

Vassar Temple
Bereavement Guide



Vassar Temple *Nachamu* Committee
August 2019

Vassar Temple Bereavement Guide

Nachamu נַחֲמוּ

This Bereavement Guide is presented to you by the *Nachamu* Committee of Vassar Temple.

Nachamu means “to bring comfort.” It is our mission to support and give comfort to you or a loved one during a terminal illness, when you are considering the removal of life support, while you are planning a funeral, and during the time immediately following a death in your family.

In addition, we want to bring you information about Jewish mourning practices, especially as they are observed at Vassar Temple. Our hope is that this guide will answer many of your questions, but we do not want you to go on this journey alone. We are here to be with you.

It is a *mitzvah* to comfort the sick and the bereaved. We welcome anyone in our holy community to join us in doing so.

Sandra Mamis, Chair
Linda Cantor
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Small modifications

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Hebrew corrections, replaced Rabbi Golomb's name with generic reference to Vassar Temple rabbi, new table of contents (TOC) including hyperlinks to headings, and hyperlinks for appendix references.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The work of the Vassar Temple *Nachamu* Committee was an outgrowth of our desire to support both members of the temple who were facing end of life issues themselves and families dealing with a loved one approaching this reality.

Our endeavor to create an online Bereavement Guide was accomplished much more easily than it would have been otherwise because of the foundation laid down for us by the *Nachamu* Bereavement Group of the Caring Community of Temple Beth Emeth of Ann Arbor, Michigan, whose 2005 Bereavement Guide forms the basis for this one. We are profoundly grateful to them for sharing their wisdom, their research and, yes, even their name, with us as we proceeded on our journey to find ways to “bring comfort” to the members of our own temple family.

With admiration and appreciation, we recognize the twelve members of Temple Beth Emeth's committee, named here, and acknowledge the enormous amount of thought, energy, and commitment of time they devoted to developing their online Bereavement Guide, after which ours is so closely modeled.

Phil Barr	Arthur Lindenberg
Bette Cotzin	Betsy Mark
Tami Elliott	Jennifer Porte
Joy Wolfe Ensor	Steve Rhodes
Ketl Freedman-Doan	Marilyn Scott
Nanette Gill	Janice Tainsh

Yeshar Koach to them; the work of their hands will continue to comfort others.

Sandra Mamis, Chair
Vassar Temple *Nachamu* Committee

Cover Art

The *Nachamu* Committee of Vassar Temple appreciates being able to use Irwin J. Davis's painting Psalm 125 (Jerusalem Psalms) on the cover of this online bereavement guide.

Mr. Davis is a retired industrial scientist with a background in art. From his times as a cartoonist in college, art has been an important avocation and he has had training from well-known artists in painting, drawing, and sculpture through the years.

He now (2013) resides in the Clearbrook Adult Community in New Jersey, and is a past president of the Clearbrook Art Appreciation Club. Mr. Davis has lectured on art and taught drawing and painting to senior citizens in the area. He believes art can improve the quality of life for other retired people, as it has done for him.

Mr. Davis has spent many years painting the Psalms of David in a biblically correct way and his paintings have been featured in Jewish publications. He also teaches the Psalms, using the insights gained in research for his paintings.



Sincere appreciation is extended to Rabbi Paul Golomb for his good counsel as this document was developed, as well as for his encouragement of the *Nachamu* Committee's efforts to bring expanded bereavement support to Vassar Temple.



The *Nachamu* Committee offers special thanks to Richard Lowry for preparing this bereavement guide to be viewed online and for posting it on the Vassar Temple website.

FOREWORD TO FIRST EDITION BY RABBI GOLOMB

Modern American society is filled with specialists, trained and expert in doing the right thing in the face of daunting and difficult circumstances. In the case of severe illness or death, there are physicians and nurses, hospice workers and grief counselors. They all provide invaluable services at a very stressful time. Dire illness and death, however, cannot be left entirely to the specialists. Each of us as caring individuals has a role to play as well.

This Guide is called *Nachamu*, drawn from the biblical book of Isaiah, where the prophet is exhorted by God: “Comfort My people, comfort them!” (*Nachamu nachamu ami*). The Jewish people at that time were experiencing devastating loss, and yet the prophet was called upon to express words of comfort and succor. The Hebrew verb, furthermore, is cast in the plural. The comforting is not done by a single person, but rather by a cohort of comforters.

Providing comfort is not easy, especially when it has to be done infrequently. This Guide is intended to give knowledge and insights in order to make a daunting yet necessary task less difficult. It also assures you that you are not alone. The caring community that is Vassar Temple is prepared to be present with you.

On behalf of the *Nachamu* team who prepared this Guide, I invite you to look through its contents. You can draw strength and comfort from the material, whether you are simply preparing for future contingencies, or confronting now the challenges of loss and bereavement.

The Torah informs us that attending to the sick and the dying is not merely a response to divine commands, but a way of acting in a manner worthy of God. We hope this Guide will assist you as you activate the divine spark within you.

B’shalom,
Rabbi Paul Golomb

WHEN DEATH IS IMMINENT

What are some important documents to have prepared when death is imminent?

The teachings of Judaism emphasize the importance of putting one's house in order, preferably before the time when death is imminent. Creating a will, designating financial durable power of attorney and a durable power of attorney for medical treatment decisions, signing legally required authorizations to release health records and information to personal representatives [HIPAA forms], and specifying any advance directives and funeral instructions are several important tasks that are best completed before illness strikes.

An ethical will is an opportunity to express your values and concerns and can provide moral guidance to your family. Preparing such a will is as simple as writing a letter to those you love expressing your feelings, advice and hopes for the future. On this and other things discussed in this guide, the rabbi can advise you, and can share examples of ethical wills. (See [APPENDIX A: Sample Ethical Will](#).)

What is the Viddui וְדַוִּי (final confession)?

When an illness becomes critical, a long-standing practice of Judaism, though one that has largely fallen into disuse, is a confessional prayer called the *Viddui*. This is recited by one who is critically ill and concludes with the *Shema שְׁמַע*. The purpose of this prayer is to enable someone who is dying to reconcile with God by acknowledging, and asking forgiveness for past failings. (See [APPENDIX B: The Viddui Prayer](#).)

Which prayers are customarily recited when death is imminent?

Prayers may be offered on behalf of the individual who is critically ill. While there are no particular prayers that are called for, the *Shema שְׁמַע* or Psalm 23 may be comforting. (See [APPENDIX C: Psalm 23](#).) The words of one's own heart directed toward God are often the most beautiful and appropriate of all.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheimu, Adonai Ehchad.

Hear, O Israel, the Eternal One is our God, the Eternal God Alone.

Who can lend support in an emergency situation or when death is imminent?

Jewish tradition teaches that it is important to allow others to help us when we are sick. Judaism regards *bikkur cholim* בְּקוּר חוֹלִים, the mitzvah of visiting the sick, as both an act of loving-kindness and one of the supreme acts of holiness.

When there is a serious illness, please inform the Vassar Temple office, (845) 454-2570. The rabbi is always available and her (his) emergency phone numbers are on the Temple's answering machine when the office is closed. Clergy, Hospice and the *Nachamu* Group of Vassar Temple's *Reyut* Committee can offer both concrete and emotional support to those who are ill, as well as to their loved ones and caregivers during this difficult time.

Some of the services the *Nachamu* Committee offers are:

- Sitting with the family at the bedside of the person who is very ill or dying
- Saying appropriate prayers/meditations at a time when life support is to be removed
- Serving as liaison to the rabbi at the time of death or before
- Supporting the clergy in meeting the informational needs of those dealing with the death of a loved one or with one's own impending death
- Accompanying family members who are making arrangements at a funeral home
- Assisting in the writing of an obituary
- Contacting the *Reyut* Committee for assistance with *shiva* שְׁבִיעָה preparations
- Assisting in planning the unveiling of a memorial stone about a year after the death

Who should be notified when death occurs?

Even when a loved one has been stricken with a terminal illness, the moment of death still surprises and confuses. Knowing whom to contact may eliminate some stress during this difficult time.

First, notify the rabbi at (845) 454-2570. She (or he) is always available, and her (his) emergency phone numbers are on the temple's answering machine when the office is closed. When death occurs – before any procedures are performed by the hospital or facility staff – guidance should be sought from the rabbi regarding Jewish practices.

The following are two funeral homes in the area which are familiar with Jewish practices.

Miller Funeral Home	845-485-0241
Parmele Funeral Home	845-452-0790

When you speak to the funeral director, be sure to mention that you are a member of Vassar Temple. The funeral director will arrange for the proper treatment of the body and will assist you in obtaining the death certificate.

It is important to notify all members of the family when a death has occurred. Oftentimes friends of the mourners will assist in making these calls.

Is there a prayer customarily recited at the time of death?

When one has been present at or is informed of a death, the following prayer is traditionally said, along with other such prayers as the heart may prompt:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם דֵּן הָאֵמֶת

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, Dayan Ha-emet.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Our God,
Sovereign of the Universe, the True Judge.

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This blessing acknowledges God's goodness even in a moment of profound loss.

What is Reform Judaism's view of organ donation and autopsy?

Reform Judaism views organ donation as a mitzvah when done with appropriate respect for the body. Any autopsies required by civil authorities or conducted to further medical knowledge are acceptable.

AT THE TIME OF DEATH

What does Judaism teach about care of the body?

The body should be disturbed as little as possible when awaiting the arrival of representatives from the funeral home. Altering the deceased person's appearance is not necessary. According to Jewish tradition, as a gesture of respect, the body should not be left alone prior to burial. Traditionally, a guardian, known as the *shomer* שומר (pl. *shomrim* שומרים) watches over the body day and night and recites *tehillim* תהלים (psalms). This service is no longer offered by our local *Chevra Kadisha* חברה קדישה but families are free to arrange for a *shomer* to stay with the body between the time it has been prepared for burial and the time when the funeral takes place if they wish to do so.

