"MAY GOD COMFORT YOU"
A GUIDE FOR MOURNERS

CONGREGATION BETH SHALOM
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*Compiled by a Beth Shalom Committee*
FOREWORD

There are stars up above,
so far away we only see their light
long, long after the star itself is gone.

And so it is with people that we loved —
their memories keep shining ever brightly
though their time with us is done.

But the stars that light up the darkest night,
these are the lights that guide us.
As we live our days, these are the ways we remember.

-Hannah Senesh

The Blessing of Memory

It is hard to sing of oneness when the world is not complete,
when those who once brought wholeness to our life have gone,
and naught but memory can fill the emptiness
their passing leaves behind.

But memory can tell us only what we were,
in company with those we loved;
it cannot help us find what each of us, alone, must now become.
Yet no one is really alone:
those who live no more, echo still within our thoughts and words,
and what they did is part of what we have become.

We do best homage to our dead when we live our lives more fully,
even in the shadow of our loss.
For each of our lives is worth the life of the whole world;
in each one is the breath of the Ultimate One.
In affirming the One, we affirm the worth of each one
whose life, now ended, brought us closer to the Source of life,
in whose unity no one is alone and every life finds purpose.

- Chaim Stern
Two basic principles govern the Jewish laws of mourning: *kevod ha-met* (honoring the deceased) and *nichum aveilim* (comforting the mourners). *Kevod ha-met* insists that the body of the deceased, which once had the holy spark of life in it, deserves respectful treatment. The *mitzvah* of *nichum aveilim* provides that mourners should not be alone with their grief. Rather, it is the role of friends and community to provide comfort and support.

Congregation Beth Shalom provides support to its members in times of joy and in times of pain and sorrow. When death occurs in our community, our congregation is there to help. This booklet is intended to serve as an introductory guide to Jewish custom, law and procedures for both mourners and comforters. The information in this booklet is designed to give mourners a roadmap of ritual practices and to provide congregants useful guidance on how to comfort the bereaved in our community.

This is not a comprehensive authority; nor do we attempt to answer all questions. There are many areas where law and custom have become interwoven, i.e., what was once a local custom has achieved the status of law through centuries of use. In all matters, one should consult with a rabbi for definitive answers. Our synagogue library also contains books on the subject.
IN BRIEF:
SUMMARY OF WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE DIES

In case of deaths occurring locally, your first call should be to contact the rabbis. The rabbis will then instruct you to call the Seattle Jewish Chapel to arrange for pickup and care for the body. Funeral arrangements will be made with the rabbis.

When a death occurs outside Seattle, please contact the synagogue so that we can best support you.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Congregation Beth Shalom...............................(206) 524-0075

Rabbi Borodin..............rabbiborodin@bethshalomseattle.org

Rabbi Rose...............................rabbirose@bethshalomseattle.org

Seattle Jewish Chapel.................................(206) 725-3067

Rick Becker at Evergreen Washelli (plot purchasing)
(206) 362-5200

Mitzvah Corps.........................seattlemitzvahcorps@gmail.com
BEFORE DEATH OCCURS
Preparing for the death of a loved one is a part of life. Our tradition gives us a way to prepare and to mark this sad moment in our lives in a meaningful way. Please consult with one of our rabbis for assistance during this trying time. They can provide resources for support, including the text of the *Vidui*, the confession for the deathbed, and materials about ethical wills and living wills. In addition, if you wish to purchase a cemetery plot, please contact Evergreen Washelli.

*Beit Shalom Cemetery.* Usually, members of the Beth Shalom are buried at the Beit Shalom Cemetery, located at Abbey View Cemetery, 3601 Alaska Road, in Brier. Abbey View is run by Evergreen Washelli. Beit Shalom Cemetery is a Jewish cemetery and Jewish burial practices are observed. All plot purchases and burials at the cemetery must be approved by one of Beth Shalom’s rabbis.

