



*Temple Isaiah Funeral
and Mourning Guide*

*Temple Isaiah
Lexington, Massachusetts
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When there is a death of a loved one, there are immediate decisions to be made regarding the funeral. The *“Temple Isaiah Funeral and Mourning Guide”* is designed to help the mourner make those decisions, in the hope that it will ease the stress and confusion of one part of the mourning process. It is intended to be used only as a guide.

Contacting the Temple office. All congregants who suffer a loss should contact the Temple office immediately (781-862-7160) so that the clergy and the Bereavement Committee can offer their sympathy, support, and guidance during the funeral and mourning process. If the office is closed, the answering service will contact one of the clergy immediately when the call involves a death. The Temple should be called even if the funeral will be out of town. A loss within the community is a loss no matter where it occurs, and our clergy will want to extend their support and sympathy.

Arranging the time and place of the funeral. The family may want to contact a funeral director themselves, or they may prefer to wait to talk to one of the clergy for guidance. Because a Jewish funeral takes place soon after death, arranging the time and place is often the first decision to be made. In general, it is the clergy’s availability that determines the exact time, along with the family’s wishes and the schedule of the funeral home. The availability of the Temple may be another factor.

Arranging the details of the funeral. The next step is to meet with the funeral director to arrange the details of the funeral. The Temple Isaiah clergy and Bereavement Committee strongly recommend the selection of a simple pine casket in keeping with Jewish tradition. A moderately priced, finished-wood casket has also been selected for those who prefer an alternative to the plain pine casket. If you are using one of the funeral homes listed in this pamphlet and decide to use one of the recommended caskets from the “Isaiah Plan” as described on the next page, the meeting can take place at your home or another quiet place, such as the Temple. A financial package is available through several local funeral homes for Temple Isaiah families who follow the “Isaiah Plan” recommendations (see the last page of this guide).

Cemetery plots and arrangements. Cemeteries will also be discussed at the meeting with the funeral director. If necessary, the director can help arrange for the purchase of a plot. (The Jewish cemetery of Beit Olam East in Wayland is available to all Temple Isaiah members and their families. Lexington, Bedford and Concord have municipal cemeteries with Jewish community sections available to town residents and, in Concord, former residents are also eligible. In Lexington non-residents who own real estate may purchase cemetery plots.) In addition, a series of questions will be asked relating to specific funeral arrangements. Stress or uncertainty may make the process of answering these questions difficult. This guide, therefore, includes a list of suggested answers, together with a brief explanation of the reasons behind them.

Support from the clergy and the Bereavement Committee. In the meantime, once the Temple has been notified, a member of our clergy will be in touch with you to offer sympathy, advice, and support and help you make plans. A Bereavement Committee member will also call to offer sympathy as well as guidance in the planning of the post-funeral details. Please discuss any special circumstances or concerns you may have with the clergy. If family members are unable to attend a funeral at Isaiah, streaming of the service can be offered upon request.

Isaiah Plan recommendations (see next page). Even if the funeral is not taking place in the Boston area, the recommendations listed in the “Isaiah Plan” can still be helpful in your decision making. Please note that your costs will be reduced by following the recommendations no matter where the funeral is held. In addition, funeral homes will work with families who have financial concerns, as will Jewish cemeteries.

ISAIAH PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDED by the Temple Isaiah clergy and Bereavement Committee:

1. Simple wooden casket

Often the most difficult decision is the selection of the casket. At the Jewish funeral home there are several dozen caskets available. To make this often stressful decision easier, the Temple Isaiah clergy and Bereavement Committee strongly recommend the plain pine coffin, which returns the body to the earth most readily and is most in keeping with Jewish tradition. An attractive covering quilted by Temple members with a Star of David motif may be used upon request to cover the casket during the funeral ceremony. A moderately priced mahogany-stained casket has also been selected for those who prefer an alternative. If you choose one of the Isaiah recommended caskets, you need not go to the funeral home to make the funeral arrangements.

2. Shrouds of linen

Shrouds are white linen or muslin burial garments supplied by the funeral home. Linen is recommended. Dressing the body in shrouds is in keeping with the tradition that, rich or poor, we all leave the earth as equals.

***3. Tahara* (ritual washing and prayers)**

In this ritualized bathing of the body members of the Chevra Kadisha ("Sacred Society") who are of the same sex as the deceased wash the body with great respect and recite special burial prayers. If this option is not chosen, a member of the funeral staff, who may be of either sex, will bathe and dress the body without Jewish ritual.

4. Closed casket

Jewish tradition is firmly opposed to any public viewing of the body.

