A Guide to
Jewish Mourning Practices

Temple Beth Shalom
Needham, Massachusetts 02494
This book is dedicated to Billie Burstein (z’l) and Marge Cohen (z’l) who both served on The Shiva Guide Committee.

Zecher Tzadik Liv’rachah.

The memory of the righteous will always be for a blessing.

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Introduction

The death of a loved one is one of the most difficult moments that we face in our lives. Understanding this, Jewish tradition seeks to reach out to offer us guidance, support, and sources of strength that will help us to take the next steps forward in our lives. Rituals, traditions, and teachings provide comforting words and acts that help us to mourn, to find comfort among family, friends, and community and to reach out to God.

Since Biblical times, the Jewish value of *kavod ha’met*, “respect for the dead,” has been an important part of our tradition. A second central Jewish value is *kavod ha’chayim*, “concern for the welfare of the living.” The Temple Beth Shalom Shiva Committee has prepared this guide to provide information, comfort and guidance to those who are confronted with the loss of a loved one.

In the following pages, we define and explain the most common Jewish practices associated with death, burial, and mourning – both from the perspectives of traditional and Reform (liberal) Judaism.

Understanding that many who turn to this guide will have just experienced a death, we begin with an outline of how Temple Beth Shalom can be supportive in the immediate shadow of loss. We then offer information about how Jewish tradition in general tries to help during this time of need. In this section, we will chronologically explore the Jewish mourning practices. At the end of this guide, we provide numerous resources: a glossary of terms, some appropriate prayers, and a listing of Boston area organizations and resources.

Reform Judaism understands and embraces the diversity of the Jewish community. Our movement encourages Jews to learn about the different expressions of Jewish life and to find those practices and teachings that speak most deeply to us as sources of inspiration, comfort, and strength.

It is our hope that the information found within these pages will be helpful as you and your family make your own personal decisions. Our clergy and Temple staff are also always available to provide guidance and any assistance you may need.

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I. Initial Steps

Who To Call First When a Death Happens

The specific arrangements to be made for the funeral will depend on where the death occurs:

If the person passed away at home, it may be necessary to call the police or 911 to report the death and to arrange for the care of the body. The funeral home should be the next call to help with the next steps.

In a hospital setting, the attending physician will prepare the death certificate, and arrangements will then be made with the funeral home.

In a hospice setting, the hospice doctor should be notified first. The doctor will then sign the necessary documents, and hospice will help you make the arrangements, including contacting a funeral home.

II. Jewish Funeral and Burial Practices

Funeral Home

If your family has not yet decided which funeral home will serve your needs, our Temple’s clergy, staff, a doctor, a health care provider, a family member, or a friend can offer suggestions. The Jewish funeral homes in the Greater Boston area are all excellent and have compassionate and supportive staffs who are prepared to assist you. Boston area Jewish funeral homes are listed in this guide on page 18.

Scheduling the Funeral

Traditionally, the funeral is held as soon as it is reasonably possible to bring the family together. Often this is done within two or three days unless there are extenuating circumstances (such as family members having to travel a great distance). According to Jewish tradition, funeral services are not held on Shabbat, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, or the first or last day of the Festivals (Sukkot, Passover and Shavuot). This is observed within the Reform Jewish community as well.

If the funeral is to take place out of town and/or through another temple and its clergy, please contact Temple Beth Shalom’s office directly at 781-444-0077. Our community and clergy want to know about the loss in your family and offer personal condolences and support.

If the funeral is to take place in the Boston area through Temple Beth Shalom and with the guidance of our clergy, the funeral home will contact our Temple’s clergy directly. Our clergy will then call your family. Should you wish to contact the clergy directly at the Temple, you are welcome to do so. If you are not
able to reach a member of the clergy directly (either because it is after hours or Shabbat or he/she is not at the Temple at the time of your call), do not leave a message on voice mail. Please allow for either the Temple office staff or the funeral home to contact the clergy directly. All of the funeral homes are able to reach our clergy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If the death takes place out of town, but the funeral is to take place in the Boston area, the funeral home handling all of the arrangements will help take care of bringing your loved one back to the Boston area.

