

My parents rejected most of Judaism's practices and laws when they married. They had both come from observant families but believed that the stringencies of Judaism were too much to follow and, at the same time, assimilate into American culture. So we had a meal for Passover but not a seder. We had a meal for Erev Rosh Hashanah but there was no synagogue attendance attached to it. But I know that my parents never missed a visit to the cemetery between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur and never missed a Yizkor service. They knew how important it was to remember and pray for their parents and siblings who had died. They felt that connection more strongly than they felt any other connection to Judaism.

And I know many people here feel the same way. Even without regular synagogue attendance, we come to shul for our family's Yahrzeits and for Yizkor. It's almost as though it's in our genes to remember. And as hard as it is to once again feel the loss of our loved ones, that remembering also holds a holiness with it. It's a way, a time, not only to be with our community but to feel connected with those who are no longer here. The sanctuary of a synagogue and the grave of our loved ones may be the only places we allow ourselves to cry, to fully feel how much we miss them.

But Yizkor is not just about pain and sadness, it's also about remembering the good times, the joyful memories, our feelings of gratitude to those who have died. Even if they were not as virtuous as we wish they had been, even if they were hurtful, we still have some things to thank them for. If they were our parents, we thank them for giving us life. We can even thank them for teaching us how not to behave in the world.

As we stand at the cusp of the New Year and just a few moments before we recite the Yizkor prayers, let's travel back six months to our Passover seders, to the mirror image of what we're doing right now. As much as we grieve on Yom Kippur, we celebrate on Passover. We celebrate renewal, release from slavery.

In this mirror we see our families sitting around our seder tables and singing Dayeinu. Even if we don't usually sing at our seders, this is the one song we definitely include. Dayeinu, it would have been enough.

If God had only brought us out of Egypt and not split the sea for us - Dayeinu - it would have been enough.

If God had split the sea for us, but not sustained us in the wilderness - Dayeinu.

If God had brought us through the wilderness, but not given us the Torah - Dayeinu .

Even as I sing this song each year, I ask myself, is this really true? If God had brought us out of Egypt, but Pharaoh's armies had captured us at the sea, or if we had starved in the desert, or if we had never received the Torah - would that really have been enough?

We can sing these verses only because we know that we got it all. Leaving Egypt, getting through the desert, receiving the Torah, living in the Holy Land. But we also know that each verse asks us to be grateful for every single thing that God did for the Israelites, for our ancestors. We are required not to forget one of those steps on the path to our existence today so that, we can continue to be grateful to God for each of our miracles.

The concept of Dayeinu does not just relate to how much gratitude we feel for our Jewish traditions but it also relates to how we live our daily lives. We are certainly grateful for the big moments in our lives: births, bnai mitzvah, weddings, would any of us ever say, Dayeinu? Would any of us ever say that we had enough of them? Of course not. We want more of those moments, not because we are greedy but because we are filled with love on those special days. And because we always want to feel more of that love.

How much more so do we feel this desire for more as we prepare for *Yizkor*. Yes, we are grateful for all the memories, all the joys we had with our loved ones. **And** we wish we could have had more. More happiness, more laughter, more shared simchas, joyful occasions. We may also have wished for more time even if only for the possibility of healing to occur in the relationship.

Is it possible that Dayeinu teaches us that it would have been all right if we hadn't had all that time we had with our loved ones. That we shouldn't be disappointed, we shouldn't grieve?

Of course not. It teaches us instead not to quantify people's lives, not to measure them by days and years or even by whatever achievements those days produced. Dayeinu tells us that we had moments with this person, these people, that were actually a whole world in themselves. And those moments are the ones we hold with us today and every day. Those are the ones that make us smile and feel connected once again to those who died.

Perhaps what *Dayeinu* is telling us is that it's not about how much time we have with anyone but what each moment teaches us, about the love, appreciation, learning, and even anger that we share. Each of those moments is the *Dayeinu*, each of those moments is enough.

At funerals we recite the words [Job 1:21]: "*Adonai natan, va'Adonai lakach, yehi shem Adonai mevorach*" - "Adonai has given, Adonai has taken, Blessed be the name of Adonai." Why do we bless God at that moment? We could say that we are blessing God for the time in between the giving and the taking.

And that is what we can learn from *Dayeinu* today. *Dayeinu* for the time in between the giving and the taking. *Dayeinu* for the precious memories of our loved ones who are no longer here. And Dayeinu that we still have another day to be joyful and grateful for what we do have.

*Ketiva v'Hatima tova*. May we all be written and sealed in the Book of Life.

Based on a sermon by Rabbi David Stern