5. Family or friends as pallbearers

If desired, pallbearers can be chosen from among friends or family or can be provided by the funeral home. Those who choose family members or friends as pallbearers tend to appreciate the warmth of the personal involvement of people who have had a close relationship with the deceased or the mourners. However, it is not necessary to designate pallbearers.

6. Arrangements made by the funeral home:

- newspaper notices
- procurement of death certificate

NOT RECOMMENDED:

Embalming, hairdresser or cosmetologist

Embalming slows the process of returning to dust. Unless special circumstances require it, the recommendation is not to embalm.

OPTIONAL:

The funeral director will ask you if you want to use the following. These are personal decisions and are dependent on the circumstances.

- ***Use of Shomer*** ("Guardian," one who remains with the body until the time of the funeral) Having someone stay near the body and recite psalms is optional in Reform Judaism. There may be acquaintances who would like to perform this mitzvah. It is possible to hire a shomer, if you wish.

- ***Limousine for the family on the day of the funeral*** (a friend or non-mourner could drive)

- ***Tent at the cemetery***

- ***Police detail*** (not needed for short distances)

- ***Flowers*** While flowers at funerals are not commonly part of the Ashkenazi Jewish tradition, they are part of other traditions, and it is permissible to have a tasteful floral arrangement.

- ***Acknowledgment cards*** They are not required; may be sent to acknowledge donations.

LOWERING THE CASKET AND SHOVELING EARTH:

Funeral homes will often instruct the cemetery regarding whether or not the casket should be lowered and earth shoveled onto the casket while the family is present. The family should discuss this decision among themselves and with the clergy so that the mourners will be prepared to make their wishes known to the funeral home.

SECURITY NOTE:

For security reasons, it is strongly recommended that someone house sit on the day of the funeral at each of the homes of family members who are listed in the obituary notices. Friends and neighbors will often ask what they can do for you, and house sitting is one way they can help. The Bereavement Committee may also be able to assist with finding house sitters.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

You are encouraged to speak to the clergy about any special circumstances you may have regarding the funeral and your family's participation. Please be aware that no one need be denied a Jewish funeral or burial due to cost. If any special assistance is required, please do mention it to the clergy.

STREAMING OF FUNERALS:

If the funeral is held at Isaiah, it is possible to stream the funeral to family members who are unable to attend upon request to the Temple office. The service from the bima is the only part that will be streamed; attendees who are not on the bima will not be shown. The service will be archived for 30 days unless there is a specific request not to archive. There is no charge for streaming. The funeral can be viewed via a special link or viewed on the streaming portion of the Temple website.

In addition, many funeral homes offer streaming of graveside funerals upon request.

CREMATION:

While some in the Jewish community do choose cremation, there are particular questions and potential complications that can arise when there is a cremation. We suggest that anyone considering cremation should speak with one of the clergy.

MOURNING OBSERVANCES

Mourners

The laws of mourning apply in the death of seven family members: mother, father, brother, sister, husband, wife, and child. According to Jewish tradition, children under thirteen need not observe the mourning rituals. Although grandparents are not traditionally recognized as mourners, at Temple Isaiah the names of grandchildren of temple members are read at the time of Kaddish during the 30 days of mourning.

Returning to the House of Shiva

It is common that only mourners, family members, and, possibly, out-of-towners return to the Shiva house after the interment. This can provide a time for the family to rest and to grieve quietly with one another, unless they explicitly wish to open the house to friends.

Meal of Consolation

A light Meal of Consolation is usually served by friends to the mourners after they return to the house. The Bereavement Committee can contact friends and offer guidance.

Shiva Candle

A seven-day memorial candle supplied by the funeral home (also available in the Temple office) is kindled upon return from the cemetery. These words are recited:

Ner Adonai nishmat adam.

Baruch atah Adonai noteya betochainu chayeit olam.

“The human spirit is the lamp of God.

Blessed is the eternal one who has implanted within us eternal life.”

Length of Shiva

The word shiva means seven, which is the traditional number of days of the initial mourning period. Jewish tradition recognizes that there are circumstances in which seven days is a burden for the mourners and/or those who depend on them, and so, prescribes a minimum observance of three days. It is strongly recommended that mourners take that amount of time at minimum, and afford themselves the important opportunity to mourn and grieve before returning to a more routine schedule.

Service at the House of Mourning

The Bereavement Committee will guide the family in obtaining prayer books and conducting an evening service in the home, which usually begins at 7:30 p.m. The service can be led by a friend or family member (non-mourner), or the committee can try to arrange for one of the clergy or a congregant to be the leader. Reform Judaism does not require a minyan for this service to be held. Visitors are normally not restricted to the service time and should check the Temple announcement for visiting hours.

