

Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation

Guide for the Bereaved



Throop Cemetery Bournemouth

In Loving Memory of Hannah Taylor 1918-2016

INTRODUCTION

There comes a time when our nearest and dearest are called to their Eternal Rest. At such a time we have a profound desire to honour their memory in accordance with the traditions of our faith and our people.

In order to help you understand the rules and practices of the Jewish tradition with regard to the end of life, this booklet is designed as a concise guide. For more details please consult the Rabbi.

WHO IS A MOURNER?

We are obliged to mourn for a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister (including half brother and half sister), husband or wife, but not for an infant less than thirty days old. Thus in-laws and grandchildren are not designated as mourners. Males from the age of thirteen and females from the age of twelve should observe the laws of mourning.

The Hebrew term for mourner is *Avel*, the plural *Avelim*.

THE MOMENT OF PASSING

During the last moments of life family members should try to stay, for their presence is an expression of great respect. You may wish to call Rabbi Jesner (01202789430 or 07932723811) at this time for spiritual guidance. If for any reason Rabbi Jesner is not available please contact Reverend Barry Sklan on 01202 789573 or 07545 773143.

After death has occurred the eyes and mouth of the deceased should be closed, any jewellery should be removed, the arms placed sentry-style at the side of the body, and a sheet drawn over his/her face. It is customary to light a candle. Call Rabbi Jesner, or Reverend Barry Sklan if the Rabbi is not available.

Then call Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation Office on 01202 557433 Option 6 during office hours (if out of hours the recorded message on the telephone will give you the numbers you will require). A member of staff will take the necessary information from you.

As soon as possible ask the doctor or hospital to write the Death Certificate and give it to you. The death cannot be recorded by the Registrar of Births and Deaths and arrangements for the funeral cannot be commenced until you have the Death Certificate.

Arrangements such as notifying the community and arranging the Funeral and Shiva will then be appropriately dealt with as a result of communications with the Rabbi, the mourners and the Office.

In the sadness and distress of the loss of a loved one it is easy to become confused. It is recommended that you and appropriate others make a note of all the above numbers. The Hebrew name of the deceased will also need to be provided or confirmed.

BETWEEN DEATH AND BURIAL

During this period the mourner is known as an *Onen*.

The most important duty in this period is arranging the funeral. In recognition of this and of the mourner's state of mind at this time the Onen is exempted from fulfilling other religious duties such as reciting prayers or putting on Tefillin.

On Shabbat or Yom Tov however, an Onen follows the appropriate public observances of the day.

An Onen should not conduct business or professional activities.

ADMINISTRATION MATTERS

The following covers the most common circumstances. In exceptions the Rabbi and the Synagogue Office will advise. Some elements of the burial cost will be covered by subscription to Bournemouth Hebrew Congregation Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society). The Synagogue Office will be able to advise you further.

1. Obtain a Death Certificate from the doctor or hospital stating the cause of death.
2. Contact the Synagogue Office on 01202557433. They will put you in touch with the Undertaker, Head and Wheble, and give you help and guidance on the administration matters below.

Call the Rabbi on 01202789430 or 07932723811. He will provide pastoral care and advice.

3. Book an appointment with the Registrar for Births and Deaths in the vicinity in which the death occurred. The Registrar will issue paperwork which is needed by the Undertaker before the funeral can take place. You will need to take the Death Certificate with you. If the death occurs at a weekend or over a Bank Holiday the Undertaker will help you to make an appointment with the Emergency Registrar so that a funeral is not unnecessarily delayed.
4. Phone the Undertaker (Mr Simon Head at Head and Wheble – 01202551190) who can then arrange the necessary transport.
5. Now phone the Synagogue Office once again. They will then be able to confirm the timing of the funeral, notify the Rabbi and the congregation, and make further arrangements such as assisting with Shiva chairs and prayer books.
6. Speak personally with the Rabbi about the funeral service and Shiva arrangements.
7. Notify family and friends of the arrangements.

RESPECT FOR THE DECEASED

Respect for the deceased is a fundamental principle governing Jewish practice. One expression of this respect is *Tahara*, the ritual preparation of the body which is performed by members of the Chevra Kadisha, a group traditionally devoted to the proper burial of the dead.

The deceased preferably should not be left alone before the funeral. Ideally family and/or friends should keep constant vigil. *Tehilim* (Psalms) are traditionally recited during this period.

Jewish tradition teaches us that the dead must be buried as soon as possible. A delay is permitted only for the sake of close family who have to travel great distances.

Kohanim who are not mourners should not enter a building containing the deceased. Even at the cemetery the only Kohanim who may enter the prayer hall before the deceased is removed are the mourners. Other Kohanim must neither enter nor approach the graves. (Kohanim are normally buried near the footpaths).

