

JEWISH TRADITIONS
REGARDING
DEATH & DYING

*AS PRACTICED AT CONGREGATION SHAAARIE
TORAH*

*Mourning and Bereavement
Funerals*

Remembrance of the Dead

January 2008

To the Members of Congregation Shaarie Torah

The text you are about to read was prepared and researched by Cliff Hockley. To Cliff my personal thank you for allowing me as the new Rabbi to infuse this page prior to its publication. Cliff took an enormous amount of time and careful effort in documenting our Jewish Heritage and traditions.

The following booklet codifies and discusses the many traditions we have in Judaism regarding illness, death, burial and mourning. From a Jewish perspective each one of these components make up the path, we as Jews follow.

As a Kohen (a member of the Tribe of Levi and descendent of the children of Aaron) I am only to attend seven funerals, relatives (father, mother, wife, brother, son, daughter, and sister if she is not married; Code of Jewish Law, Yoreh Dayah, 373:3). Should a Kohen become “impure” by coming in contact with a deceased person, he would be required to follow a seven day cleansing process, including bringing a sacrifice. Since the requirement to offer sacrifices cannot be upheld since we longer have a functioning Temple in Jerusalem, all Kohanim of today are basically impure and would be null and void from ancient rituals. On festivals and holy days we still have the only opportunity to present the Kohen in a symbol of ritual by allowing them the “Blessing of the People”.

Having explained the dilemma that any rabbi that is born a Kohen has in officiating congregational funerals, I am making every effort to officiate at funerals and unveilings without coming in contact with the deceased i.e. remaining dalet amot (~ eight feet) from a grave and not to be in a building where there is a deceased, such as the Chapel.

I consider it a great honor and according to our tradition an important mitzvah for which one receives extra merit in offering a eulogy on behalf of the deceased. Our Sages tell us, no one will come back from the grave to say thank you for speaking your kind words, and so the mitzvah is done for the sake of the mitzvah ONLY.

(From the Amidah) May we all merit the entry into Olam Habah (The World to Come), when it is our time.

B'vrakha,
Rabbi Arthur Zuckerman

Foreword

Twenty four years ago my mother Eva Hockley passed away suddenly. We were faced with a funeral and I was left without my mother. Friends, family and members of Shaarie Torah encouraged me to say *Kaddish* for eleven months. I followed their advice, and became close to those who were also saying *Kaddish*. Thereafter, I continued to help those who needed a minyan have one to help with Kaddish. During that time I found my spiritual home at Shaarie Torah.

Over the years, I noticed that fewer and fewer people were showing up for funerals and minyan. I suspected it was because our traditions were being forgotten. I wanted to learn more about death and dying, as well as Jewish funeral and bereavement practices. 24 years later after the death of my wife's parents, Sid and Sylvia Bluestone, I started my research.

To help our community remember our customs, this pamphlet summarizes our traditional and *halachic* death, funeral and bereavement process. I hope it will serve as a map for all of us as we negotiate the never ending circle of life.

I thank Rabbi Geller, Ivan Gold, and Steve Carver for their sage advice. I also thank my wife Julie and my children Ellen and Lily for their encouragement. Mike Imlah and Christina Seavy were instrumental in assembling this small pamphlet and creating a format that worked on Shaarie Torah's website.

This pamphlet relies on information and tools found on local websites and resources that are listed in the reference section of this pamphlet.

Dedication

I dedicate this Booklet to my father Ralph M. Hockley, my Step-Mom Carolyn Hockley, my Rabbi and Rebbitzin Yonah and Lisl Geller. It is also dedicated to the memory of my mother, Eva Hockley, my parents-in-law, Sid and Sylvia Bluestone, my grandparents, and all of those Jews that perished in the Holocaust or in Israel to maintain a Jewish homeland.

Clifford A. Hockley
June 2007

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BEREAVEMENT IN JUDAISM	6
DEATH	6
<i>DEATH AND DYING</i>	6
<i>SHAAT HA-MITAH (THE MOMENT OF DEATH)</i>	6
<i>VIDUI – CONFESSION</i>	6
<i>THE SOUL</i>	7
<i>WHO CARES FOR AN ILL PERSON AS THEY APPROACH DEATH?</i>	7
<i>HOW DOES A LOVED ONE HELP A PERSON WHO IS CLOSING IN ON THE END?</i>	7
<i>WHEN DEATH OCCURS OR IS IMMINENT</i>	8
<i>WHEN DEATH OCCURS ON A JEWISH HOLIDAY</i>	8
THE FUNERAL PROCESS	8
THE HEVRA KADISHA – THEIR ROLE	9
JEWISH TRADITIONS AT THE CEMETERY AND BURIAL	10
<i>FUNERAL SERVICE</i>	10
<i>CHOL HA'MOED</i>	11
<i>PROCESSION</i>	11
<i>BURIAL</i>	12
<i>A TYPICAL BURIAL SERVICE</i>	13
<i>THE PRAYERS</i>	13
<i>K'RIAH (RITUAL TEARING OF CLOTHES)</i>	14
<i>HAND-WASHING LEAVING THE CEMETERY IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING BURIAL</i>	14

STAGES OF MOURNING	15
KADDISH	16
ANNUAL REMEMBRANCES	17
<i>Yahrzeit</i>	17
<i>Visiting Jewish Graves</i>	17
MEMORIAL THROUGH PRAYER	18
<i>Mourner's Kaddish</i>	18
<i>Yizkor</i>	18
<i>Avharachamim</i>	18
FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION	19
MORE TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS	21
<i>A Short Form Vidui</i>	21
<i>Mourner's Kaddish</i> <i>(Hebrew, Transliterated and Translated into English)</i>	22-23
HEVRA KADISHA	24
GLOSSARY	26
REFERENCES	27
BIBLIOGRAPHY	28

BEREAVEMENT IN JUDAISM

Bereavement in Judaism (*avelut* - "mourning") combines *minhag* (traditional custom) and *mitzvot* (commandments) derived from Judaism's classical *Torah*, *Talmud* and rabbinic texts. Details of observance and practice vary among different communities, though fundamental laws and traditions are consistent.

