

Blessed Memory

A Jewish Death, Dying & Mourning Guide



*Shelter me in the
shadow of your Wings.*

Viddui



TEMPLE BETH HATFILOH

— A CENTER FOR JEWISH LIFE —

Courtesy of the Chevra Kadisha. 5779/2019
Temple Beth Hatfiloh in Olympia, Washington

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Chevra Kadisha: Holy Society

Our local Chevra Kadisha supports Jewish funerary preparations, interment ceremonies and bereavement traditions. Contact TBH for help: 360-754-8519.

Our Historic Cemetery & Family Cemetery at Masonic Memorial Park

The TBH Historic Cemetery, created in 1857, is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Washington and is reserved for Jewish burial. The TBH Family Cemetery permits the burial of non-Jewish partners of Jewish community members. Both cemeteries are located inside the Masonic Memorial Park in Tumwater. See page 7 for details.

Our Memorial Plaque by Artist Simon Kogan

The beautiful, brass TBH Memorial Plaque, located in the temple, serves as a permanent memorial to our community members and loved ones. It was created by Olympia sculptor Simon Kogan to serve as a permanent artistic memorial. See page 35 for information.

Our Rabbi Seth Goldstein

Leads our congregation with a dynamic and compassionate focus on Jewish death and dying awareness, preparedness, customs and education. Rabbi Goldstein serves as our Chevra Kadisha Advisor and as Executive Editor for Blessed Memory.

A Note About Sources

Blessed Memory is a mosaic created and compiled from many sources, including the “cultural fabric” of death and dying handbooks from Jewish congregations across the nation and Canada. The Temple Beth Israel guidebook “Treasure Each Day” from Eugene, Oregon served as our foundation. We edited the source material to align closely with our congregation and rewrote sections or drafted new pages about Jewish death practices to resonate within our progressive Jewish community.

Gratitude to these congregants who helped create “Blessed Memory.”

Lisa Brodoff Contributor, Sonja Dordal Editor, Hilary Hauptman Contributor, Oscar Soule, Contributor and Leslie Shore Ph.D, Editor/Writer and Contributor.

Downloadable digital copy of “Blessed Memory” at: bethhatfiloh.org

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Introduction by Rabbi Seth Goldstein

We know that death is a part of life, and facing the death of our loved ones is one of the hardest experiences to confront. Our Jewish tradition gifts us with a rich tapestry of practices and customs that allow us to not only mourn and heal, but to do so in community. Our traditions hold us through this most difficult of passages.

Jewish customs around death and dying serve to both honor the dead and care for the living. They are both ancient and wise, and teach us that death and mourning is not an event but a process. We honor these traditions not only because they have been passed down to us, but because in many ways they “work.”

While we may rationally know of the Jewish approach to death and grief, at the time of loss we may find ourselves lost and confused, needing support and seeking answers. **This booklet is meant to serve as a guide to Jewish mourning practices as well as a resource to understanding both the spiritual and the practical process of mourning.**

When death first visits a Jewish home, there are arrangements to be made. The breadth of decisions that need to be made and tasks that need to be performed in preparation for a burial, a funeral, or others, can seem overwhelming. This booklet includes a “First Steps Checklist,” a list of local resources in the Olympia area—as well as information about our Jewish cemetery—and a glossary to explain Jewish end of life terms. It covers Jewish practice around preparing the body of a loved one, including that most sacred and intimate of practices of Tahara—ritual washing.

After a funeral or memorial, the journey of mourning begins. This booklet includes a chronological overview of the first year following death in the “Bereavement Stages in Order” section. It covers the tasks that are required by loved ones immediately after death, sitting shiva, reciting Mourner’s Kaddish, observing Shloshim, through the unveiling of the headstone at the first Yahrzeit, one-year later, and the continued annual observance of the Yahrzeit, the anniversary of death.

And recognizing our commitment to diversity and inclusivity, this guide includes sections on cremation and Tahara for the trans community, for example. We welcome constructive feedback and suggestions on ways to serve the needs of our community members.

Several of our community members poured their heart into this booklet to serve as a helpful guide for a time when we need the most support. I commend and thank them all. And while we may reach for it at the time of loss, I would encourage you to read through this guide when you are not facing death, so you can grow in your learning and be more prepared when the time does come. May we continue to support one another, especially in our journeys of mourning.

L’shalom,
Rabbi Seth Goldstein

First Steps to Take Following Death

- ___ Call 911, if death occurs at home.
- ___ Call Hospice, if palliative care was assigned.
- ___ Call Rabbi Seth Goldstein at TBH: 360-754-8519.
- ___ Was the Tahara ritual requested by the deceased?
- ___ If Tahara is requested: decide whether to use the traditional tachrichim (shrouds) that TBH stocks or special clothing from home.
- ___ Contact your Funeral Home (see page 7.)
 - ___ Decide about burial or cremation.
 - ___ Choose a wooden casket or an urn.
- ___ Purchase Burial Plot at TBH, through main office: 360-754-8519.
- ___ Do you want Rabbi Goldstein to Officiate?
- ___ Burial at TBH Historic Cemetery? (*Burial Purchase Agreement must be signed.*)
- ___ Select Type of Service:
 - ___ Funeral at TBH followed by Graveside Burial
 - ___ Graveside Service and Burial
 - ___ Memorial Service
 - ___ Chapel for Ceremonies at Funeral Home
- ___ Obtain a Death Certificate. Make several copies.
- ___ Write an Obituary: for on-line legacy sites, newspapers and historic record. Funeral Home staff is experienced and can assist you.
- ___ Contact Family, Friends and Colleagues to Attend Services.

Personal Notes: _____

_____.

Glossary: Jewish End of Life Terms

Aninut: stage immediately following death and prior to burial.
Aron: coffin or casket.
Aveilut: status of being a mourner.
Avel, Aveilim: mourner, mourners.
Beit HaChayim: house of life, sometimes used as the term for the cemetery.
Chevrah Kadisha: “Holy Society” for burial, performs Tahara, helps mourners.
Chesed Shel Emet: acts of true loving kindness, without repayment.
Choleh, Cholim: ill person, ill persons.
Goses, HaGoses: a dying person.
Halachah: Jewish law.
HaMet: the deceased.
Halvayat HaMet: accompanying the deceased with respect and honor.
Hesped: a eulogy contemplating the deceased.
Kaddish Yatom: Mourners’ Kaddish prayer.
Kavod HaMet: honoring/respecting the dead.
Keriah: tearing/rending of the garment, signifies the “rip in the fabric of life.”
Kever: the grave.
K’vurah: burial. Mourners shovel dirt onto the casket of the deceased.
Levayah: Funeral Hebrew term. Literally “accompanying” to burial.
Matzevah: gravestone at site of burial, unveiled on “One Year Anniversary.”
Mayim Cayim: living waters (especially relevant in Tahara).
Meitah, Meit or Meyt: the dead person (female/male/gender neutral).
Minhag: custom.
Minyan, Minyanim: quorum of 10 persons assembled for ritual purposes.
Nichum: comfort, comforting.
Seu’dah havra’ah: Meal of consolation for mourners following the funeral.
Shana: 11 months after Sheloshim.
Sheloshim: First 30 days of mourning after funeral, including Shiva.
Shiva Minyan: Prayer quorum. 10 Jews who recite Kaddish.
Shemira/Shomer: Watching over the dead. “Guardian.”
Tachrichim: Burial shrouds of natural fibers that are often linen.
Tahara: Ancient Jewish water cleansing ritual with liturgy.
Tallith: Prayer Shawl.
Tehillim: Psalms before the funeral by group of friends.
Yarzheit: Anniversary of Death. Headstone unveiling on 1st Yarzheit.
Yizkor: Memorial Prayer.
Zichrona l’vracha: (feminine) May Her Memory Be for a Blessing.
Zichrono l’vracho: (masculine) May His Memory Be for a Blessing.
Zichorneh l’vracheh: (neutral) May Their Memory Be for a Blessing.

