Ceremony For A Yahrzeit

The family is gathered at dusk, on the evening before the anniversary of a loved one’s death.

Lighting the Memorial Candle

It is Jewish custom to light a memorial candle year after year on the anniversary of a loved one’s death. The candle burns for twenty-four hours and is a reminder of the life that was lost and the love that will never die. This ritual is recommended to all those who are searching for a lasting way to sanctify the memory of a loved one.

On Lighting a Yizkor or Yahrzeit Candle

A candle.
A flame.
A memory.

God of generations,
Grant a perfect rest under Your tabernacle of peace
To ______(name of loved one)_________,
My _____(relationship with loved one)___,
Who has left this life and this world.
Let his/her soul find comfort.
Let her/his memory be a blessing.

This candle is for healing,
This flame is for hope,
Calling forth our joys and sorrows,
Calling forth our hours and our days.

God of our ancestors,
Bring me/us solace and consolation
In this moment of remembrance.
Let all who mourn find peace.

Excerpt from This Grateful Heart: Psalms and Prayers for a New Day by Alden Solovny, page 134
(Family members are encouraged to share memories of their loved one with the group.)

We usually light candles to rejoice, to mark the beginning of a holiday or to usher in Shabbat. Now, we stand before a candle that marks both loss and connection, presence and absence. We light this candle to represent the presence of ________(name of loved one)__________, with us even as we go about our daily pursuits. His/her spirit lives on with us in our memories and in the way our memories influence how we choose to live. For some of us, this presence may be as palpable as the heat and changing colors of this flame. Yet like this flame it cannot be held or embraced.

The Light is Kindled

FOR A MALE

 Oversight for him
Zich-ro-no li-v’ra-cha.
His memory is a blessing.

FOR A FEMALE

 Oversight for her
Her memory is a blessing.

Source of life’s mystery, source of life’s fragility and its hard-edged boundaries, have compassion on us as we mourn our loss. May this flame remind us that loved ones’ presence in our lives does not end with death. May we find comfort as we draw together in this candle’s light. And may _____________’s memory be a blessing for all of us.

Excerpt from KOL HANESHAMAH: Prayers for a House of Mourning, page 2

- Jennifer Feldman
A Memorial Prayer

I haven’t forgotten you, even though it’s been some time now since I’ve seen your face, touched your hand, heard your voice. You are with me all the time.

I used to think you left me. I know better now. You come to me. Sometimes in fleeting moments I feel your presence close by. But I still miss you. And nothing, no person, no joy, no accomplishment, no distraction, not even God, can fill the gaping hole your absence has left in my life.

But mixed together with all my sadness, there is a great joy for having known you. I want to thank you for the time we shared, for the love you gave, for the wisdom you spread.

Thank you for the magnificent moments and for the ordinary ones too. There was beauty in our simplicity. Holiness in our unspectacular days. And I will carry the lessons you taught me always.

Your life has ended, but your light can never be extinguished. It continues to shine upon me even on the darkest nights and illuminates my way.

I light this candle in your honor and in your memory. May God bless you as you have blessed me with love, with grace, and with peace. Amen.
The 23rd Psalm or another favorite passage from the Bible or Prayerbook might now be recited.

A Psalm of David

Adonai is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
God makes me lie down in green pastures;
God leads me to water in places of repose;
   God renews my life;
   God guides me in the right paths
      as befits God’s name.
Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,
   I fear no harm, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me.
You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;
   You anoint my head with oil;
      my drink is abundant.
Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
   all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the House of Adonai
   for many long years.