



**Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood**

# *A Time To Weep*

A Guide to Bereavement  
Based on the Customs  
of the  
Seattle Sephardic  
Community



Congregation Ezra Bessaroth



First Edition - 2013  
*Printed in The United States of America*

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DEDICATION

**Part 1**

- A concise overview about the importance and proper performance of our responsibility to visit people who are ill. 15

CHAPTER ONE

Visiting The Sick and The Patient 17

- Visiting the Sick 17
- The Patient 19

CHAPTER TWO

**Viduy** (Confession) 21

CHAPTER THREE

The End of Life In This World and The Visitor 23

- The End of Life in This World 23
- The Visitor 24

**Part 2**

- Overview of the various states of mourning and through anniversary **meldados** 27

CHAPTER FOUR

Overview of the Mourning Process 29

CHAPTER FIVE

The Period From Death Until the Burial 31

- The Brotherhood 31
- **Onen** 31

CHAPTER SIX

Honoring the Deceased 33

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Funeral and **Ko'anim** 35

- The Funeral 35
- **Ko'anim** 37

CHAPTER EIGHT	
The Burial	39
• Decorum in the Cemetery	39
• The Burial	39
CHAPTER NINE	
After The Burial — The <b>Siete (Shiva)</b>	41
• General	41
• Notes	42
CHAPTER TEN	
The Tearing Of Garments	43
• <b>Kortar Keriya</b>	43
• Differences between parents and other relatives	44
CHAPTER ELEVEN	
<b>Seudat Avraa</b> (the Meal of Consolation)	45
• <b>Siete</b>	45
• <b>Seudat Avraa</b> (the Meal of Consolation)	45
• Other Meals and Customs	46
CHAPTER TWELVE	
Rules and Restrictions to Follow During the <b>Shiva</b>	47
• General Rules and Restrictions	47
• Restrictions on the <b>Avel</b>	47
• <b>Tefila</b>	49
• <b>Shabbat</b>	50
CHAPTER THIRTEEN	
Visiting the Mourners During <b>Shiva</b>	53
CHAPTER FOURTEEN	
Ending the <b>Shiva</b>	55
CHAPTER FIFTEEN	
The Thirty Days and the Year	57
CHAPTER SIXTEEN	
The Unveiling of the Headstone	61

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The <b>Meldados</b> and Visiting the Cemetery	63
• When <b>Meldados</b> are held	63
• Preparing for a <b>Meldadado</b>	64
• The Day of the <b>Meldado</b>	65
• Visiting the Grave on the <b>Meldado</b>	66

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

In Conclusion	69
---------------	----

## Appendix A

The <b>Kaddish</b>	71
• Introduction	71
• Who says the <b>Kaddish</b> ?	72
• How and when is <b>Kaddish</b> said by mourners at services?	73

## Appendix B

Differences between Sepharadim and Ashkenazim Customs in Seattle	75
---	----

## Appendix C

The Lighting of Candles	77
• When to light?	77
• How to light?	78

## Appendix D

Glossary	79
----------	----



This booklet presents the laws and customs prevalent in our community that relate to several especially stressful times, when people are experiencing difficult and potentially traumatic life cycle events - that is, relating to illness, death and mourning.

The focus is on the principals going through the experience, their friends and relatives, and on the community. This booklet covers periods of being sick, for the patient and for those visiting or caring for the patient; and it also covers periods when one has suffered the passing of a close relative, for the mourner and for those visiting or caring for the mourners. The material here is meant to be complementary to Siddur Zehut Yosef (ZY) and to the soon-to-be published Brotherhood Cemetery and Mourning Booklet (BCB) delineating the prayers and some of the practices during these periods.

Besides the strict *alachic* (Jewish legal) considerations, in these matters, over the years, there have developed a variety of customs in many individual communities. The purpose of this booklet is to provide an informative guide for the Seattle Sephardic Community. The booklet is intended to be a useful reference and guide for people going through the experience. For this reason, it is divided into short chapters with a

paragraph numbering system. It is not intended to be a scholarly writing with lengthy explanations nor does it contain many details and differences of opinion.

The Seattle Sephardic community is a community true to its roots and steadfast in its practice of tradition. Even so, over time, and for a variety of reasons, we have lost the practice of some of our traditions, such as visiting the *avel* (mourner) at home on *Shabbat* after *Kal* (synagogue). Our intent is that this booklet will increase knowledge, awareness and practice of our traditions and customs for people going through these difficult times. However, there will more than likely be details and special cases that will come up that are not dealt with in these pages. In such cases, please consult your rabbi for more detailed instructions, guidance or explanations.

It is our hope that we will see the day when no one need mourn any longer and that we merit the coming of the *Mashiach* - to return to *Yerushalayim* with a rebuilt *Bet Amikdash* - and to be reunited with all our loved ones at *Tehiyat Ametim!*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our sincere thank you to:

Rabbi Morris Scharhon – Our brother, Rabbi Morris Scharhon, began this project so that our Sephardic heritage will survive for future generations. He took an entire summer to type the book's first draft and his knowledge of our laws and traditions has made him a great resource throughout the work of putting the book together.

Rabbi Solomon Maimon – Rabbi Maimon has provided much of the foundation for maintaining our Sephardic customs in Seattle. We thank him for sharing his vast knowledge of the Seattle Sephardic community and its traditions.

Rabbi Simon Benzaquen – Rabbi Benzaquen shared his expert knowledge of our community's customs and traditions with us. We thank him for the many details he provided which we have included throughout this booklet.

Hazzan Isaac Azose – We thank Hazzan Azose for the invaluable expertise he provided concerning Sephardic customs, grammar and translations.

Albert S. Maimon – We owe Albert a huge debt of thanks. His expert knowledge was essential throughout this project. Even more than that though, he was a constant driving force to make sure this project was carried out and completed.

Bill & Rachel Rood – We thank Bill and Rachel for their invaluable help with the booklet's technical formatting and design.

Brianna Caplan Sayres – We thank Brianna for her assistance with proofreading the final manuscript.

## SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood is an organization committed to enhancing the quality of life for Sephardic Jews throughout the community. When the time comes, it only takes one phone call to put everything in motion. We learned early on, from our father, how special the Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood is. For these reasons he served as the Brotherhood's president from 1986 to 1987.

We are extremely grateful to the organization for agreeing to host this booklet on their website, [www.seattlesephardicbrotherhood.org](http://www.seattlesephardicbrotherhood.org) and also agreeing to supply a copy of it to their members when needed.



Azaria and Rachel Scharhon

## DEDICATION

## IN MEMORY OF

## AZARIA AND RACHEL SCHARHON

After our parents, Rachel and Azaria Scharhon *A"H*, passed away (Mom – *Iyar* 9, 5761 May 2, 2001 Dad *Adar* 3, 5763 March 7, 2003), we did extensive research on what our Seattle Sephardic traditions had to say about how to show proper respect for those who are dying and those who have passed on. Since our parents felt so strongly about our Sephardic traditions, we felt that a booklet sharing these traditions with our community would be a fitting tribute to their memories.

We hope that anyone who must go through such trying times will find that this booklet will ease the stress and add understanding and meaning to the experience. As you and your families make use of this booklet in time of need, you will be helping to honor the love of Sephardic tradition, so deeply held by our parents.