The role of the funeral home is to guide the family compassionately through the decisions that need to be made regarding the funeral (including the scheduling of the service, the choice of the casket, and information regarding the cemetery). The funeral home also sees to the care of a loved one prior to burial.

If the funeral service is to be held at Temple Beth Shalom, the funeral home will contact the Temple Administrator and the clergy to make necessary arrangements. Service arrangements can be finalized after discussions with the family, the rabbi, and the funeral home.

Selecting a Casket
While many different caskets are appropriate and made available through the funeral home, Jewish tradition emphasizes simplicity. This is intended to demonstrate the Jewish understanding that all souls are equal in both life and death.

Our Clergy’s Response
Our clergy and our Temple community are here for every family. Once the rabbi learns of a family’s loss, the rabbi will call the family directly to answer any immediate questions and to set a time to meet. During this time together, the family and the rabbi will talk about the funeral service and share information about the deceased. The rabbi also will explain what will happen graveside at the cemetery and discuss the different Jewish rituals that take place at home following a loss.

Additional information about the Jewish funeral service and rituals of mourning can be found later in this guide.

Temple Beth Shalom’s Response Following a Loss
When our rabbis learn of a loss in our congregation, they immediately inform the Temple office. The Temple sends this information via e-mail to our congregation’s leadership and to our Temple members who have asked to be informed of losses in our community. The Temple also notifies our “Shiva Committee” (lay people who reach out to those who have lost a loved one) and, as needed, to our Minyan Service Leaders (lay people who lead prayer
services, often referred to as “minyan services,” in a house of mourning).

**The TBS Shiva Committee**
Our Shiva Committee will call the family to offer condolences on behalf of the congregation. The Committee will offer to bring a meal to the house of mourning (shiva house), to assist in setting up food and to have someone from the congregation stay at the house of mourning while the family attends the funeral. This offer is extended because there are some who – recognizing that funeral notices commonly appear in the newspapers – prefer that a house not be left unattended during the time of a funeral.

**Minyan Service Leaders**
If a family has asked our clergy to provide minyan services to be held at the house of mourning during the shiva period, a member of our congregation’s Minyan Service Leaders group will call to schedule services. Our Temple Brotherhood coordinates the Minyan Services.

**Our Temple’s Leadership**
A member of our Temple’s Board of Directors also will contact a family in mourning and visit the shiva house if shiva is being observed locally.

**The Funeral Service**
The funeral service honors the deceased and provides comfort to those who are bereaved. The central part of the service is the eulogy which may be delivered by clergy and/or family members.

A traditional Jewish funeral service consists of the reading of psalms, poetry, the eulogy, and the recitation of special prayers (including *El Malei Rachamim*, Hebrew for “God, full of Compassion”) and the Mourner’s *Kaddish* (Judaism’s prayer of memorial). Traditionally, the casket is closed as we are taught to remember the deceased as he/she was in life rather than in death.

**Pallbearers**
It is considered an honor to escort the deceased to his/her final resting place. The family of the deceased may choose the pallbearers, who are usually members of the family or close friends. The funeral home usually inquires about a family’s preference regarding pallbearers.

**Children at the Funeral**
While attending a funeral may be helpful in mourning the loss of a loved one, this decision is best left to the family with clergy guidance, if needed.
Memorial Service
A funeral service can be held only if the body is present. In the absence of a body or in the presence of cremated remains (though cremation is not a traditional Jewish practice), a memorial service may be conducted at the request of the family and is very similar in content to a funeral service. Memorial services may be held in a number of different ways and under a number of different circumstances. Contact our clergy for guidance if you feel that a memorial service might be most appropriate for your family.

At the Cemetery
If the funeral service begins at either the Temple or the chapel of the funeral home, it will conclude graveside at the cemetery. Once the processional has arrived at the cemetery, the deceased will be escorted (either by the rabbi alone or by all who are present) to the place of burial. At the grave site, the casket will either remain raised during the closing prayers of the service or will be lowered prior to their recitation. This decision will be made by the family in consultation with the clergy prior to the funeral.

