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Building a Memorial Tallit in Honour of Covid-19:

Research Concerns in Communal Lament

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Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of Requirements for Rabbinic Ordination

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Table of Contents

"Yaakov set up a memorial on her grave. This memorial is on Rachel's grave to this very day."

-Exodus 35:20

Dedication

This research project is dedicated to the families and friends of those who died during the Covid-19 pandemic.

זיכרונם לברכה.

May their memories be for a blessing.

And to my mother

who saw the potential of me becoming a rabbi

before I could myself.

I could not have done it without you, Mommy.

Acknowledgements

"Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: One does not construct monuments for the graves of righteous people. The purpose of a monument is to remember the dead person, and Torah scholars do not need a monument, as their words of Torah that continue to be taught are their memorial."

-Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 2:5:3

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Introduction

"The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing."

-Proverbs 10:7

The author intends to build a memorial tallit in honour of Covid-19. Deeply influenced by the *Aids Quilt* (1987), the *Witness Blanket* (2015-16), and Judy Chicago's collective, feminist artworks, the tallit is to be composed of squares designed or donated by participants— using varying artistic mediums or significant personal objects—to be collected and sewn together onto a larger piece of fabric. Each square is to commemorate a loss felt during the pandemic, whether of a person, place, community, moment, or experience. In sewing the pieces together—each symbolic of a moment of mourning— the final project will act as a communal memorial to a singular moment in Jewish history. The author views the project as threefold: (1) to articulate and teach traditional Jewish text on memorial and lamentation, (2) to collect oral histories from diverse communities and individuals (i.e. children, older adults), and (3) to encourage healing through pastoral relationships and communal sharing of grief and mourning.

This document is composed of the research meant to undergird the project, thereby situating the artistic practice in Jewish learning, and thought. It begins with outlining the author's methodology in "Chapter 1: Research Methods: The Intersections of Oral History and Pastoral Care." This chapter focusses on the utility of this method (oral history through the lens of pastoral care) in the context of this project. The author chose this method, as it provides a means of humanizing the abstract losses of Covid-19 while simultaneously offering participants a sense of communal witnessing. Not to mention that the dialectic between the interviewer and

interviewee forms an exchange that fosters a sense of shared experience, compassion, and human connection, steeped in Jewish tradition. The sharing of stories of loss and experiences of mourning in a communal setting has potential to foster unity and repair amongst participants.[1]

The project, in essence, is one of lamentation— articulating grief surrounding a loss— and memorialization— of creating a historical document to be preserved, canonizing said loss. The author will examine the concept of lamentation and memorializing in Jewish tradition in "Chapter 2: Texts of Remembrance," asking the question: what is the significance of ז-כ-ר (memory) in Jewish text and practice? The highlighted primary texts emphasise the Jewish value of communal remembrance practices (as it made explicit in the halakha of mourner's rites, such as needing a quorum to recite kaddish, or the expectation of shiva *minyanim*).[2]

Continuing in "Chapter 3: Halakha of Tallitot," the author will explore the reasons for which a tallit is a ritual item conducive to the practice of memorial. According to rabbinic tradition, tallitot have long served as memory markers; that is, an item that reminds the wearer of mitzvot, their relationship with the Divine and with *Am Yisrael*. The object of memorial is a ritual item— that is, an item collectively used and shared amidst community— as it centralizes the position of those who otherwise would participate in moments of communal experience who no longer can. Furthermore, it connects the idea of memory, community, and the Divine, which, during a time of memorial, can be both difficult (e.g., "How could G-d let this happen to *me?*) and healing (i.e., feeling supported by one's community, recognizing a shared lived experience). The basis of this imagery (of memorial and community) is found in an exploration of the primary sources around the halakha of tallitot.

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[1] Larry Kent Graham, "The Healing Power of Public Lamentation," (paper presented at Pathways to Hope Conference, Soul Repair Center, Kansas City, Kansas, October 30, 2015).
[2] Anita Diamant, *Saying Kaddish: how to comfort the dying, bury the dead, and mourn as a Jew,* (New York : Schocken Books, 1998), 25.

The subsequent chapters will investigate the outcomes of the project, as it currently stands. The author notes some of the challenges to the project's completion (e.g. complications due to October 7th, 2023). Additionally, the author will highlight the ways in which the project had positive outcomes on participants.

Given the limitations of the project (e.g. time, diversity of participants), this written document is meant to act as a case study for potential future memorial art/ritual projects. In effect, the author hopes that the research that follows might: (1) situate this memorial tallit in Jewish text/practice around remembrance, healing, and mourning, and (2) suggest potential for future research or art project possibilities. Some of these future possibilities will be explored in "Conclusion: Future of the Project." The author will posit both possibilities for the future of this tallit (that is still in formation), and ideas for those who might wish to replicate the project under different circumstances. This chapter recognizes the limitation of both the author and her timeframe but opens the door for future growth.

Chapter 1:

Research Method

"Therefore, they wept over those who were killed by their enemies, those who died on the journey, and those killed by the Euphrates."

-Midrash Tehillim 137

Oral History as Method

The following section aims to clarify why the author chose Oral History as the primary research method for this project. On its surface, the practice of conducting oral history interviews is simple: an interviewer documents a dialogue with a relevant individual.[3] That said, such a definition minimizes the method. Oral history is one of the oldest forms of documenting history, an extension of storytelling.[4] As Dr. Elana Foulis' explains:

> Oral history is the exchange of stories and histories between an interviewer and a narrator. It allows [people] to take ownership of their own story and to see the complexities [therein]. […] Oral history is about documenting somebody's recollection of a particular moment, event, or life history. It is a collective experience of coming together to share stories, to receive them and to learn from them.[5]

[3] Lynn Abrams. *Oral History Theory*. Second edition. ed. (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 1.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Elana Foulis. *More than a statistic: Oral history & Latinx identities* (TEDxOhioStateUniversity), Aug 10, 2022, TEDx Talks, YouTube video, 11:52 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-Td2SyW0Lw&t=260s.

Thus, oral history has the power to give agency to storyteller and listener; in so doing, the practice may affect healing in both parties through bilateral sharing (in effect, finding compassion and common ground).[6]

Jews, in particular, hold to an oral tradition and the importance of storytelling (especially in contexts of healing), from the annual recitation of the Pesach *magid* to the hundreds of recorded Holocaust survivor accounts held worldwide at institutions such as *Yad Vashem*. In these stories, Jews give voice to an ancestry, and, in so doing, state that the past has impact on the present. As it is written in the Mishnah: "In every generation a person must regard themself as though they personally had gone out of Egypt."[7] Stories, like Torah, are seminal in defining experience, identity, and history.

The valuing of story is in part due to Jews being situated in minority social location(s). Feminist, post-colonialist, and queer scholars have long professed the ability of oral history to decentralize traditional systems of power. As Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson suggest: "Through oral history interviews, working-class men and women, indigenous peoples or members of cultural minorities, amongst others, have inscribed their experiences on the historical record, and offered their own interpretations of history."[8] In other words, through dialogue, a historian can record often absent or minimized forms of lived experiences (i.e. domestic work, family relationships, subjective understandings of lived experience).[9] In the context of queer stories, Nan Boyd further elaborates, "The use of oral history methods stems back to the field's social history moorings, where historians of the dispossessed found themselves lacking print

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[6] Trent Hohaia. *Making Connections: The Power of Oral Storytelling* (TEDxUOA), Dec 19, 2017, TEDx Talks, YouTube video, 17:51 min. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uh_9H93MACA.
[7] Mishnah Pesachim 10:5, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[8] Robert Perks, and Alistair Thomson. *The Oral History Reader*. 3rd Ed. (London: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), xi.
[9] Ibid.

sources and turned to live historical actors for information about the recent past."[10] In effect, what many feminist, post-colonialist, and queer scholars aim to accomplish through the practice of oral history is a recording of that which is missing from dominant, canonical narratives.

With the Covid-19 pandemic, the communal narrative has been dictated by media, political machinations, and a desire for the pandemic to be situated in the past. Not to mention the fact that data reported on by the World Health Organization have become faceless: 6, 985, 278[11] persons died globally since the start of the pandemic, and over 772,052,752 confirmed cases have been identified. These numbers do not include those who died due to complications vis-à-vis Covid hospital overcrowding or lockdown procedures (not allowing for those with non-Covid related diseases to receive necessary care). These numbers are astronomically large, and risk offering only a theoretical understanding of the global loss. As the Mishnah teaches, the loss of every person represents the loss of an entire world.[12] How then, can one grapple with the death of close to 7 million worlds? The answer is, by telling the stories of the people, places, and experiences that were lost. Trent Hohaia, a descendent of Ngāti Maniapoto, of the Tainui Waka, and an indigenous activist, teaches that this process of effectively decolonializing history through storytelling and oral history works because "Storytelling gives knowledge a soul, […] a face."[13] In this vein, to de-centralize hegemonic narratives and give agency to affected individuals, the author has chosen oral history as method: to allow for persons to engage meaningfully in conversations of loss, and personal lived experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic (thereby,

[10] Nan Alamilla Boyd. "Who Is the Subject? Queer Theory Meets Oral History." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17 (2)(2008), 177.
[11] This number is accurate as of November 30, 2023: https://covid19.who.int/?mapFilter=deaths.
[12] Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5, accessed on Seferia.org.
[13] Hohaia.

decreasing isolation and encouraging emotional healing). In so doing, the author hopes to give "face" to the inconceivable losses of this global, traumatic pandemic experience.

Data Collection

There are different ways in which to facilitate oral history interviews. The author has chosen a bifold approach: (1) one-on-one interviews, and (2) group workshops. In the individualized interviews, each participant has had space to share their story of loss at length. This format has allowed participants more time and individualize attention with their story. As is typical in a one-on-one oral history interviews, the conversation may be more fluid, allowing for the conversation to shift depending on the experience, goals, feelings, and so on of both the interviewer and interviewee at the time of engagement.[14] To encourage consistency throughout the project, the author has collected a series of basic questions to be asked to participants (see Appendix C). While the author understands that the questions may not each be asked to all participants, the questions allow for consistent framing across interviews.

In addition, the author has been running group workshops. In these lessons, participants have had the option to learn about Jewish practices around memorial, share a loss in a written format, decorate a piece of fabric representing the loss (to be donated to the tallit), and then share their art and loss with the group. This dynamic has allowed for a sense of shared communal experience (everyone has a story of loss from the pandemic), increased rapport, and facilitated healing (especially in the context of a pandemic that made communal experiences almost impossible).[15] Each lesson plan has been customized based on the cultural makeup, age and needs of each group (see examples in Appendix A). Noteworthy, because of the Jewish learning

[14] Perks and Thomas, 109.
[15] Ibid., 118.

component of this format, additional materials have been necessary (see Appendix B), including Jewish Primary Source Material (see Chapters 2 & 3).

Ethical Concerns

It goes without saying that speaking of grief, mourning, and trauma can be a painful endeavor, not to mention that Covid-19 has been (and in some cases continues to be) a source of collective trauma. Using a trauma-informed approach, the author acknowledges some of the ethical challenges present in this research project, one of which is the proximity of the traumatic event to the documenting thereof. Given that this research is being done while some continue to experience isolation and repercussions of the pandemic in lieu of years later (when few consequences still exist), the events which may have inflicted trauma on a person may not be fully processed.[16] This lack of processing has been and may continue to be particularly painful to some participants.

