

A painting of a stream flowing through a dense forest with autumn foliage. The stream is the central focus, winding through the center of the frame. The water is depicted with light, shimmering brushstrokes, contrasting with the darker, more textured foliage on either bank. The trees and bushes are rendered in a variety of autumnal colors, including deep reds, oranges, yellows, and greens, with visible brushwork giving the scene a sense of movement and texture. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

A Time to Mourn

The Temple Emanuel Guide

DEDICATION

I dedicate this booklet to the memory of my dear parents, Fifi and Leo Brenner, whose loss I have sustained but whose love I will always have, and to the Temple Emanuel Minyan whose tremendous support and camaraderie helped me so much in my bereavement and taught me so much about the meaning of Jewish mourning.

Jill Grossman

TEMPLE EMANUEL BEREAVEMENT GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	2
A Word to the Reader	2
What to Do When a Loved One Dies	3
The Funeral Home	3
Choosing a Cemetery	4
Contacting the Rabbi	4
Respect for the Dead	5
Time of Funeral	5
Location of the Funeral	5
Preparing the Body	5
The Casket	6
The Funeral Service	6
The Interment	7
Mourning Observances	8
Shiva	8
Shloshim and the First Year	9
Making a Shiva Visit	9
Writing a Note of Condolence	10
Observing Anniversaries of the Death	10
Yizkor and Yahrzeit	11
Bereavement for the Interfaith Family	11
Times of Services at Temple Emanuel	11
Mornings	11
Evenings	11
Suggested Readings	12
In Closing	13

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This booklet was originally written by Jill Grossman, with the assistance of Debbie Guthermann, Cyd Josephy, Anita Redner, and Madge Turner z"l. Halachic guidance was provided by Rabbi Wesley Gardenswartz. Jill's son, John Grossman, designed the cover and the layout. For this current revision, we have also utilized the talents of Gil Rosen, Michael Slater, Terri Swartz Russell, and Ruth Tepper.

A WORD TO THE READER

Few of us are prepared for the death of a loved one, but it is a reality with which we each must learn to cope. The intent of this booklet is to inform you about the Jewish approach to death and to provide assistance at the appropriate time. We'd also like to suggest that you consider familiarizing yourself with this material before there is a specific need, and that you discuss these issues in advance with adult members of your family as an act of love and kindness.

In the Jewish religion, mourning is a communal experience that acknowledges an individual's loss while assuming collective responsibility by providing a network of support around the mourner. From the funeral, to shiva, to saying Kaddish, the mourners are ideally surrounded by supportive relatives, friends and congregants to help them in their time of grief.

Our Jewish tradition respects and honors those who have died and provides rituals to guide us through the painful grieving and mourning process. We wrote this booklet to help not only the mourner, but each of us who may one day deal with the death of a close relative, and to enhance our knowledge and comfort with regard to providing aid and support to another who has sustained a loss.

WHAT TO DO WHEN A LOVED ONE DIES

From the time a loved one dies until the burial, the mourner is referred to as an *onen*, and that period is called *aninut*. Before the funeral the *onen* is not considered to be in mourning, therefore it is appropriate to attend to all the necessary preparations for the funeral, burial and shiva.

The Funeral Home

The clergy at Temple Emanuel recommend that the first thing to do when a loved one dies is to contact a Jewish funeral home. If you prefer to contact the Rabbi first, please refer to the section "Contacting the Rabbi" below. Funeral homes can be contacted twenty-four hours a day, every day, including Shabbat. The funeral home director will arrange to meet with you to gather information and attend to necessary details.

Funeral homes in the Newton area include:

Brezniak-Rodman
1251 Washington Street
Newton
Tel. 617-969-0800

Levine Chapels
470 Harvard Street
Brookline
Tel. 617-277-8300 or 800-367-3708

Stanetsky Memorial Chapel
1668 Beacon Street
Brookline
Tel. 617-232-9300 or 800-842-4280

The funeral director will ask for information concerning the deceased, including English and Hebrew names, Social Security number, date and place of birth, names and relationships of close relatives, desired newspapers and information for the death notice, location of burial plot and any special funeral wishes of the mourner or the deceased.