Bruce and Esther (Scharhon) Caplan  
Rabbi Morris and Chani Scharhon  
Alan and Marie Scharhon



# *Part 1*

**A concise overview about the importance and proper performance of our responsibility to visit people who are ill.**

## CHAPTER ONE

**Visiting The Sick and The Patient****Visiting the Sick**

- 1) Our Torah commands us to do two types of *Mitzvoth* (commandments). One type is social – between people (for example, to lend things; not to steal). The other type is between people and their Creator (for example, to keep kosher; not to serve idols).
- 2) Visiting the sick (*Bikur Holim* in Hebrew) is a commandment of the first type. However, this *Mitzvah* is so special that even *Ashem* keeps it (see Genesis Chapter 18 Verse 1 where the Torah tells us about *Ashem's* visiting Abraham when Abraham was recovering from circumcision).
- 3) A Jewish man or woman is obligated to visit the sick — Jewish and non Jewish and irrespective of their social, economic, or other status. We must visit people who are sick, whether their illness is temporary or of a more serious nature.
- 4) There are four basic goals in performing this *Mitzvah*. They are:
  - a) To cheer the ill person up and to keep the patient company.
  - b) To care for the patient's physical and spiritual needs.
  - c) To pray for the patient's recovery. Our tradition teaches us that the presence of *Ashem* visits the sick as well



and is considered to be above the patient's head. The appropriate prayers include asking *Ashem* (in any language) to please grant the patient a complete, speedy recovery. Also, one may say *Te'illim* (Psalms) for the recovery of the patient (preferably in Hebrew). See ZY pages 418-421 (*Mi Sheberach* and *Te'illim*)

- d) To gently remind the patient to pay attention to their state of affairs if they are critically ill (e.g., to repay all outstanding debts, to “forgive and forget”, to ask forgiveness). Another aspect of this goal is for the patient to do *Viduy* (confession). (See chapter 2 for more detail on this matter). There are two benefits to this fourth aspect of the *Mitzvah*. Firstly, in the *zehut* (merit) of taking care of these important matters, *Ashem* may grant the patient a *refuah shelema* (a complete recovery). Additionally, in the event that the person does not recover and passes on (*leshos - has veshalom* - G-d forbid) the burden has been lessened on themselves and on their family.
- 5) The more one visits the sick, the more praiseworthy is the visitor.
  - 6) Everyone must be very sensitive to and considerate of the feelings of a patient. The visitor is reminded to have only the patient's well being in mind, and not be a burden. For example:
    - a) If the patient is not up to having visitors, one should stay away.
    - b) When speaking to a patient, discuss only cheerful things, in order to lift their spirits.
    - c) It is important not to depress them or frighten them.
    - d) Certain information should be withheld from a critically ill patient. (When in doubt of what to say or how to say it, contact a rabbi before visiting the patient).

- e) Try to help in any way possible.
- 7) A person who is visiting the sick should take the opportunity to resolve any damaged relationships and ask forgiveness from the patient.
- 8) If a person is unable to visit a patient personally or if the patient is not up to having visitors, the *Mitzvah* of *Bikur Holim* may be accomplished by calling or writing.
- 9) In general, besides visiting, one should otherwise show concern and try to provide for the needs of the patient. This includes praying for the patient's recovery, both privately and in *Kal* and donating money to *tsedaka* (a charity of your choice) for the *refuah shelema*, complete recovery, of the one who is ill.

### **The Patient**

- 10) On occasion, when a person has recovered from being gravely ill, his or her Hebrew first name may be changed, symbolic of having received "a new lease on life". (ZY Pg 422)
- 11) A seriously ill person who hears news about the passing of a close relative does not have to tear their clothes or keep any of the other laws of *avelut* (mourning).



## CHAPTER TWO

**Viduy (Confession)**

- 1) As mentioned, we must be very careful not to frighten the patient. Rather we should encourage him / her that his / her confession will lead to recovery and merit his living many more years. For this and other reasons, it is worthwhile for the patient to confess and to apologize to people for having wronged them, even if (s)he is only slightly ill.
- 2) Although we go out of our way to keep spirits up and not frighten the patient, if a patient is critically ill, someone capable of the utmost sensitivity must urge him / her to confess the wrongs that have been committed over the course of his / her lifetime. This confession is called *Viduy*. (See ZY pages 422-424)
- 3) Since this is a very sensitive matter, it is better that this is done privately (with no more than one close person present). This should definitely not be done in the presence of anyone whose behavior may cause the patient to get discouraged or depressed.
- 4) If a patient is unable to verbalize this *Viduy*, they may confess in their thoughts or listen to someone who reads it for them.
- 5) If the patient cannot follow a lengthy *Viduy*, they should at least say something, such as “May the pain that I am going through atone (be a *kapara* – atonement) for all of my sins”.



## CHAPTER THREE

**The End of Life In This World and The Visitor****The End of Life in This World**

- 1) This can be a most trying time for both the person whose time is approaching and for close relatives and friends. Seeking counsel and guidance from a rabbi can be most comforting and helpful. This is a most intense and emotional period filled with conflicting and mixed feelings about “doing the right thing”. There may be “a lot of time” if the person is suffering from a continuing illness; there may be “almost no time” if the person is suddenly struck by a near fatal illness or accident.
- 2) According to our Torah, great care must be taken not to do or say anything that will quicken a person’s death even if extreme pain prompts the patient to request it. The use of heroic measures (ventilator, resuscitation, etc) and the ability to stop them or to change instructions is best considered in consultation with a rabbi and physician. Consult a rabbi should extraordinary circumstances or measures be required.
- 3) We are obligated to desecrate the *Shabbat* to prolong the life of one who is dying. Through the last moments of life, a person is still considered totally

alive. Human life is precious and it takes precedence over every other consideration.

- 4) Once a person has died, the trauma and the feeling of the need to “do something” is great among family and friends. If one passes away on *Shabbat*, consideration for *Shabbat* takes precedence so that, one is advised before *Shabbat* to consult with a rabbi about how best to accomplish certain aspects of taking care of necessary affairs.

### **The Visitor**

- 5) Those visiting *goses* (a person who is in the stage before death) should not eat or drink or be lighthearted in their presence.
- 6) A dying person should not be left alone. It is a big *Mitzvah* to be at the side of a person when the soul (*neshama*) departs from his/her body. Therefore, it is desirable that family and close friends and if possible, a *minyan* (10 adult Jewish males) be present. This should not include an emotional individual who might start to cry or otherwise cause a commotion, so as not to frighten the one dying and quicken their demise.
- 7) When it appears that death is imminent, it is best to immediately consult with the rabbi for the appropriate action to take.
- 8) When a person has died, a most traumatic time for family members, the Torah focuses attention on giving honor to the dead. This is accomplished by ensuring that someone is constantly with the body and that the body is treated with honor through such

actions as closing the mouth and eyes and ensuring that the body remain completely intact.

- 9) According to the Torah a person does not own their body and therefore has no right to allow any of their organs to be used after death. In general, organ donation is not permitted. However, there are ways according to *alaha* (Jewish Law) to donate some organs. Consult your rabbi to explore such possibilities.
- 10) Similarly, in the case of a person who has had an amputation, the proper care of the amputated limb should be discussed with a rabbi, so that the limb or limbs may be buried with the deceased.
- 11) In general, autopsies are forbidden. In case the authorities require one, you should call your rabbi immediately for guidance and support.
- 12) Embalming and cremation are forbidden.