Additionally, the respondents may be emotional in their retelling events.[17] In recounting narratives of loss, the author must endeavor to be aware to not re-traumatize individuals.[18] Resultantly, the author has been paying careful attention to the needs of each person being interviewed, respecting their boundaries: one might find solace in silence while another might find comfort in sharing.[19]

Furthermore, the religious bent of the project may be difficult for some participants. As Mary Beth Werdel and Robert Wicks explain, “From experience and research, we also know, as

[16] Abrams, 93.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ricardo Santhiago, and Miriam Hermeto, eds. *The Unexpected in Oral History : Case Studies of Surprising Interviews*. Palgrave Studies in Oral History. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 175.
[19] Perks and Thomson, 176.

might be expected, that religion and spirituality may be a source of great distress; trauma is an experience that can threaten, harm, or even alter a person's spiritual beliefs […]. It is no surprise that understanding religious and spiritual themes may allow clinicians access to information that could inform interventions in way that a lack of awareness might prevent."[20] As such, the author must take care to not make assumptions about the religiosity, religious affiliation, or practice of participants. Such assumptions may cause harm.[21] Nevertheless, as all participants have been volunteers (not required to participate should they not wish to do so), potential harm is mitigated by personal agency.

Potential Benefits

There are benefits that might derive from the process of participating in collective storytelling—both in a group or individual setting. As Abrams argues, "First-hand accounts not only present an authentic picture of an event and its human impact but may also help participants reflect on their experiences as a first step on the road to recovery."[22] In traumatic bereavement in particular, social support and empathic listening are two critical ways to help in traumatic processing and building resources.[23] In effect, having an opportunity to engage meaningfully in a conversation about loss can foster a process of healing, both individually and communally.[24] In so doing, both interviewer and participants will be engaging in lamentation as a form of repair. As Dr. Larry Kent Graham (ז״ל) explains:

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[20] Mary Beth Werdel, and Robert J Wicks. *Primer on Posttraumatic Growth : An Introduction and Guide*. (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 160.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Abrams, 92.
[23] Rogers, J. Earl. *The Art of Grief : The Use of Expressive Arts in a Grief Support Group*. The Series in Death, Dying, and Bereavement. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 27.
[24] J. Shep Jeffreys. *Helping Grieving People: When Tears Are Not Enough: A Handbook for Care Providers*. 2nd ed. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 340.

> Lamentation is more than providing a place to cry. It also gives us the place to question, to complain, to protest, and to assess responsibility for what happened. One of the strongest contributions that memorials and lamentations make […] is how they support the angry and intense interrogation that inevitably come into play when disasters shatter our views of what the world is really like. Our cries of anguish lead inescapably to questions of why. These questions become more hostile and accusatory, demanding clear answers, when the tragedy is at the hand of fellow-human beings. Interrogating causes and focusing complaint at underserved disaster adds theological strength and moral dimensionality to the lamentation and memorializing process. Lamentation in the context of memorialization discloses that we are creatures of culturally constructed histories and meanings."[25]

As Graham suggests, there is a potential theological concern when engaging in conversation around collective tragedy. In the context of a project that has an explicit religious bent— the author being a rabbinic presence and the use of narrative in forming a memorial Jewish religious garment (the tallit)—, participants have necessarily been engaging with religion to help process the loss which they recently experienced during the pandemic. In navigating post-traumatic growth, as Werdel and Wicks explain, faith and religion can be useful tools, offering theological explanations and tools for grappling with suffering and pain, as religions often grapple with such lived realities.[26]

This understanding of pastoral conversation being a source of healing is reflected in "The Human Condition: Pastoral Perspectives":

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[25] Graham.
[26] Werdel and Wicks, 160.

> The human condition is a complex theological, philosophical, and psychological term that refers to the nature of our human experience. Typically, discussions of the human condition from a pastoral perspective are framed within the terminology of existential theory, exploring themes relating to life and death, meaning and despair, freedom, and limitation, being and becoming, and so forth.[27]

In fact, pastoral relationships and conversations can be convoys to restore faith, grapple with loss, and encourage healing.[28] That said, such outcomes are only possible within pastoral "relationships that exhibit acceptance, unconditional positive regard, and warmth create an atmosphere conducive to personal growth and healing"[29] As such, such benefits may only be achieved with care and trust cultivated on the part of the author.

Limitations of Research Methodology

In Jewish tradition, the centrality of Mishnah and Talmud, explains Dr. Elizabeth Alexander, is in part due its oral transmission. She writes: "The ancient handlers, students, and transmitters of Mishnaic tradition were not passive agents conveying an established or already authoritative tradition; rather, they were active shapers of what the Mishnah was in the process of becoming."[30] In this vein, the inherent mutability of this historical method has been a source of its critical reception— from those who question the reliability of memory to bias in an interviewer's questions, and so forth.[31] Bearing this concern in mind, the author acknowledges

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[27] Jesse Fox, Daniel Gutierrez, Jim Coffield and Bill Moulder, "The Human Condition: Pastoral Perspectives," in *Understanding Pastoral Counseling*, Elizabeth A. Maynard, and Jill L. eds, (Snodgrass, Springer Publishing Company, Incorporated, 2015), 51.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Elizabeth Shanks Alexander. *Transmitting Mishnah : The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3.
[31] Perks & Thomson, x.

the limitations of this research methodology: the fallibility of memory. The reliability of first account narrative has long been a source of contentions among historians.[32] Not to mention, in the context of trauma, "there is general agreement that traumatic experiences are remembered differently from the everyday. But there is disagreement as to the precise relationship between trauma and memory."[33] Trauma might either sharpen a person's recollection, or contrastingly, distort it; in either case, as Regina Helena Alves da Silva and Leylianne Alves Vieira write: "individual and social memory is influenced by trauma and violence."[34] Thus, there is a question in the matter of truth: what in the information provided is both accurate and reproducible?

An additional limitation is in the scope of the project. The author is conducting her research in the context of obtaining rabbinic ordination (that is, as the primary (and solo) researcher and within a prescribed timeline); therefore, there are severe constraints in the scope of the project (i.e. number of participants, diversity of the pool). That said, given that the project's outcomes are not to provide widespread historical knowledge of Covid-19 (i.e. historical accounting, trends), but rather an opportunity for pastoral care and memorialization, these two above-mentioned limitations should not be read as significant.

[32] Ibid.
[33] Abrams, 93.
[34] R.H.A. Da Silva and L.A. Vieira, "Tragedy, Trauma, and the Transformations of Local Memory," in *The Unexpected in Oral History*, 194.

Chapter 2:

Texts of Remembrance

"Now Absalom, in his lifetime, had taken the pillar which is in the Valley of the King and set it up for himself; for he said, 'I have no son to keep my name alive.' He had named the pillar after himself, and it has been called Absalom's Monument to this day."

-II Samuel 18:18

A primary question of inquiry is: "In rabbinic tradition, how might we understand the word ז-כ-ר?" This chapter will investigate the history and usage of the concept of memory/memorial from Biblical times until today. The author accords her views with that of the historian and scholar, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, who writes: "In Israel […] is the injunction to remember felt as a religious imperative to an entire people."[35] The author will proceed below to evidentiate such a statement.

Survey of Biblical Texts about Remembrance

When it comes to the concept of "memory" the primary biblical quote that comes to mind is Exodus 20:8: "**Remember** the sabbath day and keep it holy."[36] The word in Hebrew to mark this form of memory is *zachor*. This use of the word connotes the importance of Jewish observance, particularly the remembering (and necessary enactment) of mitzvot. The word in this context is not passive; rather, it is active. Remembering implies a necessary action taken (not

[35] Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi. *Zakhor*. Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies. (University of Washington Press, 2011), 9.
[36] The Contemporary Torah, Jewish Publication Society, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.

simply the passive action of thinking of something). In consulting the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (BDB), this form of remembering—connected to the practice of mitzvot, "*zachar* commandments of ה׳ (so as to do them) Nu. 15:39,"[37]— has a connotation of ensuring the enactment of the Jewish covenant with G-d. Nevertheless, this definition is one of the many ways this word is used and defined.

Another instance is in the commandment to remember certain days, such as the Exodus from Egypt. The significance of this event is made evident in Deuteronomy 16:3: "You shall not eat anything leavened with it; for seven days thereafter, you shall eat unleavened bread, bread of distress—for you departed from the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you may **remember** the day of your departure from the land of Egypt as long as you live."[38] A similar proclamation is made in Exodus 13:3: "And Moses said to the people, '**Remember** this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how ה׳ freed you from it with a mighty hand'"[39] The remembering in both of these cases marks the importance of a day or moment in time, an instance the people are to memorialize evermore. Many of the Jewish holidays fall under this category of remembrance: Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Pesach, and so forth.

In contrast, *zachar* is also used to refer to the act of reflection. One might see an example in Esther 2:1, in which it is written: "Sometime afterward, when the anger of King Ahasuerus subsided, he **thought** of Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed against her."[40] In this verse, the word *zachar* is translated as "thought" (as bolded above). Unlike in previously examples of usage, this version is a more passive form of "remembering," one that involves

[37] Noteworthy, the biblical quote referenced in this portion of the dictionary entry is the one (mentioned in the previous chapter), in which the Israelites are commanded to wear fringes. BDB Dictionary, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[38] The Contemporary Torah, Jewish Publication Society, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.

personal contemplation, not physical action. Another example of this passive, remembering is found in II Kings 9:25:

> Jehu thereupon ordered his officer Bidkar, 'Pick him up and throw him into the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. **Remember** how you and I were riding side by side behind his father Ahab, when G-d made this pronouncement about him.'[41]

As Rashi explains, the "remembering" in this instance refers to a prophesy by Eliyahu. Thus, *zachor* can be used to refer to a thinking, or personal recollection of an idea.

Zachor is also used in the context of warning against sin. In Deut. 24:9, for instance, it is written: "Remember what your G-d ה׳ did to did to Miriam on the journey after you left Egypt." Rashi explains how the verse is reminding the people of Miriam being punished with leprosy after committing the sin of *lashon hara.*[42] Another example of such usage can be found in Jeremiah 17:2, in which it is written:

> While their children remember
> Their altars and sacred posts,
> By verdant trees,
> Upon lofty hills.[43]

While the meaning of the translation is unclear, the JPS edition states that the "remembering" in this case is a memorial marker to turn the children away from sin.[44] The expression is used much of the same way in 1 Kings 17, in which a widow is speaking to Elijah. It is written: "She said to Elijah, 'What harm have I done you, O agent of G-d, that you should come here to recall my sin

[41] Ibid.
[42] Rashi on Deut. 24:9, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[43] The Contemporary Torah, Jewish Publication Society, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[44] Ibid.

and cause the death of my son?'"[45] Again, the term there is a direct link in this verse to both sin and memory.

Perhaps most significantly for the purposes of this project, are the ways in which *zachor* is used to refer to the name of a person. In these texts, the reader might notice that "name" signifies more than a person's given name or title. Rather, a name becomes a symbol of their personhood, and even, their existence. There are numerous biblical examples, which spell out the importance of a name, such as Genesis 12:2, in which G-d promises to make Abraham's name great. It is written:

> I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you; I will make your name great And you shall be a blessing.[46]

This naming is deeply connected to existence, a name allowing a person/people/place to live for eternity versus a name being blotted out or erased from history.

One of the ways a name might be memorialized is through monuments and sculptures. Isaiah makes a speech to this effect, in which he states (quoting ה׳): "I will give them […] a **monument and a name** better than sons or daughters. I will give them an **everlasting name** which shall not perish."[47] This form of memorial monument is additionally found in II Samuel 18:18:

> Now Absalom, in his lifetime, had taken the pillar which is in the Valley of the King and set it up for himself for he said, '**I have no son to keep my name alive**.' He had named the pillar after himself, and it has been called Absalom's Monument to this day.

[45] The JPS TANAKH: Gender-Sensitive Edition, 2023, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[46] The Contemporary Torah, Jewish Publication Society, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[47] Isaiah 56:5, Ibid.

