

**Dignity for the body
Peace for the soul**

**An introduction to
Jewish Burial Customs**

**What happens to
the Soul after death
should make all the difference
in your burial decisions**

When a person dies, the soul or *neshama* hovers around the body. This *nehama* is the essence of the person, the consciousness and totality. The thoughts, deeds, experiences and relationships. The body was its container, while it lasted, and the *neshama*, now on the way to the Eternal World, refuses to leave until the body is buried. In effect, the totality of the person who died continues to exist for a while in the vicinity of the body. A Jewish funeral is therefore most concerned with the feelings of the deceased, not only the feelings of the mourners. How we treat the body and how we behave around the body must reflect how we would act around the very person himself at this crucial moment.

Shmira / The Vigil

**From the moment of death
to the moment of burial the
body is never left alone**

Now more than ever, the body deserves respect. After all, there is a real awareness around the body that knows exactly what is going on. It would be insensitive to leave the body alone, without any attention, as if it were being discarded because it was no longer useful. Arrangements for a *shomer* or guard should therefore be made. These watchmen stay with the body day and night, reciting passages from the Book of Psalms. This lends great comfort to the *neshama* while it waits for the body's burial and its ascent to the Eternal World.

Tahara / The Preparation

**The body leaves the world
the way it entered**

A newborn is immediately cleaned and washed when it enters the world. And so it is when a person leaves the world. After all, the soul is about to be reborn in a new spiritual world. We also believe that eventually the body will be resurrected in this world. A *Tahara* is performed by members of the *Chevra Kadisha* (Burial Society). This is a complete cleansing and dressing of the body, performed according to Jewish Law and Custom. Prayers asking for the forgiveness of the deceased and the soul's eternal peace are offered. While *Tahara* requires that the body be made as presentable as possible, embalming, cosmetizing or any other attempts to create a life-like appearance through artificial means are contrary to Jewish Law.

Tachrichim / The Shroud

Dressing for the final Yom Kippur

The *neshama* is about to face its final Judgment Day and clothes don't matter – good deeds do. That's why every Jew is buried exactly alike. In a handmade, simple, perfectly clean, white linen shroud which includes a white linen hat, shirt, pants, shoes, coat and belt. Men are dressed in a *tallis* (payer shawl). The shrouds have no pockets to accentuate the fact that no worldly belongings accompany him. The shrouds are modeled after the white uniform worn by the High Priest in the Holy Temple on Yom Kippur when he stood before G-d asking for the needs of his family and the entire Jewish People. These shrouds are therefore especially appropriate because each and every *neshama* asks for the needs of his or her family on the final Judgment Day.

Aron / The Casket

**Allowing the body's
natural return to dust
to be as swift as
possible**

“For dust you are and to dust you shall return.” This biblical teaching is what guides us in selecting a casket. The casket must not be made of material that slows down the body's natural return to the elements. Metal caskets are therefore not permitted. Wood is the only material allowed and several holes are opened at the bottom to hasten the body's return to the earth. When vaults are required, they too should be open at the bottom. Caskets remain closed because viewing the body is seen as disrespectful and undignified and is therefore forbidden according to Jewish Law.

Kvura BiKarka / In-Ground Burial

**The natural decomposition
of the body is of
utmost importance in
Jewish Law**

The *neshama's* return to heaven is dependent upon the body's return to the ground. That's what the Prophet means when he says, "The dust returns to the earth . . . and the spirit returns to G-d who gave it." Jewish Law is therefore concerned with the immediacy of burial and the natural decomposition of the body. Mausoleums are forbidden since they retard the process of return to the earth. Cremation is certainly forbidden. It is the harshest for the indignity to the body and a pagan ritual that denies the existence of G-d. The only acceptable burial is directly in the ground, with family members and friends helping to fill the grave completely until a mound is formed. No attempt to retard the body's decomposition is permitted.

The Role of the Chevra Kadisha / Burial Society

**Preparing a fellow Jew
for burial is an especially
great mitzvah**

Throughout Jewish History being a member of the *Chevra Kadisha* has been a great honor. Members of the Burial Society are selected for their character, integrity and personal devotion to Jewish Tradition. These men and women are on call 24 hours a day to perform a *Tahara* and to ensure that the laws and traditions of Jewish burial are executed properly. Their greatest concern is the sensitive care, modesty and dignity of the deceased. Men care for men, women care for women, Jew cares for fellow Jew. There is no better way to ensure the dignity of the body than to entrust its preparation to the *Chevra Kadisha*.

A GUIDE TO JEWISH MOURNING PRACTICES



Tikvat Israel Congregation *Chevra Kadisha*.