# *Part 2*

**Overview of the various states of mourning and through  
anniversary *meldados***



## CHAPTER FOUR

**Overview of the Mourning Process**

There are two stages one goes through with the passing of a loved one. The general transition for the family who suffers the loss of a relative is summarized below:

- 1) **Onen** – Stage one. A state of utter grief from time of death until burial (Chapter 5)
- 2) **Avelut** – Stage two, mourning, is composed of *Los Siete*, *El mes*, and *El anyo*
  - a) **Los Siete** – *Los Siete* (*Ladino* for The Seven) refers to the first seven days of mourning. It is also referred to as *Shiva* (seven in Hebrew). It starts immediately after burial, at the home where the family will sit in mourning. The steps below are followed by the mourners soon after they arrive at the designated home:
    - They change out of leather shoes (Chapter 9)
    - They *Kortar Keriya* (tear the garment) (Chapter 10)
    - Led by the eldest, they light a seven day candle which should last the entire week (Appendix C)
    - They eat the *Seudat Avraa* (meal of consolation) (Chapter 11)
    - The *avelim* will sit in mourning in the home seven days, at the end of which, a *Meldado* is held called the *Korte de Siete* (the cutting/conclusion of the seven) (Chapter 12)

- b) **Korte de Mes** – (the cutting/conclusion of the month in Ladino) the end of the first 30 days at which a *Meldado* is held (Chapter 14)
- c) **The Anyo** – (year in *Ladino*), for a parent (or other specially close relatives), at which a *Meldado* is held (Chapter 14)

**During the first year, all *Meldado* dates are based on the Hebrew date of burial.** Thereafter, the *Meldado* is held on the anniversary date of the person's passing, with commemoration (saying *kaddish*) from the Shabbat before the *Meldado*. (Chapter 15)

## CHAPTER FIVE

**The Period From Death Until the Burial****The Brotherhood**

The Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood should be contacted as soon as possible after death (Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood phone number 206-344-5238 or [www.sephardicbrotherhood.org](http://www.sephardicbrotherhood.org)). The Brotherhood will work closely with the family and the rabbi to help ensure that necessary and appropriate arrangements are made in a manner consistent with our traditions (timing, place, pallbearers, escort, etc). This includes designating a *shomer(im)* (watchman/men), preferably including a family member, to ensure that the deceased is not left alone, and who say *Te'illim* (preferably not the immediate family members). The *shomer(im)* may not eat or drink in the presence of the body (men for men – women for women). It also includes washing and properly caring for the body, with appropriate prayers being said. This is called *Tahara* (purification), and is arranged by the Brotherhood (may include family members or friends). The deceased is then covered with standard, inexpensive white shroud material.

*NOTE: there are special considerations and procedures when a new born baby passes (including naming the baby). Since there are many details in such a tragic circumstance, a rabbi should be consulted.*

**Onen**

From the time of death until after the burial, the closest relatives (father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter and spouse) of the

deceased are called *onenim* (in a state of utter grief) and have the following responsibilities and restrictions:

- 1) They should be involved in the burial preparations and may leave the house **only** for such reasons. These preparations include decisions about the burial (e.g., if the deceased is a male, whether to use his personal *tallet* or to ask the Brotherhood to provide one), who will serve as pallbearers (e.g., at the chapel and at the cemetery and as honorary), location of the funeral, location for sitting the *Siete*, location and time for prayers during the *Siete*.
- 2) Respect should be shown for the deceased by not behaving in a lighthearted manner, nor eating in the presence of the body, and not eating meat or drinking wine.
- 3) The *onen* may not pray, either individually or as a group, say Amen or put on *Tefillin*. **They are not included in a *minyan*.**
- 4) They may not say any *berahot* (blessings) before or after eating. However, hands must be washed before eating bread without saying the *beraha*.

## CHAPTER SIX

**Honoring the Deceased**

- 1) It is proper to have the funeral as soon as possible after death, to show respect and honor to the deceased.
- 2) A funeral is considered a matter of such importance that all other activities must be set aside to deal with it. For example, even the learning of Torah must be interrupted to attend to a funeral/burial.
- 3) In cases, when a short postponement will be an honor for the deceased (e.g., so that close family members can attend) it is permissible. Before delaying a funeral consult your rabbi.
- 4) A funeral may not be held very late on Friday afternoon because it might lead to the desecration of the *Shabbat*.
- 5) It is proper that only Jewish people take care of and carry the deceased (e.g., pallbearers, either at the funeral or at the burial). Consult a rabbi before the fact for exceptions.
- 6) All relatives of the deceased should attend the funeral and burial. However, some in our community have a custom that children do not go to the burial of their father. This custom is based on *Kabbala* and is an old *Yerushalmi* custom.
- 7) The practice in our community is that funeral services may be held in the synagogue for noted rabbinic scholars and recognized community leaders. Even in such circumstances the deceased may not be brought into the sanctuary.





## CHAPTER SEVEN

**The Funeral and *Ko'anim*****The Funeral**

In Seattle, the funeral, burial, and some post-burial services can take place entirely at the cemetery (the funeral service may take place in the cemetery chapel or at graveside) or the funeral may take place at a separate chapel, with the burial in the cemetery and followed by all post-burial services at the person's home. Practices are slightly different in each circumstance. On occasion, the deceased is buried out of town (e.g., somewhere in Israel or in another city).

Funerals are never held on *Shabbat*, or during the Festival of *Shavuot*, or during the first and last days of the Festivals of *Pesah* and *Sukkot*.

In the following material, unless otherwise stated, the assumption is that:

- a) the funeral takes place in an off-site chapel
  - b) the burial is in the Brotherhood cemetery
  - c) the post-burial services take place at the home of the deceased
- 1) The general order of the funeral service may be found in ZY starting on page 425.

- 2) A key portion of the service is the *hesped* (eulogy). The main objective of a *hesped* is to honor the deceased; however, mention may be made of the parents and family of the deceased. A *hesped* should bring people to feel heartbroken and to cry. In a *hesped* the good character and praises of the deceased should be mentioned. Our rabbis have taught that a person may exaggerate a little in the *hesped* (on the assumption that every Jew has acquired a lot more good than people know about). However, too much exaggeration should be advised.
- 3) No formal *hesped* (eulogy) is delivered during a funeral that occurs during the holidays, including *Hanukkah*, *Purim*, and the *medianos* (Intermediate Days) of *Pesah* and *Sukkot*. However, it is customary to say a *Devar Torah* and to include some words about the deceased as well.
- 4) If, prior to passing, a person had requested that a eulogy not be made for him/herself then the request should be honored.
- 5) Proper decorum at a funeral is very important. Cell phones should be turned off and individuals should refrain from excessive or loud socializing. Our custom is that men and women sit in separate sections of the chapel. Reading of some chapters from *Te'illim* (Psalms) or other relevant material is appropriate before the ceremony has begun. Use material provided.
- 6) It is a *Mitzvah* to escort the deceased from the funeral to the burial. This is called *levayat amet* and may be minimally accomplished by escorting the deceased at least four *amot* (eight feet). It is usually accomplished by also following the hearse in a car from the place of the funeral to the cemetery. ZY, page 427/428, has the verses to say during the *levaya*.
- 7) Care must be taken to ritually wash one's hands when one finishes participating in the services of *hesped* (eulogy)

and burying the deceased, whether at the chapel or at the cemetery, using the facilities provided.

***Ko'anim***

- 8) A male *Ko'en* may attend the funeral and burial of any relative that he must mourn (father, mother, unmarried sister, brother, son, daughter, or wife). However, he may not be in proximity (defined by the *alaha* as either physical contact, within eight feet or under the same "roof"), so, he may not come into the chapel when the deceased is there, nor may he enter the burial portion of the cemetery. For this reason, and because of the *keddusha* (holiness) of a *Ko'en*, *Ko'anim* are buried along the perimeter of a cemetery.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

**The Burial****Decorum in the Cemetery**

- 1) So as not to “taunt” those buried in the cemetery:
  - a) Special care should be taken to avoid stepping on any grave or leaning on any headstone (or footstone).
  - b) One should not eat, drink or even smoke on the cemetery grounds. (Although, it is permissible if the *Seudat Avraa* is done in the cemetery chapel).
  - c) Business matters should not be discussed.
  - d) If a man is wearing *tzitzit*, he should tuck them in.

**The Burial**

- 2) The *Mitzvah* of burial is to bury the deceased in the ground. In Seattle, a plain wooden coffin is used. Once buried, in general, it is forbidden to reopen a grave. If the need does arise, consult your rabbi.
- 3) To symbolize our belief that the deceased will come back to life, we bury a person on their back, face up, as one who is sleeping.
- 4) See ZY, pages 427-431, for the order of the graveside services (e.g., asking for *mehila* (forgiveness), memorial prayer for the deceased and his/her previously deceased relatives). One of the key elements of the service is to say

*Kaddish*, which requires a *minyán* (a quorum of ten adult Jewish males).