In this verse, the verb (ז-כ-ר) is conjugated in the *hif'il* tense (a reflexive conjugation), meaning "to cause to remember, remind" or "to make a memorial, make remembrance."[48]

Another way names are memorialized is through the naming of children or grandchildren (that is, instances in which ancestry might carry on a person's name), such as in Deuteronomy 25:6: "The first son that she bears shall be accounted to the dead brother, **that his name may not be blotted out in Israel.**"[49]

Perhaps the most famous of example of the erasure of a name is the case of Amalek:

> Then ה׳ said to Moses, 'Inscribe this in a document as a reminder, and read it aloud to Joshua: I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven!'[50]

The rabbis teach that this proclamation was a harsh one, going as far as to insist on the genocide of the people. As explained in *Sefer HaChinukh*:

> **To blot out his seed from the world:** That we were commanded to blot out the seed of Amalek and to destroy his memory from the world — male and female, old and young. And about this is it stated (Deuteronomy 25:19), 'you shall blot out the memory (*zekher*) of Amalek' — as all are included in 'the memory.'

As exemplified above, in rabbinic discourse there is a sentiment that the "blotting out" of a name is a more severe decree than death itself. Thus, in terms of "memorial" (specifically how one's name is recorded in death), there is a definitive link between the words ז-כ-ר, family names, remembrance, and death in much of biblical scripture.

[48] Github dictionary, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Exodus 17:14, Ibid.

While nuance could be brought to light through a deeper form of linguistic research, the author believes the above survey of the word's usage in biblical sources give the reader a good jumping off point for discussion around the concept of *zachor* and Jewish remembrance.

Rabbinic Tradition and Memory

Much of the ways in which the rabbis discuss the concept of ז-כ-ר in the Talmud mimics that of the Hebrew Bible: that is, remembering mitzvot, ensuring a covenantal relationship with the Divine, memorializing death, and so forth. For instance, this *pasuk* from BT Bava Batra 21a recalls the verse from Deut. 25:6 cited above:

> For Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: However, **remember** this man for good, namely Yehoshua ben Gamla, for if not for him, Torah would have been forgotten from Israel.

The concepts raised in this *pasuk* are in line with the Deuteronomic concerns; that is, a person's preoccupation with maintaining their respectable name, the role in which behaviours (sin/goodness) play into memorial, and the potential erasure/elimination of a people.

Interestingly, in the texts of this era, there is an expansion on death rituals and the memorialization of death. For instance, in JT Shekalim 2:5, there is a notion that the study of or teaching of Torah is a means by which a person might be memorialized. As it is written:

> Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: One does not construct monuments for the graves of righteous people. The purpose of a monument is to remember the dead person, and Torah scholars do not need a monument, as their words of Torah that continue to be taught are their memorial.[51]

[51] JT Shekalim 2:5, edition by Heinrich W. Guggenheimer. Berlin, De Gruyter, 1999-2015, accessed on Sefaria.org.

While the concept of the word ז-כ-ר to be used in the context of memorializing a person following their death is congruent with biblical understanding of the term, this question of *how* a person might be memorialized is new. The role of "study" being a means by which to both subdue one's evil inclination and immortalize oneself in death did not exist biblically.[52]

In addition to the preoccupation with how to memorialize individuals, much like in the biblical era, there continues to be a focus on maintaining the proper covenantal relationship with G-d through the practice of mitzvot. See for example BT Pesachim 106a:

> **The Sages taught**: **'Remember the day of Shabbat to sanctify it'** (Exodus 20:7): Remember **it over wine,** through the recitation of kiddush.[53]

The rabbis reiterate many of the same teachings in which ז-כ-ר is used in biblical contexts. However, the word is now expanded to reflect the destruction of the Temple and a memorializing of the practices that took place therein (the phrase זכר למקדש becoming popularized). An example of the phrase in use is found in Mishnah Sukkah 3:12:

> **Originally,** during the Temple era, the **lulav was taken in the Temple** for **seven** days, **and in the** rest of the **country** outside the Temple it was taken for **one day. Once the Temple was destroyed, Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai instituted** an ordinance **that the lulav** should **be taken** even **in the** rest of the **country** for **seven** days, in **commemoration of the Temple. And** for similar reasons, he instituted an ordinance **that** for **the entire day of waving** the *omer* offering, **it** should **be prohibited**.[54]

[52] TB Berakhot 5a, The William Davidson Talmud, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[53] The William Davidson Talmud, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[54] Ibid.

In this *pasuk*, the term ז-כ-ר is translated to mean commemoration, which expands the biblical understanding of the term.

As such there are significant parallels in the ways in which ז-כ-ר is used during the Biblical period and the Amoraic and Geonic periods. Yet there remains some innovation, most especially in the expansion of the concept of Torah and in the commemoration of the Temple.

Medieval Conceptions of Memory

The centralization of memory as a key part of Jewish identity is a Medieval development. This evolution is clear in *Sefer HaChinukh,* in which it is written:

> And the reason [for the latter] is that that remembrance is a fundamental principle of religion, and as we have spoken about this in detail in many other places in this book.[55]

No longer is *zachor*, in this context, only a commandment to function in relationship with the Divine. Instead, the rabbis insist that remembrance is a key form of Jewish identity, not simply a form of Jewish practice. Hayim Yerushalmi explains that there is a focus in this period for rabbis to situate the Jewish people in a larger historical context (not simply a limited religious, geographic narrative).[56] This transformation is clear in Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*, in which he writes:

> This ceremony teaches man that it is essential in the service of G-d to remember the times of trouble and the history of past distress, in days of comfort. […] Such a law was necessary in order to perpetuate the memory of the departure from Egypt; because such events verify prophecy and the doctrine of reward and

[55] Sefer HaChinukh 603:4, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[56] Hayim Yerushalmi, 69, accessed on Sefaria.org.

> punishment. The benefit of every commandment that serves to keep certain miracles in remembrance, or to perpetuate true faith, is therefore obvious.[57]

Maimonides is indicating that "remembrance" is not simply a personal act, but rather, a key aspect of collective Jewish faith and character.

Nevertheless, in law codices (such as the Shulchan Arukh), there are still examples of *zachor* being used in a biblical sense of "keeping commandments" or as a marker of the covenant with ה׳. Much of the strictures around tallitot speak of memory in this fashion (explored in the next chapter). For instance, in Orach Chayim 8:8, it is written: "One should have this intention in wrapping: That G-d commanded us to wrap ourselves in it in order to remember all of his commandments and to do them."[58] This way of using the word ז-כ-ר follows a more biblical understanding of the term.

Contemporary Understanding of Memory/Remembrance in Jewish Tradition

Post-Holocaust, Jewish conceptions of memory and memorial have significantly changed. While the author has effectively argued the importance of memory and memorial throughout Jewish history, the catastrophe of the Shoah has brought new importance to the memorialization of those who were lost. This memorialization has happened through various means, from changing liturgical customs (i.e. having everyone stand during *Kaddish Yatom* in Reform synagogues) to the development of *Yom Ha'Shaoh* (a new holiday to mark the communal loss, separate from *Tisha B'Av,* the tradition mourning holiday for past catastrophes that have befallen the Jews). Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich in her book, *Holocaust Memory*

[57] Maimonides. Guide for the Perplexed 3:39, Freedlander translation (1903), accessed on Sefaria.org.
[58] SA, Orach Chayim 8:8, accessed on Sefaria.org.

Reframed, argues that even Jewish redemption narratives have shifted due to the calamity that is the Shoah. She writes:

> Remembrance as a general principle is thus transformed into a specific call for remembrance of the Holocaust, and exile acquires a symbolic dimension: geographic exile may have come to an end with the founding of the State of Israel, but those who deny the ritual of remembrance and thus risk forgetting the past create a new exile in oblivion.[59]

This author would contend that some of this centralization of remembrance (to ensure future redemption), began with earlier rabbinic response to catastrophe in the Middle Ages (post Crusades and the expulsion from Spain). Nevertheless, it is impossible to write about memory in a Jewish context, without an awareness of the loss the Shoah has engendered in Jews today. The author imagines there might additional repercussions following the events of October 7th, 2023; however, no significant research is currently available to substantiate such an assertion.

Noteworthy, with the establishment of the State of Israel, and subsequently, *Yom Ha'Zikaron*, the Israeli Day of Remembrance, the word ז-כ-ר has new meaning for present day Jews. It is notable that individuals who mark *Yom Ha'Zikaron* every year might situate the word ז-כ-ר strictly through the lens of death and morning, ignoring some of the many other ways in Jewish text and rabbinical or biblical authors have conceived of the phrase.

[59] Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich. "Zakhor: The Task of Holocaust Remembrance, Questions of Representation, and the Sacred," in *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, 9.

Chapter 3:

Halakha of Tallitot

"Speak to the children of Israel and command them to make themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments throughout the generations; add to the tzitzit at each corner a tehelet."

-Numbers 15:38

Tzitzit as Memorial

A primary research question in this project is: "Why create a memorial tallit?" Jews have a plethora of means by which to memorialize loss (e.g. memorial sites/statues, yahrzeit candles). What halakhic justification is there for making a ritual object into a memorial? And why a tallit specifically?

The author contends that tzitzit are a ritual item which serve as a physical memory device. The first reference to the commandment of tzitzit is in Number 15:38 (cited above), in which the Israelites are commanded to wear fringes on the four corners of their garments. The justification for this practice in the Torah is as follows:

> That shall be your fringe; **look at it and recall** all the commandments of ה׳ and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your G-d.[60]

[60] JPS Translation, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.

In effect, the Israelites are told to create a material item, one to be worn on their bodies[61] that is to serve as a physical reminder of their covenant with ה׳. This covenant is made manifest through the performance of mitzvot, as it is written in *parashat Eikev*: "And if you do obey these rules and observe them carefully, your G-d ה׳ will maintain faithfully for you the covenant made on oath with your ancestors."[62] The wearing of fringes is one such positive, time-bound commandment, according to Maimonides and Rabbi Shimon.[63] "Seeing leads to memory," explain the rabbis, "and memory leads to action."[64] The "action" in this case being all mitzvot for "once a person is obligated in this mitzvah of ritual fringes, he is obligated in all of the mitzvot."[65] Rashi reiterates tzitzit acting as a physical reminder of the 613 *mitzvot*:

> The ציצית will remind one of all the commandments because the numerical value of the letters of the word ציצית is six hundred, and there are eight threads and five knots in the fringes, so that you have six hundred and thirteen, which is also the number of the commandments of the Torah.[66]

In effect, the wearing of tzitzit becomes, explain the Geonim, "equivalent to all the mitzvot of the Torah."[67] Thus, the Torah suggests that the wearing of tzitzit is a reminder (to the wearer) to perform G-d's mitzvot.

The Talmudic rabbis expound upon this Torah dictum, stating that the wearing of tzitzit has a trifold memory purpose: to remind the wearer to (1) recite the Shema prayer, (2) follow the

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[61] This *mitzvah* is reiterated in Deuteronomy 22:12, which states: "You shall make tassels on the four corners of the garment with which you cover yourself." JPS Translation, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[62] Deuteronomy 7:12, JPS Translation, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[63] Mishneh Torah, Positive Commandment 14, accessed on Sefaria.org & TB Menachot 43b, The William Davidson Talmud, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[64] TB Menachot 43b, The William Davidson Talmud, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[65] Translation by Prof. Rabbi Marty Lockshin, published on TheTorah.org.
[66] Rashi on Numbers 15:39:1, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[67] TB Menchot 43b, The William Davidson Talmud, accessed on Sefaria.org.

shatnez prohibition, (3) perform all G-d's commandments (as above).[68] As to the Shema prayer, the rabbis explain: "'Look at it and remember': Look at this mitzvah and thus recall another mitzvah connected to it. Which one? Reciting the Shema."[69] Therefore, the mitzvah of tzitzit reminds the wearer to say the Shema prayer, and saying the Shema reminds the speaker to wear tzitzit, which in turn reminds the wearer to do mitzvot (including wearing tzitzit and saying Shema): creating a form of circular memory. Maimonides reiterates this teaching that "remembering" (or זְכִירָה) is an integral part of the wearing of tzitzit in his description of the Shema prayer. As he writes in *Mishneh Torah*:

> And what is it that one recites? These three sections:
>
> 'Hear O Israel...' (Deuteronomy 6:4-9),
>
> 'And if you will listen...' (Deuteronomy 11:13-21), and
>
> 'And G-d said...' (Numbers 15:37-41).
>
> We begin with the section of 'Hear O Israel' since it contains [the concept of] the unity of G-d, [the commandment of] loving Him and the study of Torah, it being a fundamental principle upon which everything is based.
>
> After it, [we read] 'And if you will listen...,' since it contains the imperative to fulfill the rest of the commandments, and finally the portion of *tzitzit*, since it also contains the **imperative of remembering all the commandments**.[70]

The verses which he names as being part of the Shema prayer are the Torah verses (listed above) which first command the Israelites to wear tzitzit. As one is to recite the Shema prayer twice a

[68] TB Menachot 43b, The William Davidson Talmud, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Mishneh Torah, Shema, 1:2, accessed on Sefaria.org.

day, Maimonides reinforces this notion that each practice— reciting the Shema and wearing tzitzit— work in tandem with the other as minders of ritual observance.

