

**GUIDE TO JEWISH CUSTOMS
REGARDING DEATH AND MOURNING**



**TEMPLE SHOLOM
MONTICELLO, NY**

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Foreword

Rabbi Alvin Fine's beautiful and inspiring prayer in *Gates of Repentance* reminds us that:

Birth is a beginning
And death a destination
And life is a journey...
A sacred pilgrimage to life everlasting.

Properly understood, death is a stage in the journey of life. The recognition that life is finite and that death is a reality that must be anticipated and accepted is one of Judaism's most profound insights. Nonetheless, confronting our mortality and that of those dearest to us is one of life's most difficult tasks. For some, the subject of death is considered morbid. But if we fail to plan ahead and avoid making essential decisions, death catches us unprepared, confused and uncertain about what to do, making the process of mourning even more painful and burdensome. It is far better, healthier and kinder to our loved ones to face the inevitable with forethought and convey our wishes to those who will survive us.

This guide has been prepared to help the members of our congregational family and their loved ones understand Jewish practices with respect to the death, funerals and mourning. While traditional Jewish practices are explained, we also include the Reform Jewish approach to these practices. As Reform Jews, it is important to understand our tradition and why certain practices are done, and then to decide personally which are meaningful for you. Please keep in mind that many of these practices are designed to help the loved ones left behind. Read it, share your feelings with dear ones and discuss the issues that should be faced. Together you can decide which practices represent who you are as well as those which will be important for your family. This guide will also prove useful for consultation when death approaches or occurs. Put it where you will have ready access to it in time of need.

Please know that your rabbi is ready to assist with the many aspects of preparing for and coping with death. Feel free to contact the rabbi with questions and concerns and be sure to notify the congregational office when a death is imminent or has occurred. We will respond as soon as possible with comfort, counsel and the assistance you may need in making necessary arrangements. We want to do whatever we can to help you find comfort and support during difficult times such as these.

Shalom,

Rabbi Michele Brand Medwin

Introduction

The Jewish approach to death and mourning is guided by four basic principles:

1. Recognition of the reality of death
2. Moderation in grief
3. Respect for the dead
4. Equality in death

It is in accordance with these principles that the laws, customs and practices of Judaism have developed. These reflect, in turn, the wisdom and the spiritual and psychological insights of generations of Jewish scholars and lay people. The recommendations and background provided here are a tribute to those who prepared the way for us.

Before Death Comes

Last Will and Testament

Every adult should have a will, a legal document in which one disposes of one's material assets. The will is the place to specify how your assets should be divided among family, organizations and others. In keeping with the mitzvah of *tzedakah*, this is a time to select some funds to go towards charitable organizations including the Temple, medical research foundations, and other organizations that represent who you are. Some people think of a will as necessary only if there is a large estate or when death is imminent. Such assumptions are mistaken and can have awful consequences. No matter what your age or financial situation, a will relieves your family of the burden of disposing of personal possessions, avoids or minimizes a range of potential problems and complications later, and reduces probate and other costs. Consulting an attorney with experience in such matters can provide you with the advice you need. If your needs are simple there are websites such as www.legalzoom.com that can guide you in creating a will.

In addition to addressing property and guardianship issues, a will can also specify your desires concerning funeral arrangements and organ donations. Please note that the will is normally not consulted until after the funeral, so it is imperative to record your funeral wishes separately and to make them known to those who will be responsible for handling the arrangements at the time of death. One way of doing so is to fill out the family information forms at the end of this guide. We also recommend that you make a copy of those forms and place them on file in the Temple office.

"Living Will"

Jewish tradition affirms the sanctity of life and encourages strenuous efforts to preserve life. It forbids both euthanasia and "assisted suicide," the active taking of life of the terminally ill. However, it affirms that when the attending physicians declare that there is no realistic hope for a patient and death is certain, impediments to death must not be created or should be removed, allowing a patient to die in dignity and peace. Thus, Judaism allows the withholding of treatment when its effect is to delay an impending death rather than to prolong life. It also allows the administration of pain relief medication to a patient with a terminal disease, even if the dosage required to control pain endangers the life of the patient.