What is the *Chevra Kadisha* חברה קדישה, and what are its responsibilities?

Chevra Kadisha חברה קדישה, which means holy society, is the name of a Jewish burial society. Members of the *Chevra Kadisha* perform the mitzvah of the Jewish ritual preparation of the body for burial. If requested, the funeral home will make arrangements for a *Chevra Kadisha* to provide these services.

The *Chevra Kadisha* prepares the body for burial. This includes the following steps:

1. *Sh'mira* שמירה -- This is the act of remaining with the body, a service which is no longer provided by our local *Chevra Kadisha*.
2. *Tahara* טהרה -- This is the Jewish ritual of washing the body of the deceased in preparation for burial. Ecclesiastes 5:14 commands, "He should depart, just as he came." This is interpreted to mean that, just as a baby is bathed at birth, so should the body of the deceased be ritually cleansed upon death.
3. *Tachrichim* תכריכים -- This refers to the Jewish custom of dressing the body for burial. Traditionally, the body is dressed in a simple white shroud, generally made of linen or cotton. These garments are the same for each person and symbolize that everyone is equal upon death. It is

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also customary that the deceased may wear a *kippah* (head covering) or be wrapped in his or her *tallit* (prayer shawl) with one of the *tzitzit* (ritual fringes) cut. The Jewish belief in equality in death suggests that any excessive expense or ostentation be avoided in the funeral and burial.

What are the responsibilities of the funeral home?

Representatives of the funeral home will arrange for the transportation of the body and will assist with the preparations for the funeral and burial. This includes obtaining the death certificate, helping to prepare and communicate obituary notices, and assisting in selecting a casket or other available services, possibly including copies of the Mourner's *Kaddish*, a *shiva* candle and acknowledgment cards.

In Judaism, is it customary to embalm the body or use any enhancements for viewing the body?

Judaism discourages embalming or the use of cosmetics on the deceased unless there are special circumstances, such as family situations or state or federal laws, that would justify these procedures. You may seek the advice of the rabbi in such situations.

What do Jewish customs suggest regarding the selection of a casket?

For many reasons, it has become Jewish custom that all caskets should be completely made of wood. The use of wood allows the casket and the body to decompose naturally and return to the "dust" from which human beings were formed.

How is cremation viewed according to Jewish tradition?

Cremation is not a part of Jewish tradition because it does not allow the deceased to return naturally to the dust as prescribed in biblical writings. Other Jewish interpretations view cremation from a historical perspective as a form of violent destruction of the body and are opposed to its use. Cremation was also seen in the tradition as preventing the ultimate resurrection of the dead. If considering this option, you may wish to seek rabbinic counsel.

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What are the rules and customs regarding burial in the Vassar Temple cemetery?

Vassar Temple members who have been in good standing for at least five years have burial rights in the Vassar Temple cemeteries, located at the end of Lagrange Avenue and on Route 44 in the Town of Poughkeepsie. An adjacent plot can be reserved for a surviving spouse.

The Vassar Temple Cemetery Committee manages the upkeep of the cemeteries. Decisions related to gravestones and private landscaping require the approval of the committee.

The funeral home, upon being notified of the death of your loved one, contacts the chairperson of the Cemetery Committee regarding cemetery preparations. Should there be specific questions on this subject, a family member may contact the committee chair through the temple office or at cemetery@vassartemple.org.

FROM DEATH TO BURIAL

What is *aninut* אָנִינּוּת (period of time between death and burial)?

Aninut אָנִינּוּת is the first phase of mourning. It begins at the time of the death of an immediate relative and ends when the burial takes place. During this period, the mourner – *onen* אוֹנֵן – typically abstains from business in order to make the appropriate funeral arrangements. The mourner is also exempt from social and religious obligations. Only family and close friends should visit with mourners at this time.

Who is an *avel* אָבֵל (mourner)?

Reform practice recognizes that one may grieve for any dear person, but it is a religious duty to observe the practices of mourning (e.g., sitting *shiva* and saying the Mourner's *Kaddish*) for a parent, spouse, sibling, or child. Those under the age of 13 are not obligated to observe mourning customs.

Jewish tradition does not call for mourning observances for an infant less than 30 days old or after a miscarriage or stillbirth. However, Reform Judaism acknowledges the devastating character of such losses by providing meaningful mourning rituals in such cases. The rabbi will be able to provide suggestions.

When should the funeral and burial occur?

According to Jewish tradition, burial should occur as soon as possible, usually within 24 hours after death. However, a funeral and burial may be delayed to permit close relatives to travel to be present, to avoid burial on Shabbat or another holy day, to transport the deceased, or for legal reasons.

Where does the funeral service take place?

Funeral services are generally held at a synagogue, funeral home or gravesite.

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Who conducts the funeral service?

Customarily, the rabbi of Vassar Temple conducts the funerals of congregants. If the rabbi is out of town or otherwise unable to officiate, another local rabbi will be asked to conduct the service.

How do we involve children in the funeral service?

Children are more aware of death than we may realize, though their understanding of death evolves as they get older. A child also needs a chance to say goodbye. Between the ages of 5 and 9, children generally become able to understand the meaning of physical death, and by the time they are 9 or 10, they often have a realistic concept of the finality of death. The ability of children to understand death varies with age, maturity and intelligence, but regardless of the variables, children cannot be shielded from death or protected from its reality. It may be helpful to have the rabbi talk with the children prior to the funeral, to explain what will take place at the funeral and also to respond to the children's questions.

Grieving adults sometimes overlook the needs of children and may need the help of family or friends at this emotionally difficult time. When parents discuss death openly with their children, they enable them to develop a concept of death in a healthy manner.

Attendance at the funeral can aid children in understanding the finality of death and in dispelling greater fears and fantasies that can arise when they are kept away. If they are old enough to attend a synagogue service and comprehend a good part of what is taking place, they should be allowed to attend a religious ceremony to say goodbye to a significant person in their lives. However, children should not be forced to attend. With a strong sense of caring and understanding, parents should permit apprehensive children to stay home. Parents may choose to visit the cemetery with them at another time.

Explain to children in advance what will take place and that people may be crying. Encourage them to ask questions and to discuss, but don't provide answers to questions that are not asked. Be supportive and understanding, but avoid myths that will later have to be rejected, such as that Grandpa is sleeping or that Grandma went away on a long trip. Speak from your heart and from the

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foundations of your own belief. For more extensive advice on this subject, you may discuss this matter with the rabbi.

What does the rabbi need to know before the service?

To prepare for the funeral service and the *hesped* הֶסְפֵּד (eulogy), the rabbi will need some information about the deceased, especially if he and the deceased were not well acquainted. The rabbi will ask you for the Hebrew name of the deceased and will ask you to recount stories about the deceased's life, including both successes and struggles.

The sharing of memories of the deceased and events in the deceased's life can be difficult at times, but it is an important part of the grieving process.

Family members may wish to share their thoughts during the funeral itself, if they are emotionally able to do so. This should be discussed beforehand with the rabbi.

Does the casket remain closed?

Jewish tradition and Vassar Temple funeral practices require that the casket remain closed throughout the service as an expression of *k'vod hamet* כְּבוֹד הַמֵּת (respect for the dead). If you or other relatives wish to view the body a last time, this should be arranged to occur prior to the funeral service.

What does tradition say about flowers?

Flowers soon fade and wither, but an act of loving-kindness can have a profound and lasting effect. Therefore, flowers are discouraged by Jewish tradition, which favors *tzedakah* צְדָקָה, a charitable contribution to assist the living. However, if flowers have been sent, they should be displayed. Announcements in newspapers should indicate the wish of the family to have donations made to a charity – which may be specified as desired – in lieu of flowers or gifts.

What is *k'riah* קְרִיעָה (tearing of the garment)?

The ancient custom of *k'riah* קְרִיעָה is an external sign of inner grief and mourning. This tradition is based on the actions of Jacob, David, and Job who reacted to reports of death by rending their garments. *K'riah* was originally a tear made in the mourner's clothing, but today is usually a tear on a black ribbon attached to the clothing. *K'riah* is usually made immediately preceding the start of the funeral service while the mourner is standing, to signify the need to confront sorrow directly. Ribbons are available from the funeral home.

For a deceased parent, *k'riah* is worn on the left side, close to the heart. For all others, *k'riah* is worn on the right side. Just before *k'riah*, the mourner recites the following benediction:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם דִּין הָאֱמֶת

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Ha-olam, Dayan Ha-emet.

Blessed are You, Adonai, Our God, Sovereign of the Universe, the True Judge.

Like the Mourner's *Kaddish* קַדִּישׁ, this benediction is a reaffirmation of faith and of the value of life made at a time of intense sorrow and pain. *K'riah* should be visible throughout the period of *shiva*, but not on Shabbat, and may be worn throughout the thirty-day mourning period (*sheloshim* שְׁלוֹשִׁים) except on Shabbat.

When learning of a death within the first thirty days, *k'riah* may be worn within that thirty-day period. By tradition, *k'riah* is always required upon learning of a parent's death, regardless of the length of time that has elapsed since the death.

What does the *levayah* לְוִיָּה (funeral service) involve?

The literal translation of *levayah* לְוִיָּה, "accompanying," teaches us that the nature of a Jewish funeral implies involvement. Tradition tells us that it is an act of respect not only to attend the funeral service, but also to accompany the dead, walking behind the *aron* אָרוֹן (coffin) for at least a few feet immediately

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after the funeral or at the cemetery. Despite Jewish folklore, pregnant women are allowed to attend a funeral.

The funeral service consists of suitable prayers of consolation, as well as a *hesped* **הֶסְפֵּד** (eulogy) delivered by the rabbi, memorializing the deceased. In consultation with the rabbi, family members and friends may participate in the service and eulogy. The rabbi chants appropriate selections from the Book of *Tehillim* **תְּהִלִּים** (Psalms) and the traditional memorial prayer, *Eil Malei Rachamim* **אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים** (God of Compassion), a prayer for the peace of the departed soul. (See [APPENDIX D: Eil Malei Rachamim](#).) Instrumental music is not played at Jewish funeral services.