WHEN DEATH OCCURS
The survivors of the deceased pass through two stages. The first is called *aninut*. This is the time between the death of a loved one and the burial. The focus of this time period is making funeral arrangements. The second stage is called *aveilut*. Aveilut begins at the conclusion of the burial and is when mourning for the deceased begins in earnest.

LAWS OF ANINUT: PRE-BURIAL
During the period of *aninut*, from the death until burial, the bereaved person is called an *onen*. The *onen* is excused from all religious obligations, except on Shabbat and Holidays. An *onen*, for example, does not engage in prayer or put on a *tallit* or *tefillin* on a weekday.
**Kevod HaMet.** Respect for the dead requires that several actions be taken immediately. The eyes of the deceased should be closed and all jewelry removed from the body. It is customary to cover the body.

**Dayan HaEmet and Keriah.** Those present at the time of death should recite the blessing “Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu, melech ha-olam, dayan ha-emet.” (Praised are You, Adonai, our God and Sovereign of the universe, the True Judge). Traditionally if the deceased is your parent, spouse, child or sibling, the ritual of *keriah* (tearing) is performed at the time of death (or at the time of learning of death) and prior to reciting the blessing. *Keriah* is the tearing of the mourner’s clothing as a symbolic action conveying the shock and grief at a loss. The tear is made of the left side for the death of parent and on the right side for all others. Today, most people tear before the beginning of the funeral with the help of a rabbi. The tear is made while standing. The torn ribbon/garment will be worn for all of *shivah*, except on Shabbat.

After the blessing “*dayan ha-emet,*” no further blessing should be made nor food eaten in the room containing the deceased. As a sign of respect, the body should not be left alone from the moment of death until the time of burial. Although it is not necessary to stay in the same room with the deceased, someone should be close by to watch over them while waiting for transportation to the funeral chapel. If death occurs in a hospital, a request should be made not to move the body to the morgue while waiting for transportation to the funeral chapel.

A member of the family or a friend should remain in or just outside the hospital room until the deceased is picked up. The funeral chapel will arrange for a *shomer* (guard), to be with the body until the funeral.
**Family and Friends.** Notifying family and friends is a difficult and time consuming task for which a lot of help is needed. Family, close friends and the Mitzvah Corps can make the necessary calls. To avoid having to make the calls twice, the time and place of the funeral service should be decided before such calls are made.

**Attorney and Doctor.** The deceased’s attorney and doctor should be contacted promptly. They may have information regarding burial instructions and provision for organ donations and may be able to answer other pertinent questions.

**CARE OF THE DECEASED PRIOR TO THE FUNERAL**

**Transportation.** Upon calling the Seattle Jewish Chapel, they will make arrangements to pick up and care for the body until the funeral.

**Preparation.** Jewish law teaches that the deceased is never to be left unattended. Therefore, after the deceased is transported to the Chapel, a *shomer* (guard) always stays with the deceased. The deceased is ritually washed and clothed in accordance with Jewish law. The body is placed inside a simple shroud. A man is normally buried with a *tallit* with one of the *tzitzit* cut off to symbolize that he is no longer required to comply with Jewish law. The same may be done for a woman if she wore a *tallit* during services. If the deceased is a woman who would like to be buried in a *tallit*, please inform the rabbis and the Jewish Chapel. Traditionally people have been buried in their own *tallit*, although it is not a requirement. It is customary not to be buried wearing shoes.

**Autopsies.** Jewish tradition holds in high esteem the saving of a life. Therefore, Conservative Judaism allows an autopsy if it is done to learn about a condition which could have hereditary implications or to provide information or benefits for others suffering from similar conditions.
Jewish law does not permit the body to be mutilated or in any way disfigured. Conservative Judaism therefore does not approve of autopsies when performed strictly for general medical knowledge or experimentation. Jewish law does, however, permit an autopsy when required by civil law, as determined by the county medical examiner.

**Organ Donation.** In the same context of the saving of a life, donation of body organs is generally permissible and highly encouraged on religious grounds. However, all unused tissue, blood and organs must be returned for burial with the body.

