loved one describe their grieving process by explaining that time does not make the death easier; rather, it just becomes more normal. Upon reflecting the death of her father, Miriam Heller Stern writes, "I've found that it doesn't get easier, but it does get more normal. You just learn how to carry it with you."[58] In her story "Garrit," Molly Bruce Jacobs writes about what losing her 11-year-old son, Garrit, to a hyena attack was like. Months after it happened, Jacobs went back to Botswana where he was killed and met an Indian woman whose son also died. The Indian woman said, "Nine years have passed, but I still cry for him. The pain lessens, but you'll always live with the loss."[59] Like Stern, Jacobs has accepted Garrit's death and is learning to live her life with it.

It is also important to note that finding peace and accepting the death is not something that should be forced upon oneself or upon another person. This sensation of peace is, in the specific case of mourning the death of a loved one, reached after a

[58] Miriam Heller Stern, from *30 Days: A Journey of Love, Loss and Healing.*
[59] Molly Bruce Jacobs, *Garrit*, from *Chicken Soup*, 84-91.

progression of what is discussed in the chapters prior to this one. The purpose of this chapter is to show that peace can come when a mourner is ready.

Finding peace can manifest in a variety of ways. One way comes from realizing that it is acceptable for the day-to-day excruciating pain to subside. In *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul*, Linda Maurer wrote about her daughter, Molly, who died at 19 years old in a railroad accident. Maurer could not bear the emotional pain; she even became briefly suicidal. After months and months of working through her grief, she stumbled upon a story of another mother who also knew the pain of having a child die. Maurer wrote her a letter which ultimately led to her writing letters to the parents of any deceased child she heard about. Eventually, she channeled her grief into writing not one, but two different books: *I Don't Know How to Help Them* (for friends and family of bereaved parents) and *Standing Beside You* (for grieving parents). Heather Black, who wrote this story about Maurer's journey, notes, "The writing brought Linda solace." Black explains that, now, Maurer spends her days writing to and speaking with bereaved parents. Maurer reflects, "If I can help one person get through another twenty-four hours, I know that Molly is proud of me. She's with me always. She's standing right here beside me, and the memories don't hurt anymore."[60]

Furthermore, along with allowing this pain to subside, the bereaved often find peace by coming to believe that it is acceptable to continue on with their lives. Sometimes this comes as a result of working to enhance a loved one's legacy; it is, often, recognizing the deceased's ongoing contribution to the world, even after he or she has died, that results in a sense of peace. In the book *The Living Memories Project,* the

[60] Heather Black, *Grief Helps Others,* from *Chicken Soup,* 120-23.

Wolfer family's story about their loved one, Stuart, is shared.[61] Working to enhance Stuart's legacy and create programs to help others in his memory led the family to a realization. They recall, "As we were preparing for a memorial program in Stuart's memory, we realized that when a dandelion dies it does not simply shrivel up and fall on the ground, but rather turns white, and when you blow it, seeds scatter to the far ends of the earth to begin anew…We do *not* believe that Stuart died to simply be buried in this earth. We believe that, like the dandelion, Stuart's seeds of teaching will continue to touch those of us who learn about him."[62]

Another way that finding peace can manifest itself is as a result of realizing that sometimes there is simply no choice but to live life and make the most of it. The bereaved can find new strength as a part of the grieving process, and it is this strength that allows them to recognize that persevering through the difficult days might result in a different – and oftentimes reviving – outcome. This concept is presented powerfully in two quotes; both are from the book, *Chicken Soup for the Grieving Soul,* but neither is attached to a story. The first, by Walter Anderson, is at the beginning of a section entitled "Living Again." The second, by Barbara Kingsolver, is presented at the beginning of a story about a bereaved father who found life for himself again by doing yoga several years after his daughter died.

> Walter Anderson: "I can choose to sit in perpetual sadness, immobilized by the gravity of my loss, or I can choose to rise from the pain and treasure the most precious gift I have – life itself."[63]

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[61] Meryl Ain *et al*, as shared by the Wolfer family, *Appreciating Our Troops,* from *Living Memories,* 37-39.
[62] Ain *et al*, *Living Memories,* 38.
[63] Walter Anderson, *Chicken Soup,* 211.

> Barbara Kingsolver: "You don't think you'll live past it and you don't really. The person you were is gone. But the other half of you that's still alive wakes up one day and takes over again."[64]

As is reflected in these quotes and the stories in this chapter, finding peace with death is a journey. As mourners continue to live every day without the physical presence of those they love so much, there comes a time – after journeying through their own process – when they may be able to accept the reality of what has happened and find this inner peace amidst the harsh reality.