DEATH

Death and dying:

Jewish practices regarding death are for one of two reasons: *k'vod hamet* (respect for the dead), or *nihum avelim* (to console those left behind). They involve very important *mitzvot*, which the community should not delegate to non-Jews. Before the funeral – respect for the dead takes priority; after the funeral, our customs focus on those left behind.

Sha'at Ha-mitah (the moment of death):

Jewish law forbids Jews to do anything to hasten a person's death; at the same time it requires all actions possible to comfort the dying person. It forbids unnecessary acts which intervene only to prolong the natural process of dying.

Vidui – Confession:¹

One close to death usually tries to recite a prayer of acceptance and reaffirmation of God, the *Vidui* (confession).

It is not really a confession, and the term creates confusion when compared to Catholic Last Rites. The *Vidui* is personal, recited in the first person; it requires no intermediary. It is repentance for past wrongs and a promise to obey the *mitzvot* in the future. When a person is on the verge of death, he is obligated to say *Vidui*. However, if mention of the *Vidui* to a sick person would endanger his health, we should not mention it. When suggesting *Vidui* we should reassure the person that its recital does not mean death will occur.

Often, a person says *Vidui* and recovers. Some who don't recite *Vidui* die. Our Torah tells us that whoever regrets the sins committed during his life, through speech, thought, and deed has a share in *Olam Ha-Ba* the "World to Come". At the brink of death, a person recognizes that he is about to enter the *Olam Ha'emet* the "World of Trust" and stand before his creator and judge. The second part of the *Vidui* is acceptance that henceforth, whether he will live one more hour or many years, he will live and act in accordance with G-d's will. One unable to confess orally due to

physical limitations should confess in one's heart. If he does not know the words of the formal confession, *Vidui*, he should say "My death should be atonement for my sins." If one is unable to recite *Vidui* it can be recited on his behalf by another.

A shortened form of the *Vidui* can be found on page 20.

The Soul:

Sha'at HaMita refers to the precise moment of death; however, death is not an end. We believe that death is a temporary and reversible state; a stage of existence, not its destination. Death is a "night between two days." Jews believe the soul returns to God after death.

- Life is holy. The body which held life retains its sanctity after death. Our sages compared the deceased to a damaged Torah scroll, which is holy although no longer usable. Therefore, Jewish tradition accords the greatest consideration and respect to the *matim* (the dead).
- We are equal in the face of death. We avoid ostentation and adhere to the same simplicity and dignity for the rich and the poor, the influential and the powerless, the famous and the little known. Everyone is buried in similar simple shrouds and casket.
- Death is natural and is part of creation. We face death without masquerade. The hallmark of our burial practices is dust to dust.

Who cares for an ill person as they approach death?

In addition to medical staff, hospice caregivers and counselors, the family, the community and the Rabbi provide care and comfort.

How does a loved one help a person who is closing in on the end?

It is important for the family to include the shul and Rabbi as early as possible. Most preferably, before death occurs. The Rabbi and others in the shul will want to observe the mitzvah of *bickur cholim* (visiting and comforting the sick).

A dying person should never be alone. The soul of a person who dies alone suffers intense pain. We can understand this concept in earthly terms. When a person leaves his familiar home (this world) and travels to a new and unfamiliar environment (the next world), it is a very difficult experience. Similarly, we stay with an ill person in order that they should not feel alone at the time of death, or departure from this world.

Those present can express love by reciting *Tehilim* (Psalms), playing music, touch and keep physical contact or share silence.

Traditionally, after death, a *Shemirah* (vigil) is required until burial. A *Shomer* (a person, preferably not a relative of the deceased) keeps watch over the body until burial. Today, people are paid or appointed by the funeral home or Hevra Kadisha to sit near the body and recite Psalms.

When death occurs or is imminent:

Call the funeral home, (Shaarie Torah members usually choose Holman's) and the Shaarie Torah office 503-226-6131; they will coordinate with the Hevra Kadisha on your behalf. (You will need to meet with Holman's to sign a contract before the funeral.)

- Holman's - Funeral Home the phones are attended 7 days a week and 24 hours a day. (503) 232-5131

When death occurs on a Jewish holiday:

Call Holman's. They will notify the Synagogue and the *Hevra Kadisha*. Funerals are delayed for the Sabbath, the main days of Festival holidays and Yom Kippur.

THE FUNERAL PROCESS

The Torah commands every Jewish community to bury its own as quickly as possible; (Deut. 21:23). Funerals, or Kevura, usually occur within 24 hours of *Petirah* (time of death). Funerals may also be reasonably delayed (preferably not more than one day) to allow time to assemble mourners to honor the deceased at the funeral. (In other words, allow time for family members who live out of town to travel to attend the funeral.)

Pallbearers are typically family members and close friends chosen prior to the funeral. This is a great *Mitzvah* that should not be delegated or delayed; acts are performed personally out of respect for deceased.

