

It Matters

Sometimes they say,
“It doesn’t matter who comes to the funeral.”
Once, I believed that, but no longer
It does matter
And I have heard it and seen
it in the eyes of the bereaved
“Look who came, and from such a far distance.”
“I haven’t seen them in ages.”

I am witness to their hearts filled with gratitude
Don’t let them fool you
Your presence is important
You fulfill a great mitzvah
“Nichum avelim” — the consolation of the mourners.

It matters
Someone cares
A life lived is remembered
A life lived respected.

No handshake, no embrace
No word of comfort
No arm around a grieving shoulder
Is unremembered.

It matters
Your presence lifts a stone
From the depressed heart
Your presence says
Death is not the final word
People care, and when there is care
There is cure
And when there is cure
There is promise.

You who attend the House of Mourning
Confirm the insight of our sages
All who are loved by their fellow human beings
Are loved by God.

And you, my friends, who come are loved.