Many people do not desire that their life be artificially prolonged when they have an incurable and irreversible condition and death is near or they are in an irreversible coma or persistent vegetative state and are no longer able to make decisions regarding medical treatment. Consult with your doctor about these issues. If this is your wish, a signed form should be on file in your medical records. Your family should also have a copy.

Jewish Ethical Will

In contrast to a last will and testament, which disposes of things of material value, an ethical will is a statement to your survivors of the beliefs and values you wish to transmit and perpetuate. It is a mitzvah to prepare an ethical will for the moral guidance of your family, especially the children. The rabbi would be pleased to

share examples of ethical wills with you. Preparing such a will is not a complicated or technical process. It is as simple as writing a letter to those you love expressing your feelings, advice and hopes for the future. As with other wills, it is advisable to prepare an ethical will when you are strong and healthy. All wills should be left in a safe place that is known to the family.

Organ Donation

Judaism permits and Reform Judaism encourages organ donation in the hope of saving the life or significantly improving the quality of life of another person or persons. The mitzvah of *pikuach nefesh*, saving life, takes precedence over virtually all other considerations. Many people die each year who could be saved if a donated organ were available for transplantation. If you wish to donate organs of your body you should so inform family members, especially those who will be responsible for making funeral arrangements as well as health care decisions, should you be unable to do so. The Department of Motor Vehicles provides a way to specify that you want to be an organ donor. It is important to make your wishes known to those who would care for you in the event of an accident. Jewish tradition disallows donation of the body to science, but Reform Judaism permits this practice, provided that the body will be treated with respect and the remains are interred when the study is completed. This is based on the premise that using your body for medical research may ultimately save someone's life.

Autopsy

Reform Judaism permits autopsies when legally required or so long as they are performed for the clear purpose of increasing medical knowledge that will help others to live. If the deceased has forbidden an autopsy, these instructions should be honored unless an epidemic threatens or they are contrary to law.

Burial, Cremation and Embalming

Jewish tradition prescribes burial as the sole acceptable manner of disposition of the body, in keeping with the belief that "the soul returns to God, its maker; the body returns to the earth from which it came." Tradition regards embalming as an unnatural retarding of the body's reintegration with the natural world, but is

sometimes used by Reform Jews when there is a necessary delay in burial. (See the section ‘**When Should the Funeral Take Place**’ for further details.) Cremation is viewed as an unnatural hastening of the body's return to the earth and has also been shunned because of its association with the Holocaust. In modern times, however, cremation is becoming more acceptable in non-Orthodox communities. One Holocaust survivor specifically requested to be cremated. She felt it gave her a connection to her relatives who lost their lives in the crematoriums. Cremation is also looked upon as a favorable environmental and sociologic solution. A memorial service can be held in lieu of a funeral and it normally takes place after the cremation has been completed. Ashes may be interred in a cemetery. This is preferable to scattering as it provides the survivors with a place where they can feel a special closeness to their loved one. Keep in mind that burial is still the preferred method by Jewish families.

Cemetery Arrangements

Burial in a specified location goes back to the patriarch, Abraham, who purchased a burial place for Sarah and his family in ancient times. It is prudent to make cemetery arrangements well in advance of the time of death in order to spare loved ones this burden at a most difficult time.

Temple Sholom maintains a cemetery for the benefit of our members. Members of Temple Sholom who are in “good-standing” are entitled, after 12 months of such standing, to an In-Line lot at no charge. Non-members may purchase a lot according to the rules and regulations of the Temple Sholom cemetery. For more information, contact the Temple Sholom office. (845 794-8731)

In Time Of Serious Illness

Visiting the sick

One of the acts that Jewish tradition declares to be both an obligation and a deed whose reward is immeasurable is *bikkur cholim* , visiting the sick. Those with a life-threatening illness have a special need and desire for the support of loved ones and

friends. A smile, a kindly touch, a listening ear, caring words and one's physical presence can ease suffering and bring peace. PLEASE let the Temple office know if a loved one is seriously ill or in the hospital. (Don't assume that we know.) The rabbi would like to visit them, if possible. We can also say a special prayer for them during Friday night services, if the person would like us to.

