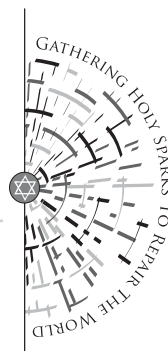


THE *Jewish*  
*Path* FOR  
DEATH AND  
MOURNING

A Guide to Rituals and Practice

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IN *loving* MEMORY OF

David A. Cohen  
Dianne Gladstone  
and Marvin Schwartz  
May their memory be a blessing.

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Underwritten by Jayne and Gary Marx in memory of Jayne's sister, Dianne Gladstone  
and others who died on September 11, 2001.*

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# THE *Jewish Path* FOR DEATH AND MOURNING

☆ A GUIDE TO RITUALS AND PRACTICE ☆

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# INTRODUCTION

*J*ewish tradition encourages us to accept and encounter death as a part of life. The recognition that life is finite and that death is a reality to be accepted and anticipated is one of Judaism's greatest insights.

Still, most of us prefer to focus on life and the living and to deal with death only when we are forced to do so. We tend to avoid confronting our mortality and that of our loved ones.

This guide has been prepared by members of the Hineynu Community's Steering Committee in an effort to help Temple Solel congregants prepare for the reality of death and to develop some understanding of our Jewish traditions for death and mourning. It is intended for both advanced reading and preparation as well as a "how to" when death approaches or occurs. At the end of the booklet we have included summaries of each topic for quick reference.

Throughout this guide, we have presented the dominant values of our tradition. We have included information about traditional rituals, but our focus has been on Reform Judaism and what is commonly practiced at Temple Solel. As with so many other areas of Reform Jewish practice over the last twenty years, there has been a dramatic shift toward more traditional observance in the area of funeral, burial and mourning ritual. Reform Judaism, with its focus on informed choice, allows us to choose what is personally meaningful within a wide range of practice. The clergy at Temple Solel believe that a family should choose practices that bring them the most meaning and comfort at this difficult time.

By no means is this guide exhaustive. We have included a list of books contained in Temple Solel's Alpert Mendelson Library for further reference.

We hope that having some advanced knowledge of the Jewish way of death and mourning will ease the burden when the inevitable occurs, as well as help us become a more responsive, caring community. Do not hesitate to contact the Temple clergy and staff for further clarification or discussion, and be sure to notify the Temple office when a death is imminent or has occurred.

L'Shalom,

Pamela Raphael Beimel, Carolyn Cohen Berlin, Jayne Marx

# PLANNING AHEAD—A GUIDE FOR THE LIVING

*J*udaism emphasizes that making decisions regarding the end of life is a mitzvah. Rather than denying or neglecting the painful issues involved, we can spare loved ones added stress by communicating our decisions and wishes in advance. The fundamental Jewish values of the dignity and sanctity of human life and its preservation are guiding principles.

With the interplay of our Jewish tradition, modern medical science and personal choice, decisions can be difficult and complicated. However, attending to legal, spiritual, and personal feelings is very important. Our clergy is available to discuss these issues with you.

A wonderful resource for making decisions in advance is the UAHC workbook, [A Time To Prepare/ Revised Edition](#). This workbook is available at the Temple library or can be ordered from the UAHC Press (See bibliography). This publication is an excellent source of information to help you consider pre-planning issues within a Reform Jewish context.

## ADVANCED PURCHASE OF CEMETERY PLOTS/FUNERAL PACKAGES

Temple Solel has made arrangements with Am Israel Mortuary for pre-need purchase of cemetery plots at the new Mt. Sinai section of El Camino Memorial Park in Sorrento Valley. Am Israel also offers funeral packages for purchase in advance. In addition to the advantage of reducing stress at the time of death, the pre-need purchase of cemetery plots and funeral packages reduces the cost of burial. For further information about plots or packages, call the Temple Administrator at 760.436.0654 or Am Israel at 619.583.8850.

## ORGAN DONATION/AUTOPSY

Contemporary Judaism, across denominational lines, favors organ donation and transplantation on the basis of the value of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life). Currently, no national or state registry exists to list those wishing to become donors. Arrangements for organ donation need to be made in advance by carrying a special card or indicating this desire on one's driver's license. The UAHC has printed an explanation brochure and donor's card. Copies are available at Temple Solel's information table.

Although respect for the dead and *minhag* (custom) has discouraged autopsy, Reform Jews have come to accept it when required by civil authorities or when the knowledge gained could save lives.

## EUTHANASIA

Jewish tradition prohibits doing anything active to hasten the death of a terminally ill person. While affirming the sanctity of life and the importance of preserving life, Judaism also recognizes that there is a point when death should be allowed to occur so that a patient may die with dignity.

When health care providers declare that there is no hope for a particular patient, Judaism asserts that impediments to death must not be created and those in place may be removed. A treatment may thus be withheld when its only effect is to delay an imminent death (within 48–72 hours). Similarly, artificial systems of life support are not mandated in situations where death is imminent.

Pain medication may be administered in order to relieve suffering, even if the dosage required could endanger the life of the patient.

Because these issues are very complicated legally and emotionally, it is important to specify one's wishes regarding the end of life in advance through written documents. A "living will" gives directions to family and health care professionals about these decisions. Such documents honor both the person who is ill and the family, by protecting them as much as possible emotionally, and allowing for choice in treatment.

## ADVANCE DIRECTIVES:

### LIVING WILLS AND HEALTH CARE REPRESENTATIVES

Advance directives are legal documents that stipulate one's preferences regarding health care decisions in the event that an individual is unable to express them directly due to serious injury, illness or reduced mental capacity. The more specific the instructions as far as medical conditions and one's feelings about specific life sustaining measures, the more useful the directive. A clearly written directive helps prevent disagreements among family members and alleviates some of the burdens of decision-making for family members, friends, and health care providers.

An individual's doctor and other health care professionals are legally obligated to follow that patient's wishes as written in an advance directive called a "living will". However, there are some circumstances that one might not have thought about when preparing a directive. For this reason, it is useful to appoint a health care representative who has the authority to make decisions based on what he/she knows of the patient's wishes. A health care representative is appointed through a proxy directive (a durable power of attorney for health care).

## ETHICAL WILLS

An ethical will is a document which transmits one's spiritual, moral and ethical legacy. It is a gift a parent gives to his or her child. The ethical will has as its antecedent Jacob's dying words to his sons, David's instructions to Solomon, and Moses' farewell address to the Israelites.

The ethical will is often written in the form of a letter. It passes on one's values, not one's valuables. It is a document to communicate one's love, wisdom, life lessons, and hopes for loved ones. It is a way of letting family know the deceased and how much they were valued. While each ethical will is unique, the common themes are personal values and beliefs, spiritual values, hopes, and dreams. As with other important documents, an ethical will should be kept in a secure place known to family.



# WHEN DEATH APPROACHES

## VISITING THE TERMINALLY ILL

In Judaism, visiting the sick is recognized as both an obligation and a reward without measure. People who are ill feel emotionally isolated. Visitors help break that isolation. The terminally ill want and need the caring expression of loved ones and friends, even if they are unable to ask for such support.

The mitzvah of *bikkur cholim* (visiting the sick) requires only that one be present to show that a person is not alone. A smile, a friendly touch or hug, a listening ear and a compassionate heart are all that are needed to ease suffering and bring peace to the dying.

People who are ill may wish to recite special prayers and others may want to say them on their behalf. Many appropriate prayers are found in Gates of the House and On the Doorposts of Your House, both published by the UAH Press and found in our Temple library. The *Shema* and the Psalms can be very comforting as well. The words of one's heart are often most appropriate. In addition, during *Shabbat* services on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings, the *mi-shebeirach*, a special prayer of healing, is said for those who are ill. If you know of someone who is ill, you may add his/her name to this list by calling the Temple office.