Once everyone has gathered, the funeral service will continue with additional prayers, including the recitation of the Mourner’s Kaddish, an ancient Aramaic prayer. Though this prayer does not specifically mention death, it does praise God as the Source of eternal life. It teaches us to continue the tasks of the living in spite of our loss and to carry on the values of those who have died.

Participating in the Burial of a Loved One
Jewish tradition considers this to be an act of love and honor. Traditionally, each mourner is invited to participate in the burial by placing three shovels of earth on the lowered casket. According to the Jewish tradition, when the first shovel of earth is placed, the back side of the shovel is used. This emphasizes that this is not an ordinary action, and as mourners, we are hesitant to perform this act. The mitzvah is completed with the shovel turned right side up. When one has finished, the shovel is placed back into the pile of earth, so the next person may use it. Traditionally, one does not pass the shovel to the next person as everyone should observe this ritual of his/her own will.

Also, the sound of the earth as it touches the coffin is said to emphasize the breaking of earthly bonds and the reality of the moment. Placing earth upon the casket is a mitzvah and is the last physical act performed to honor one who has died. Jewish tradition teaches that participation in the burial of a loved one is one of the greatest deeds that one person can do for another. The rabbis teach that because the deceased can never repay us, it is considered an act of complete selflessness and love.
When participating in the burial, many traditional Jews remain graveside until the grave has been completely filled by family and friends. Other families have each person place from one to three shovels of earth on the lowered casket, and then leave the remainder to the cemetery workers. Others choose not to participate in filling the burial place at all and leave this deed to the cemetery workers. The clergy and representatives of the funeral home will remain graveside until the casket is completely covered.

**Leaving the Cemetery**
Either the rabbi or someone from the funeral home will invite all present to form two lines facing one another so that the mourners might pass between them as they return to their vehicles. Traditionally, those standing in the line will offer words of condolence as the mourners pass, such as “May you be comforted amongst the mourners of Zion,” or more personal words.

**House of Mourning (Shiva House)**
It is customary to leave a bowl or pitcher of water with towels (paper or cloth) outside the house for people returning from the cemetery to wash hands. This symbolic gesture acknowledges the purifying of the living after contact with the dead.

Traditionally, the family lights a candle (a yahrzeit candle), which burns for seven days in memory of the deceased. The funeral home often provides the candle, and there is no required prayer when it is lit. Sometimes, at the time of the lighting, everyone present will gather together for either a moment of silence or for a few words. These can be personal thoughts, the reading of a poem or of another kind of reading selected by the family. The light of the candle symbolizes the soul. The book of Proverbs teaches, *The soul of man is the light of the Lord* (Proverbs 20:27).

Often family and friends will provide a “meal of consolation.” Often the meal includes foods that are round, such as rolls, bagels, and eggs. In Judaism, circles symbolize the cyclical, eternal and continuous nature of life. The meal is intended to remind those who mourn that even though they are in mourning, eating is important because it affirms life.

Often Minyan Services are held at the house of mourning, usually in the evenings, enabling the mourners to recite Kaddish. Sometimes, mourners also choose to attend the Temple’s Minyan Service (Monday and Thursday mornings at 7:00 a.m.). Traditionally, these services are not held at house of mourning on Shabbat (Friday night through Saturday). Instead mourners often choose to come to Temple.

The mitzvah of comforting mourners is fulfilled whenever one visits a house of mourning. According to Rabbinic tradition, this mitzvah is “one of the things
which brings good to the world.” The very act of coming to the house of mourning is an act of respect and comfort. While visiting, the most appropriate topic of conversation is about the life of the deceased.

People who visit a house of mourning should not expect to be served or offered food by any of the mourners. The mourners are not expected to be hosts and do not need to serve others. The door is unlocked or open, and you should not knock or ring the door bell. It is proper for relatives and friends to attend to the needs of the mourner and the household.

**Death of Those Who Observe Another Faith**

There are many in our Temple community who either observe a religious tradition other than Judaism or who have family members who are not Jewish. If a loved one who is not Jewish dies—whether that person is a member of our congregation or is related to a member of our congregation—our Temple Beth Shalom community and clergy are here to be of help and support.

