

Yizkor for the High Holidays 5781/2020

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Please note that this is not an official responsum of the CJLS.

Yizkor, the term often used to refer to Hazkarat Nefashot (the collective Memorial Service), has a deep resonance for those remembering loved ones. It originally took place only on Yom Kippur (on the eve of Yom Kippur among Sefardim, and during the day among Ashkenazim). In Ashkenazic liturgy, it was later added to the eighth day of Passover, the second day of Shavuot, and Shemini Atzeret. It is recited in Israel on the seventh day of Passover and the (only) day of Shavuot as well as on Shemini Atzeret. The halakhic requirements of Hazkarat Nefashot are minimal (O.H. 621.6 ReMA; Rabbi Eliyahu Munk, *Olam Hatefillot*, 2.163-164), and in general circumstances, one may recite it privately at home if one cannot attend a synagogue. For congregations offline or with limited attendance on Yom Kippur, rabbis may conduct Hazkarat Nefashot online or in person during the seven days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur or during the month of Elul. Whether it is appropriate for Yizkor to be the liturgical lead-in on the afternoon leading to Kol Nidrei is a consideration that rabbis may wish to take into account when scheduling. They may also provide guidance for private observance during the Aseret Yemei Teshuvah (the Ten Days of Repentance) and/or the month of Elul. Rabbis may rely on the previous [guidance offered by the CJLS regarding Kaddish Yatom](#). Donating to charities on behalf of deceased loved ones is also advised.