Both the funeral and the burial services are brief. At the conclusion of the funeral service, it is customary for those in attendance to remain in their places until members of the family have departed the room.

The rabbi will discuss specifics of the funeral service with you.

Does Vassar Temple use pallbearers?

It is considered an honor to escort the deceased to his or her final resting place. Six to eight individuals who are not immediate mourners, but who were close to the deceased, are chosen by the family to escort the *aron* **אָרוֹן** (coffin) from the funeral service to the hearse and from the hearse to the gravesite. The pallbearers remain seated with their families during the funeral service and are summoned to escort the casket at the close of the service.

What does the burial service entail?

The dead are buried in the earth: “For dust you are and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19.) At the cemetery, the pallbearers bring the casket to the gravesite. Vassar Temple’s practice is to lower the casket into the grave and recite some brief prayers. The *Eil Malei Rachamim* **אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים** is repeated at the grave. The Mourner’s *Kaddish* closes the service. (See [APPENDIX E: Mourner’s Kaddish](#).) This is the first time that the Mourner’s *Kaddish* is said.

Mourners, relatives and friends place shovels full of dirt back into the grave in order to cover the casket. Customarily the shovel is not passed directly from

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person to person, but rather is placed back in the earth. This indicates that no one is being forced to participate in the practice but shows rather that they are freely participating in the mitzvah. Mourners may use the back of the shovel for their first shovelful to indicate that the shovel is being used for a non-ordinary purpose or to symbolize our resigned acceptance of helping to return the person to the earth. As difficult as this may seem, covering the casket with dirt is the last physical act we can perform for our loved one and helps start the mourner on the way to acceptance and reconciliation. As Rabbi Golomb has pointed out, this is also the highest form of mitzvah because the person for whom we are doing it cannot reciprocate.

After the burial, the focus changes from honoring the deceased to *nichum avel* נִיחָם אֵיבֵל (comforting the mourner), as the immediate family and all in attendance depart for the house of mourning.

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE FUNERAL

What are the customs when returning from the cemetery?

It is an ancient custom to cleanse oneself when leaving the presence of death and to rid oneself of impurities associated with it. A pitcher of water, a bowl, and towels are placed outside the door of the house of mourning for hand-washing by those returning from the cemetery. This custom also serves the practical purpose of allowing those whose hands are soiled from participating in the interment to wash their hands before entering the home.

What is the *seudat havra'ah* סְעֻדַת הַבְּרָאָה (meal of consolation)?

According to custom, the community provides a meal to be served to the mourners upon their return from the cemetery. Providing this meal also allows members of the community to express in a practical way their comfort and support. This recognizes the need to take nourishment after this physically and emotionally exhausting experience. Mourners are obliged only to eat and have no obligation to serve as hosts. Rather, those who visit the house of mourning serve as hosts and assume responsibility for tasks such as answering the door, preparing the food, and cleaning up.

Traditionally, the inclusion of hard-boiled eggs reflects the egg's association with the renewal of life. Lentils and other round objects (for example, bagels and rolls) symbolize the cycle of life. It is traditional to serve dairy because milk is associated with life.

SHIVA שְׁבֻעָה

What is *shiva*?

In Hebrew, the word *shiva* שְׁבֻעָה refers to the number seven. It connotes a seven-day period of intense mourning that commences on the day of the funeral. *Shiva* is the public expression of grief observed by the family of the deceased.

The custom of *nichum avelim* נִיחָוּם אֲבֵלִים (comforting the mourners) is derived from a variety of sources in our tradition. The Torah states (Genesis 50:10) that Joseph mourned for seven days after the death of his father, Jacob. In Job 2:13, when Job is joined by his friends as he mourns the loss of his children, it says: “So they sat down with him upon the ground for seven days and seven nights.”

The practical effect of *shiva*, when mourners are surrounded by a community, is to give them support and comfort as they face the reality of death. It is a community obligation to comfort the bereaved.

What customs are observed in the house of mourning during *shiva*?

Immediately after the funeral, the bereaved family gathers together to “sit *shiva* שְׁבֻעָה.” A house of mourning reflects its special character in various ways, depending on the preferences and practices of the mourner. It is a time used by many to tell stories, share pictures, meditate, read, recite private prayers, or simply talk.

A *shiva* candle – a candle which lasts for seven days – is traditionally kindled upon entering the *shiva* house after the funeral service. One candle (provided by the funeral home) is sufficient for a household; if *shiva* is observed by different family members in different locations, a candle is lit in each home where *shiva* is observed. The *shiva* candle represents the light that the deceased brought to friends and loved ones during life, recalling Proverbs 20:27: “The human spirit is the light of the Eternal.” Suggested readings for the lighting of the *shiva* candle are found in [APPENDIX F: Lighting a Shiva Candle Upon Returning from the Cemetery](#).

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It is a long-standing custom to cover the mirrors in a house of mourning. This tradition has been linked both to medieval superstition and to the modern belief that mirrors, as a symbol of human vanity, are inappropriate in a house of mourning and are a distraction from the responsibilities of mourning and *nichum avel* נִיחָוּם אָבֵל (comforting the mourner). The tradition of mourners sitting on low stools dates back to Talmudic times and represents the mourner's physical reflection of his or her emotional state by sitting close to the earth in which the loved one is interred. Most Reform Jews no longer observe these practices.

During *shiva*, the mourner abstains from normal routines, as well as from activities that involve personal pleasure or expressions of vanity. Abstentions consistent with Reform Jewish practice include refraining from business or professional activities, attending social gatherings or joyous events, and engaging in sexual relations.

What is a *shiva* service (*shiva minyan* שְׁבִיעָה מִיָּנָן)?

During *shiva* שְׁבִיעָה, worship services are traditionally held at the house of mourning. This provides the opportunity to bring the community together in support of the mourners, as well as to afford those in mourning the opportunity to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish* (קַדִּישׁ) as part of a *minyan* (group of ten adult Jews). *Shiva* services are not held on Shabbat.

This service is the traditional daily *maariv* מַעֲרִיב (evening) service. In addition, it may include a *D'var Torah* (Word of Torah) or other appropriate readings. Members of Vassar Temple usually have *shiva* services in the house of mourning. If this is impractical, they can be held at the Temple. The services are usually conducted by either the rabbi or by a congregant who has been trained to lead such services.

What role does Vassar Temple's *Reyut* Committee play during *shiva*?

Our congregation understands that the consolation of the bereaved is a community responsibility. Our *Reyut* (Friendship) Committee, which welcomes the participation of all interested temple members, may be called upon to help with the provision of food at the house of mourning and other needs (e.g., picking up relatives at the airport). To reach the chairperson of the *Reyut* Committee, call the temple office (845-454-2570).

When does *shiva* start and end?

The day of burial is counted as the first day of *shiva* **שְׁבֻעָה** and *shiva* ends on the morning of the seventh day. Jewish tradition and the experience of generations teach the importance of a full opportunity for mourning. Grief impacts the mourner in psychological, emotional, and physical ways. This *shiva* period allows the mourner to move gradually from intense grief back into more normal routines of life. Some families choose to observe a period of mourning shorter than seven days.

How do Jewish holidays affect the observance of *shiva*?

The holidays of Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Passover, and Shavuot all affect the length of observance of the *shiva* **שְׁבֻעָה** period. The rabbi should be consulted for guidance.

What happens on Shabbat during *shiva*?

Shabbat is included in the counting even though no public forms of mourning are practiced on Shabbat. On Friday (unless it is the seventh day of *shiva*), *shiva* is suspended well before sunset to allow the mourner time to prepare for Shabbat. On Shabbat, in lieu of a *shiva* service at the house of mourning, mourners attend synagogue to say the Mourner's *Kaddish* **קְדִישׁ**. *Shiva* is resumed on Saturday evening, unless Saturday is the concluding day.

What are the customs for those visiting a house of mourning?

Jewish tradition regards the comforting of mourners as an obligation. Visiting a house of mourning and participating in an evening *shiva* **שְׁבֻעָה** service are acts of consolation; sitting with the mourner is an act of respect and comfort. All are welcome to participate in the service, using the small prayer book which is distributed at the beginning of the service as a guide.

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Upon arrival at a house of mourning, it is appropriate to enter quietly without ringing the doorbell or knocking on the door. This protects the mourner from having to act as a host or hostess.

Grief is, by nature, intense and private, yet companionship is valuable to the bereaved. Recognizing this, some visitors may be uncertain as to what to say in a house of mourning. The Talmud counsels, “The merit of attending a house of mourning lies in the silence observed.” Because traditions vary, it is best for visitors to take cues from the bereaved as to when to speak and what to say. The most appropriate topics of conversation are the life of the person who died and the well-being of the mourners. The visitor’s words should reflect and respect the mourner’s own tears and laughter, memories and beliefs.

What should you bring to a house of mourning?

The tradition of providing a meal of consolation following the funeral is continued through the *shiva* **שבועה** period. At Vassar Temple, congregants and friends of the family typically provide meals and gifts of food. The *Reyut* Committee might offer to organize these efforts, or you may contact its chairperson through the temple office.

As previously noted, flowers are traditionally considered to be inappropriate at Jewish funerals and houses of mourning, although they are sometimes seen in Sephardic households. In expressing concern for the living, Jewish tradition encourages *tzedakah* **צדקה**, a charitable contribution, in lieu of flowers. This is a way of extending the loved one’s influence for good even after death. This information should be included in newspaper announcements.

How is the end of the *shiva* period observed?

On the last morning of *shiva* **שבועה**, after one hour of observance, there is an opportunity for a brief ritual symbolizing a “rising from *shiva*” – the return to society from which the mourner had withdrawn. The mourner may observe the custom of taking a short walk outside the house. In [APPENDIX G: Concluding Shiva](#), there are meditations and prayers appropriate for this moment.

