



Nachamu Ami

INTRODUCTION

The death of a loved one forces us to confront many issues which are stressful and confusing. **Nachamu Ami** offers guidance on ritual observances and practical concerns as an aid to Temple members and their families. It defines and explains the most common Jewish practices associated with death, burial and mourning. Practical considerations are also addressed. Throughout, the dominant values of our tradition are stressed -- respect for the deceased and comfort for the survivors.

By providing an overview of Jewish customs and belief, **Nachamu Ami** can serve as a manual for bereaved families. It is organized in chronological sequence, starting with the initial steps and special considerations relating to the death, followed by funeral and burial practices, the various stages of mourning (*shiva, sheloshim, avelut*), and annual memorial practices. At the end of the booklet, there are several special sections: references relating to meditations, helping children cope with death, and further details about Jewish practices and rituals, a list of the area Funeral Providers, and a detachable SUMMARY to help the bereaved. Terms discussed in the text that are in ***ITALICS*** are defined in the GLOSSARY at the very end of the booklet.

Where variation in custom or ritual exists, **Nachamu Ami** highlights those of Reform Judaism, especially as practiced at Temple Beth Ami. Be aware that customs may vary from place to place, so consult the clergy in the community where the funeral service is to take place. It is our hope that a review of these practices and options will provide some guidance to the bereaved family and their family and friends. Please do not hesitate to contact the Temple clergy and staff for further clarification or any discussion of special issues not covered here.

I. INITIAL STEPS

Whom to Call First

Arrangements may vary depending on where the death occurs. If the decedent died at home, it may be necessary to call the police or 911 to report the death and arrange for removal of the body. In a hospital setting, the death certificate will be prepared by the attending physician and the body will be held until arrangements can be made with the funeral home. In a hospice setting, the hospice doctor should be notified. The doctor will sign the necessary documents and hospice will help make the necessary arrangements.

Upon the death of a loved one, the first calls are to the Temple and the funeral provider. The clergy will assist you taking the next steps. The funeral provider will assure that the death certificate is obtained and provided to you. The provider will also arrange for removal of the body. A listing of local funeral directors is provided at the end of this booklet.

If you want Temple clergy to officiate at the funeral, it is important to coordinate with Temple staff before any arrangements are finalized. Even if Temple staff will not be involved in the funeral service, the congregation will provide support to the bereaved family.

If the family knows death is imminent, it is better to discuss and resolve some of these issues and procedures concerning the funeral and burial beforehand.

Aninut: Between Death and Burial

When a death occurs, the immediate mourners enter a period known as *aninut*, the period of time between death and burial. Mourners are freed from social and ritual obligations. During this period, only family and close friends should visit with the mourners so that they can express their initial grief and feelings in private. The *shiva* period (see below) does not begin until after the funeral and burial.

II. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Euthanasia

Judaism affirms the sanctity of life, and therefore is formally opposed to any measures that facilitate death of the individual (see appendix).

Living Wills

The Reform Movement has endorsed the use of living wills as means to assure that an individual's preferences regarding "end of life" issues will be clearly communicated and honored. A booklet, "A Time to Prepare", is available through the Union of American Hebrew Congregations. It provides guidance in the preparation of Living Wills and medical power of attorney documents (see appendix).

Organ Donation

Organ donation is an acceptable and admirable act. Arrangements for organ donation should be made in advance by so indicating on one's driver's license or by carrying an organ donor card. Such a donation may represent the expressed wishes of the deceased or, in some instances, the wishes of his/her family. Organ donation can only be accomplished in a hospital setting; it is not possible if the individual dies in a hospice setting or at home.

Interfaith Observances (non-Jewish family member)

Our clergy staff will assist interfaith families in a manner sensitive to other religious traditions. A Jewish service may be appropriate when the deceased was not Jewish but identified with Jewish tradition, and the surviving family members are Jewish. The Temple clergy are willing to conduct appropriate non-sectarian funeral services in support of a bereaved Temple family and will participate with non-Jewish clergy (e.g. non-Jewish relative), provided the overall service is consistent with Jewish traditions.

However, please be aware there are certain restrictions with respect to burial in Jewish cemeteries (see page 13 regarding policies of our Temple cemetery). A non-Jew may not be buried in a Jewish cemetery, even next to his/her Jewish spouse. A non-Jew or an interfaith couple may be interred in a non-sectarian section. A convert to Judaism is entitled to all of the rites of a Jewish burial.

Death of an Infant

Although the death of a young infant involves feelings of loss and bereavement, Jewish custom does not require a funeral service for an infant of less than 30 days, nor are family members required to say *kaddish* or sit *shiva* (see appendix).

Suicide

Please do not hesitate to contact the clergy staff in the case of a suicide. Judaism opposes the willful destruction of life and cannot condone suicide. At the same time, we are taught to look for mitigating circumstances so as to avoid declaring any death a genuine suicide. In this way, the prohibitions against burying a suicide in a Jewish cemetery or honoring them with formal funeral rites are mitigated. Jewish tradition encourages approaching the tragedy of suicide with compassion and understanding.