Funeral Home List Olympia, Lacey & Tumwater

We have worked with several local funeral homes including: Funeral Alternatives, Mills & Mills and Forest/Woodlawn. Our Chevra Kadisha performs Tahara rites at the Funeral Alternatives location in Lacey near Jubilee. We have also practiced Tahara at other funeral homes by special and prior arrangement. Each funeral home identifies a funeral director who is your point of contact for your ceremony and services.

Funeral Alternatives Lacey

360-489-6562
2830 Willamette Dr. NE, Suite G.
Lacey, WA
funeralalternatives.org

Funeral Alternatives Tumwater

360-523-2489
455 North St. SE
Tumwater, WA
funeralalternatives.org

Mills & Mills Funeral Home and Memorial Park

(360) 216-4352
5725 Littlerock Road SW
Tumwater, WA
dignitymemorial.com

Woodlawn/Forest Funeral Home

360-943-6363
2501 Pacific Ave
Olympia, WA
woodlawn-funeralhome.com

The Historic Jewish Cemetery

TBH Family Cemetery, Masonic Memorial Park in Tumwater

TBH owns two cemeteries located inside the Masonic Memorial Park in Tumwater. We own the oldest Jewish cemetery in Washington, established in 1857. The TBH Historic Cemetery is reserved for Jewish burial. Adjacent, TBH Family Cemetery connects to the Historic Cemetery and permits burial of non-Jewish partners of Jewish community members. Masonic Memorial Park, 455 North Street SE Tumwater, WA 98501.

How to Make Cemetery Arrangements

1. **Buy a Cemetery Plot.** The “Agreement to Purchase a Cemetery Plot” must be signed and payment made, before burial can commence. Call Temple Beth Hatfiloh to purchase one: 360-754-8519.
2. **Transport and Burial.** Contact your chosen funeral home to arrange for transport and burial. A casket can be chosen and arrangements made for delivery of the body, at the proper time for burial. The choice of funeral homes is left to mourners; however, we have used both Funeral Alternative locations in Lacey and Tumwater with success.
3. **Tahara.** Traditional washing and dressing rites over the body, by our Chevra Kadisha, is chosen by many mourners. There is no formal charge but a donation to TBH is appropriate. Chevra Kadisha means Holy Society. We stock natural burial shrouds and a limited supply of pine coffins for burial. If Tahara is requested please contact the Rabbi directly: 360-754-8519. Tahara is performed at the Funeral Alternatives branch in Lacey.
4. **Opening and Closing of Grave, Concrete Liner.** If the Rabbi or funeral home has not made this arrangement, contact the Masonic Memorial Park to arrange for the opening and closing of the grave, as well as a concrete liner as required by law. There are costs for all three steps. Contact Terry Harper at Masonic Memorial Park, 360-357-6232.
5. **Officiant.** Mourners traditionally contact Rabbi Seth Goldstein to officiate. He can: help coordinate funeral home, ritual preparation of the body, cemetery arrangements, and scheduling of burial. Contact TBH directly to request the Rabbi: 360-754-8519 or email: rabbi@bethhatfiloh.org. The Officiant will expect payment and the amount can be “worked out.” There is no fee for TBH members but some people choose to donate to the Rabbi’s Discretionary Fund.

Jewish End of Life Practices

Brief Review of Bereavement Stages in Order

Avel: a Jewish Mourner

A Jewish mourner is one who has just lost a father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister or child. A Jewish mourner is called an *avelut*. The formal mourning structure is called upon for immediate family. Our traditions are ancient foundations that support us when death comes to a Jewish home.

Aninut: Between Death and Burial

The period of time is called *aninut* and it is the liminal space (in-between) from the “moment of death” to the funeral. During this phase the mourner or *onen* is excused from formal religious duties except arranging the funeral, burial or disposition. At this stage, people often feel shock, numbness, anger, sadness and survivors may even seek reasons to comprehend the death. An *onen* should not be expected to undertake mundane chores or tasks during these early hours of loss. Some mourners recite The Shema daily as part of their grieving practices during *aninut*, while others engage in meditative or contemplative practices. This is also a good time for friends and community members to begin to arrange for meals to be delivered to the home between now and the end of the Shiva period.

Shmira: Guarding the Body

This is a Jewish custom that has ancient roots, and for those who strictly follow Halacha – Jewish Law, it is very important. *Shmira* literally means, “guarding,” and it involves having somebody near the met (the body of the deceased) until the time of burial. Traditionally, the *Shomer*, or guardian, reads from the book of Psalms or other Jewish texts. While some of the reasons for *Shmira* have become less relevant in our time (fear of wild beasts, thieves, or demons) there are some families and groups of friends who want to perform this mitzvah for their loved ones, or ask the Chevra Kadisha to coordinate this task.

With modern laws about refrigeration, funeral homes providing physical security for the met and holding normal business hours—it has become more of a symbolic act. A *Shomer* might sit in a room in the funeral home outside the refrigerated section. This opens up *Shmira* to the possibility of new interpretations: speaking to the soul of the met in one’s heart, sending love, gratitude and wishes for peace of spirit. This spiritual “guarding” practice can be done from anywhere: in one’s home or while on meditative trek in nature, from bodies of water. This aids survivors in focusing more on the person who lived and less on the empty body left behind.

Levayah: The Funeral

Jewish tradition is to bury the dead within 24-hours in a plain wooden box or as soon as possible. The funeral typically occurs at the synagogue or cemetery during a graveside service. The service typically includes readings from Jewish texts, a eulogy and the *El Maley Rachamim* (God Full of Compassion) prayer.

Avelut: Mourner

After the funeral, a Jewish mourner is known as an *avelet* (woman), an *avel* (man) or an *avelah* (gender neutral). One is a mourner, by obligation for parents, children, siblings or spouses. When someone is said to be “avelut” we understand them to be formally, a mourner.

Returning from Cemetery

Immediately on returning from the cemetery, mourners should be greeted with a *Meal of Consolation* prepared by their extended family and/or community. It is traditional to place a pitcher of water, a bowl and towels outside the door of the house for ritual hand washing.

Shiva

Jewish tradition offers recommendations for re-entry into normal life. The first week after the funeral is known as *shiva* (literally, “seven”). Mourners are treated with the utmost care and respect. Their needs are met by the community through spiritual and emotional support. Friends, relatives and congregants bring food for the household. During this time, mourners remain at home and a service is held daily (often at night) in the home where mourners recite *Kaddish*. Mourners are encouraged to join the congregation on Shabbat to say Kaddish.

Sheloshim: 30 Days of Mourning

First 30 days of mourning after the funeral—including Shiva. The mourner may return to work but doesn’t engage in public entertainment. Formal mourning ends except for those mourning parents. Many people choose to mourn losses other than parents for the full eleven months. Psychologically and emotionally, mourning may continue, and it is wise to recognize this truth and honor the rhythm of one’s own bereavement. Some people may wish to mark the end of sheloshim with a special minyan at which the mourner talks about the deceased. If there is a public memorial service, it is often held at the end of shloshim.

Jewish End of Life Funerary Preparations

Aninut: Ways to Help the Mourner in the “Between Time”

In the approach to the funeral, friends should not completely take over the funeral arrangements; that is the task of the survivor. Friends may help in other ways: driving or accompanying your friend to make arrangements, taking care of children, or picking up family members at the airport. Your help may be needed to cancel appointments that the survivors, or the deceased, will not be keeping. Above all, you can offer your support and presence. A silent hug or a helping gesture, are worth far more than words at this time of peak stress. Your concern and kindness are of immeasurable value and platitudes are unnecessary and are sometimes compelled by public discomfort in the face of death.