The synagogue, the Rabbi and the *Hevra Kadisha* stand ready to help you through this process.

Typically, the Rabbi will visit with your family prior to the funeral to give comfort and help prepare for the funeral.

The funeral cost:

Grave – A dues paying member in good standing of Shaarie Torah for three or more years, is not charged extra for a plot. Non members must purchase their plot. To do so, call the synagogue office or the rabbi. The plot must be paid for. Oregon Law requires the congregation to have a signed contract before burying the deceased in the cemetery. Both members and non members must pay for opening and closing the

grave and for Perpetual Care which at the time of the writing of this document is \$5000.

Funeral Home – These are separate charges for all, member or not. As of this writing (June 2007) average costs are between \$3,500-\$5,000. All go to the grave in the same style of specially prepared shrouds, in unadorned, unlined, plain wooden caskets (constructed with no metal, screws or nails) sealed by the Hevra Kadisha; although you can purchase a more expensive casket from Holman’s, it must meet Hevra Kadisha and Orthodox *halachic* (Jewish law) standards.

Total Burial costs are currently approximately \$10,000. Children or living family member(s) typically sign a document regarding finances to ensure payment, if there is no money; consultation with the Rabbi is needed to discuss arrangements. A person that is passing, often have planned ahead for payment of burial expenses, and have these documents stored with their wills or in a safe place.

Headstone – These are purchased separately. Each grave must have a marker. The office can assist in contacting Vancouver Stoneworks or Holman’s Funeral Home for the creation and setting of the marker or headstone. (Please keep in mind that the headstone can take as long as six months to manufacture.)

The family arranges to place the headstone, traditionally seven months to a year, after burial, but there is no rule. Once the tombstone is “unveiled,” family members usually visit the grave to recite psalms at least yearly, usually before the Rosh Hashanah holiday.

Synagogue Memorial Plaques – Can be ordered through the office at the Shaarie Torah office. The plaques are installed at the Synagogue in memory of the decedent.

THE HEVRA KADISHA – Their Role*:

The Hevra Kadisha (Holy society) is a voluntary organization that takes charge after death and prepares the met (deceased) for Burial.

The practice of routine autopsies is contrary to Jewish law, since autopsies are viewed as a desecration of the body. In most cases, when an autopsy is recommended, the family can refuse. In cases where the law requires an autopsy, it should be carried out under the supervision of a Rabbi who is familiar with the procedures.

Organ donation may be viewed as an example of *K'vod Ha-met* (respect for the deceased) which brings healing to the living. Thus, offering to donate certain organs or tissues is permissible and can be considered a *mitzvah*. The Rabbi should be consulted in all cases.

According to Jewish tradition, embalming and the use of cosmetics on the deceased are not permitted. Embalming is not permitted unless required by civil law.

Jewish law does not permit cremation. In addition to cremation, burial in mausoleums or above ground is also forbidden.

After death and as close to the time of burial as possible, the *Hevra Kadisha* performs the ritual of *tahara* (purification) for the *met* (the physical remains) in preparation for burial. *Tahara* may refer to either the entire process, or to the ritual purification.

With prayers and in a reverential environment, open bleeding is stopped, wounds, if any, are closed, medical equipment is removed. The body is thoroughly cleaned of dirt and body fluids. The hair is washed, the nails are trimmed, and the body is ritually purified by pouring a substantial continuous flow of water over it. The *met* is declared pure, and dressed in the burial shroud. Once the body is purified, it is then dressed in *tachrichim*, or "shrouds," white linen garments which symbolize the robes worn by the High Priest. A male is then wrapped, preferably in his own *tallit* (prayer shawl); the *tzitzit* (fringes) are cut off to show that the dead person is no longer bound by the mitzvot of the Torah. Shards of pottery, representing the destruction of the Temple, are placed on the eyes and mouth of the deceased. Earth from Israel is scattered throughout the casket, as well as on the mouth, eyes, and heart.

Tradition forbids the placing of personal objects in the casket. All are created in the image of G-d, and we make no distinction between rich and poor. All go to the grave in the same style of specially prepared shrouds, in unadorned, unlined, plain wooden caskets, sealed by the *Hevra Kadisha*. All are buried facing the cemetery gates in anticipation of final redemption. We return to the earth, our source. Therefore, Jewish tradition forbids cremation, burial in mausoleums, or above ground.

In Israel many do not use caskets at all, but rather wrap the body in thicker white shrouds covered on the outside by a *tallit*.

JEWISH TRADITIONS AT THE CEMETERY AND BURIAL:

Few *mitzvot* in Judaism are more important than escorting the dead to the grave and comforting the bereaved.

Funeral service:

Shaarie Torah's funeral services usually occur at the Bricker Memorial Chapel at Shaarie Torah's cemetery. Some funeral services take place at funeral homes. In either case, after the service the mourners and their entourage proceed to a Jewish cemetery for the burial.

It is considered disrespectful to the deceased to have an open casket, and we do not permit it.

From death until burial, Jewish tradition focuses on honoring the Met, or deceased, and accepting G-d's decision. Belief is that the ground on which the service is performed is consecrated ground; blessings are recited, men cover their heads, moderate dress is customary and idle conversation avoided. Much of the funeral and burial rituals must be performed by a Jew.