III. FUNERAL AND BURIAL PRACTICES

The funeral should be held as soon as it is reasonably possible to assemble the family, generally within two days. Jewish funeral services are simple, comprised of a few essential prayers, selected readings, and eulogy. They are intended to honor the deceased and to comfort the bereaved.

Scheduling of the Funeral

A funeral is held within 48 hours of the death, unless there are extenuating circumstances such as family members traveling from great distances or the advent of a major Jewish Holiday (*Shabbat, Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashannah, Shavuot, Passover, Sukkot, or Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah*).

If Death or Funeral Occurs Out of Town

The funeral provider should be chosen based on the site of the funeral rather than where the death occurred. Contact a local funeral provider at the location where the funeral is to take place and to assist with the necessary shipping arrangements. For interstate shipping, the body must be packed in cool packs, enclosed in a sealed metal case (Zigler case) or embalmed (see below for more on embalming).

Responsibilities of the Funeral Provider

Once the death certificate is signed, the funeral provider will take possession of the body, remove it to the funeral home and place it under refrigeration. The provider will then explain to the family the options available to them, such as *tahara* and *shomrim* (see below), casket selection, and burial property if the family does not have cemetery plots. The provider will facilitate the rental of either a hearse, or, at a lesser expense, a black van, and limousines. They also furnish materials for *shiva*: books, shiva candle, stools,

kipot, and acknowledgment cards. The provider must offer the family a full list of services and prices of these services upon request.

Casket Selection

Jewish tradition strongly suggests a simple plain pine casket to reaffirm that we are all equal in death. A kosher casket is made only of wood, using wooden dowels rather than nails, and vegetable (not animal) glue.

There are no federal or state laws concerning liners (a concrete shell supporting the walls of a grave) or embalming. Most cemeteries require liners to assist them in grounds' management, and to prevent graves from collapsing. Some funeral providers will offer liners for sale at a lower cost than cemeteries. Some providers may encourage the use of a vault, which is similar to a liner, but sealed and more expensive.

Preparation of the Deceased

Tahara, is the ritual washing of the body in preparation for burial. It is a burial custom that may be performed for any Jewish person. The washing is done by a *Chevra Kadisha* (literally, "holy fellowship"). Some synagogues have their own. In this area, there is a community *Chevra Kadisha*, which is a group of professional "volunteers" who will perform the ritual for a donation of \$100.00 (used for *tzedakah* by the committee). *Tahara* must take place as close as possible to the funeral service. Jewish tradition discourages public viewing of the deceased, although private arrangements can be made between the family and the funeral provider. Viewing of the body (public or private) is discouraged after *tahara*.

Dressing of the deceased is a matter to be discussed between the family and the clergy. If *tahara* is observed, the body is generally dressed in a shroud, made of either muslin or linen. According to Orthodox or Conservative practice, linen shrouds are reserved for *Cohanim* (Priests) or Levites.

The family may arrange for *shomrim*, persons who will sit with the body until the funeral service. The custom is based on the desire not to leave a loved one unattended. *Sh'mira* may be performed by members of the *Chevra Kadisha* who read psalms or study sacred texts during their shifts, or by friends of the family who may read or have appropriate discussions. Occasionally, a family member might choose to be among the *shomrim*.

Kriah: Rending of the Garment

The practice of *kriah* dates back to the bible, when Jacob rent his garment upon learning of the supposed death of Joseph. Thus, one made a rend or tear in a garment immediately upon hearing of the death of a loved one as a way of indicating we are incomplete. Many Jews attach a black ribbon to their garment immediately before the funeral service. It is torn instead of actually tearing a garment. *Kriah* is usually observed by the immediate *shiva* relatives (parents, children, spouses and siblings). The *kriah* ribbon or torn garment is displayed throughout the entire period of *shiva*. When mourning the death of a parent, the *kriah* period may be extended to 30 days.

Funeral Service

Traditionally, this is a simple service to honor the deceased and give comfort to the bereaved family. The central element is the eulogy; it may be delivered by clergy and/or family members or other lay people. The service may include some psalms, and concludes with *Eyl Maleh Rachamim*, a prayer asking God to have compassion upon the soul of the deceased.

The service may be held at the funeral home, if it has a chapel, or in the Temple Beth Ami sanctuary. This decision should be discussed with the Rabbi or Cantor, so that necessary arrangements can be made with the Temple staff. Some funeral providers have a small on site chapel or contractual arrangements with area synagogues. Alternatively, the service may be held at the gravesite.

There is no fee for clergy participation in the funeral of a Temple member or a member of the family. Customarily, the participation of clergy staff is acknowledged through the performance of *tzedakah*, which may involve donation to the Rabbi's and Cantor's Discretionary Funds or other appropriate Temple funds.