A Guide to Jewish Mourning Practices Tikvat Israel Congregation, Rockville, Maryland

...וּמָחָה אֲדַנְי יְהוָה דְּמַעַת מֵעַל כָּל-פָּנִים
ישעיה טו:ג

...and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces
Isaiah XXV:8

Dear Friends,

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

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

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

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

The Tikvat Israel Congregation *Chevra Kadisha*

נְחָמוּ נְחָמוּ עַמִּי

COMFORT YE, COMFORT YE, MY PEOPLE

LAST MOMENTS OF LIFE

When death is imminent, the Rabbi should be notified. The Rabbi and others will be available to give moral support to the family and to the dying person by praying with them and offering practical counsel and assistance. In one instance, a family member, knowing that death was a certainty, and worried that their loved one was suffering, prayed for death to come quickly. Rabbinic advice was sought and given that it was more appropriate to pray for the comfort of the loved one, rather than pray for another's death. The advice was well received and removed the guilt that one would feel praying for the death of one's own parent.

A person in his or her final moments of life is known as a גוסס, *goses*, which means “dying”, or “moribund”. This word is derived from the sound heard coming from the throat as the chest cavity narrows. The Talmud teaches that the שכינה, *Shechinah* (Divine Presence), stands at the head of the *goses*. This special status means that the dying individual must be treated as a living person in all respects and not as an object or as one to be avoided. Everything possible to save a person should be pursued even if it means transgressing שבת, *Shabbat*, or a יום טוב, *Yom Tov*. In the same vein, it is forbidden to take any action that would hasten a person's death.

The presence of loved ones brings necessary and important psychological comfort to the *goses*; as well as meeting the emotional needs of those who love him/her. This final demonstration of love and concern provides all involved the assurance that they did all they could up to the very end. It also allows one to deal with grief directly and without the sense of guilt of not having done enough for the one who died. However, this does not mean that one may desecrate *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov* in order to be, before the final moments, with the one who is dying.

If at all possible, the one who is dying should not be left alone. Try to limit conversations to those that meet the needs of the dying person. One should leave the room to eat, drink, or discuss extraneous matters with another visitor. Psalms and prayers may be recited to ease the loved-one's passing. Psalms 23, 91, 103, 121, 130 and 139 are particularly appropriate.

וידוי שכיב מרע, *Vidui Sh'chiv M'rah*, Confession on a death bed

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

The recitation of the *Shema* by the dying person in the last moments of life helps to affirm one's faith in God.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד

Shema Yisrael Adonai Elohaynu, Adonai Echad

"Hear O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One" (one time)

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Baruch Shem k'vod malchuto l'olam vo-ed

"Praised be His glorious sovereignty throughout all time" (three times)

ה' הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים

Adonai Hu HaElohim,

"The Lord, He is God" (seven times)

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

WHAT TO DO WHEN DEATH OCCURS

For those present at the moment of death it is appropriate to recite the following:

ה' מֶלֶךְ ה' מֶלֶךְ ה' מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד

Adonai Melech , Adonai Malach, Adonai Yimloch l'olam vo-ed

"The Lord is King, the Lord was King, the Lord shall be King for ever and ever" (three times)

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

בְּרוּךְ דַּיָּן הַאֱמֶת

Baruch Dayan Ha-Emet

Praised is the True Judge.

Initial Care of the Deceased

After reciting *Dayan Ha-Emet*, the following activities should be performed:

Open the windows in the room where the deceased is lying.

Close the eyes and mouth of the deceased and straighten the limbs.

Completely cover the deceased with a sheet.

Place a lighted candle near the head of the deceased (not done on *Shabbat*, on *Yom Tov* kindle from a pre-existing flame).

Cover the mirrors in the room where the deceased is lying.

As with a dying person, the deceased should not be left unattended.

Autopsies

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

Organ Donations

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

The United Network for Organ Sharing has a toll free number where one can obtain information regarding all organ donations. The number is 1-888-894-6361. A Conservative Movement Organ Donation Card, published and distributed in a joint effort of the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, has been included in the appendix. It is important to use this card instead of a "Uniform Donor Card," since this last mentioned card includes organ donation for the purposes of transplantation, therapy, medical research or education. The Conservative Movement Organ Donation Card limits the organ donation for the purpose of transplantation only.