## WHEN DEATH IS IMMINENT

Jewish rituals before and after death address the psychological needs of the dying and articulate Jewish values regarding deep philosophical issues.

A long-standing practice of Judaism is the recitation by the dying person (or one who says it on his/her behalf) of the *Vidui*, a confessional prayer. This prayer asks God to forgive the dying person's sins and to protect his/her family. It ends with an affirmation of faith in God and the *Shema*. Some people choose just to recite the *Shema*.

Reciting the *Vidui* on the deathbed is an act of *teshuvah* (turning or returning). It is like cleaning one's slate; one returns to, or affirms behavior appropriate to one created in God's image. In the best of situations, the dying person recites the *Vidui* at home in a lucid state, surrounded by loved ones. More often, however, this is not possible. The patient may be in a hospital setting or other medical facility and may not be conscious. In such cases, family or friends may recite the *Vidui* on the patient's behalf. Praying with/for a loved one who is dying is considered a *mitzvah* and a way of saying good-bye.

(For a version of the *Vidui*, see Section 13, Rituals, Prayers and Readings.)

## WHEN DEATH OCCURS

In the last moments of a person's life, family should surround him if possible. When death comes, the family or whoever is present should close the eyes and mouth of the deceased and cover the body with a sheet. Those present may want to say a prayer to affirm their faith in God. (See Section 13, Rituals, Prayers and Readings.)

Upon death, Psalms 23 and 91 are traditionally recited.

## IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATIONS AFTER A DEATH

*W*hen death is imminent or when it occurs, family must notify the clergy and the Temple office (760.436.0654) as soon as possible to set up the funeral service. They must also call the mortuary to arrange for the body to be picked up if death occurs at home.

On weekends, evenings, or holidays when the Temple office is closed, the answering service will relay a message to the clergy member on-call. Our clergy will discuss plans for the funeral service and coordinate with the mortuary regarding specific arrangements. Clergy is also available for counsel and advice. No announcements of date and time should be made with the mortuary until consulting with the clergy if they will be officiating.

Am Israel Mortuary is the Jewish funeral provider in San Diego (619.583.8850). They provide the full range of Jewish death and burial ritual. Am Israel will make the necessary arrangements with the cemetery once a date for burial is decided. If a cemetery plot has not already been purchased, Am Israel will arrange for its purchase as well as coordinate arrangements for burial.

Funeral services for Temple Solel members are typically held at graveside. Occasionally, congregants choose to have a service at the cemetery chapel or in the Temple sanctuary. Temple Solel has a memorial lawn at El Camino Memorial Park in Sorrento Valley. Members of the congregation have also been buried at Eternal Hills Cemetery in Oceanside.

In Judaism it is a *mitzvah* to bury the dead. Jewish tradition views cremation as a desecration of the body that is not in keeping with the value of *kavod ha met* (dignity of the deceased). Cremation is discouraged because of traditional Jewish views regarding the resurrection of the dead. Cremation is also frowned upon in modern times following the Holocaust and the loss of millions of Jewish lives in crematorium. Still, many Jews consider cremation rather than burial due to its financial appeal and convenience, and/or to honor the wishes of the deceased. While our clergy discourage cremation, they will conduct a memorial service or *minyán*. If a family is considering burying ashes after cremation, they must still purchase a full plot.

When a loved one dies out of town, it is important to contact the Temple office to let them know of the death. Often, congregants want to speak with one of our clergy before leaving town. Members may choose to arrange for a local *minyán* when they return, so the Solel community can support them in their loss. A *minyán* can be led either by clergy or lay leaders. Am Israel Mortuary will help coordinate with the funeral provider in another location, should that be needed.

## FROM DEATH TO THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Judaism teaches that our body and soul were created in the image of God. Thus, treating the body in a respectful manner is of utmost importance. The rituals and customs in the Jewish approach to death and mourning can be grouped into two categories: *kavod ha met* (the dignity of the deceased) and *kavod ha chayim* (regard for the living). Each represents a basic value for guiding us through this time. Observances associated with the care of the body, proper preparation for burial, and the funeral and interment services all reflect the concern for the dignity of the deceased. All observances that guide individuals through the period of mourning, and define the responsibility of the family and the community to those in mourning, reflect the value of regard for the living.

Jewish tradition emphasizes the need for speedy burial, usually within two days after death. Though this is optimal, it is not always possible. The funeral should be held as soon as it is reasonably possible for the family to gather. Funeral services are not held on *Shabbat*, High Holy Days, or the first and last days of Sukkot, Pesach or Shavuot.

Judaism teaches that every human being has dignity and worth; everyone thus deserves a proper burial. Judaism also teaches that every human being is equal. Rich and poor are to be buried alike. This equality is reflected in the funeral service, coffin, and the manner of burial.

In death as in life, we care for our loved ones and ensure that their departure from this earth is dignified. Judaism actively discourages anything that prevents the body from returning to the dust from which it came. Thus it discourages any practices which attempt to preserve the body and/or delay the process of decay. For this reason, embalming is frowned upon in Jewish practice. However, when a funeral must be delayed or a body shipped for burial, legal requirements prevail. Similarly, the use of grave liners or metal caskets delays the natural deterioration and is not recommended. At El Camino Memorial Park, however, cement grave liners are required.

As with so many other aspects of Reform Jewish practice in the last twenty years, there has been a shift toward the consideration of more traditional practices in the area of funeral and burial. Members of Temple Solel choose from a range of possibilities. The clergy at Temple Solel believe that a family should choose whatever practices will bring them the most meaning and comfort. Following are some of the options.

### CLOTHING AND CARE OF THE DECEASED

We are required to show respect and honor for the deceased (*kavod ha met*). Caring for the body from the time of death until the burial is considered a real act of kindness. *Tahara* is the ritual washing of the body in preparation for burial. This ritual is part of a highly structured series of procedures following death and prior to burial, that is part of traditional Jewish practice. While Reform Jews generally do not observe this practice, it is an option some choose. Ritual washing is done by a *Chevra Kadisha* (holy burial society), a group of individuals within the Jewish community who prepare the body for burial in strict accordance with Jewish law. Ritual washing can be arranged through Am Israel Mortuary.

If the tradition of *Tahara* is observed, the *Chevra Kadisha* dresses the body in a simple white shroud. The use of such shrouds (*tachrichim*) symbolizes the Jewish principle that all are equal in death as in life. Reform Jews can be buried in shrouds if they desire, but more often, the body is clothed in street clothes chosen by the family. Many Jews choose to be buried wearing their *tallit*, but one of the *tzitzit* is cut off to render it ritually unfit.

Traditionally, the deceased is never left alone from the moment of death until burial, as a sign of respect to the departed. *Shomrim* are devout Jews who stay with the body until the funeral, reading Psalms or studying sacred texts during their shifts. If this practice is desired, it can be arranged through Am Israel Mortuary.

## THE COFFIN

Simplicity and dignity are the governing principles in Jewish burial. A simple wooden coffin, with wooden dowels rather than nails, is in keeping with traditional Jewish practice. The type of wood makes no difference, but ostentatious caskets or lined interiors are to be avoided. Burial vaults are not prescribed in Jewish tradition, but are acceptable where required by cemetery rule or local law, as at El Camino Memorial Park.

## VIEWING THE DECEASED

Judaism discourages any public viewing of the body of the deceased. If they wish, the family may view the body privately before the service begins, but the coffin should then be sealed.

## FLOWERS AND MUSIC

Jewish tradition discourages instrumental music and flowers at funerals. In lieu of flowers, Reform Judaism encourages *tzedakah*, such as contributions to worthy causes or institutions.

## PALLBEARERS

It is considered a *mitzvah* to serve as a casket bearer. Members of the family or close Jewish friends generally perform this *mitzvah*. Traditional Judaism does not allow women to be casket bearers. Reform Judaism has no such prohibition.