Memorial Service

A funeral service can be held only if the body is present. Otherwise, a memorial service can be conducted at the request of the family. Memorial Services may be held following a cremation (see below) or in the case where some family members could not attend a funeral held far way. The service offers an opportunity for the family to be comforted by friends, and to observe some funeral and mourning customs.

Special Cases: Autopsy, Embalming, Cremation

Jewish tradition discourages autopsies, unless it provides some medical benefit to the surviving family or the immediate community (e.g., diagnosis of a genetic or infectious condition), or is required by law. If an autopsy is needed, the funeral provider will coordinate with the doctors or medical examiner. In legal cases, the authority of the medical examiner supersedes all other authorities.

Embalming is not required by state law, nor permitted by Jewish law. Embalming slows down the natural process of returning to the earth.

Judaism deems embalming unnecessary and unacceptable. The extensive invasion of the body required by the procedure violates the Jewish practice of treating the body of the deceased with utmost respect. Attempts to preserve the body frustrated the process of decay which is considered natural and appropriate. Any cosmetic treatment of the body is considered an undesirable emphasis on the physical remains at the expense of the spiritual legacy.

No states have laws that mandate embalming. There may arise circumstances which may justify embalming because of unusual community or family priorities. In those instances, rabbinic counsel should be sought.

Jewish tradition does not condone cremation, the willful destruction of the human body. The Temple's clergy will not officiate at a crematorium nor take part in a service at any other location preceding a cremation; the clergy will officiate at a memorial service after the cremation has occurred. (Some clergy will officiate with the body present at a service prior to cremation, but most will not officiate with the ashes present.) The staff will do its best to meet the needs of the family.

Involvement of Children

Decisions regarding a child's attendance at a funeral and/or burial are best made in discussions that include the child. Explanations and descriptions of the funeral service, the cemetery, and the burial which respond to a child's questions can help determine whether the child is emotionally ready to attend. Children who have enjoyed a meaningful relationship with the deceased often have a need "to say goodbye" equal to that of adults. They may feel excluded and frustrated if summarily left behind. Attendance at a funeral, and the subsequent family discussion, can help children develop

understandings which will help them confront loss and grief at later stages in their lives. Children who do not attend a funeral can participate in other observances, such as *shiva*, in ways that are appropriate and inclusive. Since each child is unique and each family has different concerns, this important matter is best discussed with clergy at the appropriate time.

Pallbearers

The family of the deceased chooses the pallbearers, usually members of the family or close friends. Any person, male or female, can be a pallbearer, including children (within safety guidelines); it is considered an honor to escort the deceased to his or her final resting place. At least six pallbearers are suggested to carry (or accompany) the casket from the chapel to the hearse, and later from the hearse to the gravesite. The pallbearers may remain seated with their families during the funeral service and are summoned to escort the casket at the close of the service.

Customs involving the Gravesite

If a cemetery plot has been purchased before death, contact the cemetery when the death occurs. If one has not been purchased beforehand, the funeral director will assist you with the purchase. Selection of the gravesite should be discussed with other family members. The policies of each cemetery may vary with respect to perpetual care; decisions regarding perpetual care are generally made at the time of the purchase.

Some cemeteries permit only ground-level markers at the gravesite instead of tombstones. These markers, however, are not accepted by all Jewish authorities and some Orthodox Rabbis will not officiate at cemeteries where markers are used.

Gravesite rituals include the recitation of *kaddish* and participation in the act of burial. The burying of the dead is the final *mitzvah* that one can perform on behalf of the deceased. It is a loving obligation of the family to ensure that the burial takes place properly. Family and friends are encouraged to participate in the *mitzvah* of covering the casket; Judaism teaches that the burial should not be left totally in the hands of strangers.

It is customary not to return to the gravesite until after the *shiva* or *sheloshim* period (see below). At Temple Beth Ami we encourage the bereaved to balance their remembrance of the deceased with the need to return to their normal daily lives. Subsequent visits to the gravesite may be acknowledged by placing pebbles or small stones on the top of the gravestone or marker. Some sources suggest that to do so honors the deceased (see additional readings).

Returning from the Cemetery to the House of Mourning

Washing one's hands symbolizes leaving the cemetery behind and returning to life. A bowl of water and a towel are placed outside the mourner's home for this purpose and all are encouraged to take part in this important custom. Usually family and friends provide the initial sustenance for the mourners; this meal is called the *sheudat havra-ah*. In some communities, this symbolic meal is eaten shortly after returning from the cemetery. Although customs may vary, traditional food for the first meal includes hard-boiled eggs and bagels, whose roundness suggests the continuance and eternity of life.

Temple Beth Ami Cemetery at the Garden of Remembrance Gan Zikaron Memorial Park

"One generation passes away, and another generation comes; And the earth abides forever." - Ecclesiastes

Located in a tranquil, beautifully landscaped setting amid gently rolling hills in Clarksburg, Maryland, the new Garden of Remembrance Gan Zikaron Memorial Park sits on 152 acres of meadows and woodland at the foot of Sugarloaf Mountain, just off I-270. It is the only cemetery in the region that is Jewish owned and operated.