Contact the Rabbi

Rabbi Gorin prefers to be contacted first, that is, prior to contacting a funeral home or making other funeral commitments in order to counsel the bereaved family concerning traditional Jewish practices. The funeral home does not know the Rabbi's schedule and may not be well-informed on Jewish practices. The Rabbi is available for immediate advice and assistance at his office (301-762-7338) or at his home (301-460-1750). The Rabbi may be called at any hour by a member when there is a death in the family. The congregation's staff and leadership are able to contact the Rabbi (or an alternate if he is unavailable) at all times. If the office is closed, follow the instructions on the answering machine.

If death occurs in special circumstances, such as during *Shabbat* or a *Yom Tov*, please come to Tikvat Israel and meet with the Rabbi. Otherwise contact the Rabbi immediately at the conclusion of *Shabbat* or *Yom Tov*.

Role of the Synagogue

The Rabbi, the Tikvat Israel staff and members of the *Chevra Kadisha* are prepared to assist and advise any congregant in making the necessary arrangements. The Tikvat Israel *Chevra Kadisha* can arrange for טְהוּרָה, *tahara* (the ritual washing of the body), תְּכָרִיכִים, *tachrichim* (a plain white shroud), a condolence meal, and שְׁבִיעָה, *shiva* services. A complete list of what the *Chevra Kadisha* does is available in Appendix 2.

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

Funeral Arrangements

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

Cremation and Embalming

Jewish law and custom is averse to any desecration of the body; for this reason cremation or embalming is not practiced by Jews. The use of cosmetics on the deceased is not permitted.

Contact the Funeral Home

The funeral home should be contacted only after the Rabbi has been called. Tikvat Israel is a member of the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc (JFPCGW), which has been contracting with funeral homes on behalf of area congregations for thirty years. The Funeral Practices Committee upholds the Jewish values of honoring those who have died, and comforting the bereaved with simple Jewish funerals and rituals. Each contract has had a duration of two years at which time it is reviewed for possible price and quality of service improvements. The current providers under the JFPCGW contract (2002-2004) are Hines-Rinaldi Funeral Home located in White Oak, Maryland, and Jefferson Funeral Chapel in Alexandria, Virginia.

In addition, Tikvat Israel has had an agreement with Edward Sagel Funeral Direction, located in Rockville. Over the years they have provided congregants with traditional funerals held either at the Synagogue or at graveside. When contacting the funeral home, please mention that you are a member of Tikvat Israel. Copies of both contracts are available in the appendices.

Once the death certificate is signed, the funeral home will take the body and move it to its premises. Along with the Rabbi and *Chevra Kadisha*, the funeral home will coordinate funeral arrangements. If the death or funeral occurs out of town, the local funeral home will assist with the necessary arrangements.

אָרוֹן *Aron*, Coffin

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

Cemeteries

Judean Memorial Gardens
16225 Batchelors Forest Road
Olney, MD 20832
(301) 384-1000

Burial sites at Judean Gardens are available at reduced cost to our members in a section reserved for Tikvat Israel. Contact the Synagogue office for complete details.

Mount Lebanon Cemetery
9500 Riggs Road
Adelphi, MD 20783
(301) 434-4640

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

Garden of Remembrance
14321 Comus Road
Clarksburg, MD 20871
(301) 428-0358

Please be aware that there are expenses associated with a funeral in addition to the purchase of a gravesite: a fee is usually imposed for opening the grave. Details should be discussed with the cemetery management.

BEFORE THE FUNERAL

אָנִיּוּת *Aninut*, "sorrow, grief" - Between time of Death and the Funeral

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

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

שְׁמִירָה *Shmira*, Guarding the Body

Jewish tradition requires that the deceased not be left unattended prior to burial. The person who stays with the deceased is called a *shomer* (guardian). Preferably, the *shomrim* are family members or friends of the deceased. *Shomrim* can also be arranged for a fee through the funeral home. Smoking, eating, drinking, and idle conversation are all forbidden in the presence of the deceased. Instead, the *shomer* should read from סֵפֶר תְּהִלִּים, the Book of Psalms.

טְהָרָה *Tahara*, Ritual Cleansing

Tahara, the cleansing of the deceased, is a Jewish religious act. Just as a baby is cleansed when it first enters this world the circle is completed by washing the deceased as he departs. In addition to the cleansing special prayers are recited asking forgiveness for any sins the deceased may have committed and for his eternal peace. It is preformed as a mitzvah by the *Chevra Kadisha* since the person for whom it is done cannot reciprocate. A specially trained women's group for women and a men's group for men from our synagogue preform the ritual cleansing in the prescribed manner that has been handed down for generations. They are the last people to handle the body before it is placed in the coffin, and thus the family is assured that their loved one was always treated properly and with respect. The Washington Area *Chevra Kadisha* is also available and may be contacted through the funeral home.