Aron: the Coffin

Burial traditionally takes place in an unlined wooden coffin, or Aron, with no metal hinges, nails, or fasteners. Wooden pegs enjoin the planks and the handles are natural rope. Simplicity is emphasized to allow the effects of decomposition to return us “to dust.” Elaborate coffins are seen as undue expense and display. In modern Israel the dead are usually wrapped only in a shroud and lowered into the ground on a bed of reeds without a casket. The simplicity of the coffin speaks to the inherent equality of all people and to the stark reality of death. Green burial is also possible in our community by special arrangement with Funeral Alternatives (see page 7).

Viewing

Viewing is traditionally not a part of Jewish custom. However, prior to closing the coffin, private family viewing can be helpful in facing the reality of death. To look upon the deceased is seen as disrespectful, creating an unequal relationship, as you are looking upon someone who cannot look back at you. During the funeral ceremony, viewing the body is not harmonious with the principles of simplicity and dignity. In some cases, however, viewing is essential to a healthy grieving process—especially for distant relatives who rarely saw the deceased. Some people may feel that children are too young to look upon the face of death. In some cases, however, children who have a strong need for closure may find viewing the met a helpful experience. The emphasis during the service is on memories of the life of the deceased, not their death.

Tahara: Purity Before Burial

Tahara is an ancient water ritual that literally means purity and is performed on the body (*the met, meit or meyt*) after death in which a continuous stream of water is poured to symbolize running water. Some 24-quarts of water must flow in a continuous stream—without interruption—reminiscent of the living waters of the *mikve* (ritual bath) that honors occasions of transition. Following the washing and liturgy, practitioners dress the *met* in shrouds and gently place it in the casket (*aron*) to be ready for the funeral. Tahara is performed by trained members of the Chevra Kadisha to honor the miraculous vessel that once housed the soul. Care is taken to preserve the dignity of the deceased person and practitioners work in the spirit of confidentiality, compassion and tranquility. Tahara experiences are confidential and the personal identity is protected in community.

Temple Beth Hatfiloh uses our own Tahara manual created in community with inclusive language throughout. Tahara is a *Last Mitzvah* or *Chesed Shel Emet*: a kindness that can never be repaid because the person is dead.

Tahara Choices for Transgender Persons: Meyt

For many millennia, Jewish tradition held that a dying person's gender needed to match the gender of the Tahara practitioners. An exception was allowed under Jewish law: female practitioners could perform rites for men when necessary. At Temple Beth Hatfiloh, an inclusive community, Trans individuals may choose, in advance, which type of team they want assigned to correspond with their preferred gender identity and expression. It is important to designate such wishes in writing and store extra copies (digital and paper) in secure locations that can be accessed by others following death. Please contact Rabbi Seth Goldstein directly with any concerns or wishes you or your loved one may have, in preparation for Tahara. These will be communicated to the Team Leader before the ritual. TBH adheres to Washington state law that empowers individuals to choose their own arrangements (RCW 68.50.160). The law stipulates the order in which decisions about legal "disposition" can be made, if final wishes were not documented (See p. 36).

Tachrichim: Burial Shrouds or Clothing

The tradition is to dress the dead in simple white shrouds, called *tachrichim*. The vast majority of the time the shrouds are 100 percent natural fiber such as cotton or linen. This is in keeping with the Jewish belief that a funeral should be simple and modest. Such services reinforce the Jewish concept that we are all equal before God. The plain linen or cotton shroud reminds us of the garment worn by the High Priest as he entered the *Holy of Holies in the Temple* on Yom Kippur.

Another option for some is to be buried in their *kittel*, the simple linen robe worn for one's wedding, Seder, and on Yom Kippur. Additionally, some people are buried with their own *tallit* (altered by the removal of one fringe).

The Levayah: The Funeral

Certain decisions will have to be made almost immediately. In consultation with the Rabbi, you may arrange a time for the service and plan for a cemetery plot. Visit the funeral home, select a coffin and decide for the interment. An obituary may need to be written and usually the funeral home will assist with that task. Notify family and friends. TBH will send out an email announcement if you wish. If you have written anything in advance you may take it to the funeral home along with a photograph to appear in the newspaper or digital memory pages on the Internet. Decide which type of service you want: funeral, graveside or memorial service. If you need help with meals, child-care or with preparatory errands, please notify Rabbi Goldstein of your needs.

K'vurah: Burial

According to Jewish law, the deceased is to be buried as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours of death. Prompt burial has psychological benefits. The funeral, the act of burial, and the first recitation of the Kaddish, which takes place at the grave, are of great value in beginning the mourning process. Long delays between death and burial put strain on the mourners and it can leave survivors in emotional limbo. Every effort should be made to expedite the burial. Delays are permitted in order to honor the dead, for example: if we must wait for a proper coffin to arrive, or for relatives to travel to the funeral, or for legal reasons. Traditionally, Jews return the body to the earth and do not embalm or cremate the dead. The body is allowed to decompose in a natural way, in tune with the insight "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). The body is actually understood in Jewish traditions to have been loaned to us in life and it is to be returned to the earth as it was born. Any practices that preserve or are invasive to the body violates the tenet K'vod Ha met or respect for the dead. Nonetheless some Jews do, for a variety of reasons, choose cremation. These are very personal decisions and treated with consideration and respect at TBH. The Chevra Kadisha honors the individual wishes of community members while also honoring our lasting traditions, whenever possible.

Types of Services & Ceremony Elements

Generally, a funeral service is held before burial, the casket or coffin is present and a graveside service at the cemetery. A memorial service may be held any time after burial or cremation has occurred. Some people hold a private graveside funeral immediate after death and then they hold a memorial in community. This is often practiced if the deceased was a public figure or a beloved community member and there are many mourners who wish to share stories and tributes. You may wish to explore with Rabbi Goldstein, which practices to incorporate into your mourning practices.

Funeral Service

The location and content of the service can vary. The funeral service can be held at the funeral home or on occasion in the synagogue. It is possible to have the funeral in a private home if that is desired. The funeral service takes place in the presence of the closed casket. The service consists at a minimum of the recitation of a Psalm, a eulogy, and the El Maley Rachamim prayer. The mourner's Kaddish is not said until the burial at the cemetery. According to Jewish custom, flowers are symbolic of rejoicing and are discouraged at a funeral or house of mourning. If someone unaware of Jewish custom should send or bring flowers, it is important to be appreciative of the kind intention. You may keep them, donate them to a medical facility, or you may wish to ask someone who is not "in mourning" to take them.

Graveside Service

Funerals are generally followed immediately by a graveside service. Some people choose to have the entire service at the graveside. This includes the eulogy, entire funeral liturgy or an abbreviated service. A canopy is available in case of rain. The choice to hold a graveside service expresses the value Judaism places on simplicity and it eliminates the expense of renting space for an indoor funeral. A separate funeral service indoors, however, may be desirable for many reasons, including inclement weather, too many mourners for the cemetery or to utilize the cemetery's PA system.

Memorial Service

A memorial service is performed without the body present. This is often conducted after a private burial ceremony, in cases of cremation, or if the person died or was buried in a separate location. A memorial service may be held: in the synagogue, at a private home, a funeral home, or in some larger space, such as an auditorium, if many people will attend and multi-media is part of the ceremony.

Hesped: Eulogy

Eulogy means: a good word. It is not an attempt to write an entire biography of the person, but to convey the personality, milestones, personal stories and accomplishments of the deceased. This is an honest assessment rather than a glorification. The eulogizer also tries to express the sense of loss experienced by the survivors. The Rabbi or the lay funeral service leader, who will generally give the eulogy, spends time with the family even if they were well acquainted with the deceased. This process is valuable for the writing of an appropriate eulogy and important for the mourners themselves. A grieving family often experiences some degree of healing through sharing memories of the deceased. Eulogies may also be delivered by friends or family members.

