



**Guide to Jewish Death  
and  
Mourning Customs**

*Congregation*

*B'nai Tikvah- Beth Israel*

## Table of contents

Preparing for death

*Vidui* – confessional

When a death occurs

Caring for the dead

Honoring the dead

Comforting the mourners

Memorializing the dead

Selected readings and resources

Appendixes

A. Checklist of what to do when someone dies

B. Whom to contact at different stages

C. Pre-planning information sheet

Glossary of Hebrew terms

This guide is focused on Jewish death and mourning customs and is not intended to address the sometimes very difficult medical, ethical and other issues associated with the end of life. Should you need any assistance in this regard, CBTBI is here to help you. It is recommended that you designate a healthcare agent to make medical decisions on your behalf, that you create a living will, and that you make family members aware of your general desires regarding your medical treatment and burial procedures. You should not hesitate to contact our Rabbi with any questions you may have.

*VIDUI* — CONFSSIONAL

When a person is nearing the end of his/her life, Jewish tradition provides an opportunity for spiritual guidance, comfort and fulfillment. It has become a powerful custom for someone to recite the *Shema* when they feel their life is ebbing away. There is also an ancient custom of reciting the *Vidui*, or confessional.

While we are more familiar with confessionals as part of the *Yom Kippur* liturgy, the deathbed confessional gives the dying person an opportunity to spiritually cleanse themselves and approach death without reservation.

In the event that someone is unable to recite the prayers, there is a version of the *vidui* that can be said on the dying person's behalf. Below is the English translation of both forms of the *vidui*.

By the individual:

My God and God of my ancestors, accept my prayer. Do not ignore my supplication. Forgive me for all the sins which I have committed in my lifetime. I am abashed and ashamed of these deeds I have committed. Please accept my pain and suffering as

atonement and forgive my wrongdoing, for against You alone have I sinned.

May it be Your will, Adonai my God and God of my ancestors, that I sin no more. With Your great mercy, cleanse me of my sins, but not through suffering and disease. Send a perfect healing to me and to all who are stricken.

I acknowledge to You, Adonai my God and God of my ancestors, be it Your will to heal me. Yet, if You have decreed that I shall die of this affliction, may my death atone for all sins and transgressions which I have committed before You. Shelter me in the shadow of Your wings. Grant me a share in the world to come.

Protector of orphans and Guardian of spouses left behind, protect my beloved family, with whose soul my own soul is bound. Into Your hand I commit my soul. You have redeemed me, Adonai, God of truth.

*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*

*Adonai Hu haElohim. Adonai Hu haElohim.*

Hear, O Israel: Adonai is Our God, Adonai is One.

Adonai is God. Adonai is God.

Read by another, if individual is unable:

Adonai, our God and God of our ancestors, we acknowledge that our life is in Your hands. May it be Your will that You send perfect healing to (name of infirmed). Yet, if it is Your final decree that s/he be taken by death, let it be in love. May her/his death atone for the sins and transgressions which s/he committed before You. Grant her/him a portion of the abundant good which is held in store

for the righteous, and give her/him life replete with joy in Your presence, at Your right hand forever. Protector of orphans and Guardian of spouses left behind, protect her/his beloved family, with whose soul her/his own soul is bound. Into Your hand s/he commits her/his soul. You have redeemed her/him, Adonai, God of truth.

*Sh'ma Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.*

*Baruch shem kevod malchuto l'olam vaed.*

*Adonai Hu haElohim. Adonai Hu haElohim.*

Hear, O Israel: Adonai is Our God, Adonai is One.

Praised be God's glory for ever and ever.

Adonai is God. Adonai is God.

#### WHEN A DEATH OCCURS

CBTBI is prepared to help. When your loved one has died and you want to plan his/her care and burial, please call the synagogue. During business hours, the best course is to call the synagogue at 856-589-6550 or [info@cbtbi.org](mailto:info@cbtbi.org). They will notify the rabbi. If you are unable to reach someone in the office, please call Rabbi Gendra on his cell phone at 267-970-0044. Rabbi Gendra will advise families concerning traditional practices and requirements.