תְּכָרִיכִים *Tachrichim*, Shroud and Burial Attire

To demonstrate the equality of all in death, Jewish law requires burial in *tachrichim* - plain white shrouds. Adult men and women may be buried in their own *tallit*. The practice of dressing all alike for burial was instituted by Rabbi Gamliel in the 2nd century so that the poor would not be shamed and the rich would not compete with each other to be buried in the costliest garments. The clothes are appropriate for one about to stand before God and be judged; therefore, they are simple, perfectly clean, and white. Men and women are dressed in similar garments. There are no pockets in the garments for there is no need to carry anything with them.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

The funeral service is intended to honor the deceased and to comfort the bereaved. It may be held in the Synagogue, in a funeral home, or at the graveside. The service is brief and simple; chanting of psalms and *אֵל מֵלֵא רַחֲמִים Eil Malei Rachamim* (the traditional memorial prayer). A *הַסְפָּד hesped* (eulogy), that honors the deceased, is given. Instrumental music is inappropriate. Fraternal ceremonies and military honors should be cleared with the Rabbi. See Appendix 3 for a list of possible funeral fees.

It is considered an honor to have a funeral service conducted in the Synagogue. The mourners are expected to abide by the Board of Directors policy on funerals conducted in the Sanctuary. (See Appendix 4)

קְרִיעָה *K'ria*, Rending of Garments

Mourners for parents, a spouse, children, or siblings, traditionally participate in this rite usually just prior to the funeral service. It is the custom to tear a visible portion of clothing such as a lapel, pocket, or collar; in keeping with tradition, others choose to wear a torn black ribbon as a symbol of their mourning. The garment is torn (or the cut ribbon is worn) on the left side, closest to the heart for parents, and on the right side for other relatives. The torn garment is worn for the duration of the *shiva*, the 7-day mourning period (except on Shabbat). Some people continue to wear it during the *Sh'loshim*, the 30-day period. *K'ria* is not performed on *Shabbat* and *Yom Tov*.

כֹּהֲנִים *Kohanim*, Descendants of the Priestly Tribe

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

Pallbearers

The coffin is escorted out from the sanctuary and/or is carried to the burial site by family or friends selected by the mourners.

Viewing the Remains

Public viewing of the body is contrary to Jewish tradition.

Flowers

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

קְבוּרָה *K'vurah*, Burial

During the recitation of Psalm 91 by the officiating rabbi, pallbearers customarily stop several times while carrying the coffin to the grave. The coffin precedes mourners, family, and friends as a sign of respect. It is appropriate for mourners who are standing near the coffin as it passes to say:

...ה" נתן נה" לקח יהי שם ה" מְבֹרָךְ:

אִיּוֹב אֵבֵר

Adonai nattan, v'Adonai lakach, y'hi shem Adonai m'vorach.

"...the Lord gives and the Lord takes away, praised be the name of the Lord."

Job 1:21

At the Graveside

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

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

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר אַבְלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם

Ha-makom ye-nachem et-chem b'toch sh'ar avay-lay tsi-yon vi-yerusha-la-yim

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

The mourner, from this time on, is known as a יָתוֹם, *yatom* (a mourner whose dead had been buried) during the year of mourning.

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

THE *SHIVA* HOME

Preparation of the *Shiva* Home

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

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

Returning to the *Shiva* Home

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

סְעוּדַת הַבְּרָאָה *Se-udat Hb-ra-ah*, Meal of Condolence

Tikvat Israel can arrange for a dairy meal of condolence **to be served to the mourners** at the house of mourning when they return from the cemetery. This meal traditionally includes round foods such as eggs.

Decorum

A *shiva* is not a wake, and a *shiva* call is not a social outing or a mere formality. It is a sacred act of sharing the sorrow of one's relatives and friends, to console with the mourners, and to support them with one's presence. It is appropriate for visitors to bring nourishing food for the mourners. Condolence callers should not expect refreshments to be provided and it is inappropriate to socialize during a condolence visit.

PERIODS OF MOURNING

Jews by Choice may, and are encouraged to, observe these rules and customs for both their Jewish and non-Jewish relatives.

שְׁבִיעָה *Shiva*, The First Seven Days

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

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

It is customary for the mourners to participate in the afternoon/evening services in the *shiva* home (except on *Shabbat*, when they are encouraged to attend Synagogue services). The mourners may wish to lead these home services; if they choose not to do so, then the *Chevra Kadisha* will arrange for a *minyán* leader.

