



## HOLY BLOSSOM TEMPLE

ק"ק פרחי קדש

### Contact Information

416 789 3291

After hours please contact us at

416 375 6771 (pager) or 416 565 7561 (emergency)

## A GUIDE FOR MOURNERS

Shiva, most profoundly and simply, is for you the mourner, to receive comfort and support. *Shiva* reminds you that you are not alone in your grief; there is a rich legacy of Jewish tradition and a caring community to offer you comfort and support. We at Holy Blossom Temple offer this guide to help you in the days following the burial of your loved one. And we are available to answer any and all questions relating to this difficult time.

In Judaism, all mourning customs are guided by the *mitzvah* to honour the dead, and the *mitzvah* to console the bereaved.

### Shiva

*And [Joseph] observed a mourning period of seven days for his father (Genesis 50:10).*

*Shiva* refers to the period of mourning immediately following the burial of a loved one and concludes on the morning of the last day. *Shiva* moves the mourner from *aninut*, the first stage following the knowledge of the death, to *avelut*, the period of mourning following the burial. The word *Shiva* is derived from the Hebrew word *sheva* meaning seven and traditionally is observed for seven days. Historically, the week of *Shiva* has been divided into two parts. The first three days after the burial are recognized as a time of intense grief. The next period is often less acute after mourners have been receiving support from friends and relatives. *Shiva* begins immediately after the burial and concludes on the morning of the last day.

Shabbat counts as one of the seven days, but observance of Shabbat overrides observance of *Shiva*. Depending on the time of year, *Shiva* can resume Saturday evening after Shabbat ends. Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot can suspend or cut short *Shiva*. Please consult one of our Rabbis to determine how to best honour the Holy Days while providing comfort for the mourners.

### Location

*Shiva* is usually held in the home of the deceased. Families may choose to sit *Shiva* elsewhere so that all the mourners may be comforted.

## CUSTOMS AND RITUALS FOR THE BEREAVED

### Kriah

*Jacob rent his clothes, put sackcloth on his loins, and observed mourning for his son many days. (Genesis 37:34; See also II Samuel 1:11, and Job 1:20)*

Since biblical times, mourners express their grief by cutting or tearing a piece of clothing before the funeral. This is referred to as *kriah*. The Rabbi will guide you through this ritual. The garment is torn on the left side for a parent. For all other relatives the cut clothing is on the right side.

Today mourners often choose to wear a black ribbon, and tear it instead of a piece of clothing before the funeral. The ribbon is usually provided by the funeral director, pinned on and cut just before the funeral. The *kriah* ribbon is worn during *Shiva* but not worn on Shabbat, High Holidays or Festivals.

### Washing Hands

The ritual impurities associated with death and the cemetery are symbolically removed by washing one's hands (see Numbers 19:11).

The ritual of washing one's hands begins *Shiva*. It separates the *mitzvah* of honouring the dead from the *mitzvah* of comforting the bereaved.

It is customary for anyone coming from the cemetery to wash their hands. There is no blessing recited; the water is poured over one hand, the other three times. This can be done at the cemetery or just outside the home where *Shiva* is held. Most Jewish cemeteries provide an outdoor washing facility. Usually, a wash basin, water pitcher, paper towels and waste bin are set up outside the front door of the *Shiva* home. The water vessel is not passed from hand to hand but rather placed overturned in the basin.

## Candle

### *Ner Daluk*

After returning from the cemetery, it is customary for the mourners to light a *Shiva* candle, called a *ner daluk* (burning light). This candle is usually provided by the funeral director and burns for the entire *Shiva* period. It is placed prominently and lit without saying a formal blessing.

## Meal of Consolation

### *Seudat Havara'ah*

This meal often includes a symbol of continuity such as hard boiled eggs, and bread, the staff of life. Close relatives or friends often provide and serve this meal. Serving a meal to mourners is a tangible act of condolence.

## Sitting Shiva

*...Job's three friends...sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. None spoke a word to him for they saw how very great was his suffering (Job 2:11-13).*

The primary mourners are the children, siblings, spouse and parents of the deceased. During *Shiva*, primary mourners traditionally sit on lower surfaces while receiving visitors. The funeral home can provide lower height chairs or mourners may choose to remove cushions from a sofa or chairs. The elderly, physically weak, pregnant and nursing mothers are exempt from this custom. Primary mourners sit at the regular height when eating.

It is a *mitzvah* to comfort the mourner and therefore visitors need not be thanked. Customarily, the door to the *Shiva* home is left unlocked so that visitors may enter without disturbing the mourners. Mourners do not need to rise to greet visitors. A condolence book and pen might be placed conveniently for visitors to sign.