If a loved one dies on Shabbat, you may contact the rabbi and you may also wish to contact the funeral home to remove the deceased (the *meit / meitah*). It is inappropriate, however, to make funeral arrangements on Shabbat.

#### Making Funeral Arrangements

Jewish law requires that burial take place as quickly as possible, usually within 24 hours of death. Burial may be delayed for legal reasons, to transport the deceased, to enable close relatives to travel long distances to be present at the funeral/burial, or to avoid burial on Shabbat or a holy day. You should contact Rabbi Gendra before contacting a funeral home or making other funeral commitments. He will offer assistance concerning traditional Jewish practices, scheduling and will help to notify the Community so that you can be assisted and supported through the funeral and mourning period.

Local Jewish funeral homes that are used by our community:

§ Platt Memorial Chapels Inc. Address: 2001 Haddonfield-Berlin Rd, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003. Phone: (856) 428-9442

§ Goldsteins' Rosenberg's Raphael-Sacks address: 6410 N Broad St, Philadelphia, PA 19126. Phone: (215) 927-5800

§ Joseph Levine & Sons. Address: 4737 Street Road, Trevese, PA 19053. Phone: (215) 942-4700

## CARING FOR THE DEAD

### *Autopsies/Organ Donations*

The practice of routine autopsy is contrary to Jewish law, since it is viewed as a desecration of the body. In cases where an autopsy is required by law or for immediate medical benefit, Jewish law allows for the procedure, which is customarily performed in a respectful, surgical setting. Rabbi Gendra should be contacted for guidance and support.

In 1995, the Conservative Movement adopted a legal position that organ donation is a mitzvah ([www.uscj.org/images/Organ\\_and\\_Tissue\\_Donation.pdf](http://www.uscj.org/images/Organ_and_Tissue_Donation.pdf)). Although organ donation may involve some alteration of the body, it is viewed as an example of *k'vod hameit* (respect for the deceased) by bringing healing to the

living. Willing certain organs or tissues is recommended and is considered a mitzvah. The rabbi should be consulted in all cases to assist and support the family in their decision-making.

### *Sh'mira – Guarding the Body*

Jewish tradition encourages, as an act of great respect, that the *meit/meitah* not be left alone prior to burial. Hospitals should be requested to avoid disturbing the deceased until the arrival of a *shomer/et* (guardian). *Shom'rim* should not be members of the immediate family. Usually the *shomer/et* reads *T'hillim* (Psalms) or other sacred texts, while sitting near the body.

### *Taharah – Ritual Purification*

Jewish law requires, as an expression of respect, that the deceased be washed, purified and dressed according to a prescribed ritual. Members of a group of trained persons from the *Chevra Kadisha* are available to perform this mitzvah.

*Taharah* is performed soon after a person dies and as close to the time of the funeral as possible, but is never performed on Shabbat. Family members do not perform *taharah* for other family members.

*For myself and my loved ones, why should I follow Jewish tradition regarding taharah and related practices?*

Unlike the “death as a business” practices which have arisen in some funeral homes, a properly performed *taharah* follows Jewish law and tradition in treating the body of the deceased with the utmost respect. Care is taken to make sure that the person is treated with kindness, modesty and respect. The *taharah* team is trained to cleanse, ritually purify and dress the body while making sure the body is not harmed. With *sh'mira*, the deceased is never left alone and is surrounded by a spiritual atmosphere of community members reciting sacred texts. It should give a family great comfort to know that members of the community are caring for the deceased in a way that our ancestors have done from generation to generation. For

these reasons, *taharah* and related practices are the appropriate Jewish practices for the last of the life cycle events, death.