Public mourning observances are suspended on *Shabbat*--the sanctity and serenity of this day supersedes personal grief. Mourners are encouraged to attend *Shabbat* services; they are not given an *aliyah*, do not lead services, and the *k'ria* is not displayed publicly.

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

Condolence Calls

It is a *mitzvah* to pay a condolence call during the *Shiva* period. Greetings between mourners and visitors normally are not exchanged. An important role for all visitors is to listen and provide comfort to those in mourning. Levity and laughter are obviously out of place. Conversation should center on the personality and character of the departed. This demonstrates that the entire community shares in the sorrow and sense of loss.

שְׁלוֹשִׁים *Sh'loshim*, The First Thirty Days

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

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

שָׁנָה *Shana*, The First Year

Mourners for deceased parents continue to attend *minyanim* daily to recite the Mourners' *Kaddish* for eleven months, and continue to refrain from celebratory activities for a full year. The *halachic* obligation for spouse, children, or siblings ends after the thirty-day *Shloshim* period.

Sometimes people are troubled by their inability to say *Kaddish* regularly. Some people resort to asking others (even paying strangers) to recite the *Kaddish* in their place, mistakenly thinking that suffices. The practice is inappropriate because Judaism discourages prayers by proxy. It has been suggested that when public recitation of the *Kaddish* cannot be performed, individuals can express their devotion to Jewish tradition in a variety of ways; studying the words of the Mourners' *Kaddish* or reciting Psalms can provide comfort to the mourner. Regular attendance at a *minyan*, though, can provide an anchor to the community and aid the healing process.

Unveiling Ceremony at the Graveside

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

Yahrzeit, Anniversary of Death

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

Visiting The Grave

It is customary to place a small stone upon the grave. The placing of stones an indication that someone has visited the grave. An early reference to this custom is found in the *B'er Heitev* commentary to the *Shulchan Aruch*. It is also customary to wash one's hands before leaving the cemetery.

Yizkor, Memorial Prayers

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

כְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר אִמּוֹ תִנְחַמְנוּ כֵן אֲנִי אֲנַחֲמְכֶם וּבִירוּשָׁלַם תִּנְחַמּוּ
ישעיה טו:יג

As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you,
and you will be comforted in Jerusalem.
ISAIAH LXVI:13

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- Liss-Levinson, Nechama. 1995. When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Remembering Workbook for Dealing with Shiva and the Year Beyond. Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont. 48 pp.
- Levine, Aaron. 1994. To Comfort the Bereaved. Jason Aronson, Inc., New Jersey. 241pp.
- Weiss, Abner. 1991. Death and Bereavement: A Halakhic Guide. Ktav Publishing House, Inc., New Jersey. 404pp.
- Wolfson, Ron. 1996. A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort: A Guide to Jewish Bereavement and Comfort. Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, Vermont. 320 pp.

Local funeral homes familiar with Jewish practices:

Borgwardt Funeral Home
4400 Powder Mill Road
Beltsville, MD 20705
(301) 937-1707

Jefferson Funeral Chapel *
5755 Castlewellan Drive
Alexandria, VA 22315
(703) 971-7400

Danzansky-Goldberg Memorial Chapels
1170 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 340-1400

Edward Sagel Funeral Direction +
1091 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 217-9400

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

Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home
254 Carroll Street, NW
Washington, DC 20012
(301) 495-3395

* 2002-2004 Contract with the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc.

+ Tikvat Israel agreement

Local Burial Organizations:

Tikvat Israel Chevra Kadisha
David Gantz, Chair
301-460-4674

Chesed Shel Emes (Free Burial Society)
Rabbi Saul Koss
(301) 230-7294
FAX (301) 230-7260

Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of
Greater Washington, Inc.
Bob Hausman, Chair
(202) 966-1545
www.jewish-funerals.org

Women's *Chevra Kadisha* of Washington
Linda Rishe
(301) 585-2028

Men's *Chevra Kadisha* of Washington
Alan Sussman
(301) 681-6366

Appendix 1. Minimal and Alternative Confessional Prayers

The following text is a minimum confession.

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

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

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

My God and God of my fathers and mothers
May my prayer come before You
Do not ignore my plea.
Please, forgive me for all of the sins
That I sinned before You throughout my lifetime.
I regret things that I have done.
Now, O God, take my suffering and pain as atonement.
Forgive my mistakes, for against You have I sinned.

May it be Your will, O God, my God and God of my ancestors
That I sin no more. In Your great mercy, cleanse me of the sins I have
committed, but not through suffering and disease.
Send me a complete healing along with all those who are ill.

