

The Mourners' Guide

Congregation B'nai Torah

Sudbury, MA

July 2017

The Mourners' Guide

(Please Retain For Future Reference)

We are pleased to offer to you and your family this Mourners' Guide. The Guide was written to make available to the membership of Congregation B'nai Torah answers to some of the questions which may arise at the time of a death in the family. This is only a guide. We hope that this resource will help make a difficult time a little less stressful. Please remember that Congregation B'nai Torah is part of your extended family – ready and willing to help.

In the event of a death in your family, please call Congregation B'nai Torah at 978-443-2082. If there is no answer, please follow the directions for leaving a voicemail and contact Robin Berman, our administrator. The quickest way to reach Robin, in the case that there is no one answering the synagogue phone is via email: admin@bnaitorah.com. Robin will notify the Rabbi and will also be the point of contact should the funeral service take place at Congregation B'nai Torah. B'nai Torah has prayer books and kipot for use during the Shiva period for Minyan, which may be borrowed by calling the office. If a Minyan leader is needed, the congregation will help to arrange for one.

Cemetery Lots

The Towns of Sudbury, Wayland and Natick have Jewish Sections for burial of residents of their communities.

New Town Cemetery (Sudbury)

In the public, New Town Cemetery of Sudbury, there are five sections consecrated for Jewish use. This consecrated land is for Jewish families, including families with a non-Jewish partner.

Gravesites are available for purchase in the newest section for residents of Sudbury. At this time, the purchase fees are:

1 grave \$ 551 Week Day Opening of grave \$400

2 graves \$1101 Sunday Opening \$500

4 graves \$2201 Foundation \$45 per cubic foot

This includes perpetual care, with the additional \$1 being the cost of the Deed.

These lots can only be sold back to The Town of Sudbury at the purchase price. There are Principles and By-laws formulated by a joint committee of Congregation B'nai Torah and Congregation Beth El members, which govern these lots.

Please call Phyllis Kaufman at 978-443-9647 if you are interested in one of these sites or for further information.

Beit Olam

(Wayland)

The Jewish Cemetery Association of Massachusetts has consecrated land for this cemetery in Wayland. There are sections for all persuasions of Jewish faith and their non-Jewish partners. Town affiliation is not required. For information, please call Beit Olam Cemetery Association, Inc. at 617-244-6509.

Funeral Directors

The following Jewish funeral directors have been surveyed and are well versed in Jewish funeral practices. They will help you with all the details when meeting with you at the funeral chapel.

<p>Brezniak-Rodman Funeral Directors</p> <p>617-969-0800</p> <p>1251 Washington Street</p> <p>West Newton MA</p> <p>CLICK HERE for Brezniak-Rodman Website</p>	<p>Levine Chapels</p> <p>617-277-8300</p> <p>470 Harvard Street</p> <p>Brookline MA</p> <p>CLICK HERE for Levine Chapels Website</p>
<p>Stanetsky Memorial Chapel (Brookline)</p> <p>617-232-9300</p> <p>1668 Beacon Street</p> <p>Brookline MA</p> <p>CLICK HERE for Stanetsky Website</p>	<p>Stanetsky Memorial Chapel (Canton)</p> <p>781-821-4600</p> <p>475 Washington Street</p> <p>Canton MA</p> <p>CLICK HERE for Stanetsky Website</p>

Arrangements with Funeral Directors

Jewish funeral directors are extremely helpful in guiding individuals and families through the steps associated with end-of-life issues and with the many customs and rituals of Jewish death and mourning. Many people feel “unprepared” for the inevitable time when dying and death comes; others do not want to be a burden to children, siblings, spouses and other family members. For this reason, many people derive a great deal of comfort from making “pre-arrangements” for themselves and/or their loved ones with the funeral director when they are well and when they are able to clearly express their wishes while they are still healthy and vibrant and in a position to make decisions together with their family members. These pre-arrangements may be set up at any time and ensure relationships are established early on between families and funeral directors.

