

# A GUIDE TO JEWISH MOURNING PRACTICES



Tikvat Israel Congregation  
Rockville, Maryland

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וּמַחָה אֶ-דְּנֵי הָ' דִּמְעָה מֵעַל כָּל-פָּנִים

...and God will wipe away tears from all faces

Isaiah 25:8

Dear Friends,

The purpose of this pamphlet is to explain and clarify the Jewish approach to death and mourning. The Jewish way of dealing with death is one part of a larger philosophy of life in which everyone is viewed and treated with dignity and respect. Our people believe that even after death, the body, which once held a holy human life, retains its sanctity. Our sages have compared the sacredness of the deceased to that of an impaired Torah scroll which, although no longer usable, still retains its holiness. Therefore, the greatest consideration and respect is accorded the dead. It is completely irrelevant whether the deceased was religious or not.

Jewish law and tradition have endowed funeral and mourning practices with profound religious significance. To this end, Jewish funerals are not ostentatious. A חֲבֵרָה קְדִישָׁא — *Chevra Kadisha*, literally, "a holy society", such as the one at Tikvat Israel, is made up of volunteers who aid the bereaved and, together with the Rabbi, ensure that appropriate practices are followed. Assisting in the preparation and burial of the deceased is an important *mitzvah*. It is a חֶסֶד נְשֵׂל אֱמֶת — *hesed shel emet*, (a true act of kindness), performed without expectation of reciprocation.

The observance of הַלְכָה — *Halakhah* (Jewish law), during the time of a loved one's death is, perhaps, the most meaningful of all Jewish observances. It provides a sensitive and compassionate understanding of grief and mourning. The heartache one feels does not end and there will be no miraculous consolation. By teaching us how to express our pain in love and respect, the observance of *Halachah* restores us to humanity and keeps us from becoming bitter or indulging in self-pity.

This guide provides essential information concerning Jewish death, funeral and mourning practices, so that informed decisions can be made by the bereaved. When a member of the community dies, it is the community's responsibility to aid the mourners in this final act of respect. The Bereavement Committee of Tikvat Israel Congregation stands ready to assist anyone when the need arises. It is our hope that these practices and guidelines, once fully understood, will bring comfort to the families who have suffered the loss of a loved one.

The Tikvat Israel Congregation

נַחֲמוּ, נַחֲמוּ, עַמִּי

*Nachamu, nachamu, ami*

Comfort Ye, Comfort Ye, My People



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## THE LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE

When death is imminent, the Rabbi should be notified. The Rabbi and others will be available to give moral support to the family and to the dying person by praying with them and offering practical counsel and assistance. A person in his or her final moments of life is known as a גּוֹסֵס – *goses* (for a male) or גּוֹסֵסֶת – *goseset* (for a female), which means "dying" or "moribund". This word is derived from the sound heard coming from the throat as the chest cavity narrows. The Talmud teaches that the שְׂכִינָה – *Shechinah* (Divine Presence) stands at the head of the *goses/goseset*. This special status means that the dying individual should be treated as a living person in all respects and not as an object or as one to be avoided.

The presence of loved ones brings important psychological comfort to the *goses/goseset* and those who love him/her. This final demonstration of love and concern provides those involved the assurance that they did all they could up to the very end. It also allows them to deal with grief directly and without the sense of guilt of not having done enough for the one who died.

## Confession on a Death Bed – וִידוּי שְׂכִיב מֵרַע, *Vidui Sh'khiv M'rah*

The dying person traditionally recites the וִידוּי – *Vidui*, a confessional prayer. The prayer includes regret for all sins committed during one's lifetime and is recognition of the fact that one is passing from this world to the next. Care should be taken that this does not distress the dying person. It should be explained that saying the *Vidui* does not mean that death is imminent. In fact, it may happen that a person says the *Vidui* and then recovers. The *Vidui*, followed by the recitation of the *Shema* in the last moments before death, help to affirm one's faith in God precisely when it is most challenged. If the dying person is unable to recite this confessional, a person in attendance may recite the *Vidui* on that person's behalf. The minimal confession and an alternative are available in Appendix 1.

The recitation of the *Shema* by the dying person in the last moments of life helps to affirm his/her faith in God.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד  
*Shema Yisraei, Adonai Elohaynu, Adonai Ehad*  
"Hear O Israel, Adonai our God, Adonai is One" [once]



בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

*Barukh Shem k'vod malchuto l-olam va-ed*

“Praised be God’s glorious sovereignty forever & ever” [3 times]

ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים

*Adonai Hu Ha-Elohim*

“Adonai Is God” [7 Times]

The *Shema* is not a petitionary prayer and it does not praise God. In fact, it is not a prayer at all, but a proclamation of God's oneness. The recitation of the *Shema* is an affirmation of Jewish identity and connection. The *Shema* ends with the word — Ehad (one). Uttered with a "dying breath," it suggests the ultimate reconciliation of the soul with the Holy One.

## What To Do When Death Occurs

If a death occurs at home, contact the Rabbi and notify the police. If a death occurs at a hospital or nursing home, contact the Rabbi. For those present at the moment of death it is appropriate to recite the following:

ה' מֶלֶךְ ה' מֶלֶךְ ה' יִמְלֹךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

*Adonai Melekh, Adonai Malakh, Adonai Yimlokh l-olam va-ed*

“God reigns; God has always reigned; God shall reign beyond all time” [3 times]

If the deceased is a relative for whom one must mourn, i.e., father, mother, son, daughter, brother/half-brother, sister/half-sister, or spouse, the following prayer may be recited:

בְּרוּךְ דַּיִן הָאֱמֶת

*Barukh Dayan ha-Emet*

Praised is the True Judge

## Initial Care of the Deceased

After reciting *Dayan ha-Emet*, some people may want to:

- ✧ Open the windows in the room where the deceased is lying.
- ✧ Close the eyes and mouth of the deceased and straighten the limbs.
- ✧ Completely cover the deceased with a sheet.
- ✧ Place a lighted candle near the head of the deceased (not done on *Shabbat*; on *Yom Tov* kindle from a pre-existing flame).
- ✧ Cover the mirrors in the room where the deceased is lying.
- ✧ Note that the deceased should never be left unattended.