Kria: the Final Tear

Death rends the fabric of life. The ritual of *kria*, or tearing the clothing, takes place before the funeral. This is probably the oldest mourning ritual we have and it dates back to the earliest *Tenach*. Some actually tear a garment; others tear a black ribbon, which has been attached to the mourner's garment. The tradition is to tear on the left (close to the heart) for parents and children, and on the right for spouse and siblings. After we tear, we recite the blessing "Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu melech ho- olam, dayan ha-emet. "Praised are You, Eternal our God, the true Judge." Alternatively, we may recite: "Adonai natan v'Adonai lakach. Yehi shem Adonai mevorach." God has given; God has taken. May God's name be blessed" The torn ribbon or garment is worn through the shiva period and some people wear it for the full 30 days (sheloshim).

K'vurah: in Burial Ceremony

Graveside funerals include the rite of shoveling fresh dirt or "earth" on the casket as a mitzvah that honors the reality of death. It is a mitzvah for each individual to assist in covering the casket by shoveling earth into the grave. The sound of earth striking the coffin can be stark and harsh; it is a very difficult moment for immediate survivors. For many this sound is the first moment of clear realization that their loved one has died. It is the beginning of acceptance and then healing. The first part of the burial service is the procession of carrying the coffin from the hearse to the grave. At least six pallbearers are chosen for closeness to the family, or members of the graveside minyan can perform this mitzvah as community members. The remainder of the service consists of these elements: Psalm 23, the El Maley Rachamim prayer, the lowering of the aron into the ground, the covering of the coffin with earth, and the recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish.

Burying our own dead is the last act of *chesed* or loving-kindness that we can perform for the deceased. Judaism teaches us that anything we do to accompany the dead to burial is an act of *chesed* because it is a kindness for which we can never be thanked or repaid. In cases where there has not been a funeral service, the eulogy may be delivered at the graveside. According to Jewish custom, it is only after burial or interment that the bereaved person formally leaves the stage of “survivor” and becomes a mourner.

Mourner's Kaddish

After covering the coffin with earth, the mourner recites the Kaddish. The Mourner's Kaddish does not focus on death but speaks of the majestic power of G-d. Perhaps the ancient rabbis understood that in the face of death one is sometimes likely to deny the existence of G-d. We recite the Kaddish to reaffirm our belief in the Creator. We express our feelings of loss and the hope that G-d will fill the void that has been created in the world and in our hearts. Some people believe the Kaddish is also said for the benefit of the soul of the deceased to help it on its journey. After the funeral it is customary to say Kaddish at every service you attend during the eleven months of mourning. Traditionally, Kaddish is only said for immediate family, but you may say Kaddish for whomever you wish. Some people undertake the mitzvah of saying Kaddish for a person without family or whose relatives will not recite the Kaddish. Also, on occasion, the whole congregation rises for Kaddish to honor the memory of a leader or a person of significance to the community. It is the custom for many at Temple Beth Hatfiloh to rise for the Kaddish even if that person is not a mourner but wants to extend support to the community.

“Only with a collective voice is there enough energy to uplift the lonely mourner, the angry mourner, the mourner even too hurt to say ‘Amen.’ The Minyan chorus implicitly reassures the wounded soul, “You are not alone” (Anita Diamant, *Saying Kaddish* 16).

Children at the Funeral

People often wonder if children should be present at a funeral. There is no reason, according to our tradition, for a child to be excluded. Whether a child attends is a family decision based on the child's maturity and wishes. It is important to realize that children also have feelings of loss, as well as all the other emotions of grief. Furthermore, their inexperience may lead them to misinterpret the tensions and grief present in the house and to conclude that they are somehow at fault.

It is important for an adult to take the time to: explain what has happened, listen to children's feelings and dispel mistaken conclusions they may have drawn. If you deny children the opportunity to attend a funeral, it may suggest to them that their feelings don't count. Many adults remember with anger and resentment such exclusion when they were children. If your children can learn from you that grief is a necessary experience that humans endure in the face of death.

The reality is not easy, but it may be better in the long run than the fantasies and imaginings of an excluded child. If you are the mourner, you might want to have a close friend near you to help with your children during the funeral itself, so that you won't be distracted from your own grieving. Please do not push the children aside, or send them away during shiva. It is important to allow children the space to express their grief in their own ways, even if those ways may contradict our own sensibilities. We can help our children by explaining what is happening and by allowing them to participate if they so choose.

Sitting Shiva

Shiva literally means “seven” during which the mourners traditionally remain home for a full week, beginning after the burial. The shiva period gives the mourners time to withdraw from the ordinary world to both integrate and accept their loss. During this time, a service is held daily (often in the evening) at the home, so mourners may recite the Kaddish. Judaism forbids sitting shiva on Shabbat or other Jewish holidays. The tradition is that the Mourner's Kaddish is said in the presence of a minyan to insure mourners are surrounded by members of the community. Friends and relatives often drop by to visit and bring some food for the household. It is traditional to include round foods (such as hard boiled eggs, lentils, bagels, round challah) that are symbolic of the wholeness of life. When a mourner has no family or may have relocated without family or friends, the role of the community becomes central to that person's healing. People are needed to attend minyanim, bring meals, help with dishes, assist with childcare and pet care. At the close of shiva, friends or family traditionally accompany the mourner for a brief walk (around the block) to symbolize a return to daily living.

For the Shiva Visitor: Supporting the Mourner

There are old world Jewish traditions in a shiva home that include: the covering of mirrors, the refusal of baths, the rejection of shaving, as well as mourners “not changing” clothes or applying cosmetics. The aim of these practices is to concentrate the focus on the spiritual and emotional aspects of loss. Through prayer services and recitations of the mourner's Kaddish— and through conversations in shiva—family and community honor the blessed memory of the deceased.

For visitors, there is something of an art to paying a condolence call. Taking a cue from the mourner(s) will help you understand what the family needs. The most meaningful mitzvah during shiva observance is *your presence*. Consider the emotional tenor of the mourner as your cue. Does this person display an inclination to talk or be silent? Does this person need to weep or laugh? Superficial conversation might be common practice in some communities, however, the role of the visitor is not to distract mourners from their grief process as it extends suffering.

Mourners may reminisce about experiences with the loved one by sharing old photographs and journals. Your own memories, stories, and reflections about the dead person may provide a complement to those of the mourners. Obviously, if your comments would be indiscreet or unbecoming, this is not the time to share them. The support we give each other at such times benefits everyone, mourner and comforter alike. Sometimes one may find one's own feelings rising in the process of paying a shiva call. Grief is part of the human condition and sharing our mourning highlights our equality in the face of death and loss. At the same time, it is important to remember that the mourner's needs are your primary focus and that shiva is a crucial role in their bereavement journey. If the mourner wants to talk, the kindest thing you can say is: "Please tell me about your _____ (brother, sister, cousin, sibling, partner, spouse)." This opens up the communication channel for memory and gratitude, both of which aid the mourner during bereavement. It is especially important to remember grieving individuals at holiday times—which may be particularly poignant. At such times a visit, card or invitation to accompany them to Shabbat services may be an uplifting experience, especially during the First Year following death or on Yahrzeits.

For the Shiva Mourner: Supporting the Visitor

As a mourner it is helpful to note that you are not entertaining as a host during shiva, even though people are visiting your home. You do not need to offer refreshments because visitors should supply them. You do not need to engage in conversation if you prefer to be silent or alone. You are excused, during shiva from the conventional demands of politeness and hospitality. Feel free to shape the content of the shiva observance to support your own needs. That may include asking for specific people to "sit shiva" or asking for chosen prayers, poems, or ritual foods. The gathering provides the mourners a chance to tell their story and share their grief to learn more about the deceased. It affords an opportunity for the community to support the mourner and learn about the Jewish bereavement process itself. The end of the shiva period initiates a new phase in the life of mourners. One custom is to walk around the block at noon on the last day to symbolize the transition. As the mourners re-enter the world of work and community, their personal reality remains radically altered by their loss. It may take months, or even years, for mourners to feel complete in their bereavement process. Our tradition provides further guidelines for what comes next.