In addition to action (*mitzvot*) and ritual (liturgical) memory devices, *tzitzit* aid to remind the wearer of their connection to Jewish peoplehood. Midrash Lekach Tov on Numbers 15:40 states:

> **And you shall be holy to your G-d** - this is the holiness of tzitzit (fringes). It is saying that tzitzit adds holiness to the Jewish people.[71]

The text goes on to add that every Jew is served even when only a few perform the mitzvah of tzitzit, which suggests the individual practice having communal implications.[72] As a result, the purpose of the tzitzit is to create a physical marker (a memory device) of an existing (legal) relationship, which holds meaning for two parties (G-d and the Israelites).

Furthermore, tzitzit are said to provide a unique connection with the Divine, a means of glancing at the face of the Shechinah. In Sifrei Numbers 115, it is written: "וראיתם אותו: The verse teaches us that those who observe the mitzvah of tzitzit, it is as if they have greeted the face of the divine presence (Shekhinah). For *tekhelet* is the color of the sea and the sea is like the sky and the sky is like the Divine Throne."[73] Interestingly, this phrase interprets the word אותו as referring to G-d, instead of the fringes (in contrast to the JPS translation cited above). As such, there is a constant theological element to the wearing of tzitzit: how our relationship with the Divine should remain foremost in our mind (we should *remember* ה' when glancing at our tzitzit).

[71] Accessed on Sefaria.org.
[72] Ibid.
[73] This reference is also mentioned in TB Menachot 33b.

This consistent theme of "memory"— reminding both the individual and the community of their covenant with the Divine and the Jewish people, the necessity of practicing mitzvot, and the omnipresence of the Divine— in the practice of wearing tzitzit is one that parallels memorial rituals (seeing something to remember a person, place, event, and so on). Tzitzit might be a useful tool to visualize the communal experience of loss/grief. The theological elements of the ritual garb aiding to illustrate the community's (and that which was lost) connection with the Sacred. Thus, a tallit, which already has the purpose of remembrance, is an appropriate ritual item for a memorial project.

Halakha on the Materials and Construction of Tallitot and Fringes

Having established the appropriateness of a tallit being a memorial object, the author must next consider the halakhically acceptable materials required to fabricate such an item, and how it should be made. Given that the project is asking participants to either make a memorial square or to donate a material object which will attached to the tallit, the author has a limited control over the made/donated materials. As such, this study is to consider what materials onto which the crafted/donated materials should be sewn. It will also note the material required for the threads of the fringes, and the appropriate colours of the above-mentioned textiles.

There are widespread disagreements about of correct fiber for the fabric of a tallit. The consensus is that quality sheep's wool is preferred.[74] Other materials that may be used are linen, other animal wools (i.e. lamb's wool), cotton, or silk.[75] If using a blended material (i.e. cotton-blend), then said fabric must consist of over 50% cotton fibers. According to Maimonides, the material of which the body of the tallit is made must match that of the fringes (e.g. a cotton tallit

[74] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 3:1. SA Orach Chayim 9:1. Ben Ish Hai, 1st Year Noach 1:1, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[75] Ibid.

should have cotton fringes, a wool tallit, wool fringes).[76] However, Orach Chayim states that: "Tzitzit of linen or of sheep wool are acceptable on all kinds of garments except for cases when tzitzit of linen are put on a garment of wool or tzitzit of wool placed on a garment of linen."[77] However, if you are to have cotton fringes, they are only kosher if used on a cotton fabric (not any other fabric).[78] Ben Ish Hai disagrees, stating strong cotton could be used on other materials (especially on a silk tallit, as it is difficult to find silk threads), but wool is preferred.[79] Rema suggests that strings of linen should no longer be made, as to not accidentally put linen strings on a woolen garment.[80] Interestingly, given that wearing tzitzit is a positive commandment and *shatnez* a negative one, Maimonides suggests it does not apply to tallitot with *techelet* (as positive commandments always supersede negative ones). That said, he states that it is permissible to have *shatnez* in a tallit, but since the practice is avoidable, it is preferrable to eschew it.[81] As such, given the possibility of *shatnez* in this project (working with donated materials), the author is committed to adding *techelet* to the fringes to void any accidental prohibitions. The author also intends to use cotton as the central material of the body of the Tallit and its strings, as this fabric is less likely to chance the prohibition of *shatnez*.

The size of the fabric of the body of the *tallit* should be "large enough to cover both the head and the majority of the body of a child who is able to walk on his own in the marketplace without having someone else accompany him and watch him."[82] Orach Chayim agrees; Rema suggests this size is only necessary if a person intends to wear the shawl to a market.[83] HaRav

[76] Mishneh Torah, Fringes, 3:5, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[77] SA Orach Chayim 9:2, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ben Ish Hai, Halachot 1st Year, Noach 1:2, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[80] SA Orach Chayim 9:2, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[81] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 3:6, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[82] Ibid 3:1.
[83] SA Orach Chayim 16:1, accessed on Sefaria.org.

David Yosef argues a tallit must measure 2 amot in length (~96 cm) and 1 amah in width (48 cm) in order to recite the blessing.[84] Given the quantity of donated material, a larger size will be required; thus, the author intends to follow the opinion of Maimonides and that in the Orach Chayim.

As to the fringes, there are a few considerations. Much of the literature seems to suggest the colour and material of the fringes is minhag, not halakha. The Mishneh Torah states that the colour of the strings should match the colour of the fabric of the tallit,[85] whereas Orach Chayim states that such colour matching is predominantly a Sephardic practice. (Ashkenazi Jews have white strings.)[86] Both agree, however, that should *techelet* be included in the strings, it should sit in contrast to white strings only (so that there is a clear distinction between the blue thread and the other threads). As such, the author will use white cotton as the base of the project and white cotton fringes (it is difficult to purchase cotton strings that are not white in colour).

There are a few considerations to be taken into account with the "making" of strings of the fringes as well: (1) they need to be made by a Jew, (2) they should (ideally) be made with the intention of being made into tzitzit, and (3) the tzitzit may not be removed from another tallit and repurposed.[87] Maimonides justification for this ruling is: "Speak to the children of Israel... and you shall make tzitzit for yourselves."[88] In contrast to Maimonides opinion, the author would argue that given that, as part of the project, non-Jews are to be included as part of *B'nei Israel*, the tzitzit should be permitted to be tied by a non-Jew who identifies with this community and the project. Nevertheless, as such a requirement would be difficult to measure (that is, the

[84] Halacha Berura 16:1, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[85] Mishneh Torah, Fringes, 2:8, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[86] SA Orach Chayim 9:5, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[87] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 1:12, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[88] Numbers 15:38, JPS Translation, 2006, accessed on Sefaria.org.

attachment of the maker to Judaism and Jewish practice), the author will likely purchase kosher strings from a Jewish person.

As to the construction of the garment, the first consideration is that it must have a minimum of four corners.[89] Given that most fabric when cut from a bolt naturally has four corners, the author anticipates no issue in having four corners on the garment.

The *atarah* (the "crown") can be made of the same material or a different material than the body of the tallit.[90] The concern is to ensure that the garment is worn in the same manner every time so that the front fringes and back fringes are not confused.[91] The rabbis are mainly concerned that the wearer be consistent in their performance of the mitzvah.[92]

Another concern is the proper tying of the fringes. The length of the fringes must allow for "one third of the tzitzit be bound, and two thirds hang loose."[93] Orach Chayim gives the clearest description on how to tie the knots:

> You should take 4 threads on one side and 4 threads on the other side and tie them two times, making a double knot. Afterwards, you should use wrap the longest thread around the 7 others with a little wrapping and then make a double knot. Then repeat and wrap. This should be repeated until 5 double knots are made with the 4 spaces between them filled with windings. There is no שיעור (set measurement) for wrapping other than the fact that all the wrapping and the knots must be 4 thumb widths wide and the branch (protruding threads) 8 thumb widths. [If the Tzitzit are longer, one should make sure that one the tassels should be (at

[89] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 3:1 & SA Orach Chayim 10:1, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[90] Magen Avraham 262, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Chatam Sofer, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[93] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 1:9, accessed on Sefaria.org.

> the minimum) one third of the length and the branch should be two thirds of the length.] It is the custom to have 7 wrappings in the first space, 9 in the second space, 11 in the third, and 13 in the fourth. They all add up to 40 corresponding to the numerical value of "השם אחד" (G-d is one) which is actually 39 and by adding G-d (since G-d is one, you add one), it makes 40. It is customary to tie a knot at the end of every thread so that they should remain intertwined.[94]

The strings should be threaded through the corner of the fabric at a specific distance. According to Orach Chayim, that distance should be as follows: "Rather, there must remain at least the measurement of joint of the thumb and not farther than 3 fingers since the hole must be in the garment."[95] Maimonides list these same measurements.[96]

It should be noted when tying the fringes no blessing is required. Maimonides states:

> No blessing should be recited on the tzitzit when making them, because the ultimate purpose of the mitzvah is that one should wrap oneself in [a tallit].[97]

However, offering a *shecheyanu* prayer upon the completion of the project would be appropriate, as, "The blessing *shehecheyanu* is recited: […] [before fulfilling] every mitzvah that involves the acquisition of property - e.g., tzitzit, tefillin, and a guardrail."[98] Once the knots have been tied, it is then and only then that the *shecheyanu* may be said. Further, the fringes should not hang down to the floor, but be slanted at an angle.[99]

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[94] SA Orach Chayim 11:14, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[95] SA Orach Chayim 11:11, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[96] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 1:6, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[97] Ibid 3:8.
[98] Mishneh Torah, Blessings 11:9, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[99] SA Orach Chayim 11:15, accessed on Sefaria.org.

Sacredness of the Object

Once the tallit is made, the author must consider what might happen to it. Maimonides delineate the sacredness of the object: the holiness resides in the wearing of the garment, not in the item itself (meaning it can be discarded without being interred).[100] Nevertheless, it is not permissible to sell the item, as it "has a measure of holiness."[101] Understandings of the sanctity of the object affect how it might be used/lent to the congregations and organizations who help shape the project.

[100] Mishneh Torah, Fringes 3:9, accessed on Sefaria.org.
[101] Ibid.

Chapter 4:

Outcomes

"Consequently, these days are recalled and observed in every generation: by every family, every province, and every city."