**Comfort During Aninut.** Friends and acquaintances of the bereaved are often uncertain about how to provide comfort during this stage. The Sages taught that you cannot comfort a person when their deceased lies before them. This is the basis of delaying rituals of comfort and condolence until after burial.

However, there are concrete acts that comforters can do, even before the burial. You can help the bereaved by planning and assisting with the *se’udat havra’ah*, the meal of consolation. The bereaved may need help contacting acquaintances concerning the funeral and other requirements of the hour. If you are a friend of the bereaved, we encourage you to be with them and available to help with their requests.
FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Site. Burial in the ground is the only procedure acceptable to Conservative Judaism. The body, one life has passed from it, is simply a part of nature and must be allowed to decay though natural processes and return to the earth: “For dust you are and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19). Cremation violates this natural process by substituting instant destruction of the body, and as such, cremation is strongly discouraged. Cremains may be buried in the Beit Shalom cemetery, but the rabbis will not perform a service for the burial in such cases. Burial should be in a Jewish cemetery or in one with a section reserved for Jews.

Timing. The funeral is held as soon as possible, usually the day after the death. However, short delays can be made to allow family and friends reasonable travel time to be present. The rabbis will work with the family regarding the date and time of the funeral; do not set a time for burial without first checking with a rabbi. Funerals are not permitted on Shabbat or Jewish holidays.

Published Notices. If there is sufficient time, the family may elect to place a funeral notice in the local newspapers. The Jewish Chapel can help with these arrangements. This should not be confused with an obituary (a newspaper article that describes the life of the deceased) or with a vital statistics listing (automatically placed by the county.) We also request that families provide an obituary for our monthly bulletin, the Beth Shalom Ruach.

Rabbi. A rabbi will want to meet with the family of the deceased in order to prepare for the funeral. The rabbi will use this occasion to begin the process of healing and remembering amongst the survivors. Family members are invited to provide recollections, including writings, photos, anecdotes and ethical wills.
Costs.

There are three cost categories associated with burial.

- Before or at the time of need, a plot must be purchased. Fees include the cost of the plot, title transfer, perpetual care of the grave, and preparation of the gravesite for the burial. All of these fees may be pre-paid. Contact Congregation Beth Shalom with any questions.

- After the funeral, Beth Shalom will send an invoice for the fees of the Seattle Jewish Chapel for funeral preparation. You will receive that invoice about 30 days after the burial.

- Later, the costs of acquiring and setting a monument to mark the gravesite will be incurred. Please see page 20 or contact the synagogue for more information.

Additional optional costs may include hiring of limousines, police motorcycle escorts and publication of notices.

The synagogue’s Cemetery Committee establishes all costs. There are separate price structures for Beth Shalom members, relatives of members, and non-members; please contact the synagogue with questions. A member of the cemetery committee will take you through the necessary preparations for burial. If finances are an issue, please inform the rabbis of your needs so they can sensitively help you to make arrangements as necessary.

**THE LEVAYAH: FUNERAL AND INTERMENT**

**Who should attend.** The levayah (funeral) service is intended to memorialize the deceased and to assist the bereaved in “letting go” by confronting the reality of death. Thus the levayah should be attended by the family and by friends of both the deceased and the deceased’s family. We recommend that children also attend the burial unless they are very young. Consider your child’s maturity when deciding, and consult a rabbi when in doubt.
**Location of the Levayah.** The *levayah* is conducted graveside, except for rare exceptions.

**Elements of the Service.** The service is conducted in the presence of the coffin. Out of respect to the deceased, the coffin is not open during the funeral service.

The funeral service opens with words from scripture, Rabbinic writings, and other appropriate selections. This is followed by the eulogy. The rabbi usually delivers the eulogy, after meeting with the family to discuss the themes or ideas to be included. A family member or friend may deliver a eulogy in addition to, or instead of, the rabbi. The eulogy should be reasonably brief and any praise should not be embarrassingly immodest or exaggerated. After the eulogy, the memorial prayer – *El Maleh Rachamim* – is chanted, and then the Mourner’s *Kaddish*.

