

When you hear of a death, say: Baruch Atah A-do-nai, Dayan Ha'Emet
Praised are You A-do-nai, Judge of Truth.

Burying our dead is a Mitzvah (a sacred commandment). Comforting the bereaved is also a Mitzvah. Let us help you.

Please contact the funeral home and the Rabbi—preferably before the person dies, but certainly immediately after the death. If the funeral is to be in a B'nai Zion cemetery, please also speak with the current Chair of the Cemetery committee. If you haven't already purchased a burial site, you will need to do so now. If you have a site, the Chair of the Cemetery committee works with the funeral home to appropriately mark the site.

Concerning the Burial:

- Jewish tradition prefers that the body be buried as soon after the death as possible. Sometimes delays are inevitable, and will be accommodated. Speak with the Rabbi about scheduling the funeral, but acceptable delays may include:
 - Jewish holiday immediately following the death. Burials should not take place on Shabbat or Holy Days.
 - Immediate relatives needing to travel long distances to arrive for the funeral
 - Legally required autopsy
 - If the body has to be transported a long distance
- In death rich and poor are alike. Burial is so that the body, which is a gift from God, should be allowed to return from “dust to dust.” Jewish tradition is to bury the body in a simple pine coffin. The body traditionally is dressed in a shroud (which the funeral home provides) and not in clothes. If the person traditionally wore a tallit, then the body is buried with the tallit over the shawl (however the tallit has the tzitzit cut off and often the “crown” removed).
 - You should not need to have a vault for burial. If the cemetery insists, you should be allowed to have an option of a liner inside the coffin, instead of a vault outside the coffin. The liner maintains the shape of the coffin (to avoid sink holes in the cemetery).
- Jewish tradition prefers no:
 - Autopsy (but it will be allowed if the local law requires it)
 - Embalming (but it will be allowed if the local law requires it)
 - Cremation (speak to the Rabbi if there is a request about cremation)

For the Funeral / Memorial Service, the Rabbi will need to know:

- Hebrew name (if any) of the deceased
- Names of the immediate relatives of the deceased – the ones who are officially in mourning are the:
 - Father, Mother
 - Sister, Brother
 - Spouse
 - Children
- The Rabbi will want to meet with the immediate relatives to discuss the mourning rituals and rules. Allow approximately an hour for this meeting.
- Please be ready to discuss with the Rabbi important things about the deceased's life. This helps the Rabbi prepare a fitting eulogy, and helps to honor the memory of the deceased.
- Discuss with the Rabbi any religious preferences (Hebrew usage; favorite prayers; head coverings; etc.)
- Consider whether family and/or friends would like to say something at the funeral ceremony.

- Would any of the mourners want to participate in a “kriyah” ceremony? In Jewish tradition, clothing or a ribbon being worn by the mourners are torn to symbolize that their life is torn, and not whole due to their loss. This can be done as soon as one learns about the death, or at the time of the funeral, either in front of everyone else at the funeral, or in a ceremony for family only. The Rabbi can provide ribbons.
- The Rabbi allows the family to choose whether they want a processional with Pall Bearers at the cemetery.
- The Rabbi allows the family to choose whether they prefer the coffin to be left above ground for the entire funeral ceremony; lowered during the ceremony; already in the open site when the mourners arrive for the funeral.
- Jewish tradition teaches us that it is the mitzvah of the mourners to actually bury their relative. Out of this mitzvah, some mourners choose to observe the tradition of placing at least a few shovel-fuls of dirt on the coffin, while it is already in the ground. Some mourners prefer not to observe this tradition. Please let the Rabbi know your preference, so that arrangements will be made with the funeral home to have shovels available at the funeral site.
 - Traditionally the shovel must be taken from the ground or from the mound of dirt. The shovel is not passed from one person to another, since the mourner should take upon themselves the mitzvah, and not feel coerced into taking the shovel by someone passing it to them.
 - Traditionally the first shovel-full of dirt is done with the shovel upside down. Although it is not very efficient at getting any dirt to stay on the shovel, it shows that the mourners take on the responsibility, but reluctantly.