-Esther 9:28

Overview

The author worked with three different organizations to accomplish this project: DOROT (a not-for-profit that serves older adults in Manhattan), the Jewish Community Project Downtown Hebrew School Project (JCP HSP) (a "community-center" model synagogue in Tribeca), and Temple Beth Sholom (TBS) (a large, Miami-based synagogue). Overall, there were 51 number of participants[102]: 45 children, and 6 adults. At the time of each workshop, participants were 11 to 73 years of age.[103] At TBS, the author taught the workshops over Zoom (while the students were at the synagogue in person) to two different participant groups: (1) JLab (Hebrew School) students (grades 4th-6th), and (2) Confirmation class (9th-10th grade). Moreover, the author facilitated a lesson to the 4th grade class at JCP HSP. She also led a staff "Lunch & Learn" and a one-on-one interview at DOROT. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the author was unable to lead the organized group workshop at DOROT for the registered clients. The author anticipates reaching out to said registrants to participate later. For the workshops, the author wrote a lesson plan that was customized to each organization (see Appendix A). Regardless, of

[102] This number is accurate at the time of writing this chapter.
[103] It should be noted that some of the younger participants may not have completed the form corresponding with their donated square. It is possible younger students participated for whom the author does not have sufficient documentation.

age, each participant filled out a form to indicate that which they were commemorating (see Appendix B). This form was attached to the individual donated item/art piece to be saved, catalogued, and attached to the tallit. Each organization was asked to provide their own art materials.

Effects of October 7th, 2023

It should be noted that many other synagogues were approached and expressed interest in participating in this project; however, there were a few reasons for which they were unable to do so. A significant factor was October 7, 2023. Following the Hamas attack on southern Israel, all the clergy to whom the author spoke became overwhelmed by other critical tasks (making communication challenging). Additionally, synagogue educators mentioned concerns about rehashing an old trauma (Covid-19) with congregants (especially children) when a new one was presently overwhelming them. The author had the sense that asking congregations to engage meaningfully in a mourning practice (unrelated to Israel) in this first *Shannah* post-Oct. 7th felt like a much bigger request than it had been before the terrorist attack. Interestingly, one educator with whom the author collaborated mentioned that she thought having a "break" from speaking about Israel would be good for her students. She was keen to host the project in lieu of an additional Israel program. Thus, there were conflicted feelings from clergy and educators about how this project fit into the overall sense of mourning, grief and pain congregants were already feeling post-Oct. 7th.

Nevertheless, even with the organizations that did participate, the start dates of events and workshops were significantly postponed. The first month following Oct. 7th became a time in which it was impossible to program anything: meetings, workshops, gatherings, and so forth.

There was limited emotional capacity to plan ahead in the immediate moments following the tragedy. As such, the author spent significantly more time reaching out to congregations and organizations to plan events than anticipated (and fewer events took place before the thesis deadline). That said, as the project is still in progress, the author anticipates more of the synagogues previously approached will participate at a later date.

Hebrew School Workshops

As might be expected, at the beginning of each of the Hebrew School workshop events, the children fidgeted in their seats, played with their phones, and chatted with their friends. In the Jewish learning, children were keen to say the right answers and were quick to respond to questions. That said, when asked to name a loss from the pandemic, several students exclaimed: "I can't remember," or "I didn't lose anything." Prior to leading the lesson plans, the author anticipated some of this resistance from the younger students: mourning is a challenging topic, and for some, the pandemic happened when they were very young. Not to mention, the author suspects these reactions were in part due to the socio-economic class of the child participants: by and large, the children came from wealthy families. Covid-19 statistics demonstrate that persons with higher economic means were less detrimentally affected by the pandemic than those with limited ones, partly as they were able to stay home and self-isolate more easily. They also generally had better access to health care if/when they did get sick. All the students who participated fell squarely into this socio-economic bracket (barring few exceptions). Yet, with some additional coaxing and guidance, each student managed to recognize an experience of grief from the pandemic.

The most significant moment in the lesson was when students would share with each other what their loss was and the ways in which each had depicted it on their square of fabric. In the sharing, it was evident that the students could see their own losses reflected in the experiences of their classmates (regardless of whether they commemorated the same experience). Yet, there were some patterns in what was depicted: loss of friendship or time with family and friends; inability to attend school in person (or a focus on Zoom learning); loss of time more broadly; inability to attend family member's, friend's or their own B Mitzvah, and; loss of a trip (e.g. first time at summer camp, school trip, family vacation). Many students wrote of a loss of one or more grandparents, and some identified the death of one or more other relatives (such as aunts and uncles). Interesting, there were images that were oft repeated (irrespective of grade level and physical location), such as the virus, germs, masks, homes, the Zoom logo, and computers. The author suspects the reasoning of these commonalities is due to the breadth of these images being showcased in media over the course of the pandemic. Not to mention, those items likely most directly affected those of this age range (i.e. their social lives happened on laptops). For instance, in Fig. 1, the child explained that these common images— a laptop, the Covid-19 virus, and a mask— represented the loss of their 6th grade school year. In Fig. 2, a different child represented a similar loss, but with other visual tropes.

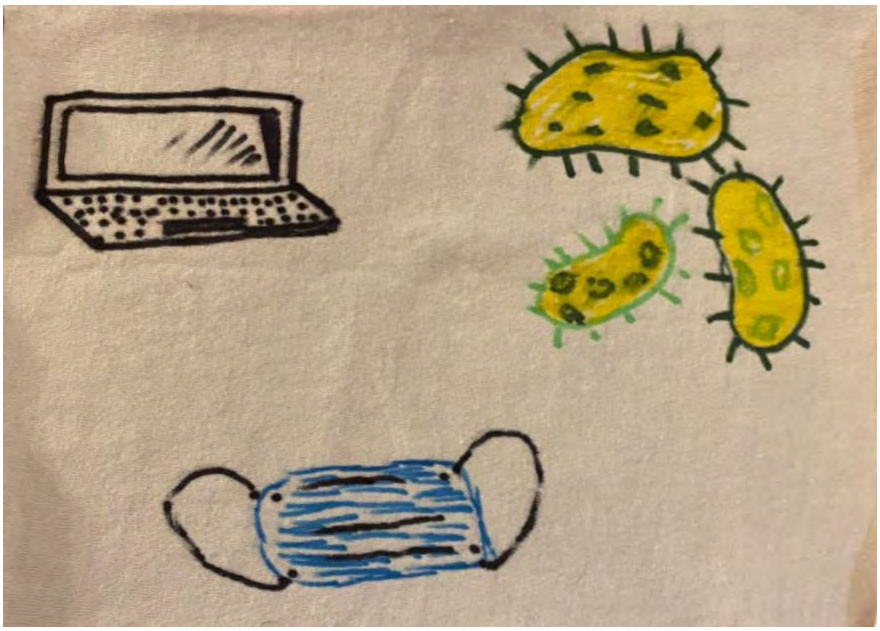

Fig. 1, Charlotte, 15 year-old, *Donated Square*, Marker on Cotton Fabric, Dec. 4, 2023, TBS Confirmation Class.

Fig. 2, Name Withheld, Unknown Age, *Donated Square*, Marker on Cotton Fabric, Dec. 4, 2023, JLab.

Many of the children portrayed their loss in a concrete way; if they lost out on seeing their friends, they drew pictures of their friends. In these unambiguous images, several of the

children chose to use words, names, or phrases to highlight the loss in question. For example, in Fig. 3, the child illustrated the distance between her home and that of her friends. She then emphasized the space in question through the words: “So close, and yet so far.” Her expressions of grief and longing can be viewed through her representation of emojis (this practice was seen in other participants’ designs).

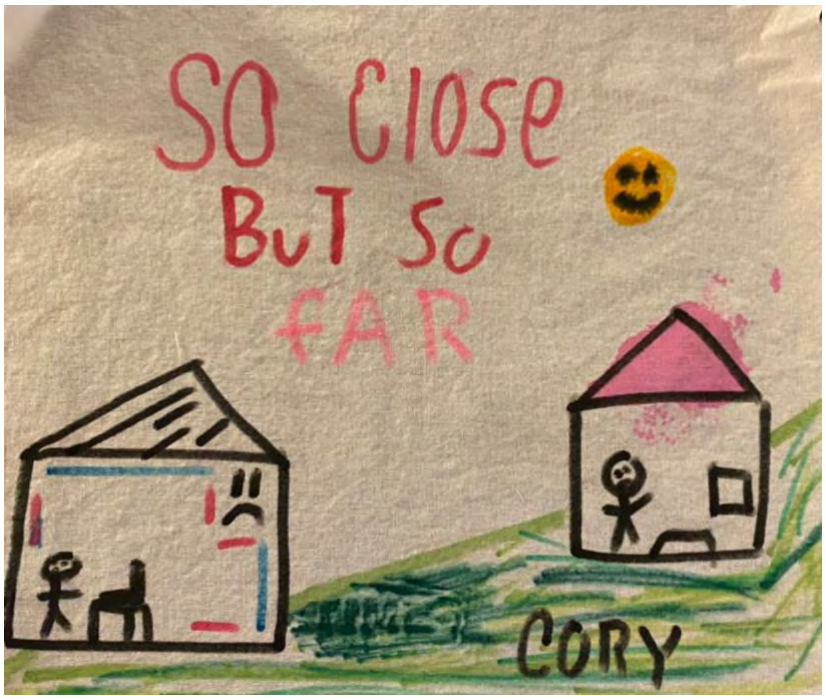

Fig. 3, Cory, 11-year-old, *Donated Square*, Marker and Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 14, 2024, JCP Downtown.

Other children chose more metaphorical approaches in drawing what or who they lost. For instance, in commemorating her uncle, Jessie chose to colour a vivid flower (see Fig. 4). She wrote in explanation: “I would like to remember [my uncle] as a colorful flower. This is because my aunt loved flowers, and I think he does too.”

Fig. 4, Jessie, 11.5-year-old, *Donated Square*, Marker on Cotton Fabric, Dec. 4, 2023, JLab.

In contrast, there were those participants who showcased a more ephemeral loss. Adriana, for example, chose to represent the loss of the "right to breathe easily." She explained to me in the classroom that she has asthma, and wearing a mask all the time was scary and laboursome for her. In her square, there is simply swirling bacteria, invading every inch of the white space (see Fig. 5). An outline of a facemask is just visible in the background, as if insufficient to protect the wearer from the invasion of germs before it.

Fig. 5, Adriana, 11-year-old, *Donated Square*, Marker and Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 14, 2024, JCP Downtown.

After viewing these 45 squares together, it becomes obvious that there is a true communal experience that was felt during Covid-19. The students each took the exercise to heart in their own ways, sharing a truth about this painful moment. What are the elements that have stayed with them? What are the losses that they are still feeling today 4 years later? The author imagines that once the squares are sewn together and displayed, the student participants will have even greater connection to the project. This supposition is based on repeated comments to that effect shared with her by children and their educators.

Interestingly, only one of the class teachers participated in the workshop with his students. This participation was extremely positive, as it modeled for his students thoughtful connection to grief and mourning. It also demonstrated to them that adults have moments of loss and pain. The adult in question chose to illustrate him losing "out on crucial experiences during [his] semester abroad" (see Fig. 6). In his square, he drew himself dreaming of London.