At the time of death – day or night, whether at home, at a hospital, or even out of town – the family of the deceased calls the funeral home and informs the funeral director or staff member of the death. A number of initial questions will be asked so that short-term and longer-term arrangements can be initiated. Among the questions that are often asked (if there has been no pre-arrangement) are:

- The name of the deceased in English and Hebrew (if applicable).
- The date and place of birth.
- The deceased's legal address, occupation, social security number and highest level of education.

Subsequent questions to be answered:

- Temple/synagogue affiliation.
- Preference as to where the funeral service will take place.
- Whether there is a burial plot and if so, its location.
- Requested day and time of the funeral.

During the meeting with the funeral director, the family will be given information and perhaps some choices about the preparation of the body for burial, the selection of a casket, the option of cremation, decisions about flowers at the funeral service/cemetery, where to direct friends and relatives who would like to make donations in memory of the deceased and what information the funeral director will put into the newspaper notices. The Rabbi will also help you with decisions in the areas of Jewish rites and customs, and if the family and/or the funeral director has specific questions.

Other services that the funeral director will discuss are:

- Obtaining Death Certificates (ask for more than you think you will need).
- Supplying acknowledgment cards for family members of the deceased to use to write personal notes following the funeral and burial.
- Providing memorial prayer books for the home.
- Finalizing newspaper announcements and gravesite arrangements.
- Selecting a casket – consider the “Temple Isaiah” casket, which is medium-priced, constructed of all wood, and meets the requirements for traditional Jewish burial.
- Determining whether the deceased will be dressed in the traditional Jewish shrouds for burial,
- Selecting those who will serve as pallbearers.
- Considering whether a canopy and chairs will be used at the gravesite for the immediate family.
- Establishing whether those attending the burial at the cemetery will be invited to participate in the *mitzvah* (Jewish deed) of helping to bury the dead by symbolically casting earth onto the casket -- either by hand or with a shovel.
- Clarifying whether the family requests limousine(s) and/or police escorts as part of the funeral cortege between the funeral home or synagogue and the cemetery.

Be sure to get all costs in writing.

Arrangements with the Rabbi

If you are a member of Congregation B’nai Torah or a first-degree relative of a member (parent, spouse, child, sibling), either you or the funeral home will contact the synagogue to inform and involve the Rabbi and the synagogue administrator so that you get the time and attention you need and deserve. The Rabbi will work together with the funeral home and the synagogue to confirm a date, time and location for the funeral service and burial. Traditionally, burial in Judaism takes place rather quickly – if possible, within 72 hours of death. Most often, the family of the deceased will schedule times to meet with the funeral director first and then with the Rabbi to discuss all of the details and help you make decisions if they have not already been made at an earlier time.

Since this meeting generally takes place after the family meets with the funeral director, the Rabbi will ask to get together with any/all (immediate) family members of the deceased to go over any questions that may still be unresolved and, most importantly, to get to know the deceased loved one through the eyes, hearts and direct experiences of those who were in his or her closest circle. The Rabbi will help move each family through the various choices to be made with respect to Jewish ritual practice so that family members can make informed decisions either individually or collectively that align with their lifestyle, wishes, and requests.

The Day of the Funeral and Burial

Services may be held at the funeral home or temple (depending on availability), followed by a graveside service; or can take place at the graveside only. In all cases, Jewish funeral services and burials are always conducted with closed caskets. For security reasons, on the day of the funeral, please arrange for someone to stay in the homes of all family members who are listed in the obituary notices. Upon hearing of the death, friends will ask if they can be helpful to you. This is one way they can.

Returning Home: The Process of Remembering

Following the interment service at the cemetery, family and friends return to the house of mourning. There is an old Jewish custom that suggests people wash their hands after leaving the cemetery or a house of mourning. For this reason, some families symbolically put a pitcher of water and towels outside near the front door so that those who were at the cemetery can wash their hands prior to entering the house of mourning.