How do members of Vassar Temple observe *shiva* when the funeral is held out of town?

Frequently, Temple members must go out of town for funerals and *shiva* **שבועה**. In consultation with the rabbi, family members may also choose to observe part of the *shiva* in their own homes. This gives the local community an opportunity to express its support and condolence.

SHELOSHIM שלושים

What is *sheloshim*?

The word “*sheloshim*” שלושים means thirty, and refers to the 30-day mourning period following the burial. The period from the end of *shiva* to the end of *sheloshim* is one of transition from deep bereavement to resuming life’s normal routines.

What is customarily done and not done during *sheloshim*?

During *sheloshim*, it is customary to return to work and to resume intimate relations, but to continue to refrain from general festivities and public entertainment. Mourners generally refrain from attending parties and other social occasions. Attendance at religious ceremonies and associated celebrations, such as a bar or bat mitzvah, a wedding, or a *brit mila*, is permitted. If the mourner chooses to attend the party after a religious life cycle event, he or she might wish to refrain from dancing and exuberant celebration.

To honor the memory of the deceased, it is customary for the mourner to recite the Mourner’s *Kaddish* קדיש as part of a *minyan* every day during *sheloshim*, either at home or in the synagogue. Mourners attend Shabbat services during *sheloshim*, where the name of the deceased is read prior to reciting the Mourner’s *Kaddish* during the four Shabbat services following the burial.

What can be done to mark the end of *sheloshim*?

In some cases, it is appropriate for a ceremony of remembrance to be conducted at the end of the *sheloshim* period. This is often arranged when, for any reason, a local service could not be held during the *shiva* period but the bereaved would be comforted by the opportunity to memorialize the deceased with Vassar Temple friends and others.

THE MOURNER'S *KADDISH* קְדִישׁ

What are the practices surrounding the Mourner's *Kaddish*?

The Mourner's *Kaddish* קְדִישׁ (an Aramaic word meaning sanctification), while generally thought of as a prayer for the dead, does not mention death. It is essentially an affirmation of life and faith, confronting death with life and looking to the future with faith in God and hope in the presence of grief and despair. The Mourner's *Kaddish* is a link between the generations, between an individual and God, and between people. If someone dies without an *avel* אָבֵל (parent, spouse, sibling, or child) to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish*, then another relative or friend may recite the prayer in his or her memory.

In traditional Jewish thought, the Mourner's *Kaddish* provides comfort to both the mourners and the deceased. The mourner recites the *Kaddish* at the burial. A person in mourning for a parent traditionally recites the *Kaddish* for eleven months. While the anniversary of the death (*yahrzeit*) continues to be marked by saying *Kaddish*, the mourners should be prepared to move on in this world and, according to tradition, the deceased in the world-to-come, before the first anniversary. Conventionally, the daily or weekly recitation of *Kaddish* ends at the end of the eleventh month.

A spouse, sibling, or parent traditionally recites the Mourner's *Kaddish* for only thirty days, but may choose to recite it for the full eleven months. Others may choose to say the Mourner's *Kaddish* as well, such as grandchildren for their grandparents and pupils for their teachers.

While *Kaddish* is a prayer recited by the individual mourner, it deserves being heard and acknowledged by a community prepared to offer comfort and consolation. Thus, whenever possible, *Kaddish* should be recited by the mourner as part of a *minyan*.

See [APPENDIX E: Mourner's *Kaddish*](#).

VISITING THE GRAVE

When is it appropriate to visit the grave?

It is customary to visit the grave on the concluding days of *shiva* שְׁבִיעָה and *sheloshim* שְׁלוֹשִׁים, and on each *yahrzeit* יָאָרְצִיִּט. It is also appropriate to visit at the time of the High Holy Days.

Vassar Temple conducts a memorial service at our cemetery on a Sunday between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. This service is open to everyone, to remember deceased relatives whether or not they are interred in that cemetery. Jewish tradition discourages excessive grave visitation as a barrier to returning to normal routines of life and the community.

What are the customs of visiting the grave?

When visiting the gravesite, psalms and memorial prayers may be read. (See [APPENDIX H: Visiting the Cemetery](#).) It is customary to place stones on the gravestone or marker as a sign of visitation.

AFTER *SHELOSHIM* שְׁלוֹשִׁים

What are the traditions surrounding the placement and unveiling of the *matzevah* מַצֵּבָה (grave marker)?

The custom of erecting a monument over the grave dates back to biblical times. In Genesis 35:20, Jacob set a pillar upon Rachel's grave in order to keep his wife's memory alive and to identify her burial place. It has become customary to place the monument during the period between the end of *sheloshim* שְׁלוֹשִׁים and the first *yahrzeit* יָאָרְצִיִּט, usually nearer to the first *yahrzeit* because that gives the earth above the grave sufficient time to settle.

The unveiling is a brief ceremony, conducted by clergy or by family or friends, dedicating the grave monument. It provides an opportunity for family and friends to gather in remembrance of the deceased. The tombstone may be covered by any piece of cloth, or one (e.g., a *tallit*) with special meaning for the deceased, which is removed by the family during the service. Ideas for creating a service of unveiling may be found in [APPENDIX I: The Unveiling Service](#). After the ceremony, those in attendance often get together for refreshments.

What should be inscribed on the marker?

Minimally, the marker should be inscribed with the name of the deceased and the date of death in Hebrew or English.

What is the *aveilut* אַבְלוּת (extended period of mourning for parents)?

The mourning period for parents is traditionally eleven months from the burial. During this time, the mourner continues to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish* קַדִּישׁ and to refrain from public celebrations.

What is *yahrzeit* יָאָרֶצִיט (observance of the anniversary of a death)?

Yahrzeit יָאָרֶצִיט (Yiddish for “year-time”) consecrates an annual day of remembrance of the anniversary of the death which may be observed for any relative or friend. Observers light a 24-hour candle in the home at sunset on the eve of the *yahrzeit*. There is no special prayer or benediction to be recited, but it is appropriate to meditate briefly or to recite a psalm, poem or reading which has meaning. (See [APPENDIX J: Lighting the Yahrzeit Candle](#).)

Traditionally, the name of the deceased is read and the Mourner’s *Kaddish* קַדִּישׁ is recited in the synagogue on the *yahrzeit*. At Vassar Temple, the name is read on the Shabbat following the *yahrzeit*.

If you notify the Temple office of the date of a death, the Temple will contact you annually to remind you of the date of the *yahrzeit* according to your choice of the Jewish or secular calendar. The reminder will indicate the date of the Shabbat service at which the name of the deceased will be read from the bimah. If you would prefer to have the name read at a different service, inform the office and the change will be made.

The name of your deceased relative will be included on the *yahrzeit* list as long as you are a member of Vassar Temple, or in perpetuity if you have arranged for a plaque in memory of that person on the memorial board in our sanctuary. If the deceased is a former synagogue member for whom relatives have requested that the name be read, and they make some contribution to the congregation, then that name will continue to be included on the *yahrzeit* list.

It is traditional to honor the memory of the deceased at the time of the *yahrzeit* through *tzedakah* צְדָקָה, a charitable contribution.

What is *yizkor* יִזְכוֹר?

Yizkor יִזְכוֹר (remembrance) services are traditionally held several times during the liturgical year. At Vassar Temple, *yizkor* services are held on Yom Kippur, on Sh’mini Atzeret following Sukkot, on the seventh day of Passover, and on Shavuot. It is a time in which we, in partnership with God, remember the deceased. Participating in this service allows us to remember loved ones and the values they cherished and transmitted to us. *Yizkor* may be recited by the mourner beginning with the first holiday after the death of a loved one.

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Yizkor may be said for anyone whom a mourner seeks to remember. Jewish tradition does permit a person with living parents to attend *yizkor* services.

As with *yahrzeit* יָאָרְצִיִּיט, it is customary to light a 24-hour candle on the evening preceding *yizkor*. One candle may serve to recall all loved ones.

GLOSSARY

- Ahlav B'Shalom* **עָלְיוּ בְּשָׁלוֹם** - May he rest in peace.
- Aleha B'Shalom* **עָלֶיהָ בְּשָׁלוֹם** - May she rest in peace.
- Aninut* **אַנִּינּוּת** - Period of time between death and burial
- Aron* **אָרוֹן** - Coffin
- Avel* (pl. *avelim*) **אַבֵּל** - A mourner (parent, spouse, sibling or child)
- Aveilut* **אַבְלוּת** - Extended eleven-month mourning period for death of parent
- Chevra Kadisha* **חֶבְרַת קַדִּישָׁה** - Literally “holy society,” a group that takes responsibility for preparing the deceased for burial
- Eil Malei Rachamim* **אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים** - Prayer requesting God’s compassion for the deceased; recited at the conclusion of the funeral service, at an unveiling, and at *Yizkor*
- Hesped* **הֶסְפֵּד** - Eulogy
- Kaddish* (Mourner’s *Kaddish*) **קַדִּישׁ** - Prayer extolling God
- K’riah* **קְרִיעָה** - Tearing of garments as a sign of mourning (most often replaced by displaying a torn black ribbon)
- Kever avot* **קְבֵר אַבוֹת** - The service held at the cemetery during the High Holy Day period
- K’vod hameit* **כְּבוֹד הַמֵּית** - Literally, “respect for the dead;” the totality of Jewish mourning customs
- Levayah* **לְוִיָּה** - Literally, “accompanying;” funeral
- Maariv* **מַעֲרִיב** - Evening religious service
- Matzevah* **מִצֵּבָה** - Tombstone, memorial, grave marker
- Minyan* **מִנְיָן** - Quorum of ten adult Jews traditionally required for a service
- Nachamu* **נַחֲמוּ** - “Bring comfort;” the name of Vassar Temple’s bereavement group

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Nichum Avelim נִיחָוּם אַבְלִים - Consoling the mourners

