



Kahal B'raira /
community of choice

Congregation for Humanistic Judaism

CREMATION SERVICE





Birth is a beginning
Death is a destination
And life is a journey:

From childhood to maturity
And youth to age;
From innocence to awareness
And ignorance to knowing;
From foolishness to discretion
 And, then perhaps, to wisdom;
From weakness to strength
Or strength to weakness--
 And, often, back again;
From health to sickness
 And back, we hope, to health again;
From offense to forgiveness,
From loneliness to love,
From joy to gratitude,
From pain to compassion,
And grief to understanding;
From defeat to defeat to defeat--
Until, looking backward or ahead,
We see that victory lies
Not at some high place along the way,
But in having made the journey, stage by stage.

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination;
And life is a journey.

And every journey ends.

We are suffering from a great loss. _____, an important person in our lives, has died; is gone. We can all wish it could be otherwise, but we know that this death is final. The look, the touch, the smile, the frown, all these are gone from the physical world, as we, too, will someday be.

The Talmud tells us that a rabbi was once passing through a field where he saw a very old man planting an oak-tree. "Why are you planting that tree" he asked. "Surely you do not



expect to live long enough to see the acorn grow into an oak-tree?" "Ah!" replied the old man. "My ancestors planted trees not for themselves, but for us, in order that we might enjoy their shade or their fruit. I am doing likewise for those who will come after me.

We are the field in which _____ planted. Our memories are the acorns of this life, and the truths we learned will grow into the oak trees of wisdom that we pass on to later generations.

Poem

Burn out, my life, burn quick,
Not much is left now of the wick.
Let there be light on my last day,
To point the way.

Don't flicker life, burn clear.
Then like a spring-thought disappear.
I hate to stint! Life blaze away!
Let me have least at least one day!

Abraham Reisen (trans. Joseph Leftwich)

Cremation is an act of courage and affirmation. If the physical remains were the essence of the person then to commit them to the fire would be too difficult to bear. Better to let the earth, and time, take responsibility for what happens. But body is not the essence: it is the matrix in which life weaves a glowing personality. Without life the structure yields, and there are left only elements, the stuff of which the stars and earth are made. To add fire is only to hasten the inevitable return of the body to nature, so that it may partake in many more lives. We honor _____ by returning these physical remains to the great store of resources of the earth, where someday in some different form they will again contribute to life. The book is not the paper – the wood pulp and linen – that can be recycled and used for other books. The book is the stories, the thoughts, and the memories they implant in the reader. We have been readers of this story and, like the traveling peddlers and singers of history, we will go from this place to share it with others.



Responsive Reading

Leader: At the rising of the sun and at its going down

Mourners: We will remember _____

At the blowing of the wind in the chill of winter,

We will remember _____

At the opening of the buds in the rebirth of spring

We will remember _____

When we are weary and in need of strength

We will remember _____

When we are lost and sick at heart

We will remember _____

When we have decisions that are difficult to make

We will remember _____

When we have joys we yearn to share

We will remember _____

When we seek advice that does not come,

We will remember _____

When we are alone and afraid,

We will remember _____

For _____ will be a part of us as long as we live

And we will remember.

Barukh ha-or sheh-b'khol eh-khod.

Radiant is the light in each of us

dAxe' lOwakJbeH rOwah

™FwrGAb

Barukh ha-or b'olam.

Radiant is the light of the world

£AlOw, Gb rOwah *™FwrGAb*

Barukh ha-or ha-atid.

Radiant is the light of the future

dÓta'ah rOwah *™FwrGAb*

Barukh ha-or ba-zeh-car-own shel

_____.

Radiant is the light in the memory of

leH §OwrJakÓzaJb rOwah

™FwrGAb _____