**Pallbearers.** It is customary to select six people who were especially close to the deceased or to the family to serve as pallbearers. They may not be any of the immediate mourners (parent, child, spouse, or sibling). The pallbearers move the casket wherever required. The family may also appoint relatives and long-time friends as “honorary pallbearers” who will not carry the casket, but whose names will be read during the funeral services.

**Kevurah (Burial Service).** The coffin is taken by hearse to the cemetery. Once there, the pallbearers carry the coffin from the hearse to the grave, where in the presence of all attending, the officiating rabbi conducts the remainder of the service. This consists of a portion of Psalm 91, the lowering and covering of the coffin, and the recitation of the Mourner’s *Kaddish* by the mourners.
The entire family and others in attendance participate in covering the coffin and filling the grave with earth. This is considered a great mitzvah, and called “chesed shel emet,” “true kindness,” because it is a favor that can never be repaid. Each person should replace the shovel in the dirt when finished rather than passing it on to the next person. In so doing, one observes the custom of not passing the sorrow from one person to the next.

When the service is concluded, the mourners should be the first to leave the cemetery, passing through the shurot (two rows formed by those in attendance to offer condolences as the mourners pass through).

It is appropriate at this time to comfort the mourners with the traditional phrase: “HaMakom yinachem etchem betoch sh’ar avlei tziyon vi’rushalayim. (May the Omnipresent comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem).”

Following the service, everyone should ritually wash their hands. This may be done upon leaving the cemetery or prior to entering the home. At the home where the shivah is being observed, a pitcher of water should be available outside the entrance for those who have not yet washed.

Kohanim. At the time of the Temple, a kohen (priest) was considered ritually impure and unfit to serve in the Temple if the kohen came in contact with a dead body. Under this tradition, a kohen could only attend a funeral for his mother, father, wife, daughter, son, brother or unmarried sister. A kohen could not otherwise enter a cemetery or enclosed room where a body was present. Today, some kohanim enter a cemetery for a funeral, but some may remain on the paved road, not approaching any of the graves.
Flowers/Donations. Flowers are not customarily used at Jewish American funerals. Those who might otherwise send flowers should be encouraged to make a donation to a charity of particular significance to the deceased or the family. The charity of choice may be listed in the newspaper funeral notice or mentioned at the conclusion of the levayah.

AVIELUT AND NICHUMIM
MOURNING & CONDOLENCES
When the burial is complete, the focus shifts from kevod ha-met, the honoring of the deceased, to nichum avelim, the providing of comfort to the mourners. In Jewish tradition, we move through a phased process of mourning: the 7-day period of shivah, the 30-day period of sheloshim, the 12-month period of mourning for parents (yud bet chodesh), and subsequent remembrances such as yahrzeits and yizkor (memorial) services. The phases are consciously designed to allow time to accept our loss and gradually return to normal activities.

Mourners (Aveilim). The obligation of formal mourning is restricted to the relationships of spouse, parent, child and sibling. For the death of these relatives, a person “sits” shivah, recites the Mourner’s Kaddish, observes yahrzeit and attends yizkor (memorial) services. Traditionally, there are no obligations of formal mourning for grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, or nieces, nephews, or other relatives and friends. One may choose, however, to take on obligations of mourning for these people. We recommend that you discuss this with one of the rabbis. The practice of Beth Shalom views members as obligated to mourn non-Jewish kin in the same manner as Jewish kin. Although the funeral preferences of the non-Jewish kin should be respected, the mourning practices of a Jew mourning a non-Jewish relative should follow Jewish law.
**SHIVAH – THE FIRST SEVEN DAYS**

**Time Period.** Though “shivah” literally means seven, the shivah period is not exactly seven days. The day of the funeral counts as the first full day. The second day starts at sundown of the day of the funeral. The morning of the seventh day (rather than the full day) completes the regular shivah period. The Shabbat during the shivah period is observed as normal.

On the theory that public holidays must take priority over private grief, the occurrence of certain Jewish Holidays during the shivah period terminates the shivah observance. The timing and duration of the shivah period should be determined by a rabbi.