## THE COMMUNITY AND ITS RESPONSE (*kavod ha chayim*, regard for the living)

The first phase of the Jewish mourning process is called *aninut*, the period after death and before the funeral. The person who has experienced the death of a relative is called an *onen* or *onenet* (f.).

Because of the need to make the funeral arrangements, Jewish law releases the *onen* from the obligations of prayer, as well as from many other religious obligations. To allow the family private time, it is appropriate for friends and acquaintances to refrain from visiting the home until after the burial. Close friends, however, may be involved in assisting with the funeral arrangements.

## THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Prior to the funeral service, most Reform Jews perform the ritual of *Keriah*. *Keriah* dates back to the Bible when Jacob tore his garment upon learning of Joseph's supposed death. Traditionally observant Jews, as well as some Reform Jews, tear their actual clothing. Reform Jews more typically wear a black ribbon which is torn instead of an actual garment. *Keriah* is observed by the immediate relatives (parents, children, spouses, and siblings), as an outward sign of grief and mourning. For the

loss of a parent, the cutting is customarily on the left side, closest to the heart. For all others, *Keriah* is on the right side. Mourners wear the *Keriah* ribbon throughout the *shiva* period.

The funeral service is meant to comfort the bereaved and honor the memory of the dead. It may be held at graveside, in the Temple sanctuary or at the cemetery chapel. It is a relatively simple service consisting of recitation of Psalms and a *hesped* (eulogy), which is delivered by clergy, family members and/or close friends. The funeral service concludes with *El Maley Rachamim*, a prayer asking God for compassion on the soul of the deceased.

## BURIAL

Burying the dead is the final *mitzvah* one can perform on behalf of the deceased. Arriving at the cemetery, pallbearers carry the casket to the grave. Graveside rituals include the recitation of *Kaddish* and participation in the act of burial. It is considered a *mitzvah* for relatives and friends to help shovel the earth back into the grave to cover the casket. This is literally the last physical act that family and friends can do for the deceased and helps start the mourner on his way to acceptance and reconciliation. There is a custom of not passing the shovel from person to person, but rather placing it in the ground before the next person picks it up. This symbolizes the hope that the tragedy of death will not be passed from one person to another.

## BURIAL OF NON-JEWS

There are some circumstances in which Reform Judaism allows the burial of a non-Jew in a Jewish cemetery. (See Section 10, Other Considerations and Issues.)

## ENTOMBMENT IN A MAUSOLEUM

Burial is the preferred method of disposition of the body after death in Judaism. Jewish tradition discourages entombment in a mausoleum because it does not allow the body to return to the earth.

With the burying of the dead, the emphasis shifts from honoring the dead (*kavod ha met*) to comforting the mourners (*kavod ha chayim*).

# THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

*In the end, it is as simple as this: you have lived through a week. You were given the mercy of distraction from your grief in tiny intervals—from time to time these houseguests have provided small comforts, softening the new frozen mass inside of you for a blessed instant. The people you know, the people who are part of your family's life have come together and put their warm hands on your back or shoulder, fortifying you with treasured memories and words of kindness, helping you take the first small steps. What seemed impossible seven days ago has happened: you have survived.*

—from “Houseguests” by Audrey Glassman.

The return from the cemetery begins the traditional seven-day period of formalized mourning by the immediate family of the deceased. This period called *shiva*, from the Hebrew word meaning “seven,” is a public expression of grief. *Shiva* is the first stage of mourning. Through it, those in mourning initiate a process that ultimately leads them back to life and the world of the living. This is also the time when the community of friends and extended family can offer sympathy and support. Visits from friends and family, and memories of the deceased occupy the mourners at this time.

## WASHING HANDS

Washing one's hands upon entering the house of mourning symbolizes leaving the cemetery behind and returning to life. This custom may have originated out of the desire to cleanse oneself from the association with death and the cemetery. A bowl of water and a towel are placed at the entrance to the mourner's home and all are encouraged to participate in this custom as they enter the house of mourning.

## SHIVA CANDLE

A *shiva* candle is lit by a family member upon entering the house. This candle is provided by the mortuary. The *shiva* candle serves as a mark of respect to the deceased and burns for a full seven days. No blessing is said when it is kindled.

## THE MEAL OF CONDOLENCE/SEUDAT HAVRA'AH

After returning from the cemetery, mourners eat a Meal of Condolence. The Talmud directed that this meal be provided by friends. The *Shulchan Aruch*, a collection of Jewish law, gave more specific and similar guidelines.

At Temple Solel, *Chavurat Chesed*, one of the teams of the Hineynu Community, provides this *mitzvah*. Bringing food to the House of Mourning is an act of caring that frees the mourners from everyday concerns.

Traditional foods for this meal include hard-boiled eggs, bagels and lentils. The roundness of these foods reminds us of the cycle of life. Eggs in particular symbolize that new life goes on even in the face of death. Other simple and easily digestible foods may also be served.

The Meal of Condolence is a *mitzvah*, not a social event.

## ADDITIONAL PRACTICES/TRADITIONS IN THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

### WEARING DARK COLORS:

Mourners generally wear dark colors though this is not a Jewish custom. The tradition does discourage the purchase of new clothes for the funeral service. Mourners often wear slippers or sneakers rather than leather, which is considered an item of luxury.

### COVERING MIRRORS:

Traditionally observant Jews cover the mirrors so that grief stricken mourners do not have to worry about their appearance. This practice is rooted in ancient folklore. Some felt that by looking in the mirror, one might see the Angel of Death or the ghost of the deceased and that one's life might be put in jeopardy. Later acceptance of this custom, however, lies in its sensitivity to the human reality.

Although most Reform Jews do not practice this custom, it is an option some choose.

### SITTING ON LOW STOOLS:

In this custom, mourners sit on low boxes or stools during the *shiva* period. The origin of this custom is unknown and there are many interpretations. Most scholars trace its origins to Job 2:13 "For seven days and nights they sat beside him on the ground." Others cite II Samuel, which describes King David lying on the ground in grief. Still others explain that sitting on low stools reflects the mourner's inner feeling of being humbled.

It is probable that this custom resulted in the expression "*sitting shiva*". In some parts of the country the funeral home or mortuary provides these stools. This custom is not typically observed in this area.



## THE MOURNER'S PATH/THE FIRST YEAR

*M*ourning can be a strange and foreign land. It helps to have a map. The best map available is the one provided by the rituals of Jewish mourning.

*Indeed, mourning is a dance. It is the dance that has been choreographed over the millennia by everyone who has passed through the mourner's path. By making loss and bereavement visible, we can fulfill the psalmist's promise: to turn mourning into dancing.*

—from "Reclaiming the Mourner's Path" by Anne Brener.

Mourning (*avelut*) is a universal experience that we will all face at some point in our lives. The route we take to deal with this experience can determine our success in handling our journey to achieve optimum health and well being.

We, as Jews, are fortunate to have a set of guidelines in place dating back to the existence of the Temple in Jerusalem. When the Temple stood, mourners had a separate gate for entering and a special path. As they walked along this path, mourners came face to face with others from their community who gave them a blessing for finding comfort.

Some of those walking in the opposite direction were former mourners, who by their presence alone affirmed the possibility of healing. Mourners found comfort in knowing that they would not walk the mourner's path alone or forever. The existence of the path normalized their experience and prevented mourners from feeling ashamed or invisible.

Today we no longer have such a physical path for mourners, but traditional guidelines for mourning help tremendously with the healing process. This built-in structure guides mourners through the initial period of shock following loss, back to life and its normal routines and the end of the first year (*shanah*).

### DEFINITION OF A MOURNER

A mourner is anyone who is obligated under Jewish law (*halachah*) to practice the rituals of mourning. Mourners include all first-degree relatives: mother, father, son, daughter, sister, brother (including half-brother or sister), husband or wife of the deceased. Though these relatives are obligated to mourn their loss, Judaism does not limit the observance of mourning rites only to these relatives. Minors have no obligation to observe the laws of mourning.