- 5) Attendees may participate in the act of burial by shoveling. When one person finishes shoveling, one should not hand the shovel directly to the next person. Instead one puts it down and lets the next person pick it up, symbolically showing that we do not want to hand sadness to anyone else.
- 6) Although the *Mitzvah* of burial is accomplished when the grave is mostly filled, our custom is to completely cover the coffin.
- 7) When leaving the gravesite, some have the custom of pulling some grass and dropping it back on the ground. Recently, some have also adopted a *Yerushalmi* custom of putting a rock on the headstone, which is done any time the gravesite is visited.
- 8) Once the graveside services are over, with the recitation of the *Kaddish* by the mourners, all attendees (including the mourners) should wash their hands at the facilities provided when exiting the cemetery.
- 9) Directions to the home where the mourners will be spending the *Siete/Shiva* are either handed out in printed form or given out by word of mouth.

## **After The Burial – The *Siete* (*Shiva*)**

### **General**

There are many reasons given for the seven day period of mourning known as the *Siete* or the *Shiva*. However, it is very relevant to keep in mind the following reason (which may be found in the *Kabbalah*). For seven days, the soul of the departed goes back and forth from the grave to its house and from the house to the grave. Therefore, when possible, it is proper for the mourners to sit in the home of the deceased.

During these seven days after the burial, the mourners have certain restrictions. The simple reason for these restrictions is given by the Rambam (Maimonides). Since tragedy has struck a person, other close ones should be concerned about what else might happen. They should spend some time secluded and doing some “soul searching”.

- 1) After the burial is over, the seven day mourning period (the *Siete* or *Shiva*) begins for the mourners (see note below for special circumstances).
- 2) Once at the home where the mourners will sit *Shiva*, they remove their leather shoes in preparation for the process of *Kortar Keriya* (tearing the garment).



**Notes**

Consult your rabbi for details in these or similar circumstances.

- 3) If the deceased is being buried in a different city or country, the seven days start, for those remaining here, when they take leave of the deceased. However, those accompanying the deceased start the *siete (shiva)* right after the burial.
- 4) In the event that the funeral is on the *medianos* (Intermediate Days) of *Pesah* or *Sukkot*, the *siete (shiva)* does not begin until after *segundos* (the end of the closing days of the holiday).

## The Tearing Of Garments

### ***Kortar Keriya***

*Kortar keriya* (tearing garments) is alluded to in the Torah when Jacob tore his clothes as a sign of grief, upon being told that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (Genesis 37:34). Note that only garments can be torn (see below).

Upon the passing of any one of a person's seven closest relatives (see chapter 5, *Onen*), an *avel* must tear his garment. Usually this is done at the mourners' home immediately following burial (depending on circumstances, it may be done in the chapel cemetery).

While there are differences between *keriya* for a parent and for other relatives, the following five points apply to all:

- 1) Clothing or outerwear that is commonly worn in the home, such as a shirt or blouse; not *tzitzit* or undergarments. Women should cover themselves over the tear or pin it up so as not to expose themselves.
- 2) The garment must be torn:
  - a) While standing (if it is hard for an older person, they may sit).
  - b) Beginning near the neck proceeding downward.
  - c) Someone (the rabbi or an officiate at the burial service) may start the tear with a blade and the mourner then

finishes it by hand with a tear approximately four inches long that can be obviously seen.

- 3) Before the *avel* rips their garment, they hold the garment (ready to tear it) to say the *beraha* (blessing)- ZY, page 431.
- 4) Men should assist men and women should assist women in the performance of the tearing.
- 5) A person may change into old clothing before making *keriya*.

#### **Differences between parents and other relatives**

**For Parents**, children tear

- a) On the **left** side near the heart
- b) If they change clothes during the *siete*, they must first be torn
- c) In front of other people

**For Other Relatives**, the *avel* tears

- a) On the **right** side
- b) If they change clothes during the *siete*, they need not be torn

## **Seudat Avraa (the Meal of Consolation)**

### **Siete**

One key public aspect of the *siete* (*shiva*), is for the *avel* to sit on the floor or on low chairs, not on “regular” seats like chairs or sofas. This includes meal time as well. Our custom is for visitors to join the *avel(im)* in meals to eat with them. Some choose to join the *avel* by eating while sitting on the floor as well.

### **Seudat Avraa (the Meal of Consolation)**

- 1) Since mourners may not eat their own food for the first meal after the burial, it is a *Mitzvah* for friends, neighbors or the *Kal* to provide this meal, which is called *Seudat Avraa*. This meal is eaten on the floor or while sitting on low chairs. It is also customary to wash the mourners’ hands with a pitcher and pan to catch the water and pass them a towel to dry their hands for the blessing of *al netilat yadayim*.
- 2) The meal should consist of bread (*panezikos*/rolls), *wevos haminados* (hard boiled eggs) and *azetunas* (olives). Raisins, oranges or any other round food (which symbolizes the cycle of life) may also be served.
- 3) Wine is offered to the mourners at the end of the meal as is written in Proverbs 31:6 “give wine to the bitter-hearted”. If they choose to drink it, they should not drink too much (see paragraph 7).

### Other Meals and Customs

- 4) Our custom is that friends and neighbors bring breakfast, lunch and dinner for all seven days. They may join the mourners, optionally eating on the floor with them, to share in their suffering and as a form of condolence. As shown above, it is also customary to wash the mourners' hands with a pitcher and pan to catch the water and pass them a towel to dry their hands for the blessing of *al netilat yadayim*.
- 5) It is important to note that although it is very important to comfort the mourners, the people who are assembled for the meal should maintain a somber atmosphere and refrain from making it feel like a party.
- 6) Note also that the friends of the mourners should try to organize everything that the mourners need during the week, not only the meals (e.g. they should try to organize a minyan to come and pray three times a day, take care of the children's needs, or the needs of the house).
- 7) There is a special *Birkat Ammazon* said after a meal in the house of an *avel* throughout the seven day period, starting with the *Seudat Avraa* and ending with the meal eaten just before getting up from the *siete*. If possible, three or more adult Jewish males should participate in each meal to make a *zimmun* (quorum) (see ZY, page 432).

## Rules and Restrictions to Follow During the *Shiva*

### General Rules and Restrictions

The mourners should sit *shiva* in the house of the deceased, if at all possible (see chapter 9 introduction).

Some have a custom to cover the mirrors in the house that mourners are sitting in. One reason given is that when people pray in the home, they may not pray in front of the mirror because it is an unnecessary distraction.

The following restrictions apply during the entire seven days. There is some stringency to follow during the first three days of mourning when the *aveil* is particularly expected to be focused internally, to deeply mourn over the tragedy and to be thinking about how to improve their lives. Those restrictions are noted below. Some of the practices do not apply on *Shabbat* when all public displays of mourning are forbidden except as noted.

### Restrictions on the *Aveil*

- 1) **Not to work** – If mourners have employees or partners, they should check with their rabbi as to how their business should run over the course of the week of the *shiva*. If necessary, the community should help make financial arrangements for a mourner if financial hardship would result. The usual and necessary housework (e.g., cooking, making the beds) is permitted to be done. It is especially

important that the mourners not go to work during the first three days of mourning.