The funeral director will also want to know the number of cars you may want to rent for family members going to the cemetery, the location of the *shiva*, a charity to which donations may be sent and who will deliver eulogies. You may wish to choose pallbearers from among relatives and friends of the deceased who will accompany the casket out of the funeral service to the hearse and from the hearse to the gravesite. Often the issue of flowers is raised. We are instructed in the Talmud not to use flowers at a funeral. It is suggested instead to make a donation in the name of the deceased to a charity of your choice.

The funeral home will supply you with a memorial candle and guest book for the *shiva* period.

Choosing a Cemetery

Choosing a cemetery plot or plots for a family is a project that can ideally be done before any immediate need arises and can certainly relieve the stress of doing so at the time of death. Temple Emanuel has its own cemetery in Randolph and arrangements for a plot there can be made by contacting our Temple office.

There are numerous Jewish cemeteries in the area and a funeral director can guide you with these arrangements.

Contacting the Rabbi

Your first contact to inform the Temple of a loved one's passing should be to the rabbi's office at 617-558-8101. You are encouraged to talk to the rabbis with any questions and for comfort. During non-business hours, including Shabbat and festivals, please call the after hours number 877-845-3550 and a staff person will call you back. Please inform the temple even if the burial is out of town or to be officiated by a non-Temple Emanuel rabbi.

One of the rabbis will meet with you before the funeral to offer comfort, answer questions, and help plan the funeral service and the burial. The rabbi will gather personal information for the eulogy and will discuss the *shiva* and *shloshim* period with you.

People often have difficulty making decisions about how much participation is appropriate for their children with regard to a funeral. Children may and should be brought into the grieving process in a manner appropriate to their age. Shielding children from tragedy may deprive them of the opportunity to grieve which is part of the healing process. You may find it useful to discuss this with the rabbi.

This is a time to allow friends, relatives and others to help you. The Temple Emanuel Bereavement Committee has volunteers who will assist you with information or specific help with preparations for the funeral and *shiva*. You can expect a call from a member of the Bereavement Committee offering their assistance.

You may ask others to share the calls that need to be made to people whom you wish to inform of the death. You may also need help with the logistics of transportation, preparing the home for the *shiva* period or with the care of young children.

RESPECT FOR THE DEAD

There is a guiding principle in Judaism of *k'vod Ha-met*, respect for the dead. The following guidelines are consistent with this principle.

Time of Funeral

Ideally the funeral should take place as soon as possible after the death, as it is considered degrading to leave the deceased unburied. However, circumstances may cause an acceptable delay, for example, if a death has occurred away from the area, or because close relatives require travel time to come for the funeral. Funerals are also not held on Shabbat, the High Holidays, *Sukkot*, *Pesach* or *Shavuot*.

Location of the Funeral

Funeral services are generally held in a funeral home chapel or at the graveside. Services for temple members may also take place in the Rabbi Samuel Chiel Sanctuary or the Gann Chapel. The funeral director and rabbi can discuss this with you and help guide you to the appropriate choice for you and your family.

Preparing the Body

There are traditional customs that you may want to follow:

We show respect for the dead by not leaving the body unattended until the funeral. A *shomer*, or guardian, remains with the deceased and usually recites Psalms. The *shomer* may be a friend or relative, or possibly more than one person, sharing hours until the time of the funeral. The funeral director can assist you in finding a *shomer*. If the funeral director is unable to find a *shomer* for you there are volunteers from the synagogue who may be available to perform this *mitzvah*.

Jewish tradition calls for ritual washing and the dressing of the deceased in *tachrichim*, white shrouds for burial. It is customary to place a *tallit* over the *tachrichim* with one of the *tzitzit* (fringes) cut. The *tallit* symbolizes that our beloved is enveloped in the love and presence of God; and the cutting of the *tzitzit* symbolizes that our beloved is no longer able to perform mitzvot.