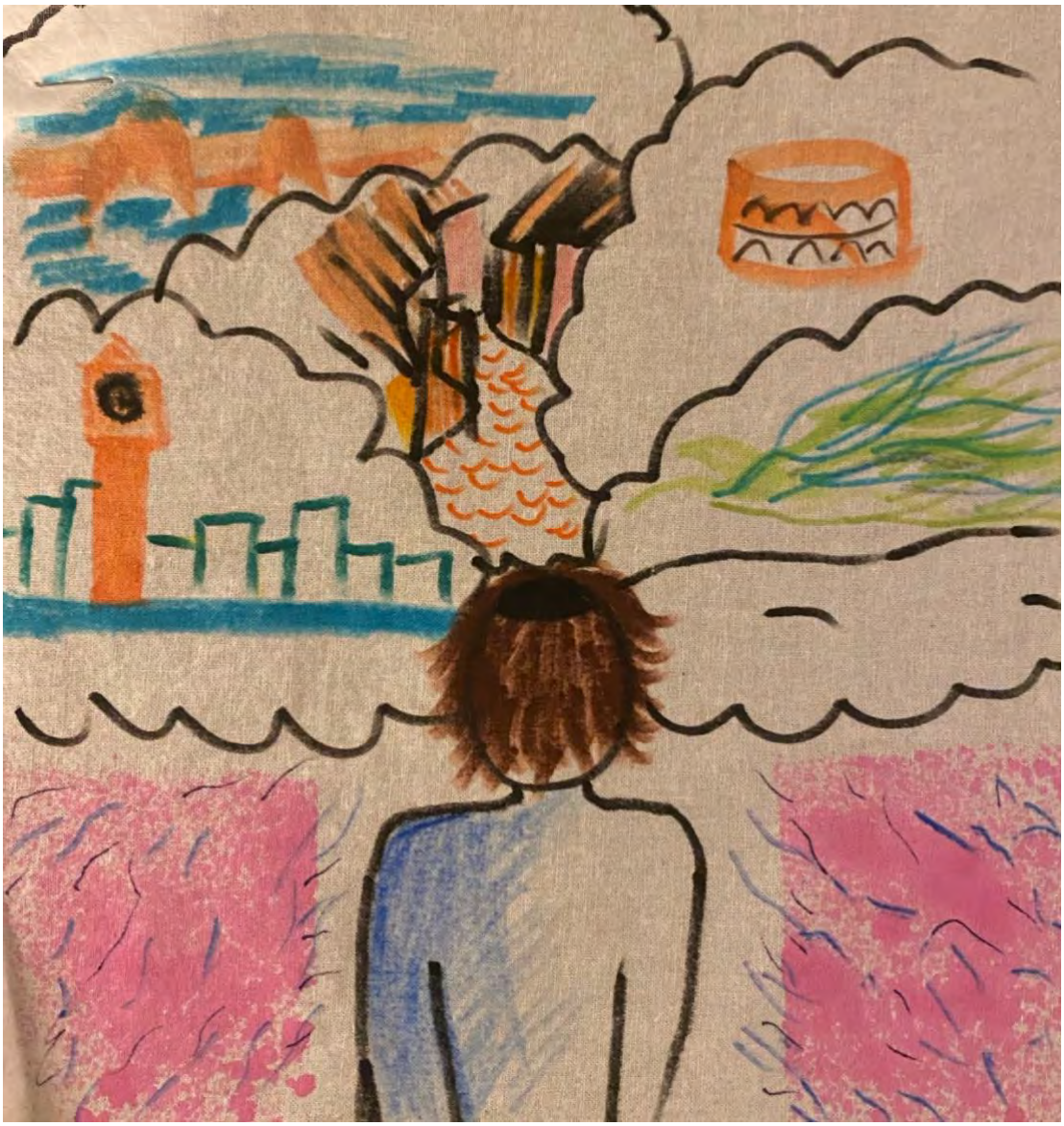

Fig. 6, Ezra, 25 years-old, *Donated Square*, Marker and Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 14, 2024, JCP Downtown.

Moving forward, the author would encourage classroom teachers to participate in the project with their students if they felt comfortable doing so. The challenge in this ask is that teachers must be comfortable with a certain level of vulnerability in their place of employment (thus, thoughtful consent is a critical component of said ask).

Adult Workshop

The author held one workshop with solely adult participants (women aged from 30 to 58 years-old[104]). The workshop was facilitated in a hybrid format (e.g. in person and on Zoom); that said, only the participants in person donated materials (as of the submission date of this document) and contributed to the dialogue (in the shared classroom space). As such for the purpose of this paper, the author has omitted the hybrid participants from the numbers (listed above). In future, the author would not hold other hybrid workshops. The author felt that it was difficult to effectively facilitate (and especially, to pastor) to both the people in person and online. Not to mention, those who were participating online were more likely to communicate through the chat directly to the author (as facilitator) instead of raising their voices to the group, so their participation felt a little voyeur. The hybrid modality removed some of the intimacy that existed in the learning space in a way the author found problematic. As stated in the goals of the project, it was for a purpose of creating a sense of shared loss and narrative which was not accomplished through virtual participation.

The notable difference between facilitating the workshop for children versus the adults was *how* each group engaged in the topic. As mentioned above, the children were keen to share

[104] There was no specific age prerequisite. Participants had the option of sharing their age. Not all participants chose to disclose. It was interesting that only women chose to participate in this workshop. The author wonders as to the reason for this outcome; however, DOROT does have significantly more staff that identify as women than men.

their Jewish knowledge, actively participating in the Jewish learning component of the lesson (e.g. shouting out answers). That said, when it came to sharing and exploring their own grief, they were much more reticent—even going so far as to deny that any loss was experienced. The adults, on the other hand, had the opposite challenge. In engaging with the text study on ז-כ-ר, the participants were quiet, reluctant to read verses, and not offering opinions, comments, or questions. That said, once they were each given an opportunity to write about a specific moment of mourning in their lives, and began creating their art, little by little, each participant began to share their stories of grief without prompting. The stillness and the collective practice made space for natural form of conversation around the experience of loss. Unlike the workshop with the children, the adults had the ability to share their art with each other as it was being created, instead of needing a space at the end of the workshop. There was a dialogue— among the participants of which the author was privy— that happened organically, which was clearly meaningful to everyone present.

Initial participant remarks were not specific to what they chose to represent on their fabric. One participant said: "There was so much loss, I was not even sure which one to pick at first." This comment opened the door for other participants to share their experiences of loss. One of the members in the group shared about being single, and how suddenly, because of the pandemic, primary relationships (that were not spousal relationships) were no longer given the same priority when it came to rules around isolation and "pods." She said: "It used to be I could bring my cousin to a work event, because, you know, that was the significant relationship in my life. During the pandemic, suddenly, if you didn't have a partner, those other relationships were seen as secondary, like they mattered less. I don't think we've fully recovered from that." In her square she chose to represent the ways in which community relationships are perpetually

overlapping, not static or fixed the way in which they were spoken of during the height of pandemic precautions (see Fig. 7).

Fig. 7, Kay, 30 years-old, *Donated Square*, Marker and Acrylic Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 26, 2024, DOROT.

Another shared of her parents' pain: "My parents lost 15 of their closest, vibrant friends in the span of two months after the start of the pandemic. They won't ever speak about it, but I know it is there. They are both traumatized." In her description of her artwork (Fig. 9), she went on to add: "It is like they [the fifteen people] just disappeared. People have said: "Well, they're old," but they still had more life to give and enjoy." It was interesting in the adult workshop the blurring of grief. That is, the children spoke of grief that was their own: "I lost my dog" or "I am

sad." Whereas in the adult group, the grief could be grief felt on behalf of a loved one: "My husband lost his father." This marked a significant difference in orientation to grief.

Notably, much like the children's squares, the adults often chose a mixture of artistic styles through which to visualize their loss. Again, one might note the use of text to highlight an experience, and the employing of both realistic portrayals of objects versus more abstract imagery. For instance, one participant, commemorating the loss of her father, drew a simple, more traditional memorial: an outline of the Boy Scout logo, inside which she wrote her father's initials and the dates of his lifespan. "[My father] was a Boy Scout 'til the day he died," she explained, going on to add that his boy Scout badges were his prized possessions (see Fig. 8).

Fig. 8, Linda, Unknown Age, *Donated Square*, Marker and Acrylic Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 26, 2024, DOROT.

Others chose more abstract ways to illustrate their loss. As exemplified in Fig. 9, each circle represents the life of a single person who died from the pandemic. The central phrase in the circle was one discussed as part of the Torah study at the beginning of the workshop.

Fig. 9, Cindy, 58 years-old, *Donated Square*, Marker and Acrylic Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 26, 2024, DOROT.

In contrast, a participant chose a concrete image—a globe— to illustrate a more abstract loss: togetherness with her relatives (see Fig. 10). She wrote: "During the pandemic, I lost the ability to physically be with my family in India. My husband lost his father and though he was able to go for his final services, I or my children could not. I also lost touch with my brother who suffers from mental health challenges." She went on to add: "Technology and development made the world smaller. It is so easy to travel across the world. It only takes a moment for it all to go away."

Fig. 10, Supriya, 44 years-old, *Donated Square*, Marker and Acrylic Paint on Cotton Fabric, Feb. 26, 2024, DOROT.

In the closing of the workshop, participants all thanked the author for her facilitation. One said: "I really have not up until this moment allowed myself to think about my grief. I only focussed on what I gained from the pandemic. I appreciate you bringing this project forward." Another mentioned the project allowing her to find some closure.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that there was added difficulty in this exercise for some: the workshop was held at the office with participants colleagues sitting around the table. One Zoom participant wrote to the facilitator: "I am interested in participating in your project, but I realize now that I just can't do this at work. It is too hard." Sharing feelings of grief can feel additionally vulnerable in one's place of employment. One participant began to cry in the workshop when speaking of her dead father. This demand for vulnerability may be why fewer

people than expected participated in the “Lunch & Learn.” Location and the relationships between participants will be elements the author keeps in mind in leading future workshops.

One-on-One Interview

Unfortunately, the author only met with one person for a one-on-one interview. Partly, as when the author approached organizations to participate in the project, there was greater interest in holding a workshop for a group of people, rather than suggesting individuals meet to participate. The author posits that one of the reasons for this preference has had to do with creating a communal healing space—encouraging participants to see their stories mirrored in that of others—, marking a difference from pandemic isolation. In attending a workshop, participants have a chance to “be social,” making connections with peers, in lieu of sitting in a room alone being interviewed.

Another justification for this trend is that in working with children, group activities seem more age appropriate. There was enthusiasm for Hebrew School-aged children to participate in the project with an awareness that the younger ones might find it difficult (either to remember the pandemic, to talk about something emotionally challenging, or because they might feel uncomfortable being alone with an unfamiliar adult). Having now facilitated several workshops with kids of varying ages (11-16 years-of-age), the author believes it could be beneficial to facilitate interviews with older students (such as the 10th graders), but that younger children (12 and below) would be too young for more intense dialogue.

Another reason for the single interview was due to time constraints. The author has a list of a few (about half a dozen) names of individuals to contact to participate in the project. That said, those interviews will be held following the thesis submission deadline.

Given the single participant, the author cannot speak to trends; that said, it was interesting in the interview that the participant focussed minimally on Covid-19. In fact, she spent most of the hour wanting to talk about the life of her partner, not her death or the challenges thereafter.

The author spoke with Rebecca about her partner of 44 years, Betty Brown (ז״ל) who died on March 29, 2020 of dementia. The author felt as though Rebecca wanted to participate in the project so that there might be a record of Betty's life. She described her as "charming, witty, loving, kind, and beloved by many." "She was a romantic figure, and we had a wonderful time," she said with a slight blush to her cheeks to match her bright red hair, "It was like something out of a novel." Betty was the Fred Astair to her Ginger Rogers. Rebecca did not gloss over some of the hardships of their relationship—Betty was a hoarder who found it difficult to hold down a job— but she also said: "I miss her terribly, and we were, for the most part, very happy."

When asked about the pandemic, Rebecca explained that she was relieved that Betty died at the beginning and was not witness to the years that followed. The death affected her experience of the pandemic mostly in terms of her own isolation. She explained:

> What I felt deprived of was the ability to be around people as much as possible. And this tied in, which, really doesn't necessarily have anything to do with Betty or grieving of widowhood, but maybe it does. I think the public health establishment made a huge mistake around Covid, certainly once everybody was vaccinated which was the beginning of 2021 […] by stressing this isolating and isolating and staying safe and being safe at the expense of everyone's mental health.

In fact, this isolation pushed her to get out and see the city. She explained she wore a mask, but she would not stop herself from shopping or sitting in a park with a friend. She also began

volunteering at a food pantry. She further described that she would have had a party to celebrate Betty's life after she died, but that because of pandemic that became impossible. However, she dismissed the loss of the party, explaining: "Betty outlived most of her friends," so the only people who would have come to a funeral would have been her friends, not Betty's.

Rebecca donated to the project "a turquoise t-shirt from Ogunquit, ME where we went almost every year from 1987-2002. Her ashes are scattered there." She also shared a picture with the author of her and Betty together (see Fig. 11).