Onen אוֹנֵן - Close relative of the deceased; mourner-to-be (during *aninut* אַנִּינּוּת, the period of time between death and burial)

Seudat Havraah סְעֻדַת הַבְּרָאָה - first meal for mourners returning from the cemetery

Sheloshim שְׁלוֹשִׁים - The first thirty days of the mourning period

Shiva שִׁבְעָה - Initial seven-day period of mourning

Sh'mira שְׁמִירָה - The act of remaining with the body

Shomer (pl. *Shomrim*) שׁוֹמֵר - Individual who stays with the body prior to the funeral

Sitting *Shiva* שִׁבְעָה - The act of receiving visitors during the *shiva* period

Tachrichim תְּכָרִיכִים - White linen garments (shroud) placed over the body for burial

Tahara טְהוּרָה - Ritual washing of the body in preparation for burial

Tehillim תְּהִלִּים - Psalms (e.g., recited by *Shomrim* or during the funeral)

Tzedakah צְדָקָה - Literally “righteousness;” an act of charity

Vidui וְדוּי - Confessional prayer recited when death is imminent by one who is critically ill

Yahrzeit יָאָרְצֵיט - Observance of the anniversary of a death; literally “year-time” in Yiddish

Yizkor יִזְכוֹר - Literally, “May God remember;” prayers for the dead recited in Temple on special occasions during the year

Zichrono/Zichrona Livracha זְכוֹרוֹנוֹ [זְכוֹרוֹנָה] לְבְרָכָה - “May his/her memory be for a blessing.”

APPENDIX A: **Sample Ethical Will**

This ethical will was written by a healthy widow in her fifties.

To my children and grandchildren --

My Family

The foundation of my life was laid by my wonderful parents who made me feel loved, competent and confident. They taught me the central importance of family relationships – my father through his life-long study of family history and his collections of letters, stories and family trees; my mother through her maintenance of personal connections with relatives scattered around the world. The love I share with my brother and sister and their families continues to be a cornerstone of my security. I learned at home that love cannot be required, even among relatives, but that caring and respect ought to be.

I had a special relationship with my grandmother. She lived next door to us and taught modesty, moderation and strength by personal example. From her I learned that one should “do good for the sake of good, not for the sake of reward” and that “there is no end of good that can be done by those who don’t care who gets the credit.”

Judaism

From my family I learned that it is important to know your own background: Of which tree are you a branch? In which chain are you a link?

For us, Judaism is the chain of connection. I believe it remains the best one for us, although other religions and value systems work well for other people. For me, the appeal of Judaism centers on the intellectual challenges it offers. It specializes in questions without answers and acknowledges the weaknesses and limitations of human beings while encouraging them to achieve their highest potential. For me, Judaism has provided a social context for relationships with others who have a common link but enough differences to make them interesting. I have also found the customs of our tradition, combined with the personal freedom of the Reform approach, to be psychologically sound.

I have not found a unifying purpose for life but I believe that each of us can make each day important and meaningful to ourselves. This philosophy gives

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us a lot of personal responsibility. I believe that the only eternal life over which we have control is our remembrance of those we love who have died.

Learning and knowledge

These two keep us mentally sharp, keep us open to growth and change, enable us to contribute professionally and personally, and can provide us with pleasant hours. I believe, as my mother did, that hard work and intelligence can go far toward overcoming many problems.

It is a privilege to be able to share your knowledge and your love of learning with others. I have been fortunate to find many opportunities for teaching, both formal and informal.

Taking and giving

In giving you make your life worthwhile. But if you don't take, you will have nothing to give. Don't refuse to accept: others need a chance to give also.

I hope you will make the world a better place, both on a smaller scale and in the wider sense. Try to be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Keep before you for inspiration a vision of the way things ought to be and help us move, albeit slightly, in that direction.

Appreciation and love

My life has been enriched by an appreciation of nature. I hope you too will notice its variety and allow nature to refresh you.

Do not take for granted your physical and mental health and strength when you have it, nor lose hope when you don't.

My life has been enriched by wonderful friendships but the love of my family has been the most precious gift I have. Your father and grandfather offered me a love and a life which I always feared was too good to last. My love for him will never die. I picture the world to come as the opportunity to relax again in his arms.

My children are sources of joy and pride. You make me feel loved and cared for. Your thoughtfulness is touching and our interactions are a pleasure for me.

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My love for my grandchildren is too great to express in words. I hope I have expressed it in other ways. Your existence gives me hope for the future and our mutual love gives me the greatest happiness.

APPENDIX B: When Death Is Imminent - the *Viddui* וְדוּי Prayer

The following is a suggested version of the *Viddui* to use as a guide. By tradition, personal thoughts and feelings may be added.

I acknowledge before you, Adonai, my God, and God of our ancestors, that both my cure and my death are in Your hands. May it be Your will to send me perfect healing. Yet if this is not your determination, I will accept it. In your presence I atone for all of my sins and transgressions. O God, bestow upon me the abounding happiness that is treasured for righteous people. Make known to me the path of life. In Your Presence is fullness of joy. At Your right hand is eternal bliss. Protect my family with whose soul my own is knit. Into Your hand I offer my spirit. You have redeemed me, O God of truth. Amen.

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Ehchad.

Hear, O Israel, the Eternal One is our God, the Eternal God Alone.

The opportunity should then be taken, if at all possible, to turn to family members and friends with words of forgiveness, understanding, and reconciliation.

APPENDIX C: Psalm 23

(Traditional)

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul;
He guideth me in straight paths for His name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil,
For Thou art with me.
Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;
Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

(Modern)

*The Lord is my shepherd;
I lack nothing.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me to water in places of repose;
He renews my life;
He guides me in right paths
as befits his name.*

*Though I walk through a valley of deepest darkness,
I fear no harm, for you are with me;
Your rod and Your staff - they comfort me.*

*You spread a table for me in full view of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil;
my drink is abundant.*

*Only goodness and steadfast love shall pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
for many long years.*

APPENDIX D: *Eil Malei Rachamim* אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים

(For a Male)

אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים, שׁוֹכֵן בְּמְרוֹמִים, הַמְצִיא מְנוּחָה נְכוֹנָה תַּחַת פְּנֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה,
עִם קְדוֹשִׁים וְטְהוֹרִים כְּזוֹהַר הַרְקִיעַ מְזִהִירִים אֶת נְשִׁמַּת _____ בֶּן _____
[יָקִיר] שֶׁהָלַךְ לְעוֹלָמוֹ. בְּעַל הַרַחֲמִים יִסְתִּירָהוּ בְּסִתְרֵי פְּנֵי לְעוֹלָמִים.
וְיִצְרֹר בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת נְשִׁמָּתוֹ. יְיָ הוּא נַחֲלָתוֹ וְיִנּוּחַ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל מִשְׁכָּבוֹ,
וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

Eil malei rachamim sho-chein bam'romim, ham-tzei m'nuchah n'chonah tachat kanfei ha-sh'chinah, im k'doshim u-t'horim k'zohar ha-rakiya maz-hirim et nishmat _____ ben _____ [yakir] she-halach l'olamo. Ba-al ha-rachamim, yasti-rei-hu b'seiter k'nafav l'olamim. V'yitzror bitzror ha-chayim et nishmato, Adonai hu nachalato, v'yanu-ach b'shalom al mishkavo v'nomar amen.

God of compassion, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure who shine in the brightness of the firmament, to the soul of our dear _____ who has gone to his eternal rest. God of compassion, remember all his worthy deeds in the land of the living. May his soul be bound up in the bond of everlasting life. May God be his inheritance. May he rest in peace. And let us answer: Amen.

(For a Female)

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת פני השכינה,
עם קדושים וטהורים כזהר הרקיע מזהירים את נשמת _____ בת _____
[יְקִירָה] שְׁהֵלְכָה לְעוֹלָמָהּ. בְּעַל הַרְחָמִים יִסְתִּירָהּ בְּסֵתֶר כְּנָפָיו לְעוֹלָמִים.
וַיִּצְרֹר בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים אֶת נִשְׁמָתָהּ. יְיָ הוּא נַחֲלָתָה וְתַנּוּחַ בְּשָׁלוֹם עַל
מִשְׁכָּבָהּ, וְנֹאמַר אָמֵן.

*Eil malei rachamim sho-chein bam'romim, ham-tzei m'nuchah n'chonah tachat
kanfei ha-sh'chinah, im k'doshim u-t'horim k'zohar ha-rakiya maz-hirim et
nishmat _____ bat _____ [yakirah] sheh-halchah
l'olamah.*

*Ba-al ha-rachamim, yasti-reha b'seiter k'nafav l'olamim. V'yitzror bi-tzror ha-
chayim et nishmatah. Adonai hu nachalatah, v'tanu-ach b'shalom al
mishkavah, v'nomar amen.*

God of compassion, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure who shine in the brightness of the firmament, to the soul of our dear _____ who has gone to her eternal rest. God of compassion, remember all her worthy deeds in the land of the living. May her soul be bound up in the bond of everlasting life. May God be her inheritance. May she rest in peace. And let us answer: Amen.

APPENDIX E: Mourner's *Kaddish* קַדִּישׁ

יִתְגַּדֵּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעָלְמָא דִּי-בְרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ, וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ.
בְּתֵיכּוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכּוֹן וּבְתֵי דְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזֶמַן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ
אָמֵן.

*Yit-ga-dal ve-yit-ka-dash she-mei ra-ba be-al-ma di-ve-ra chi-ru-tei, ve-yam-lich mal-chu-tei
be-cha-yei-chon u-ve-yo-mei-chon u-ve-cha-yei de-chol beit Yis-ra-eil, ba-a-ga-la u-vi-ze-
man ka-riv, ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.*

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא.

