

TEMPLE SHIR TIKVA DEATH, MOURNING, AND FUNERAL STANDARDS

FROM THE TIME OF DEATH UNTIL THE FUNERAL SERVICE

VIDUI

Our tradition says.....whenever possible a clergy member should be called to the bedside to assist the dying person in saying the *Vidui* (the Jewish prayer typically said at the High Holidays for confession of sin) and other prayers.

TST Perspective: Saying the *Vidui* is a tradition which both family members and the dying individual find very comforting. We realize that this is not always possible. If it is not, the clergy is often available, if the family desires, to administer these prayers as soon as possible after the time of death.

SHOMER

Our tradition says.....from the moment of death until burial the body should not be left alone.

TST Perspective: It recommended that that we embrace this tradition. A *Shomer* can be a member of the family, or someone who performs this function through the funeral home. The *Shomer* typically sits and watches over the deceased until burial, reciting Psalms and prayers.

TAHARAH

Our tradition says.....the *Taharah* or ritual purification of the body in preparation for burial is performed by the Jewish burial society or the *Chevrah Kaddisha*. The body is washed while prayers are recited asking G-d for forgiveness and eternal peace.

TST Perspective: We recommend this practice. The clergy is available to further explain the beauty of this ritual. The funeral director at the request of the family typically arranges the *Taharah*.

SHROUD

Our tradition says.....our tradition recognizes the democracy of death. Therefore, it makes sense that all Jews be buried in the same type of garment reflecting the equality of all before G-d.

TST Perspective: The traditional linen shroud, the *Tachrichim*, may be provided by the funeral director. We recommend that the shroud resemble a simple white cloth suit without pockets, tied with a simple cord. It is also customary for the deceased to be wrapped in a *tallit* provided by either the family or the funeral home. The family may also choose to use the deceased's *tallit* but some families wish to preserve this as a family heirloom to be presented at a *Bar/Bat Mitzvah* or used as a *chuppah*.

ORGAN DONATION

Our tradition says.....”The ability to transplant organs in order to save a life is one of the great contributions of the 20th century’s remarkable advances in medical science.”

The Talmud says...”when one saves a single life, it is as if he/she saved the entire world.”

TST Perspective: This wonderful *mitzvah* is strongly encouraged. Congregants should avail themselves of the many state authorized means to insure that this wish gets carried out, specifically at the time of driver's license renewal, and any of the legal documents such as an advance care directive and/or health care proxy.

CASKET

Our tradition says.....the casket should be made completely of wood. The casket does not have to be either costly or inexpensive. The sages did not “consider the expense a barometer of honor to the dead.” To some it may be preferable to contribute money to a charity in memory of the deceased rather than purchase lavish caskets.

TST Perspective: A simple wooden casket is preferable. The essential requirement is that dignity prevails. Ostentatious caskets are strongly discouraged.

TIMING

Our traditions says.....the deceased should be buried by sundown of the day of the death.

TST Perspective: Logistical issues as well as the family decision makers should determine the soonest possible time for the funeral service and burial. Of course the clergy will be available to counsel in making this decision.

CREMATION

Our tradition says.....the deceased must be interred bodily in the earth. The dead should not be reduced to ash in a crematorium.

TST Perspective: Our clergy will always respect the family's personal perspective on this issue while still encouraging the adherence to our tradition. Jewish funeral homes can accommodate all perspectives on disposition. We hope that our members will consider the traditional perspective on this issue.

KERI'AH

Our tradition says.....the most striking expression of grief is the rending (tearing) of clothing by the mourner prior to the funeral service. The Torah tells us to rend (tear) our garments upon the death of a loved one.

TST Perspective: One may choose to embrace this tradition by tearing an article of clothing upon being informed of the death. However, as an alternative, the funeral home will provide a black ribbon which will be torn by the mourner either upon receiving it or at the funeral service. The following family members should perform this ritual: son, daughter, father, mother, brother, sister, and spouse. They should be adults over the age of *Bar Mitzvah*.

FROM THE FUNERAL UNTIL *SHIVA*

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Our Tradition Says.....the funeral service is generally a brief and simple service designed primarily for the honor and dignity of the deceased.

TST Perspective: Mourners and family members generally have three choices regarding the location of the actual funeral service: Some families choose a graveside service at the cemetery. Others may choose to hold the service in the chapel of the funeral home handling these arrangements. One beautiful option is to hold the service at the venue where the deceased and or the family have worshipped. Thus the temple sanctuary is available to all congregants for the holding of the funeral service.