The 400 plots in the Temple Beth Ami section are available to members of our Temple community and their families. Congregants and their immediate families (mother, father, sister, brother, spouse and children, and their families) may be buried in our cemetery. Both headstones and markers are available, as is above ground burial in a mausoleum. Non-Jewish members of a family may be buried in our cemetery, with other members of the family, but a non-Jewish burial service or symbols on the stone or marker cannot be permitted.

We are pleased to be able to offer this important service to our members. To visit the cemetery or for further information, please call the Temple's Executive Director at 301-340-6818, ext. 226.

IV. THE MOURNING PERIOD

Jewish tradition identifies stages of mourning, beginning with a seven-day intense period (*shiva*) observed in the home(s) of the immediate family, followed by a period of reduced mourning (*sheloshim*) as one adjusts and returns to worldly routines. Mourning the death of a parent involves an extended period (*avelut*). Special anniversaries marking the death are discussed in the next section.

Shiva: The Initial Seven-day Mourning Period

Shiva is a public expression of grief observed by the immediate family of the deceased (parents, children, spouse and siblings). The seven-day mourning period begins immediately after the funeral and burial (not the death). Any part of the day of the internment which occurs prior to sunset, no matter how brief, is counted as the first day of *shiva*. *Shiva* may be observed at more than one mourner's home, or at a single site with mourners returning to their homes to sleep.

Because mourners are excused from public worship in the synagogue during *shiva*, prayer services (including the recitation of *Kaddish*) may be conducted in the home. Friends and family are encouraged to visit and comfort mourners during the *shiva* period. Tradition suggests that visitors wait to be acknowledged by the mourner before speaking. It is often better to be a listener and to provide comfort merely by your presence.

The word *shiva* is a variation of the Hebrew word for "seven". *Shiva* traditionally encompasses a seven-day period. The first three days are considered more intense than the last four days. Thus, if the observance of the full *shiva* may cause financial or physical hardship, the mourner is permitted to go out after the third day, do what is necessary, and then resume *shiva*. A special seven-day candle is kept lit during the *shiva* period.

If *shiva* is observed locally, Temple Beth Ami's *Hineni* Committee will send a meal to the family; if *shiva* is being observed out of town, *Hineni* will send a fruit basket. If there are no services, or the Temple is informed after *shiva* has ended, a tree will be planted in the name of the departed.

If one is invited to a *simcha* during the *shiva* period, one might choose to attend the event itself, but not the celebration following. Jewish law stipulates that life must continue. However, different rules apply to different members of the family. Please speak with the clergy concerning specific situations.

If a *Yom Tov* (major Jewish Holiday) occurs during the *shiva* period, it cancels out the remainder of the *shiva*. A subsequent *Yom Tov* that occurs during *sheloshim* (thirty-day period of reduced morning following *shiva*, see below) will cancel the obligation of that period as well.

Shiva Services

If possible, a member of our clergy will be present each night of *shiva*, at the request of the family. Some family members may be capable of conducting the service themselves, and are encouraged to do so. Fellow congregants, who have been trained, may also conduct the service.

Our congregation's tradition is to conduct a *Maariv*, or evening service. We conduct a service and recite Kaddish regardless of the number of people present. Temple Beth Ami provides the service booklet, Gates of Prayer for Weekdays. These booklets can be supplemented by the funeral director. The family should ask specifically for the prayer books of the Reform Movement.

Home Traditions Associated with Shiva

Covering the mirrors, a custom occasionally associated with the *shiva* period, is rooted in ancient folklore. Some felt that by looking in the mirror, one might see the angel of death. Moreover, since mourners may neglect their physical appearance, mirrors may be covered so as not to draw attention to the mourners.

Sitting on low seats dates back to the biblical times. It is an indication of the lowered position of the mourner, and their reduction of esteem because of their loss.

Wearing dark colors is customary, although black is not obligatory in Jewish tradition. Since leather was considered an item of luxury, wearing slippers or sneakers instead of leather footwear symbolizes the relinquishing of luxury items during mourning.

Mourners should prepare food only for their immediate family. They should not have the added burden of sustaining visitors.

Sheloshim: The First Thirty Days of Mourning

Sheloshim is the thirty-day period of reduced mourning when one returns to work and daily life. The name of the departed is read in the Temple at Shabbat services each week during this period.

As with the *shiva* period, the occurrence of a major Jewish festival cancels out the remainder of *sheloshim*. Traditionally, a mourner recites *kaddish* every day during *sheloshim* (the mourning is extended for the death of a parent, see *avelut* below). It is customary to recite *kaddish* in the synagogue amid the comfort of other Jews, although in the Reform movement, it is permissible to say it alone at home. Temple Beth Ami does not offer daily services, so mourners may wish to attend daily *minyans* at other synagogues in the area (see listing in section X).

