

YIZKOR VISION

by Simcha Raphael

In the crisp autumn air
I went to say
Yizkor prayers today
One of those holy days
Four times a year
We gather in community
Mourners threaded by
Memories of heart and mind
A direct line
To loved ones
In the world beyond.
Four times a year
Ever since the Crusades
When mega-death
Demanded memorialization
Jews have said Yizkor
Remembrance
To honor, remember, elevate
Souls of dead loved ones.
It was fascinating
As I looked around the room
The synagogue was packed
Death, after all is said and done
Is a popular attraction
Yet to my surprise
Through the vision of my eyes
There was hardly
An adult in the room
Those saying Yizkor for parents
I saw on their faces
Pain and love
Of little boys and girls
Lost, lonely
Crying for Mommys and Daddys
Those remembering dead brothers and sisters
They too were pained children
A little brother
Reaching for his older sister's hand
A little girl, standing next to her sister
Both of them wondering why
Their little brother died
And even that man
Saying Yizkor for his dead wife
For a brief moment

Looked like a lost child
Unsure if someone
Will ever be there
To light the way
So many children
Being cleansed by their tears.
In an instantaneous moment
Of infinite time
Something changed
Reciting the "el maleh rachamim"
In mournful dirge
Suddenly the windows opened
Souls ancient, eternal, transcendent
Seemed to stream into the space
Visible on everyone's face
Each lost child
Seemed to be comforted
Through soul's presence
Our prayers invited
A heavenly congregation
Of wondrous, watching, wise beings
Ancestral guides
Mommys, Daddys
Bubbys, Zaydes from the other side
Loved ones who walk with us
Day and night
Easing pain, loneliness and fright
And somehow in the afterglow
Of so many souls
Beckoned and present
As our praying moments
Softly came to an end
Each face, man, woman and child
Looked a little older
A little wiser
Deepened in the interior channels
Of heart and soul
Walking with dignity
The mourner's path
Of our ancient sages
Deepened in knowing
Death and loss
Come what may
Are truly and evermore
Interwoven into
The mystery and the enigma
Of being alive
Of being human.