Sheloshim: First Month After the Funeral

As mentioned on page 10 of this guide, people observe a further mourning period known as shloshim for 30 days, counting forward from the day of the funeral. More on Sheloshim on page 20.

An Overview: The First Year of Bereavement Order & Timeline of Observances for the Mourner

During the first year, mourners are encouraged to say the Kaddish daily—the prayer is also known as the mourner’s Kaddish. In our community it may be difficult to find nine other adults to hold a daily service. In larger cities, congregations are able to do this with more ease. At Temple Beth Hatfiloh we encourage mourners to say Kaddish weekly, at Shabbat services, on Friday nights where a minyan can readily be found. Judaism insists that Kaddish be recited only with a minyan. Saying Kaddish is valuable, but coming to services and taking time to reflect on the deceased and the mourning process offers a period when mourners know they will have time and space to grieve.

Drawing mourners into community to worship helps them return to the rhythms of life, and to the realization that others are sustaining similar losses. Attending a shiva minyan during this year often calming and provides opportunities to recite Kaddish. If you are unable to say Kaddish with a minyan, you can create your own daily or weekly ritual as part of your first year mourning. Following the funeral, the formal mourning period begins and the bereavement process continues to unfold. This is difficult to remember in our fleeting, fractured culture in which immediate gratification is prized rather than the healing journey.

“We expect to be healed without acknowledging the rupture. We expect to arrive at our destination with no journey. But the process of healing requires a journey for which there is no shortcut. It requires us to acknowledge the variety of emotions which accompany loss. Recognizing and expressing these difficult and varied feelings is the only way back from the world of mourning” (Anne Brener, *Mourning and Mitzvah*, 22).

Sheloshim: (Thirty)

Following Shiva we observe a further mourning period, *sheloshim*, which means thirty, for 30 days. At the conclusion of sheloshim, the formal mourning period ends, except for those who are mourning parents. The choice of how long to mourn is a personal one that will arise out of the nature of the relationship and one’s own way of handling loss. If there is to be a public memorial service it is usually held at the conclusion of sheloshim. The memorial service may include several speakers and music or poetry that might not have been included in the funeral service.

Shana: 11 months following Sheloshim

During the first year, mourners may wish to say the Kaddish daily. Mourners are welcomed and recognized at Shabbat services on Friday nights and Saturday mornings where Kaddish is recited. Not only is saying the mourner's Kaddish valuable but coming to Shabbat services and taking time out of the week to reflect on the loved one, offers a special period when the mourner knows they will have time and space to reflect. Drawing the mourners into the community to worship may help them return to life, and to the realization that others are sustaining similar losses or already have lost family members and can support you.

The Kaddish

After the funeral it is customary to say the Kaddish at every service you attend during mourning. Traditionally, Kaddish is only said for immediate family, but you may say Kaddish for whomever you wish. Some people undertake the mitzvah of saying Kaddish for a person who left no family.

The Grave Marker

The gravestone or monument (*matzevah*) can be selected shortly after the funeral, though Jews traditionally wait until after the eleventh month of mourning to hold the unveiling. Traditionally the text on the stone includes the English name and dates of birth and death. Some may wish to include the Hebrew name and the Hebrew dates of birth and death as well as a short Hebrew phrase or Jewish symbol. The Rabbi can help you decide on the wording.

The Unveiling: 1 Month Before First Yahrzeit

The basic mitzvah of the unveiling is visiting the grave. Customs differ, but the unveiling is held after sheloshim and usually in the month prior to the inaugural *Yahrzeit*. The unveiling is simply the first opportunity to do so after the placement of the monument. A Rabbi need not be present but can advise in advance. It is helpful to have an experienced person officiate at *The Unveiling*. The ceremony is very brief and may include: psalms and readings, reflections about the deceased, the removal of a covering from the monument, the El Maley Rachamim, and the Kaddish. The unveiling reminds us that we will continue to visit the grave on *yahrzeit* and during the High Holiday season, and that the memory of the person will always be with us as our life continues.

Yahrzeit: Time of Year

Yahrzeit is the anniversary of a loved one's death on the Hebrew calendar. We observe yahrzeit at home by lighting a yahrzeit candle in memory of the deceased. In the synagogue, we observe yahrzeit by saying the Kaddish at services. Some mark the Yahrzeit on the anniversary in the secular calendar.

Yizkor: Memorial Services on Yom Kippur

The *Yizkor* prayer recalls by name those who have died, along with others in our community and in our history, who have left their mark on the world. Yizkor was originally instituted as a regular practice after the First Crusade in 1096, when entire communities of Jews in the Rhineland chose death over forced baptism. The surviving communities instituted a memorial to the pious martyrs on Yom Kippur, which was later extended to the three pilgrimage festivals. No matter what we believe or don't believe about the afterlife, most of us would agree with the statement: "We live on in the memory of those who survive us." Yizkor provides us with a framework for including personal and collective memory in our observance of major Jewish holidays.

Visiting the Cemetery: Leaving a Stone

It is customary to visit the graves of loved ones before the High Holy Days as well as on the yahrzeit of the death. Many Jews visit the cemetery on the loved one's birthday, an anniversary, or on a special shared day. Visits are not made on Shabbat or Jewish festivals. In earlier times, graves were marked only by a pile of stones. Today, they can be a visible sign of the remembrance. Jewish tradition discourages excessive mourning and cemetery visitation, especially if it becomes an impediment to returning to life. It has been an old custom dating back to biblical times to leave a pebble or small stone on the grave marker. Some mourners also leave behind blades of grass.

Yahrzeit: Marks Official End of Mourning

Yahrzeit, which means "time of year" marks, in the first year, the official end of mourning and is the anniversary of the death on the Hebrew calendar. There are written prayers to say when lighting a yahrzeit candle, or you may wish simply to speak silently through your heart or aloud at the graveside. For example, you may thank them for the gift of their presence in your life, forgive and release them, wish them well, or just recall a happy time in your life together. We observe yahrzeit at home by lighting a candle in memory of the deceased. Each year the TBH office will send a reminder of the yahrzeit date to the family. In order to do this, the office needs: the name, date of death and e-mail or postal address for the annual notice to

be delivered. The *yahrzeit* itself is an individual Memorial Day, a time to remember the deceased with tributes or observances that reflect the person of blessed memory. Some examples: taking a familiar hike, walking on the beach, participating in a certain sport, gardening, cooking a special dish to share with family and friends or creating an art project symbolizing the blessings that person brought into the world. The memory is a blessing and the blessing of that life is annually honored with gratitude during *Yahrzeit* observances. Family members are invited to purchase a *yahrzeit* plaque at Temple Beth Hatfiloh to honor the deceased. It is displayed in the synagogue by the first *yahrzeit* and can be purchased at any time. There is a custom of giving *tzedakah* (charity) and lighting a *yahrtzeit* candle on the anniversary of the death as well as during the festivals and Yom Kippur when we recite *Yizkor*.

Tzedaka

There is a close connection between *tzedaka* (gifts to charity) and the various mourning customs. You may give *tzedaka* at any point in the year of mourning as a tribute to the memory of the deceased. Some people will include a suggestion in the obituary of one or more charities so that others may make memorial contributions. Let the funeral coordinator know of your *tzedaka* choices to inform the Temple office. It is also customary at a *yahrzeit* to honor the memory of the deceased by giving *tzedaka*.

Olam Ha Ba: World to Come

The Jewish Afterlife is a deep and complex topic that is rarely discussed in daily American-Jewish life. Many people think that Judaism does not have a belief in an afterlife. One glance at the text of *El Maley Rachamim* reveals that Judaism affirms the survival of the soul after death: God full of compassion, Eternal Spirit of the universe, grant perfect rest under the wings of Your *Shekhinah* (Presence) to our loved one who has entered eternity. God of Mercy, let _____ find refuge forever beneath Your wings, and let this soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life.”

