

At some time or another...
bereavement comes to all of us.

The death of a loved one is a most painful experience. When death occurs, we are often at a loss as to where to turn and what to do. The Chesed Committee of Congregation Etz Chaim has prepared this booklet to help you at such a time.

What can Congregation Etz Chaim do to assist you?

Please call Rabbi Dorsch or the Synagogue office so we may assist you with the following:

- ❖ Funeral arrangements (Rabbi)
- ❖ Arranging the first night's Minyan
- ❖ Provide prayer books and kippot for Minyan during Shiva
- ❖ Contact family and friends if necessary
- ❖ Provide other services, if feasible

Important Telephone Numbers:

Synagogue Office	770-973-0137
Rabbi Daniel Dorsch	610-613-1426
Rabbi Jonathon Adler	646-334-7710
Marty Gilbert, Executive Director	908-421-4916
Arlington Memorial Park	404-255-0750

Responsibilities of the Funeral Home

- Funeral Arrangements
- Coordinate with the Rabbi
- Met (deceased body) transfer
- Contact the Chevra Kadisha (Burial Society) and supply tachrichim, burial white linen shroud
- Arrange for Shemira – watching the deceased body upon request
- Casket selection for Jewish clients (traditional Jewish caskets)
- Assist with obituary in local and out-of-town newspapers, as directed by the family
- Sign-in Visitors Book
- Shiva candle
- Kippot for funeral
- Folding chairs for family members (graveside service)

- Death certificate – will provide multiple certified copies, if requested.

(Taharah) Preparation for Burial

Jewish law requires that the deceased be cleansed, dressed, and prepared for burial according to a prescribed ritual, Taharah, as an expression of respect. A group of specially trained people called a Chevra Kadisha (holy society), from the synagogue performs this mitzvah. According to Jewish tradition, embalming and the use of cosmetics on the Met (deceased body) is not permitted.

(Tachrichim) The use of Shrouds

Jewish law prescribes burial in a plain white garment with a shroud or Kittel (Tachrichim) to demonstrate the equality of all. The simple white garment, instituted when burials became terribly burdensome and expensive for the masses, emphasizes that in death, the rich and poor are equal. In addition, a Jewish male (or female) is customarily buried wearing a Kippah and their own Tallit. It is preferable that the tallit be one that they used in prayer.

(Shemira) Watching the Deceased

The Met should not be left alone but should be attended until the time of the funeral. The attendant (Shomer) who is present with the deceased recites Psalms (Tehillim). Either the family or the funeral home can arrange for this. Relatives may serve as Shomerim.

FUNERAL

When and where the funeral takes place

Traditionally, burial takes place as quickly as possible. Burial may be delayed for legal reasons, in order to transport the Met, or to make it possible for close relatives who must travel long distances to be present at the funeral. Burial is not permitted on Shabbat or major Jewish holidays.

The graveside funeral service

The funeral service is usually brief and simple. It customarily includes the chanting of Psalms and El Malei Rachamim (the traditional memorial prayer), and a Hesped (eulogy) honoring the deceased. The coffin is subsequently lowered into the grave and the family and friends assist in placing earth over it. With the completion of this ritual, the Rabbi concludes the service, leading the family in Kaddish, and the mourners leave the gravesite.

Funeral services take place at the funeral home, chapel, or at the graveside. When the service is held in the chapel, interment follows at the graveside.

Arlington Memorial Park is currently the only cemetery that has a section set aside for Congregation Etz Chaim. You will need to purchase the following from Arlington:

- Burial plot
- Jewish burial vault
- Bronze memorial

(Keriah) Tearing

Traditionally, Keriah is the custom of the mourner (Avel) cutting and tearing a garment when he/she hears of the death of a loved one. Today, for some, Keriah is done prior to the funeral service using a black ribbon. When mourning the death of a parent, the ribbon is worn on the left side (over the heart); for the death of other relatives such as a spouse, children and siblings, the ribbon is placed on the right side of the outer garment. It is worn during Shiva but is removed during Shabbat.

Leaving the Cemetery

It is customary for the mourners to pass between two rows of the others in attendance to receive the traditional expressions of consolation. It is also customary for all attendees to ritually wash their hands before leaving the cemetery.

THE MOURNING PERIOD (AVEILUT)

Shiva

Shiva is a seven-day period of intensive mourning observed by the immediate family of the deceased. It begins when the family returns home after the burial. During the entire Shiva period, mourners are to stay away from work or school and to remain at home. It is also a time to contemplate the meaning of life and the manner in which adjustments will be made to cope with the death of the loved one.