Eulogies

A *hesped* is a eulogy, typically delivered at the funeral service or at graveside. It is common for several people to speak during the ceremony. (Traditionally, in the same way some give charity anonymously, some specify that no eulogy should be recited.) On certain days, such as during the entire month of Nisan (including all of Pesach) on *Chol HaMo'ed*** (intermediate days of Jewish holidays) Succot, during Hanukah and on Purim and the day after (shushan Purim) eulogies and prayers during the funeral service are not recited, only Psalms. This is a Talmudic observation that the community should not mourn publicly on holidays. It is not disrespect to the deceased; it is rather an honor to the person who is buried with the same devotion to observance that marks a holy life.

Fraternal ceremonies which interfere with the solemnity of the Jewish funeral service are not appropriate.

Tehilim (Psalms) are recited and prayers asking G-d to grant the deceased pardon, salvation and rest. Following *Tehilim*, the clergy, mourners, family and the community escort the Met to the *Kever* (grave) for final rest.

Chol Ha'Moed**

Chol HaMoed, a Hebrew phrase which means "weekdays of the festival," refers to the intermediate days of Passover and Succot. During Chol HaMoed the usual restrictions that apply to the Biblical Jewish holidays are relaxed, but not entirely eliminated. Passover is a seven-day festival (eight in the Diaspora), of which days second through sixth - third through sixth in the Diaspora - are Chol HaMoed. Succot is a seven-day festival, of which days second through seventh (third through seventh in the Diaspora) are Chol HaMoed.

Procession:

The more people who accompany the deceased to their final rest the greater the honor to the deceased. In addition, recital of the *Kaddish* (Mourner's prayer), at the graveside requires the presence of a minyan (10 Jewish men).

During the procession to the grave, the family and the mourners walk behind the coffin, this shows reluctance to say a final goodbye.

The Rabbi or the person leading the service heads the procession, the *Hevra Kadisha* and the pallbearers (tradition stipulates only Jewish males may serve) carry the casket

immediately behind, followed by the mourners and their families, followed by the other attendees. Traditionally, we stop the procession seven times to show how reluctant we are to make our final goodbye. At each stop, the Rabbi recites Psalm 91 without its final seven Hebrew word verse “For He shall give His angels charge of you, to keep you in all your ways”, and one more word of the last verse. At the seventh and last stop, we recite the complete Psalm and arrive at the graveside. The pallbearers place the casket on the open grave, and the *Hevra Kadisha* lowers the casket into the grave immediately.

Burial

The community is required to provide full devotion to all burials. The obligation is derived from rules regarding a *met mitzvah*, (an unclaimed dead body) which obligates any Jew who comes across it to provide a respectful burial. This clearly extends to the community to provide full devotion to any person known or unknown, rich or poor.

It is important to stay until the burial is concluded. Typically, when the funeral service has ended, the mourners (excluding the immediate family), come forward to fill the grave. Symbolically, this gives the mourners closure as they observe the grave being filled. One custom is for people present at the funeral to take a spade or shovel, held pointing down instead of up, to show the antithesis of death to life and that this use of the shovel is different to all other uses, to throw three shovelfuls of dirt into the grave. When someone is finished, they put the shovel back in the ground, rather than handing it to the next person so that they shouldn't pass along their grief.

While the grave is being filled, some Jews may throw a handful of earth from Israel on the casket.

In ancient days, the Talmud informs us, fragrant flowers and spices were used at a funeral to offset the odor of the decaying body. Today, this is no longer essential and they should not be used at Jewish funerals.

In our days, flowers are used primarily at Christian funerals, and are considered to be a non-Jewish ritual custom which should be discouraged.

It is much better to honor the deceased by making a contribution to a synagogue or hospital, or to a medical research association for the disease which afflicted the deceased. This method of tribute is more lasting and meaningful.

- **The family role**

A Jew becomes a mourner, subject to the laws of mourning upon the death and burial of any of the seven closest relatives (father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter or spouse). This is formal status under Jewish law.

- **The friend's role**

Traditionally, words of consolation are considered out of place before the burial. Friends and others should reserve words of consolation until after the burial. During this time distant family and friends come to visit or call the mourners to comfort them via "Shiva calls."

A Typical Burial Service

The Rabbi or person leading the service will give eulogy first, ask others to speak, recite the prayers, and then head the procession to the grave.

The Prayers:

1. **Ha-tzur (the Rock)**, a prayer which accepts G-d's judgment, praises G-d and asks mercy for the living.
2. **El Molei Rachimim** (the merciful ruler), a prayer which praises G-d and asks mercy for the deceased.
3. **Kaddish**, a prayer praising G-d, said by the Mourners (by tradition 10 Jewish men can must be present to perform this service) with the attendees responding.

Jews recite versions of the *Kaddish* frequently: after completing portions of the synagogue service, after Torah reading, after Midrash study, and during the eleven months and one day following a burial, on the anniversary of family deaths, etc. There are numerous versions of the *Kaddish* for different occasions. Only the *Kaddish HaGadol* (great Kaddish), which traditionally was recited at burials, refers to mortality. It reaffirms Judaism's core belief in eventual new life for the dead and declares that life has a meaning and purpose which survive death.

The *Kaddish* is perhaps most identified with Mourners who recite the "Mourner's *Kaddish*" three times each day at prayer services during the first eleven months after death, and on each anniversary of death. Our custom is to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish* at the graveside.

Children are required to recite the *Kaddish* for their parents. One may recite the *Kaddish* for any of the seven closest relatives.

Closing the grave. Covering the casket with dirt in the presence of, and with the assistance of the mourners and attendees.

Consolation to the Mourners as they leave the grave and the cemetery.