### STAGES OF MOURNING

Jewish tradition prescribes a formal period of mourning of up to a year. It delineates a series of steps beginning with the moment of death. During each stage there are prescribed behaviors for both mourners and the community.

#### 1. ANINUT

*Aninut* (deep sorrow) is the period of mourning between death and burial. A person who has lost a loved one is called an *onen* (f.onenet) during this time. Jewish tradition recognizes that the enormous pain and shock following death must be respected. The *onen's* sole concern at



this time is to bury his or her dead. Thus, an *onen* is freed from all religious obligations except observing *Shabbat*.

To allow the family private time, it is appropriate for the extended community to refrain from visiting the home until after burial. Family and close friends may be called upon to assist with the funeral arrangements. Condolence calls from the extended community begin after interment, during the *shiva* week.

## 2. SHIVA

Immediately after burial, the focus of attention shifts from the deceased to the *aveilim* (mourners). The first stage in the gradual process of healing for mourners is called *shiva*. *Shiva* (seven) refers to the seven-day traditional mourning period. It begins immediately after the funeral service and burial. Today, many choose to observe only the first three days of *shiva*, which are considered the most intense.

During *shiva*, mourners begin a process which eventually leads them back to the world. Mourners refrain from ordinary activities, work and business pursuits. Breaking daily routines at this time emphasizes the extreme rupture which has occurred. Traditionally observant Jews also refrain from shaving, using make-up, and focusing on their appearance. Mourners do not leave their homes during *shiva*. They are encouraged to express their grief, to work through pain, and then to take a first step back toward life. Visits from friends and family, and memories of the deceased occupy the mourners.

Jewish law requires that mourners recite the mourner's *Kaddish* three times each day during *shiva*. Friends and family come to the home to enable the bereaved to perform this *mitzvah*. In traditional practice, a *minyan* of ten adult Jewish males is required to say the mourner's *Kaddish*. However, women and men count equally in the composition of a Reform *minyan*. Reform Jews generally have only one *minyan* each day, usually in the evening. *Shiva* services are not conducted at home on *Shabbat*. On the *Shabbat* which falls during the *shiva*, mourners join the congregation at Temple in prayer.

*Shiva* allows mourners the opportunity to begin working on grief, to be comforted, and to interact with close friends and loved ones. At the end of this period, in many communities, the mourner walks around the block with friends or family, thus marking reentry into the world and the end of this time of mourning. In the weeks and months following the *shiva*, mourners begin to readjust to their lives without the deceased. Tradition provides the framework for this process.

## 3. SHELOSHIM

*Sheloshim*, meaning "thirty", is the thirty-day period following the funeral; *shiva* is included within the count for this period. During this time, traditionally observant Jews continue to recite *Kaddish* at a *minyan* two to three times daily. They do not attend parties or other festivities, particularly those with music and dancing. Traditionally observant mourners also avoid movies, sporting events, and social gatherings and avoid visits to the cemetery during this time. Reform Jews may recite *Kaddish* at *Shabbat* services or attend a daily *minyan* where one is available. Reform Jews make a choice about further restrictions on their social activities. They may visit the grave anytime after *shiva* is over.

Formal mourning for relatives other than parents ends at the end of this month. Mourners return to a full business and social life.

#### 4. EXTENDED MOURNING FOR A PARENT

Judaism gives a special year long status to the bereaved (*shanah*). But public signs of mourning end for most mourners with *sheloshim*. Formal mourning for a parent continues beyond this time. *Avelut* refers to the extended period of mourning observed for the death of a parent. Mourners say *Kaddish* for eleven months following this loss. Reform Jews may recite *Kaddish* at a daily *minyan* or at weekly *Shabbat* services. Restrictions on social activities are a matter of personal choice.

## ADDITIONAL MOURNING RITUALS OF THE FIRST YEAR

### UNVEILING

The unveiling is a graveside religious ceremony marking the setting of the memorial marker. It is an American Jewish custom. A marker may be set anytime after *sheloshim* has ended and within the first year. However, most Jews hold this service at the end of the year of mourning to mark its end. The ceremony is usually brief and can be an intimate family gathering or also include friends. Clergy is not required, but may officiate when requested by the family. Temple Solel has a service available for those who want to conduct the ceremony themselves.

### THE FIRST YAHRZEIT

*Yahrzeit* is a German/Yiddish word meaning a "year's time." The first *yahrzeit* marks the end of the first year without the loved one.

*Yahrzeit* is observed by lighting a twenty-four hour candle at home and saying *Kaddish* at services. Traditionally, the *yahrzeit* is observed on the Hebrew date of the death. Temple Solel members, however, have the option of observing *yahrzeit* on the anniversary of the secular date. On the *Shabbat* closest to either the Hebrew or secular date (depending which option is communicated to the Temple office), the name of the deceased is called at Temple before the *Kaddish* is recited. On the day of the *yahrzeit*, many Jews visit the cemetery where the deceased is buried. (See also Section 9, Remembrance/After the First Year.)

### YIZKOR

*Yizkor* is a Hebrew word meaning remembrance. *Yizkor* is a prayer which asks God to remember the soul of the deceased. *Yizkor* services are memorial services associated with specific holidays. They are held at Temple Solel on Yom Kippur, Succot, Passover and Shavuot.

The first *yahrzeit* brings the first year of Jewish mourning to an end. It is important to remember, however, that, while formal mourning is distinguished by ritually prescribed time periods, the mourner's grief is not determined by these time frames. The chronology is different for everyone.

## THE COMFORTER'S PATH

*J*ewish tradition guides both the mourner and the comforter through the bereavement process. *Nichum avelim* (comforting the mourner) is the *mitzvah* of visiting the house of mourning during *shiva* and beyond. A *shiva* visit is also referred to as a condolence call.

The obligation to comfort the mourner is traced back to the Torah, which portrays God as comforting Isaac upon the death of his father, Abraham. We are imitating a Divine act of consolation when making a *shiva* call.

Visitors reassure mourners that their burden of grief is real, but can be withstood, because they are not alone. Visitors can soften the pain and allow the mourner to express his/her grief and hold on to treasured memories within the embrace of the community. The process of visitation allows the mourner to express sorrow openly, while at the same time, being led gently but firmly back to life and the world of the living.

### THE SHIVA VISIT/THE ROLE OF THE COMFORTER

Condolence calls take place following the burial, during the *shiva* period. Mourners can be visited any time during *shiva*, but most commonly *shiva* visits take place in the evening after the *shiva* service. During this time, the door to the mourner's home generally remains unlocked. *Shiva* visits should be kept short; about thirty to forty-five minutes is sufficient.

Often people feel unsure about just what to say and how to approach the mourner. Visitors often believe it is their job to lighten the mourner's sadness. This is not the case. There are no words that can remove grief after the loss of a loved one. Jewish tradition actually encourages visitors to remain silent and to wait for the mourner to speak. This allows the mourner to express grief, including tears.

Visitors can provide comfort just by their presence. Sitting with, holding hands, and just listening are often the best things visitors can do. A simple "I'm sorry" or a hug can communicate one's caring and sympathy. Listening, sharing, accepting feelings and offering help as needed are all gifts given by the comforter.

In general, it is important not to minimize the loss. It is also important to avoid cliches and easy answers such as "He had a good life," or "She is no longer in pain." Visitors should ask questions that allow the mourner to talk about his or her grief and his/her memories of the deceased. They should accept the mourner's emotions and follow his or her lead in sharing memories and reminiscences. Visitors should not hesitate to share their own stories about the deceased.

When making a *shiva* visit, it is appropriate to bring a gift of food. Donations to the deceased's synagogue or favorite charity are always welcome.

### AFTER SHIVA IS OVER

Often, the full impact of a loss is not felt until *shiva* is over. Remaining in contact after *shiva* and *sheloshim* end lets mourners know friends are there for them. Too often after the initial mourning period, support disappears when people need it the most.