Fig. 11, *Photograph of Rebecca & Betty*, Digital Photograph, Date Unknown, Oqunquit, ME.

Additional Challenges

The author was pleasantly surprised by how well each of the workshops went. Each interaction was meaningful and engaging. The biggest obstacle was scheduling (marking time on

synagogue calendars is challenging and would be helpful to do much more in advance). Another major challenge was in procuring materials. As synagogues and organizations provided their own supplies for the workshop, and interviewees donated their own items, there was a huge inconsistency in the donated fabrics. The author anticipates that assembling the project so that the materials look aesthetically pleasing (to not "cheapen" the outcome) will be difficult. Not to mention, the donated squares are inconsistent in size and shape (making them more challenging to sew together). If reproducing the project in future, the author would suggest having one individual or organization provide all the materials to foster aesthetic cohesion in the final product.

Conclusion:

Future of the Project

"And Moses took the remains of Joseph with him; for Joseph had made the sons of Israel promise him to tell the future generations: 'The Almighty will surely remember you, and then you shall carry up my remains with: you from here.'"

-Exodus 13:9

Given the strict submission deadline for this thesis project, the tallit is not currently complete. As such, in lieu of writing a traditional conclusion (explaining that which was learned from the project), this chapter explores some of the possible next steps and required future research. The following chapter is also an invitation for other researchers or communities to model a new memorial project after this one: what are ways that another community might help themselves heal following tragedy? What are ways that a community come together in the process of lamentation/memorial?

Additional Data Collection

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, only one one-on-one interview was conducted and one group workshop for adults; not to mention, several other organizations expressed interest in participating in the project. In particular, the author would like to focus on bringing in additional adult voices to the project moving forward (given the disproportionate number of children's memories currently collected), especially through the medium of one-on-one interviews.

Assembling and Designing the Tallit

Currently, the donated materials for the tallit have not been sewn together. The next step will be to design a way to halakhically and aesthetically assemble all the collected material into a single ritual item. One question the author is still considering in the sewing of the squares together is: how does one ensure that the squares are identifiable? What are ways to guarantee participants may locate their donated items in the completed project? When displayed how might non-participants learn about who/what is being memorialized in each square? These questions speak to the goal of the tallit being a memorial. Are the individual stories of participants needed to mark this project as a memorial? Or is simply being told that the entire project is composed of loss from the pandemic sufficient? Additionally, these queries relate to concerns around confidentiality and consent. The author will need to consider what information should/can be made public in the possible future display of the tallit versus what information need be kept private. This question is especially significant in the case of squares made by minors.

Moreover, is it important that squares made by set organizations be placed together and those organizations named in the fabric of the art piece? This question is laden with a question of values: does mixing up the squares from different communities highlight that everyone is, regardless of background, all one *Am Yisrael*?[105] Or, as a participant, would it preferable to able to see all the squares from one's community sewn together, highlighting the sacredness and closeness of those pre-existing relationships? The author does not currently have an answer. Additional research in this area might be beneficial. It should be noted that such a decision may be made based on practical concerns such as sewing together squares that are of similar size and shape for aesthetic purposes. To be clear, *hiddur mitzvah* being a Jewish value, the author

[105] Not all participants identified as Jewish. That said, all who participated were deeply enmeshed in Jewish space. Thus, it feels fair to group those persons into the umbrella of Jewish community.

understands matters around the aesthetics of the tallit to be, if not a halakhic requirement, certainly minhag.

Moreover, there are other required pieces of the tallit yet to be made: the *atarah*, the four corners, and the fringes. DOROT expressed interest in having a workshop wherein members of their community could tie the knots. The author has apprehensions about having one community which has donated materials tie knots over another community (as it might insinuate that one community has greater ownership over the piece than another). Currently, there are three organizations that have participated in the project: should each organization be encouraged to tie one of the fringes? The same questions could be applied to the *atarah* and the four corners. The author is wondering at what point in the project the author should make items to ensure aesthetic cohesion versus giving the project additional community ownership. Again, these are questions that might be aided with additional research.

Unveiling: Ritual Development & Music of Lament

The communities which have thus far participated in the project have the expectation that once the tallit is finalized, they will have a chance to view and (potentially) display it. This sharing of the final project is an integral part of the healing the author has striven for in the completion of this project: it is only in seeing the tallit in its totality that the witnessing of a communal narrative is possible. The author also contends that, given that the project is a memorial, there should be a ritual to "unveil" it. As such, further inquiry into the history and law around Jewish memorial practices (i.e. funerals, unveilings) would be necessary. The author will likely write a new ritual for the unveiling of the tallit to honour the circumstances of Covid-19 and the many communities which participated in the project (also as a means of honouring all the

memorial practices that were withheld during the time of the pandemic). Keeping these considerations in mind, the author should further research ritual theory, memorial liturgy and practices, and ritual development. She posits that the work of Rabbi Dr Lawrence Hoffman and Dr. Vanessa L. Ochs might be particularly useful.

Furthermore, the author notes the important role music plays in ritual, community events, and memorial. Certainly, additional research that explores Jewish music of morning and lamentation could benefit this project. How does Jewish music play a role in memorial unveilings? Which melodies might best mark this moment in time? How might music play a role in pastoral healing and posttraumatic growth? How might new compositions figure/benefit in the unveiling of a memorial? The author believes the thesis work of Cantor Lauren Adesnik (née Lauren Michelle Furman) will be useful in this study.

Storage and Cataloguing of Materials

The author must consider where all the residual materials should be catalogued and stored (i.e. recordings of one-on-one interviews, pages noting remembrances). The author is considering reaching out to different libraries to find out best practices.

Covid-19 Narrative

A question that arose over the course of reviewing the collected materials is: “Is this project collecting primary historical source material, or is it for the purpose of creating a collective myth of that time period?” The author noticed in analyzing the donated squares, for example as mentioned in the previous chapter, that there were some images that were recurring (i.e. the virus). These images are not necessarily ones that individuals experienced firsthand, but

rather ones to which they were exposed through the media or other sources of public discourse. In amassing these images into a single item, a tallit, is the author inadvertently spreading a narrative rife with socio-political connotations? As the project was originally intended as a tool to foster pastoral relationships, the author did not originally consider the ways in which the final product might be also a historical document. Moving forward, the author may want to explore the ways in which a project of this nature both creates myth—a community narrative that shapes identity and experience that may (or may not) be steeped in a truth— and dissembles it. How might this collective storytelling change one's understanding of the pandemic or cement it? What are the ways in which this type of object might be beneficial or harmful (once it is removed from the intimacy of the initial pastoral interaction between author and participant)? There is a life of the object once it has been created that has yet to be fully explored/understood by the author.

Other Art Projects

As mentioned previously, the events of October 7th, 2023 greatly affected the outcome of this memorial project. The author has been approached as to how she might adapt the project to one in recognition of Oct. 7th and its aftermath. At this moment, the author does not feel prepared to engage with such a memorial (given the current proximity of said events); however, there is something to be said about a project being created closer to the yahrzeit of the tragedy.

Hope for the Future of the Project

As the primary researcher, the author has found this project to be meaningful: from teaching the lesson plans, to building relationships with communities, to hearing individual stories of loss. The author wishes that moving forward those who have participated have a sense

of closure and growth at the unveiling of the project. Most especially, she hopes that the memories of the people lost during the pandemic will be for a blessing in this communal remembrance. *Ken Yehi Ratzon*, May it be G-d's will.

Appendix A:

Lesson Plans

The following section includes the lesson plans taught over the project. Each lesson plan was tweaked for the organization at which it was taught. Nevertheless, the general components are the same from one to the other. It should be noted that the lesson plans were made in conjunction with the research in Chapter 2 and 3.

Lesson Plan Taught at JLab (Temple Beth Sholom, Miami Beach)

This lesson was taught as part of their Monday night Hebrew school cohort for 4th through 6th grades students. To give each student enough time to complete the activity, the Education Director chose to have the lesson broken up into two parts: the first part to take place in the chapel with the author as the instructor, and the second part in the classroom with each class's habitual teacher.

Lesson Plan: Remembering Covid-19
JLab

Guiding Texts:

זכרונם לברכה,

May their memory be a blessing.

Exodus 13:3

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם זָכוֹר אֶת־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יְצָאתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים כִּי בְחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא יֵאָכֵל חָמֵץ׃

And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how יהוה freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten.

Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 2:5

רַבָּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמר. אין עוֹשִׁין נְפָשׁוֹת לַצַּדִּיקִים. דִּבְרֵיהֶן הן זִכְרוֹנָן.

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: One does not construct monuments for the graves of righteous people. The purpose of a monument is to remember the dead person, and Torah scholars do not need a monument, as their words of Torah that continue to be taught are their memorial.

Vocabulary:

- *Zicharon* (memorial)
- *Chevrutah* (partner)

Materials:

- Hand-out (to Print)
- Fabric (ideally white)
- Any combination of the following:
    - Glue
    - Markers
    - String
    - Paint & Paint brushes
    - Paper Plates
    - Beads
    - Felt
- Scissors

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the students will:

1. Understand how memorializing death and mourning is an intrinsic part of Jewish life;
2. Understand how lamenting is a key part of Jewish mourning ritual, and;
3. Have a chance to think of ways to grapple with a Covid-19 loss in a communal context.

Lesson Breakdown:

30 minute Lesson in Chapel:

Welcome (10 minutes)

- Introduce speaker, using the concept of Ancestry
    - "My name is Luisa, and I am the granddaughter of Ada."
- Turn to the person next to you, say your name and the name of one of your ancestors, and who that ancestor is in relationship to you.
    - Why did I do that?
    - Why do our ancestors matter?

What is a memorial? (10 minutes)

- *Zikaron*: Does that word sound familiar?
    - What are other times that you might have heard that word?
- Name ways in which Jews memorialize:
    - *Yom Ha'Shaoh, Yom Ha'Zikaron*
    - Memorial Hall (in synagogue)
    - Memorials for Events
    - Museums
- What do we memorialize?
- Why is memorializing important?
- Describe my project as a memorial for Covid-19
    - Importance of *zikaron* in Jewish tradition

Hand-Out (10 minutes)
- Give each student a handout. Have them complete the form individually.
- Have them hold onto the form for class.

30-45 minute lesson with classroom teacher:

Chevrutah Partner (5-10 minutes)
- Once each student has completed their own form, pair them with another student in the class, and have them share what they wrote.
- Questions to ask their *chevrutah* partner:
    - What would you memorialize?
    - Why is that important to you?
    - How would you like that person/pet/place/thing to be remembered?
    - Does speaking with a partner change what/how you want to remember?

Art Project (20 minutes)
- Give each student a square of fabric which they can decorate according to their design.

Conclusion (5-10 minutes)
- Have students share their work with each other:
    - Have each student show their square and explain what/who they are memorializing.
    - How did this project make you feel?
    - What is it like to see all the memorial squares together?

Clean-Up (3-5 minutes)
- Make sure stations are clean.
- Make sure all the remembrance squares are collected.
- Make sure the paper descriptions are matched with a square.

Lesson Plan Taught at Confirmation Class (Temple Beth Sholom, Miami Beach)

This class was part of the 8th-grade confirmation curriculum. The instructor was on Zoom while the group gathered in the conference room.

Lesson Plan: Remembering Covid-19
Confirmation Class

Guiding Texts:

(see above)

Vocabulary:
- *Zicharon* (memorial)

Materials:
- Hand-out
- Fabric (ideally white)
- Any combination of the following:
    - Glue
    - Markers
    - String
    - Paint & Paint brushes
    - Paper Plates
    - Beads
    - Felt
- Scissors

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the students will:
1. Understand how memorializing death and mourning is an intrinsic part of Jewish life;
2. Understand how lamenting is a key part of Jewish mourning ritual, and;
3. Have a chance to think of ways to grapple with a Covid-19 loss in a communal context.

Lesson Breakdown:

Welcome (7 minutes)
- Introduce speaker
    - Explain a bit about my project.
        - What am I doing?
        - How will they be participating in the project?