Zoom Shiva Service

Because of Covid, many services have been held on Zoom. It is your choice whether to observe shiva in person, or to have the service available on Zoom. Congregants with family and friends at a distance have found it very comforting to enable their participation on Zoom. Having at least one Zoom gathering in addition to any in-person observance can allow inclusion of more of your family and friends.

Local observance of Shiva when the funeral has been held out of town

We recommend that mourners have some observance of Shiva locally, so that members of their community will have an opportunity to express their condolences and the mourners can receive their support. This is comforting for all who have done it. Even if it is necessary to have an observance past the usual period of Shiva, a minyan service of remembrance can be held.

Comforting the Mourner

The Shiva period is devoted to the mourner. Visitors should not linger at the house and should focus on speaking about the deceased with the mourner rather than on making conversation. Refreshments should be kept to a bare minimum, but providing meals for the family is a mitzvah.

Shloshim During the thirty-day period following the funeral, mourners customarily refrain from joyful social events. The name of the deceased is read at Temple Shabbat services on Friday evening and Saturday morning during this time period.

TEMPLE ISAIAH BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE

The primary mission of the Bereavement Committee is to console those who have suffered a loss and to facilitate the bereavement process, in keeping with Jewish tradition and Temple Isaiah custom, at the time of a loved one's death. As soon as committee members are notified of a death within the Temple community, they contact the bereaved family to offer sympathy and support and to help facilitate the rituals, demands, and challenges of the funeral and mourning period. Key activities include the following:

- expressing condolences on behalf of the congregation
- offering support, answering questions and listening to concerns
- helping to arrange for leaders to conduct shiva minyans in mourners' homes
- helping to arrange for house sitters on the day of the funeral
- contacting friends and relatives who can help in setting up meals and in other preparations for the funeral and shiva period
- working with local funeral directors to set up an "Isaiah Plan" — a recommended casket and other details — to ease the burdens of decision-making at the time of a death
- coordinating the training of shiva minyan leaders
- providing materials and occasional programs to help families understand and prepare for future losses

The Bereavement Committee can be reached by calling the Temple office (781-862-7160) or by emailing bereavement@templeisaiiah.net.

Committee members are:

Liz Cohen
Pauline Finberg
Cheryl Siegel Forsythe
Shirley Hurwitz
Bonnie Kelly, Co-chair
Pamela Mann
Brent Passer

Susan Ritter
Carol Sacerdote, Co-chair
Susan Ritter
Fredda Sage
Harriet Silverman
Barry Tuber
Ceci Warsawski

FUNERAL HOMES

The following funeral homes in the Greater Boston area are aware of the “Isaiah Plan” – the specific caskets pre-selected by the Bereavement Committee and other recommendations. You may refer to them simply by mentioning Temple Isaiah. If you choose the Isaiah Plan, you need not go to the funeral home but can meet with the funeral director at your home, the temple, or other place. In addition, the first three on the list offer special pricing that goes with the Isaiah Plan.

1. Brezniak Funeral Directors – special Isaiah Plan pricing offered

1251 Washington St., W. Newton, MA 02465

617-969-0800

Contact: David Brezniak

www.brezniakfuneraldirectors.com

The Community Hevra, a liberal Hevra Kadisha, is available in the Boston area only through Brezniak. To encourage use of the Hevra, Brezniak’s is offering a substantial discount to Temple Isaiah members and their families who choose to have the traditional rite of Tahara.

2. Levine Chapel – special Isaiah Plan pricing offered (\$1,000 discount)

470 Harvard St., Brookline, MA 02446

617-277-8300, 800-367-3708

Contact: David Decter, Funeral Director

www.dignitymemorialjewish.com/levine-chapels/en-us/index.page

3. Stanetsky Memorial Chapels – special Isaiah Plan pricing offered (\$1,000 discount)

1668 Beacon St., Brookline, MA 02445

617-232-9300, 800-842-4280

Contact: Jane Salk, Bruce Schlossberg, Location and General Managers

www.dignitymemorialjewish.com/stanetsky-memorial-chapel-brookline/en-us/index.page

4. Schlossberg Solomon Memorial Chapel

824 Washington St., Canton, MA 02021

781-828-6990, 800-828-6993

Contact: John Finstein

www.schlossbergchapel.com

5. Goldman Funeral Chapel

174 Ferry St., Malden, MA 02148

781-324-1122

Contact: Harvey Goldman, Jay Goldman

www.goldmanfc.com

6. Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapels

10 Vinnin St., Salem, MA 01970

781-581-2300

Contact: Edward Hymanson

www.dignitymemorialjewish.com/stanetsky-hymanson-memorial-chapel/en-us/index.page

Many congregants will find themselves using other funeral homes. It is hoped that this guide will prove useful no matter where the funeral is held.