I acknowledge before You, Adonai, my God and God of my ancestors,
That my healing and my death are in Your hands.
May it be Your will to grant me a complete healing.
If it is Your will that I am to die of this illness,
Let my death be atonement for all the wrongs that I have done in my life.
Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings.
Grant me a place in the World to Come.

Parent of orphans and Guardian of widows,
Protect my dear loved ones, with whose souls my soul is bound.

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

Appendix 2. The Role of Tikvat Israel and the Chevra Kadisha

At this time, the following are what Tikvat Israel and the *Chevra Kadisha* can provide when death occurs in a congregant's family:

- Advise congregant in making funeral arrangements
- Bereavement counseling
- Arrange for *Tahara*
- Arrange funeral services in Tikvat Israel's sanctuary or at graveside
- Arrange for *Shomrim* before the funeral at the Synagogue
- Prepare house of mourner prior to the mourner's return from cemetery (e.g., cover mirrors, set out water to wash hands after return of funeral)
- Arrange for a meal of condolence for mourners at their immediate return from the funeral
- Coordinate *shiva minyanim* (supply the *shiva* house with *siddurim* and low chairs, if desired)
- Daily evening *minyan* at Tikvat Israel for the remainder of the first year and subsequent *yahrzeitim*
- *Yahrzeit* reminders will be send out by the Tikvat Israel office
- Funeral contract with Sagel Funeral Direction
- Funeral contract through the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington DC, currently with Hines-Rinaldi, MD and Jefferson Funeral Chapel, VA
- Members may purchase grave sites at reduced cost at Judean Gardens

Appendix 3. Funeral Fees Summary

- Funeral Home Fees - as specified by a contract or as charged by the funeral home
- Cemetery - as per agreement with the cemetery
- Officiating Rabbi Honorarium - may be included in the Funeral Home charges if the funeral is not officiated by Rabbi Gorin

Appendix 4. Board of Directors Policy on Funerals Conducted in the Sanctuary of Tikvat Israel

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

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

A service cannot be conducted in the sanctuary when the remains have been cremated or embalmed.

An open casket is not permitted in the sanctuary.

The Rabbi will have sole authority and discretion to modify or adjust the requirements delineated above.

Deviation from the above expectations will necessitate a service at another location or at graveside .

Adopted April 30 2001

Appendix 5. Contract with Edward Sagel Funeral Direction

The following is an agreement between Tikvat Israel and Edward Sagel Funeral Direction, Inc., (hereinafter called the "Funeral Director and/or FD"), 1091 Rockville Pike, Rockville, Maryland 20852. Revised December 10, 2002.

- I. The Basic Funeral
 - a. The Funeral Director agrees to provide any member or extended family of Tikvat Israel that seeks funeral accommodations pursuant to this agreement a Basic Funeral for \$1,290 or \$2,800 depending on casket selection (this is a savings of over \$1,500.00).
 - b. The Basic Funeral shall consist of the following **funeral home services**:
 1. Basic services of Funeral Director and Staff as well as minimal overhead and inventory costs.
 2. Preparation/Dressing/Casketing/Refrigeration as Required.
 3. Transfer of the deceased at anytime of day or night, 24 hours a day/365 days a year within a 30 *mile* radius.
 4. All customary paperwork, such as filing death certificates, submitting death notices and other reasonable forms associated with a funeral.
 5. Equipment and staff services for transportation of casket to synagogue and/or cemetery for services, within a 30 mile radius (see below for family vehicle charges).
 - c. The Basic Funeral shall consist of the following **funeral home merchandise**:
 1. Solid Poplar casket (a.k.a. IH07, 407007), all wood construction, with handles, "flat-raised" top, unfinished, and white interior and pillow (with this stated casket the package price is \$2,800.00).
Or
Solid Pine casket (a.k.a. IH03, 407003), all wood construction, without handles, with no stain, and no interior or pillow (with this stated casket the package price is \$1,290.00).
 2. Muslin shroud (if a person chooses to upgrade he or she may and pay the difference).
 3. Taharah Supplies
 4. Taharah Room
 5. Basic Register Book (paper) (if a person chooses to upgrade, he or she may and pay the difference).
 6. Yahrzeit Calendars

7. Shiva Candle (1) and Use of Prayer Books
8. One (1) box of 50 Standard Acknowledgement Cards (if a person chooses to upgrade, he or she may and pay the difference).