Judaism encourages visitation of graves at appropriate times including the conclusion of *shiva* or *sheloshim* and on the *yahrzeit*. Some people visit on fast days and many make a special visit to the cemetery before the High Holidays. At such times, Psalms and

memorial prayers may be recited. It is customary in some places to put stones or blades of grass on the grave stone or marker. Stones recall the ancient practice of upkeep and protection of a grave. Grass, which returns season after season, is thought to be a symbol of eternal life.

Individuals and families find their own appropriate patterns of visitation. Judaism teaches that it is best to find a balance between constant visitation and total neglect.

Aveilut: Extended Mourning for a Parent

Aveilut refers to the 11-month mourning period observed for the death of a parent (rather than the thirty-day *sheloshim* period for children, spouses or siblings). *Aveilut* begins immediately after the burial and extends through the period of *shiva* and *sheloshim*. Some of the customs and practices associated with *aveilut* may continue for a full year. *Kaddish* may be recited daily for the first eleven months of the year of mourning.

V. SUBSEQUENT REMEMBRANCES OF THE DECEASED

Unveiling Ceremony at the Gravesite

Unveiling marks a transition in the process of mourning. It may take place any time after the 30-day *sheloshim* period. In the case of a parent, a mourner may choose to wait until after the 11-month period of *aveilut*. There are no formal requirements in our tradition relating to the liturgy of an unveiling ceremony. Many families find it comforting to meet at the gravesite to unveil the monument, with appropriate prayers or psalms recited by family members or other attendees. *Eyl Maleh Rachamim* and *Kaddish* are usually recited. Although an unveiling ceremony does not require the presence of clergy, our Rabbis and Cantor are available to assist or lead the service.

Yahrzeit

Yahrzeit is observed annually on the anniversary of the death. Traditionally, the Hebrew calendar is followed; at Temple Beth Ami many families use the English calendar date unless otherwise requested. *Yahrzeit* is observed by attending services in order to recite *Kaddish* and lighting a 24-hour *Yahrzeit* candle at home. It is also a suitable date for performing acts of kindness and/or charity. At Temple Beth Ami, the name of the deceased is read at *Erev Shabbat* and *Shabbat* services immediately following the date of the *Yahrzeit*, although the specific timing may be changed upon request of the family.

Yizkor service

Yizkor (literally "may He remember") is a prayer for the dead which is recited in the Temple four times each year – *Yom Kippur*, *Shemini Atzeret/Simchat Torah*, the last day of *Pesach* and *Shavuot*. At Temple Beth Ami, *Yizkor* is recited during services on both the eve and morning of the last day of *Pesach* and of *Shavuot*.

The name of the deceased may be placed on the Temple Beth Ami *Yahrtzeit* list at any time and on a plaque displayed during the week of the *Yahrzeit*. Names may be placed in the *Yom Kippur* Memorial Book by submitting the form included with the High Holyday mailings. This book is distributed on *Yom Kippur* and used on other Holydays that include *Yizkor*. This book is distributed on *Yom Kippur* and used on other Holydays that include *Yizkor*.

VI. ADDITIONAL READINGS

Helping Children Cope With Death

Death of a Pet, Animal or Tree:

- Abbot, Sarah, The Old Dog, New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1972.
- Cohen, Miriam, Jim's Dog Muffins. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1984.
- Edwards, Lynne and Brian, Dead as the Dodo. New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1973.
- Liberman, Judith. The Bird's Last Song. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1976.
- Viorst, Judith. The Tenth Good Thing About Barney. New York: Atheneum, 1973.

Death of a Grandparent or Older Person

- Fassler, Joan. My Grandpa Died Today. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1971.
- Grollman, Earl. Talking About Death. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.
- Hazen, Barbara S. Why Did Grandpa Die? New York: Western Publishing Company, Inc., 1985.
- Pomerantz, Barbara. Bubby, Me and Memories. New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1983.

Death of a Sibling

- Coburn, John. Anne and the Sand Dobbies. New York: Seabury, 1964.
- Losing Someone You Love: When a Brother or Sister Dies. New York: G.P.Putnam's, 1986.
- Walsh, Jill. Unleaving. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1976.

Death of a Child or Adolescent

- Bach, Alice. Waiting for Johnny Miracle. New York: Bantam, 1982.
- Kubler-Ross, Elizabeth. Remember the Secret. Celestial Arts, 1982.

Biological and Sociological Facts About Death

- Bernstein, Joanne and Gullo, Stephen. When People Die. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1977.
- Klein, Stanley. The Final Mystery. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974.
- Pringle, Laurence. Death is Natural. New York: Four Winds Press, 1977.
- Zim, Herbert and Bleeker, Sonia. Life and Death. New York: William Morrow, 1970.