Grieving takes time and patience as the mourner adapts and readjusts to a changed reality. Our customs and traditions provide a framework to guide us in helping the mourner through this process.

## REMEMBRANCE/AFTER THE FIRST YEAR

The first *yahrzeit* brings the year of mourning to an end. In Judaism, however, remembrance continues long after the formal period of mourning is over. The life lost stays with us as a memory and a blessing. We go to synagogue to recite *Kaddish* on the anniversary of a death, light *yahrzeit* candles and attend *Yizkor* or memorial services. We visit the grave and leave pebbles to show that we have been there. We also remember loved ones through acts undertaken in their name and memory.

### Yahrzeit

*Yahrzeit* is a German/Yiddish word meaning a “year’s time” and refers to the annual commemoration of a loved one’s date of death. The practice may have dated back to Talmudic times, but is generally felt to be borrowed from 14th to 16th century Germany and the practice of lighting candles to commemorate the dead at annual masses.

*Yahrzeit* is a personal rather than communal observance. The mourner takes responsibility for lighting a twenty-four-hour *yahrzeit* candle on the eve of the anniversary. These candles are available at many grocery stores and at the Temple gift shop.

*Yahrzeit* is also observed by attending *Shabbat* services. On the anniversary of the death, the deceased’s name is printed in the pulpit folder and read on *Shabbat* before the *Kaddish*. A reminder of the upcoming *yahrzeit* is sent a few weeks before the anniversary. At Temple Solel, a memorial plaque that bears the name of the deceased can be purchased. A bulb on the plaque is lighted annually on the anniversary date as well as at *Yizkor* services. Congregants may observe either the Hebrew or secular date for *yahrzeit* and must notify the Temple office of their preference.

*Yahrzeit* may also be observed by visiting the cemetery and by performing special acts of *tzedakah* in honor of the deceased. *Yahrzeit* is observed for members of the immediate family only: parents, stepparents, spouses, children, stepchildren, siblings. In Reform Judaism, it can be observed for non-Jewish family as well.

### Yizkor

*Yizkor* (remembrance) refers specifically to prayers for the dead. These prayers are recited at special services held on Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot. Generally the *Yizkor* service includes selections from Psalms, personal memorial prayers, and a congregational memorial prayer. In many synagogues, additional memorial prayers are offered for the six million Jews lost in the Holocaust.

At Temple Solel, names of loved ones may be placed in the Yom Kippur Memorial Book by completing a form included with the High Holy Day mailings. This booklet is distributed on Yom Kippur and includes prayers and meditations that are read at the *Yizkor* service.

## KADDISH

*Kaddish*, an Aramaic word meaning “sanctification”, is also derived from the Hebrew word, *kodesh*, meaning “holy”. There are various forms of the *Kaddish* prayer in the liturgy.

The mourner’s *Kaddish* is the prayer we associate with the remembrance of the dead, although it says nothing about death or grief. The prayer itself praises God, expresses hope for the messianic era and asks God for peace in the world.

Jewish mystics believe that the living play a part in the redemption of the dead by reciting the *Kaddish*. Death does not end a relationship. Saying *Kaddish* is a way of maintaining the connection and the conversation.

The mourner’s *Kaddish* traditionally is recited for parents, spouses, siblings and children. In Reform Judaism, it is said for anyone without regard to their filial ties or their religion. It may be said alone, but a community context is desirable. It is said by both men and women while standing, as a symbol of respect for the memory of the departed. In most Reform congregations, it is said by the entire congregation in order to support the mourner, to remember those who have no one to say it for them, and for victims of the Holocaust.

*Kaddish* is recited first at the time of burial. During the time of formal mourning, traditional Jews recite *Kaddish* for eleven months at daily services for parents, and thirty days for all other relatives. Reform Jews generally say *Kaddish* at weekly *Shabbat* services or at home on their own. *Kaddish* is thereafter recited on the *yahrzeit* or annual anniversary of the death.

## VISITING THE CEMETERY

It is customary to visit the graves of loved ones before the High Holy Days as well as on the *yahrzeit* of the death. Many Jews also visit the cemetery on the loved one’s birthday, an anniversary, or on a special shared day. Visits are not made on *Shabbat* or Jewish festivals. Jewish tradition discourages excessive mourning and cemetery visitation, especially if it becomes an impediment to returning to life.

It has been an old custom dating back to biblical times to leave a pebble or small stone on the grave marker. In earlier times, graves were marked only by a pile of stones. Today, they can be a visible sign of the remembrance.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND ISSUES

### DEATH OF AN INFANT

According to Jewish law, an infant who dies within thirty days of birth is considered non-viable. This law developed in pre-modern times when infant mortality rates were very high. It prevented small communities from what could have been a continuous cycle of mourning.

Today, Reform Judaism recognizes that the death of an infant, a miscarriage, or a stillbirth is a significant loss and appropriate responses are a part of our modern practice. Funeral or mourning customs take place in abbreviated form to support the family.

### SUICIDE

In Jewish tradition, suicide is prohibited, but there is no clear-cut law against it in either the Bible or Talmud. The first statement about suicide as a crime was in a post-Talmudic booklet. This booklet stated that a suicide was to be buried near the outer limits of the cemetery, and denied traditional mourning rites. Such rulings were seemingly established by the Rabbis to discourage the act of suicide. Historically, Jewish law rarely ruled an apparent suicide to be a self-inflicted killing. Instead, the Rabbis generally said that a person under physical or psychological stress was not to be considered a legal suicide.

In modern times, the reluctance to stigmatize a person as a suicide has allowed more rights of burial and mourning. In Reform Judaism, a funeral service is held and mourning customs followed. There is an emphasis on offering compassion and understanding to the bereaved family.

### INTERFAITH ISSUES

Interfaith families and Jews-by-Choice are a significant part of the Reform Jewish community today and increasingly so at Temple Solel. Reform Judaism permits the Jew-by-Choice to recite *Kaddish* and to observe the rites of mourning for his or her non-Jewish family. Similarly, it allows the Jew from birth in an interfaith marriage the same benefits.

When a non-Jewish spouse experiences the loss of a Jewish spouse, he/she may turn to his/her own religion for support and guidance. However, when the non-Jewish spouse is not involved with another faith community, the Jewish community should respond as it would for any other member with some modifications of Jewish mourning practices.

Reform Judaism permits non-Jewish spouses to be buried in Jewish cemeteries. A Jewish service may be appropriate when the deceased, though not Jewish, identified with Jewish tradition and the surviving family is Jewish. The funeral service may be modified but must not reflect symbols from another faith. Families with specific concerns or questions may consult with the clergy in advance.

### JEWISH VIEWS ON THE AFTERLIFE

Jewish views on the afterlife have affirmed the concept of the immortality of the soul and a belief in the world-to-come since post-biblical times. However, there is no one single concept of life-after-

death. Concepts range from metaphysical beliefs in resurrection of the dead or an eternal union of souls to a more rational or naturalistic idea of immortality through memories of loved ones or the lasting impact of good deeds.

## CHILDREN AS MOURNERS

Children's concepts of death evolve as they mature. From ages five through nine, children generally begin to understand the meaning of physical death and its finality. However, even young children are sometimes more aware of death than we think.

Although the concept of understanding death relies on variables such as age and maturity, children should not be shielded from death as a protection against its reality. A death in the family needs to be viewed as a family crisis. All too often, young children are overlooked and their needs ignored. When death is discussed openly with children, we give them the opportunity to develop their concept of death in a comfortable environment and healthy manner. Attendance at the funeral not only helps a child to understand the finality of death, but it can also dispel some of the fears and fantasies often associated with it. It can be helpful if children are told ahead of time that friends and relatives will be sad and may be tearful. However, children who are anxious or apprehensive about attending a funeral should never be forced or made to feel bad if they do not attend.