The names of all of our loved ones can be recalled during Shabbat and weekday morning services by having their names included on our *Kaddish* list—a list of those who have died that is read prior to the recitation of the *Kaddish* prayer. Contact the Temple whenever your family experiences the loss of a loved one—regardless of that person’s faith tradition—so that we might share how our congregation and Jewish tradition might be a source of comfort.
III. Memorial Practices

Recalling Our Loved Ones at Temple Services
During the first 30 days following the funeral, (in Hebrew, a period known as sheloshim), the name of a family’s loved one is read aloud at Temple services immediately before the recitation of Kaddish. This does not require that a family be present at Temple during these services. It is our community’s way of mourning with each of our families.

If your family is present during a Shabbat evening service when the name of your loved one will be read, either for Yahrzeit (“anniversary of passing”) or because your loss is recent, it is our custom to invite you, if you feel comfortable doing so, to rise at your seat before our entire community stands. This gesture allows our congregation to be aware of those who are in mourning so that following services, people may more thoughtfully approach you. If you do not feel comfortable standing early for Kaddish, you are welcome to remain seated until the congregation rises.

Temple services are held several times throughout the week. Shabbat evening services are held on Friday evenings. Shabbat morning services usually take place twice on Saturday mornings. Weekday morning Minyan Services take place on Monday and Thursday mornings at 7:00 a.m. Please contact the Temple office or check the Temple website for a list of specific services and times.

The Memorial or Gravestone
The Hebrew word for gravestone or memorial is matzevah. Monuments that mark the gravesite are often placed and dedicated at any time during the year of death after the period of shloshim (30 days of mourning). Some mourners choose to wait a full year before establishing a memorial.

The Unveiling
The service for dedicating a gravestone is not intended to be a second funeral service but rather a way to further honor the memory of the deceased. The ceremony is simple and often has the officiant covering the memorial with a cloth before the ceremony begins and then removing the cloth at an appropriate moment—hence the name “unveiling.” This ceremony does not require the presence of a rabbi or cantor and can be prepared and conducted by family members. Our clergy can either lead this ceremony for you, send you a sample ceremony that you may use, or assist you in creating your own ceremony. Two of the prayers recited are the El Malei Rachamim and the Mourner’s Kaddish. (See page 16-17).
IV. Honoring a Loved One

The Giving of Tzedakah
Traditionally, mourners give tzedakah as a way of honoring a loved one. 
Tzedakah comes from the Hebrew root letters for “righteous.” Commonly understood, tzedakah is a “righteous” or charitable donation to a worthy cause. The giving of tzedakah is one way that Judaism emphasizes that even when our focus is on death, we continue to affirm the meaning and value of life. Donations may be given either to those organizations or causes that were important to a loved one and/or to the Temple through one of our funds.

Yahrzeit (“Anniversary of the Death”) at the Temple
Each year following the loss of a loved one, it is traditional to remember that person by lighting a yahrzeit candle at home. Such candles can be found in many supermarkets. During the week of the yahrzeit, that person’s name is read during Shabbat services. Many people choose to come to services when a loved one’s name is read.

Someone from the Temple office will contact your family to ask whether you would prefer to observe the yahrzeit anniversary according to the date on the English calendar or the date on the Hebrew calendar. Either is appropriate. The Temple will then make a note of your preference, and each year prior to the yahrzeit date, will send a reminder to your family. You may choose also to give tzedakah at this time of year as a way of honoring your loved one.

Yizkor Services (Services of Memorial)
Four times during the year, it is traditional for Jews to attend a special service called Yizkor (from the Hebrew word meaning “remember”). It takes place during the afternoon of Yom Kippur and on the last day of Sukkot (Simchat Torah morning in the Reform movement), Passover, and Shavuot. Our morning services most commonly take place at 7:00 a.m. Please check the Temple bulletin, website, or call the Temple office for more information about specific Yizkor Service dates and times. The Yizkor service offers us the opportunity to reflect not only on death, but also on life and its meaning. We remember those who were close to us and what they taught us through their words and actions.