Jewish Practices and Rituals – Resources for Adults

- Goodman, Rabbi Arnold M., A Plain Pine Box. A Return to Simple Jewish Funerals and Eternal Traditions. New York: K'Tav, 1981.
- Greenberg, Rabbi Sydney, ed. A Treasury of Comfort. California: Wilshire Book Company, 1970.
- Grollman, Earl A., ed. Concerning Death: A Practical Guide for the Living. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974.
- Lamm, Rabbi Maurice. The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning. New York: Jonathan David, 1969.
- Pincus, Lily. Death and the Family. The Importance of Mourning. New York: Pantheon Books, 1974.
- Riemer, Jack, ed. Jewish Reflections on Death. New York: Schocken Books, 1974.
- Rozwaski, Chaim Z. Jewish Meditations on the Meaning of Death. New Jersey: Jason Aaronson, Inc. 1994.
- Silverman, William B. and Cinnamon, Kenneth M. When Mourning Comes. A Book of Comfort and Grieving. New Jersey: Jason Aaronson, Inc., 1990.

VII. LIST OF AREA FUNERAL PROVIDERS AND CEMETERIES

Funeral Providers with Chapels

Danzansky Goldberg Funeral Home, Inc.
1170 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301-340-1400, 800-281-1471

Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home
254 Carroll Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20012
202-541-1001 or 301-495-3395

Funeral Providers Without Chapels

Edward Sagel Funeral Direction
Talbot Center
1091 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301-217-9400

Ives-Pearson Funeral Homes
2847 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22201
472 N. Washington Street
Falls Church, VA 22046
703-527-3016/301-762-2299

Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington contractor:
Hines-Rinaldi
11800 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD
301-622-2290

All of the above funeral providers can arrange services at Temple Beth Ami or at graveside.

Area Cemeteries

Garden of Remembrance
Gan Zikaron Memorial Park
14321 Comus Road
Clarksburg, MD 20871
301-428-3000

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

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

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

King David Memorial Gardens
Lee Highway – Hollywood Road
Falls Church, Va 22043
703-560-4400

VIII. APPENDIX

Euthanasia and Living Wills

The preservation and protection of life (*Pikuach Nefesh*) is a primary Jewish value. Any act which directly terminates life is considered morally questionable. At the same time, Judaism recognizes that there comes a point at which death should be allowed to occur without measures which only prolong the process of dying.

In a 1985 document, "the quality of Life and Euthanasia," the following was established as the perspective of Reform Judaism: "...we should do our best to enhance the quality of life and to use whatever means modern science has placed at our disposal for this purpose. We need not invoke 'heroic' measures to prolong life, nor should we hesitate to alleviate pain, but we cannot also utilize a 'low quality' of life as an excuse for **hastening** death. We cannot generalize about the 'quality of life' but must treat each case which we face individually. All life is wonderful and mysterious. The human situation, the family setting, and other factors must be carefully analyzed before a sympathetic decision can be reached."

We are instructed by tradition that it is praiseworthy to remove from a *goses* (a comatose person on the verge of death) any impediment which prevents the soul from departing the body. This indicates that our tradition recognizes that the process of dying must have its dignity, just as does the process of living. Therefore, instruments such as "living wills" or "medical power of attorney" which outline the wishes of individual regarding the end of their lives can be very important. Such documents should be prepared in consultation with family, legal counsel and rabbinic guidance.

Kaddish

The *Kaddish*, a prayer which praises God as the source, is recited in a number of different contexts. Because it is said at special times by persons in mourning, it has become known as "the mourner's prayer," even though it says nothing regarding death or grief.

When mourners recite *Kaddish* within a congregation, they are considered as leading the community in prayer. This act of piety honors the deceased in whose memory *Kaddish* is recited. For countless generations, and in virtually every Jewish community around the world, the recitation of *Kaddish* by mourners has been a powerful expression of personal remembrance and spiritual affirmation. The communal aspect of *Kaddish* makes the mourner available to accept the comfort and sympathy of the congregation. Its words enable us to confront the pain of death with a declaration of our gratitude for life. Many is the person for whom the recitation of *Kaddish* provides a comforting sense of connection with the beloved dead.

Kaddish is recited first at the time of burial. It is repeated at every worship service conducted in the house during the *shiva* period. Even during *shiva*, mourners come to the synagogue to recite *Kaddish* on *Shabbat*. After *shiva* is concluded, mourners may continue to recite *Kaddish* on a regular basis during *sheloshim*. Custom suggests that *Kaddish* be recited on a regular basis for a full eleven months following the death of a parent.

Life After Death

From of old, Judaism has affirmed the immortality of the soul. That aspect of our humanity, created "in the image of the divine," is, like God, eternal. References to this belief can be found in all the sacred sources of Judaism.