Ye-hei she-mei ra-ba me-va-rach le-a-lam u-l'al-mei al-ma-ya.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח, וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא, וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ
דְּקֻדְשָׁא, בְּרִיךְ הוּא, לְעֵלָא מִן-כָּל-בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירָתָא, תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנִחַמְתָּא
דְּאִמְרֵיךְ בְּעָלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

*Yit-ba-rach ve-yish-ta-bach, ve-yit-pa-ar ve-yit-ro-mam ve-yit-na-sei, ve-yit-ha-dar ve-yit-
a-leh ve-yit-ha-lal she-mei de-ku-de-sha, be-rich hu, le-ei-la min kol bi-re-cha-ta ve-shi-ra-ta,
tush-be-cha-ta ve-ne-che-ma-ta, da-a mi-ran be-al-ma, ve-i-me-ru; a-mein.*

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָה רַבָּא מִן-שְׁמַיָּא, וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

*Ye-hei she-la-ma ra-ba min she-me-ya ve-cha-yim a-lei-nu ve-al kol Yis-ra-eil,
ve-i-me-ru: a-mein.*

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ וְעַל-כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל,
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

*O-seh sha-lom bi-me-ro-mav, hu ya-a-seh sha-lom a-lei-nu ve-al kol Yis-ra-eil,
vei-me-ru: a-mein.*

Exalted and hallowed be God's great name in the world which God created according to plan.
May God's majesty be revealed in the days of our lifetime and the life of all Israel – speedily,
imminently, to which we say Amen.

Blessed be God's great name to all eternity.

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Blessed, praised, honored, exalted, extolled, glorified, adored, and lauded be the name of the Holy Blessed One, beyond all earthly words and songs of blessing, praise and comfort. To which we say Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and all Israel, to which we say Amen.

May the One who creates harmony on high, bring peace to us and to all Israel. To which we say Amen.

From *Mishkan T'filah*, a Reform *Siddur*, 2007

APPENDIX F: Lighting a *Shiva* **שְׁבִיעָה** Candle Upon Returning from
the Cemetery

The following selections are some suggestions which might direct your thoughts as you light the *shiva* **שְׁבִיעָה** candle. Feel free to adapt these texts.



O God, grant us strength as we mourn the loss of _____ . We will always have cherished memories of him/her. Bless our family with light and peace. May his/her memory continue to serve as a blessing and an inspiration to all who knew and loved him/her.



A Prayer of Moses
Psalm 90

Adonai, You have been our refuge in all generations.
Before the mountains were born or the earth was formed
From everlasting to everlasting You are God.
You turn a person to dust. You say: "Return, O mortals."
A thousand years are in Your sight
As a passing day, an hour of night.
You carry us away and we sleep.
We flourish in the morning like grass.
In the morning it grows anew;
In the evening it is cut down and withers.
We are consumed by Your anger;
We are overcome by Your wrath.
You set out our sins before You,
Our secrets before Your presence.
Your anger darkens our days,
Our lives expire like a sigh.
The days of our years are three-score and ten
Or even by reason of strength four-score years.
Laden with trouble and travail,
Life is quickly gone, and we fly away.

Who can know the power of Your wrath?
Who can measure the reverence due You?
Teach us to number our days
That we may get us a heart of wisdom.
Relent, Adonai! How long must we suffer?
Have compassion upon your servants.

Match days of sadness with days of joy
Equal to the years we have suffered.
Let your work appear to Your servants
And Your glory upon Your children.
May Adonai our God show us graciousness
And may Adonai prosper the work of our hands.

APPENDIX G: Concluding *Shiva* שבועה

At the conclusion of shiva, one customarily takes a short walk around the block. These meditations may help shape your thoughts before taking your walk.

O God, Healer of shattered hearts, let neither death nor sorrow have dominion over us. May we always remember and cherish all of the good and kind deeds in the life of _____ . May his/her memory inspire us to deeds of loving-kindness.

~~~~~

*O God who heals the broken-hearted, we thank You for Your gift of comfort that You have brought us during these past days of sorrow. We are also thankful for family and friends who have shared our grief and brought us comfort.*

~~~~~

As we again go forward to resume our life's tasks, we pray that You will help us face our grief without bitterness. Teach us to honor our dear _____ by continuing to serve our people through deeds of charity and loving-kindness. And may You, O God, always be our support when our strength fails us.

~~~~~

*We rise up now to face life's tasks once more. There will always be moments of loneliness, for a loved one has passed from our midst. Teach us always to be thankful for the life of our dear companion and for the opportunity of sharing so many joyous moments with him/her. May we always honor \_\_\_\_\_ by rising above despair and finding consolation in serving our people. Amen.*

~~~~~


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God of spirit and flesh, we have turned to You for comfort in these days of grief. When the cup of sorrow passed into our hands, Your presence consoled us. Now we rise up to face the tasks of life once more. There will be moments of woe and hours of loneliness, for a loved one has passed from our sight. In our times of weakness may her (his) memory strengthen our spirit. Teach us to give thanks for all that was deathless in the life of our dear companion and friend, and which now is revealed to us in all its beauty. Be our support when our own strength fails us.



For the love that death cannot sever; for the friendship we shared along life's path; for those gifts of heart and mind which have now become a precious heritage; for all these and more, we are grateful. Now help us, God, not to dwell on sorrow and pain, but to honor our beloved by the quality of our lives. Amen.

Adapted from Gates of the House
(Central Conference of American Rabbis)

APPENDIX H: Visiting the Cemetery

The following may be recited when you visit the cemetery, or refer to Appendix D for Psalm 23. You are not required to recite anything. Feel free to speak from your heart or meditate in silence. The *Eil Malei Rachamim* אֵל מְלֵא רַחֲמִים Memorial Prayer (Appendix E) is customarily recited before leaving the gravesite.

In Memory of a Loved One

I lovingly recall _____; may he/she rest in peace. I thank God for the gift of his/her life, for the pleasant memories which are left behind. May the goodness and love with which he/she touched my life continue to influence my life as I share these qualities of kindness with others. May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of life and endure as a source of blessing to all who knew and loved him/her. Amen.

To this sacred place I come, drawn by the eternal ties that bind my soul to the soul of my beloved. Death has separated us. You are no longer at my side to share the beauty of the passing moment. I cannot look to you to lighten my burdens, to lend me your strength, your wisdom, your faith. And yet what you mean to me does not wither or fade. For a time we touched hands and hearts; still your voice abides with me, still your tender glance remains a joy to me. For you are part of me forever; something of you has become a deathless song upon my lips. And so beyond the ache that tells how much I miss you, a deeper thought compels: we were together. I hold you still in mind, and give thanks for life and love. The happiness that was, the memories that do not fade, are a gift that cannot be lost. You continue to bless my days and years. I will always give thanks for you.

Gates of Prayer
(Central Conference of American Rabbis)

At the Grave of One's Mother

Though we are separated, dear mother, at this solemn moment when I stand before your grave, I call to mind the love and solicitude with which you tended and watched over my childhood, ever mindful of my welfare, and ever anxious for my happiness.

I feel the closeness of your spirit, mother, and my heart is filled with tender emotion as I recollect the many sacrifices you made to ennoble my heart and instruct my mind. I am grateful for your every blessing, your kindly deeds, your understanding heart, your sacrificial devotion and your warm love so freely given.

What I achieved is because of your influence, and what I am, I have become through you. Indeed, the wisdom you imparted to me shall always remain with me. If at times I have failed to show you the love and appreciation you have so worthily deserved, if I have been thoughtless and ungrateful, I ask to be forgiven. In tribute to your beautiful memory, I implore your inspiration to noble and intelligent living as I cherish the recollections of your lifetime.

I pray, O God, that the soul of my beloved mother be bound up in the bond of eternal life. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Father

The memory of your life, dear father, rises before me at this solemn moment, as I stand before your grave and recall all the years of unselfish devotion, kindness, love and encouragement which you showed me during your life. I recall all the sacrifices you made for my welfare, and the many comforts with which you provided me. You rejoiced in my achievements, you guided me in my perplexities, and strengthened me in trials and disappointments. The passing of time will never diminish the blessed memories of your life.

I can pay you the tribute which you richly deserve by cherishing the ideals and principles you have taught me, by continuing the noble work you have left unfinished, by loyally upholding the heritage of Israel which you have transmitted to me, and by serving my people and all who need me. Though you are gone from my physical presence, the bond of love which unites us can never be severed.

May God grant that my father's memory ever inspire me, and may his soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life, together with the souls of all the righteous that are in Your keeping. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Husband

O God, behold and see the sorrow of my heart. Widowed and bereft, I mourn the loss of the dear companion of my heart. You sleep beneath this tomb, dear husband, and though you cannot hear me, neither can you see my tears. My existence is now a void; joy and happiness have you taken with you and I must bear the burden of life alone, for your hand can no longer protect me nor my heart repose with yours. All is cold and sorrow; I come to pour out my grief at your grave.

May God support me in this heavy trial; may God in mercy pardon the words of bitterness which have escaped from my widowed heart. O God, protect my bereaved children, deprived of their earthly father's care. Extend Your protection, God, and inspire them with a love of duty and fidelity to our faith, and veneration for their father's memory.

I pray, O Lord, that the precious memories of our happy years together may ever be an incentive to noble and sanctified living. May my endeavors to practice what is good atone for my errors. God of all, grant that the soul of my beloved husband be bound up in the bond of eternal life. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Wife

With a sorrowing heart, O beloved wife, I fondly recall your love and companionship, your tenderness and devotion and the many comforts and joys you brought into my life. As I stand now before your grave, my heart cries out for the gentle touch of your hand and your sweet compassion. Never will I forget the hardships and the pleasures, trials and triumphs, joys and sorrows, we shared together. You helped dispel my fear and in time of need encouraged me and stood by my side.

I pray that our children may ever be inspired by your precious memory. May they always remember and strive to imitate your gentleness, piety, and virtue. O God, grant unto her for whom I mourn all the joys of eternity, grant that her soul may watch as a guardian angel over my bereaved children, remove every evil influence from them, and lead them in the way of righteousness, so that we all may one day be deemed worthy of being numbered among the blessed.