## Autopsies

While the soul or spirit leaves the body upon death, it is important to treat the body, which once housed the soul or spirit, with dignity and respect. Therefore, a routine autopsy is contrary to Jewish law, because it is viewed as a desecration of the body. Autopsies are generally not required even though they may be requested by hospital staff. When an autopsy is required by law, contact the Rabbi for guidance.

## Organ Donations

Organ donation is viewed as *פיקוח נפש* – *pikuah nefesh* (the saving of a life), bringing healing to the living. It is not only permitted, it is strongly encouraged. If you wish to be an organ donor, please be sure to inform your family members. If there are any questions or concerns, please consult the Rabbi.

The United Network for Organ Sharing has a toll free number (1-888-894-6361) and a website (<http://www.unos.org>) where one can obtain information regarding all organ donations. A Conservative Movement Organ Donation Card, published and distributed in a joint effort of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, is available at the office. It is important to use this card instead of a "Uniform Donor Card," because this latter card includes organ donation for the purposes of transplantation, therapy, medical research or education. The Conservative Movement Organ Donation Card limits the organ donation for the purpose of transplantation only.

## Contact the Rabbi

Prior to contacting a funeral home or making other funeral commitments, please contact the Rabbi so that he can counsel you and your family concerning traditional Jewish practices. The funeral home does not know the Rabbi's schedule and may not be well informed on Jewish practices. The Rabbi is available for immediate advice and assistance at his office (301-762-7338). See the insert for his cell number.

In the event of a death, please contact the Rabbi. In an emergency, this may be done at any time of day or night. The congregation's staff and leadership are able to contact the Rabbi (or an alternate if he is unavailable). If the office is closed, follow the instructions on the answering machine.

If death occurs during Shabbat or Yom Tov please call the Rabbi, leave a message, and he will get back to you.

## Role of the Synagogue

The Rabbi, the Tikvat Israel staff and members of the Bereavement Committee are prepared to assist and advise any congregant in making the necessary arrangements. The Tikvat Israel *Chevra Kadisha* can arrange for טְהוּרָה – *TohoRAH* (the ritual washing of the body) and תְּכָרִיכִים – *tachriCHIM* (plain white burial clothes and shroud). A condolence meal, and services in the home during the period of שְׁבֻעָה – *shiva* will be arranged by the Bereavement Committee. A complete list of what the Bereavement Committee does is available in Appendix 2.

The Tikvat Israel Board of Directors has established a policy that permits family members to hold traditional funerals in the sanctuary or chapel (see Appendix 4). A funeral service held in the synagogue must include *Tohorah*, *tachrichim*, a closed wooden casket, and a religious service devoid of flowers and instrumental music.

A funeral can be arranged for the family of bereaved congregants even when the deceased family member is not a member of our congregation. There may be a fee for such a funeral.

## Funeral Arrangements

Jewish law requires that burial take place as quickly as possible, usually within 24 hours of death. Burial may be delayed for legal reasons; to transport the deceased; if close relatives must travel long distances to be present at the funeral or burial; or to avoid burial on *Shabbat* or on a major Jewish holiday (*Rosh Hashanah*, *Yom Kippur*, *Shavuot*, *Pesah*, *Sukkot*, *Sh'mini Atzeret*, *Simhat Torah*). In any case, it should not be delayed longer than necessary. In the event of a death by suicide, or death of children under 30 days of age, please seek guidance from the Rabbi.

## Cremation and Embalming

Jewish law and custom are averse to any desecration of the body; for this reason cremation or embalming and the use of cosmetics on the deceased are contrary to Jewish tradition.

## Contact the Funeral Home

The funeral home should be contacted only after the Rabbi has been called.

Tikvat Israel is a member of the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc. (JFPCGW), which has been contracting with funeral homes on behalf of area congregations for decades. The Funeral Practices Committee upholds the Jewish values of honoring those who have died, and comforting the bereaved with simple Jewish funerals and rituals. Each contract has had a duration of two years at which time it is reviewed. The current provider under the JFPCGW contract is Hines-Rinaldi Funeral Home located in White Oak, Maryland, Tikvat Israel also has had an agreement with Sagel Bloomfield Goldberg Funeral Direction, located in Rockville. Over the years they have provided congregants with traditional funerals held either at the Synagogue or at graveside. When contacting the funeral home, please mention that you are a member of Tikvat Israel. Funeral homes' contracts are listed on the Tikvat Israel website.

For more information about Jewish funeral practices, visit: [www.jewish-funerals.org/jewish-funeral-practices-committee-greater-washington-0](http://www.jewish-funerals.org/jewish-funeral-practices-committee-greater-washington-0)

The director of the funeral home obtains a death certificate, and— once it is signed—moves the body to its premises. Along with the Rabbi, the bereavement committee, and the cemetery, the funeral home coordinates funeral arrangements. If the death or funeral occurs out of town, the local funeral home will assist with the necessary arrangements. Local funeral homes familiar with Jewish practices are:

Sagel Bloomfield Goldberg Funeral Care  
1091 Rockville Pike Rockville MD 20852  
301-340-1400

Hines-Rinaldi Funeral Home  
11800 New Hampshire Ave Silver Spring, MD 20904  
301-622-2290

Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home 254 Carroll Street, NW  
Washington, DC 2001  
202-541-3395

### *יָרֵךְ – Aron, Casket*

Some mourners are tempted to purchase a casket that "will last forever," but in Jewish tradition we follow Genesis 3:19: "...for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." In order to avoid interference with the natural process of "to dust you shall return," Jewish tradition requires that a casket be made entirely of wood (a "plain pine box") and not be ostentatious. We came into the world as equals in the sight of God, and we should leave the same way.