K'riah (Ritual Tearing of Clothes):

K'riah is performed for the seven closest relatives (mother, father, son, daughter, sister brother and spouse). Traditionally, following the eulogies, but before actual burial, mourners ripped their clothes to show their grief. Today, men often wear a tie that can be cut and women a scarf, which can be torn as a sign of grief. A blessing is recited following the *K'riah* which accepts and acknowledges G-d's judgment.

“Baruch Atah Adoshem, Elokenu Melech Ha'Alam, Dayan ha'Emet.”

“Blessed art thou, O lord our G-d, King of the Universe, the True Judge.”

Hand-Washing leaving the Cemetery:

When you leave the cemetery, you will notice a fountain with a cup. Jews ritually wash their hands as they leave a cemetery. Take the cup, fill it with water, and sprinkle water three times on the fingers of the left and the right hand. Like the shovel, the pitcher is not passed to the next user, but is emptied and placed on the fountain.

Immediately Following Burial:

The period of formal mourning commences immediately after the burial. According to some customs, the attendees line up in *shurah* (two columns along the sidewalk from the grave). The Mourners leave first, walking through the row of comforters who say, as the mourners pass between them,

“Ha'Makom Ye-na-chaym et-chem b'toch she-or avey-ley b'Tzee-yon v'Yerushelayim.”

“May G-d console you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

Once burial has occurred, our concern is for the living. As a community, we have an obligation to comfort the bereaved – to help them face their loss, express their grief, and overcome their sorrow. By fulfilling these obligations, the community restores the faith of the bereaved and helps bind them to life.

It is customary for the community to offer meals at the home of the mourners. Friends typically bring something sweet as well as food so the family doesn't have to think about preparing meals. Furthermore, it is customary to make a contribution to charity to honor the deceased.

STAGES OF MOURNING:

One mourns for the seven closest relatives. Following the cemetery, focus and attention transfers to consoling and supporting the bereaved. The mourners pass through five formal stages of mourning during the first year after the funeral. Each stage gradually advances them from the despair immediately following loss, to the health of a normal community member.

First stage - *aninut*

Aninut is (intense mourning). An *onen* (one in a state of *aninut*) is considered to be in shock and disorientation. The *onen* is *patur* (*exempt*) from performing *mitzvot* that require action such as making prayers and making blessings, putting on *Tefillin* or even arranging for the funeral if there are others who can make the arrangements.

Aninut lasts until the burial is over, or if unable to attend the funeral, from the moment one is no longer involved with the funeral itself.

Second stage - *avelut*

Avelut (mourning) is the official commencement of mourning following the completion of the burial when the mourners customarily go home and then do not leave home for a week to observe the *Shiva* (seven days), conduct prayers at home with a *minyan*, commence the recitation of the *Kaddish* prayer for eleven months in synagogue, ending when the first *Yahrzeit* is observed.

Traditionally, an *avel* (mourner) would not listen to music or go to concerts, or attend any joyous event or party such as a wedding or a Bar or Bat mitzvah unless absolutely necessary.

Third stage - *shiv'ah*

Shiv'ah (seven) refers to the week-long period of grief and mourning for seven types of first-degree relatives: mother, father, sister, brother, wife or husband, or child. The *shiv'ah* ritual is referred to by English-speaking Jews as "sitting *shiv'ah*."

Immediately upon the burial of the departed, the first-degree relatives assume the status of *avel* (mourner). This state lasts for seven days, during which family members traditionally gather in one home and receive visitors.

No mourning may occur on Shabbat, nor may the burial take place on Shabbat, but the day of Shabbat does count as one of the seven days. If a Jewish holiday occurs after the first day, that curtails the mourning period. If the funeral occurs during a festival, the start of the mourning period awaits the end of the festival. Some holidays, such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, cancel the mourning period completely.

If prayer services are organized in the house of mourning, it is customary for the family to lead the services themselves. It is considered a great mitzvah

(commandment) of loving kindness and compassion to pay a home visit to the mourners. Traditionally, no greetings are exchanged and visitors wait for the mourners to initiate conversation. The mourner is under no obligation to engage in conversation, and may in fact, completely ignore his visitors.

Traditionally, during *Shivah* the mourners do not shower or bathe, do not wear leather shoes and/or jewelry, men do not shave, and in many communities large wall mirrors in the mourners' home are covered. During this time distant family and friends come to visit or call the mourners to comfort them via "*Shiva* calls."

During *Shivah* the community should help make minyan at the home on the first day. The community should help make minyan at *shul* for the mourners the first week.

The mourners' first meal and sometimes more meals, after returning from the cemetery are usually provided by friends, neighbors or a synagogue committee. There are various customs as to what to say when taking leave of the mourners. One of the most common is to say to them:

"Hamakom yenachem etchem betoch sha'ar avelei tzion viyerushalayim."

"May G-d comfort you among the other mourners for Zion and Jerusalem."

Depending on their community's customs, others may also add: "You should have no more *tza'ar* (pain) or "You should have only *simchas* (happy events)" or "we should hear only *besorot tovo*t (good news) from each other" or "I wish you long life."

Fourth stage - *shloshim*

This refers to the *shloshim* (thirty days) of mourning observed by the immediate family. During this time males do not shave. The mourner is forbidden to marry and to attend even a *seudat mitzvah* (religious festive meal).

Fifth stage - *shanah* a year of mourning

The *shanah* (year) activity gradually returns to normal, although the mourners continue to recite the mourner's Kaddish as part of synagogue services for eleven months for a parent, and there are restrictions on attending festive occasions and large gatherings, especially where live music is played.