Personal Prayer in Time of Illness

People who are ill may wish to recite special prayers, and others may wish to do so on their behalf. There are many appropriate prayers, some of which are found in *On the Doorposts of Your House (UAHC Press)* . At such times, recitation of the *Shema* or the 23rd Psalm can be particularly comforting. Also, the words of one's own heart directed to God are often the most beautiful and appropriate of all. The rabbi has prayer cards for those who are in the hospital or homebound. Please call the office for a copy.

Vidui / Confessional Prayer

A long-standing practice of Judaism, though one that has largely fallen into disuse, is a confessional prayer called *vidui* , recited by or for one who is critically ill, that concludes with the *Shema*. This is the prayer's most significant portion. For centuries, Jews have wanted this to be their last words. Those present when death is imminent may help the dying person say these hallowed words or recite them on that person's behalf.

The purpose of the prayer is to enable the dying to reconcile themselves with God by acknowledging and asking forgiveness for past failings. The opportunity should also be taken, if at all possible, to turn to family members and friends with words of forgiveness, understanding and reconciliation.

Vidui: The Final Confession

(Note: This page may be removed and kept by the bedside.)

I acknowledge before the Source of all
That life and death are not in my hands.
Just as I did not choose to be born,
so I do not choose to die.
May it come to pass that I may be healed
but if death is my fate,
May I accept it with dignity
and the loving calm
of one who knows the way of all things.

May my death be honorable,
and may my life be a healing memory
for those who know me.
May my loved ones think well of me
and may my memory bring them joy.

For all those I may have hurt, I ask forgiveness.
Upon all who have hurt me, I bestow forgiveness.

As a wave returns to the ocean,
so I return to the Source from which I came.

Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohenu Adonai Echad.

Here, O Israel, that which we call God is Oneness itself.

Blessed is the Way of God,
the Way of Life and Death,
of coming and going,
of meeting and loving,
now and forever.
As I was blessed with the one,
so now am I blessed with the other.

by Rabbi Rami Shapiro

From The Time Of Death To The Funeral Service

Prayers after the death of a loved one

When one has been present at or is informed of a death, the following prayer is customary, along with such other prayers as the heart may prompt:

Barukh Atah Adonai, Eloheinu, Melekh Ha-Olam, Dayan Ha-Emet.

Blessed are You, Eternal, Our God, Sovereign of the Universe, the Judge of truth.

Who to Contact - Rabbi and Funeral Home

Soon after a loved one has died, after you have spent the time you need with the loved one, it is important to contact the rabbi and the funeral home. (An emergency contact number for the rabbi can be found on the Temple answering machine.) Together the rabbi and funeral home will help you with your emotional needs as well as plan the details of the funeral and burial, or memorial service and cremation. The Jewish funeral home for our area is Joseph N. Garlick Funeral Home, 388 Broadway, Monticello, NY. (845 794-7474.)

The rabbi can give you counsel, advice and help. The rabbi will help to comfort you, and to plan with you the type of service you would like as well as answer any questions and concerns you have. There is no fee for the rabbi to officiate at the funeral of a Temple member or an immediate relative of a Temple member (spouse, parent, child, sibling). This is a benefit of membership. A donation to the Temple and/or the Rabbi's Discretionary Fund is customary.

The funeral home will perform such tasks as removing the body of the deceased, obtaining a death certificate and placing obituary notices and preparing the body for burial or cremation. It is normally necessary to meet the funeral director at the funeral home to select a casket and other services and provide for payment if this has not been arranged in advance. If the person has not been under a doctor's care

and the death has not been expected you must also contact the police so a cause of death can be determined.

Notifying Family Members

It is a mitzvah to notify all members of the family when a death has occurred, even those who are estranged. If possible, the precious opportunity should be seized to heal wounds by bringing family members together. See if you can find a family member or close friend to help with phone calls.

Visiting the Bereaved Prior to the Funeral

Unless you are a very close friend or relative, it is best to postpone a visit to the home of the bereaved until after the funeral. Preparations must be made and time taken to begin coping with the loss. There are exceptions, of course, guided by common sense, such as the bringing of food to the family.

Activity by the Bereaved

During the period before the burial, the bereaved do not engage in business or other activities except those required for the funeral or to respond to emergencies. They are in the first, most intense stage of mourning, *oh-n'noot* , a time when tradition exempts them from all other ritual obligations.