Shiva: The Initial Days Following the Funeral and Burial: Upon returning home, the *Shiva* “seven-day” candle is lit and a meal of consolation (*Se’udat Havra’ah*) is shared. Traditional foods that symbolize life should be part of this meal. These include bread, hard-boiled eggs and lentils. The *Se’udat Havra’ah* is an important time for the family to be together to welcome those who have come to offer their condolences. It is customary to have a Jewish home-service in the home that includes memorial prayers in order to bring community and connection to the loved ones of the deceased and to help them mark time again as they begin to turn again slowly toward life and living. Families have options as to how many days and/or evenings and at what specific times they will receive family and members and friends who wish to visit to keep mourners company, express their condolences, and join the mourners for the home-services. This period of time is known as *Shiva* (meaning “seven”), and while families traditionally receive people at home for seven days after the funeral, many prefer to observe this intense stage of mourning for a shorter period of time. Holy days and festivals curtail the length of *shiva*, and Shabbat offers a welcome opportunity for the family to go to services and be welcomed and consoled by the congregation.

Sh'loshim: The First Thirty Days Following the Burial: The next designated period of mourning is *sh'loshim* (“thirty”), which ends on the thirtieth day following the burial. This period is not usually as intense as the first seven days (*shiva*); however, traditionally, a mourner does not attend any happy gatherings including parties or weddings during this month. When mourning for parents, some Jews will choose not to attend celebrations for eleven months. For other family members, this period extends to a full year.

Yahrzeit: The Yearly Anniversary of a Loved One's Death: Every year, the anniversary (*yahrtzeit*) of the death is observed with the lighting of a twenty-four-hour memorial candle, attending the synagogue service to hear the name of the loved one read aloud, saying the Mourner's Kaddish, and donating in memory of the deceased. Congregation B'nai Torah has memorial plaques located in the sanctuary where an inscription can be made with your loved one's name and date of death. There is also a Tree of Life available for a similar remembrance in the temple lobby. Along with any donation that might be considered on the Yahrzeit of a loved one's death, sponsoring an Oneg at that Friday evening's service is also possible.

Information for Friends of the Family

Prior to the Funeral

Friends should make specific offers of help to the grieving family. A person who has just had a death occur in their family is overwhelmed, even if the death is expected. It is often difficult for a mourner to say what needs exist. The best offer for help is a specific one!

Friends can:

- ▶ Offer to telephone anyone the family wishes informed of the death
- ▶ Provide meals for the family
- ▶ Help with carpools
- ▶ Transport family and friends to and from the airport, train or bus station
- ▶ Arrange for the meal of consolation (“Se’udat Havra’ah)– a detailed list follows
- ▶ Pick up the Minyan case at the temple the day before the funeral

Day of the Funeral

- ▶ House sit during the funeral or arrange for house sitting
- ▶ Offer transportation to the service, cemetery and house of mourning
- ▶ Set up the meal of consolation (“Se’udat Havra’ah)
- ▶ If the family is observant, make certain water and towels are at the front door

During Shiva

- ▶ Offer transportation for children and out of town family and friends
- ▶ Take care of shopping and other errands
- ▶ Arrange for meals to be brought into the house of mourning – it is best if one person coordinates

- ▶ Offer refrigerator or freezer space
- ▶ Help the family maintain a list of people who have brought items and/or run errands
- ▶ Make certain all items coming into the house are labeled with the names of the owners or contributors and made note of.
- ▶ Offer to return containers when no longer needed
- ▶ Pay a condolence call – it is a mitzvah
- ▶ Be present for a Minyan service as necessary

Preparing the Meal of Consolation- the First Meal Upon Returning Home from the Funeral and Cemetery (Se'udat Havra'ah)

This meal is not meant to be a banquet. Be sure to ask the family if they have any traditional foods they want served. Most people prefer a dairy meal. Deli platters are equally acceptable. The following is a list of suggested foods and supplies, any of which would be appropriate:

- Hard-boiled eggs (in some families, potatoes are traditional), signifying fertility and life
- Smoked fish, herring, lox spread, cheeses
- Tuna salad, egg salad
- Noodle pudding – already baked
- Challah, bagels, rolls, breads
- Fruit platter, fruit salad, Jell-O molds
- Pastries, cakes
- Coffee, tea, juices, milk, cream, soda, ice
- Paper Goods:
 - plates, cups – hot and cold
 - plastic forks, knives, spoons and serving pieces, napkins, plastic wrap, aluminum foil, paper towels, trash bags
 - Bucket or pitcher for water at front door
 - Thirty-cup coffee maker
 - Pad of paper to write down who brought what into the home.