

Remembering pregnancy and neonatal loss during the High Holidays

Pregnancy loss is unfortunately common and not discussed. For some it is an isolated incident and for others it is part of a larger infertility experience. Regardless, the themes of birth and the readings about infertility during the High Holidays can unleash a deep pain for those who have experienced loss. Services like Yizkor and prayers like the Mourner's Kaddish recall the life and death of a loved one. However, when the loss was of potential life, Judaism does not have the same acknowledgement. What felt like an infinite amount of hope and love is gone, and it can feel like there is no place to grieve.

Below are some ideas to explore with your community about how to remember pregnancy and neonatal losses in your community. While respecting that pregnancy loss is not the same as that of a parent, spouse, sibling or child, these rituals allow space to acknowledge that the loss is not completely dissimilar either. Rather than leaving hopeful parents in a perpetual state of *aninut* (in between), these rituals give people who experienced pregnancy loss the place to grieve in their community.

- Have a brief specific service for pregnancy and neonatal loss. The ceremony could be held as a separate form of Yizkor or on a day in between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Invite those who attend to share the month and year or have it pre-printed if you have a service guide.
- Include a moment to recognize the many forms of loss in the lives of community members that are not exactly death - divorce, pregnancy loss, onset of lethal illness etc. People can rise for an added element of "naming." This can be done prior to Yizkor service, during the time with a Mi'sheberakh for healing, or held as a separate and brief community service.
- For a supplemental prayer reader, include a reading/prayer for pregnancy loss. Mention it during the story of Sarah, Hannah or the second day haftarah recalling Rachel's original cry - give me a child lest I die, and now they are gone.
- For a community memorial book, include a separate page at the end with an introduction and/or prayer for pregnancy loss.
- For either the supplemental prayer booklet or memorial booklet, include a list of intended parents with the month/year of the loss.
- For a community with a memorial garden or designated area for fetal loss, observe the tradition to visit graves between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, and organize a visit. If no place exists, consider designating an area for such observances.



Prayer during holidays for remembering pregnancy loss

May God remember the life that was forming and coming into being and into my heart. In loving testimony to all that the life could have become, I pledge tzedakah to help my community, others who have experienced pregnancy loss, and those who may in the future. Through this, prayer and remembrance, may I prove worthy of compassion from the Source of compassion. May this mediation strengthen me and bring me closer to the Creator of all life. Amen.