The Body

The body is treated with great respect as the vessel that once contained the soul. By tradition, the body is not left unattended before burial. With candles burning to symbolize the soul's eternal flame, a watchman (*shomer*) sits in attendance and reads Psalms. Most Jews, however, tend to be satisfied with the care of the undertaking establishment. Pre-funeral visitation at the funeral home is not in keeping with Jewish custom.

Tradition calls for the body to be ritually washed, a cleansing called *taharah* , purification, before the body is laid in the earth. The body is then dressed in plain white, inexpensive shrouds, emphasizing the principle of equality in death. This is done by the *Chevrah Kaddishah*, Jewish burial society. Most Reform Jews do not

observe *taharah* and follow the contemporary practice of dressing the dead in their own clothing. Some bury men with a *kippah* and a *Talit* with the *tzitzit* cut off as a symbolic recognition of death. (Others retain the *Talit* to pass on to a member of the family.) Another practice some follow is to place a small sackful of earth from the land of Israel in the coffin. This emphasizes the attachment of our people to the holy land.

Making Funeral Arrangements

When Should the Funeral Take Place

Jewish tradition states that a funeral should take place as soon as possible after death. In Israel, you will often hear of funerals taking place the same day as the death. When determining when the funeral should be, it is important to honor the deceased by allowing time for important family members and close friends to be present. In Israel, people are at most, just a few hours journey away. In the United States, however, family members are often across the continent. Jewish funerals here usually take place 2-3 days following a death to allow for the loved ones to be present and for the obituary to be printed in the newspaper so local friends can be informed. (If it takes longer for people to come so the funeral needs to be delayed, and there are not adequate facilities at the funeral home to maintain the body, it is sometimes necessary to use embalming under these circumstances.) The Temple can send a e-mail to members who have e-mail, announcing the death and giving the details of the funeral and shiva. Funerals are never held on the Sabbath or Jewish Holy Days and festivals and are conducted during daylight hours. Please do not announce the day and time of the funeral without consulting with the rabbi. The rabbi will make every effort to rearrange schedules to accommodate your needs for timing of the service, but that is not always possible.

Where Should the Funeral Take Place

The Talmud indicates that the funeral service was once held in the home of the deceased or at the cemetery. In modern times, services are generally held at a synagogue, funeral home or cemetery. When the deceased is a member of the

Temple the service may be held at the synagogue, in the sanctuary. When desired by the family, the funeral service may be combined with the interment and the entire service held at the cemetery. (Keep the weather in mind. On very hot or very cold days, it is best to have the service indoors and spend a shorter time at the graveside.)

Out of Town Funerals and Memorial Services

Sometimes most of the family and/or cemetery plot is out of town and so the funeral does not take place locally. Our rabbi can help you find a local rabbi to perform the funeral service if needed. You can also have a memorial service here at Temple after the burial has taken place if you feel that it would be helpful to local friends of the deceased who cannot travel to the funeral. You can also sit Shiva locally once you return from out of town to be with your friends. (See ‘**Sitting Shiva**’.)

Cemetery

If you have not already done so, cemetery arrangements must be made at the time of death. The funeral home or rabbi can help you with this.

The Coffin

The Jewish value of equality in death calls for the avoidance of ostentation and excessive expense in making final arrangements. An elaborate coffin is not required; on the contrary, Jewish tradition discourages this. It prescribes, instead, a simple, all wood casket. This is in keeping with the ability of the coffin and body to return to the earth. Metal on the coffin is not used because metal is a sign of war and goes against the concept of “resting in peace.”

Floral displays

These are discouraged by Jewish tradition, which favors *tzedakah*, a charitable contribution to assist the living, instead. Flowers soon fade and wither, but an act of loving kindness can have a profound and lasting effect. It is customary to mention in the obituary if you or the deceased have a preference for where contributions should be made.

Children at Funerals

Children are more aware of death than we may realize, though their understanding of death evolves as they get older. Between the ages of 5 and 9 children generally become able to understand the meaning of physical death and by the time they are 9 or 10 they often have a realistic concept of the finality of death. The ability of children to understand death varies with age, maturity and intelligence, but regardless of the variables, children cannot and should not be shielded from death or protected from its reality. Children seem to be able to absorb or block out what they need to during a funeral.