Grant that the soul of my beloved wife, O God, be bound up in the bond of eternal life, together with the souls of all the righteous that are in Your keeping. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Child

O God, from the depths I cry unto thee; You have taken my dear child away from me. O help me to feel that the ways of Your providence are wise and good, though we understand them not.

You, O God, know that my soul would not question your justice; I would not rebel against your decree. It is the tender and deep love which my dear child brought into my heart that draws me here. O merciful Father, have mercy upon me and send the healing balm of your consolation to my grieving spirit.

In this moment my soul feels but little strength to praise. Yet if You did take away this life, You also did give it. O may the light of love which my child kindled within my heart continue to burn brightly, so that as I regain strength of soul, I may bring cheer to all my dear ones.

Praised be You, O God, who comforts the mourner with hope of eternal life. May the soul of my dear child be bound up in the bond of eternal life, together with the souls of all the righteous that are in Your keeping. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Sibling

O merciful God, standing here at the grave of my brother [sister] I fondly recollect the happy years we spent together, sharing the love and tradition of our home and family. Alas, death claimed you too soon and removed you too early from those who loved you. Though God has called him [her] back, I shall always hold sacred the memories of his [her] kindness and sincerity, love and devotion.

O Lord, grant that the recollections of his [her] life provide an incentive to righteous living. I place my trust in You who are the source of all life and my strength in time of sorrow. Though a link has been severed in our family chain, help me, O God, to be more closely united with those dear ones who remain.

May the soul of my beloved brother [sister] be bound up in the bond of eternal life together with the souls of all the righteous that are in Your keeping. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Grandparent

O heavenly Father, as I stand here at the grave of my beloved grandfather [grandmother] I am grateful to You for all the precious memories of his [her] life and for all that he [she] meant to me and my parents. I hope that I may follow the example of piety and goodness he [she] has left to our family. I will strive, with the help of God, to leave a similar heritage to my children.

I pray that the soul of my beloved grandfather [grandmother] be bound up in the bond of eternal life, together with the souls of all the righteous that are in Your keeping. Amen.

At the Grave of One's Friend or Relative

May you rest in peace, dear friend! Death has severed the tie that united us in life, to be renewed everlastingly in a happier world, to which I shall one day follow you.

Now, faithful to your memory, I implore God to grant repose to your soul and to give me hope of reunion when my time shall come. My God, allow the soul of him [her] for whom I mourn, freed from earth's painful struggles, dangers and difficulties, and purified through Your mercy, to share the joys of the blessed in eternity. Amen.

APPENDIX I: The Unveiling Service

The use of tombstones is an ancient custom, dating back to biblical times. Erected at the head of the grave, its purpose is to keep the memory of the deceased alive as well as to identify the grave. In former times, the inscription on the tombstone was an elaborate tribute to the virtues of the deceased. Nowadays, simplicity is preferred with a focus on the English name, Hebrew name and dates of birth and death.

While there is no traditional basis for the Unveiling Service, except for the custom of visiting the grave on the day of Yahrzeit, it is now an accepted and meaningful practice. The Unveiling Service, while not intended to be a second funeral, offers additional opportunity to pay tribute to the deceased as well as to speak to the living about the meaning of life and death. Further, the Unveiling Service marks the approximate end of the first year of mourning. Thus, it provides a natural separation in the grieving process. Through this service, and time of contemplation surrounding the end of the first year, the mourners are able to evaluate where they are in the grieving process and what they still must do to continue healing.

Suggested Words and Prayers for the Service

In the Book of Genesis, we read that the grieving Jacob set a pillar to mark the final resting place of his beloved Rachel. Today, we continue that ancient tradition of our people.



Service Options 1

On behalf of the family of _____ and in the presence of his (her) relatives and friends, we consecrate this memorial as a sign of undying love. May his (her) soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life.

-- Rabbi's Manual (Central Conference of American Rabbis)

For an Adult

God of infinite love, in whose hands are the souls of all the living and the spirits of all flesh, standing at the grave of _____, we gratefully recall the goodness in her (him) and we give thanks for the consolation of

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memory.

Strengthen us who mourn, that, walking through the valley of the shadow of death, we may be guided by Your light. May our actions and aspirations honor our loved one as surely as does this monument, which will stand as a symbol of our abiding devotion. So will she (he) live on for blessing among us.
-- *Gates of Prayer* (Central Conference of American Rabbis)

For a Child

To You, O Source of peace, we turn in our time of need. Give us strength and patience to bear our burden of sorrow. And help us to overcome our grief, so we may return to life and its tasks. Deepen our love for one another; teach us to open our hearts to all who need us; move us to reach out to them with our hands; and guide us on our path, until we find the abiding love that survives all loss and sustains us through every trial.

Grant consolation, Adonai, to sorrowing parents and to all who mourn. Heal our hurt, renew our hope and our faith. May the memory of this beloved child make all children more precious to us, and inspire us to labor for a world in which every life shall find its fulfillment.

As we dedicate this memorial to _____ we hallow and bless Your name.

-- Adapted from *Rabbi's Manual* (Central Conference of American Rabbis)

Recite Psalm 23 (Appendix C) or Psalm 121 (below).

Psalm 121

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains;
From whence shall my help come?*

*My help comes from God,
Who made heaven and earth.*

*God will not suffer thy foot to be moved;
God that keeps you will not slumber*

*Behold. The Lord who keeps Israel
Neither slumbers nor sleeps.*

The Lord is your keeper;

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The Lord is your shade upon your right hand,

*The sun shall not smite you by day,
Nor the moon by night.*

*The Lord shall keep you from all evil;
God keeps your soul.*

*The Lord shall guard your going out and your coming in,
From this time forth and forever.*

Then... The body has died; the spirit it housed will never die. On earth our dear ones do live on through those of us who to whom they were so very precious.

Remove the cover.

We now fondly dedicate this monument [plaque] to the blessed memory of [name] realizing that his [her] remains lie not only in this plot of ground but in every heart his [her] life touched.

O God, we are grateful for the years we were privileged to share with him [her] – years when he [she] brought us so many pleasures and taught us so very much by example.

And even though he [she] is no longer in our midst, we know he [she] will never leave our hearts where his [her] memory will endure as a blessing forever.

Recite the *Eil Malei Rachamim* (Appendix D) and follow with *Kaddish* (Appendix E).



Service Options 2

We join together to express our undying attachment to our beloved _____, returning to this, his/her final resting place to dedicate a memorial to him/her.

We remember now the moments shared: the times of celebration, and the times of difficulty; the times of warmth and closeness, and the times of love and

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companionship. We pray, O God, that You will treasure all that was good in his/her life, and that You will help all of us to retain that good as part of the very fabric of our lives.

Those present might wish to recite some of the words to be found in Appendix H, Visiting the Cemetery, choosing reflections appropriate to the relationship they had with the deceased.

Individuals, or everyone together, might wish to recite aloud some of the Readings and Reflections from Appendix K.

The following selection is especially appropriate for an Unveiling Service:

WE REMEMBER THEM

At the rising of the sun and its going down

We remember them.

At the blowing of the wind and the chill of winter

We remember them.

At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring

We remember them.

At the blueness of the skies and the warmth of summer

We remember them.

At the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of autumn

We remember them.

At the beginning of the year and when it ends

We remember them.

*As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.*

When we are weary and in need of strength

We remember them.

When we are lost and sick at heart

We remember them.

When we have joy we crave to share

We remember them.

When we have decisions that are difficult to make

We remember them.

When we have achievements that are based on theirs

We remember them.

*As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,
as we remember them.*

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– *Gates of Repentance*, Central Conference of American Rabbis

Recite Psalm 23 (Appendix C) or Psalm 121 (above).

Then... *The body has died; the spirit it housed will never die. On earth our dear ones do live on through those of us who to whom they were so very precious.*

Remove the cover.

We now fondly dedicate this monument [plaque] to the blessed memory of [name] realizing that his [her] remains lie not only in this plot of ground but in every heart his [her] life touched.

O God, we are grateful for the years we were privileged to share with him [her] – years when he [she] brought us so many pleasures and taught us so very much by example.

And even though he [she] is no longer in our midst, we know he [she] will never leave our hearts where his [her] memory will endure as a blessing forever.

Recite the *Eil Malei Rachamim* (Appendix D), in both Hebrew and English if you wish.

Together:

*There is a season for everything, a time for every experience under heaven:
A time to be born and a time to die,
A time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted;
A time to tear down and a time to build up;
A time to weep and a time to laugh,
A time to grieve and a time to dance;
A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones,
A time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;
A time to seek and a time to lose,
A time to keep and a time to discard;
A time to tear and a time to sew,
A time to keep silent and a time to speak.*

Ecclesiastes 3:1

You might wish to read this aloud before reciting the *Kaddish*:

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The origins of the Kaddish are mysterious; angels are said to have brought it down from heaven. It possesses wonderful power. Truly, if there is any bond strong enough to chain heaven to earth, it is this prayer. It keeps the living together, and forms a bridge to the mysterious realm of the dead. One might almost say that this prayer is the guardian of the people by whom alone it is uttered; therein lies the warrant of its continuance. Can we as a people disappear and be annihilated so long as we remember those who have gone before us?

This prayer does not acknowledge the finality of death. Through it we affirm that the blossom which has fallen from the tree of humankind shall flower and develop again in the human heart.

Recite the *Kaddish* (Appendix E) together, in English as well as Hebrew if you wish.

Leaving Special Stones on the Monument

Any of the words above might be followed by a modification of the tradition of leaving stones on the monument to show that one has been there. In the weeks before the unveiling, one of the mourners could solicit from family members, both those who will be present at the ceremony and those who will not be able to attend, words that represent the deceased either by describing who the person was or by naming something that was important to that person. These words could then be painted, using craft paint, on large stones (which can be secured from landscapers or home improvement stores if necessary). This process might prove comforting for the mourner who is doing it because it helps that person to focus on the essence of the deceased and his/her accomplishments, rather than on the difficulties which accompanied the end of his/her life. It also provides a way for those not able to be there physically to have a role in the unveiling.