Stages of Mourning

- Aninut: Between the time of death, and the time of burial, a mourner is considered an “onan” (for a male) or an “onenet” (for a female), which means, “one who is distressed.”
 - During this time the mourner is not obligated to any mitzvot, including prayer.
 - Kaddish is not traditionally said on behalf of the deceased until after the burial.
 - Traditionally, one does not cut hair, shave, or conduct business.
- Shiva: Means, “seven” and refers to the seven days that begin immediately after the burial. It ends the morning of the seventh day.
 - It is traditionally observed in the house of the deceased.
 - Traditionally the first meal should be prepared by friends and neighbors.
 - A “shivah” candle, lit and left to burn for seven days after the funeral, may be lit at the house where the mourners are. The Rabbi can arrange for each mourner to receive a candle for their own home, even if it is the only observance of shiva being done. The light is a symbol of the spirit of the deceased.
 - The Rabbi can arrange to have a minyan at the house of Shivah or at B'nai Zion so that Kaddish may be said for all or part of the Shivah period.
 - Some traditions include covering all of the mirrors in the house where one is sitting Shivah.
 - Celebrations are avoided by mourners during the week.
 - There is a tradition that new clothes are not worn during Shivah. The kriyah ribbon or clothing is usually worn the whole week.
 - All of Shivah observance is suspended for Shabbat during the week of Shivah.
 - If a Torah holy day occurs during the week of Shivah, it marks the end of the Shivah, even if seven days have not yet been completed.

- Sheloshim: Means, “thirty” and refers to the three weeks that follow the Shivah period, for a total of thirty days after the burial. For parents, this period is extended for a full year (or at least eleven months)
 - The name of the deceased will be read at all worship services when there is a minyan, and Kaddish will be said for the deceased. The mourners are encouraged to attend services to say Kaddish for their departed loved one for the month (or year, if it is for a parent).
 - Mourners traditionally do not attend celebrations during this period.
 - Traditionally new clothes are not worn during this period.
 - Some traditions include not cutting hair or shaving during Sheloshim.
 - If a Torah Holy Day occurs during the period of Sheloshim, it marks the end of the Sheloshim, even if thirty days have not yet been completed.

May Their Memory Be For a Blessing:

- Mourners’ Kaddish: The Kaddish is a prayer, written in Aramaic, which praises God. The prayer itself does not mention death. It is traditionally said for the deceased only after they have been buried. It traditionally requires a Minyan (at least ten adult Jews) to say it. It will be said at the funeral, each Shabbat evening and morning during the Sheloshim at B’nai Zion, it should be said at every minyan opportunity for a year, in the case of a parent, for the Yahrzeit, and at Yizkor services. Please contact the Rabbi if you would like some guidance about saying the words.
- Yahrzeit (annual anniversary of death): Remembering our loved ones includes saying Kaddish each year on the anniversary of the death. Please let B’nai Zion know if you prefer to be reminded of the secular anniversary date or the Hebrew calendar anniversary date. Please let B’nai Zion who should be contacted with a reminder about the Yahrzeit.
 - Since Kaddish is supposed to be said when a minyan is present (at least ten adult Jews), the tradition at B’nai Zion is to say Kaddish on the Shabbat at the end of the week of the anniversary. In other words, if the anniversary of the death falls between Sunday and Saturday, the name will be read and Kaddish will be said during Shabbat services on Friday and Saturday evening at the end of that week.
- Memorial Plaque: B’nai Zion has plaques with the name and Yahrzeit date (and usually birth date) of those whose families choose to provide a visual way of honoring the memory of their loved ones. Each year for the Yahrzeit, and four times a year at Yizkor (Memoria) Services the light next to the plaque with the name of the deceased is lit. Contact the B’nai Zion office if you would like to make a donation to have a Memorial Plaque installed.
- Yizkor: Each year towards the end of Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot the beloved are remembered at Yizkor (Memorial) services. B’nai Zion has a Memorial Book which is printed for the Yom Kippur Yizkor service each year, and continues to use for the other Yizkor services throughout the year. To include the name of those you would like to remember, please make a donation to B’nai Zion and contact the office before Yom Kippur to be included.

If you have any other questions or concerns, please contact the Rabbi or the B’nai Zion office.