#### *Tachrichim – Traditional Burial Attire*

If one is being buried according to Jewish tradition, one is buried in *tachrichim* rather than regular clothing. *Tachrichim* are plain white cotton or linen garments, as prescribed by Jewish law, to demonstrate the equality of all individuals in death. A Jewish male is customarily buried wearing a *kippah* and his own *tallit* (with the fringes cut, to show that it will no longer be used). If desired, he may be buried in his *kittel*. If a Jewish woman customarily wore a *kippah* and/or a tallit, she should be buried in them as well. It is also a custom to sprinkle earth from Israel into the coffin and onto the *meit/ah* as a way of connecting the deceased to the holy land of Israel. Broken shards of pottery, symbolizing the fragility of life, are laid over the deceased's eyes.

#### *Embalming / Cremation*

Jewish tradition does not permit the embalming of the deceased unless it is required by civil law. Cremation is against Jewish tradition because it is considered *nivul hameit*, an act of desecration of the deceased. Should a family ignore Jewish tradition regarding cremation, the rabbi may still choose to officiate in a memorial service at the funeral home prior to cremation. Ashes should be interred in a Jewish cemetery. The urn should have an opening so the ashes come in contact with the earth.

#### *Aron - Coffin*

In order to avoid interference with the natural process of returning to the earth, Jewish tradition requires that a coffin be made entirely of wood, without nails or metal decoration. It is suggested that, in keeping with the spirit of modesty in Jewish burial customs, the *aron* be simple yet dignified (e.g., a plain pine box, no metal or decoration). In many areas a vault is required by civil law and is

therefore permitted. In the event that a vault is used, a significant amount of earth should be shoveled into the vault before it is sealed.

## HONORING THE DEAD

### *K'riah - Rending of Garments*

Mourners for parents, spouses, children, and siblings participate in the rite of k'riah usually just prior to the funeral service. K'riah is an ancient tradition which can be traced to biblical times. This rite consists of tearing a visible portion of clothing (lapel, pocket, or collar, for example). The custom today is to cut a black ribbon which children of the deceased wear on the left side over the heart and other mourners wear on the right. During this ritual, mourners stand to signify strength at the time of grief, and they recite a prayer acknowledging the inevitability of death. The torn garment is worn throughout *sh'loshim*, the 30-day mourning period, except on Shabbat.

### *Who is a Mourner?*

Jewish tradition wisely provides us with laws and customs that help us grieve and honor our deceased loved ones. Mourners are those who are immediately related to the deceased – mother, father, sister, brother, husband, wife and child.

From the moment of death until the burial, each of these immediate relatives is considered an onen/et. During this period, the onen/et has no religious obligations except to attend to the practical necessities of arranging for the funeral. Once burial has occurred, the seven immediate categories of relatives are considered mourners. Rabbi Gendra strongly recommends that Jewish mourning practices be observed for Jewish and non-Jewish relatives. Please call him to discuss any questions you may have.

### *Funeral Services*

In the CBTBI community, funeral services are usually held at one of the Jewish funeral homes in the area or in the sanctuary if the deceased was a member at the time of death and requested by the family. Alternatively, there may be instances where they may be held graveside. In the event of a relative being buried far away, sometimes mourners will want a memorial service to honor their deceased loved one. Rabbi Gendra can offer you guidance.

The funeral service is usually brief and simple. The bereaved family sits at the front of the chapel or synagogue. The closed coffin remains in view covered by a pall. The service includes psalms and inspirational readings. The eulogy highlights the enduring qualities of the deceased. Often family members offer personal reflections on their loved ones. It is recommended that no more than one representative of each generation speak (or that other appropriate measures be taken to streamline the process) so that the service is not overly lengthy.

The service ends with the memorial prayer *El Malei Rachamim* (literally, “God full of compassion”). It expresses the hope that the deceased will be granted eternal peace. Fraternal ceremonies and instrumental music are generally not appropriate.

#### *Should Children Attend?*

The presence of children at a funeral is ultimately a family decision. Recent work in psychology suggests that children may be more frightened by what they imagine occurs at funerals than what actually happens. So from the age of 8 or 10 on, it is generally thought that children should be permitted to attend funeral and cemetery services. For children younger than this, attending just the funeral services might be a good way to help them say goodbye and be with their family.

Often friends or relatives are assigned to support the younger children so that their parents can grieve.

