

DEATH AND MOURNING

This section does its best to outline the key steps to be taken, in accordance with Jewish law, in the event of a death; useful contacts to call to make the necessary arrangements; and some on-line resources explaining the laws and customs surrounding Jewish death and mourning.

Please note, as with all sections of this resource guide, this by no means represents a comprehensive set of information or exhaustive list of resources. We would welcome any and all suggestions for adding to the usefulness of this page.

OVERVIEW

The list of resources at the end of this section provides a good starting point for getting a more thorough grasp on the rituals and practices pertaining to death and mourning in the Jewish tradition. Here, however, is a brief explanation of some of the fundamentals:

Chevra Kadisha (“holy society”) is essentially a burial society comprised of community volunteers -- for more information about the nature and duties of a *chevra kadisha*, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chevra_Kadisha).

Because Jewish Law dictates that the deceased should be buried as quickly as possible after death, one needs to make the necessary funeral arrangements and preparations as soon as one can. A *chevra kadisha* typically will do much of the work in this regard.

Tahara (“*purification*” or *ritual washing*”) This ceremony, usually coordinated and performed by the *chevra kadisha* is a central component of the death rites in Judaism and is designed to preserve the dignity of the deceased and, accordingly, provide comfort to the mourners who can be assured that their loved one is being respected in death as though in life.

Shomrim (“**guards**”) are people who watch over the body until the funeral. While often the *chevra kadisha* will provide this service, traditionally the duty is performed by close family and friends of the deceased.

According to Jewish law, the deceased should never be left alone before burial. While this tradition dates to a historical period when risk of corpse-theft was high, today the practice is continued as a mark of respect to the deceased.

Shiva is a seven day period which begins immediately after burial and during which the mourners are surrounded by friends, family, and fellow mourners. It is generally held at the home of a mourner, or the home of a family member or friend of those mourning. Sometimes the seven days is split among different homes. The mourners traditionally do not leave the 'mourning house' the entire week, and friends and acquaintances will visit constantly. Shiva commences immediately after burial.

Kaddish is a prayer recited daily by many mourners for a certain period of time following burial (up to a year). To fulfill the *mitzvah* one is supposed to recite it in the presence of a *minyan*. While the DC Minyan does not hold daily *minyanim*, ***please reference the Synagogues section of this Guide for a list of synagogues that hold daily minyanim.***

For additional information about the practices and rituals relating to Jewish Death and Mourning please consult the resources section below.

WHAT TO DO

NOTE: If you are also a member of another congregation – one which is a full-service synagogue -- in

the unfortunate event of bereavement, the first thing you should do is contact that synagogue's office to be in touch with the Rabbi. Most synagogues will have their own *chevra kadisha* and existing relationships with Jewish funeral homes, taking much of the responsibility away from you.

While the DC Minyan is unfortunately unequipped to offer such services, we of course want to support our members to the best of our abilities and will do our utmost to provide the additional community support you will need to help you through the bereavement process.

If your only affiliation is to the DC Minyan:

1. **Contact a *Chevra Kadisha*** (see above)

While, as explained above, *chevra kadisha* services are generally provided in a congregational context, the Orthodox community maintains men's and women's *chevrai* that will serve anyone on request.

If the deceased is a woman, contact: Bev Morris, 301 649 7333

If the deceased is a man, contact: Menasha Katz, 301 681 6787

2. **Contact a Funeral Home** for burial arrangements. You will then work with them in conjunction with the *chevra kadisha*.

Contacting a *Chevra Kadisha* is probably your most important call since this group should be able to help you navigate the rest of the process. However, **below is a list of Funeral homes providing Jewish funeral services and Jewish Cemeteries.**

Funeral Homes

Hines-Rinaldi Funeral Home
11800 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20904
301-622-2290

Borgwardt Funeral Home
4400 Powder Mill Road
Beltsville, MD 20705
301-937-1707

Danzansky-Goldberg Memorial Chapels
1170 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301-340-1400

Jefferson Funeral Chapel
5755 Castlewellan Drive
Alexandria, VA 22315
703-971-7400

Edward Sagel Funeral Home
1091 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301-217-9400

Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home
254 Carroll Street NW
Washington, DC 20012
202-541-1001

Cemeteries

Adas Israel Cemetery
1400 Alabama Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20032
202-362-4433

Judean Memorial Gardens
16225 Batchellors Forest Road (at Georgia Avenue)
Olney, MD 20832
301-384-1000

King David Memorial Gardens
7482 Lee Highway
Falls Church, VA 22042
703-560-4400

Menorah Gardens
12800 Viers Mill Road
Rockville, MD 20853
301-881-2151

RESOURCES

<http://www.jewish-funerals.org/aboutus.htm> (this is the website of the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington and a wonderful and comprehensive resource both for Washington-specific information, and general information about Jewish death and funeral practices).

http://www.itim.org.il/bin/en.jsp?enDispWho=CeremonySuperTopic^17&enPage=BlankPage_E&enDisplay=view&enDispWhat=object&enZone=CeremonySuperTopic&enInfolet=viewObject_E.jsp (from the Jewish Life Information Center [ITIM] website, which provides in-depth information about all Jewish lifecycle events. Some information is specific to the Israeli context, but there is also a wealth of generally relevant information).

<http://www.jewfaq.org/death.htm> (an informative site covering the “basics” of death and mourning in the Jewish context)

<http://adasisrael.org/pdfs/FuneralPractices2004.pdf> (a pamphlet produced for its members by Adas Israel congregation in DC. Much of the information pertains to what a member of Adas should do in the event of experiencing bereavement, but there is also some generally relevant and very good information).