## GUIDELINES FOR THE BEREAVED

Traditionally, mourners remain at the *Shiva* home for the duration of the *Shiva*, leaving only to attend services, particularly on Shabbat. Customarily, *Shiva* is a period of relinquishing routines as well as ordinary pleasures and comforts. Usually, mourners do not cook, or run errands, or attend school or work. A close relative or friend can oversee meals and other necessary household tasks. Often a sign-up sheet is placed prominently in the kitchen for friends and relatives to volunteer for various tasks.

During *Shiva* mourners are not expected to concern themselves about their appearance. Mourners will often cover mirrors in the *Shiva* home to signify that personal appearance is of little consequence during this time. *Shiva* is a time for reunion and reminiscing. Mourners may find comfort in displaying photographs of the deceased.

## Prayer Services

*Kaddish* is an Aramaic poem sanctifying God and has been recited by mourners since the 13<sup>th</sup> century C.E.

The Mourners' *Kaddish* is said at the cemetery after the burial and at prayer services during *Shiva*. Traditionally, Mourners' *Kaddish* is recited twice daily with a *minyan*, a prayer quorum of ten adult Jews. Holy Blossom Temple encourages, but does not require, a *minyan* for the recitation of Mourner's *Kaddish*.

Daily services always include *Kaddish* and may be held at the *Shiva* home, Services in the house of mourning may be led by one of the primary mourners, by a qualified friend or relative, or by one of the devoted volunteer Service Leaders from Holy Blossom Temple. Holy Blossom will provide volunteer Service Leaders in the home for an 8:00 pm half hour service as well as *Shiva* prayerbooks and *kippot* on request.

Mourners may prefer to attend synagogue for recitation of *Kaddish*.

*Kaddish* is part of prayer services at Holy Blossom Temple. The name of the deceased is read during the following services for the first 30 days following the burial.

## Shacharit (morning) Services:

Monday to Friday 7:30 - 8:00 am followed by a light breakfast.

Shabbat 10:30 am - 12:30 pm followed by Kiddush lunch.

Sunday and Statutory Holidays 9:00 am - 9:30 am followed by a light breakfast.

Festivals 10:00 am - 12:30 pm followed by Kiddush lunch

## Mincha/Ma'ariv Services

Monday to Thursday 6:00 - 6:30 pm

Kabbalat Shabbat Friday evening 6:00 - 7:00 pm

## Bereavement Group

Tuesday evenings 6:30 - 7:30 pm

(Facilitated by an experienced grief counselor, and supported by our Rabbis and Cantor)

## End of Shiva

### (Getting up from Shiva)

It is customary to end *Shiva* after the morning services of the final day. To signify their return to life outside the *Shiva* home, it is customary for the primary mourners to take a circular walk. Before getting up to walk, mourners may want to have a short prayer ceremony (see Page x in Holy Blossom Temple's *Shiva* Prayer Booklet).

## **Shloshim**

The mourning period continues with *shloshim*, a 30 day gradual re-entry to normal activities. *Shloshim* begins on the day of burial. Mourners are encouraged to say kaddish daily during *shloshim*. The time spent sitting *Shiva* is included in the period of *shloshim*.

Mourners grieving the loss of a parent customarily say *kaddish* for 11 months. Mourners grieving the loss of a sibling, spouse or child, say Kaddish for *shloshim* (30 days).

During the period of *shloshim*, it is customary to restrict participation in celebratory occasions.

Please consult with one of our Rabbis about further considerations of mourning practices. Additional resources can be found below.

## **Unveiling**

*And Jacob erected a monument by [Rachel's] burial site (Genesis 35: 20).*

After the period of *shloshim* and within a year after the death, the bereaved customarily gather at the cemetery to unveil the monument. The dedication of a headstone marks the transition from mourning to remembering. Our Rabbis and Cantor are available to lead the service, or the mourners may compose their own personal ceremony and lead the service. Unveiling Service Pamphlets are available.

## **Yahrzeit**

*Yahrzeit* is Yiddish for “a year’s time”. It is the anniversary of the death of a primary relative (parent, spouse, sibling, or child) or other loved one. The date is traditionally marked according to the Hebrew date on which the person died. Some people prefer to observe *yahrzeit* on the date of death on the secular calendar. Holy Blossom Temple will send a *yahrzeit* reminder to family members according to the requested date. The purpose of *yahrzeit* is to honour the memory of a loved one.