#### *Pall and Pallbearers*

The coffin may be covered with a specially prepared cloth called a pall and is accompanied by family or friends (pallbearers) selected by the mourners. Pallbearers can be male or female; usually six or eight individuals are given this honor. Mourners do not serve as pallbearers. As a sign of respect, the coffin precedes the mourners, family and friends. Typically the pallbearers accompany the coffin, assist in lifting it into the hearse and accompany it from the hearse to the grave at the cemetery. The pallbearers customarily stop several times while carrying the coffin to the grave.

### *Flowers*

Flowers are not a customary part of Jewish mourning practices. Friends and associates of the deceased who wish to show some concrete expression of condolence should be encouraged to contribute to a charity which was of importance to the deceased or support the mourners by sending food for meals during the shiva period.

### *K'vura - Burial*

In traditional practice, the coffin is lowered into the ground and the grave filled, initially using a reversed shovel, until a mound of earth is formed over the coffin. This practice allows us to perform the last mitzvah upon us to care for our loved ones by performing their burial ourselves, and not leaving it to strangers. The burial service is simple, consisting of a psalm, the chanting of *El Malei Rachamim* and the recitation of Kaddish. If the deceased was a veteran, arrangements can be made ahead of time for an honor guard to be present at the grave for the playing of Taps and for presentation of an American flag to the spouse or the family. Please discuss this with the funeral director and the rabbi.

### *What is Kaddish?*

An ancient prose poem, Kaddish praises God for life and anticipates peace on earth. It has five variations. One is the mourner's Kaddish, intended as a statement

of faith at a time when we feel most threatened and fragmented. Kaddish is said only in the presence of a minyan.

### *Geniza*

In Jewish tradition, sacred Jewish texts that bear God's name and have become damaged or unusable are treated with reverence and respect by being buried. Sometimes texts are buried in a *geniza*, a special burial chamber. Burying sacred scrolls and books with a deceased person is regarded as a special mark of esteem both for the individual who passed away and for the texts.

### *Leaving the Grave*

It is customary for the mourners to pass between two rows of friends and family who recite the traditional expression of consolation, "May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem." With this shift from honoring the dead to consoling the bereaved, the official mourning period begins.

Before entering the home, mourners and those who have been to the cemetery customarily pour water on their hands as a symbolic act of purification and an affirmation of life after involvement with death. Alternatively, this practice may be performed at the cemetery.

Mourners should not serve as hosts or entertain people after the funeral. It is customary for family and friends to arrange for a condolence meal (which traditionally includes bagels and round foods such as eggs or lentils suggesting the continuity of life) to be served to the mourners when they return from the cemetery. Since eggs are one of the few substances that become harder when subjected to heat, hard boiled eggs are included as a symbol of strength and life.

Shiva is the seven-day period of intensive mourning observed by family members beginning on the day of burial. During the entire *shiva* period, mourners are encouraged to stay away from work or school, to remain at home, and to use the period of *shiva* to reflect on the deceased's life and legacy. Public mourning observances are suspended on Shabbat. Mourners attend Shabbat services, but they are not given an aliyah, do not conduct the services, and do not display the *k'riah* - torn fabric or ribbon publicly. A major festival terminates *shiva* (for details consult the rabbi).

It is customary for the mirrors in the *shiva* house to be covered, for the mourners to be provided with lower chairs on which to sit, for a seven-day memorial candle to be kindled, and for the mourners to refrain from wearing leather shoes and from shaving. Conversation should focus on the deceased and on consoling the mourners. It is acceptable to display some photographs of the deceased. When approaching a mourner, it is customary that you do not ask the person how they are doing and that you wait for the person to speak to you. It is good to ask the mourner about their loved one, their work / interests / family / legacy. It is recommended that you say something like "I am sorry for your loss" or you share your memories or impressions of the deceased.

During the *shiva* period (except on Shabbat), Kaddish is said at home in the presence of a *minyan* – at one's home and at the synagogue for morning services. The mourners may conduct the services in the home, or they may designate others to do so. If requested by the family, CBTBI will assist in arranging and leading evening services and making sure that prayer books are available for the services.