Death is a crisis that should be shared by all members of the family. The needs of children are sometimes overlooked by grieving adults. When parents discuss death openly with their children, they enable them to develop a concept of death in a healthy manner. Attendance at the funeral can aid children in understanding the finality of death and in dispelling the greater fears and fantasies that can arise when they are kept away. If you have young children, it would be helpful to ask a friend or relative to be responsible for them during the funeral in case they get restless. Of course, children should not be forced to attend. If apprehensive children choose to remain at home they should be allowed to do so without being made to feel guilty or neglectful. Parents may visit the cemetery with them at another time. It is very helpful to children to explain to them in advance what is going to take place and the fact that people may be crying. It is important to be open and honest with children. Do not use euphemisms about death. Someone once related to me that when she was four years old her grandmother, who she was very close to, died. She was told that “grandma went away.” She spend many years waiting for grandma to return and was angry at her for not coming back. The book, *A Candle For Grandpa*, might be helpful to explain what will happen at the funeral before they go.

The Funeral/Memorial Service And Burial/Interment

Greeting Guests

Before the service, the family often greets guests who come to offer condolences.

***Keriah* / Tearing a Garment**

The custom of *Keriah*, or tearing the garment dates back to Biblical days. When Jacob was told of the death of his beloved son Joseph, he tore his clothing to represent the pain that was in his heart. Before the funeral or memorial service begins, the family is gathered together. Instead of tearing clothing, a black ribbon is given to mourners and a blessing is said. According to tradition, those considered mourners are: spouse, sibling, child, parent. At Reform funerals, the rabbi also offers a ribbon to those who would find it meaningful including spouses of mourners and grandchildren. The ribbon is usually worn throughout the *Shiva* period. Some chose to wear it through *Sheloshim*, the first month.

The Service

The service centers around prayers, psalms, readings of comfort and a eulogy in memory of the deceased. The family will meet with the rabbi ahead of time to talk about what should be included in the eulogy. Family members are encouraged to speak as part of the eulogy. Even though it is very difficult, the ability to share personal thoughts about your loved one with family and friends is very meaningful and healing. If you type what you are going to say, the rabbi can read it for you if it becomes too difficult to speak. The inclusion of additional readings or music by the family should be discussed with the rabbi ahead of time. At the conclusion of the service, it is customary for those in attendance to remain in their places until members of the family walk out of the room, behind the coffin, to accompany it to the hearse. Jewish tradition requires that the casket remain closed throughout the service as an expression of respect for the dead. If the bereaved wish to view the body a last time, they should arrange to do so prior to the funeral service.

The Burial Service/Interment

At the cemetery, pallbearers selected by the family, or the funeral director and cemetery personnel, will carry the casket to the grave. Following the recitation of prayers, it is customary for the casket to be lowered. Family members and friends are then invited to place a shovelful or handful of earth in the grave. Tradition considers participation in the burial to be one of the highest and most selfless mitzvot because it is an act of kindness of which the recipient is unaware and that cannot be repaid. The sound of earth falling on the casket can be jarring, but it helps mourners accept the reality of death and, thus, facilitates the process of healing. (The metaphor of covering a child and tucking them in at night before they go to sleep might be helpful.) After earth has been placed in the grave, the Mourners' Kaddish is recited and the service concludes.

Burial Vaults or Liners

Neither are prescribed by Jewish tradition and they are not necessary, but are acceptable where required by civil law or cemetery rules.

After The Funeral And Interment

The Meal of Consolation

Following the interment, the mourners normally return to the home of the deceased or another family member. Usually, others who attended the funeral or burial service are invited to join them. Customarily, food and beverages are set out by friends of the bereaved so that they may take nourishment after a physically and emotionally exhausting experience. Several foods are traditionally served, including hard-boiled eggs, which symbolize the Jewish affirmation of life, even in the aftermath of death.

Other Customs upon Returning from the Cemetery

Some choose to follow the custom of having a container of water and a towel outside the door of the house of mourning. This serves the practical purpose of

allowing those whose hands are soiled from participating in the interment to wash their hands before entering the home.

Mourning Observances

After Burial

After burial or cremation, attention shifts from paying appropriate respect to the deceased to easing the pain of the living. Jewish traditions and practices define periods of mourning and ways for the bereaved to gradually reenter the stream of life.