## Cemeteries

The initial two cemeteries listed have sections set aside for Tikvat Israel at a reduced cost for members. Contact the synagogue for further information and to set up preplanning if desired.

*Judean Memorial Gardens* 16225 Batchelors Forest Road Olney, MD 20832 (301) 384-1000. Judean Gardens has a chapel available for funerals for a fee.

*Garden of Remembrance* 14321 Comus Road Clarksburg, MD 20871 (301) 428-3000

*Mount Lebanon Cemetery* 9500 Riggs Road Adelphi, MD 20783 (301) 434-4640. This cemetery also has a section for Tikvat Israel, but plots are no longer available. Some members may have already purchased plots here.

*Menorah Garden Cemetery* 12800 Viers Mill Road Rockville, MD 20853 301-881-2151

## Local Burial Organizations

***The following information is current as of August 2017. Note that contact's names may change.***

### **Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc. (JFPCGW)**

Art Hessel, Chair (June 2017)  
Hessel.arthur@yahoo.com  
410-569-4289

### **Kavod v'Nichum (Honor and Comfort)**

Educational non-profit organization that encourages and assists the organization of bereavement committees and Chevra Kadisha groups in synagogues and communities – [www.jewish-funerals.org](http://www.jewish-funerals.org)

### ***Chesed Shel Emes (Free Burial Society)***

Phillip Goldman  
301-762-2825

### **Community-wide *Chevra Kadisha* of Greater Washington**

<http://www.chevrakadishagw.org>

- Women's division:  
President Mrs. Linda Rische 240-271-1493  
Mrs. Devorah Grayson 202-438-7060 (June 2017)
- Men's division:  
Menasha Katz 301-244-8316  
Nechemia Mond 301-537-7158 (June 2017)

## BEFORE THE FUNERAL

### תַּנְיָוִית – *Aninut*, Between the Time of Death and the Funeral

*Aninut* is the first of several stages of mourning in Judaism, each with its own inner logic and sensitivity. Along with the stages that follow it, *aninut* is designed to help the mourner acknowledge and accept the pain and loss. It begins when one first learns of the death of an immediate relative and ends when burial takes place.

A person who has lost a relative and is going through *aninut* is called an אֹנֵן – *onen* (for a male) or an אֹנֵנֶת – *onenet* (for a female). During this period many decisions may be required, but the *onen/onenet* may not be ready to make them. The laws governing actions and behavior of an *onen/onenet* are sensitive to this inner struggle and reflect a commonsense understanding of a mourner's current state of mind. The mourner is not expected to be concerned about social amenities and is exempt from certain religious obligations so that (s)he can attend to the funeral and burial preparations with the dignity befitting the memory of the deceased.

### טְהוּרָה – *Tohorah*, Ritual Cleansing

*Tohorah*, the cleansing of the deceased, is a Jewish religious act. Just as a baby is cleansed when (s)he first enters this world, the circle is completed by washing the deceased as (s)he departs. In addition to the cleansing, special prayers are recited asking for the eternal peace of the deceased. The *Chevra Kadisha* performs *Tohorah* as an act of *chesed* (kindness), because the person for whom it is done cannot reciprocate. Specially-trained groups from our Synagogue (a women's group for women and a men's group for men) perform the ritual cleansing in the prescribed manner that has been handed down for generations. They are the last people to handle the body before it is placed in the casket, and thus the family is assured that their loved one has been treated properly and with respect. The Washington Area *Chevra Kadisha* is also available and may be contacted through the funeral home.

### שְׂמירָה – *Shmirah*, Guarding the Body

Jewish tradition requires that the deceased not be left unattended prior to burial. The person who stays with the deceased is called a שׂוֹמֵר – *shomer* (male) or שׂוֹמֵרֶת – *shomeret* (female), which means "guardian."

Preferably, the שומרים — *shomrim* are family members or friends of the deceased. During the time that the deceased is at the funeral home, *shomrim* can be arranged for a fee through the funeral home. If the funeral is to be held at Tikvat Israel, the Bereavement Committee will provide a *shomer/shomeret* to stay with the casket prior to the beginning of the funeral service. Smoking, eating, drinking, and idle conversation are all forbidden in the presence of the deceased. Instead, the *shomer* should read from the Book of Psalms (סֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים).

## תְּכָרִיכִים — *Tachrichim*, Shroud and Burial Attire

To demonstrate the equality of all in death, Jewish law requires burial in *tachrichim*, plain white burial clothes and shroud. In addition to the *tachrichim*, adult men and women may be buried in their own *tallit*. The practice of dressing all alike for burial was instituted by Rabbi Gamliel in the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E., so that the poor would not be shamed and the rich would not compete with each other to be buried in the costliest garments. The clothes are appropriate for one about to stand before God and be judged; therefore, they are simple, perfectly clean, and white. Men and women are dressed in similar garments. There are no pockets in the garments, for there is no need for the deceased to carry anything.

## THE FUNERAL SERVICE

The funeral service is intended to honor the deceased and to comfort the bereaved. It may be held in the Synagogue, in a funeral home, at the graveside or in the cemetery chapel. The funeral should be held as close to the time of death as possible. The service is brief and simple: chanting of psalms and אֵלֵי מֶלֶךְ רַחֲמִים — *El Malei Rachamim*, the traditional memorial prayer (Appendix 8). A הֶסְפֵּד — *hesped* (eulogy) that honors the deceased is given. Instrumental music is inappropriate. Fraternal ceremonies and military honors should be cleared with the Rabbi.