### *Sh'loshim – The First Thirty Days*

During the thirty days following burial (except *shiva*), mourners return to work and normal activities but refrain from public entertainment or social activities. The *k'riah* ribbon is customarily worn during sh'loshim in a hidden place such as the inside of a garment, pocket or in a pocketbook / wallet. If you ripped a

garment of clothing, that clothing is no longer worn and can be repaired after the thirty days.

### *Shanah - The First Year*

Rabbi Gendra is available to advise on how to observe traditional restrictions of mourning and honor one's family during the year. Within the CBTBI community, Rabbi Gendra encourages one who is mourning a deceased parent to attend services to recite Kaddish for eleven months and one day.

## MEMORIALIZING THE DEAD

### *Yahrzeit - Anniversary of Death*

The yahrzeit is the anniversary of a death (not burial) in the Jewish calendar, and is observed each year by reciting Kaddish at the synagogue, lighting a memorial candle at home, and giving tzedaka in memory of the deceased. CBTBI mails out a reminder notice in advance of the yahrzeit date. Yahrzeits are announced during Kabbalat Shabbat services on the Shabbat before the yahrzeit. Those observing a yahrzeit sometimes host a light breakfast in the synagogue after the service is concluded to honor the memory of their loved one and thank the participants in the minyan for sustaining the service.

### *Yizkor - Memorial Prayers*

Yizkor, a memorial prayer service, is recited within congregational worship services four times a year: Yom Kippur and the three major festivals, Shemini Atzeret, which comes at the end of Sukkot, the last day of Pesach, and the second day of Shavuot. A mourner is considered exempt from the first three yizkor services after the loved one's death due to the intense nature of grief in the first year of mourning.

### *Headstones*

Jewish law requires that a grave be marked, but neither the type of marker nor the inscription itself is specified. Cemeteries have varying requirements about size and placement of such markers. Inscriptions usually include the name of the deceased in Hebrew and in English as well as the date of birth and date of death. Sometimes other information is noted or a quotation about the person is added. Many end with five Hebrew letters: ת נ צ ב ה , which are an abbreviation for the phrase “t’hi nishmato/nishmata tzrura b’tzror hechaim” (May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of life). Please contact the office of the cemetery to order the headstone.

### *Unveiling*

The unveiling is not required by Jewish law, but has become a strong custom in America. The ceremony often includes the recitation of a few psalms, the chanting of memorial prayer *El Malei Rachamim*, mourner’s Kaddish, and a few words spoken about the deceased. It may be held any time after *sh’loshim* and it is often held before and near the first *yahrzeit*. Family members often conduct these simple services. Rabbi Gendra has compiled a booklet to help families plan and lead an unveiling service.

## SELECTED READINGS

Books, articles and websites that offer fuller discussion of Jewish bereavement and funeral traditions:

- William Cutler, ed., *The Jewish Mourners Handbook* (West Orange, New Jersey: Behrman House Publishing) 1992.
- Jewish Funerals, *Burial, and Mourning* (published by *Kavod v'Nichum* and the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington) Web. <<http://www.jewish-funerals.org/>>.
- Isaac Klein, ed., *A Guide to Religious Practice* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav Publishing) 1979.
- Ron Wolfson, *A Time to Mourn, a Time to Comfort* (Philadelphia: Jewish Lights Publishing) 1996.

Books that can be a source of comfort:

- Martin Cohen, ed., *Our Haven & Our Strength: The Book of Psalms* (New York: Aviv Publishing) 2004.
- Sidney Greenberg, ed., *A Treasury of Comfort*, (North Hollywood, California: Wilshire Books) 1970.
- Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books) 1981.
- Jack Reimer, ed., *Jewish Reflections on Death* (New York: Schocken Books) 1974.

## APPENDIX A

## Checklist of what to do when someone dies

### *If pre-planning has occurred:*

- . Contact the funeral director (who should have a list of arrangements).
- . If it is during business hours, contact the CBTBI office at 856-589-6550 and ask to speak to Rabbi Gendra. If it is Shabbat, or if it is after business hours, contact Rabbi Gendra on his cell phone at 267-970-0044.
- . Contact the funeral home again to arrange a time for the funeral service.