Honoring a Loved One Through Naming
In the Ashkenazi (Eastern European) Jewish tradition, it is customary to name children after a loved one who is no longer with us. The giving of the name—whether in Hebrew or in English—is a way of not only honoring our loved one, but also of expressing a hope that the special qualities of that person might find their way into this new life. Contact our clergy for guidance and more information.
Perpetual Memorial at the Temple
Temple Beth Shalom has a number of ways to honor and remember a loved one.

Wall of Memorial – In our Temple sanctuary is a beautiful Wall of Memorial where your loved one’s name may be honored.

Tree of Life – Our Temple also has a Tree of Life wall sculpture that includes leaves to honor and remember our Temple community. Our Tree of Life Fund is used to support the work of our congregation.

Prayer Book or Torah Commentary – A prayer book or a copy of a Torah commentary may be dedicated to a loved one. Such a dedication is noted by a book plate on the inside cover of the book.

TBS Yom Kippur Memorial Book – Another way of honoring a loved one is by including his/her name in Temple Beth Shalom’s annual Yom Kippur Memorial Book – a special booklet published for the Yizkor Service that takes place on Yom Kippur afternoon. Information about this booklet is included with the High Holy Day packet sent to our congregation during the summer.
V. Glossary of Traditional and Reform Jewish Responses Following a Loss

Aninut – The Time Between Death and Burial
When death occurs, Jewish tradition teaches that the family enters a period of time known in Hebrew as Aninut (“grieving”). The traditional grieving period takes place over several stages. Aninut is the most intense of these stages as it is the period of time immediately after the loss. Aninut lasts from the moment of death until the time of burial. While many members of the family or friends of the deceased are in mourning, in Jewish tradition, those who are considered mourners are those who are part of the closest family circle in relation to the deceased. This includes the deceased’s mother, father, daughter, son, brother, sister, and spouse/partner. A mourner is known in Hebrew as an Onen.

During the time of Aninut, it is customary for only family and close friends to visit with those who are in mourning. The time period known as Shiva (the traditional seven days of mourning explained in greater detail later), does not begin until after the funeral and the burial.

Autopsies
Jewish tradition, mindful always of the body as being a gift from God, discourages autopsies, unless required by law or to provide either a medical benefit to the surviving family or to the immediate community (e.g., for the diagnosis of a genetic or infectious condition). Reform Judaism has no objection to autopsies for the purpose of increasing medical knowledge.

Cremation
Mindful that the body is a gift from God that should be returned to the earth in its given state, traditionally Jews do not engage in cremation. There are, however, some Reform Jews, for whom cremation is either necessary or preferable. Most Reform Rabbis will officiate at a funeral where cremation has taken place. Contact our clergy to inquire more about this choice.

El Malei Rachamin (“God, Full of Compassion”) 
This is a prayer for peace of the departed soul that is recited or chanted after the casket is lowered into the ground and at the unveiling.

Embalming
Embalming is a procedure that replaces bodily fluids with chemicals in order to preserve the body. While embalming is not in keeping with traditional Jewish burial (which emphasized the return of the body to the earth), it is sometimes done, and some Jewish funeral homes offer this option.
Kaddish Prayer
One of the most widely recognized prayers in all of Jewish liturgy; the Mourner’s Kaddish is a powerful statement of faith. Kaddish literally means “sanctified.” It is related to the Hebrew term kadosh, meaning “holy” or “special.” There is no mention of death in the prayer. Rather, it praises God and thereby affirms the importance of life and living. This prayer can be recited for family members during prayer services for up to a year and then at special times of memorial throughout the year. At Temple Beth Shalom, our entire congregation rises for the recitation of the Mourner’s Kaddish as a way of recalling our loved ones, those who have no one to recite the prayer for them, as well as for the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust.

Kriah (Cutting one’s clothing or wearing a torn black ribbon as a sign of mourning)
Upon hearing about the death of a loved one, Jews traditionally tore their garments to represent their broken hearts. This practice began in the Bible with Jacob, who, according to the Torah, tore his clothing when his sons brought Joseph’s bloodied coat to him (Genesis 37:34. and 2 Samuel 1:11 and Job 1:20).