- 2) **Not to bathe or apply lotions** – A mourner may wash their face, hands or feet with cool water. Brushing teeth is permitted as well. Washing any part of the body to remove dirt is permitted, as is combing hair. Cosmetics are forbidden. Other washing and applying of lotions is forbidden.
- 3) **Not to wear leather shoes** – This includes any shoes made partially of leather, even sneakers or tennis shoes.
- 4) **Not to have intimate relations**
- 5) **Not to study *Torah*** – This prohibition does not apply to the sad parts of *Torah*. These sad parts as well as the laws of and books about mourning are permitted to be studied.
- 6) **Not to greet others** – This includes not saying “*shalom*”, “hello” or any standard greeting. That being the case, if a mourner answers a phone, the proper way to begin the conversation is by saying “Yes”, or “This is so and so speaking. Can I help you?” After the first three days, if someone greets the mourner, they may respond in a low voice. While a handshake or a hug is an expression of consolation and is permitted, it should be discouraged. Note: During the first three days, the mourners should not even respond to a greeting. They should just converse as if they have already replied.
- 7) **Not to wash or clean clothing** – An *aveil* (mourner) should not put on freshly laundered (not yet worn) outer garments.
- 8) **Not to sit on regular chairs or sofas** – An *aveil* should not sit on a regular size chair or sofa. Low chairs specially made for mourners are available (to borrow such chairs, call the Seattle Sephardic Brotherhood). Some people opt to sit on the floor (with or without a pillow). The elderly, infirm or others for whom it is an extreme hardship, may

sit on regular chairs. Mourners do not have to stand out of respect, even when their parent or a rabbi enters the room (however they may stand, if they choose). An *avei* may sit on a regular chair or sofa if there are no visitors.

- 9) **Not to take a haircut or shave** – combing hair is permitted.
- 10) **Not to cut nails**
- 11) **Not to go out of the house** – Mourners should not leave the house during the *siete* (*shiva*), unless they have to sleep in a different house or unless they have to go to *Kal* to pray there. Obviously, a mourner can not go to a happy celebration, such as a wedding or *Bar Mitzvah*. In the event of a wedding in the family that happens to coincide with sitting *siete*, a rabbi should be consulted.
- 12) **Not to joke around** – The mourners must not forget that they are in mourning throughout the entire week.
- 13) **Not to listen to music**

### **Tefila**

- 14) It is preferable that **all tefila** (prayer) should be held at the home, with a *minyán*, and should be led by the *Avei* or a family member, for the entire *siete* (*shiva*). If the mourner can lead the prayers, he should do so in loving memory of the deceased. (It is our custom that a mourner leads the *tefila* even on a *Shabbat* or a holiday.)
- 15) The additions/changes to the *tefila* in the house of an *avei* can be found in ZY pages 425- 434.
- 16) Since the week will include a *Shabbat*, as well as a Monday and Thursday, when the *Sefer Torah* is normally read, arrangements should be made for a *Sefer Torah* to be



brought from *Kal*. In the event that a *Sefer Torah* can not be brought to the home, the mourners can go to *Kal* and pray there in order to be able to hear the reading of the *Sefer Torah*.

- 17) *Tahanunim* (supplicatory prayers) are not recited in the home of an *avel*. If the *avel* is attending *tefila* in the synagogue, the *avel* does not participate in saying *Tahanunim*.
- 18) If the *Allel* is scheduled to be recited (as on *Rosh Hodesh*), the mourners do not say it. They remain silent when everyone else is saying it.
- 19) Whether or not the *Shahrit* (morning) and *Arvit* (evening) prayers are performed at home or in the synagogue, a freestanding candle is lit near the mourners and stays lit throughout the entire service and until after the *Ashkava* (memorial prayer) is made after services. Note that the candle is not lit before or during *Minha*. This candle is then extinguished by fanning it out or some other means, not by blowing it out to avoid using one's breath (the breath of life) to extinguish the symbolic light of the deceased. (See Appendix C)
- 20) In the morning, at the end of the *Shahrit* service, it is our custom that the mourners do not wrap up their *tefillin* themselves. A friend takes the *tallet* and *tefillin* from the *avel* and wraps them up for him.
- 21) All attendees should strive to remove their *tallet* and *tefillin* in time for the reading of *Tziduk Adin*. (See ZY pages 434)

### **Shabbat**

- 22) On the Friday of the *siete* (*shiva*) the mourners “get up” and get ready for the *Shabbat* some time in the afternoon (the exact time depends on the time of year so the rabbi should be consulted) by changing into regular *Shabbat* clothes

and regular shoes. The mourners do not sit on the floor on *Shabbat*.

- 23) There is no mourning in public on *Shabbat*, but *Shabbat* is counted as one of the seven days
- 24) All private laws of mourning are in effect (e.g., the prohibitions of washing or using lotions, having intimate relations and studying Torah).
- 25) While no public expressions of mourning may be made on *Shabbat* and the mourners do attend synagogue, it is our custom that on that *Shabbat* morning, the *avelim* sit in a special place in *Kal*, and family and friends sit near them. The rabbi makes an announcement before his sermon acknowledging the presence of the mourners and their loss.
- 26) Mourners are allowed to greet people with the standard greeting of *Shabbat Shalom*.
- 27) A mourner may *pasar la perasha* (go over the *perasha* – i.e., read the weekly Torah portion two times), even though they can not study Torah, because this obligation to read is separate from the *Mitzvah* of learning Torah.
- 28) It is our custom on the *Shabbat* of the week of *siete* (*shiva*), to call a relative or close friend of the deceased to the Torah. An *ashkava* (memorial prayer) for the deceased is made at the end of this *aliya*. If this is done in Sephardic Bikur Holim the *ashkava* is made for the deceased only. At Ezra Bessaroth the *ashkava* is made for the deceased and other predeceased family members.



### Visiting the Mourners During *Shiva*

- 1) It is a great *Mitzvah* to comfort a mourner (*nihum avelim* in Hebrew). We find that G-d Himself performed this *Mitzvah* in Genesis 25:11, when *Ashem* visited Yitzhak after Abraham passed away. This visit is not only a sign of respect to the mourners but to the deceased as well.
- 2) The Rambam (Maimonides) writes that, if a person has a choice to do either the *Mitzvah* of *bikur holim* (visiting the sick) or *nihum avelim* (comforting mourners), one should choose *nihum avelim* because this is a kindness to the living **and** to the deceased.
- 3) The manner of the visit is **as important** as the visit itself. This is not meant to become a social gathering but it is a visit to comfort the mourners. One should not become distracted by the social nature of many people's presence in the house of the mourner; rather they should keep in mind that comforting the mourners is the objective.
- 4) When visiting the mourner, one should not initiate the conversation but should wait for the mourner to start speaking. The mourner should not start by saying "hello" or "good morning" but just start a conversation as if the preliminary greetings have been said. Shaking hands is permitted but it is better to refrain, as mentioned in ch12-6.
- 5) A visitor should be astute enough to understand when to leave and to understand that the mourners have undergone (and are undergoing) an extremely hard period. They should

be considerate not to overdo their stay or not to keep them up too late, etc.

- 6) When leaving the mourners, say: “*min ashamayim tenuhamu*” or “*tenuhamu min ashamayim*” (May you be comforted from Heaven). An appropriate response from the mourner is: “*Tizke VeTire BeNehamat Tsiyyon*” (may you merit to see the comforting of *Zion*).
- 7) It is preferred to visit in person. However, if this can not be done, one should contact the *avel* by telephone.
- 8) One may visit on *Shabbat* if one cannot personally visit during the week.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**Ending the Shiva**

- 1) After the morning prayers on the seventh day, there are a number of symbolic rituals and special memorial prayers to be said. The exact order depends on the plans of the mourners as to whether or not they will have a meal after *tefila* and whether or not they will be visiting the cemetery after *tefila* as well. If the mourners are not going to have a meal and go to the cemetery after the morning services, then at the conclusion of the services in addition to an *Ashkava* (memorial prayer) for the deceased, there is one for every previously deceased close relative of the deceased and then the mourners are given a hand to get up off the floor and the intense mourning period of the first seven days ends. Also, as they rise, there is a special verse that is recited. See ZY, page 437 for the verse and other details. If they are going to have a meal and/or go to the cemetery, consult the rabbi for the specific order.
- 2) It is customary to go to the cemetery on that day and pray at the gravesite (as if you're saying: we want to report to you that we gave you proper respect during mourning). The friends of the family should help to arrange for a *minyan* to be at the cemetery so that the mourners can say *Kaddish*. This helps bring closure to the mourners. (See ZY, page 437 for details)
- 3) Once the shiva ends, it is our custom that the mourners can take a bath or a shower immediately (even with hot

water). Some wait until they come back from the cemetery. However, in Seattle, we take showers right after we “get up”.