Public mourning observances are suspended on the Shabbat in view of the belief that the sanctity and serenity of this day supersedes personal grief. Mourners are permitted and encouraged to attend Shabbat services; however, they are not given an Aliyah and may not conduct services. On the seventh day, it is only necessary to sit for one hour in the morning. Afterward, it is customary for the mourners to walk

outdoors for a short distance to symbolize their return to society and the world from which they had withdrawn for the week. One does not sit Shiva on Shabbat, but it is included as one of the seven days. The major festivals terminate Shiva. Since Judaism teaches that the grief over loss of human life is not limited to the family alone, but is shared by the entire community, it is customary for the name of the deceased to be recalled at the Shabbat service after the funeral.

(Avelim) Mourners

The designated mourners are the parents, spouse, children, and siblings of the deceased.

Customs of Shiva

- Upon return from the funeral, it is customary to have a pitcher of water and a basin at the entrance of the Shiva house for all to wash their hands.
- In keeping with Jewish tradition, neighbors and/or friends prepare meals to be served at the house of mourning. The meal of Condolence, Se'udat Hav-ra'ah, is served following the return of the mourners from the burial service. Etz Chaim's Chesed Committee provides a meal of condolence for funerals that are held locally. A traditional meal of condolence includes round foods like bagels and peeled hardboiled eggs to symbolize the circle of life.
- Visiting a Shiva house is not a social call. It is a ritual, and an abbreviated visit is appreciated.
- There are no guests in a house of Shiva. Avelim are not hosts and they should not concern themselves with the comfort of those paying the Shiva call. There is no need to serve food or drink.
- The practice of covering mirrors in the house of mourning is not based upon explicit Jewish law. It is a time-honored tradition. “Avelim are not to gaze upon their reflection in the mirror, lest they appear to be reflecting upon themselves rather than upon the meaning of Life and Death.”
- At times, Shiva is concluded early when it is interrupted by the communal joy of a major Jewish holiday. If this issue pertains to your experience, please consult one of our Rabbis for more information.

(Shloshim) Thirty Days

Shloshim is a 30-day period of mourning beginning on the day of the funeral. After the first seven days (week of Shiva), mourners return to their usual pursuits. It is

customary not to take part in any festivity of amusement during the Shloshim period. The grave is not usually visited during this period but may be visited if the bereaved feels the need.

At times, Shloshim is concluded early when it is interrupted by the communal joy of a major Jewish holiday. If this issue pertains to your experience, please consult one of our Rabbis for more information.

(Shanna) Twelve Months-The Duration of the Mourning Period

Mourners for deceased parents attend services daily to recite Kaddish for 11 Hebrew months plus one day and continue to refrain from public celebratory activities for the full 12 months. Mourners who are not mourning a parent often choose to say Kaddish during this period as well. However, their mourning period officially ends after 30 days.

(Yahrzeit) Anniversary of Death

Yahrzeit is to be observed solemnly. In the home, the Yahrzeit light or candle is kindled the eve of the anniversary of the death (according to the Hebrew calendar) and remains lit until the candle burns out. Observers of Yahrzeit recite Kaddish on the eve, morning, and afternoon of the Yahrzeit. They have the responsibility of being present at services on the eve before the Yahrzeit date, the morning of the Yahrzeit date, and at the late afternoon/evening of the same day. The synagogue will advise you when the Yahrzeit of a loved one occurs.

Our Congregation maintains records of the names of the deceased and the Hebrew dates of the Yahrzeits. The Synagogue needs the Hebrew and English names of the deceased, Hebrew names of their parents, as well as the date, time and year of the death.

On the Hebrew anniversary of the death, it is customary to light a Yahrzeit (24-hour burning) candle, to study a portion of Torah or Mishnah, and to donate Tzedakah. It is also customary to recite Kaddish Yatom, the Mourner's Prayer, with a minyan during prayer service. The Kaddish contains no reference to death. It is a declaration, in the midst of our sorrow, that God is just, though we do not always comprehend God's ways. It is when death seems to overwhelm us that the Kaddish proclaims our desire and intention to continue the relationship to the Jewish community. By continuing the chain of tradition that binds generation to generation, we express our undying faith in God's love and justice. We pray that God will speed the day when

God's kingdom will finally be established, and God's peace pervades the world. A transliteration and line-by-line explanation of Kaddish may be found in the *Question and Answers* section of this guide.

(Yizkor) Memorial Prayer

Yizkor prayers are recited on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, the last day of Pesach, and the second day of Shavuot. A Yahrzeit candle is to be kindled at sundown prior to Yizkor the next day.