Who is a mourner?

Judaism recognizes that there is a difference between formal rites of mourning and the very personal grief that cannot be regulated. Reform practice recognizes that one may grieve for any dear person, but it is a religious duty to observe the practices of mourning for a parent, spouse, sibling or child. Those under the age of 13 need not observe the mourning customs. Jewish tradition does not call for mourning observances for an infant less than 30 days old, but Reform Judaism recognizes the devastating character of such a loss by providing for mourning rituals in such cases.

***Shiva* / Seven days of mourning**

In Hebrew, the word *shiva* means seven; when used in connection with mourning it connotes the seven day period that commences the day of the funeral. During the *shiva* period, it is customary for mourners to refrain from all ordinary pursuits and occupations and remain at home, except on Shabbat, festivals and the high holy days, when they attend synagogue services in order to recite kaddish with the congregation following the reading of the name of the deceased as part of the congregation's memorial list. *Shiva* provides the mourner an opportunity to begin working through grief, to be comforted and interact with good friends and loved ones. This is a time when friends stop by to visit and bring food for the family. *Shiva* days and times are usually listed in the obituary so friends know what times are convenient to visit.

Most Reform Jews do not follow the customs of sitting on low stools and covering mirrors at the home of the bereaved during *shiva*. Since Shiva is not suppose to be an economic hardship on the family, many families choose to sit *Shiva* formally for only 3 days, and then return to work. (Some people, in an attempt to avoid grieving, don't sit shiva at all or only for a day, and are in a rush to get back to their daily routines. Shiva plays a very important role in the healing process. Rabbi strongly recommends sitting shiva for at least three days.)

The Memorial Candle

Upon returning home from the memorial service or interment, a seven day memorial candle, usually provided by the funeral home, is lit at the home of the bereaved. It should be lit by a mourner as a symbol of the light the deceased brought to friends and loved ones during life. It recalls the biblical teaching, "the human spirit is the light of the Eternal."

Home Services

Jewish tradition prescribes daily services at home (except for Shabbat and holidays) during the shiva period so they can recite Kaddish. Members of our congregation follow a variety of practices in this regard. Some have one service in their home the evening on the day of the interment. Some hold services for three days. Some prefer just to have people visit and have no service. These services are available upon request and are conducted by the rabbi or a knowledgeable member of the congregation. In keeping with the egalitarian principles of Reform Judaism, both men and women count toward a minyan of ten Jewish adults for these services.

Condolence Calls

It is appropriate for friends and members of the congregation to visit the home of the bereaved following the burial during the shiva period. It is also a kindness to visit or call in the weeks and months after *shiva* when the press of family and friends has begun to give way to loneliness and the full impact of the loss is felt. People are often not sure how to conduct themselves during such a visit. Here are some suggestions:

You may not be certain what to say. Jewish tradition encourages visitors to remain silent and wait until the mourner speaks first. There are no words to take away grief. Your presence and acceptance is often more important than advice. Be willing to simply sit in silence, perhaps holding the mourner's hand, sharing a smile, communicating without words your caring and concern.

Allow mourners the opportunity to talk about and express their feelings of loss and the pain of separation from a loved one. Do not attempt to change the subject or divert them from painful, angry or guilty thoughts. If they wish to cry, allow them to do so without discouragement. Tears are not a sign of weakness; they are a healthy and appropriate outlet for grief.

Listen. Ask questions that will allow the mourner to talk with you about their grief and their memories of the deceased. *Shiva* is an ideal time for reminiscing and reflecting on the life of the person who has died. Do not hesitate to talk about the deceased. Share your own stories and recollections. Memories are a precious gift to mourners.

Share your feelings. The paradox of grief is that the very person who would provide comfort in a time of emotional distress is the one who has died. The person who would hug, hold and console the mourner is no longer available to do so. If you have a close relationship with the bereaved, do not hesitate to hold, hug or touch them as you would want them to do were the situation reversed.

Show your acceptance. Grief often makes people feel as if they are losing their minds; it makes them say and do things that are unusual for them. If you can accept them without passing judgment, you will communicate your unconditional care.