## The Thirty Days and the Year

- 1) The change from intense mourning to the normal life style takes place gradually. This gives the mourners time to cope with their loss, to feel an ongoing connection to their beloved relative and begin to incorporate the loss into their future.
- 2) Once the *siete* (*shiva*) finishes, the mourners may return to wearing leather shoes, sitting in regular chairs and couches, going back to work, resuming intimate relations, regular study of Torah, and greeting people.
- 3) However, after the seven days conclude, some restrictions continue until the thirtieth day after the burial. They are:
  - a) **Not to take haircuts or shave** – if shaving is necessary for your employment, the rabbi should be consulted. Women may take haircuts after the *shiva*.
  - b) **Not to cut nails with a nail clipper** – however, if the nails extend past the fingers, it is permitted.
  - c) **Not to attend parties or to get married** – this includes weddings and *Bar* and *Bat Mitzvahs*. However, one may attend one's own immediate family's *semahot* (happy occasion) if it would cause grief to the bridegroom or bride or the *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*.
  - d) **Not to take a leisure trip or a vacation**
  - e) **Not to listen to music**
  - f) **For personal exceptions, consult with the rabbi**



- 4) This period of thirty days finishes on the morning of the thirtieth day after the burial. If you're in doubt as to the exact day, ask the rabbi. Especially if there was some exceptional circumstances like the death occurring in another city or on a holiday. The following evening there is a *meldado* to commemorate the *Korte del Mes*.
- 5) There are no restrictions after the thirtieth day and no requirement to say *Kaddish* for a person mourning for a brother, sister, daughter, son, or wife. Some have the custom to say *Kaddish* even for these relatives during the entire year.
- 6) If an individual has lost a parent, the mourning decreases after the thirtieth day, but is observed to a lesser degree throughout the *anyo* (year). The continuing restrictions for an *avel* during the rest of the year are as follows:
  - a) **Not to attend an affair where they are playing music**
  - b) **Not to attend a celebration** – a *Berit Milah* (circumcision) or a *Pidyon Aben* (redemption of a first-born son) ceremony may be attended. However, one may not participate in the meal (the circumcision itself is more a *Mitzvah* than a celebration, whereas the meal is more a celebration than a *Mitzvah*).
  - c) **Not to shave or take a haircut** – until people start to criticize him for his long hair. In order to make it easier for the *avel* to shave or take a haircut, there is a custom for people to immediately criticize the *avel* upon the end of *sheloshim* (the 30 day period).
- 7) The twelve months making up the *anyo* are Jewish calendar months. Therefore, even in a Jewish leap year (that has thirteen months), mourning is for twelve chronological months.

- 8) Throughout the year a mourner should try to learn more Torah, to give more *tsedakah* (charity), and to do acts of *hessed* (mercy) in memory of their loved one.
- 9) The act of learning has many facets. One of the purposes of learning is *le'iluy neshama* (to elevate the soul of the departed). The three ways this is fulfilled are:
  - a) *Mishnayot* learned at the *meldado* (reading) including the Hebrew word for soul, *neshama*, which has the same letters that spell *Mishna*.
  - b) The original law that a mourner should say *Kaddish* was made for people who did not know how to learn Torah. However, those who know how to learn Torah would learn something special in memory of their beloved relative. Today, the *Kaddish* is said by all mourners (see Appendix A for a more detailed explanation).
  - c) Learning itself provides a greater, more personal *zehut* (merit) for the soul. So, if possible, every relative should try to study some part of the Torah in memory of the soul of the departed. Today many friends and relatives attempt to join mourners in learning *mishnayot* or *gemarrah* during the *anyo*.
- 10) Apart from the *meldados* that are scheduled at the end of the *siete* (*shiva*) and the end of the first month, there are *meldados* scheduled for the 7th month, 9th month, 11th month, and the *anyo* (year).
- 11) There are some who have a custom to have a candle burning in their home twenty four hours a day throughout the entire year in memory of the deceased (see Appendix C).



## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

**The Unveiling of the Headstone**

- 1) It is the custom to put up a headstone some time during the year, typically during the latter part of the year. Many will schedule the Unveiling around the 11th month *meldado* so that two requirements can be taken care of at roughly the same time. Quite a bit of planning goes into ordering the stone; the type, style and design of the stone, the inscription, etc. Plan on its taking two to three months before the stone is ready for the unveiling. Quiring Monuments on Aurora Avenue in North Seattle has been making all the headstones for use in our Sephardic Brotherhood Cemetery for almost a century. Consult the rabbi or a knowledgeable family member for assistance.
- 2) The Hebrew first and last name of the deceased and of the deceased's mother's Hebrew first name (e.g. **Shemuel Sarfati ben Zimbul** in Hebrew) and the Hebrew date of passing should be written on the monument. Beyond that, the monument can contain appropriate graphics, sayings or text to memorialize the deceased in a most honorable way.



## **The *Meldados* and Visiting the Cemetery**

In general in Jewish *alachic* literature, and in this chapter in particular, the term “the day of” or “anniversary” refers to the roughly twenty four hour period between sunset on two consecutive days, i.e., the Jewish “day” starts with nightfall and ends around sunset, about twenty four hours later. When a reference is made to “day” meaning “day time” from sunrise till sunset or till midnight, the term will be explained as such; otherwise the former definition applies.

### **When *Meldados* are held**

- 1) During the first year *meldados* are scheduled commemorating the day of burial. After the first year the Jewish date of death determines the secular date of the *meldado*.
- 2) Specifically, our custom is to make a *meldado*:
  - a) at *corte de siete* (the end of the first week)
  - b) at *corte de mes* (the end of the month)
  - c) on the seventh month
  - d) on the ninth month
  - e) on the eleventh month
  - f) on the twelfth month
  - g) thereafter, on the day of the annual anniversary of the death

The specific details and complications are such that each person's specific *meldado* is and should be determined by the synagogue.

### **Preparing for a *Meldadado***

- 3) Once the date of the *meldado* has been determined, the synagogue office will send out a notice. Arrangements for the *meldado* should be made with the rabbi or the *hazzan* who will officiate. Family members and friends who do not receive the synagogue notice should be notified by family members who do. Each family should consider compiling a list of prospective attendees to ensure that family and friends who **should** attend will have an opportunity to attend.
- 4) For *meldados* after the *anyo*, *Kaddish* should be said from the Friday night before the *meldado* through the end of the day of the *meldado* (see appendix A). Some have the custom to start saying *Kaddish* from the beginning of the Jewish month.
- 5) On the *Shabbat* before the *meldado*, the mourner should arrange to get called to the Torah by calling the synagogue office or the *gabbai* so that an *Ashkava* (memorial prayer) may be said in memory of his beloved relative. Preferably, it is our custom that the mourner bid on the *Maftir*, which is the repetition of the last few sentences of the *perasha*. This entitles the mourner to read the *Aftara* (a section from the Prophets). If the mourner is not proficient enough, the *hazzan* can read it for him. Another option is to ask to be called *mashlim* (next to last) with an opportunity to say a half *Kaddish*. However, if he decides not to bid on the *Maftir* and for some reason, cannot be called *mashlim*, any *aliyah* (going up) to the Torah will serve for the *hazzan* to make the memorial prayer after the *aliyah*.

- 6) It is customary to light a twenty four hour candle for the *Shabbat* before the *meldado* and for family and friends make a special effort to visit on that day. This *Shabbat* is called the *Shabbat de la Candela* (the Sabbath of the Candle).

