I can clearly remember the moment when I finally joined the club that I had dreamed of joining for years. When I found myself remaining in shul to recite the prayer of Yizkor for the first time.

Heintz. I waited with treptation to experience the power of this first Yizkor... only to be sorely disappointed. This is it? I wondered as I looked at the text before me. "What is this all about?"

The Yizkor prayer had been a source of mystery to me for years. Now, with its text open before me, I was deeply disappointed. It seemed less significant, and much less powerful, than I had expected. As I studied the passage itself, however, my disappointment was soon replaced with an even greater sense of bewilderment. The prayer seemed deeply puzzling for What exactly, I asked myself, are we praying for?

"Yizkor, G-d, please remember our deceased at this holy time of year, may their memories be a source of comfort to us and to their families. May their souls be rewarded and may they be close to the Divine in the hereafter. Amen."

Why? Why did G-d put us in such a dif-

ficult place? To do what? To answer this question, we must first ask ourselves: Who are we? Who are the people who will remain affected by the outcome of the Yizkor prayer? Who are the individuals who, knowingly or unknowingly, were affected and are still being affected by the presence of our loved ones? In each of their lives — and in the lives that they themselves will yet shape — you will see the surrounding contributions of those whom we ask you to remember today.

May we, in word and deed, serve as a powerful, inspiring touchstone for the merit of those who shaped our lives.

And may we also be wise and right-

eous enough, in our own right, to lead by example. Through our examples, we can inspire others to live lives of goodness.

Rabbi Shmuel Goldin is rabbi emeritus of Ahavath Torah in Engle-

wood, NJ and past president of the Rabbinical Council of America. He currently lives in Jerusalem.