KADDISH³

The Kaddish is a prayer that reinforces our belief in G-d, and G-d is the final judge, even though we, at this point, do not understand the meaning of the death. G-d is the supreme ruler and it is in His blueprint of life that this should happen. Furthermore, the Kaddish represents that G-d will resurrect the dead and that is a fundamental

concept in the Jewish religion, as the Talmud states that 40 years before the final redemption G-d will resurrect the dead.

The person who says the Kaddish praises G-d. Traditionally, the soul of the departed is credited with having inspired that praise and is therefore rewarded in the world to come. In addition, the fact that the mourners have accepted G-d's decision, painful as it may have been, and continue to praise G-d through the Kaddish is a credit to the memory of the deceased. One who had such friends and family is certainly deserving of respect in the next world.

ANNUAL REMEMBRANCES

Yahrzeit:

Yahrzeit (Time "of" Year) refers to the annual anniversary of the day of death of a relative. Mourners required to fulfill this observance are the children, siblings, spouses and parents of the deceased.

The date of the Yahrzeit is determined by the Hebrew calendar, and falls annually on the Hebrew date of the deceased relative's death.

The main *halachic* obligation of *Yahrzeit* is to recite the mourner's version of the Kaddish prayer three times (evening, morning, and afternoon). (During the Morning Prayer service the mourner's *Kaddish* is recited at least four times.) As a widely practiced custom, mourners also light a special candle which burns for 24 hours, called a "*Yahrzeit* candle."

Lighting a *yahrzeit* candle in memory of a loved one is a *minhag* (custom) which is deeply ingrained in Jewish life honoring the memory and souls of the deceased.

Some observe the custom of fasting on the day of the Yahrzeit. Among many Orthodox Jews it has become customary to make a *siyum* by completing a tractate of Talmud or a volume of the *Mishnah* on the day prior to the Yahrzeit, in the honor of the deceased. A Halacha requiring a *sedum* (celebratory meal), upon the completion of such a study, overrides the requirement to fast.

Many synagogues will have lights on a special memorial plaque on one of the synagogue's walls, with names of synagogue members who have died. Each of these lights will be lit for individuals on their *Yahrzeit*; all the lights are lit for a *Yizkor* service. Some synagogues will also turn on all the lights for collective memorial days, such as *Yom Ha'Shoah*.

Visiting Jewish Graves:

Typically, even when visiting Jewish graves of someone that the visitor never knew, he or she would leave a small stone at the graveside. This shows that someone had

visited, and represents permanence. This contrasts with the common custom of leaving flowers, which do not live long. Another reason for leaving stones is tending the grave. In Biblical times, graves were marked with mounds of stones, so by placing (or replacing) them, one perpetuated the existence of the site.

MEMORIAL THROUGH PRAYER

Mourner's Kaddish

"Mourner's" Kaddish, is said at all prayer services, as well as at funerals and memorials. Customs for reciting the Mourner's Kaddish vary markedly among various communities.

Yizkor

Yizkor (remembrance) prayers are recited by those that have lost either one or both of their parents. In many congregations there is a custom that those who do not recite the *Yizkor* prayers leave the synagogue until the completion of *Yizkor*; the symbolic reason for this is to respect the life of one's living parents.

The *Yizkor* prayers are recited four times a year: on Yom Kippur, Shmini Atzeret, the eighth day of Passover, and the second day of Shavuot. The *Yizkor* prayers are asking God to remember and grant repose to the souls of the departed.

In Sephardic custom there is no *Yizkor* prayer, but *Hashkabóth* are recited on Yom Kippur for all members of the community who have died during the last year. A person called up to the Torah may also request the reader to recite *Hashkabah* for his deceased parents.

Av HaRachamim

Av Harachamim is a Jewish memorial prayer which was written in the late 11th or early 12th Century, after the destruction of the Ashkenazi communities around the Rhine River by Christian crusaders during the First Crusade.

FURTHER USEFUL INFORMATION

The Unveiling

A headstone (tombstone) is known as a *matzevah* (monument). Jewish law requires that a tombstone be prepared, so that the deceased will not be forgotten and the grave will not be desecrated. It is customary in some communities to keep the tombstone veiled, or to delay in putting it up, until the end of the mourning period. The idea underlying this custom is that the dead will not be forgotten when he is being mourned every day. In communities where this custom is observed, there is generally a formal unveiling ceremony when the tombstone is revealed.

Suicide

Judaism considers suicide to be a form of "self-murder" and thus a Jew who commits suicide is denied some important after-death privileges. Eulogies are not given and burial is normally not allowed in the main section of the Jewish cemetery.

However, in recent times, most suicides are deemed to be the victims of depression or of serious mental illness and their act is not deemed voluntary self-destruction. They are therefore looked upon as having died of causes beyond their control.

Additionally, the Talmud (in *Semakhot*, one of the minor tractates) recognizes that much of the mourning ritual is as much for the living survivors as for the dead, and these elements would thus still be present in the case of the suicide. Furthermore, if reasonable doubt exists that the death may not have been suicide (e.g. if it is unknown whether the victim fell or jumped off a building), the benefit of the doubt is given and regular burial and mourning take place. Lastly, suicide of a minor is considered a result of a lack of understanding "*da'at*," and in such a case, regular mourning would be observed.

Tattoos

While *Halakha* (Jewish law), forbids tattoos there is a common myth that Jews with tattoos are not permitted to be buried in Jewish cemeteries. This is not true and a Jew with a tattoo would receive a normal funeral service.

Death of an apostate Jew

There is no mourning for an apostate Jew according to Jewish law.

