

June 2-5, 2019 I attended the Kavod v'Nichum conference in Fort Collins, CO. 2.5 days packed with fascinating teaching sessions, heartbreaking accounts of the experiences of folks at the Pittsburgh Tree of Life Synagogue and its aftermath, and lots to share and think about!

1) I am creating a "Shmirah box" that will go to any shmirah we provide. It has several books I bought at the conference and can be added to as we see fit. (blanket, diary, memorial candles) Books I bought for the box include:

Laments and Kavannot for The Journey compiled by R. Me'irah Iliinsky and R. Eva Sax-Bolder. (3 copies-extra copies can be circulated among CK personnel)

Divrei Nichum: Comforting Words During Times of Loss. A Collection of Poems for Mourners by Lisa Rappaport, Foreward by R. Stuart Kelman

Exploring the Soul of Taharah by R. Avivah W. Erlick and Richard A. Light

Faith Unravels: A Rabbi's Struggle with Grief and God by R. Daniel Greyber, forward by Mayim Bialik

Jewish Rites of Death: Stories of Beauty and Transformation by Richard A. Light, Forward by R. Jack Riemer

2) I also purchased an extra copy of Chesed Shel Emet: The Truest Act of Kindness (R. Stuart Kelman and Dan Fendel) our primary Taharah guidebook, for the women's CK of TI.

3) I attended a double session on the Taharah liturgy with R. Stuart Kelman and Dan Fendel; took pictures and brought back some instructions for making our own tachrichim; spoke at length with R. Aviva Erlick and her work providing non-traditional taharah for unaffiliated Jews in the Los Angeles area; attended a session led by R. Daniel Greyber talking about his work in expanding traditional grief rituals to include and honor non-familial mourners; attended a session on archiving records of the Jewish community with Eric Lidji; and a session on Conscious Eldering, a very brief intro to R. Zalman Schachter-Shalomi z'l Aging and Saging work with R's Nadia and Victor Gross and R. Eva Sax-Bolder. (they are wonderful and I have been wanting to do this work with R. Shaya Isenberg and Bahira Sugarman in G'ville for years but could never afford it! So it was nice to get a taste of it with Rebs Nadia and Victor.)

I listened to a panel of folks from Pittsburgh and their experiences and work following the Tree of Life synagogue shooting, including the men's CK provided 5 taharot for their friends over 18 hours, then going back into the sanctuary and cleaning it, collecting everything that had blood or a bullet hole in it for ritual burial. There was sharing about providing mental health care to the whole community for months in recognition that everyone was deeply affected by the shooting and in an effort to prevent an epidemic of PTSD among the survivors, and follow-up discussions about safety in houses of worship to prevent or, if necessary, enhance response time to, an attack.

4) Things I need to do: 1) Enhance communication with TI congregation about our traditional Jewish end-of-life rituals and what the Chevrah Kadisha can provide in this regard. 2) Compile a list of congregants available for shmira. 3) Recruit more folks to participate in the Chevra Kadisha. 4) Continue to deepen my own understanding of the Taharah ritual and search out

additional contemporary readings for inclusion in the ritual. 5) An additional discussion (that I missed) concerned Taharah ritual prayers for transgender and gender-fluid individuals. While we have not encountered that issue yet, it will undoubtedly happen and we need to be thinking about how best to serve those folks, too.

5) Next year's conference will be in Pittsburgh and I am hoping Brian or someone else from the men's CK will be able to attend. Or anyone else!!!! If there are no takers, I'm happy to go again! Total cost was about \$1200. (flights, conference, extra ground transportation costs) My heartfelt thanks are extended to Temple Israel Memorial and Cultural Fund, Mark Burk, Temple Israel's Caring Committee, Regina Palacios, Jana and Aaron Williams, and my husband!, for making it possible for me to attend this conference.

B'shalom, Judith Lyons