The end of shivah is marked by a short walk, usually around the block, which symbolizes the mourner’s emergence from intense mourning and beginning to return to society.

**Memorial Candles.** Traditionally, a seven day candle is lit immediately upon returning from the funeral and is kept burning throughout shivah. The candle’s flame symbolizes the everlasting influence of the soul of the deceased. These re-fillable candles can be provided by Congregation Beth Shalom.

**Seudat Havra’ah: Meal of Consolation.** The shivah period begins with the seudat havra’ah, the meal of consolation. Following the funeral, family and friends return to the home where the shivah is being observed. The meal is shared by all and should be prepared by friends and neighbors. The traditional meal includes bread and hard-boiled eggs, cooked vegetables (particularly lentils), and a beverage. These foods symbolize the cycles of life. Mourners should not feel compelled to entertain guests.
Mourners’ Activities. Mourners observe *shivah* at a designated residence, usually the home of the deceased or a closely related mourner. If possible, mourners stay there throughout the *shivah* period, but may return to their own homes to sleep.

During the *shivah* period, mourners are expected to ignore their normal activities and obligations and are excused from all work. In cases of genuine hardship or public responsibilities, exceptions may be made. Even in such cases, however, an effort should be made to observe at least the first three days of *shivah*. This should be discussed with a rabbi.

Because a human being has been lost, any vanity regarding the human form is barred during *shivah*. Normal concerns for personal appearance are set aside. Mirrors are covered, cosmetics are not used, shaving is forgone, and bathing is only done as necessary for personal hygiene.

During the *shivah* period, mourners traditionally avoid recreation, entertainment, and pleasurable activities (radio, television, reading for pleasure). Mourners also abstain from marital relations. Mourners traditionally sit on low benches and wear socks, slippers, or non-leather-soled shoes.

It is preferable to have friends or more distant relatives perform all household functions during this period. However, if necessary, mourners may cook for themselves and do light housekeeping.
**Shivah Minyan.** During shivah, many mourners choose to have daily worship conducted in their home. Thereby, the mourner is able to recite Kaddish. The shivah minyanim commence after burial and run until the morning of the seventh day. Traditionally, shivah minyanim are held for Shacharit, Minchah, and Maariv; in our community, shivah minyanim are usually convened in the evening for Minchah/Maariv. Whenever possible, it is appropriate for the mourner to lead the minyan. While the tefillin are not worn during the aninut period, they should be put on during shivah during the Shacharit service.

Minyan times should be set with the rabbi and announced at the funeral. You will need to obtain the briefcase of siddurim and kippot from the synagogue or have the Mitzvah Corps deliver them. A Torah scroll may also be brought to the home for the readings on Monday and Thursday. The Mitzvah Corps is also able to find congregants to lead services and chant from the Torah when necessary. The rabbis will make an effort to attend some but not all of the shivah minyanim.

Some congregants choose to have shivah minyanim in their homes for less than the full shivah period or only in the mornings or evenings, or may choose to attend daily minyanim at the synagogue. When congregants live a great distance from the synagogue and it is difficult to organize a shivah minyan in the home, it is possible for the shivah minyan to meet at the synagogue.

**Shabbat.** Unlike holidays, Shabbat does not shorten the shivah period. Mourning observances, however, are suspended. Services are not conducted in the home, and mourners should attend Shabbat services in the synagogue. The mourner removes the torn ribbon/garment for the duration of Shabbat. Shabbat Minchah/Ma’ariv services can easily be organized to take place at the synagogue when requested.
Role of Comforters During Shivah. Comforters fulfill the mitzvah of nichum aveilim, comforting the bereaved, by condolence visits to the home where shivah is being observed. They also participate in prayer services, which are customarily held in the home.

Because the mitzvah of comforting the bereaved falls on everyone in the community, it is appropriate for congregants to attend a shivah of a mourner, even if they do not know them. It has been our experience that mourners greatly appreciate the efforts of unacquainted congregants who come to help make the shivah minyanim in their homes. Such efforts by congregants engender enormous good will and plant the seeds of future friendship and fellowship.