Our respect for the dead further requires that we do not view the body, nor do we embalm or cremate. Autopsy is discouraged unless it promises to provide helpful medical knowledge which cannot be obtained in any other way, or assists in a criminal investigation. Since saving a life, *pikuach nefesh*, is of the highest value in our religion, one is encouraged to implement the donation of organs. The *mitzvah* of helping to save a life takes precedence over that of *k'vod ha-met* in this instance. Organ donation cards which conform to Jewish law are available through the rabbis' office.

The Casket

Consistent with the philosophy of equality in death and simplicity, our tradition urges us to use a plain wooden casket.

THE FUNERAL SERVICE

Before the funeral service the immediate mourners usually wait in a separate room where they may choose to have brief visits from family and close friends before the service. Prior to the service the custom of *kriah*, the cutting of one's garment, is generally performed by the rabbi. One may choose to do *kriah* on a personal garment, such as a scarf or a shirt, which would then be worn during *shiva* and *shloshim* or it may be done on a black ribbon pinned to the mourners' clothing. The act of tearing is a physical expression of the anguish one feels at this time. When the deceased is a parent, *kriah* is on the left side, closest to the heart. For others it is done on the right side.

The funeral service is designed to be a time when relatives and friends come together to honor the deceased and comfort the mourners. The service generally consists of psalms, a eulogy (or eulogies) and the memorial prayer *El Malei Rachamim*. Sometimes there are also personal eulogies by family and friends who feel able to do so. It is helpful to remember that this is an emotional time and writing one's thoughts down before speaking is encouraged and will make one's talk easier.

THE INTERMENT

The Hebrew word for funeral is *levayah*, which means accompanying. We are accompanying our departed to his or her final resting place.

When the funeral procession arrives at the cemetery after the service, it is customary for everyone to walk behind those carrying the casket in order to accompany the deceased to the gravesite, while reciting Psalm 91. We may make stops along the way to symbolize our reluctance to take this final journey.

The principal parts of the burial service include lowering the casket into the ground, the reciting of the prayer of acceptance, *Tziduk Ha-din*, and the placing of earth on the casket. Members of the family and friends may help in this process. The ritual of placing earth on the casket is considered a true act of kindness, *chesed shel emet*. It is the demonstration of love and respect with no expectation of reward.

After earth is placed on the casket, the memorial prayer of *El Malei Rachamim* is recited, followed by the *Kaddish*. Finally, an aisle is formed by the relatives and friends through which the mourners pass as they leave the gravesite and are offered the traditional words of comfort, "*Hamakom y'nahem etchem b'toch sh'ar avelei Tziyon virushalayim*"; or the English, "May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

Upon arrival at the mourner's home from the cemetery it is traditional to rinse one's hands before entering the house because water symbolizes a return to life and vitality. For this purpose a pitcher of water, a basin and a towel are placed outside the door. The memorial candle is also lit at this time and burns constantly during the *shiva* week. No blessing is recited.

Friends and relatives customarily prepare a light meal, *seudat havra'ah*, a meal of condolence, for the mourners and comforters when they return from the cemetery. The meal is usually dairy but should always include hard boiled eggs whose roundness is symbolic of life's cycles. This custom also insures that the mourners will take nourishment despite their grief.

MOURNING OBSERVANCES

When the funeral and burial have concluded our concern and attention shift from honoring the deceased to comforting the bereaved. There are four phases to the mourning process: *shiva*, *shloshim*, the following eleven months (for a person who has lost a parent), and the anniversaries of the death.

Though people's grief and the intensity of their pain differ, the phases and rituals of the mourning process help to provide mourners with the necessary time to ease the intense period of their loss and to help them begin to accommodate and return to the routines of their lives.

Shiva

The word *shiva*, from the Hebrew word for seven, refers to the first seven days of mourning that begin immediately following the funeral. The day of the funeral is considered the first day and *shiva* concludes on the morning of the seventh day. On Shabbat during *shiva* mourners go to the synagogue. On Friday night the mourner will be greeted by the congregation with the words of comfort at the end of the prayer *L'cha Dodi*. Mourning practices, such as wearing the torn clothing or ribbon, are not done on Shabbat.