- **What is an apostate Jew?**

- An apostate Jew is one who renounced one's religious faith.

Death of an infant

Traditionally, an infant who has not lived more than 30 days cannot be formally mourned by sitting *shiv'ah* or observing the other formal customs of mourning.

FURTHER FAQs:

- **Who can be buried in a Jewish cemetery?**
At Shaarie Torah Cemetery, you must be Jewish.

- **Am I Jewish / How do I become Jewish?**
You can convert. If your mother is Jewish you are Jewish. Your father's religious status does not affect you, whether father is Jewish or not. A non Jewish spouse of a Jew cannot be buried in the Shaarie Torah Cemetery.

- **Can I pick my cemetery plot?**
Yes, you can reserve your plot from what is available.

- **What about cemetery long-term perpetual care?**
Dues paying members in good standing of the congregation for three or more years are not charged extra for the plot; however the cost for long term perpetual care is separate. The cost is approximately \$1,600.00 for the burial and \$3,400.00 pays for perpetual care. Associate members and Non-members must add \$5,000.00 for the plot. (These figures are subject to change as the cost of long term perpetual care changes.)

- **Who cares for the cemetery?**
The Shul staffs two full time caretakers.

- **Where is the cemetery?**
8013 SE 67th, Portland, Oregon 97206
Telephone Number: 503-774-8577

*Do you have other questions? Call the synagogue office.
Call the Rabbi. Call the Hevra Kadisha.*

MORE TRADITIONS & CUSTOMS:

Each community's Minhag (custom or practice) plays a major part in determining each community's Jewish funeral practice. For example, strict tradition discourages eulogies and El Molei Rahamim during the Hebrew month of Nissan, on Major Festivals or the day following, on Chanukah, Purim, the first day of each Hebrew Month (Rosh Hodesh), or on Friday afternoon. The Rabbis thought it inappropriate for a community publicly to mourn on holidays or days of thanksgiving (Yomim Tovim). Some communities eulogize Holocaust Survivors, regardless of the date. In any event, an abbreviated funeral service does not disrespect the deceased.

A SHORT FORM VIDUI

I acknowledge before You, O Lord my God and God of my fathers that my life and death are in your hands. May it be Your will to heal me. But, if death is my lot, then I accept it from Your hand with love. May my death be an atonement for whatever sins and errors and wrong doings I have committed before You. In Your mercy grant me the goodness that is waiting for the righteous and bring me to eternal life. Father of orphans, Protector of widows, protect my loved ones with whom my soul is bound. Into Your hands I return my spirit. You will redeem me, O ever faithful God. Hear O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord is One.

MOURNER'S Kaddish (Hebrew, transliterated and translated into English):

יְתַגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא (אָמֵן)

Yit'gadal v'yit'kadash sh'mei raba (Cong: Amein).
May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified (Cong: Amen.)

בְּעֲלָמָא דִּי בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ

b'al'ma di v'ra khir'utei
in the world that He created as He willed.

וְיִמְלִיךָ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּתַיִכּוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכּוֹן

v'yam'likh mal'khutei b'chayeikhon uv'yomeikhon
May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days,

וּבְתַיִי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

uv'chayei d'khol beit yis'ra'eil
and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel,

בְּעֲגָלָא וּבְזְמַן קָרִיב וְאָמְרוּ

ba'agala uviz'man kariv v'im'ru:
swiftly and soon. Now say:

(Mourners and Congregation:)

אָמֵן: יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעַלְמֵי וְלְעַלְמֵי עַלְמַיָּא

Amein. Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varakh l'alam ul'al'mei al'maya
(Amen. May His great Name be blessed forever and ever.)

יְתַבְרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא

Yit'barakh v'yish'tabach v'yit'pa'ar v'yit'romam v'yit'nasei
Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled,

וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלָּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא

v'yit'hadar v'yit'aleh v'yit'halal sh'mei d'kud'sha
mighty, upraised, and lauded be the Name of the Holy One

(Mourners and Congregation:)

בְּרִיךְ הוּא

B'rikh hu.
Blessed is He.

לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכָּתָא וְשִׁירָתָא

l'eila min kol bir'khata v'shirara
beyond any blessing and song,

תְּשִׁבְּתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא דְאֲמִירָן בְּעֵלְמָא וְאֲמָרוּ

toosh'b'chatah v'nechematah, da'ameeran b'al'mah, v'eemru:
praise and consolation that are uttered in the world. Now say:

(Mourners and Congregation:)

אָמֵן

Amein

Amen

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya
May there be abundant peace from Heaven

וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲמָרוּ

v'chayim aleinu v'al kol yis'ra'eil v'im'ru
and life upon us and upon all Israel. Now say:

(Mourners and Congregation:)

אָמֵן

Amein

Amen

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם

Oseh shalom bim'romav hu ya'aseh shalom
He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace,

עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲמָרוּ

aleinu v'al kol Yis'ra'eil v'im'ru
upon us and upon all Israel. Now say:

(Mourners and Congregation:)

אָמֵן

Amein

Amen

Hevra Kadisha

A *Hevra kadisha* (holy group) acting as a burial society is a loosely structured but generally closed organization of Jewish men and women who ensure the bodies of Jews are prepared for burial according to Jewish law, and that the bodies of the deceased are protected from desecration, willful or not, until burial. Two of the main requirements are the showing of proper respect for the body of the deceased, and the ritual cleansing of the body and dressing for burial.