Tearing a garment represents both the tear in the fabric of life and of the severing of a physical relationship. Traditionally, at the funeral, mourners are given a small, black ribbon which is cut prior to start of the service. The kriah ribbon is worn on the left side of one’s shirt when a parent has died, as it is closer to the heart, and on the right side when the deceased is related in another way. Traditionally, the kriah ribbon is worn throughout sheloshim (30 days of mourning). Many Reform Jews choose to wear the kriah ribbon during shiva or just during the day of the funeral. Others wear it for the full 30 day sheloshim period. Traditionally, as Shabbat is a time of peace and joy, the kriah ribbon is not worn.

Some extended family members (such as grandchildren and in-laws) also choose to wear a kriah ribbon for a period of time. Other Reform Jews choose not to wear them. The funeral home or the clergy will guide you as you consider this tradition.

Organ Donation
Reform Judaism recognizes the benefit of donating a body or specific organs to science, particularly if doing so will save a life. Arrangements for organ donation should be made in advance by indicating your preference on your driver’s license or by carrying an organ donor card.
**Shiva (The first seven days)**

The word *shiva* is a variation of the Hebrew word for “seven.” The traditional observance of *shiva*, the period of mourning, lasts for seven days and begins immediately after the funeral and burial (not the death). This observance is traced to ancient times, for the Torah tells us that Joseph mourned seven days after his father Jacob’s death. Many Jews observe the *shiva* period for less time, often for three days.

During this period, mourners remain at the house of mourning (also sometimes called the “*shiva* house”), refrain from normal activities, and receive the support of friends and family. Visitors to a *shiva* house offer comfort through their presence. An evening *minyan* prayer service may be conducted in the house of mourning by a member of our Temple community, a family member or a friend.

When the funeral or *shiva* takes place out of town, a family may extend the *shiva* period in their own home to allow their local community to express condolences.

On Shabbat, because this is a day of joy in the Jewish community, the mourning of *shiva* is traditionally interrupted, and the *kriah* ribbon is not worn. If a *Yom Tov* (major Jewish Holiday: Sukkot, Passover, or Shavuot) occurs during *shiva*, it traditionally not only interrupts *shiva*, but also brings the mourning period to a close.

If one who is in mourning is invited to a *simcha* (Hebrew for “joyous occasion”) during *shiva*, mindful of the solemnity of having experienced a loss, he/she might choose to attend the ceremony, but not necessarily the celebration following. Jewish tradition teaches that we should gradually return to life’s regular rhythm. Speak with our clergy if you have specific questions.

**Customs Associated with the Shiva Home**

Many of the following Jewish customs may be meaningful for you as you seek healing following your loss. Reform Judaism teaches that families should consider each of them, and then observe those traditions that they believe will bring comfort.

**Covering the mirrors** in a house of mourning is based on the teaching that when you are in mourning, you need not be concerned with personal appearance. This tradition, like many, is rooted in ancient folklore.

**Lighting a memorial candle** (usually provided by the funeral home) is said to symbolize the body and soul. The soul is attached to the body as the flame is to the wick. An electric light is also permitted.
Sitting on low seats dates back to biblical times. It reflects the lowered position of the mourner and is a way of physically expressing that life is not the same.

Not wearing leather symbolizes the relinquishing of luxury items during mourning. Since leather has historically been considered an item of luxury, wearing fabric slippers or sneakers is the tradition.

Taking a walk around the block on the final day of shiva indicates a return to life in the world.

**Sheloshim (The first 30 days)**
Sheloshim is the first 30 days following the burial. The word means “thirty” in Hebrew. While mourners take the next step in returning to the world and regular daily life there are still some things that are traditionally done to acknowledge the loss. The kriah ribbon is still worn. Mourners recite the Mourner’s Kaddish at services in memory of their loved one. Celebrations are kept to a minimum.

As with shiva, the occurrence of a major Jewish festival brings to an end the remainder of sheloshim. At Temple Beth Shalom, during this period we recall the names of our loved ones prior to recitation of the Mourner’s Kaddish.

**Shanah (The first year)**
*Shanah* (in Hebrew “year”) refers to the 11-month mourning period observed for the death of a parent. Jewish tradition teaches that one should say the Mourner’s Kaddish for 11 months following the death of a parent.