II. Additional Charges (Optional)

- a. The following charges may be added to the cost of the Basic Funeral, if requested, at current General Price List Charges. (The below prices are effective as of September 15, 2002, but are subject to change without notice.)
 1. Family Cars (\$295 each, 4 passenger sedan, within a 30 mile radius/ \$395.00 each, 6-7 passenger limousine, within a 30 mile radius/ \$495.00 each, 10 passenger stretch limousine, within a 30 mile radius, additional distance will be charged at \$2.00 per mile for all cars. Overtime after 4 hours will be charged at \$75.00 per 1/2 hour or fraction thereof)
 2. Outer Burial Container for the cemetery (\$695.00-\$2,295.00).
 3. Caskets range from \$695-\$7,995.00 the casket involved in the
 4. Upgraded or additional Acknowledgement Cards (\$10-family selection).
 5. Flowers
 6. Upgraded Register Book (\$45 and up)
 7. Shiva Platters (any various amount)
 8. Linene or Linen Shroud (\$80 or \$120)
 9. Flag Case/Veteran Memorial (\$100 and up)
- b. Charges at Cost (a.k.a. "Pass Thru")
 1. Taharah Honorarium (\$100)
 2. Newspaper Death Notice (one day in Washington Post, estimate: \$ 180)
 3. Rabbi Honorarium, if your rabbi is not available (\$400)
 4. Synagogue Rental, if your synagogue is not available (\$500)
 5. Certified Death Certificates each (\$10 in MD, \$12 in VA, \$15 in DC)
 6. Cemetery Charges
 7. Shomeir (\$10 per hour)

III. Additional Terms

- a. Pre Arrangements are available.
 - b. The Basic Funeral, as described above, shall be available to any Tikvat Israel Member, and their extended family, who request Basic Funeral Service pursuant to this *agreement*. All members or affiliates, even if funeral is paid in advance, must come in to conclude arrangements. (AKA "final arrangements")
 - c. **Members** or affiliates of Tikvat Israel are responsible for identifying themselves as a member or family member or affiliate and refer to the above named arrangement. It can not be assumed that we can identify any member or affiliate or family member of this group. Without proper indication that above services are requested, the Tikvat Israel package will not be granted. Refunds will not be given if family identifies themselves after the conclusion of the funeral arrangements.
- a. The FD reserves the right to charge per current General Price List rates for all services if requesting individual of their own free will request changes beyond the Basic Funeral service or as stipulated in the above said agreement.
 - b. The package is "as is". Nothing may be substituted for any other, it is all inclusive (for example, if one prefers own clothing, the shroud is still included in the package, no further discount will be taken, same with Taharah supplies and room).
 - c. The contract shall continue in effect until two years from the date signed below. It is upon the congregation to contact us for renewal. Upon this date, a new agreement must be negotiated by both parties involved.

Appendix 6. Contract through the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc. (JFPCGW)

AGREEMENT BETWEEN JFPCGW & HINES-RINALDI FUNERAL HOME FOR 7/1/02 THROUGH 6/30/04, WITH OPTIONS THROUGH 6/30/06

This contract is made between the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington, Inc., "JFPCGW," and Hines-Rinaldi Funeral Home, Inc., with premises at 11800 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD hereinafter called the "Funeral Director" or "FD," effective July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2004.

FD understands that JFPCGW's primary purpose is to permit and encourage congregations to honor their dead by taking the lead in ritual activities and in protecting and comforting the mourners, and to follow the Jewish values of quick burial, and simplicity and equality in death. FD agrees to cooperate to further those purposes.

The Funeral Director agrees to provide any Jewish congregation or its members, or family members of its members, a funeral which includes the services and merchandise listed below. Except as indicated below, the price will be \$1545 through June 30, 2003, and \$1615 from July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004. FD may also add any increase in the wholesale price of the casket if it is purchased, and used in the funeral, during the second year.

1. Removal of the body from the place of death, or another place, within 40 miles of the Washington Beltway.
2. Securing a signed copy of the physician's death certificate at the place of death and at the time of removal. If the death certificate is not ready there and then, \$80 will be charged for obtaining the death certificate later.
3. Refrigeration as required.
4. An all-wood pine rectangular casket, of appropriate size for the particular deceased, as mutually agreed between the Committee and the FD.
5. Use of the FD's premises, 24 hours per day, including Sundays, for ritual washing (tahara) and watching (shmira) of the body and lounge facilities for the people involved. Ritual washing includes cleaning the body and stopping bleeding, dressing the body in a shroud set, placing it into the casket, and closing the casket. FD will provide all necessary supplies for the ritual washing, including muslin shroud sets, Israeli earth and clay [shards] protective clothing for the washers. FD will cooperate fully in learning the needs and meeting them. FD will create a Tahara Room with private entrance with a table suitable for performing tahara, with running water, heating, air conditioning, overhead lift and all supplies needed. FD will also create a shomers' area separate from, and adjacent to the Tahara Room, with a telephone and rest room facilities.
6. Cleaning, dressing and casketing the body when ritual washing is not performed.
7. Use of the FD's chapel for a funeral service when desired by a family.