If the funeral service is conducted in the Synagogue, mourners are expected to abide by the Board of Directors' policy on funerals conducted in the Sanctuary.

## קְרִיעָה — *K'ria*, Rending of Garments

Mourners for parents, a spouse, children, or siblings traditionally participate in this rite, usually performed just prior to the funeral service. It is the custom to tear a visible portion of clothing such as a lapel, pocket, or collar; in keeping with tradition, others choose to wear



a torn black ribbon as a symbol of their mourning. The garment is torn (or the cut ribbon is worn) on the left side, closest to the heart for parents, and on the right side for other relatives. The torn garment is worn for the duration of the *shiva*, the 7-day mourning period but on Shabbat it is not publicly displayed. Some people continue to wear it during the *Sh'loshim*, the 30-day period. *K'ria* is not performed on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*.

## כֹּהֲנִים – Kohanim

There are many special restrictions related to the attendance of *Kohanim* at a funeral. For details, please consult the Rabbi.

## Pallbearers

The casket is escorted out of the Sanctuary and/or is carried to the burial site by family or friends selected by the mourners.

## Viewing the Remains

Public viewing of the body is contrary to Jewish tradition.

## Flowers

Flowers are not appropriate. A tangible expression of condolence may be made by contributing to a charity that was favored by the deceased or the mourning family.

## קְבוּרָה – Kevurah, Burial

During the recitation of Psalm 91 by the officiating rabbi, pallbearers customarily stop several times while carrying the casket to the grave. The casket precedes mourners, family, and friends as a sign of respect.

## At the Graveside

The officiating person speaks; prayers are recited; and the casket is lowered into the ground. It is customary for the family of the deceased to place an inverted shovelful of soil on the casket followed by several shovelfuls to fulfill the *mitzvah* of לָיַיֵּת הַמֵּת – *l'vayat ha-met* (attending the dead to the grave). Others attending are asked to place similar shovelfuls on the casket until the casket is fully covered with soil. The Mourners' *Kaddish* is then recited by the bereaved.

Those in attendance form two rows between which the mourners pass to receive the traditional expressions of consolation:

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר אֲבֵלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם

*HaMakom yenaḥem et'khem b'tokh shar avay'lay Tzion veerushalayim.*

*May the Almighty comfort you together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem*

It is customary to wash the hands ritually after leaving the cemetery or before entering the house of mourning. This washing is an affirmation of life after involvement with death

## THE SHIVA HOME

### Preparation of the *Shiva* Home

It is customary to cover the mirrors in the *shiva* home; to provide mourners with low chairs upon which to sit; and to provide a *shiva* candle—a seven-day memorial candle. The mirrors are covered so that the mourners cannot see themselves in their depressed state. Sitting on low seats dates back to biblical times and indicates the lowered position of mourners and their reduced self-esteem because of their loss.

The Bereavement Committee can assist, if needed, with the preparations of the *shiva* home, and provide low chairs *and siddurim* (prayer books) for services conducted at the *shiva* home. One of the main functions of the Bereavement Committee is to try to ensure that there will be a *minyan* at the *shiva* home.

### Returning to the *Shiva* Home

A hand-washing station outside the entrance is provided for those who did not have the opportunity to ritually wash at the cemetery. It is customary for mourners to remove leather shoes upon entering the house. A seven-day candle provided by the funeral home is lit as a first act of mourning. It remains burning for seven days as an indication that this is a house of mourning. There is no prescribed prayer for the candle lighting.

### סְעֻדַת הַבְּרָאָה – Se'udat Havra'ah, Meal of Condolence/Comforting

When **the mourners return to** the local house of mourning from the cemetery, it is customary to have a traditional meal, which includes round foods such as eggs, to symbolize the circle and cycle of life. Tikvat Israel can provide either a fruit basket or a meal for up to 10 mourners sometime during the Shiva period.

## PERIODS OF MOURNING

### שָׁבָעָה – *Shiva*, The First Seven Days

In Genesis 50: 7-10, we are told, "So Joseph went up to bury his father...together with all of Joseph's household, his brothers...they held there a very great and solemn lamentation; and he observed a mourning period of seven days for their father."

*Shiva* is a seven-day period of intense mourning, beginning on the day of the burial. During this time, mourners should not wear leather shoes or cosmetics; they should not shave; and they should remain at home. If it is necessary to return to work during the *Shiva* period, the traditional form of mourning should be resumed upon returning home. If a major festival occurs during this period, it terminates *shiva*; the Rabbi will advise about other circumstances that alter the duration of this period of mourning.

It is customary for mourners to participate in the afternoon/ evening services in the *shiva* home (except on *Shabbat*, when they are encouraged to attend Synagogue services). Mourners may wish to lead these home services; if they choose not to do so, then the Bereavement Committee will arrange for a *minyán* leader. At the end of each *shiva minyan*, those in attendance say these words in unison to the mourner:

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ נְשָׂאָר אֲבְלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם

*HaMakom yenaḥem et'khem b'tokh shar avay'lay Tzion veerushalayim.*

*May the Almighty comfort you together with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem*

Public mourning observances are suspended on *Shabbat*—the sanctity and serenity of this day supersedes personal grief. Mourners are encouraged to attend *Shabbat* services; they are not given an *aliyah*, do not lead services, and the *k'ria* is not displayed publicly. At Friday night services it is traditional for mourners to enter the service after *L'Cha Dodi*.

Judaism teaches that the feeling of loss of a human life is not limited to the family of the deceased but is shared by the entire community. During *Shabbat* services immediately after the death, it is our custom at Tikvat Israel to announce the name of the deceased and give details concerning the funeral and *shiva*, if applicable. The Synagogue office will also send an e-mail message with the pertinent information to the Congregation email list.