Unlike the funeral, where the main function is to memorialize the deceased, the essence of shivah is to give comfort and support to the mourners.

According to tradition, the visitor should not initiate any greeting such as “Hello, How are you?” or “Goodbye”. The traditional greeting and parting words are the same words said at the conclusion of the burial: “HaMakom yinachem etchem betoch sh’ar avlei tziyon vi’rushalayim. May the Omnipresent comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.” During the visit it is appropriate to offer a hug or express a few words of sympathy.

The visitor should follow the mourner’s lead in conversation. Comforters should not feel compelled to be gloomy or unduly solemn. Neither should they trivialize the occasion by converting the condolence call into a party-like social event filled with jokes, business discussions, current events, or gossip. The visitor is there to lend support, not to entertain or be entertained.
Mourners often want to share or hear stories about the deceased and the deceased’s influence on others. While the funeral was aimed at “letting go” and accepting the reality of the death, the purpose of *shivah* is “holding onto” and incorporating into our lives the memories and positive influences of the deceased.

Comforters should not bring or send flowers, candy, liquor or other festive gifts. Instead, an appropriate way of expressing sympathy and friendship is to make a contribution to a charity or activity in which the deceased or the mourners have been involved. Bringing food or baked goods to the home is also very appropriate as it is traditional for friends to provide for the mourners’ daily needs during the *shivah* period. When bringing food, be sensitive to the observance of *kashrut*.

**SHELOSHIM – THE FIRST THIRTY DAYS**

*Sheloshim*. The portion of the 30-day period following the death that remains after the completion of *shivah* is called *sheloshim*. It is a time of reduced mourning. Its purpose is to provide a period of gradual transition from deep grief back to normal activities. Although the mourner returns to work at the end of *shivah*, restrictions continue against attending celebrations, entertainment events, and listening to music. Traditionally, a mourner does not receive an *aliyah* during this time.

*Daily Minyan*. After the conclusion of *shivah*, the mourner begins to attend daily *minyan* to recite Mourner’s *Kaddish*. Mourners attend *minyan* and recite *Kaddish* 11 months for a parent, and 30 days for all other relatives. Congregation Beth Shalom currently has a daily morning *minyan* and Monday evening *minyan*.

*Minyanim* at Beth Shalom are held weekday mornings at 7:00am; Sunday and holidays at 9:30am, and Monday evenings at 7:30pm. *Minyan* times can be confirmed by the office, in the Ruach or at bethshalomseattle.org.
Sheloshim Minyan. It is customary to recall and speak about a loved one on the 30th day of the death, and this is often done in the context of a minyan. This practice is particularly helpful for members who come home after sitting shivah outside of Seattle, as it enables members to hold a memorial service for their loved one among friends and associates locally. If you wish to hold a minyan to mark sheloshim, please contact one of our rabbis.

REMEMBRANCES

Hakamat Matzevah (Unveiling). It is customary to erect a headstone. The stone is usually set in place no sooner than 30 days but before 12 months following the funeral. There is no halachah (law) relating to settling headstone; usually local custom and family feeling prevail.

The headstone should be modest in design, and include the deceased’s name in Hebrew and English, the date of death (listing both the secular calendar and the Jewish calendar), the date of birth. It may also include a short inspirational inscription in Hebrew or English in memory of the deceased. Headstones may be obtained from Evergreen Washelli, (206) 362-5200, or through the Jewish Chapel, (206) 725-3067. They will be able to show you appropriate headstone patterns and inscriptions.