COFFIN AND SHROUDS

It is customary for a deceased male to be buried in a *Tallis* (ideally, the one he wore during his lifetime). Objects of value for the living are not buried with the dead. Coffins used for Jewish funerals must be made of plain, unpolished boards without any ornamentation. The shrouds are provided by the Synagogue.

MOURNERS

In the text following, the term *mourner* includes a parent, a spouse, an adult (post bar/bat mitzvah) brother or sister, an adult (post bar/bat mitzvah) son or daughter of the deceased. The period of mourning for a deceased parent is 11 months; for all others it is 30 days.

KRIAH

Kriah, a tear made in the mourner's clothing, is an external symbol of inner grief and mourning.

Kriah is usually made immediately preceding the start of the funeral service. It must be done for the mourner while he/she is standing. In the absence of a Rabbi, any competent person can assist the mourner in this duty. A benediction is recited by the mourner just before Kriah:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, דִּין הָאֵמֶת

Baruch Atah Adonai Elohaynu Melech Ha'olam, Dayan Ha'emet.

Blessed Art Thou, O Lord our G-d, King of the Universe, the True Judge.

For a parent, Kriah is on the left side, close to the heart. For all others Kriah is on the right side. The tear should be downward and a handbreadth in length. Kriah should be visible throughout the period of Shiva but not on Shabbat. The torn garment is discarded after Shiva.

It is not necessary to wear one's finest clothes to the funeral only to subject them to Kriah. Kriah is performed on the outermost garment that one would wear indoors. This is generally a jacket or cardigan or occasionally a shirt.

THE FUNERAL: LEVAYAH

The funeral service consists of suitable prayers of consolation and a eulogy (*hesped*) memorialising the deceased which can be delivered by the Rabbi and/or one of the mourners or another relative. It should speak positively of the deceased and consist of appropriate words of comfort for the mourners. Selections from the Book of Psalms are read and the traditional memorial prayer is chanted.

After the coffin is lowered into the grave those present cover the coffin with soil. It is customary that when filling in the grave one does not pass the spade directly to another but rather puts it down for the other to take up, symbolic that the act is voluntary.

MOURNERS' KADDISH

A mourner for a parent first recites a special Kaddish at the cemetery after the burial. (This special Kaddish is replaced by the normal Kaddish on festive dates and when Tachanun is not recited, eg Rosh Chodesh, Erev Shabbat etc). This is then followed by an ordinary mourner's Kaddish. If one is mourning any close relative other than a parent the ordinary Kaddish is recited twice. A female mourner is entitled to say Kaddish if she wishes.

The Kaddish is generally thought of as a prayer for the dead. But while the mourner's Kaddish certainly is recited in that context, it does not mention death and the dead.

Recitation of Kaddish is an act of hallowing and praising God and His Name. In Jewish tradition, such an act must take place in a *Minyan* which is defined as a quorum of at least 10 adult Jewish males. Thus the Kaddish, in any variation, is recited ONLY in the presence of a Minyan.

'Mourners' Kaddish for parents is recited for eleven months, less one day, counting from the day of the death. In a leap year, First Adar and Second Adar are counted as two separate months. Mourner's Kaddish is also recited on each anniversary of the death (*Yahrzeit*).

Kaddish for relatives other than parents is only recited for 30 days.

English transliterations of all the Kaddishim can be found at the end of the funeral prayer books used at the cemetery.

MEAL OF CONSOLATION

After the funeral the mourner is known as an *Avel*. An *Avel's* first meal after returning from the cemetery (*se'udat havra'ah*) is provided by friends and neighbours, who express their concern in a practical way. This simple meal consists of hard-boiled eggs and bagels, both round and symbolising the continuity of life, and a beverage (usually tea).

It is not incumbent upon the family to invite the funeral participants back to their home immediately after the funeral service. It is certainly not incumbent upon them to entertain their guests by providing food and drink.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

Generally, religious services are held at the house of mourning. If it proves impossible to obtain a Minyan in the house it is proper for the mourners to attend the Synagogue Minyan for Morning, Afternoon and Evening services, at which they will recite Kaddish. Services are not usually held at the home of a mourner on Shabbat or Festivals.

For women who are widowed or where there are only daughters and/or sisters, services need not take place if there is no male relative to say Kaddish, but Shiva must still be observed by sitting for the required length of time, and the Rabbi will still visit the bereaved. The lack of a prayer service at home in no way invalidates the Shiva. Women are not required to attend services at the Synagogue but may do so if they wish. A female mourner may recite the Kaddish at any service provided there is at least one man reciting Kaddish at the same time.

A 7-day Yahrzeit candle (available from the synagogue shop) should be lit on returning home from the cemetery. A further two ordinary candles should be lit before each service begins. These candles should be lit by someone other than a mourner.

VISITING A HOUSE OF MOURNING

The mitzvah of comforting mourners (*nichum avelim*) is fulfilled by a personal visit to the house of mourning. One need not be mute but neither should one feel compelled to maintain a flow of conversation. The most appropriate topic of conversation is the person who died and his or her life. A visit should not be unduly long and certainly is not the time for general socialising.