## Condolence Calls

It is an act of *chesed* to pay a condolence call during the *Shiva* period. Everyday greetings between mourners and visitors normally are not exchanged. An important role for all visitors is to listen and provide comfort to those in mourning. Conversation should center on the departed. This demonstrates that the entire community shares in the sorrow and sense of loss.

## *Sh'loshim*, The First Thirty Days

In Deuteronomy 34:8, we learn, "...And the Israelites bewailed Moses in the steppes of Moab for thirty days."

This period of mourning begins at the end of *shiva* and continues until the morning of the thirtieth day after the funeral. After the initial seven days of *shiva*, mourners begin to adjust to the loss, and gradually resume a normal life. Mourners return to work and normal activities but refrain from public entertainment or social activities. Some people continue to wear the *k'ria* during *Sh'loshim*. In place of home services, mourners customarily attend Synagogue services daily to recite the Mourners' *Kaddish*.

## *Shanah*, The First Year

Mourners for deceased parents continue to attend *minyanim* daily for eleven months, in order to recite the Mourners' *Kaddish*. The *halachic* obligation for those mourning a spouse, child or sibling ends after the thirty-day *Shloshim* period.

It has been suggested that when public recitation of the *Kaddish* cannot be performed, individuals can express their devotion to Jewish tradition in a variety of ways: studying the words of the Mourners' *Kaddish* or reciting Psalms can provide comfort to mourners. However, regular attendance at a *minyan* can provide an anchor to the community and aid the healing process. There are minyanim all over the greater Washington area. To look for them online go to [www.godavin.com](http://www.godavin.com) or consult with the rabbi.

## How to Honor your loved ones

Memorial plaques are available at the synagogue to record the names of our departed for constant remembrance. Please provide the deceased's name/Hebrew name and date of death (both secular and Hebrew dates) to the office. The office will make arrangements for the memorial plaques. Contact the office concerning costs.

Other ways could be to dedicate a Chumash, plant trees in Israel, or make another kind of donation in your loved one's memory.

## הַקְמַת מַצֵּבָה – Hakamat Matzevah

### Unveiling Ceremony at the Graveside

Unveiling marks a transition in the process of mourning. It generally takes place during the first year after death. There is no formal requirement in our tradition relating to the liturgy of an unveiling ceremony. Family members and friends find it comforting to meet at the graveside to unveil the monument and recite a few appropriate prayers and psalms, such as *El Malei Rachamim* and, if a minyan is present, the Mourners' *Kaddish* (see Appendix 8).

### *Yahrzeit*, Anniversary of Death

One is obliged to observe *yahrzeit* only for one's parents, but may elect to do so for others, especially if nobody else does so. Generally, *yahrzeit* is observed on the anniversary of the passing; however, if the burial took place more than three days after the passing, then the first *yahrzeit* is observed according to the Jewish calendar on the anniversary of the burial. Subsequently, the *yahrzeit* is observed on the anniversary of the passing. A *yahrzeit* candle is lit without any specific blessing and left burning until it goes out by itself. Remember that Jewish days go from sunset to sunset. If the *yahrzeit* occurs on *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*, the *yahrzeit* candle should be lit first.

### Visiting the Grave

When you visit a grave, it is appropriate to make a contribution to *zedakah*. Rather than hire someone to recite a prayer for you, you may recite the memorial prayer *El Malei Rachamim* either in Hebrew or English (see Appendix 8). It is permitted to visit the grave at any time after burial. It is customary to place a small stone upon the grave. The placing of stones is an indication that someone has visited the grave. An early reference to this custom is found in the *Shulchan Aruch*. It is also customary to wash one's hands ritually before leaving the cemetery.

### *Yizkor*, Memorial Prayers

Following Jewish tradition at Tikvat Israel, *Yizkor* prayers are recited (even during the first year) on *Yom Kippur*, *Sh'mini Atzeret*, the last day of *Pesach*, and the second day of *Shavuot*.

כְּאִישׁ, אֲשֶׁר אָמוֹ תִנְחַמְנוּ--כֵּן אֲנֹכִי אֲנַחֲמְכֶם, וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּנְחַמְנוּ.

As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you, and you will be comforted in Jerusalem.

ISAIAH 66:13

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- Lamm, Maurice. 2000. *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*. Jonathan David Publishers, Inc., New York. 265pp.
- Liss-Levinson, Nechama. 1995. *When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Remembering Workbook for Dealing with Shiva and the Year Beyond*. Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont. 48 pp.
- Levine, Aaron. 1994. *To Comfort the Bereaved*. Jason Aronson, Inc., New Jersey. 241pp.
- Weiss, Abner. 2001. *Death and Bereavement: A Halakhic Guide*. Ktav Publishing House, Inc., New Jersey. 404pp.
- Wolfson, Ron. 2005. *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort: A Guide to Jewish Bereavement and Comfort*. Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont. 320 pp.

We Jews wish each other: May you live *ad meah esrim, bis hundert tzvantzik*, until 120, like Moses, with eyes undimmed and strength unabated. That is the wish, but we all know the reality. When mourning comes, every Jew should be surrounded by a loving community.

*Rabbi Avis Miller*

## Appendix 1: Minimal and Alternative Confessional Prayers (*Vidui*)

The following text is a minimum confession:

I acknowledge before You, Adonai my God and God of our ancestors, that both my cure and my death are in Your hands. May it be Your will to send me perfect healing. Yet, if this is not Your determination, I will accept it. In Your presence I atone for all of my sins and transgressions. O God, bestow upon me the abounding happiness that is rewarded to righteous people.

Protect my family with whose soul my own is knit. Into Your hand I offer my spirit. You have redeemed me, O God of truth.

Even though the *Vidui* is a formalized prayer, tradition allows everyone to add his or her own thoughts and feelings. The following text is an alternative confession (translation by Rabbi Amy Eilberg):

My God and God of my fathers and mothers

May my prayer come before You.