While affirming the immortality of the soul, Judaism does not provide a single, dogmatic concept of a "life after death." A variety of concepts or metaphors exist within our tradition which seek to explore some aspect of this mystery. These concepts range from a notion that the dead are "gathered to their kin" in eternal reunion with loved ones; an equation of "the world to come" with the Garden of Eden; to metaphysical images of union between the soul and the sacred source to which it returns. Already by the first century of the Common Era, Rabbinic Judaism taught the concept of *techiat ha-maytim* (resurrection of the dead) which later became a central teaching of Christianity.

Later, the mystics of Jewish tradition taught the concept of *gilgul* or serial incarnation leading to spiritual perfection.

In modern times, there has been a tendency to stress more naturalistic notions of immortality through memory or through the lasting impact of deeds. From this developed a perception that Judaism and Jews "do not believe in life after death." While that may be true for some individuals and some communities, it is not true for Judaism in general. Instead, Judaism offers every person the opportunity to embrace a concept of immortality, or afterlife, which is in keeping with our Jewish tradition and satisfies both the emotional and spiritual needs of the individual.

Comforting the Bereaved: Thoughts on Making a Shiva Call

The obligation to comfort mourners is deeply rooted in Judaism, its origins can be traced to the *Torah* which depicts God as comforting Isaac upon the death of his father, Abraham. Human beings are understood to be imitating that divine act of consolation when making a *shiva* call. This teaching helps to underscore the significance, the sanctity and the sensitivity which is part of visiting a mourner.

Mourners may be visited at any time during *shiva*. Common courtesy and local custom suggest that it is best to be certain of when the bereaved are ready to receive visitors. One purpose of the *shiva* call is to provide a comforting presence and emotional support. This is often best achieved through quiet conversation or simply sitting silently with the mourner. *Shiva* is not a time to explain away and rationalize the painful or sorrowful circumstances of a death. Rather, it is the time when a mourner may express the full range of his or her feelings to persons who are present to listen and to acknowledge grief and discomfort.

Many people find it difficult to visit a house of mourning. It is hard to enter a home transformed from a place of joy and companionship into a place of concentrated grief. We may be reminded of our painful losses or confronted with situations which are new and uncomfortable. Some people are dissuaded from visiting because they feel that visitors are responsible for lightening the burden of sorrow. Just the opposite, by their presence and quiet comfort, visitors reassure the mourner that the burden of grief is real, but can be borne because the mourner is not alone and has not been abandoned. Once a person understands that he or she is not personally responsible for "cheering up" the mourner, it is easier to provide the support and solace which makes a *shiva* call so important.

Some have observed that *shiva* is too often a social event, full of laughter and all sorts of conversation other than that which focuses on the deceased and on the grief of the family. *Shiva* is a social gathering, albeit of a very special kind. It is the community of family and friends gathering to lend the support which only they can. When important stories and fond recollections of the deceased are exchanged they may bring smiles and laughter, as well as tears. Such laughter is appropriate and important. Conversations about other matters should be limited, and conducted in a subdued tone away from the mourners.

The *shiva* is meant to relieve the mourner of the intense feeling of loneliness and abandonment. Any visitor, no matter how uncertain of themselves, can help in this way. This is an important *mitzvah*, which can be easily fulfilled and whose immense and immediate benefit is felt by both the bereaved and the visitor.

Afterword: A Reflection on Rituals and Customs

The rituals and customs which reflect Jewish teachings about death and mourning can be grouped into two categories. Each category is, itself, a basic value guiding us through a most difficult time in our lives. Observances associated with the care of the body, its proper preparation for burial, and the conduct of funeral and interment services all reflect the concern for *kavod ha-met*, "the dignity of the deceased." One aspect of this concern for dignity is rooted in the Jewish teaching which asserts that the body, like the soul is part of a divine creation – a human life which is a reflection of divinity. It requires that the physical remains of the deceased be treated with respect and gentleness. Therefore, nothing which distorts destroys or shows disdain for the body is condoned. The other aspect which our tradition upholds is the personal dignity of the deceased. This is reflected in the way in which funeral and burial rites are conducted. They emphasize the significance of the life which has ended by acknowledging the sense of loss and the grief of the mourners. Words of eulogy which are spoken at the funeral address the significance of the life that has ended in ways that demonstrate consideration and compassion. Even the act of burial is considered a kindness which is accorded to the deceased out of respect and regard. Therefore, burial is not left entirely to strangers.

All observances which guide individuals through the period of mourning and define the responsibility of family and community to those in mourning reflect the value of *kavod ha-chayim*, "regard for the living." Many of private and public expressions of mourning associated with *shiva* are customs which respond to the emotional and spiritual needs of persons dealing with grief. Judaism recognizes the natural tendency of mourners to withdraw from the demands of work and community affairs. Mourners are understood to be distracted from the tasks of daily living – everything from mode of dress to the preparation of food. Tradition recognizes that a person recently bereaved may find it uncomfortable to be present at joyous celebrations. At the same time, Jewish tradition encourages family and friends not to abandon the mourner to his or her grief but to provide support and consolation. A study of Jewish mourning customs will show that they reflect many of the most contemporary insights into the grieving process.

