

# **Temple Adath Yeshurun**

## **Guide to**

### **Funeral Practices and Mourning Customs**

This guide has been prepared to explain Jewish funeral practices and mourning customs and to help the mourner work through grief within the time-honored traditions of Judaism. Those traditions are governed by certain principles such as the Mitzvah of accepting the reality of death, respecting the dead by according the dead the honor of a proper burial, and establishing limits to mourning. Ultimately, it is hoped that the principles and practices of Judaism will aid the mourner to return fully to life and to be brought closer to the Source of Life, in whose unity no one is alone and every life finds purpose.

The reader is encouraged to both read the guide now when the heart is not heavy-laden and consult it when death occurs. The rabbi is happy to answer any questions, and the Caring Committee is available in times of need.

“Judaism teaches us to understand death as part of the Divine pattern of the universe....Mortality is the tax we pay for the privilege of love, thought, and creative work.”

## **TEMPLE ADATH YESHURUN GUIDE TO FUNERAL PRACTICES AND MOURNING CUSTOMS**

When there is a death in the family, there are practical decisions regarding the funeral that must be made. At that moment it is often difficult to make rational decisions under such emotional stress. We have published this **Temple Adath Yeshurun Guide to Funeral Practices and Mourning Customs** to help members of TAY begin discussion about these emotional issues.

### **Whom do I call when someone dies?**

After a doctor pronounces the death of a person, the rabbi and funeral home should be notified. The rabbi will begin working with you to make necessary arrangements, while the funeral home will make arrangements to transport the body from the place of death to the funeral home. Most of the Jewish funerals in Manchester have been arranged through Goodwin's Funeral home or Durning's Funeral Home, both of which have copies of this guide.

### **How do I schedule the funeral?**

Scheduling the funeral is the first thing that must be addressed after a death occurs. Both the rabbi and the funeral director must be contacted. The family's wishes must be coordinated with the rabbi and the funeral director to determine the date and time. The place, too, should be considered carefully:

- The Temple
- The Funeral Home
- The Cemetery Chapel
- The Graveside

### **How do I choose a casket?**

This usually takes place at the funeral home. Traditionally, an all wood, moderately priced casket is used. If you are using either of the funeral homes mentioned in this guide, they are aware of our selection and therefore the meeting with the funeral director may take place at your home, eliminating the difficult task of choosing a casket at the funeral home.

### **How do I secure a grave?**

Contact the Temple office to reach the Cemetery Chairperson who can assist you in purchasing a grave in the Temple Adath Yeshurun Cemetery located on South Beech Street. One should not wait until a death occurs to purchase a family plot or grave, but should do so in an atmosphere free from the stress of death.

### **What expenses will I have in conjunction with a funeral?**

While there is no charge for the use of the Temple or the Cemetery Chapel, the cost of the grave, its opening and closing, will be billed through the Temple office.

In addition, the funeral home will charge for services rendered, which include services of the funeral home staff, transfer of body to funeral home, use of facilities and equipment, embalming (when necessary), Shiva candle, the casket, hearse, limousine, and any other personal services performed (such as obtaining certified copies of the death certificate, newspaper notices, organist, and a cantor should you opt for one.)

The following suggestions are made in keeping with the traditions of Reform Jewish practice with regard to the respectful burial of the dead.

### **Recommended**

- Moderately priced wooden casket
- Family or friends as pallbearers
- Closed casket
- Donations, in lieu of flowers, to the Temple or another charity of your choice to be indicated in the newspaper notice
- The following options are arranged by the funeral home:
  - Newspaper notices
  - Plain acknowledgement cards
  - Registry book
  - Chairs, if needed, at the house of mourning

### **Not Recommended**

- Embalming (except when required by law)
- Hairdresser or Cosmetologist
- Flowers at the funeral
- Tahara (ritual washing and prayers)
- Use of Shomer (one who remains with the body until the time of the funeral)
- Viewing hours or visitation before the funeral

### **Options**

- Shrouds
- Limousine for the family on day of funeral

### **Cremation**

For the last 2000 years, internment has been the customary Jewish practice. In recent years Reform Judaism has accepted cremation as an option. The ashes should, however, be buried. Those desiring cremation should consult with the rabbi first.

### **What services are offered by the Caring Committee?**

The committee is prepared to help you with any of the following:

- Notifying relatives and friends
- Transportation from the Manchester airport
- Watching your home during the funeral
- Assisting the Ritual Committee to insure a minyan at your home during Shiva week

## **DEATH AND MOURNING CUSTOMS IN JUDAISM**

### **Euthanasia**

Judaism forbids doing anything active to hasten the death of the terminally ill; however, one need not hinder the departure of the soul and therefore artificial systems of life-support are not mandated in situations where death is inevitable. One may wish to offer

guidance to one's family in these matters by completing a living will or health care proxy.