For many decades, the rationalist bent of the modern movements made this a taboo topic. Now, in the light of new attitudes and openness about spirituality, it is certainly a valid option to believe in a Jewish afterlife. Judaism over the centuries has never codified a single vision of the afterlife, and the concept continues to evolve. Some Jewish mourners use the phrase “*Gan Eden*” (heavenly Eden) to represent their idea of the Jewish afterlife.

A Note About Unexpected, Sudden and Intentional Deaths

Among the most intensely challenging deaths a Jewish person can face is the sudden, unexpected or intentional death of a loved one. A call to the Rabbi and consulting a Trauma Specialist are two helpful choices following such losses.

Sudden, Accidental Public Deaths

Sudden and accidental deaths often occur in public spaces, such as: freeways, train tracks, airports or bridges. They can sometimes be the subject of television and web news reports. The repetitive nature of such coverage can cause deeper suffering in survivors, especially in elders and children. In such cases, “unplugging” from screen media is highly advised. Depending on conditions around the death, it is recommended that a Trauma Specialist be consulted, along with Rabbi Seth Goldstein. A supportive network can protect mourners from additional pain and suffering when the news media is involved.

Unexpected Deaths can arise from health conditions and chronic ailments that eventually take their toll. In this case, feelings of remorse and exhaustion often surface if the surviving partner was also a caregiver who felt powerless in the physical decline of a beloved one. Grief Support Groups are especially helpful with unexpected deaths and a group that can “hold space” with survivors can be effective in healing.

Intentional Deaths

When someone chooses to end their own life, Temple Beth Hatfiloh can provide spiritual support as well as traditional burial rites and ceremonial services. Rabbi Goldstein can advise on approaches that carry us through such complex loss. Since most Intentional Deaths still require, by law, an autopsy to determine “cause of death” there may be powerful, conflicting feelings that prompt mourners to worry that Jewish traditions will not be honored. Please know that the TBH community is here to support you. Our Tahara teams are skilled and trained to adapt to such circumstances with loving kindness, empathy and without judgment. A call to Rabbi Goldstein, after first contacting legal authorities is a good choice following such confusing loss.

The Death of a Child

“The First Tear” in the Torah: Being Shakhul

Parents who have suffered the primal, devastating loss of a baby or child are forever altered by these profound deaths. Jewish *End of Life* traditions are especially helpful to provide a structural framework to mourn such losses. Sometimes those you have relied upon—those surviving and those you love closest to you, also experience such intense grief that you may feel unable, for a time, to help one another. In such times pastoral support from the Rabbi and the synagogue community can be very healing. The death of a baby or child is so complex that some friends may turn away, until they can return to you. It is helpful to keep in mind: your own well-being must come first on all healing journeys, but especially on the path of mourning a child. Regular Jewish tradition is especially comforting as all the socio-cultural and religious constants apply and the practice of actively grieving throughout the entire First Year is a balm for some parents. Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider’s 2014 article “A Permanent Tear: on the Loss of a Child” from *The New York Jewish Week* introduces the term “shakhul” to signify the death of a child and being in mourning. Following the sudden death of his four-year old son, this father aligns his grief with Jacob’s *shakhul* in the Torah, when Jacob “tears” his shirt in Genesis 42:36:

“One who loses his parents is an orphan; bereaved spouses become widows and widowers. These are losses so profound that a special word is needed to express the new state of being. By designating a specific term, *shakhul*, for parents who have lost a child, the Torah is calling for added sensitivity towards the pain parents endure and is demonstrating awareness of the enduring emotional scar. The story of Jacob opens a door for us to discuss our tradition’s perspectives and insights regarding the loss of a child. As the descendants of Jacob who pursue the sacred task of building noble and caring communities, we are reminded to open our collective hearts with compassion and loving care. As I now continuously search the Torah and our holy books for insight and wisdom in confronting my aching loss, I have found comfort in discovering that the Torah treats child loss in way that is honest and real. It establishes [*Shakhul* as] as a word specifically for parents who endure the bitterness and pain of child loss.”

(Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider)

Words of Comfort and Messages of Meaning

“Please tell me about your loved one.”

It is often unnecessary to offer words to mourners as bearing witness to their loss requires deep listening. One of the most respectful sentences you may extend to a mourner is actually in the form of an invitation: to share their stories about the person they loved and have now lost. “Please tell me about _____,” offers a mourner an opening to grieve in memory.

Since Jewish tradition does constellate around remembrance—individual and collective memory—this is a helpful invitation. In so doing, the deceased transforms from an earthen person to a heartfelt and “heart held” Blessed Memory and as such, a presence of blessing. Such an invitation to listen to the stories of their life is among the highest form of respect one can show in a Jewish house of mourning. It inspires healing because it helps mourner’s process their grief through narrative and that, by its very form, provides a framework that weaves a tapestry of memory and of meaning.

The “crown jewel” of Jewish consolation:

“May God console you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

Ha'makom yena'hem etkhem betokh she'ar avelei Tziyon vi' Yerushalayim.

Messages of Meaning:

“I’m so sorry to hear about your loss.”

“I’m so sorry about your (____) passing.”

“I don’t know what to say. This must feel so rough for you and those you love. I’m here to listen.”

“I hurt for you.”

“(Name the deceased) loved you so much.”

“(Name the deceased) was an important member of our community. Such memory is a blessing for all.”

“I will hold _____ in loving and blessed memory.”

“Tell me what I/We can do, in _____ memory. What would mean the most, to our beloved?”

Words of Comfort: Are Not Always Words

Listen Non-judgmentally.

Mourners don't need judgment that their feelings are wrong.

Be Present.

Give undivided attention.

Lean forward and meet "eye-level."

Don't Interrupt.

Give the bereaved time to speak, without jumping to the next topic.

Don't Give Rational Answers.

The death of a loved one cannot be explained away with logic.

Don't Compare Experiences.

Grief is not competitive.

The last thing a mourner should hear about is your loss, unless the mourner invites you to share the context of your experience.

12 Ways to Support Yourself & Other Mourners

The *halakha* takes into account human needs for self-acceptance, emotional expression, support from others, and time. Traditional practices are noted in parentheses below:

1. **Accept your emotions.**

Grieving can be an emotional roller coaster: involving shock, guilt, denial, panic, anger, and physical symptoms. (*Aninut* and the suspension of social obligations; the staged mourning periods).

2. **Express your feelings.**

A feeling that is denied remains with you and can erupt at inappropriate times. Acknowledging pain is much better for long-term emotional health. Crying is a natural expression of grief for men as well as women and children. Sorrow is natural for all human beings.

3. **Heal your grief in your own way and in your own time.**

Grief can feel very physical and exhausting to the body—so taking time in healing practices, such as baths, massage and meditation may help. Some people take more bed rest. Ask that others give you the freedom to grieve your own way (observing rituals, phased mourning periods).

4. **Create an Art and Soul Piece: Symbolic of Your Love & Loss**

The soul communicates in metaphor and loss can be so profound that words may feel insufficient. Creating a piece of art that symbolizes the love and loss you feel can be healing. A few ideas: collages, mosaics, illustrations, sewing, jewelry, scrapbooks and sculptures.

5. **If you have children, bring them into the grieving process.**

They should not be shielded from the awareness of death. Silence and secrecy deprive them of an important opportunity to share grief. Your children's most important source of security is you. Stay close to them, hug them, let your children feel the warmth of your body as you prepare the eulogy.

6. **Allow yourself flexibility.**

Loss can sap one's energy and affect one's ability to function. Give yourself permission to refuse unnecessary tasks and tending to the mundane.

7. **The support of other people is important.**

Let your friends and family know you need support and feedback. The synagogue has volunteers ready and willing to help in many ways if you ask for them. Ask for what you need (support during the period of aninut; the funeral; shiva; help during the difficult days, weeks or months after shiva has ended).

8. **Help yourself and others through support groups.**

People in these groups understand your fears and frustrations; they have been there, too. Again, the synagogue can refer you to an appropriate support group (the funeral; Kaddish; minyan).