When a funeral takes place just prior to a festival, the *shiva* is abbreviated. Though the family continues its own grieving process, this is to allow the community to observe the festival free of the obligation to provide comfort. If the funeral takes place during the intermediate days of *Pesach* or *Sukkot*, *shiva* should begin when the festival is concluded. The rabbi will clarify the days of *shiva* in any of these instances.

One observes the rites of mourning for a parent, child, spouse or sibling. *Shiva* is generally observed at the home of the deceased but may be at the home of one of the mourners.

During *shiva* it is customary for mourners not to use cosmetics, shave or cut their hair, wear leather shoes, drink wine or have marital relations. Mirrors are usually covered because mourners are not to be concerned with their appearance during this week of loss. Every morning and evening during *shiva*, services are held at the house of mourning. The Bereavement Committee will help with arrangements for these services, providing prayer books, *kippot* and mourners' chairs. They can provide leaders for the services as well as congregants to help make up a *minyan* if needed. If services are not held at the home, the mourners may attend services at the Temple. It is permitted to say *Kaddish* for an in-law but not

required. A Jew by choice should also observe *shiva* and recite *Kaddish* for his or her non-Jewish parent.

At the conclusion of the *shiva*, the mourners usually leave the home to take a walk around the block symbolizing their return to society.

Shloshim and the First Year

After *shiva* is concluded, the remaining twenty-three days of the first month constitute a less intense mourning period known as *shloshim*, the Hebrew word for thirty. The mourners return to work and their regular responsibilities, but still observe the following rituals and restrictions:

- Reciting *Kaddish* twice a day or on some regular basis.
- Avoiding celebrations and entertainment
- Avoiding shaving and haircuts
- Some continue wearing the torn garment or ribbon for *shloshim*, others only observe this during *shiva*.

Those who have lost a parent continue saying *Kaddish* for an eleven month period that is counted from the date of death not the funeral. This is not usually done for other losses.

Making a Shiva Visit

Visiting a *shiva* house is an important *mitzvah* because your very presence serves as consolation to the mourners. Many find visiting a house of mourning a difficult and uncomfortable experience. A few thoughts to keep in mind may ease this visit for you. What to say to the mourner is often a concern. Jewish etiquette holds that we wait for the mourner to speak to us before we speak to the mourner. A simple hug and, “I’m sorry” are easy and appropriate. The bereaved may want to talk and it is good just to listen. It is helpful to validate the mourner’s feelings and not try to minimize their sadness. Ask about the deceased, or if you can, give a pleasant reminiscence about the deceased. If you can be of particular assistance (driving someone, preparing a meal), offer to do so. Always remember the role of the visitor is to be supportive and understanding of the mourner; it is all about them and their grieving time should not be diminished. Your visit need not be long to be helpful.

In taking our leave from the mourner it is traditional to say, “*Hamakom y’nahem etchem b’toch sh’ar avelei Tziyon v’Yerushalayim*”; or the English, “May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

Writing a Note of Condolence

Although it is not part of *halacha*, words of sympathy are most supportive to the bereaved. Anything from the briefest of notes to the longer letter, including pleasant memories about the deceased, are all appropriate and much appreciated. There are books that deal with this more thoroughly (see suggested readings) but these are some simple guidelines:

- Begin with an acknowledgment of the death and the relationship of the deceased to the mourner.
- Express your sympathy.
- Recall a memory or a quality you admired about the deceased, if possible.
- End with a word or phrase of sympathy, not “Sincerely” or “Love”, e.g. “With sympathy” or the traditional phrase, “May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

OBSERVING ANNIVERSARIES OF THE DEATH

Post-mourning observances include the unveiling, *Yizkor*, and *Yahrzeit*. Although many people wait one year for the unveiling, it may take place anytime after *shloshim*, during which period we are not to visit the cemetery. The monument may be put up after the first month and is usually dedicated in an unveiling service within the first year. The accompanying ceremony, usually attended by mourners and close family or friends, is brief, consisting of some psalms and readings, words about the deceased, the removal of the cloth covering the monument, hence the term “unveiling”, the prayer *El Malei Rachamim* and *Kaddish*. The unveiling is generally not a large affair resembling a second funeral, but does require a *minyán*.