Unveiling

No formal unveiling services are necessary to dedicate the marker or monument. Our Rabbi can assist you by conducting the service or by providing you with the text of the appropriate prayers to be recited by the family at graveside. A marker or monument may be unveiled at any time after Shloshim. It is not necessary to wait a full 12 months.

Services at Congregation Etz Chaim

Daily morning and evening services are conducted at Congregation Etz Chaim. Check with the Synagogue office or *Voice of Chaim* for the schedule.

Questions and Answers:

Is cremation ever permitted under Jewish law?

No. Jewish law prohibits burning the body of the deceased. The deceased must be buried in the earth. Even if the deceased willed cremation, his or her wishes should not be granted.

Will the Etz Chaim section of Arlington ever accept cremated remains?

No. However, cremated remains are buried in the "Shalom" section, which is reserved for unaffiliated Jews and cremated remains.

What is the Jewish point of view on organ donation and autopsy?

Though organ donation involves some desecration of the body, it is viewed as an example of K'vod Ha'met, honoring the deceased, by bringing healing to the living. It is also permitted for reasons of Pikuach Nefesh, saving of a life, which is a paramount Mitzvah in our tradition. Thus, it is permissible to will certain organs or tissues. Since many types of organ donation remain questionable under Jewish law, the Rabbi should be consulted. The practice of routine autopsy is contrary to Jewish

law since it is viewed as a desecration of the body. In cases where an autopsy is required by law, it should be carried out under the supervision of a Rabbi.

Why is it necessary to purchase a vault?

The State of Georgia requires a concrete enclosure (vault) for the casket at burial. The cemetery makes arrangements for this. It prevents sinkholes when the casket disintegrates.

What kinds of markers or monuments are available at Arlington?

At Arlington Cemetery, a brass marker is placed on the gravesite within the year of internment. Other cemeteries have monuments and/or markers indicating the gravesite.

What kind of maintenance is provided at Arlington?

Perpetual care is provided at Arlington Cemetery. Other cemeteries may or may not provide this service.

When is it appropriate to purchase cemetery plots?

Cemetery plots may be purchased at any time. You may wish to consider pre-planning in order not to be faced with this task at the emotional time of bereavement.

What is a memorial plaque?

A congregant may wish to perpetually memorialize their loved one by inscribing his/her name on a memorial plaque to be installed at Etz Chaim. The Hebrew and English date of death as well as the Hebrew and English name of the deceased are inscribed on the plaque. During the week in which the Yahrzeit occurs, and at every Yizkor service, the bulb next to the plaque is illuminated. Plaques may be purchased through the synagogue office.

What is appropriate to bring to the Shiva home?

Kosher (preferably pareve) food is acceptable in a Shiva home. A most appropriate gift is a contribution to the synagogue or a specified charity.

What is a Shiva candle?

It is customary to have a candle that burns continually for seven days, based on the verse in Proverbs: 20:27: "The soul of man is a lamp of the Lord." This candle will be provided by the funeral home and is kindled after the family returns from the funeral.

What rules are there regarding visitation in the chapel?

Viewing the Met and visiting the family at the chapel during the evening prior to the funeral is contrary to Jewish tradition and not the practice in our Congregation. However, private family visitation can be arranged upon request.

Is viewing a part of our tradition?

Viewing is contrary to Jewish practice.

What is the definition of “festivity and amusement” with regard to the mourning period?

An Avel should avoid listening to music, dancing, shaving and frivolous behavior during Shiva.

What is Etz Chaim’s position regarding the burial of a non-Jewish spouse alongside a Congregant?

A non-Jewish spouse may not be buried in the Etz Chaim section, but in the unaffiliated Shalom section with their Jewish spouse.

Suicide?

In our society today where we are acutely aware of those who suffer from mental health challenges, suicide is treated the same as if a person passed away from any other illness.

What is the English translation/transliteration of the Mourner’s Kaddish?

Mourner: *Yitgadal v’yitkadash shmai raba.*

Magnified and sanctified be His great name.

Cong: Amen

Mourner: *B’alma dee v’ra chir’utai,*

In this world which He has created in accordance with his Will.

v’yamlich malchutai, b’chayechon u’vyomechon,

May He establish His kingdom during your lifetime,

u’vchayai d’chol bait Yisroel,

And during the life of all the House of Israel,

ba’agaloh u’vizman kariv, v’imru Amen.

Speedily, and let us say, Amen.

Cong. & Mourner: *Y'hai shemai rabah m'varach, l'alam u'laylmey almaya!*
Let His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity!