*Yahrzeit* may be observed by lighting a twenty-four hour candle on the evening before the day of death. *Yahrzeit* candles are provided at Holy Blossom Temple, or can be purchased in Judaica shops and other Jewish stores. There is no fixed blessing for lighting this candle. A personal prayer may be said. An example may be found in the Holy Blossom Siddur on page 485. Traditionally, the mourner attends morning and/or evening services at the synagogue to say *kaddish* and hear the name of the deceased recited. It is also customary to visit the grave and make a charitable donation on the occasion of a *yahrzeit*.

## **Yizkor**

*Yizkor* is the name of a prayer and the service during which it is recited. The word means “memorial” and is based on the Hebrew “may God remember.” Holy Blossom Temple holds four *yizkor* services during the year: on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, the seventh day of Passover, and Shavuot. Mourners are encouraged to attend *Yizkor* services to acknowledge their bereavement and remember their loved one(s).

## **GUIDELINES FOR VISITORS**

*Nichum aveilim* means “comforting mourners” and refers to the *mitzvah* of visiting the mourners during *Shiva*. Visitors help the mourners deal with their grief by listening, supporting, and responding to the mourner. Sharing memories of the deceased may be helpful. Visitors usually wait for the mourner to greet them. It is a *mitzvah* to help mourners by providing food and comfort. After attending a funeral and burial, close friends and relatives support the mourners by returning to the *Shiva* house to share the *Seudat Hava'rah*.

All *Shiva* visits should be brief and avoid meal times. It is a *mitzvah* to participate in the daily *Shiva* service(s) and/or to make a donation in memory of the deceased.

Visitors do not sit on the low seats reserved for the mourners. It is often difficult to know what to say to a mourner. Visitors may find it easiest to follow the mourner’s lead, responding to subjects mentioned by the mourner or remaining silent. One gives support just by being there.

When leaving, it is customary for the visitor to say, “*Hamakom yenachem et’chem b’toch she’ar avelei Tziyon Vi’rushalayim*” (May God comfort you among the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem).

## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

*ASK THE RABBI*, Louis Jacobs, Vallentine Mitchell, London, 1999.

*THE BOND OF LIFE, A Book for Mourners*, Editor Rabbi Jules Harlow, The Rabbinical Assembly, 1983.

*THE BOOK OF CUSTOMS*, Scott-Martin Kosofsky, Harper, San Francisco, New York, 2004.

*THE COMPLETE BOOK OF JEWISH OBSERVANCE*, Behrman House, Inc. Summit Books, New York. 1990.

*GATES OF MITZVAH*, Central Conference of American Rabbis, New York, 1979.

*GATES OF THE HOUSE*, Central Conference of American Rabbis, New York, 1977.

*THE HOW TO HANDBOOK FOR JEWISH LIVING*, Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Rabbi Ronald H. Isaacs, KTAV Publishing House, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey, 1993.

*THE JEWISH CATALOGUE*, Volume 1, compiled and edited by Richard Siegel, Michael Strassfeld, Sharon Strassfeld, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1973.

*JEWISH FAMILY CELEBRATIONS*, Arlene Rossen Cardozo, St. Martin's Press, 1985.

*A JEWISH MOURNER'S HANDBOOK*, Rabbi Ron H. Isaacs and Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky, KTAV Publishing House, Inc., Hoboken, NJ, 1991.

*THE JEWISH MOURNER'S HANDBOOK*, Rabbi William Cutter, Chairman of Editorial Committee

Behrman House, West Orange, NJ, 1992.

*THE JEWISH WAY*, Rabbi Irving Greenberg, Touchstone, New York, NY, 1988.

*THE JEWISH WAY IN DEATH AND MOURNING*, Maurice Lamm, Jonathan David Publishers, New York, 1969.

*MISHKAN T'FILAH For the House of Mourning*, Central Conference of American Rabbis, 2010.

*MOURNING & MITZVAH*, Anne Brener, Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock, VT, 1993.

*SAYING KADDISH*, Anita Diamant, Schocken Books, New York, 1998.

*SIDDUR PIRKEI KODESH*, Editor, Rabbi Yael Splansky, Holy Blossom Temple, 2011 - 5772.

*A TIME TO MOURN, A TIME TO COMFORT*, Dr. Ron Wolfson, Jewish Lights Publishing, Woodstock VT, 1996.

See also:

[www.Shiva.com/learning](http://www.Shiva.com/learning)

[www.myjewishlearning.com/article/death-mourning/](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/death-mourning/)

[www.reformjudaism.org](http://www.reformjudaism.org)