Offer help. Grief can make daily living a burden. During and following *shiva*, you can assist by providing meals, organizing a minyan, car pooling, shopping, running errands or helping the mourner obtain legal advice. Help them, but allow them to remain in charge of their own lives.

Be patient. Grief is a process of adapting to change rather than "recovering." Be patient in allowing people to grieve and return to life after *shiva*. It often takes a year or more for a mourner to feel like himself or herself again. It can be difficult to be in the company of a person in acute emotional pain. Your patience and compassion will make a difference in their healing process.

After Shiva

Sheloshim

After *shiva*, normal occupations and family activities are resumed. During *sheloshim*, the thirty day period that commences on the day of the funeral, it is customary to refrain from public entertainment and parties with music. It is permissible to plan for and attend such events as a family wedding or bar or bat mitzvah ceremony during this period, but it is traditional to refrain from dancing and exuberant celebration. The rabbi can help you with questions that you have about individual situations that might arise during this period.

Kaddish

Jewish tradition establishes one year as the official period of mourning for a parent (thirty days for other close relatives) and calls for daily recitation of the *kaddish* prayer in memory of the deceased at a public worship service attended by a minyan. In our congregation, it is customary for mourners to attend weekly Shabbat services as often as possible for up to a year, to recite *kaddish* with the congregation. The names of recent deaths of congregants and family members are mentioned during services before *kaddish* is recited for the the first year of their passing. Some find it comforting to recite *kaddish* privately when they are unable to attend services at the synagogue. For other special readings of comfort during the year of mourning, the book, Grief in Our Seasons by Rabbi Kerry Olitzky is very helpful. (See the Bibliography for other books.)

Yizkor

On Yom Kippur afternoon a special service is held at the synagogue. The service includes a *yizkor* or memorial section with traditional prayers in memory of loved ones. As in the case of the anniversary of death, it is a mitzvah to light a memorial candle at home prior to sundown on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Cemetery Visits

It is not customary to visit the cemetery in the month following the funeral. As the intent of this custom is to spare the bereaved the pain such a visit can cause, it should not be considered an inflexible rule. Thereafter, visitation is unrestricted, but it is not customary to visit on Shabbat or Jewish holidays. The month prior to the high holy days is a common and appropriate season for such visits. The tradition of placing a small stone on the grave marker hearkens back to the time when it was a family responsibility to maintain loved one's graves. It also reminds us of the Biblical practice of using stones for grave markers. Today, it testifies that the grave has been visited by those who remember the person buried there.

Unveiling/Dedication of the Grave Marker

Jewish tradition permits the dedication of a headstone or grave marker any time after the end of *sheloshim*, (30 days following the funeral). Unveiling ceremonies can take place anytime after that within the first year. The ceremony, which is brief and without a eulogy, may take place on any day except Shabbat or a Jewish holiday and may be conducted by a rabbi or a knowledgeable lay person or family member. (Because the rabbi is only at Temple part time, depending on the day you choose, the rabbi may not be available for the unveiling. The rabbi can provide you with a beautiful booklet containig readings that a family member can read at the graveside for the unveiling).

Should you need assistance, the rabbi can help you choose the wording for the grave marker, which should be ordered in enough time before the date of the unveiling ceremony. On that day, the family and dear friends gather at the grave and return home afterward. The cemetery should be notified of the date and time of the unveiling to insure that the gates are open, that the tombstone or marker is in place

and that another funeral or unveiling is not scheduled in the immediate vicinity of the grave at that time.

Yahrzeit

It is customary to observe the *yahrzeit* or anniversary of the death of a loved one by attending services at the synagogue and reciting *kaddish*, and by lighting a small, 24 hour *yahrzeit* candle at home at or near sundown on the eve of the anniversary of the day of death. These candles can be obtained at most grocery stores. Our congregation's custom is to read the name of deceased loved ones of its members at the Shabbat services before the date of death. We can follow the secular calendar or Jewish calendar. Please notify the office of the date of death of a loved one and specify which date you would like to use. If you cannot be present on the closest Shabbat, please let the office know and we will gladly read the name on a nearby date when you can attend.

Bibliography

The following is a list of books for reference and for comfort. The rabbi has copies of these books if you would like to see them. It is suggested that if a book seems like it may be helpful, to purchase your own copy.