8. Transportation of the body to another place, such as a synagogue or a home for the funeral service, then transportation to the designated cemetery within 40 miles of the Washington Beltway.
9. All customary paperwork, such as newspaper notices, Social Security and Veterans claims, death certificates, etc. This does not include the additional charges for those items made by the newspapers, or the fees for the certificates, which shall be charged at cost.
10. FD will order certified copies of the death certificate on behalf of the family by U.S. mail. If requested to secure certified copies by some other means FD will charge \$80 for doing so.
11. Guest register book and fifty acknowledgement cards (memorial package), and Shiva/ritual candle, to be given to the family.
12. All transportation to and from places within 40 miles of the Washington beltway is included. Transportation of the body within the area of Maryland and Virginia beyond the 40 miles will be charged at \$3 per loaded mile. Road trips to New York City vicinity (within a 40 mile radius of New York City), New Jersey or Pennsylvania will be charged at \$800. Any area outside of these areas will be charged at \$3.00 per loaded mile plus any overnight expenses required (such as hotel fees and meals).
13. On request, FD will furnish one or more limousines and drivers for a minimum of three hours. Minimum charges shall be \$250 for one 6-passenger, \$425 for two six passengers, \$325 for an 8-passenger, and \$395 for a 10-passenger, limousine. Additional time shall be charged at \$85 per hour or portion thereof. The time is measured from the time the limousine leaves the garage to the time it returns, but no more than one hour shall be charged for the round trip to and from the garage.
14. The family will not be required to visit the funeral home. FD will send a representative to the bereaved's home to accomplish paperwork, when requested.
15. FD will permit one person associated with the funeral to ride in the funeral coach with the director.
16. If there is no religious or funeral service, or if the body is transported to another funeral director prior to such service, the charge shall be \$ 725 within a 40 mile radius of the Washington Beltway. A charge of \$3.00 per loaded mile will be charged for any mileage in excess of 40 miles.
17. This funeral is provided as a package. There will be no credit for services or merchandise provided above which are not taken by the patron, except as specified in this contract.
18. The FD agrees that when a bereaved member of any congregation contacts it, it will inform the person designated by the congregation or the Rabbi of the congregation. The FD will also inform the bereaved of the designated congregational contact or the rabbi. FD will not attempt to sell any upgrade merchandise or services to the bereaved without involving the person designated by the congregation or the Rabbi of the congregation.

19. Any merchandise not included or optioned in this agreement, including the appendix, may be charged at FD's then current price list, reduced by the price list value of such merchandise as it replaces. In no event will there be a separate charge for professional services.
20. Families or congregations will not be billed earlier than 30 days after the burial, except that cemetery charges may be billed as required by the cemetery.
21. FD will assign a single account executive whose primary duty is to receive calls for services, and to facilitate its performance, under this contract. FD will see that such functions are covered when the account executive is absent. Contract patrons will be given a single number to call.
22. FD will keep JFPCGW advised of its procedures, and of changes to its procedures within 15 days of making the change.
23. FD will furnish JFPCGW quarterly statistics of funerals performed and preneed contracts made under this agreement by the 15th day of the succeeding month, including the name of the deceased, the congregation or other source of the call, and a copy of each invoice.
24. Menorah Gardens [Cemetery] will make available to those families that choose to bury within the cemetery one burial rite in a location of the cemetery's choosing at no cost to the family. The family will be responsible for paying the Professional Service Fee (grave opening and closing fee) and the cost of any memorial that it may select to be placed on the gravesite. If the family chooses to purchase additional grave spaces at the same time as the initial burial, the family will be allowed to select the area of the cemetery where they would like to purchase their burial rites and a credit will be given for one burial rite.
25. For the years beginning 7/1/2004 and 7/1/2005, respectively, JFPCGW shall have the option to renew this contract for each of the next two years, until 6/30/06, with annual price changes in accordance with the U.S. Government's Consumer Price Index for Washington-Baltimore all items – urban, for the most recent 12 month period available as of April 15, 2004 and 2005, respectively. Reference data may be found at www.data.bls.gov.

APPENDIX

1. Memorial package will be taxed as merchandise per various state requirements. For that purpose, the following values are assigned: Coffin \$ 170, [including sales tax]; Register books, \$15; 2 boxes of acknowledgement cards, \$15 ; ritual candle, \$10.
2. Any "cash advance" charges or fees will be passed on to the user of those services.