In addition to these values which help shape the observances of the Jewish community, there are other important ideas and teachings which influence ritual and custom. Judaism views death as an integral part of life. There is no denial of death. Rather, Jewish observances acknowledge both the pain of loss and the mystery of death directly. On the other hand, Judaism has taught from of old that there is an aspect of the human spirit which is imperishable. The soul, divine in its origin, does not die. The mystery of its existence is described in many ways both natural (through memory and deeds) and supernatural (life after death). Some customs associated with mourning and remembrance emphasize the continuing influence and sense of presence which the deceased have in the lives of those who continue to love them.

Judaism provides a rich and responsive body of lore and ritual to guide individuals through the difficult period following a death. Recognizing that there is emotional and spiritual content to Jewish practice enables persons to draw the greatest degree of comfort and strength from our tradition.

IX. SUMMARY LIST TO HELP THE BEREAVED

This is a brief summary of the key steps to take when a loved one dies. Please refer to the booklet or contact the clergy for additional information.

- Contact authorities (if death occurs at home)
- Obtain death certificate and have body transferred to funeral provider
- Make key funeral (or memorial) service and burial decisions
 - Temple Beth Ami has arranged a special contract for its members with a local provider. Please call the executive director for details
 - Design funeral service with clergy
 - Select funeral service sight
 - Select casket
 - Select pallbearers
 - Burial property purchase and maintenance
 - Children's attendance
- Private viewing of the deceased (if desired)
- *Sh'mira* (sitting with the body until burial), if desired
- *Tahara* (ritual washing of the body), if desired
- *Kriah* (rending garment or ribbon)
- Funeral service (memorial service when there is no possibility of burial)
 - Eulogy
 - *Eyl Maleh Rachamim* prayer
 - Other readings (as desired)
- Internment service
 - *Kaddish*

- Burial of casket
- *Seudat havra-ah* (meal following the service)
 - Wash hands
 - Round food
- Mourning
 - *Shiva* (immediate family)
 - *Sheloshim* (30 days)
 - *Aveilut* (for parents only)
- Provide for grave marker
- Unveiling ceremony – after *Sheloshim* and *Aveilut*
- Remembrance
 - Yahrzeit
 - Yizkor

X. MINYANIM AT AREA CONGREGATIONS

Temple Beth Ami

Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday, 10:15 a.m.

B'nai Israel Congregation (Conservative):

Mon- Fri, 7:15 a.m.; Sun – Thurs, 8:00 p.m.,

Sat, Sun, 9:00 a.m.; Fri, 7:00 p.m.

Congregation Beth El of Montgomery County (Conservative):

Mon – Fri, 7:30 a.m., Mon – Thurs, 8:00 p.m.

Sat, 7:30 and 9:15 a.m., Sun 9:00 a.m., Fri, 6:30 p.m.

Har Shalom (Conservative)

Sun – Thurs, 7:45 p.m., Fri, 6:30 p.m.

Mon and Thurs, 6:45 a.m.

Sat, 9:30 a.m., Sun 9:00 a.m.

Hebrew Home of Greater Washington

Sun – Fri, 9:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

Sat, 8:45 a.m.

Other *minyanim* in the Washington area are listed in the Washington Jewish Week.

XI. GLOSSARY

Ahlav/Aleha HaShalom: May he/she rest in peace

Ayl Maleh Rachamim: Prayer requesting God's compassion for the deceased; recited at conclusion of funeral service, unveiling, *Yizkor*

Aninut: Period of time between death and burial

Avelut: Extended 11-month mourning period for death of parent

Chevra Kadisha: Literally "holy society", group that takes responsibility of preparing the deceased for burial

Hineni: Temple committee responsible for comforting congregants

Kaddish: Prayer extolling God (e.g., Mourner's Kaddish)

Kriah: Tearing of garments as sign of mourning (generally replaced by displaying a black ribbon)

Maariv: Evening religious service

Minyan: Quorum of ten needed for a service

Onain: close relative of deceased

Seudat Havra-ah: First meal for mourners returning from cemetery

Sheloshim: The first 30 days of the mourning period

Shiva: Initial 7-day mourning period, visits from family/friends

Shomer (pl. Shomrim): Individuals who stays with body prior to the funeral; also refers to the practice itself

Simcha: Joyous occasion (e.g., birth, wedding, bar/bat mitzvah)

Tachrichim: white linen cloth (shroud) placed over the body

Tahara: ritual purification of the body in preparation for burial

Tehillim: Psalms (e.g., recited during *Shomrim* or in funeral)

Tzedakah: charity

Yahrzeit: Observance of the annual anniversary of a death

Yizkor: Literally "May He remember", Prayer for the dead recited in Temple on four special occasions each year

Zichrono/Zichrona LeVeracha: "May his/her memory be for blessing"