Mourner: *Yitbarach v'yishtabach v'yitpa-ar v'ytromam:*
Blessed, praised, glorified and exalted.
v'yitnasai v'yithadar v'ytaleh v'yit-halal,
Extolled, honored, magnified and lauded,
shemai d'Kudsha,
Be the name of the Holy one, blessed be He.

Cong. & Mourner: *B'rich Hu.*
Blessed be He.

Mourner: *L'aila min kol birchata v'shirata, tushbechata v'nechamata,*
He is greater than all blessings, hymns, praises, and consolations,
da 'amiron b'olmo, v'imru Amen.
Which can be uttered in this world, and let us say,
Amen.

Mourner: *Y'hai shlama raba min shmaya,*
May abundant peace from the heaven descend upon us,
v'chayim aleinu v'al kol Yisroel, v'imru Amen.
And may life be renewed for us and for all Israel, and let us say,
Amen.

Cong: Amen.

Mourner: *Oseh shalom bimeromav, Hu ya'aseh shalom,*
He who makes peace in the heavens, may He make peace,
aleinu v'al Kol yisroel; v'imru Amen.
For us and for all Israel, and let us say,
Amen.

Cong: Amen.

The Chesed Committee recommends the books listed below as suggested reading:

- Marc Angel: *The Orphaned Adult*
- Iris Bolton: *My Son...My Son...*
- Sidney Greenberg: *A Treasury of Comfort*
- Rabbi Arnold Goodman: *A Plain Pine Box*
- Earl Grollman: *What Helped Me When My Loved One Died*
Living When a Loved One Has Died
Explaining Death to Children

- Stuart Kelman, *Nichum Aveilim: A Guide for the Comforter*
- Alfred J. Kolatch: *The Jewish Book of Why/The Second Jewish Book of Why*
- Harold Kushner: *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*
Who Needs God?
- Maurice Lamm: *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*
- Eda Leshan: *Learning to Say Goodbye*
- Joshua Loth Liebman: *Peace of Mind*
- Rabbi Aaron Levine: *To Comfort the Bereaved: A Guide for Mourners and Those Who Visit Them*
- Rabbis Olitzky and Isaacs: *The How-to Handbook for Jewish Living (A Jewish Mourners Handbook)*
- Lori Palatnik: *Remember My Soul: What to do in Memory of a Loved One*
- Lily Pincus: *Death and the Family*
- Jack Riemer: *Jewish Insights on Death and Mourning*

Books for Children

- Leo F. Buscaglia: *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*
- Nechama Liss-Levinson: *When a Grandparent Dies: A Kid's Own Workshop for Dealing with Shiva and the Year Beyond*
- David Techner, et al: *A Candle for Grandpa: A Guide to the Jewish Funeral for Children and Parents*

PRE-PLANNING

The time of bereavement is not the optimal time to make many of the decisions which survivors must face. Earlier preparation of a will is the first step to relieve such anxiety and anguish. Advance purchase of gravesites is another important step. The following is offered as a guide to a few key items to form a minimal source of information to help the survivor make necessary arrangements. The Chesed Committee of Congregation Etz Chaim encourages you to fill out the form and keep it with other important papers in a well-identified location.

Full Names:

English: _____

Hebrew: _____

Social Security Number: _____

English: _____

Hebrew: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Legal Advisor/Attorney:

Name: _____

Phone No. and Email: _____

Will is located: _____

Life Insurance Agent:

Name: _____

Phone No. and Email: _____

Policy Nos. _____

Policies are kept: _____

Health & Accident Insurance Agent:

Name: _____

Phone No. and Email: _____

Policy Nos. _____

Policies are kept: _____

Homeowners/Liability Insurance Agent:

Name: _____

Phone No. and Email: _____

Policy Nos. _____

Policies are kept: _____

Safe Deposit Box:

Number: _____

Location: _____

Key is located: _____

Bank/Financial Accounts:

Checking: _____

Savings: _____

Money Market: _____

401(k) or IRA: _____

Certificates: _____

Stocks: _____

Financial Planner:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No. and Email: _____

Military Service:

Branch: _____

Dates of Service: _____

VA or Government information: _____

Discharge papers are kept: _____

Birth Certificates/Passports:

Are kept at: _____

Passwords for online accounts:

Are kept at: _____

Cemetery Property:

Name of Cemetery: _____

Deed No. _____

Location: _____

Number of spaces: _____

Funeral Home:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone No. and Email: _____

Letter on file: _____

Relatives and close friends who should be notified:

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE

*This book lovingly published
by our Etz Chaim Chesed Committee
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