### **The Day of the *Meldado***

- 7) If it is not *Shabbat* or a holiday, it is customary for the children of the deceased to fast (starting at rising in the morning). If fasting would be too difficult, one should offer extra *tsedaka* (charity) and an effort should be made to visit the grave that day. Fasting ends at sunset.
- 8) One should light a twenty four hour candle or *mecha* (wick, if using an oil lamp) at home in memory of the deceased, in addition to optionally lighting one in *Kal*.
- 9) To make a *meldado*, see ZY, pages 439-442. Many people make the *meldado* in their home. *Meldados* may also be made in *Kal*.
- a) A *meldado* is often held in conjunction with the daily prayers. The *meldado* itself consists of special readings from the *Zohar*, the *Mishnah* and special memorial prayers.
  - b) *Mishnayot*, including those that signify the name of the deceased and others are distributed and (preferably learned but may be) read. These need to be specially prepared so they can be provided.
  - c) It is appropriate for family members to actively participate in the *meldado* through leading services, reading *mishnayot* or delivering a *Devar Torah* in memory of the deceased.
  - d) At the end of the services, food is served so that the attendees will make *berahot* (blessings), thereby



sanctifying the name of G-d in memory of the deceased. This food includes, for example, cake, cookies, fruit, whiskey and *panezikos*; also, there's a special reason for bringing *pasas* (raisins) to symbolize the wish that this sadness will pass soon from the word play *y esto va pasar* (this, too, will pass). Check with the rabbi about bringing food to the *meldado*, especially into *Kal*.

- e) This is also an especially appropriate time to give *tsedaka*, to donate charity at this time, *le'iluy nishmat aniftar* (for the ascension of the soul of the deceased).

### **Visiting the Grave on the *Meldado***

- 10) While a person should not visit the cemetery too frequently, it is customary to visit the grave of a parent at the end of *siete (shiva)* and on the anniversary of the death (or close to it).
- 11) In addition to personal or family visits, the custom in our community is to have a community pilgrimage to both the old and the new cemeteries. This pilgrimage is called the *Ziara*. It is held once a year for Sephardic Bikur Holim on the Sunday between *Rosh Ashana* and *Yom Kippur* and twice a year for Congregation Ezra Bessaroth, on the Sundays before *Rosh Ashana* and *Pesah*.
- 12) Before entering a cemetery and at certain entrances in the cemeteries, there is a special *beraha* to say (see ZY, page 428). One should not say this blessing more than once a month.
- 13) When standing by the grave, a person should pray that the deceased should "pray for our wellbeing and that *Ashem* should watch over us in their merit and the merit of all our ancestors". If possible, a knowledgeable person should recite some *Te'illim* (Psalms) or make an *Ashkava* (memorial prayer) at the grave.

- 14) This is also an especially appropriate time to give *tsedaka*, to donate charity at this time, *le'iluy nishmat aniftar* (for the ascension of the soul of the deceased).
- 15) Before leaving, one should put their left hand on the grave and say "May it be *Ashem's* will that the deceased should rest honorably and his/her merit benefit us". When leaving the gravesite, some have the custom of pulling some grass and dropping it back on the ground. Recently, some have also adopted a *Yerushalmi* custom of putting a rock on the headstone, which is done any time the gravesite is visited.
- 16) When leaving, the hands are washed. (See chapter 9)
- 17) One should not recite the same prayer (referred to above in "13") at the same grave twice in one day.



## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

**In Conclusion**

In closing, it is important to understand that the laws and customs reviewed in this writing are to assist those in need of expressing their sorrow and mourning in a manner consistent with Jewish law and our Sephardic traditions.

A general lesson for us personally to learn through these laws and customs, is that missing the deceased, along with our grief and mourning, needs to be expressed individually in an appropriate balance. It is also true that our customs reflect the very same need for balance so that while we must honor and mourn the deceased, we may not mourn excessively. A part of the balance is to not let ourselves overdo living in the past. Rather, we should find a way to carry and honor the memory of those who have passed away through our living in the future. An example of how the rabbis have emphasized the need for balance is by their saying that, on the one hand, a person who does not mourn properly is considered cruel, while on the other hand, a person is not allowed to mourn excessively.

Another lesson to be learned, especially as illustrated in our Sephardic customs and practices, is how extensive the communal support offered throughout this difficult time is for the mourner. It calls for extensive personal involvement which includes friends and participating community members. An example of such a practice is that our custom calls for allowing others to share in the meal. This is part of a broader lesson of the importance to our community of the value of each person's sharing in the joys and sorrows of other members of the community.

May we reach the time when we will never have to use booklets like this ever again and may it be the will of *Ashem* that we merit seeing and greeting the *Mashiach* and being reunited with all of our dear loved ones once again, Amen, *ken yehee ratzon* (May it be His Will)!

## **The Kaddish**

### **Introduction**

One of the most fundamental *Mitzvoth* of the Torah is *Kiddush Ashem* (to sanctify the name of *Ashem*). This is to show ourselves and others how great the “Master Of The Universe” is. This *Mitzvah* is performed in a number of different ways, for example: by praying, or by saying blessings (*berahot*) before and / or after we eat. The ultimate fulfillment of this *Mitzvah* is to give up one’s life rather than do anything, especially in public, which denies G-d’s existence or sovereignty over the entire world, not just the Jewish people.

Another aspect of this *Mitzvah* applies with the passing of each and every Jewish man and woman, because, when a person is alive, by doing *Mitzvot* they sanctify the name of G-d throughout the course of their life. So when a Jewish person passes away, the world is missing their part of this important concept, diminishing our collective *Kiddush Ashem*. That is why *Kaddish* is said by mourners.

This is seen through looking at the translation of the *Kaddish* (see ZY, page 18 or 62) there is no mention about death; rather the *Kaddish* expresses the greatness of the Creator. So, today, one of the primary functions of the *Kaddish* is that it is said by a mourning relative who is trying to fill the void of *Kiddush Ashem* that is left by the passing of his beloved relative. When a relative says the *Kaddish*, thereby filling this void (albeit in a small way), it is a tremendous “favor” to the deceased in that it helps to elevate the soul. It also helps the soul achieve a much greater

reward in the World to Come, by bringing focus to the deceased person's performance of *Mitzvot* that they accomplished while they lived.

The *Kaddish* has indeed become an integral part of the various prayer services as a proclamation of faith, led by the *hazzan*. Also, over the years, for reasons mentioned above, it has become a universally accepted practice for all mourners to say *Kaddish* at certain times of the service.

### **Who says the *Kaddish*?**

- 1) *Kaddish* is said for a parent, a sibling, a child, and a spouse, during the month, after burial.
- 2) An adopted son says *Kaddish* for his adopted parent as well as for his birth parents. Similarly, a convert says *Kaddish* for his parents.
- 3) The *Kaddish* is said for a parent for the entire year, starting from burial. Specifically, in our community, this means that *Kaddish* is recited through and including the eleventh month *meldatho*. The next time *Kaddish* is recited is at the twelfth month *meldatho*. For *Kabbalistic* reasons, *Kaddish* is then recited for the entire next month.
- 4) Technically speaking, a person only **has** to say *Kaddish* the entire year for a parent. For other relatives, *Kaddish* need only be said for thirty days; however, many people in our community say *Kaddish* for any of their close relatives for an entire year, as mentioned earlier in chapter 14 - #5.
- 5) If there is no child to say *Kaddish* for a parent, a grandchild may say it. If that is not possible either, then someone (a relative or friend or other volunteer, or, if necessary, someone who has been hired to do so) should say at least one *Kaddish* a day during the *anyo*.

- 6) According to *alaha* women have no obligation to say *Kaddish*. However, women who have lost a dear one may join in the recitation of *Kaddish*, with other mourners.
- 7) After the *anyo*, *Kaddish* is said by children of the deceased every year on the anniversary of the death, starting from the Friday night before (some start from the beginning of the Jewish month) through the end of the day of the *meldado*.