What is a memorial? (10 minutes)
- Name ways in which Jews memorialize:
    - *Yom Ha'Shaoh, Yom Ha'Zikaron*
    - Memorial Hall (in synagogue)

    - Memorials for Events
    - Museums
- What do we memorialize?
    - Note distinction between individual versus communal memorials
- Why is memorializing important?

Hand-Out and *Chevrutah* (15 minutes)
- Give each student a handout. Have them complete the form individually.
- Once they have completed their own form, pair them with another student in the class, and have them share what they wrote.

Art Project (20 minutes)
- Give each student a square of fabric which they can decorate according to their design.

Conclusion (6 minutes)
- Have students share their work with each other:
    - What are you memorializing and why?
    - How did this project make you feel?
    - What is it like to see all the memorial squares together?

Clean-Up (3 minutes)
- Make sure stations are clean.
- Make sure all the remembrance squares are collected.
- Make sure the paper descriptions are matched with a square.

Lesson Plan Planned for DOROT (Manhattan)

The program at DOROT due to unforeseen circumstances had to be rescheduled. In the changing of the date/time of the event, only one participant came at the scheduled time. As a result, this lesson plan was not utilized. That said, the author believes it will be useful in facilitating potential future adult events of this nature.

Lesson Plan: Remembering Covid-19
DOROT Group Activity

Guiding Texts:

(see above)

Materials:

- Hand-out
- Torah Study Hand-out
- Fabric (ideally white)
- Any combination of the following:
    - Glue
    - Markers
    - String
    - Paint & Paint brushes
    - Paper Plates
    - Beads
    - Felt
    - Needles/embroidery thread/hoops
- Scissors

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the hour, each participant will:

1. Will have a sense of how the author interprets *zachor*.
2. Will have an opportunity to engage in reflexive conversation on loss (during the pandemic).
3. Will have had an opportunity to make a material object that will be donated to the larger memorial tallit.
4. Will hopefully find a sense of communal support in experience of lamentation/grief.

Lesson Breakdown (1.5 hour lesson):

Welcome (10 minutes)

- Introduce speaker
- Explain the thesis project

Torah Study (15 minutes)

- Review sources (see above handout). Consider how our Torah encourages the process of remembering and memorial.
    - *Zicharon* has threefold form of memorial:
        - Individual Practice (i.e. remember to keep Shabbat)
        - Communal Identity Formation/Narrative (i.e. Exodus from Egypt)
        - Keeping an individual's memory alive (i.e. JT Shekalim 2:5)

Hand-Out (5-7 minutes)

- Give each person a handout (see above handout), and have them complete it individually.
- Once they have completed their own form, the speaker will consult with them on best materials to accomplish their artistic goals.

Art Project (30 minutes)

- Give each person a square of fabric which they can decorate according to their design.

- Invite participants to share, as desired about their loss, the square they are designing, or any other relevant questions/comments about the project.

Conclusion (10 minutes)
- Allow each participant to share their square if they so desire.
- Leave space for a moment for people to honour the experience of sharing/memorializing.

Clean-Up (5 minutes)
- Make sure each square is paired with the document notating what the square is commemorating.

Lesson Plan Planned for Jewish Community Project (JCP) Downtown (Manhattan)

This lesson was taught as part of the 6th grade B'nei Mitzvah curriculum at JCP Downtown. The author was only given 45 minutes for the program (with the awareness that students would likely arrive between 5-15 minutes late). As such, it was significantly abridged from other lesson plans.

Lesson Plan: Remembering Covid-19
6th Grade Class

Guiding Texts:

(see above)

Vocabulary:
- *Zicharon* (memorial)

Materials:
- Hand-out
- Fabric (ideally white)
- Any combination of the following:
  - Glue
  - Markers
  - String
  - Paint & Paint brushes
  - Paper Plates
  - Beads
  - Felt
- Scissors

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, the students will:

1. Understand how memorializing death and mourning is an intrinsic part of Jewish life;
2. See themselves in relationship to their ancestry, and;
3. Have a chance to think of ways to grapple with a Covid-19 loss in a communal context.

Lesson Breakdown:

Welcome (7 minutes)

- Introduce myself as speaker.
- Go around the room, ask each student to share their name, the name of one of their ancestors, and their relationship to themself.
    - Why did I do that?
    - What does that sound like?

What is a memorial? (10 minutes)

- Name ways in which Jews memorialize:
    - *Yom HaShoah*, *Yom HaZikaron*
    - Memorial Hall (in synagogue)
    - Memorials for Events
    - Museums
- What do we memorialize?
- Why is memorializing important?
- Describe my project as a memorial for Covid-19
    - Importance of *zikaron* in Jewish tradition

Design (5 minutes)

- Give each student a handout. Have them complete the form individually.

Art Project (10 minutes)

- Give each student a square of fabric which they can decorate according to their design (on the form).

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- Have students share their work with each other:
    - How did this project make you feel?
    - What is it like to see all the memorial squares together?

Clean-Up (3 minutes)

- Make sure stations are clean.
- Make sure all the remembrance squares are collected.
- Make sure the paper descriptions are matched with a square.

Lesson Plan DOROT Staff Lunch & Learn (Manhattan)

For this lesson, the author adapted the previous DOROT lesson plan to suit a different population: the staff at DOROT, instead of the clientele. The author only had an hour for the presentation instead of 1.5 hours. As such, the lesson needed to be abbreviated.

Lesson Plan: Remembering Covid-19
DOROT Group Activity

Guiding Texts:

(see above)

Materials:

- Hand-out (to Print)
- Torah Study Hand-out (to Print)
- Fabric (ideally white)
- Any combination of the following:
    - Glue
    - Markers
    - String
    - Paint & Paint brushes
    - Paper Plates
    - Beads
    - Felt
    - Needles/embroidery thread/hoops
- Scissors

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the hour, each participant will:

1. Will have a sense of how the author interprets *zachor*.
2. Will have an opportunity to engage in reflexive conversation on loss (during the pandemic).
3. Will have had an opportunity to make a material object that will be donated to the larger memorial tallit.
4. Will hopefully find a sense of communal support in experience of lamentation/grief.

Lesson Breakdown (1 hour lesson):

Welcome (5 minutes)

- Introduce myself as speaker.
- Explain briefly what my thesis project is and key words (i.e. *zicharon, tallit*).

- Leave space for audience to ask questions about Jewish practices specifically (that might be unknown to a non-Jewish participants).

Torah Study (15 minutes)

- Review sources (see handout). Consider how our Torah encourages the process of remembering and memorial.
    - *Zicharon* has threefold form of memorial:
        - Individual Practice (i.e. remember to keep Shabbat)
        - Communal Identity Formation/Narrative (i.e. Exodus from Egypt)
        - Keeping an individual's memory alive (i.e. JT Shekalim 2:5)
    -

Hand-Out (5 minutes)

- Give each person a handout (see above handout) and have them complete it individually.
- Once they have completed the form, help them find materials to make their designed square.

Art Project (20 minutes)

- Give each person a square of fabric which they can decorate according to their design.
- Leave space for questions about the project.
- Encourage conversations about the loss there are commemorating, their art, and/or ways in which they experienced loss during the pandemic.

Conclusion (10 minutes)

- Allow each participant to share their square if they so desire.
- Give participants space to share closing remarks.

Clean-Up (5 minutes)

- Make sure each square is paired with the document notating what the square is commemorating.

Appendix B:

Handouts & Source Sheet(s)

In addition to the lesson plans, there were other materials prepared for both the one-on-one oral history interviews and the group lessons.

Memorial Form

This form allowed the author to label each item being either made for or donated to the *tallit*. Every participant of the project was asked to complete the form. That said, not all participants had to complete the entirety of the form. The author has incomplete forms for both the youngest and some of the oldest participants.

I am Remembering…

My name is_____

My age is_____

During the pandemic, I lost_____

_____

_____

I think it is important to remember _____, because_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe how you would like _____ to be remembered:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have a material object that helps you remember _____? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, describe the object_____

_____

Design your square for the Tallit Memorial on the reverse of this page. Explain what each of the elements on your square means.

זכרונם לברכה,

May their memory be a blessing.

Torah Study Source Sheet

For the adult lessons, the author grounded the learning/activity in a brief Torah study. The sheet was created using Sefaria.org, and can be accessed online at:

https://www.sefaria.org/sheets/529811?lang=bi.

Zachor: How We Remember

Source Sheet by Ada Luisa Sinacore

Weekday Siddur Sefard Linear, The Morning Prayers, Blessings of the Torah 1-5

Baruch atah, Adonai Eloheinu, Melech Ha'Olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok bedivrei Torah.

Blessed are You, Adonai our G-d, Ruler of the Universe, Who sanctified us with Your commandments and commanded us to be engaged in the words of Torah.

סידור ספרד לימות החול, תפלת שחרית, ברכות התורה א'-ה'

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסֹק בְּדִבְרֵי
תוֹרָה:

Exodus 20:8

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy.

שמות כ':ח'

זָכוֹר אֶת־יוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת לְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

Exodus 13:3

(3) And Moses said to the people,"Remember this day, on which you went free from Egypt, the house of bondage, how יהוה freed you from it with a mighty hand: no leavened bread shall be eaten.

שמות י"ג:ג'

(ג) וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־הָעָם זָכוֹר אֶת־הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יְצָאתֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עֲבָדִים
כִּי בְחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיא יְהוָה אֶתְכֶם מִזֶּה וְלֹא
יֵאָכֵל חָמֵץ:

II Samuel 18:18

Now Absalom, in his lifetime, had taken the pillar which is in the Valley of the King and set it up for himself; for he said, "I have no son to keep my name alive." He had named the pillar after himself, and it has been called Absalom's Monument to this day.

שמואל ב י"ח:י"ח

וְאַבְשָׁלֹם לָקַח וַיַּצֶּב־לוֹ בְחַיָּו אֶת־מַצֵּבָת
אֲשֶׁר בְּעֵמֶק־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי אָמַר אֵין־לִי בֵּן
בַּעֲבוּר הַזְכִּיר שְׁמִי וַיִּקְרֶא לַמַּצֵּבָת עַל־שְׁמוֹ
וַיֶּקָרֵא לָהּ יַד אַבְשָׁלוֹם עַד הַיּוֹם
הַזֶּה: {ס}

Jerusalem Talmud Shekalim 2:5:3

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: One does not construct monuments for the graves of righteous people. The purpose of a

תלמוד ירושלמי שקלים ב':ה':ג'

תַּנֵּי. רַבָּן שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן גַּמְלִיאֵל אוֹמֵר. אֵין
עוֹשִׂין נְפָשׁוֹת לַצַּדִּיקִים. דִּבְרֵיהֶן הֵן זִכְרוֹנָן.

monument is to remember the dead person, and Torah scholars do not need a monument, as their words of Torah that continue to be taught are their memorial.

Sefer HaChinukh 603:4
And the reason [for the latter] is that that remembrance is a fundamental principle of religion.

ספר החינוך תרי"ג:ד'
כִּי בְּזִכָּרוֹן הַהִיא, עִקַּר הַדָּת

May their memory be a blessing.

זכרונם לברכה.

Appendix C:

Suggested Questions for One-on-One Interviews

In her interviews with participants, the author did not stick to a strict set of questions. Below are a few of the guiding questions that inspired her:

- Please tell me about… [name the loss in question].
  - I would love to hear more about your relationship with… [loss]
  - What is the most important thing to know about… [loss]
- How do you feel the pandemic changed your experience of this loss?
- Name what rituals you were/were not able to participate in.
- How were you able to find support/community? What was missing?
- Why do you feel it is important to participate in this project?
- If this project were to be presented in a public forum, would you feel comfortable if your name, or the name of your loss was listed?
- If this project is published as a book, would you be comfortable with your name, or the name of your loss being named in the book?
- How would you like to close this interview?

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