Since the journey to peace is such a process, I wanted my senior recital to reflect that experience. As such, in the final section, "Finding Peace with the Death," I offered the audience the opportunity to become mourners. I prefaced the selections with a story from Merri Lovinger Arian as she recalled the day of Debbie Friedman's funeral. Arian remembers, "Rabbi Heidi Cohen said to everyone: 'Debbie, I know you would like us to change our mourning into dancing [in reference to Friedman's composition entitled "Mourning into Dancing"], but the truth is, we are still trying to find our footing."[65] Before I shared musical selections chosen specifically to represent a sensation of peace, I wanted to give the audience permission to *not* be ready to search for that peace.

Of the three pieces in this section, two of them come from the funeral and Yizkor liturgy. Both the texts and the music are intended to help mourners feel a sense of comfort during the darkness and difficulty of death. The first was an English choral setting of Psalm 23 by 20th-century composer, Heinrich Schalit. Unlike the setting by Herman Berlinski that I sang in the "Funeral" section of my recital, God as Protector is the central idea in Schalit's setting. This is, in large part, due to the feeling that the music

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[64] Barbara Kingsolver, *Chicken Soup*, 124.
[65] Arian, interview.

communicates. The warm melody and harmonic structure – composed almost entirely of notes that are meant to be heard together and are, therefore, pleasing to the ear – allow the listener to feel comforted throughout. Even the words of the psalm that suggest that death is scary and lonely, such as "Yea, though I walk through the valley of death," are presented so as to leave the listener feeling comforted. Additionally, this piece is a cappella, meaning that the voices sing alone with no accompaniment. This, too, represents the mourner's journey through death. Regardless of how much community and family

support a mourner may receive, mourning can, at times, be incredibly isolating and lonely; as such, in this piece the voices are left to their own devices to convey a feeling of peace.

The next piece was a setting of *Shiviti* (Psalm 16:8-9) by Cantor Benjie Ellen Schiller. Unlike Psalm 23, this text is solely about God's everlasting presence. The music only goes through the first half of the text:[66]

I AM EVER MINDFUL of Adonai's presence;
God is at my right hand; I shall never be shaken.
So my heart rejoices,
my whole being exults,
and my body rests secure.

שִׁוִּיתִי יְיָ לְנֶגְדִּי תָמִיד
כִּי מִימִינִי בַּל־אֶמּוֹט׃
לָכֵן שָׂמַח לִבִּי
וַיָּגֶל כְּבוֹדִי
אַף־בְּשָׂרִי יִשְׁכֹּן לָבֶטַח׃

The words of the text nearly erupt as the notes that so beautifully depict their essence are sung. Throughout the piece, one note after the next leaves the listener feeling comfort and peace. Cantor Schiller wrote this piece for solo voice and then later added a harmony line for my recital. The two voices complement one another powerfully: the harmony line

[66] Frishman, *Mishkan T'filah*, 578.

weaves through the melody, going both above it and below it, representing the emotional rollercoaster of grieving. Together, though, the parts are grounded by the piano accompaniment behind them the entire time – just as the psalm teaches that God is always present. At the end of each phrase, the two voices always sound beautiful together. Oftentimes, they cadence in unison or in octaves (the same notes in different registers). Just like Schalit's "Psalm 23," Cantor Schiller's "Shiviti" leaves the listener feeling wrapped in love as the text and music remind us of God's everlasting presence during the often horrendous difficulty of death.

Finally, my recital ended with a communal singing of Debbie Friedman's "Sow in Tears – Reap in Joy." The text, based on Psalm 126, gives the mourner permission to both indulge in the tears of grief and also recognize the joy – the happy memories shared with the deceased, the powerful impact of enhancing the deceased's legacy, and the peace that each mourner may find within him- or herself as the grieving process unfolds. As the audience sang together, I invited everyone to place stones passed out before the recital began in a bowl in the front of the chapel. The stones, I explained, could represent the deceased loved ones of those present in the audience. Each stone was different, just as no two people are alike and as each mourner's journey with grief is unique. The stones shone in the light, symbolizing the radiance from each deceased person that will live on forever.

The opportunity to place stones in a bowl resembled the Jewish practice of leaving stones on graves. I explained at that time, "Flowers, though beautiful, will eventually die. A stone will never die, symbolizing the permanence of memory and legacy... By placing a stone on the grave, we show that we have been there, and that our

loved ones live on in us and through us."[67] As everyone placed their stones in the bowl, I invited them to share the names of their own loved ones as they felt comfortable doing so. My intention was that, as everyone remembered their own loved ones, singing "Sow in Tears – Reap in Joy" together as one community would allow people to feel supported and lifted by the voices around them. The sensation of peace, then, would be experienced and shared together by everyone who wanted or was able to feel it.