# BOOKS ON DEATH AND MOURNING

**Alpert Mendelson Library Of Temple Solel  
Joan Tedlow & Katherine Blumberg, Librarians**

## ADULTS

The Jewish Way In Death And Mourning, by Maurice Lamm

Practical information on Jewish customs and rituals surrounding death and mourning through the first year of bereavement. Includes views of the afterlife.

Jewish Reflections On Death, edited by Jack Riemer

An anthology of halachic insights, personal observations, and philosophical responses by some of the outstanding thinkers of our times. Includes example of a modern ethical will.

A Plain Pine Box: A Return To Simple Jewish Funerals And Eternal Traditions,

by Rabbi Arnold M. Goodman

The ongoing relevance of traditional Jewish burial and mourning practices

Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal For Walking The Mourner's Path Through Grief To Healing,

by Anne Brener

60 guided exercises designed to offer those who face a loss the power and strength available by participating fully in the mourning process.

Saying Kaddish: How To Comfort The Dying, Bury The Dead And Mourn As A Jew,

by Anita Diamant

Shows how to make Judaism's time-honored rituals into personal, meaningful sources of comfort.

The Orphaned Adult: Confronting The Death Of A Parent, by Marc Angel

Discussion of practical and philosophical issues, personal experiences and other influences involved in the loss of an adult's parents.

## COMFORT

A Treasury Of Comfort, edited by Rabbi Sidney Greenberg

An anthology of prose and poetry that offers consolation and guidance for those confronting death.

To Begin Again: The Journey Toward Comfort, Strength, And Faith In Difficult Times, by Naomi Levy

Suggestions to help us thrive emotionally and spiritually when we feel overwhelmed by pain and loss.

Kaddish, by Leon Wieseltier

The spiritual journey of a man during the period in which he said Kaddish for his father.

## AFTERLIFE

The Death Of Death: Resurrection And Immortality In Jewish Thought, by Neil Gillman

The evolution of Jewish thought about bodily resurrection and spiritual immortality to present a strikingly modern statement on the meaning of death.



## CHILDREN

Bubby, Me, And Memories, by Barbara Pomerantz

A child's memories of her grandmother introduces youngsters to the process by which loss is converted into positive and deeply motivating memories. Ages 5–10.

When A Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Remembering Workbook For Dealing With Shiva And The Year Beyond, by Nachema Liss-Levinson, Ph.D.

Helps children participate in the mourning process by combining sensitive, down-to-earth guided exercises with places to write, draw, list, create and express feelings. Ages 7–12.

When A Pet Dies, by Fred Rogers

"Mr. Rogers" helps young children work through what is often their first experience with death. Ages 5–7.

## NON-SECTARIAN—GENERAL

Pearl's Marigolds For Grandpa, by Jane Breskin Zalben

The author of the popular "Beni Series" guides children through the cycle of life and death, focusing on how we keep our loved ones alive through our memories. Ages 4–7.

Goodbye Rune, by Marit Kaldhol and Wenche Oyen

This story about a girl whose best friend accidentally drowns, offers adults a unique opportunity to discuss death and sorrow with a young child. The illustrations are particularly moving. Ages 5–10.

Annie And The Old One, by Miska Miles.

A story about a Navajo girl and her dying grandmother talks about death in simple, sensitive and realistic terms. A Newberry Honor Book.

The Fall Of Freddle The Leaf: A Story Of Life For All Ages, by Leo Buscaglia

This story uses the life cycle of a leaf to illustrate the delicate balance between life and death. Ages 4–7.

Nadia The Willful, by Sue Alexander

A story about how a young Bedouin girl overcomes her feelings of loss when her brother disappears in the desert serves as an example of how to deal with death. Ages 5–8.

## ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Grandma's Soup, by Nancy Karkowsky.

A warm, realistic presentation of the effects of Dementia on a family, emphasizing the importance of families working together. Story told from a child's point of view. Ages 5–10.

Remember That, by Leslea Newman

A warm, sensitive story about a young girl's special relationship with her grandmother as the older woman's physical limitations increase until she can no longer care for herself. Ages 5–10.

# PERSONAL RECORD IN THE EVENT OF DEATH

## PERSONAL DATA

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Hebrew name \_\_\_\_\_

Residence \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation \_\_\_\_\_ Number of years \_\_\_\_\_

Kind of business, industry or profession \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse/Significant Other/Next of Kin \_\_\_\_\_

Wife's Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Hebrew name \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's maiden name \_\_\_\_\_ Hebrew name \_\_\_\_\_

Birthplace \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Military Service \_\_\_\_\_

## IN THE EVENT OF MY DEATH PLEASE NOTIFY:

Name	Address	Phone	Relationship
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_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____
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## FUNERAL AND BURIAL INFORMATION

I have  have not made funeral arrangements. If so, with \_\_\_\_\_

My plot is in \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery

Address \_\_\_\_\_

The plot certificate may be found \_\_\_\_\_

Synagogue \_\_\_\_\_ Rabbi \_\_\_\_\_

I prefer:  earth burial  mausoleum  cremation

I would like:  all wooden casket  other

I would prefer service at:  cemetery chapel  graveside

I would like to be buried in:  shroud  street clothes

I would like donations in my memory made to \_\_\_\_\_

Additional wishes/Information \_\_\_\_\_

If you are considering tissue or organ donation, discuss with your family and physician. The hospital will issue the proper forms. Do not keep this form in your safe deposit box as the box may be sealed in the event of your death.

### IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

Accountant \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Attorney \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Bank (Checking Account) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Bank (Savings Account) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Safe Deposit Box \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Financial Advisor / Broker \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Agent \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Executor \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Will/Trust \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Safe Deposit Keys \_\_\_\_\_

Location of other important papers \_\_\_\_\_

Guardians for children and/ or elderly parents or relatives:

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

# RITUALS, PRAYERS AND READINGS

## VIDUI: FINAL CONFESSIONAL PRAYER

(May be read on another's behalf)

My God and God of all who have gone before me, Author of life and death, I turn to You in trust. Although I pray for life and health, I know that I am mortal. If my life must soon come to an end, let me die, I pray; at peace. If only my hands were clean and my heart pure! I confess that I have committed sins and left much undone, yet I know also the good that I did or tried to do. May my acts of goodness give meaning to my life, and may my errors be forgiven. Protector of the bereaved and the helpless, watch over my loved ones. Into Your hand I commit my spirit. Redeem it, O God of mercy and truth.

*Adonai melech, Adonai malach, Adonai yimloch l'olam vaed.*  
God reigns; God has reigned; God will reign for ever and ever.

*Baruch shem kvod malchuto l'olam vaed.*  
Blessed be God's name whose glorious dominion is for ever and ever.

*Adonai Hu Ha Elohim*  
*Adonai is God.*

*Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.*  
Hear, O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One.

(Those who are present)  
*Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad.*  
Hear, O Israel, *Adonai* is our God, *Adonai* is One.

(After the moment of death)

*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu melech haolam, dayan haemet.*  
Blessed is the Eternal our God, Sovereign of the Universe, the Righteous Judge.

*Adonai natan, vadonai lakach, y'hi shem Adonai m'vo-rach.*  
God has given and God has taken away. Blessed be the name of God.

—from A Time to Prepare/Revised Edition, pp. 49–50

## ALTERNATIVE VIDUI

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,  
then 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.

From 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 Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*  
Hear 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.  
*Shalom. Shalom. Shalom.*

—Rabbi Rami Shapiro

## PSALM 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.  
He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
He leads me beside still waters. He restores my  
soul.  
He leads me in right paths for the sake of His  
name.  
Even when I walk in the valley of the shadow of  
death,  
I shall fear no evil, for You are with me;  
With rod and staff You comfort me.  
You have set a table before me in the presence  
of my enemies;  
You have anointed my head with oil, my cup  
overflows.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all  
the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.