The custom of reciting the Mourner’s Kaddish for 11 months as opposed to a full year comes from a belief first expressed in the Talmud (Jewish legal literature from the 5th Century). There, it teaches that only those who are ‘least righteous’ require that Kaddish be said for an entire year. Understanding that everyone embraces righteousness in some measure, the rabbis reduced the time for reciting the Mourner’s Kaddish to 11 months for all.

**Shomer (One who sits with the deceased until the funeral)**
Jewish law teaches that, as a gesture of honor and respect, one does not leave the deceased alone. Some Jews, therefore, choose to have a shomer (“a protector/guardian”) remain with the body until the funeral service. Should you choose to engage a shomer, the funeral home will find someone. While he sits, the shomer traditionally reads psalms or studies sacred texts. The funeral home or our clergy are able to guide you as you consider this tradition.
**Tahara (Ritual preparation of the deceased’s body)**
In Jewish tradition, the body is ritually cleansed and purified before the funeral. This is done either by the funeral home or by a group of specially assigned people known in Hebrew as a Chevra Kadisha (“holy fellowship”). The funeral home or our clergy are able to guide you as you consider this tradition.

**Tachrichin (A linen garment worn by the deceased) and Tallit (Jewish prayer shawl)**
In Jewish tradition, the body is clothed in a garment known in Hebrew as Tachrichin (“shrouds”). These are white linen or muslin garments that are supplied by the funeral home. Similar to the tradition of choosing a simple casket, the tradition of dressing the body in shrouds emphasizes that we all leave this earth as equals. Shrouds are made without pockets as a way of showing that none of a person’s material possessions are taken with him/her after death. In Reform Jewish tradition, the dressing of the body in his/her own clothing is also acceptable.

Some families choose to have a loved one buried with a tallit. If so, the tallit’s tzitzit (“fringes”) on the corners are cut. The fringes (and their accompanying knots) symbolize the mitzvot (“holy deeds” that one is commanded to do in life). The tzitzit are cut because the deceased are not expected to perform mitzvot. Some Reform Jews observe this custom. The funeral home or our clergy are able to guide you as you consider these traditions.

**For More Information Regarding Loss**
More information regarding Judaism’s rituals and teachings about death and mourning can be found in our Temple library, in many bookstores, on-line, and through our clergy. Please feel free to contact our clergy or staff at the Temple.

*Birth is a beginning,*  
*And death a destination.*  
*And life is a journey,*  
*A sacred pilgrimage –*  
*To life everlasting.*  

- Alvin Fine
VI. Mourners Prayers

Mourner’s Kaddish

Let the glory of God be extolled, and God’s great name be hallowed in the world whose creation God willed. May God rule in our own day, in our own lives, and in the life of all Israel, and let us say, Amen. Let God’s great name be blessed for ever and ever. Beyond all the praises, songs, and adorations that we can utter is the Holy One, the Blessed One, whom yet we glorify, honor, and exalt. And let us say: Amen. For us and for all Israel, may the blessing of peace and the promise of life come true and let us say: Amen. May the One who causes peace to reign in the high heavens, cause peace to reign among us, all Israel, and all the world, and let us say: Amen.
El Malei Rachamin

God filled with mercy,
dwelling in the heavens' heights,
bring proper rest
beneath the wings of your Shehinah,
ami the ranks of the holy and the pure,
illuminating like the brilliance of the skies
the souls of our beloved and our blameless
who went to their eternal place of rest.
May you who are the source of mercy
shelter them beneath your wings eternally,
and bind their souls among the living,
that they may rest in peace.
And let us say: Amen

This translation is taken from the prayer book, Kol Haneshamah.
VII. Jewish Funeral Homes in Greater Boston

Brezniak-Rodman-Levine-Briss Funeral Directors
1251 Washington Street, Newton, MA 02465
617-969-0800 www.brezniakrodman.com

Goldman Fisher Funeral Chapel
174 Ferry Street, Malden, MA 02148
781-324-1122
800-982-3717

Levine Chapel
470 Harvard Street, Brookline, MA 02446
617-277-8300 www.levinechapel.com
800-367-3708