Yahrzeit (Ashkenazic)/Meldados (Sephardic). The anniversary of the death based on the Hebrew calendar is commemorated each year by observing the yahrzeit/meldados. A 24-hour memorial candle is lit in the home on the evening of the start of the Hebrew date. The mourner attends minyan at the synagogue on that date and recites the Mourner’s Kaddish.
The synagogue office will notify family members of the *yahrzeit* date, and the name of the deceased will be announced from the pulpit the Shabbat before the *yahrzeit*. (Beth Shalom uses only the term *yahrzeit* in its publications.) Please notify the synagogue office of which family members should receive notices. It is customary to fulfill some *mitzvah* in honor of the deceased while observing *yahrzeit*. This may include giving a donation to the synagogue or a charity in memory of the deceased, or studying Torah. It is also appropriate for family and friends to gather together and share memories.

**Yizkor.** *Yizkor* services are held in the synagogue four times a year: *Yom Kippur,* *Shemini Atzeret,* the 8th day of *Pesach,* and the 2nd day of *Shavuot.* *Yizkor* prayers are recited by those who have lost a parent, spouse, child, or sibling. There are also *yizkor* prayers for the martyrs of the Jewish people and those who perished in the Holocaust. Because we are all considered mourners for the martyrs and the victims of the Holocaust, the entire congregation is encouraged to remain in the sanctuary for *yizkor* prayers.

Beth Shalom publishes an annual *Yom Kippur Memorial Listing (Yizkor Memorial Book).* While this list is compiled automatically from member records, we invite you to contact the synagogue office if any changes or additions need to be made.
**Yad VaShem (Memorial Plaques).** The congregation provides the opportunity for a perpetual memorial through the placement of a Memorial Plaque in the Sanctuary. These plaques are lit during the *yahrzeit* of the deceased and on days when *yizkor* is recited. Please call the office to order a Memorial Plaque.

**AFTERLIFE**

Judaism’s primary emphasis is on how to live, rather than what happens after life. Nonetheless, at the time of mourning, it is natural to wonder about an afterlife. There is no single Jewish viewpoint regarding an afterlife. The philosopher Moses Maimonides cautioned that when we discuss the subject, we are like blind people trying to understand the nature of light. Some believe that we live on through our family, through memories others hold of us, and through our deeds. Others believe that the deceased live with God and will be restored to their bodies during the Messianic era: “The dust returns to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to God who gave it.” Ecclesiastes 3:2.

This topic is discussed more fully in:

- Sonsino and Syme, “What Happens After I Die?”
- Grollman, “Concerning Death: A Practical Guide for the Living” (pp. 128 – 137)
- Lamm, “The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning” (pp. 221-238)
- Isaacs and Olitzky, “A Jewish Mourner’s Handbook” (pp. 46 – 48)
- Gillman, “the Death of Death.”

**SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Coping with the death of a loved one is a difficult process. It need not be undertaken alone. As with all of the important lifecycle events, Judaism’s intent is that death is to be faced as a community. We hope that the support of the community, family, and friends will assist you and bring you comfort. We further hope that this booklet will assist you in understanding and following the practices associated with death and will provide some comfort.
MOURNER’S KADDISH

Yitgadal v’yitkadesh shemah Rabah. (amen)
B’alma di v’ra chirutei v’yamlich malchutei b’chayeichon
uv’yomeichon uv’chaye’i d’chol beit yisra’el ba’agala
uvizman kariv, v’imru amen. (amen)

Yehei shmei rabah mevarach l’alam ul’almei almaya.

Yitbarach v’yishtabach v’yitpa’ar v’yitromam v’yitnasei
v’yit’hadar v’yit’aleh v’yit’halal shemei d’kodesha berich hu.

L’eila min kol (between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: l’eila l’eila mikol)
birchata v’shirata tushb’chata v’nechemata da’amiran b’al-
ma v’imru amen. (amen)

Yehei shlama rabah min sh’maya v’chayim aleinu v’al kol yisra’el v’imru amen. (amen)

Oseh shalom (between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: oseh hashalom)
bimromav, hu ya’aseh shalom aleinu v’al kol yisra’el v’imru
This booklet was originally begun by JACQUES FAIGENBLUM z”l, and is dedicated to his memory and the memory of our beloved Beth Shalom members.

*May their souls be bound up in the bond of eternal life.*

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We thank Lynette Brodsky for the beautiful cover artwork.

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