9. **Counseling may be beneficial.**

Seeking professional advice is not an admission of weakness but a demonstration of determination to help yourself during this critical period. This can be a very powerful and fertile time for growth. Therapy, especially with someone attuned to grief issues, can be of great value at this time.

10. **A digital Legacy story.**

Writing and editing the “Story of the Life” of your loved one can be enormously healing by creating a narrative framework that makes sense of loss.

11. **Be gentle with yourself.**

Allow your community to assist you. Also be aware that you may need solitude to find yourself. Jewish rituals of mourning and your Jewish community may also help you face and survive the inevitable moments of despair.

12. **Death and grief can be profound teachers.**

Death ends a life, not a relationship. Loss increases our awareness of our own mortality and heightens our appreciation of the gift of life. Sifting through memories and continued inner conversations help bring about resolution and a sense of peace. Considering what can be “restored” in your life following profound loss may prompt you to move forward and “fulfill” what can be restored. Respect for your own grief process and respect for the tradition are ways of honoring the memory of the deceased.

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End of Life Books for Jewish Children

Candle for Grandpa: Guide to the Jewish Funeral for Children and Parents
David Techner, Judith Hirt-Manheimer.

Daddy's Chair.
Sandy Lanton, Shelly O. Haas, ill. Fiction.
A boy loses his father.

The Fall of Freddie the Leaf: A Story of Life for All Ages
Leo Buscaglia.
Children/adults are touched by this classic tale about losing a loved one.

How It Feels When a Parent Dies.
Jill Krementz.
Eighteen children share their experiences and feelings about the death of a parent.

I Will Always Love You: A Journey From Grief & Loss to Hope & Love
Melissa Lyons.
Compassionate and hopeful, for children whose mother or grandmother has died.

The Tenth Good Thing About Barney
Judith Viorst.
A touching story about reconciling the death of a pet cat named Barney.

Until We Meet Again: From Grief to Hope, After Losing a Pet.
Melissa Lyons.
Gentle rhyming passages support healing after the death of a beloved family pet. K-7.

When Children Grieve
Russell Friedman and John W. James.
For adults to help children cope with death, divorce, pet loss, moving, and other losses in life.

When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Remembering Workbook for Dealing with Shiva and the Year Beyond
Nechama Liss-Levinson
Grandparent-loss workbook.

Jewish End of Life Multi-Media Links & Digital Resources

jewish-funerals.org

A rich website of depth. Most questions can be answered here.

jewish-funerals.org/pending-just-and-after-death

jewish-funerals.org

Traditional Jewish Mourning Practices

jewish-funerals.org/index.php?q=traditional-jewish-mourning-practices

shiva.com

A pleasant website that details Mourning and Bereavement customs.

shiva.com/learning-center/death-and-mourning/

bimbam.com

Bim Bam Productions

An excellent artistic team's thoughtful, gently animated videos on Jewish traditions.

What is a Chevra Kadisha? The role of the Holy Society in Jewish communities.

bimbam.com/?s=tahara

More Videos Accessible on the Bim Bam Page:

A Jewish Guide to Helping Your Friend in Mourning

Jewish Mourning Rituals: The Funeral

What is Kaddish?

Learn How to Say the Kaddish

Weaving Memory: a Jewish Healing Activity (craft supplies needed).

Caring for the Body (Tahara information, generally).

bimbam.com/jewish-mourning-rituals-caring-for-the-body/

Jewish Mourning Rituals: An Overview of Customs & Traditions

youtube.com/watch?v=QyHvRFkqzmw

Preparing for End of Life Realities

End of Life awareness and preparedness are important realities for Jewish people to consider in advance of death and dying. Legal, ethical and medical documents are critical tools for End of Life planning. Some questions will arise:

- How do I want to be treated as I near my own death?
- How do I want to die? How do I want my body treated once I die?
- How do I want my death observed and remembered?
- What do I want done with my property, upon death?
- What values and ethics do I want to extend, beyond my life?

Legal Will

We encourage everyone who has not yet done so, to prepare a legal will. It is crucial to have a well-written, notarized will that establishes how worldly goods, etc. are to be dispersed. The will should be revised regularly. An effective will eliminates tremendous work and strain for survivors and is a great gift to them.

Medical Power of Attorney & Advanced Directive

In this day of modern medicine, it is imperative that each individual has a medical power of attorney and an advance directive regarding treatment under a variety of medical circumstances. Without these documents, doctors or the hospital can make decisions about treatment that may contradict with patient or the family wishes. What level of intervention will you want with regard to life-sustaining medical procedures? If you become mentally incompetent, who will make decisions for you?

Common Burial, Cremation & Green Disposition Options

The decision to be buried or cremated is personal. Both may be seen as acceptable, and each person needs to come to a conclusion that is right for them. Burial has been mandated in the past because of the traditional belief that human beings are created in the image of God. Our bodies are seen as borrowed from God for our lifetime and therefore sacred. To that way of thinking, cremation disturbs this process, and traditional authorities do not permit it. However, respecting the sanctity of the body can be expressed in many ways. Some people believe that cremation is as holy and respectful a way to treat the body as burial. For people who do not believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, and even for some who do, cremation is seen as no more disruptive than burial. In 2019, Washington State also passed into law the *green option* of human composting or *recomposition* that is now legally defined as Natural Organic Reduction. The Law goes into effect in our state on May 1, 2020.

Autopsy and Organ Donation

Tradition has prohibited the desecration of the body of the deceased. However, autopsy and organ donation are permissible, and may even be mandatory, in order to save a life (pikuach nefesh). Autopsies to investigate genetic causes of death or the effects of experimental treatments are permissible because they assist family members or those suffering from the same illness. Organ donations are also considered to fall within the concept of pikuach nefesh. In cases where advanced consent of the deceased has not been obtained, the next of kin must choose whether to permit organ donation and/or autopsy.

Ethical Will

An ethical will is an opportunity for communication of your values to loved ones. It may be written to children, spouse, family members, and/or friends. You can reflect on what you have achieved and learned in your life, and the values you cherish and live by that you wish to transmit to your survivors. Essentially, it is a commentary on your ethics and a message of your hopes and dreams for your family and friends in the future. You can address specific individuals, encouraging them to develop in ways you think important. You can encourage your survivors in their paths, vocations, goals, social endeavors, etc. The intention of an ethical will is to be loving rather than critical or controlling. It may contain instructions on how you would like to be remembered, including specific instructions for your funeral, burial, eulogy, shiva, tzedaka, etc.

As with a legal will, the ethical will needs to be revised from time to time. It encapsulates what you believe now, and what you want survivors to remember, cherish, and embrace. As your values change over time and as you come to see people differently, the ethical will can be rewritten. It can either be filed with other important papers until after your death, or shared with loved ones at any time you choose.

Permanent Memorial Plaque at TBH Created by Olympia Artist Simon Kogan

The TBH Memorial Plaque serves as a permanent memorial to our community members and loved ones. The plaque consists of three sculptured bronze panels surrounded by fifty-three wood-mounted and displayed brass plates. In addition to the permanently engraved plates, there is a detachable plate (1" x 3") for each memorialized person which will be affixed to the center-sculptured panel on the anniversary date of the individual's passing (the *yahrzeit*).



Each of the 6" square plates is designed to accommodate four memorialized names and vital dates. Each entry consists of three lines:

First Line:

English name of deceased

Second Line:

Hebrew name of deceased

Third Line:

Dates of birth and death

Memorial Plaque Fee:

Each section of the Memorial Plaque (engraved or reserved) can be purchased for \$250 for members of TBH or \$500 for non-members.

To Purchase a Memorial Plaque:

To purchase a space, please complete our Memorial Application and send it to TBH. The application will be reviewed by the Rabbi for content and accuracy. You'll have the option of choosing the location on the plaque.