### **Donating Vital Organs**

The mitzvah of **pikuach nefesh** (the saving of a life) takes virtual precedence over all else. Accordingly, Reform Judaism approves of the donation of organs of one's body for both saving life and healing a deficiency.

### **Keriah**

The cutting of one's garment or a black ribbon attached to one's garment as a sign of mourning is a long-standing custom. Keriah usually takes place just prior to the funeral service and is usually worn for the period of shivah and may be worn for the first thirty days.

### **Viewing the body**

Jewish tradition is firmly opposed to any public viewing of the deceased. Immediate family members may view the body prior to the service.

### **Tzedakah**

In lieu of flowers, Jewish tradition calls for a gift that will express sympathy by doing good deeds for the living. Specifying the Temple or another charity of your choice for gifts is appropriate and meaningful.

### **Who is a mourner?**

The laws of mourning apply in the case of death of seven relatives: mother father, brother, sister, husband, wife, and child. A child under the age of thirteen years need not observe mourning laws.

### **Returning to the house of Shiva**

After the interment, the mourners and family members return to the Shiva house. With the possible exception of out-of-towners who are not remaining for any of the Shiva, this is not the time for friends to express their sympathy. The mourners deserve the right to be with one another during this intense period of grief.

### **Shiva**

Shiva means "seven" and refers to the traditional days of mourning. The day of the funeral counts as one day, as does one hour of mourning on the seventh day. While one does not mourn on the Shabbat, it is calculated in the seven. During Shiva, the mourners refrain from all ordinary pursuits and occupations and participate in daily services at the home. Where seven days cannot be observed, the first three days, which are considered the most intense, should be observed as a minimum mourning period.

## **Meal of Consolation**

Upon arriving at the house of Shiva, a meal of consolation, traditionally known as **Seruat Havraah**, is served by friends. This is not a time for feasting or drinking. Hard-boiled eggs are often served as a symbol of life.

## **Services at the House of Mourning**

The Ritual Committee will provide an evening minyan at the House of Mourning for the period of Shiva.

## **Sheloshim**

This is the thirty-day period following the funeral (including Shiva) when mourners refrain from joyous social events and entertainment. Jewish law extends this period for a year for the death of a parent. Reform Judaism is not as strict in the matter. The name of the deceased is read at Temple Adath Yeshurun each Friday during Sheloshim.

## **Kaddish**

It is a mitzvah to recite Kaddish for parents for a year and for other family members for a month. Kaddish may be recited weekly at the Sabbath service.

## **Yizkor**

Following the year's observance, the deceased are memorialized by loved ones attending Yizkor services which are held at Temple Adath Yeshurun on Yom Kippur afternoon. The last days of Succoth, Pesach and on Shavuoth mourning. The Temple also holds an annual Memorial Service at the cemetery chapel on the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

## **Yahrzeit**

The name of the deceased relative is read at Sabbath services closest to the anniversary of the death. The Temple will notify the family and attendance at that service is a sacred Mitzvah.

## **Memorials**

It is a Mitzvah to establish a memorial in memory of loved ones. This may be accomplished through Temple Adath Yeshurun either by purchasing a bronze memorial plaque or by establishing a name fund in the Temple Trust, or both. Contact the Temple office for details.

## **Unveilings**

Unveilings are not required by Jewish tradition, but many families choose to commemorate the dedication of a grave marker. One need not wait a year. A simple ceremony for immediate family members is appropriate and can take place at any time.

## PERSONAL RECORD FOR BURIAL PROCEDURES

(NOTE: Family members should have easy access to this record)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew Name \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security number \_\_\_\_\_

If veteran, branch of service, rank, war, date of discharge, Serial # \_\_\_\_\_

Safe deposit box (number / location) \_\_\_\_\_

Location of other securities, documents, will, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

In the event of my death please notify

Name	Address	Phone	Relationship
_____	_____	_____	_____

I wish to be buried in \_\_\_\_\_

cemetery, located in \_\_\_\_\_

The deed to the lot is in the name of \_\_\_\_\_

and the deed can be found \_\_\_\_\_

I wish the funeral service to be conducted at \_\_\_\_\_

(place) by \_\_\_\_\_

I wish the \_\_\_\_\_ funeral chapel in \_\_\_\_\_

to be in charge of funeral arrangements.

I wish the following with regard to coffin \_\_\_\_\_

I have made the following arrangements for vital organ donation \_\_\_\_\_

I wish the following with regard to memorial donations \_\_\_\_\_

Other wishes \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
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