Everyone present at the unveiling can be asked to choose one or more stones they want to leave on and around the monument. This activity is likely to prompt some conversation, and even some laughter, as the various aspects of the life and personality of the deceased are shared. It might also be comforting to the mourners to know that other people coming to visit the cemetery in subsequent months will notice these stones and, through them, get an idea of who this person was. When the paint fades, it can be refreshed or replaced by a new stone. A variation on this idea is to encourage people who will be at the unveiling to bring an appropriate item which reminds them of the deceased to leave on the gravestone.

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APPENDIX J: Lighting the *Yahrzeit* יָרֵצִיט Candle

The *yahrzeit* candle is traditionally burned from sunset to sunset on the anniversary of the day of death, according to the Hebrew or English calendar, starting on the evening preceding the day. There is no special prayer to be recited. Choose a quotation, a psalm, or a poem, one of the selections below, or any other passage which you are moved to read.

~~~~~

*I now remember my dear \_\_\_\_\_, who has gone to his/her eternal resting place. May his/her soul be given life everlasting, and may his/her memory be a source of blessing to those who knew and loved him/her. Amen.*

~~~~~

*I light this *yahrzeit* candle in loving memory of _____, recalling the words from the Book of Proverbs: "The soul of a person is the light of Adonai."*

~~~~~

*O God, I remember tonight the life of my dear \_\_\_\_\_. As I light this candle to his/her memory, I put my trust in You and pray that his/her memory will serve as a blessing and source of inspiration to all people who knew and loved him/her.*

~~~~~

May God remember the soul of my dear _____, who has passed to eternal rest. I pledge charity and deeds of loving-kindness on his/her behalf and pray that his/her soul will be kept among the immortal souls of our righteous ancestors.

~~~~~

*O God, I pray that you will keep the soul of my dear \_\_\_\_\_, united with us in the bond of life. In his/her memory, guide me so that I will live righteously, fulfilling Your will and serving our people. May his/her soul rest in peace and be remembered as a blessing.*

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*O God, as I observe \_\_\_\_\_'s Yahrzeit, I pray that I may emulate all that was good and righteous in his/her life. May his/her soul be given eternal life and his/her memory always remain a comfort and source of inspiration.*



*At this moment, which bears the memory of our beloved \_\_\_\_\_, let us join hands in love and remembrance. A link has been broken in the chain which has bound us together, yet strong bonds of home and love hold us each to the other.*

*We give thanks for the blessing of life, of companionship and of memory. We are grateful for the strength and faith that sustained us in the hour of our bereavement. Though sorrow lingers, we have learned that love is stronger than death. Though our loved one is beyond our sight, we do not despair, for we sense our beloved in our hearts as a living presence. Sustained by words of faith, comforted by precious memories, we kindle the yahrzeit light in remembrance.*

*“The human spirit is the light of Adonai” (Proverbs 20:27). As this light is pure and clear, so may the blessed memory of the goodness and nobility of character of our dear \_\_\_\_\_ illumine our souls.*

The light is kindled.

**זְכוּרוֹנוֹ [זְכוּרוֹנָה] לְבָרָכָה**

*Zichrono/Zichrona Livracha*

May his/her memory be for blessing.

Adapted from Gates of the House  
(Central Conference of American Rabbis)

APPENDIX K: Readings and Reflections

(Mostly from “*Mishkan T’filah* for the House of Mourning”)

Sorrow comes in great waves...but it rolls over us, and though it may almost smother us, it leaves us on the spot, and we know that if it is strong we are stronger, inasmuch as it passes and we remain...

\* \* \* \* \*

As in the world around us, so too in human life: darkness is followed by light, and sorrow by consolation. Life and death are twins; grief and hope walk hand in hand. Although we cannot know what lies beyond the body’s death, we put our trust in the undying Spirit that calls us into life and abides to all eternity.

– Chaim Stern

\* \* \* \* \*

If the existing generation were given the chance to live forever, but on the clear understanding that never again would there be a child, or a youth, or first love, never again new persons with new hopes, new ideas, new achievements; ourselves for always and never any others – could the answer be in doubt?

– Chaim Stern

\* \* \* \* \*

There are three ways to mourn. The first is to cry. The second is to grow silent. The third is to transform sorrow into song. – Abraham Joshua Heschel

\* \* \* \* \*

In Nature’s ebb and flow, God’s eternal law abides. When tears dim our vision or grief clouds our understanding, we often lose sight of God’s eternal plan. Yet we know that growth and decay, life and death, all reveal a divine purpose. God, who is our support in the struggles of life, is also our hope in death.

\* \* \* \* \*

Fashion a pure heart for me, O God;  
create in me a steadfast spirit.  
Do not cast me out of Your Presence,  
or take Your holy spirit away from me.  
Let me again rejoice in Your help;  
let a vigorous spirit sustain me.  
As my mouth declares Your praise,  
help me to put these prayers into practice.  
Open my lips, and my heart, Eternal God. – Psalm 51:12-14, 17



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What are we? Are we merely skin, flesh, blood, veins, nerves, muscle, and tissue? No! What constitutes us is our soul; the rest being only the garments that cover our inner being. When we depart this earth, we remove our outer coverings and continue to love by virtue of our soul, which is immortal. –The Zohar

\* \* \* \* \*

Hear my cry, O God, heed my prayer.  
From the end of the earth I call to You;  
when my heart is faint,  
You lead me to a rock that is high above me.  
For You have been my refuge,  
a tower of strength against the enemy.  
O that I might dwell in Your tent forever,  
taking refuge under Your protective wings. Selah. – Psalm 61:2-5

\* \* \* \* \*

Give voice to the anguish  
in your heart.  
Talk.  
Weep.  
Rage.  
You grieve deeply  
because you loved deeply.  
Grief is love not wanting to let go. – Earl Grollman

\* \* \* \* \*

I lift my eyes to the mountains;  
from where does my help come?  
My help comes from Adonai,  
maker of heaven and earth. – Psalm 121:1-2

\* \* \* \* \*

There is no magic answer to loss. Nothing, not even time, will make the pain completely disappear. But loss is transformative if it is met with faith. Faith is our chance to make sense of loss, to cope with the stone that rolls around in the hollow of our stomachs when something we loved, something we thought was forever, is suddenly gone. – David Wolfe

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\* \* \* \* \*

We do our best homage to our dead when we live our lives more fully, even in the shadow of our loss. For each of our lives is worth the life of the whole world; in each one is the breath of the Ultimate One. In affirming the One, we affirm the worth of each one whose life, now ended, brought us closer to the Source of life, in whose unity no one is alone and every life finds purpose. – Chaim Stern

\* \* \* \* \*

Much of the time we cannot control what happens to us. But we can always control how we respond to what happens to us. If we cannot choose to be lucky, to be talented, to be loved, we can choose to be grateful, to be content with who we are and what we have, and to act accordingly. – Harold Kushner

\* \* \* \* \*

We say shalom, and not goodbye,  
for shalom  
is goodbye and hello and wholeness and peace  
all threaded together in one breath,  
and in one breath we too  
say goodbye...to a hand to hold, a kiss and tight embrace,  
and in the same breath of shalom  
we say hello  
to an ocean of memories and a rush of emotion,  
gratitude and sorrow,  
tears and laughter and trembling and fatigue  
all in one breath.

\* \* \* \* \*

Grant me the ability to be alone;  
May it be my custom to go outdoors  
Each day among the trees and grasses,  
Among all growing things,  
May I be alone, and there enter into prayer  
To talk with the One I belong to.

\* \* \* \* \*

God who speaks in silence, teach me not to fear silence. Remind me that running from pain only causes more pain, that distraction is no cure for suffering. Give me the courage to embrace the stillness, to encounter the quiet, that I might learn to hear Your holy voice. – Naomi Levy

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\* \* \* \* \*

Sometimes the opportunity to sit in the stillness of our own thoughts opens a new pathway we did not think was possible. – Elaine Zecher

\* \* \* \* \*

The melody that the loved one played upon the piano of our life will never be played quite that way again, but we must not close the keyboard and allow the instrument to gather dust. We must seek out other artists of the spirit, new friends who gradually will help us find the road to life again, who will walk on that road with us. The establishment of new patterns of interaction with other people, beginning with the interaction of language and moving on to new avenues of creative expression, is [a] law for the conquest of grief and the conquest of death. – Joshua Loth Liebman

\* \* \* \* \*

An old saying tells us that “time heals.”  
In part, that is true.  
With the passage of time,  
the pangs of grief may become less sharp, less frequent.  
But healing does not simply happen.  
Healing is hard work.  
You must help time to do its healing. – Earl Grollman

\* \* \* \* \*

Eternity cannot be calculated like time; rather, it is a special kind of knowledge that affirms our presence here on earth mattered. Like a stone dropped into water, the ripples continue even though the human eye can no longer see it.  
– Elaine Zecher

\* \* \* \* \*

### WE REMEMBER THEM

At the rising of the sun and its going down  
    We remember them.  
At the blowing of the wind and the chill of winter  
    We remember them.  
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring  
    We remember them.  
At the blueness of the skies and the warmth of summer  
    We remember them.  
At the rustling of the leaves and the beauty of autumn

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We remember them.  
At the beginning of the year and when it ends  
We remember them.  
As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,  
as we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength  
We remember them.  
When we are lost and sick at heart  
We remember them.  
When we have joy we crave to share  
We remember them.  
When we have decisions that are difficult to make  
We remember them.  
When we have achievements that are based on theirs  
We remember them.  
As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us,  
as we remember them.

– *Gates of Repentance*, Central Conference of American Rabbis

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