Many local *Hevra Kadisha's* in urban areas are affiliated with local synagogues, and they often own their own burial plots in various local cemeteries. Some Jews pay an annual token membership fee to the *Hevra kadisha* of their choice so that when the time comes the society will not only attend to the body of the deceased as befits Jewish law, but will also ensure burial in a plot which it controls at an appropriate nearby Jewish cemetery.

If no gravediggers are available, then it is additionally the function of the male society members to ensure that graves are dug. In Israel, members of *Hevra Kadisha's* consider it an honor to not only to prepare the body for burial but also to dig the grave for a fellow Jew's body, particularly if the deceased was known to be a righteous person.

Many burial societies hold one or two annual fast days and organize regular study sessions to remain up-to-date with the relevant articles of Jewish law. In addition, most burial societies also support families during the *shiv'ah* (traditional week of mourning) by arranging prayer services, preparing meals and providing other services for the mourners.

Information from the Portland *Hevra Kadisha*:

1. Portland *Hevra Kadisha* and Holman's Funeral Service cooperate in good faith to accomplish the purposes of Portland *Hevra Kadisha* in accordance with the requirements Holman's must meet as Licensed Funeral Directors in the State of Oregon.
2. Although each Congregation retains final authority over its own cemetery and properties, Kesser Israel, Shaarie Torah, their rabbis and their respective cemetery committees have appointed Portland *Hevra Kadisha* to resolve *halachic* questions with regard to who may be buried, questions with regard to caskets (an orthodox certificate always will be accepted), questions with regard to pallbearers, graveside conduct and memorial chapel services, procedures and full responsibility for preparation of the bodies in accordance with Jewish law. All such questions should be referred to Portland *Hevra Kadisha* directly, rather than to each Rabbi or congregation.

3. Unless physically impossible, or impractical, Portland *Hevra Kadisha* members or their designates will accompany the deceased to the hearse and ride in the hearse to the cemetery, remove the deceased from the hearse, conduct the deceased to the chapel or the grave, place the casket on the grave, lower the casket into the grave, and supervise the closing.

Glossary

aninut	period of intense mourning
aveilut	mourning
avel	mourner
avelut	mourning
besorot tovot	good news
bickur cholim	visiting and comforting the sick
Chol Ha Mo'ed	intermediate days of a festival
da'at	understanding
halacha	Jewish religious law
halachic	pertaining to halacha
hesped	eulogy
Hevra Kadisha	A Jewish group that prepares a body for burial.
kaddish	prayer traditionally said by mourners
Kaddish HaGadol	the great kaddish said at burials
Kever	grave
Kevura	funerals
K'riah	ritual tearing of clothes
K'vod Ha-met	respect for the deceased
matim	the dead
matzevah	monument
met	the body
Met mitzvah	an unclaimed body
minhag	traditional custom
Mishnah	the recorded Jewish oral laws
mitzvah	commandment
mitzvot	commandments
nihum avelim	to console those left behind
Olam Ha-Ba	world to come
Olam Ha'emet	world of trust
Petirah	time of death
sha'at ha-mitah	the precise time of death
shanah	year
Shemirah	vigil
shiv'ah	first seven day mourning period
shloshim	thirty day mourning period
shurah	columns
simchas	joyous occasions
siyum	completion of a unit of Torah study
Tahara	purification
tallit	prayer shawl
Talmud	a record of rabbinic discussions pertaining to Jewish law, ethics, customs and history
Tehilim	Psalms
tza'ar	pain
tzitzit	tassels or fringes on a tallit
vidui	confession
yahrzeit	annual anniversary of the date of a persons death
yizkor	remembrance
Yom HaShoah	annual remembrance of those killed in the Holocaust

REFERENCES

Communal responses to death

ZAKA (abbr. for *Zihuy Korbanot Asson* (Identifying Victims of Disaster) – *Hessed shel Emet* (True Kindness), is a community emergency response team in the State of Israel, officially recognized by the government. The organization was founded in 1989. Members of ZAKA, most of whom are Orthodox, assist ambulance crews, identify the victims of terrorism, road accidents and other disasters and, where necessary, gather body parts and spilled blood for proper burial. They also provide first aid and rescue services, and help with the search for missing persons.

Portland Hevra Kadisha

Director Michael Rosenberg (503)519-2454

For men: Ivan Gold, (503) 327-4881

For women: Rachel Kline Lape (503) 349-4669

Holman's Funeral Home

2610 SE Hawthorne, Portland

(503) 232-5131

www.holmansfuneralservice.com

Shloshim.org

This is a free website that is dedicated to help people coordinate learning of the oral law by creating an online list.

www.answers.com/topic/bereavement-in-judaism.com

Further information regarding Judaism and bereavement can be found the Columbia Jewish Congregation website: www.columbiajewish.org

Shaarie Torah gratefully acknowledges Holman's Funeral Service for the long standing cooperation and support they have given to our community and to the Hevra Kadisha.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Information primarily obtained in part from the following three sources, unless otherwise noted:

- **“Guide to the Traditional Jewish Funeral Service” pamphlet.
Congregation Shaarie Torah, Bricker Memorial Chapel written by Ivan L. Gold, February 24, 2004 & November 1, 2004**

- **“A Guide to Jewish Burial and Mourning Practices” pamphlet courtesy of Hillside Memorial Park and Mortuary and Mount Sinai Memorial Parks and Mortuaries and published by the Funeral Practices Committee of The Board of Rabbis of Southern California.**

1. Information obtained from Shemay Yisrael Torah Network www.shemayisrael.com
2. Information and quotation obtained from www.jewish-funerals.org
3. Information obtained from www.yahrzeit.org