Levine-Briss Funeral Home
84 Mazzeo Drive, Randolph, MA 02368
781-963-2900 (South Shore Area)
800-554-2199 www.brezniakrodman.com

Schlossberg and Solomon Memorial Chapel
824 Washington Street, Canton, MA 02021
781-828-6990 www.schlossbergchapel.com

Stanetsky Memorial Chapels
1668 Beacon Street, Brookline, MA 02446
617-232-9300 www.stanetsky.com
800-842-9300

Stanetsky Hymanson Memorial Chapels
10 Vinnin Street, Salem, MA 01970
781-581-2300 www.stanetsky.com
800-842-4280

Stanetsky Memorial Chapels
475 Washington Street, Canton, MA 02021
781-821-4600 www.stanetsky.com
800-842-4280

Torf Funeral Chapel
151 Washington Avenue Chelsea, MA 02150
617-889-2900 www.torffuneralservice.com
VIII. Cemeteries

For a complete listing of cemeteries that serve the Jewish community please consult:

Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts (JCAM)
189 Wells Avenue
Newton, MA 02459
617-244-6509 or 800-752-JCAM
www.jcam.org
IX. Places To Buy Food Platters For Houses of Mourning

**Bagels Best**  
Needham, MA  
781-433-0003  
No charge to deliver in Needham. They prefer 24 hours notice, but will do their best to accommodate a _shiva_.

**Baker’s Best**  
Newton, MA  
617-332-4588  
[www.bakersbestcatering.com](http://www.bakersbestcatering.com)  
Delivery charge is $15.00. Kosher style. They prefer 24 hours notice, but will do their best to accommodate a _shiva_.

**Barry’s Deli**  
Waban, MA  
617-527-9773  
[www.barrysvillagedeli.com](http://www.barrysvillagedeli.com)  
Delivery charge to Needham is $10.00 to $20.00. They frequently do _shiva_ orders and are prepared to do so as quickly as possible. Kosher style.

**Rubin’s Deli**  
Brookline, MA  
617-731-8787  
[www.rubinskosher.com](http://www.rubinskosher.com)  
Kosher restaurant  
Will deliver to Needham. Fee varies. Will do best to accommodate a _shiva_.

**Sudbury Farms/Roche Bros.**  
Needham, MA  
781-449-2140  
[www.rochebros.com](http://www.rochebros.com)  
Delivery charge to Needham is $15.00, to Newton is approximately $20.00. They prefer lead time of 24 hours and 48 hours for hot foods.

**Zaftig’s Deli**  
Brookline, MA  
617-975-0075  
[www.zaftigs.com](http://www.zaftigs.com)  
There is a delivery charge. Call the catering manage for cost. They prefer 48 hours notice but will do their best to accommodate a _shiva_. Kosher style.

* Delivery charges listed are correct as of time of publishing.
X. Additional Resources

Bereavement and Jewish Tradition
Saying Kaddish: How to Comfort the Dying, Bury the Dead, and Mourn as a Jew

The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning, Maurice Lamm,

What Happens After I Die? Jewish Views of Life After Death,
Rabbi Rifat Sonsino and Daniel B Syme,

A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort: A Guide to Jewish Bereavement,

Comfort in the Shadow of Loss
Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal for Walking the Mourner’s Path

A Jewish Book of Comfort, Alan A. Kay, Jason Aronson Inc., 1993

On Life, Ethical Wills and Views on the Afterlife
The Death of Death: Resurrection and Immortality in Jewish Thought,

Jewish Views of the Afterlife, Simcha Paull Raphael, Jason Aronson Inc., 1996

So That Your Values Live On: Ethical Wills and How to Prepare Them,

Helping Children: Explaining and Coping With Death
Talking About Death: A Dialogue Between Parent and Child,

When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid’s Own Remembering Workbook for Dealing
with Shiva and the Year Beyond, Nechama Liss-Levenson, Ph.D., Jewish Lights

A Candle for Grandpa: A Guide to the Jewish Funeral for Children and Parents,
To everything there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under the heaven,
a time to be born, and a time to die.

~ Ecclesiastes 3:1-2