Do not ignore my plea.

Please, forgive me for all of the sins

That I sinned before You throughout my lifetime.

I regret things that I have done.

Now, O God, take my suffering and pain as atonement.

Forgive my mistakes, for against You have I sinned.

May it be Your will, O God, my God and God of my ancestors, That I sin no more.

In Your great mercy, cleanse me of the sins I have committed, but not through suffering and disease.

Send me a complete healing along with all those who are ill.

I acknowledge before You, Adonai, my God and God of my ancestors, That my healing and my death are in Your hands.

May it be Your will to grant me a complete healing.

If it is Your will that I am to die of this illness,

Let my death be atonement for all the wrongs that I have done in my life.

Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings.

Grant me a place in the World to Come.

Parent of orphans and Guardian of widows,

Protect my dear loved ones, with whose souls my soul is bound.

Into Your hand I place my soul. You have redeemed me, O God of Truth.



## **Appendix 2: The Role of Tikvat Israel and the Bereavement Committee**

At this time, Tikvat Israel and the Bereavement Committee can provide these services when death occurs in a congregant's family:

- ◆ Advise congregant in making funeral arrangements
- ◆ Arrange for the professional services of the Rabbi and Cantor
- ◆ Bereavement counseling
- ◆ Arrange for *Tohorah* by the Chevrah Kadisha.
- ◆ Arrange funeral services in Tikvat Israel's Sanctuary or at graveside
- ◆ Provide *Shomrim* before the funeral at the Synagogue
- ◆ If necessary, prepare the mourners' house prior to their return from the cemetery (e.g., cover mirrors; set out water for ritual hand washing after returning from funeral) This may be done by friends of the family.
- ◆ Arrange for a fruit basket or a meal of condolence for up to 10 mourners sometime during the shiva period.
- ◆ Coordinate *shiva minyanim* and supply the *shiva* house with *siddurim*, if desired
- ◆ Arrange for *yahrzeit* reminders to be sent out by the Tikvat Israel office
- ◆ Arrange for a dignified funeral at a reasonable cost through funeral contracts with Sagel Funeral Direction and the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington DC (currently with Hines-Rinaldi, MD). Tikvat Israel does not have a contract with Torchinsky but many members have used them for funeral arrangements.
- ◆ Provide members with the option of purchasing from Tikvat Israel grave sites at Judean Gardens or Garden of Remembrance at reduced cost.

### **Appendix 3: Funeral Fees for Tikvat Israel affiliated members**

Funerals can be and usually are very expensive. The contracts Tikvat Israel has with local funeral homes will keep the basic cost of a funeral down, but there are quite a few fees that are not covered. Basic contracts cover such things as the services of the funeral director and staff, the transportation of the deceased to the funeral home (within a certain mileage from the funeral home), the preparation/dressing/casketing and refrigeration as needed, paperwork (including filing and obtaining death certificates) and the transportation of the casket to Tikvat Israel or the cemetery for services (within a certain mile radius of the funeral home). These are fees of the funeral home. Preplanning is available if the family wants to start paying funeral costs before needed.

At the cemetery, of course, a site needs to be purchased. Sites can be purchased through Tikvat Israel and can be preplanned.

The cemetery itself has a system of fees for such things as the opening and closing of the grave, a concrete liner for the casket and installation of the liner. These fees can also be preplanned.

In addition, a marker for the grave, which is customarily unveiled at 11 months after the burial, is another cost involved in the burial process. The marker can be single or double, and of course, the cost depends upon the type purchased.

Finally, although not specifically a fee, it is customary to make a donation or offer an honorarium to the Rabbi and Cantor. Call the office for more information about customs at Tikvat Israel.

### **Appendix 4: Board of Directors Policy on Funerals Conducted in the Sanctuary of Tikvat Israel**

Synagogue funerals will be conducted according to Jewish law and tradition.

This implies that the deceased has undergone *Tohorah*, the ritual cleaning of the body; has been dressed in an appropriate shroud, (*Tachrichim*); and has been placed in a casket that is not excessively ornate and contains only the remains of the deceased. Sacred items such as a *tallit* and old prayer books may be in the casket.

## **Appendix 5 Funerals for those unaffiliated with Tikvat Israel**

For people who are not affiliated with Tikvat Israel, there are additional fees for using the sanctuary and the services of the Rabbi, Cantor and/or Guest Clergy.

All funerals conducted at Tikvat Israel will conform to the religious standards of the congregation, including but not limited to Tohorah (ritual preparation of the deceased, Tachrichim (traditional burial shrouds), all wooden casket, closed casket, and the deceased must be a Jew according to Jewish law.

All funerals conducted at Tikvat Israel will include the officiating or co-officiating of Tikvat Israel Clergy and/or clergy explicitly authorized by Tikvat Israel clergy. It is understood that officiantes will include both male and female clergy.

Any additional rituals performed (i.e. Masonic Rites) will be permitted only with the concurrence and supervision of Tikvat Israel Clergy. Participating funeral homes will provide certificates of insurance prior to funeral.

### **NOTE:**

- A service cannot be conducted in the sanctuary when the remains have been cremated or embalmed.
- An open casket is not permitted in the sanctuary.
- The Rabbi will have sole authority and discretion to modify or adjust the requirements delineated above.
- Deviation from the above expectations will necessitate a service at another location or at graveside.