### *If pre-planning has not occurred:*

- . If during business hours, contact the synagogue office at 856-589-6550 and ask to speak to the Rabbi Gendra
- . If it is Shabbat, or if it is after business hours, contact Rabbi Gendra on his cell phone at 267-970-0044.
- . After discussion with Rabbi Gendra, contact a Jewish funeral director to arrange for someone to pick up the body and to discuss available times for the funeral. Contact a Jewish cemetery to discuss burial arrangements.

### Whether or not pre-planning has occurred:

#### Notification:

- .Start to notify close family and friends. Try to get a sense of the soonest date/time you can hold the funeral.
- .Make a list of people to notify regarding the death. The list should include family members, friends, employers, (of both the deceased and of family members), co-workers, community members, and neighbors. Others to be contacted include (if applicable): insurance carriers, Veterans' Administration, financial consultant and medical providers.

.Have family members, close friends, the synagogue office and / or sisterhood members assist you in relaying information about the death, the funeral arrangements and the shiva arrangements.

.Contact the doctor to fill out any paperwork.

.Prepare death notice and any obituary with the funeral director.

.Designate charitable organization(s) to receive donations in the name of the deceased. Please consider including Congregation B'nai Tikvah Beth Israel.

#### Funeral and burial arrangements:

. Access vital information, including death certificate, Hebrew name, organ donation request (if applicable), and burial plot information.

. Determine the dates of shiva and times for visitation and shiva minyanim (traditionally 7:30 pm). Decide how many days you will sit shiva.

. Arrange for shiva minyanim (contact CBTBI Office at 856-589-6550.) A leader of the evening shiva minyan will be provided by CBTBI.

. Confirm funeral and burial arrangements with Rabbi Gendra, the funeral home and the cemetery. Confirm shiva arrangements with Rabbi Gendra and the funeral home.

. If the deceased had a tallit, decide if s/he should be buried with it. Alternatively, it may be kept as a family heirloom and the funeral home can provide you with a tallit for burial.

. Decide who will participate in the funeral service and consult with the service officiant regarding the eulogy.

. Estimate the number of funeral attendees.

. Appoint pallbearers. If there are individuals who may be unable to physically handle this task, you may appoint them “honorary” pallbearers.

. Arrange for transportation to and from the funeral home and to and from the cemetery. This is often done through the funeral home.

. Some mourners may wish to practice reciting mourner's Kaddish.

. If children are attending the funeral, arrange to seat them with a babysitter or other responsible adult who will not mind leaving the service with them if necessary.

. At the funeral, give out directions to the family home.

At the family home:

. Arrangements for the meal of comfort, s'eudat havra'ah, can be made by members of the extended family, friends or members of CBTBI. Mourners should not have to make arrangements.

. Cover mirrors in the home.

. Place a pitcher of water, a basin, and towel outside the front door, to be used by funeral returnees for washing of hands before they enter the home. If using paper towels, provide a small waste bin. (This may also be done outside the cemetery).

. Designate a friend / relative / CBTBI member who can set a schedule for meal preparation/delivery by friends and extended family. Set a schedule for meal preparation/delivery by friends and extended family.

. It can be helpful to arrange for the delivery of groceries and other necessities during the shiva week.

. Low chairs or cushions for the mourners' seating, prayer books for services, and kippot (head coverings) for guests can be provided by the funeral home and the congregation. Notify the Rabbi or the CBTBI office with any special concerns.

## APPENDIX B

### Whom to Contact at Different Stages

To notify the clergy, synagogue and Chevra Kadisha Committee of the death of a loved one:

- Call the CBTBI office at 856-589-6550 to speak to the Rabbi.
- If unable to reach anyone in the office, contact Rabbi Gendra on his cell phone at 267-970-0044.

To make arrangements with a local Jewish funeral home

To order a gravestone from companies in the gravestone business serving the South New Jersey area please contact the office of the cemetery.