People visiting a house of mourning should not be served or even offered food by any of the mourners, who thus would be acting in the inappropriate role of hosts at a social gathering. It is proper and correct for relatives and friends to attend to the needs of the mourner and the family.

Upon leaving, one may offer a Salutation to the mourners:

הַמָּקוֹם יְנַחֵם אֶתְכֶם בְּתוֹךְ שְׂאֵר אַבְלֵי צִיּוֹן וִירוּשָׁלַיִם

Hamakom Y'nachem Etchem B'soch Sh'ar Avaylay Tzion Vee'rooshalayim.

May the Almighty Comfort You with all the other Mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

SHIVA

Shiva means seven, the number of days of mourning, which begin with the day of the burial.

Mourners stay together at the home of the deceased or at the home of a mourner, cut off from the normal routine of their lives. They abstain from business and professional activities, bathing (except for hygienic purposes), using cosmetics and cutting hair. Non-leather shoes should be worn. For hygienic purposes they may change clothes that touch the body. They also abstain from marital relations.

As an outward symbol of mourning the mourner divests himself of the comforts of life. For this reason the mourners sit on low chairs and do not wear leather footwear.

Mirrors and televisions in the house of mourning are either covered or turned to the wall.

The day of the burial not the day of death counts as the first day of Shiva.

SHABBAT & FESTIVALS AND SHIVA

Shabbat is included in the counting of the seven days, though on Shabbat no outward signs of mourning apply. The mourners should wear regular shoes, sit on regular chairs, and change into clothing that bears no sign of mourning. The torn garment is not worn. They also attend synagogue services.

On Friday night Shiva is observed until a few hours before Shabbat leaving the mourner enough time to get ready for Shabbat.

Yom Tov annuls the remainder of Shiva provided that the mourner has first observed at least one hour of Shiva before the holiday began. If burial takes place on the intermediate days of Yom Tov (*Chol Ha'moed*) then Shiva is postponed until the end of the holiday. But the day of the funeral still counts so the Shiva is reduced to six days only.

THE END OF SHIVA

Shiva ends during the morning of the seventh day. Thus if the funeral was held on Monday, Shiva will conclude on the following Sunday morning. Mourners are required to sit for only a brief period on the final morning. When the funeral is held on a Sunday, Shiva is observed through Friday afternoon, and concludes on Shabbat morning.

When speaking of the deceased, a Hebrew phrase is generally added: "*alav hashalom*" (may he rest in peace), or "*aleha hashalom*" (may she rest in peace). "*Zichronoh livrachah*" (for a male) and "*Zichronah livrachah*" (for a female) are also used, meaning "of Blessed Memory".

During the 11 months of mourning a son or daughter says "*Hareni kaparat mishkavo*" for a father or "*Hareni kaparat mishkavah*" for a mother ('Behold I am atonement for his/her resting place').

SHLOSHIM

Shloshim ends on the morning of the thirtieth day after the funeral. It is the period between the end of deep bereavement and resuming life's normal routine.

A mourner during this period does not wear new clothes or cut the hair (or shave if a man), does not participate in general festivities, and avoids public places of entertainment. A mourner does not attend parties celebrating a brit milah, pidyon haben, or a wedding, though he or she may attend the ceremonies. When mourning a parent's death, restrictions continue until twelve months after the day of death.

TOMBSTONE

It is customary to place a tombstone (*matzeivah*) on a grave, dedicating it in a brief ceremony, known as the stone-setting, which usually takes place within a year of death. The synagogue office will help you with these arrangements and the Rabbi will ensure that the wording is correct and appropriate.

Yahrzeit

Yahrzeit is observed on each anniversary of the day of death according to the Hebrew Calendar. An exception to this rule is made when the burial takes place three days or more after the death. In such a case Yahrzeit for the first year only is observed on the anniversary of the date of the burial. On all subsequent years the Yahrzeit will be observed on the anniversary of the death.

The synagogue records the names of deceased relatives of the membership. If the name of your departed is in the records, you will be notified of your Yahrzeit date in advance. A candle should burn in the home during the twenty-five hour period of Yahrzeit, sunset to evening, starting on the sunset preceding the day.

Mourners' Kaddish is recited at all services on the Yahrzeit, from the evening service on the night before, through to the afternoon service on the day itself.

If death occurred in Adar during a Leap Year, Yahrzeit is subsequently observed only once, in the Adar (I or II) in which death occurred. If death occurred in an ordinary year, Yahrzeit is observed in Adar I although many have the custom of observing Yahrzeit during both months of Adar in a leap year.

Yizkor

Yizkor services in memory of the dead are held on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, the last day of Pesach, and on the second day of Shavuot. During the first year of bereavement, one may attend and participate in Yizkor services, although this is not an obligation.

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