A Time to Prepare , UAHC, Phila. PA

On the Doorposts of Your House: Prayers and Ceremonies for the Jewish Home, CCAR, NY, 1194, (Illness - pp 153-159; Death- pp 160-193)

Brener, Anne, *Mourning and Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking Tthe Mourner's Path Through Grief to Healing*, Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, 1993

Diamant, Anita, *Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort the Dying, Bury the Dead and Mourn as a Jew*, Schocken, NY, 1998

Gates of Mitzvah: A Guide to the Jewish Life Cycle, CCAR, New York, 1979, pp. 45-64 (A Reform Jewish approach)

Greenberg, Sidney, *A Treasury of Comfort*, Wilshire Book Co., N. Hollywood, 1957

Grollman, Earl, *Explaining Death to Children*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1967.

Techner, David and Judith Hirt-Manheimer, *A Candle For Grandpa: A Guide to the Jewish Funeral for Children and Parents*, UAHC Press, NY 1993

Kolatch, Alfred J., *The Jewish Mourner's Book of Why*, Jonathan David Publications, Middle Village, 1996

Lamm, Maurice, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* , Jonathan David, New York, 1969. (Orthodox, traditional approach)

Morris, Virginia, *Talking About Death Won't Kill You*, Workman Publishing, NY, 2001

Olitzsky, Rabbi Kerry, *Grief in Our Seasons: A Mourner's Kaddish Companion*, Jewish Lights Publications, Woodstock, Vt., 1997

Riemer, Jack, ed., *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, Schocken Books, NY 1983

Weintraub, Simcha, ed. *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*, Jewish Lights, Woodstock, VT, 1994

Wolfson, Ron, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort*, Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, NY, 1993

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WHAT MY FAMILY SHOULD KNOW

(This form may be removed from the booklet. Give this form to the Temple so we can add it to your file and make a copy for you to give to your family. Please check those sections where you have a preference.)

I. NAME _____

II. End of Life Decisions

I. _____ I have a living will which is on file at: (attach copy to this form)
doctor/hospital _____

III. I would like to:

I. _____ be buried (Name of Cemetery) _____

II. _____ be cremated

I. _____ Ashes buried (Where) _____

II. _____ Ashes scattered (Where) _____

III. _____ Be an organ donor

IV. _____ donate my body to medical science

IV. I would like my funeral or memorial service held:

I. _____ at Temple Sholom

II. _____ at Funeral Home (List name) _____

III. _____ Graveside

IV. _____ as specified in my pre-arranged funeral plan on file at:

V. _____ Specific requests for service _____

V. Cemetery

- I. _____ I have not yet purchased a grave site
- II. _____ Cemetery Preference _____
- III. _____ I have a cemetery plot located at _____
- IV. _____ My family plot is located at _____

VI. I would like the following Jewish rituals to take place:

- I. _____ no embalming
- II. _____ no public viewing
- III. _____ all wood casket
- IV. _____ dressed in shroud by *Chevrah Kadisha*
- V. _____ wrapped in my talit

VII. I would like

- I. _____ Memorial donations to be made to Temple Sholom/Fund

- II. _____ Memorial donations to be made to other organizations:

- III. _____ Memorial plaque

VIII. Please include the following information in my obituary:

- I. _____ Please include a photo. Specific photo _____

IX. I would like my gravestone to have the following inscribed on it:

X. Other Wishes

XI. _____ Items that are not specified are left to you to decide what is best and most comforting for you.

Date Signature

Temple Sholom Funeral Information

(Please fill in the appropriate information and return to the Temple Office.)

Full (Legal) Name: _____

Preferred/Nick Name (if different) _____

Maiden Name : _____

Hebrew Name: _____

son/daughter of _____
(father and mother's Hebrew first name)

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Parents' Names (list step parent in parentheses if applicable):

Father _____

Mother (include Maiden name) _____

Siblings' Names (list spouses in parentheses):

Spouse's name _____

Children's Names (and ages if under 21) - list spouses in parentheses:

Grandchildren's Names (list spouses in parentheses):

* * * * *

Highest Level of Education _____

Occupation _____ Hobbies _____

Military Service _____

Pre-Arrangements with: _____