Yizkor and Yahrzeit

There are five times during the year that we say *Kaddish* in remembrance of the dead. There are *Yizkor* services on *Yom Kippur* and the last days of *Sukkot*, *Pesach* and *Shavuot* when we say *Kaddish*. In addition to attending the *Yizkor* service at the synagogue, a memorial candle should be lit on the eve of the holiday.

Every year on the Hebrew anniversary of the death, a *Yahrzeit* candle is lit in the home. It is customary to attend evening services the night before and then the morning and afternoon services on the day of the *Yahrzeit* to recite the *Kaddish*. It is also appropriate to visit the grave at that time. Temple Emanuel will remind you of the correct dates for your loved one's *Yahrzeit*.

BEREAVEMENT FOR THE INTERFAITH FAMILY

Our tradition says that only Jews may be buried in a Jewish cemetery; therefore, a non-Jewish spouse may not be buried next to a Jewish spouse. However, there are some Jewish cemeteries in the area that have special sections designated for burial of non-Jewish spouses. One need not be Jewish to participate in the funeral service or in the ritual of shoveling earth on the casket at a cemetery.

TIMES OF SERVICES AT TEMPLE EMANUEL

Mornings

Monday through Friday: 7:00 am
Shabbat: 6:45 and 9:30 am
Sunday: 8:00 am

Evenings

Sunday through Thursday: 7:30 pm
Friday: 6:30 pm
Saturday night: Varies with sunset times

Please consult the Temple's website www.templemanuel.com for up-to-date information concerning service times which may vary because of holidays or due to time of year. For a recorded announcement with service times, call the Temple's Service Time Line number, 617-558-8145.

SUGGESTED READINGS

The Rabbi Marshall Lifson Library at Temple Emanuel has a large selection of books on death and mourning for adults and children. The Temple also maintains several shelves of books on the topic in the Gann Chapel which is always open and available to you. Please visit the library or call 617-558-8126 for more help in finding the right book. In addition, the bereavement committee posts documents of interest and resource lists that have been prepared by temple members on the temple website. These may be found at www.templeemanuel.com/bereavement-committee.

Here are a few suggestions:

Brener, Anne. *Mourning and Mitzvah*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1993.

Diamant, Anita. *Saying Kaddish*. New York: Schocken Books, 1999.

Edelman, Hope. *Motherless Daughters*. MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co, 1994.

Grollman, Earl. (Ed.). *Explaining Death to Children*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.

Lamm, Maurice. *The Jewish Way of Death & Mourning*. New York: Jonathan David Publishing, 1969.

Olitsky, Kerry M. *Grief in Our Seasons: A Mourner's Kaddish Companion*. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publishing, 1998.

Wolfson, Ron. *A Time to Mourn A Time to Comfort*. New York: The Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, 1993.

For Children

Prestine, Joan Singleton. *Someone Special Died*. Fearon Teacher Aids, 1993.

Silverman, Janis. *Helping Me Say Goodbye*. Fairview Press, 1999.

Silverman, Phyllis R. *A Parent's Guide to Raising Grieving Children*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.

Spero, Moshe Halevi. *Saying Goodbye to Grandpa*. Pitspopany, 1997.

Krasny, Laurie and Brown, Marc. *When Dinosaurs Die; A Guide to Understanding Death*. Little Brown. 1996.

Liss-Levinson, Nechama. *When a Grandparent Dies*. Jewish Lights Publishing. 1995.

IN CLOSING

This booklet was designed to familiarize you with the traditions of mourning as we observe them at Temple Emanuel and hopefully will be informative before there is immediate need. Bereavement goes hand in hand with community support and we hope we have achieved some of that for the readers of this booklet.



TEMPLE EMANUEL
385 Ward Street
Newton Centre, Massachusetts 02459
617-558-8100
www.TempleEmanuel.com

Copyright © Temple Emanuel 2003
Second Edition 2007
Third Edition 2010