Once it is engraved, you will be notified.

(From Tahara p. 11)

Right to Control the Disposition of Remains RCW 68.50.160

(1) A person has the right to control the disposition of his or her own remains without the predeath or post death consent of another person. A valid written document expressing the decedent's wishes regarding the place or method of disposition of his or her remains, signed by the decedent in the presence of a witness, is sufficient legal authorization for the procedures to be accomplished.

(2) Prearrangements that are prepaid, or filed with a licensed funeral establishment or cemetery authority, under RCW 18.39.280 through 18.39.345 and chapter 68.46 RCW are not subject to cancellation or substantial revision by survivors. Absent actual knowledge of contrary legal authorization under this section, a licensed funeral establishment or cemetery authority shall not be held criminally nor civilly liable for acting upon such prearrangements.

(3) If the decedent has not made a prearrangement as set forth in subsection (2) of this section or the costs of executing the decedent's wishes regarding the disposition of the decedent's remains exceeds a reasonable amount or directions have not been given by the decedent, the right to control the disposition of the remains of a deceased person vests in, and the duty of disposition and the liability for the reasonable cost of preparation, care, and disposition of such remains devolves upon the following in the order named:

(a) The person designated by the decedent as authorized to direct disposition as listed on the decedent's United States department of defense record of emergency data, DD form 93, or its successor form, if the decedent died while serving in military service as described in 10 U.S.C. Sec. 1481(a) (1)-(8) in any branch of the United States armed forces, United States reserve forces, or national guard;

(b) The designated agent of the decedent as directed through a written document signed and dated by the decedent in the presence of a witness. The direction of the designated agent is sufficient to direct the type, place, and method of disposition;

(c) The surviving spouse or state registered domestic partner; (d) The majority of the surviving adult children of the decedent; (e) The surviving parents of the decedent; (f) The majority of the surviving siblings of the decedent;

(g) A court-appointed guardian for the person at the time of the person's death.

(4) If any person to whom the right of control has vested pursuant to subsection (3) of this section has been arrested or charged with first or second degree murder or first degree manslaughter in connection with the decedent's death, the right of control is relinquished and passed on in accordance with subsection (3) of this section.

(5) If a cemetery authority as defined in RCW 68.04.190 or a funeral establishment licensed under chapter 18.39 RCW has made a good faith effort to locate the person cited in subsection (3) (a) through (g) of this section or the legal representative of the decedent's estate, the cemetery authority or funeral establishment shall have the right to rely on an authority to bury or cremate the human remains, executed by the most responsible party available, and the cemetery authority or funeral establishment may not be held criminally or civilly liable for burying or cremating the human remains.

In the event any government agency or charitable organization provides the funds for the disposition of any human remains, the cemetery authority or funeral establishment may not be held criminally or civilly liable for cremating the human remains.

(6) The liability for the reasonable cost of preparation, care, and disposition devolves jointly and severally upon all kin of the decedent in the same degree of kindred, in the order listed in subsection (3) of this section, and upon the estate of the decedent.

(End of Language)

Liturgy

El Maley Rachamim

El maley rachamim, shochen bam'romim, ham'tzey menuchah n'chonah, tachat canfey ha shechinah, b'ma'alot kedoshim u'tehorim k'zohar harakiyah mazhirim et nishmat_
_____ben/bat_____ shehalach l'olamo
(shehalchah l'olamah). Ana ba'al harachamim hastireyhu (hastireha) b'seyter
c'nafeycha l'olamim u'tzror b'tzror ha chayim et nishmato (nishmata).
Adonai hu nach'lato (nach'lata), v'yanuach (v'tanuach) b'shalom al mishkavo
(mishkava). V'nomar: Amen.

God filled with mercy, dwelling in the heavens' heights, bring proper rest beneath the wings of your Shechinah, amid the ranks of the holy and the pure, illuminating like the brilliance of the sky the soul of ____ who has gone to his/her/their eternal rest.

May you who are the source of mercy
shelter him/her eternally, and bind his/her/their soul among
the living,
that he/she/their may rest in peace.
And let us say: Amen

Note: This prayer is also known as *El Malei Rachamim* and *El Malah Rachamim*.

Mourner's Kaddish

*Yitgadal veyitkadash shemey raba be'alma divra chirutey veyamlich malchutey
bechayeychon uvyomeychon uvchayey dechol beyt yisrael ba'agala uvizman kariv
ve'imru amen.*

Yehey shemey raba mevarach le'alam ulalmey almaya.

*Yitbarach veyishtabach veyitpa'ar veyitromam veyitnasey veyit- hadar veyitaleh veyit-
halal shemey dekadsha berich hu. Le'ela min kol birchata veshirata tushbechata
venechemata da'amiran be'alma
ve'imru amen.*

*Yehey shelama raba min shemaya vachayim aleynu ve'al kol yisra'el
ve'imru amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya'aseh shalom aleynu ve'al kol yisrael ve'al kol yoshvey
tevel ve'imru amen.*

Let God's name be made great and holy in the world that was created as God
willed. May God complete the holy realm in your own lifetime, in your days, and
in the days of all the house of Israel, quickly and soon.
And say: Amen.

May God's great name be blessed, forever and as long as worlds endure. May it be
blessed, and praised, and glorified, and held in honor, viewed with awe,
embellished, and revered; and may the blessed name of holiness be hailed, though
it be higher than all the blessings, songs, praises, and consolations that we utter in
this world.
And say: Amen.

May Heaven grant a universal peace, and life for us, and for all Israel.
And say: Amen.

May the one who creates harmony above, make peace for us and for all Israel, and
for all who dwell on earth.
And say: Amen.

Unending Love

by Rabbi Rami Shapiro

We are loved by an unending love

We are embraced by arms that find us,
even when we are hidden from ourselves.

We are touched by fingers that soothe us,
even when we are too proud for soothing.

We are counseled by voices that guide us,
even when we are too embittered to hear.

We are loved by an unending love

We are supported by hands that uplift us,
even in the midst of a fall.

We are urged on by eyes that meet us,
even when we are too weak for meeting.

We are loved by an unending love

Embraced, touched, soothed, and counseled
Ours are the arms, the fingers, the voices;
Ours are the hands, the eyes, the smiles;

We are loved by an unending love.

These things I know

by Laura Gilpin

How the living go on living
And how the dead go on living with them
So that in a forest
Even a dead tree casts a shadow
And the leaves fall one by one
And the branches break in the wind
And the bark peels off slowly
And the trunk cracks
And the rain seeps in through the cracks
And the trunk falls to the ground
And the moss covers it
And in the spring the rabbits find it
And build their nest
Inside the dead tree
So that nothing is wasted in nature
Or in love.

When Great Trees Fall

by Maya Angelou

When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder
Lions hunker down
in tall grasses
and even elephants
lumber after safety.

When great trees fall
in forests, small things
recoil into silence,
their senses eroded by fear.

When great souls die,
the air around us becomes
light, rare, sterile.
We breathe, briefly.
Our eyes, briefly, see with
a hurtful clarity.

Our memory, suddenly sharpened,
examines, gnaws on kind words unsaid,
promised walks, never taken.

Great souls die
and our reality, bound to them,
takes leave of us.

Our souls,
dependent on their nurture,
now shrink, wizened.

(continued)

Our minds, formed and informed
by their radiance, fall away.
We are not so maddened as reduced
to the unutterable ignorance of dark, cold caves.
And when great souls die,
after a period peace blooms,
slowly and always irregularly.

Spaces fill with a kind of
soothing electric vibration.
Our senses, restored,
never to be the same,
whisper to us.

They existed. They existed.
We can be. Be and be better.
For they existed.

Notes

May you be so blessed
that your life is filled with simcha (joy)
and may the inevitable times of grief
serve to heighten simcha in its season.
Shalom.



Courtesy of the Chevra Kadisha

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For a digital copy of “Blessed Memory” please visit:

bethhatfiloh.org



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