Adopted April 30, 2001. Revised August, 2017

## **Appendix 6: Information About the Deceased, which Family Members May Need**

- Full Name
- Hebrew Name, and Hebrew names of father and mother
- Kohen—Levi—Yisrael
- Date, place of birth, location of birth certificate
- Mother's maiden name
- Social Security number and card
- Location of will and legal advisor's telephone number
- Life insurance policy and telephone number of agent
- Location of safe deposit box keys and who has access
- Number of death certificates (at least 10 is recommended) to cover each financial account or transaction, including social security and taxes
- Bank accounts and where accounts are held
- Securities information and where securities are kept
- Cemetery deed/location and any other prearrangement documents
- Real Estate and how title is held
- Military service, including branch of service and where discharge papers are kept
- Preference as to funeral home, pall bearers, and charitable donation(s)

## Appendix 7: Prayers at the Grave

### *El Malei Rachamim* For a male:

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה,  
במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הרקיע מזהירים, לנשמת

בן \_\_\_\_\_

שהלך לעולמו, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתו, אָנָּא, בעל הרחמים הסתירהו בסתר  
כנפיו לעולמים,

ויצרו בצרור החיים את נשמתו, !! הוא נחלתו, וינוח בשלום על משכבו.  
ונאמר אמן.

Exalted, compassionate God, grant infinite rest in Your sheltering presence, among the holy and the pure, to the soul of our beloved \_\_\_\_\_, who has gone to his eternal home. Merciful One, we ask that our loved one find perfect peace in Your tender embrace, his memory enduring as inspiration for commitment to his ideals and integrity in our lives. May his soul thus be bound up in the bond of life. May he rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

### *El Malei Rachamim* For a female:

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה,  
במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הרקיע מזהירים, לנשמת

בת \_\_\_\_\_

שהלכה לעולמה, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתה, אָנָּא, בעל הרחמים יסתירה בסתר  
כנפיו לעולמים, ויצרו בצרור החיים את נשמתה, !! הוא נחלתה, ותנוח

בשלום על משכבה.  
ונאמר אמן.

Exalted, compassionate God, grant infinite rest in Your sheltering presence, among the holy and the pure, to the soul of our beloved \_\_\_\_\_, who has gone to her eternal home. Merciful One, we ask that our loved one find perfect peace in Your tender embrace, her memory enduring as inspiration for commitment to her ideals and integrity in our lives. May her soul thus be bound up in the bond of life. May she rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

## Kaddish

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba,  
b'alma di v'ra, ki-r'utei, v'yamlikh  
malkhutei b'hayeikhon u-  
v'yomeikhon u-v'haye d'khol beit  
Yisra-el, ba'agala u-vi-z'man kariv,  
v'imru amen.*

*Y'hei shmei raba m'varakh l'alam u-  
l'almei almaya.*

*Yitbarakh v'yishtabah v'yitpa-ar  
v'yitromam v'yitnasei v'yit-hadar  
v'yit-aleh v'yit-halal sh'mei  
d'Kudsha, b'rikh hu \*l'ela min kol  
birkhata v'shirata tushb'hata  
v'nehamata da'amiran b'alma,  
v'imru amen.*

*Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya  
v'hayim aleinu v'al kol Yisra-el,  
v'imru amen.*

*Oseh shalom bi-m'romav, hu  
ya'aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol  
Yisra-el, v'imru amen.*

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי  
בְּרָא כְרַעוּתֵהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתֵהּ  
בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ  
אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמַי  
וְלְעֵלְמֵי  
עֲלְמַיָּא.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם  
וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל  
שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא, \*לְעֵלְמָא מִן  
כָּל

בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא,  
דְּאָמְרוּ בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא, וְחַיִּים  
(טוֹבִים) עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ  
אָמֵן.

עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה  
שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ  
אָמֵן.

May God's name be exalted and hallowed throughout the world that He created, as is God's wish. May God's sovereignty soon be accepted, during our life and the life of all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May God's great name be praised throughout all time.

Glorified and celebrated, lauded and worshiped, exalted and honored, extolled and acclaimed may the Holy One be, praised beyond all song and psalm, beyond all tributes that mortals can utter. And let us say: Amen.

Let there be abundant peace from heaven, with life's goodness for us and for all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

May the One who brings peace to His universe bring peace to us and to all Israel. And let us say: Amen.

## Appendix 8: Psalms for Mourning

### Psalm 23

1. Adonai is my shepherd, I shall not want.
2. God gives me repose in green meadows and guides me over calm waters.
3. God will revive my spirit and direct me on the right path- for that is God's way.
4. Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no harm, for You are at my side. Your staff and Your rod comfort me.
5. You prepare a banquet for me in the presence of my foes; You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.
6. Surely goodness and kindness shall be my portion all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Adonai forever.

### Psalm 91

1. You who live in the shelter of 'Elyon, who spend your nights in the shadow of Shaddai,
2. who say to ADONAI, "My refuge! My fortress! My God, in whom I trust!"
3. he will rescue you from the trap of the hunter and from the plague of calamities;
4. he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his truth is a shield and protection.
5. You will not fear the terrors of night or the arrow that flies by day,
6. or the plague that roams in the dark, or the scourge that wreaks havoc at noon.
7. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand; but it won't come near you.
8. Only keep your eyes open, and you will see how the wicked are punished.
9. For you have made ADONAI, the Most High, who is my refuge, your dwelling-place.
10. No disaster will happen to you, no calamity will come near your tent;
11. for he will order his angels to care for you and guard you wherever you go.
12. They will carry you in their hands, so that you won't trip on a stone.
13. You will tread down lions and snakes, young lions and serpents you will trample underfoot.
14. Because he loves me, I will rescue him; because he knows my name, I will protect him.
15. He will call on me, and I will answer him. I will be with him when he is in trouble. I will extricate him and bring him honor.
16. I will satisfy him with long life and show him my salvation."

**Psalm 103**

13. As a father has compassion for his children Adonai has compassion for those who show reverence.
14. God knows how we are fashioned, God remembers that we are dust.
15. The days of mortals are like grass; We flourish as the flowers of the field.
16. A wind passes over them and they are not more; And no one can recognize where they grew.
17. But adonai's compassion is everlasting. God's kindness to children's children,
18. To all the reverent ones, Endures, age after age, unchanging.

