

Life and Death

What is left to be done after the dying is over?

After the earth has covered the grave
the casket lowered
the ribbon cut
the tears shed
the last kaddish recited
the farewells over
the closure formed?

But there is no final closure in death
Life and death are locked in embrace
So intimately intertwined that the “K’riah” of the cloth
cannot tear them apart
Something important remains intact.

When the dying is over
a different kind of memory takes over
Not the memory that is obituary
Not the memory that records the past indiscriminately
But an active memory that sifts through the ashes of the past
to retrieve isolated moments
and that give heart to the future
That memory is an act of resurrection
It raises up from oblivion the glories of forgotten years.

Even the memories of failure
the recollections of frustration and regret are precious
Broken memories are like the tablets Moses shattered
Placed lovingly in the holy Ark of remembrance
Memories are saved
Those immaterial, disembodied ghosts that endure.

What is left after death?
Pointers, ensigns, marking places
That raise us up to life and give us a changed heart
Perhaps a life lived differently
Better, wiser, stronger than before.

What is left after death?
The life of the survivor.