**How and when is *Kaddish* said by mourners at services?**

- 8) It is the Sephardic custom that all mourners say the *Kaddish* in unison, led by the *hazzan*. This is done in order to ensure the proper recitation and honor of the *Kaddish*. It is not proper to recite the *Kaddish* louder than the *hazzan*.
- 9) *Kaddish* is said during various parts of the services, for a variety of reasons. Of all the different types of *Kaddish* that are said, there are two types of *Kaddish* that a mourner says, *Ye'eh Shelama Rabbah* and *Al Yisrael*. Either the *hazzan* or the rabbi will announce the *Kaddish* and the page number, so that it should not be confusing. For those capable of following the services in ZY, the *Kaddish* to be recited by mourners is labeled "Mourners *Kaddish*".
- 10) *Kaddish* can only be said in the presence of a *minyán* (a quorum of ten men).
- 11) An important part of the *Kaddish* is that those not saying the *Kaddish* respond (by saying "Amen" and "yehe shemeh rabbah..."). However, even if there are no respondents, the *Kaddish* is nevertheless recited.





## Appendix B

## **Differences between Sephardim and Ashkenazim Customs in Seattle**

While the basic *alaha* is the same in dealing with mourning, over time different customs have developed. Small differences may be disconcerting, confusing and cause further stress, especially during periods of stress and despair. The purpose of this appendix is to describe some of the main differences. In this way it will help us to understand the differences. The main factor to keep in mind is that, while we may observe and perform different practices, we are all one people serving the One G-d through the same Torah. Just as we come together in times of sadness, may it be G-d's will that we can all come together to celebrate happy occasions in peace and harmony.

When a Sephardic person goes to visit and comfort Ashkenazic friends or relatives, there are some real differences shown below.

- 1) Ashkenazim generally "*kortar keriya*" (tear the garment) at the chapel before going to the cemetery. Compare with chapter 10 paragraph 1.
- 2) Immediately after the burial, the Ashkenazic custom is for the attendees form two parallel lines for the mourners to walk through as they exit the cemetery. As the mourners pass through it is customary to comfort them by saying, "*Amakom Yenahem Etchem Betodh She'ar Avehl Tsiyyon viYyerushalayim*" (may G-d comfort you among the other mourners of *Tsiyyon* and Jerusalem). Compare with chapter 13 paragraph 6.

- 3) After visiting the *avel*, when one is leaving, Ashkenazim say, "*HaMakom Tenahem Etchem Betoach She'ar Aveleh Tsiyyon viYerushalayim*" (may G-d comfort you among the other mourners of Tsiyyon and Jerusalem). Compare with chapter 13 paragraph 6.
- 4) When visiting the home of an Ashkenazic mourner, be sensitive to the fact that many Ashkenazim have the custom of not eating in the mourners house. The mourners eat their meals in seclusion. Friends and relatives may bring food. Also, they do not say the special *Birkat Ammazon* of Mourners. Compare with chapter 11 paragraph 1-7.
- 5) On the Friday night of the *Siete (Shiva)*, in synagogue, mourners do not join services until *Kabbalat Shabbat*.
- 6) For the entire period of their mourning (the year for a parent; thirty days for a brother, sister, son, daughter or spouse) Ashkenazim will not sit in their regular seats in synagogue.
- 7) On the Shabbat of the *Siete (Shiva)*, in synagogue, the Ashkenazim do not have the custom of sitting in a designated location and having family and friends sit near them. Compare with chapter 12 paragraph 1-2.
- 8) The Ashkenazic *Kaddish* is different. In fact there are several versions of the text (Ashkenazic, "AR'l", and one called *Nusach Sefarad*, but not the same as ours), and while some are more similar to the Sephardic text, all are different.

## Appendix C

**The Lighting of Candles**

The reason for candle lighting in memory of our loved ones comes from Rabbi Haim Palachi (Izmir, nineteenth century), commenting on what King Solomon wrote in Mishleah 20: 27: "A man's soul is the lamp of *Ashem*, which searches the chambers of one's inner self." The custom of lighting a candle in memory of the deceased can be traced back to the Talmud, Ketubbot 103a, and in the *midrash* Bamidbar 20:26, describing the passing of Aaron AKo'en (the brother of Moshe Rabbenu).

**When to light?**

- 1) When the family comes home after the funeral, they light a seven day candle. When our pioneers came to Seattle from Turkey and Rhodes, the only method they used was oil and wicks. However, because of concerns regarding a possible fire, this method has fallen into disuse, although it is still used by a few families as well as at the Sephardic Bikur Holim Midrash.
- 2) During the *Shiva*, an additional candle is lit during the morning service, *Shahrit*, and during the evening service, *Arvit*. This is so, because at the conclusion of these services an *Ashkava* (a memorial prayer) is said for the deceased, and it is appropriate to have a lit candle at that time. At the conclusion of the service, the light is extinguished by waving it out by hand, not by blowing it out (so as not to use a person's breath to extinguish a (symbolic) soul).
- 3) Some have the custom of having a candle lit in the house of the *avel* during the entire first year. If possible there should

be a flame constantly burning throughout the entire year, even when switching from candle to candle.

- 4) Whether or not a candle is lit the entire year, it is appropriate to light either a wick in oil or a twenty four hour memorial candle (starting in the evening - see the note on the first page of chapter 17 for the definition of “day”).
- 5) On the Shabbat before the annual *meldado*, there is a custom to light a twenty four hour candle. This shabbat is called “*Shabbat de la Kandela*” (the Sabbath of the Candle) and relatives and friends make special efforts to come and visit and remember the deceased in the house where the candle is lit to “*acompanyar la kandela*” (accompany the candle).
- 6) Some also light a candle on certain holidays (e.g., *Yom Kippur*) at home or in *Kal*.

#### **How to light?**

- 7) Before lighting the candle, the text found on the bottom of page 431 in ZY is recited.

## Glossary

[E] – English [H] – Hebrew [L] – Ladino [Y] – Yiddish

**Avel** (plural **Avelim**) [H] – mourner(s)

**Avelut** [H] – mourning

**Bikur Holim** [H] – visiting the sick; name of a Seattle Sephardic synagogue

**Gosess** [H] – a person in the stage before death

**Hesped** [H] – eulogy

**Keriya** [H] – tearing of garments

**Ko'en** (plural **Ko'anim**) [H] – a descendant of Aaron and member of the Tribe of Levi

**Kortar Keriya** [H] – a mourner's tearing of his or her garment (clothing)

**Korte de Siete** [L] – the *meldado* which occurs on the evening after the end of the week of mourning

**Le'iluy nishmat** [H] – “For the ascension of the soul of”

**Leshos** [L] – a contraction of the Ladino phrase “leshos de mozotros”, which means “far from us”

**Levaya** [H] – Hebrew word for funeral

**Levayat Amet** [L] – escorting in general (literally); escorting the deceased in the coffin at the chapel or the cemetery or between the chapel and the cemetery

**Mecha** [L] – candle wick (placed in oil)

**Mehila** [H] – forgiveness

**Meldado** [L] – a reading of *Mishnayot* that commemorates the anniversary of a person's death

**Minyan** [H] – ten adult Jewish men (above the age of thirteen)

**Mishleh / Proverbs** [H] – one of twenty-four books of *Tanach* written by King Solomon

**Mishnah** (plural **Mishnayot**) [H] – a collection of oral interpretations of the Torah compiled about 200 AD

**Moed / Hol HaMoed** [H] – holiday/intermediate days in between two parts of holidays

In Ladino: primeros, medianos, segundos...

**Nihum Avelim** [H] – comforting the mourners

**Onen** [H] – time period between death and burial

**Seudat Avraa** [H] – Meal of Consolation (first meal provided by friends and neighbors after the burial)

**Shiva** [H] / **Siete** [L] – mourners sit in mourning for seven days

**Sheloshim** [H] / **Mez** [L] – the thirty day period of less intense mourning

**Shana** [H] / **Anyo** [L] – a years time

**Siete** [L] – see *Shiva*

**Tahanunim** [H] – supplicatory prayers

**Te'illim** [H] / **Psalms** [E] – written by king David

**Tefila** [H] – prayer

**Viduy** [H] – Confession

**Yahrzeit** [Y] – anniversary of death/ passing