To inquire about how your loved one can be memorialized at CBTBI:

- Contact the office at 856-589-6550 .

To include the name of a loved one in a yearzeit plaques:

- Contact the office at 856-589-6550.

## APPENDIX C

### Pre-Planning Information Sheet

The following information sheet will help to assemble basic information needed by survivors. We encourage families to fill out the form and to keep it available. It is difficult to make decisions when the death of a loved one has just occurred. Preparing a will and advance directives can reduce anxiety and anguish, as can advance purchase of grave sites and planning for burial arrangements.

Full name \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew name \_\_\_\_\_

Father & mother's Hebrew names \_\_\_\_\_

Kohen, Levi or Yisrael \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's maiden name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Where card is kept: \_\_\_\_\_

### Bank accounts

Account numbers, type (checking or savings), and location (name of bank, local branch): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Where passbook(s) is/are kept: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Lawyer

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Will/Living will/Organ donation card: \_\_\_\_\_

Which do you have and where they are kept: \_\_\_\_\_

**Financial adviser**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Life insurance**

Company name: \_\_\_\_\_

Agent: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy #s: \_\_\_\_\_

Where policies are kept: \_\_\_\_\_

**Health insurance**

Company name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Policy #s, group #s, etc: \_\_\_\_\_

Where card/information is kept: \_\_\_\_\_

**Safe deposit box**

Box #: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Where key is kept: \_\_\_\_\_

**Real estate and how title is held**

\_\_\_\_\_

—

\_\_\_\_\_

—

\_\_\_\_\_

**Securities**

What they are: \_\_\_\_\_

Where they are kept: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Military service**

Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

Service #: \_\_\_\_\_

VA claim #: \_\_\_\_\_

Government insurance #: \_\_\_\_\_

Where papers, including discharge papers, are kept: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of birth and location of birth certificate**

Place of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Burial plot: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_

Deed number: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Rabbi to be notified: \_\_\_\_\_

**Funeral home**

Choice, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Letter on file, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

Where charitable contributions should be made

## GLOSSARY OF HEBREW TERMS

Aliyah: The honor of being called to the Torah

Aninut: The period of time between death and the funeral

Aron: Coffin

Aveil/Aveilah: The Hebrew term for a mourner after the funeral. Before burial the term onen/et is used

Chesed Shel Emet: A true act of kindness performed without ulterior motive

Chevre Kadisha: Literally, holy society; a group of individuals who prepare a body for burial

Geniza: Special burial chamber for damaged sacred books and ritual articles

Hinuch: Education

Kippah: Skullcap

Kittel: A white robe worn by some individuals on the High Holidays

K'riah: Tearing of a garment or ribbon as a sign of mourning

K'vod Hameit: Honoring the dead

K'vura: Burial

Meit/Meitah: Literally, the dead one. The Hebrew term for the deceased

Minyan: Prayer quorum, minimum of 10 Jews of b'nei mitzvah age or older

Mitzvah: Commandment

Nichum Aveilim: The mitzvah of consoling the mourners

Nivul Hameit: An act of desecration of the deceased

Onen/Onenet: Hebrew term for a survivor between the time of death and the funeral

S'eudat Havra'ah: Meal of comfort

Sh'ma: The central prayer in the Jewish prayer book

Shiva: Literally, seven; the name given to the first stage of mourning, which begins after the funeral

Shiva: Evening prayer services during the Shiva period, at which a prayer quorum is present

Sh'lichei Tzibbur: Service leaders

Sh'loshim: Literally, thirty; the second stage of mourning, which lasts for thirty days after the funeral

Shomer/Shomeret: Guardian; he/she who watches over the meit/ah until the funeral service

Tachrichim: Shrouds; the traditional burial garments

Tahara: Literally, cleansing; the ritual washing of the body, performed by the Chevra Kadisha

Tallit: Prayer shawl

T'hellim: Psalms

Tzedaka: Charity

Vidui: Confessional prayer

Yahrzeit: The anniversary of the date of death according to the Hebrew calendar

Yizkor: The memorial service

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