Mourning is a lifelong process. Even when the bereaved are able to make peace with the death of their loved one, many mourners are still reminded of them on a regular basis. In her story, "What Death Has Taught Me," Barb Kerr writes, "Most importantly, death has taught me to live."[68] Through the treacherous reality of grief, may each mourner embrace the everlasting love of their deceased loved ones and, in due time, learn to once again live.

[67] Quote complied by My Jewish Learning staff: https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/ask-the-expert-stones-on-graves/
[68] Barb Kerr, *What Death Has Taught Me*, from *Chicken Soup,* 216.

CONCLUSION

When I began my research for this thesis, I did not know what the outcome would be. I knew that my goal was to gain a broad sense of the general human grieving process, and I hoped that I would be able to focus my findings and, ultimately, provide a musical framework through which people would be able to experience and work through their own grief. It was not until after I had completed a large chunk of my research that I arrived at the various categories through which I framed my project.

I learned a great deal from each of the books that I read; however, I gained invaluable insight from the various interviews that I conducted, largely because the interviewees so honestly shared their own experiences with death and grief. Seeing the expressions on their faces and hearing the tone in their voices as they told me about how their loved ones – child, spouse, parent, dear friend – allowed me a glimpse into the raw emotions that come with the death of a loved one. These face-to-face conversations helped me to further gage the emotional needs of a mourner.

One of the most important things that I learned over the course of my research is that, while everyone mourns and grieves differently, music can bridge these gaps – in some cases enabling mourners to relate to one another through shared musical memory associated with their deceased loved one. While I certainly expected this to an extent, I did not expect to find that so many mourners chose certain pieces of music to be shared at their loved one's funeral specifically because of a shared memory that, in one way or another, could be represented by that piece of music.

I have also learned that music has the power to evoke emotion within a mourner that he or she might not even have known existed. Part of why I chose this topic is

because I saw that my own family unintentionally ignored these difficult emotions after my grandmother died; as such, I have learned that being able to draw upon such emotions is crucial to finding the inner peace that is discussed in Chapter 5. As the most universal language, I learned that music is what helps many people more than anything else. Though this understanding did come up in some of the interviews I conducted, it became most apparent after receiving feedback from the audience at my senior recital.

Furthermore, an area that I had not intended on delving into but ended up writing about is organ donation as it pertains to carrying on with life after a loved one dies. It is discussed at length in "Chapter 4: Enhancing Legacy." I had already concluded that enhancing legacy would be an important part of my thesis when I interviewed Alicia Stillman, from whom I first learned about the connection between organ donation and grief resolution[69] After she told me about how organ donation had helped her family through the death of her daughter, Emily, I began to read and hear more about this. I concluded that the dynamic between grief and organ donation is incredibly powerful and inspiring. Although it was beyond the scope of my thesis, I would like to further explore this idea in the future, especially as it pertains to music and human connection.

In addition to organ donation, there are other aspects of the grief process that my research touched on and could benefit from further exploration. One such area is the language used when speaking with mourners about their deceased loved ones. In her Ted Talk "Dead is Dead: Euphemism and the Power of Words," Rabbi Phyllis Sommer talked about the power of words as they pertain to death.[70] She started by saying, "The words that we say matter. They matter for truth, they matter for honesty, and they matter for

[69] Stillman, interview.
[70] Video found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUqr4P7P3gM

reality." There are phrases, she explains, that society uses to talk about death – such as "losing someone" or "passing away" – that, in truth, do not accurately explicate the reality of death. "Euphemism," Rabbi Sommer says, "is defined as a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one deemed to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing." – such as death. There is room for further investigation of the relationship between euphemism and the process of truly allowing the death of a loved one to become a reality. It would be very interesting to explore how the difficult words of funeral liturgy (and, perhaps, even song lyrics) are embellished by the music to which they are set, thus allowing a mourner to further draw upon difficult emotion.

Additionally, it would be interesting to further explore the timeline for mourning that Jewish practice suggests – periods of shiva, sh'loshim, *shanah*, and yarzeit – as it pertains to the findings of my research. While I touched on this topic very briefly, I did not explore it in detail. I am intrigued by the fact that, while everyone mourns differently, many Jews find meaning and comfort within the given timeline. It would be interesting to look at the emotional state of individual mourners within each of the given time periods, how they compare to the different stages discussed in this thesis, and what role music plays in each.

Prior to beginning my research, I had an idea as to how I might be able to help people through a loved one's deaths. After the work of my recital and this thesis, I now have greater expertise and understanding to do so. Most importantly, my research has strengthened the tools that I need to use my voice to not only help mourners through their grief, but also to help them realize and embrace the fact that they *need* to mourn. My next

steps are to further put what I have learned into action and to enable and inspire individual mourners to find their own “soundtracks” for their grief. I look forward to a lifetime exploration of this as I embark upon my cantorate.

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