THE EULOGIES

Our Tradition Says.....the function of the eulogy is not to comfort the bereaved, although, by highlighting the good and the beautiful in the life of the departed it affords an implicit consolation for the mourners. One of the most important obligations of mourners and heirs is to provide for this eulogy.

Our first patriarch, Abraham, eulogized his wife Sarah and that has been the custom of Jews to this day. The purpose of the eulogy is twofold, first is the praising of the deceased for his/her worthy qualities, and second is expressing the grief and the sense of loss experienced by the mourners and entire Jewish community.

TST Perspective: At the discretion of the family, anyone so moved should be afforded the opportunity to deliver a eulogy. The eulogy is a significant focus of the funeral service. Often several individuals give brief and thoughtful eulogies. Occasionally friends and family members may be uncomfortable or unable to deliver the eulogy. If this is the case it is perfectly acceptable for the Rabbi to deliver the eulogy after consulting with the family. In the case of a person who specifically requests that he or she not be eulogized, this decision should be respected and honored.

FROM THE SERVICE TO THE CEMETERY

Our Tradition Says.....escorting the dead to his or her final resting place is an extremely important symbol of respect. This even supersedes the study of Torah. Accompanying the deceased from the service to the cemetery is considered one of the highest of the *mitzvot*.

TST Perspective: Pallbearers from among family and friends should accompany the casket from the service to hearse. Upon arrival at the cemetery the pallbearers should accompany the departed to the graveside.

THE BURIAL

Our Tradition Says.....the sacred principle of Jewish burial law that the deceased be buried in the earth requires lowering the casket to the bottom of the grave as a part of the service. Once lowered into the grave, the casket must be fully covered with earth. It is an honor and duty to help in shoveling the earth to cover the casket.

TST Perspective: Family and friends are encouraged to perform the sacred *mitzvah* of burying the dead. Thus, anyone who so desires should shovel earth into the grave. The earth is typically shoveled using the back of the shovel, indicating a difference from its use for other purposes. At the very minimum the entire casket should be covered with earth prior to the mourners leaving. It is also an option to remain at the burial site until the grave is completely filled.

KADDISH

Our Tradition Says..... *Kaddish* is recited after the grave is filled with earth.

TST Perspective: *Kaddish* is said by attendees after the burial as an affirmation of our faith in G-d despite our grief and sadness at this moment.

LEAVING THE CEMETERY

Our Tradition Says....following the *Kaddish* our sympathies and concerns are redirected from the deceased to the mourners. The theme changes from honoring the dead to comforting the survivors. To effect this transition, those present form two lines facing one another as the mourners pass between them.

TST Perspective: We embrace this decision wholeheartedly.

FROM SHIVA THROUGH SHELOSHIM

RETURNING FROM THE CEMETERY

Our tradition says.....there are three obligatory rules upon returning from the cemetery: washing hands prior to entering the house; the meal of condolence; and preparing the house for the *Shiva* observance. A container of water and hand towels are usually placed at the entrance to the home. The community typically provides the meal of condolence. The house is prepared by covering mirrors and a special candle is lit (usually provided by the funeral home) which will burn through the seven-day period of

Shiva. The funeral home may also provide boxes that serve as *Shiva* stools.

TST Perspective: We strongly encourage the embracing of each of these practices.

PRAYER SERVICES

Our tradition says.....it is desirable to hold daily prayer services at the *Shiva* home. It is important to hold these services in the presence of a *minyán* so that the mourners can say *Kaddish*. The prayer service is held once a day, usually in the evening, throughout the week of *Shiva*. The one exception to this is that the mourners usually will attend Shabbat services during *Shiva* week.

TST Perspective: Our clergy or lay leaders will be available to lead the *Shiva* service during the *Shiva* period. It is left to the discretion of the immediate family as to how many days of *Shiva* they will observe. Families are encouraged to attend Shabbat services during the *Shiva* week.

THE CONCLUSION OF SHIVA

Our tradition says.....*Shiva* typically ends the morning of the seventh day except in the case of Shabbat and festivals. Many follow the custom of having all mourners leave the house and walk outside together for a short distance. This symbolizes a return to the society from which the deceased has departed.

TST Perspective: As previously mentioned, the time frame for observing *Shiva* is at the discretion of the family. We strongly encourage the tradition of leaving the house for a walk at the conclusion of *Shiva*.