**Psalm 121**

1. I lift my eyes to the mountains; What is the source of my help?
2. My help comes from Adonai, Maker of heaven and earth.
3. God will not let your foot give way; your Protector will not slumber.
4. See, the Protector of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps!
5. God is your Guardian, God is your protection at your right hand.
6. The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
7. God will guard you from all harm
8. God will guard your soul, your going and coming, now and forever.

**Psalm 130**

1. A song of ascents: ADONAI, I call to you from the depths;
2. Hear my cry, Adonai! Let your ears pay attention to the sound of my pleading.
3. Yah, if you kept a record of sins, who, Adonai, could stand?
4. But with you there is forgiveness, so that you will be feared.
5. I wait longingly for ADONAI; I put my hope in his word.
6. Everything in me waits for Adonai more than guards on watch wait for morning, more than guards on watch wait for morning.
7. Isra'el, put your hope in ADONAI! For grace is found with ADONAI, and with him is unlimited redemption.
8. He will redeem Israel from all their wrongdoings.

**Psalm 139**

1. Adonai, , You have searched me out and You know.
2. You know my sitting and my rising; You understand how to attach me from afar.
3. My going about and my lying down You encompassed, and You are accustomed to all my ways.
4. For there is no word on my tongue; behold, Adonai, You know it all.
5. From the rear and the front You encompassed me, and You placed Your pressure upon me.
6. Knowledge is hidden from me; it is hard, I cannot attain it.



7. Where shall I go from Your spirit, and where shall I flee from Your presence?
8. If I ascend to the heavens, there You are, and if I make my bed in the grave, behold, You are there.
9. [If] I take up the wings of dawn, [if] I dwell at the end of the west,
10. There too, Your hand will lead me, and Your right hand will grasp me.
11. I said, "Darkness will darken me, and the night will be as light about me."
12. Even darkness will not obscure [anything] from You, and the night will light up like day; as darkness so is the light.
13. For You created my reins, You covered me in my mother's womb.
14. I shall thank You for in an awesome, wondrous way I was fashioned; Your works are wondrous, and my soul knows it very well.
15. My essence was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, I was formed in the lowest parts of the earth.
16. Your eyes saw my unformed body, and on Your book they were all written; days have been formed and one of them is His.
17. And to me, how dear are Your friends, O Lord! How great is their sum!
18. I shall count them; they are more numerous than sand; I have come to the end, and I am still with You.
19. If only You would slay the wicked, O God, and men of blood, "Turn away from me."
20. Who mention You with wicked thought; Your enemies took it up in vain.
21. Did I not hate Your enemies, O Lord? With those who rise up against You, I quarrel.
22. I hate them with utmost hatred; they have become my enemies.
23. Search me out, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts.
24. And see whether there is any vexatious way about me, and lead me in the way of the world.

## Appendix 9 Prayer for the terminally ill

O God, Guardian of Israel, watch over \_\_\_\_\_ May (he/she) find shelter under your care. Shield (him/her) from pain and suffering. We pray, O God for strength and wisdom. We treasure each moment that we are linked together in life, yet pray for the courage to face the unknown. Be close to us, O God, remain at our beside, for into Your hands do we place our spirit. Praised are You, Adonai, Guardian of Israel.

## Appendix 10: Books Available for Borrowing from the Bereavement Committee

The following books belong to the Tikvat Israel Bereavement Committee. When you are finished with these books, please return them to the synagogue office.

- Ben Artzi-Pelossof, Noa. *In the Name of Sorrow and Hope*. Knopf. NY. 1996.
- Canfield, Jack et al, *A 4<sup>th</sup> Course of Chicken Soup for the Soul*. Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, FL, 1997.
- Goldman, Ari. *Living a Year of Kaddish*. Schocken Books, NY. 2003
- Goldstein, Zalman. 2006. *The Jewish Mourner's Companion: Guidance, Comfort, Liturgy*. The Jewish Learning Group, Inc., United States.
- Goodman, Arnold M. 2003. *A Plain Pine Box: A Return to Simple Jewish Funerals and Etrernal Traditions*. Augmented edition. Ktav Publishing House, Inc., NJ.
- Greenberg, Sidney and Levine, Jonathan. *A Minyan of Comfort*. Prayerbook Press, Bridgeport, CT. 2003.
- Kelman, Stuart. *Chesed Shel Emet: The Truest Act of Kindness*. EKS Publishing Co., 2000, Berkeley, California. 56pp.
- Klein, Rabbi Issac. *A Time to be Born, a Time to Die*. United Synagogue of America, NY, 1988.
- Kushner, Harold. *To Life*. Little, Brown and Co. Boston, MA. 1993.
- Kushner, Harold. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Avon Books, NY. 1981.
- Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. *In the Winter of Life*. Wincott, PA. 2002
- Robinson, George. *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs and Rituals*. Pocketbooks, NY. 2000.
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- Wieseltier, Leon. *Kaddish*. Knopf. NY. 1998.
- Wolfson, Ron. 1996. *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort: A Guide to Jewish Bereavement and Comfort*. Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont. 320 pp.
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## Helpful Websites

In addition, these are some websites that may prove helpful, even though the basic information is similar in all.

National Association of Chevra Kadisha

<https://www.nasck.org/what-is-a-jewish-burial>

Judaism 101 Life, Death and Mourning

<http://www.jewfaq.org/death.htm>

Kavod v'Nichum Jewish funerals, burial and mourning

<http://jewish-funerals.org/traditional-jewish-mourning-practices>

Jewish Funeral Customs: Saying Good-bye to a Loved One

<https://jewishfederations.org/jewish-funeral-customs-saying-goodbye-to-a-loved-one>

How to Mourn Our Friends

<http://www.cjvoices.org/article/how-to-mourn-our-friends>