## AN ENGLISH KADDISH

*Yit-gadal v'yit-kadash sh'may rabah'...*  
May God's name be sanctified and praised.

May God's design for this world,  
for us and our people,  
lead us to justice and good.

May God who has decreed  
that all who live must die,  
Teach us to accept death,  
yet with all our hearts, desire life.

May God, whose plan for us  
is sometimes hidden,  
reveal the way to become stronger,  
having faced the trials of life.

And May God, *Oseh ha-Shalom*,  
Be for us a source of comfort,  
Strength, and peace.

Yitgadal v'yitkadash shmei raba.  
 b'alma div'ra chirutei, v'yamlich malchutei,  
 b'cha-yeichon uv'yomeichon uv'cha-yei d'chol beit  
 Yisra-el, ba-agala uvizman kariv v'im'ru Amen.  
 Y'hei sh'mei Raba m'varach l'alam ul'almei almaya.  
 Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpa-ar  
 v'yitromam v'yitnaseh, v'yit-hadar  
 v'yitaleh v'yit'halal sh'mei  
 d'Kudsha B'rich Hu, l'eila  
 min kol birchata v'shirata,  
 tushb'chata v'ne'che'mata.  
 da-amiran b'alma. v'imru: Amen.  
 Ye-hei shlama raba min sh'maya  
 v'cha-yim aleinu v'al kol Yisra-el.  
 V'imru: Amein.  
 Oseh shalom bimromav  
 Hu ya-aseh shalom aleinu v'al kol Yisra-el, V'imru: Amein.

יִתְגַּדֵּל וַיִּתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא.  
 בְּעֵלְמָא דֵּי בְרָא כְרֵעוּתֵיהּ, וַיְמַלִּיךְ מַלְכוּתֵיהּ  
 בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
 בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמָּן קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:  
 יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעֵלְמֵי עֵלְמֵיָא:  
 יִתְבָּרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח, וַיִּתְפָּאֵר וַיִּתְרַומֵם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה  
 וַיִּתְהַלֵּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְרִיךְ הוּא לְעֵלְמָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא,  
 תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאֲמִירָן בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:  
 יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמֵיָא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ  
 אָמֵן:  
 עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל,  
 וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

Let the glory of God be extolled, let God's great name be hallowed, in the world whose creation God willed. May God's kingdom soon prevail.



IN MEMORY OF A LOVED ONE  
 (read on the lighting of the yahrzeit candle)

There are stars whose radiance  
 is visible on earth though  
 they have long been extinct.  
 There are people whose brilliance  
 continues to light the world though  
 they are no longer among the living.

So wrote Hannah Sennesh the poet.

So it may be with my loved one.  
 Though he/she no longer walks among us,  
 may his/her light continue to shine  
 within the world.

May his/her memory illumine this family  
 who loved him/her, continuing  
 to strengthen us throughout our lives.

May \_\_\_\_\_'s memory offer us  
 comfort as the candle burns brightly.  
*Baruch haor baolam.*  
 Blessed is the light within the world.

*Baruch haor ba-adam.*  
 Blessed is the light within each person.

—Adapted from *A Benediction For Life*,  
 Congregation Beth Adam, Loveland, Ohio

## IN RECENT GRIEF

When the pain is intolerable, God, help me to bear it. When I feel lost and empty, teach me to see that I am not alone. Show me that You are with me. Help me to believe that there is a way out of this hell. If only I could see that my pain will end, then I think I could learn to live with this awful agony. Kindle within me the flame of hope, God, and I will carry on.  
Amen.

When I am lost, help me, God, to find my way. When I am hurt, shelter me with Your loving presence. When my faith falters, show me that You are near. When I cry out against You, accept my protest, God, as a prayer, too. As a call for You to rid this world of all pain and tragedy. Until that day, give me the will to rebuild my life in spite of my suffering, to choose life even in the face of death.  
Amen.

Teach me always to believe in my power to return to life, to hope, and to You, my God, no matter what pains I have endured, no matter how far I have strayed from You. Give me the strength to resurrect my weary spirit. Revive me, God and I will embrace life once more in joy, in passion, in peace.  
Amen

My wounds may heal, God, but my scars may never fade. Help me to embrace them, not despise them. Teach me how to live with my broken pieces, how to tend to them, how to learn from them. Remind me that I possess the power to turn my curses into blessings, my shame into pride, my pain into compassion.  
Amen.

—Rabbi Naomi Levy



Birth is a beginning  
And death a destination.  
And life is a journey:  
From childhood to maturity  
And youth to age;  
From innocence to awareness  
And ignorance to knowing;  
From foolishness to discretion  
    And then, perhaps, to wisdom;  
From weakness to strength  
Or strength to weakness—  
    And, often, back again;  
From health to sickness  
And back, we pray, to health again;  
From offense to forgiveness,  
From loneliness to love,  
From joy to gratitude,

From pain to compassion,  
And grief to understanding—  
    From fear to faith;  
From defeat to defeat to defeat—  
Until, looking backward or ahead,  
We see that victory lies  
Not at some high place along the way,  
But in having made the journey, stage by stage,  
    A sacred pilgrimage.  
Birth is a beginning  
And death a destination.  
And life is a journey,  
A sacred pilgrimage—  
    To life everlasting.

—Rabbi Alvin Fine, *Gates of Repentance*,  
pp. 283–284

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# SUMMARIES

## PLANNING AHEAD—A GUIDE FOR THE LIVING

### **Advance purchase of cemetery plots and funeral packages**

- ◆ Available through Am Israel Mortuary (619) 583-8850
- ◆ Temple Solel section: Mt. Sinai lawn, El Camino Memorial Park, Sorrento Valley

### **Organ Donation/ Transplantation**

- ◆ Favored by all branches of Judaism on the basis of pikuach nefesh (saving life).
- ◆ Can be indicated on one's driver's license in most states.
- ◆ Can also be indicated on a card.
- ◆ Desire must be made known to family or health care representative.

### **Autopsy**

- ◆ Reform Judaism accepts when required by authorities or to advance medical science.

### **Euthanasia/Assisted Suicide**

- ◆ Judaism prohibits active taking of a life.
- ◆ Judaism accepts withholding treatment that delays imminent death.
- ◆ Judaism accepts administering pain medications to a patient with a terminal illness even if the dosage would endanger the patient's life.

### **Advance Directives—Living Wills and Health Care Representatives**

- ◆ Legal documents that stipulate one's preferences regarding health care decisions.
- ◆ Help prevent disagreements among family members.
- ◆ Help alleviate burdens of decision-making.
- ◆ More information and forms in [A Time to Prepare/Revised Edition](#) available in the Temple library.

### **Ethical Wills**

- ◆ A document which transmits one's values, beliefs, hopes and dreams.
- ◆ Often written in the form of a letter.

## WHEN DEATH APPROACHES

### **Visiting the Terminally Ill**

- ◆ *Bikkur Cholim* (visiting the sick) is a *mitzvah* in Judaism.
- ◆ Visits reduce the isolation of the dying.
- ◆ Patients may want to recite special prayers; visitors may say them on behalf of the dying.

### **When Death is Imminent**

- ◆ The *Vidui* is a confessional prayer said by the dying.
- ◆ Reciting the *Vidui* is an act of *teshuva* (returning), like cleaning one's slate.
- ◆ The *Vidui* can be said on the patient's behalf by a loved one or friend.
- ◆ Some Reform Jews prefer to say the *Shema* only.

### **When Death Occurs**

- ◆ In the last moments of life, optimally, the dying should be surrounded by family.
- ◆ After death, the eyes and mouth are closed and the body covered with a sheet.
- ◆ Traditionally, those present recite a prayer to affirm their faith in God.

## IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATIONS AFTER A DEATH

1. When death occurs at home and the deceased was not a hospice patient, call 911.
  - ◆ Dispatcher will ask for indicators of death and send paramedics if any question exists. Paramedics will try to resuscitate.
  - ◆ If no question exists, a law-enforcement officer will be dispatched.
  - ◆ The law-enforcement officer will apprise the coroner's office, which will contact the physician to sign a death certificate.
  - ◆ A trained trauma volunteer may be sent to the home.
2. If the deceased was a hospice patient, call the hospice.
  - ◆ The hospice will take care of the death certificate.
3. When death occurs in a hospital or other medical facility, the attending physician will sign the death certificate.

### **Make arrangements for organ donation if previously decided.**

**Call Am Israel Mortuary (619.583.8850) to pick up the body, and Temple Solel (760.436.0654) to set the time and place for the funeral and burial.**

### **Make funeral service and burial decisions (with help of clergy and Am Israel).**

- ◆ Decide on where the deceased will be buried.
- ◆ Cemeteries:
  - El Camino Memorial Park, Sorrento Valley—Temple Solel Memorial Lawn.
  - Eternal Hills Cemetery, Oceanside
- ◆ If cemetery plot or funeral plan has not been pre-purchased, Am Israel will make arrangements.
- ◆ Consult with clergy regarding funeral or memorial service and related decisions.

### **When a loved one dies out of town**

- ◆ Notify Temple office.
- ◆ Speak with clergy.
- ◆ Consider a *minyán* when you return.

## FROM DEATH TO THE FUNERAL SERVICE

### **Many choices available to Reform Jews**

- ◆ In the last 20 years there has been a shift towards more traditional practices.
- ◆ Family may choose whatever practices bring the most meaning and comfort.
- ◆ All practices can be arranged through Am Israel Mortuary.

### **Care of the Deceased**

- ◆ We are required to show respect and honor for the deceased (*kavod ha met*).
- ◆ Caring for body until burial is considered a real act of kindness.
- ◆ *Tahara*—the ritual washing of the body  
Performed by a *Chevra Kaddisha* (holy burial society)—individuals who prepare the body for burial.
- ◆ *Shomrim* (watchers)—devout Jews who stay with the body until the funeral reading Psalms or sacred texts.
- ◆ *Tachrichim*—white linen burial garments.
- ◆ Reform Jews may choose to be buried in street clothes. If a *tallit* is worn, one of the *tzitzit* is cut off.

### **The coffin**

- ◆ Simple wooden coffin is recommended, with wooden dowels rather than nails.

### **Funeral practices**

- ◆ Public viewing of the body is discouraged.
- ◆ Flowers and instrumental music are discouraged.
- ◆ Acting as a pallbearer is considered a *mitzvah*.

### **The Funeral service**

- ◆ Ritual of *Keriah* (tearing of clothes) is performed before service by immediate relatives. Most Reform Jews wear a black ribbon, which is torn.
- ◆ Service includes recitation of Psalms and a eulogy, concludes with *El Maley Rachamim*, which asks for compassion for the soul of the deceased.

### **Burial**

- ◆ Final *mitzvah* on the deceased's behalf.
- ◆ *Kaddish* is recited.
- ◆ Relatives and friends help shovel earth to cover the casket.

## THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

### **Rituals and Customs**

- ◆ Washing hands upon entering the House of Mourning.
- ◆ Lighting a *shiva* candle.
- ◆ Eating a Meal of Condolence provided by *Chavurat Chesed* or friends.
- ◆ Wearing dark colors, slippers or sneakers, avoiding leather.
- ◆ Covering mirrors.
- ◆ Sitting on low stools.

## THE MOURNER'S PATH/THE FIRST YEAR

### **Definition of a mourner**

- ◆ Anyone who is obligated under Jewish law to practice the rituals of mourning.
- ◆ Includes all first-degree relatives of the deceased: parents, spouse, siblings, and children.
- ◆ Minors have no obligation to observe the laws of mourning.

### **Stages of mourning**

- ◆ *Aninut* (deep sorrow)—between death and burial.
- ◆ *Shiva* (seven)—the seven day traditional mourning period.
- ◆ *Sheloshim* (thirty)—the thirty-day period following the funeral which includes Shiva.
- ◆ *Avelut*—the extended mourning period for parents.

### **Additional rituals in the first year**

- ◆ Unveiling—a graveside religious ceremony marking the setting of a memorial marker. Can be done anytime after *sheloshim* and within the first year, typically at the end of the year of mourning.
- ◆ The first *Yahrzeit*—Mourners light a candle at home and *Kaddish* is said at Temple.
- ◆ *Yizkor* (remembrance)—a prayer which asks God to remember the soul of the deceased, said at memorial services associated with specific holidays.

## THE COMFORTER'S PATH

### **Visits to the House of Mourning**

- ◆ It is a *mitzvah* to visit the house of mourning.
- ◆ Visits usually take place in the evening after *minyán*.
- ◆ Visits should be kept short, 30–45 minutes.

### **Suggestions for visitors:**

- ◆ Wait for the mourner to speak.
- ◆ Communicate your concern with a simple “I’m sorry” or a hug.
- ◆ Listen, accept feelings, offer help as needed.
- ◆ Do not minimize the loss.
- ◆ Avoid cliches and easy answers such as “He had a good life” or “She is no longer in pain.”
- ◆ Ask questions that allow the mourner to talk about his grief and memories of the deceased.
- ◆ Follow the mourner’s lead.
- ◆ Share stories and memories of the deceased.
- ◆ Bring a gift of food.
- ◆ Make a donation in the deceased’s name.
- ◆ Remain in contact after formal mourning ends.

## REMEMBRANCE AFTER THE FIRST YEAR

### **Yahrzeit**

- ◆ Annual commemoration of a loved one’s death.

### **Yizkor**

- ◆ Special prayers for the dead, said at *Yizkor* services on Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Pesach and Shavuot.

### **Kaddish**

- ◆ The prayer we associate with the remembrance of the dead.
- ◆ Recited first at the time of burial and thereafter on the annual *yahrzeit*.
- ◆ Said by Reform Jews every week on *Shabbat* as a Congregation.

### **Visiting the cemetery**

- ◆ Customary before the High Holy Days and on the annual *yahrzeit*.
- ◆ Not permitted on *Shabbat* or the Jewish festivals.
- ◆ Customary to leave a small stone on the grave marker.

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AND ISSUES

### **Death of an Infant**

- ◆ Recognized by Reform Judaism as a significant loss.
- ◆ Funeral or mourning rituals occur in abbreviated form.

## **Suicide**

- ◆ Prohibited in Jewish tradition.
- ◆ In Reform Judaism, a funeral service is held and mourning customs followed.

## **Interfaith Issues**

- ◆ A Jew-by-choice is permitted to say *Kaddish* for non-Jewish relatives.
- ◆ Non-Jewish spouses may be buried in a Jewish cemetery, but non-Jewish symbols are not permitted.

## **Children as Mourners**

- ◆ Young children are more aware of death than we think.
- ◆ Should not be shielded from death.
- ◆ Involvement in entire process helps dispel fears and fantasies.

## TEMPLE SERVICES AVAILABLE

- ◆ The Hineynu Community is a network of Temple Solel members designed for “inreach” to families in need. Hineynu encourages participation of all Temple members in fulfilling the mitzvah of Gemilut Chasidim: acts of loving-kindness, visiting the sick, consoling the bereaved and welcoming the stranger.
- ◆ Chavurah Chesed: School director, Ellen Fox, began this mitzvah over 20 years ago in memory of her mother. When congregants have a local funeral of a first degree relative and would like to invite participants back to their home, Chavurah Chesed will prepare a meal of condolence and have it ready following the funeral. Chavurah Chesed is made up of congregants’ friends, fellow members of a Chavurah or just congregants wanting to perform this important ritual. Any Temple member is welcome to participate in this meaningful mitzvah. For additional information, contact Ellen Fox at 760.436-0654.

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Todah Rabah!

