

EASING THE BURDEN

Bereavement & Guidance



TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL

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Acknowledgement

We gratefully acknowledge the work of the Religious Practices Committee of our sister Sarasota Congregation – Kol HaNeshama. This document was inspired by and based on their publication.

The Ritual Committee,
Temple Beth Israel
January, 2015
Teret, 5775

Preface

Death knows no protocol. The passing of a loved one happens on its own terms. Even when the end of life appears to be imminent at an advanced age, even after the granting of many years on this earth, the loss of those we cherish can be overwhelming. This is why preparing for a time that inevitably will come is very important. Please know your congregation is here to assist you.

This booklet contains essential information about what will be needed when death occurs. The immediate burden of coping with the passing of a loved one can be significantly eased if certain decisions and plans have been made in advance and clearly communicated to those who are charged with carrying them out.

Beyond the practical aspects of death and burial, we also share here the wisdom of our Jewish tradition, which provides a helpful structure when bereavement is most intense. Through these insights and perspectives, we are often able to come to better terms with our own spiritual needs, while honoring at the same time those we love so deeply.

Rabbi Jonathan R. Katz

Rabbi Jonathan R. Katz and the TBI Ritual/Shiva Committee are available to assist you and your family through the entire bereavement process. Office phone: 941-383-3428. Rabbi's cell number is 941-993-4026

EASING THE BURDEN – YOUR INTENTIONS, YOUR PLANNING

While you are alive is the time to prepare for the time for when you are not.

Burial Arrangement Decisions about where and by whom to be buried should be considered well in advance. It is important to have a frank conversation with your family about your wishes regarding your funeral and burial. It is also important to ask family members about the practices that would be most meaningful and comforting to them. For those of our members who desire burial plots in Sarasota, Temple Beth Israel has arranged a section at the Palms-Robarts Funeral Home and Memorial Park, where the Jewish representative can be reached at 941-371-4962. You may contact the Temple Office for more information.

If you plan to be **Buried Out-of-Florida**, to avoid possible double billing by two mortuaries, the first phone call after a death occurs should be placed by a family member to the out-of-state mortuary which will then contact the Sarasota funeral director to coordinate arrangements.

Memorial Plaques for the wall in our Temple sanctuary may be reserved in advance.

At this time of planning, please consider providing a bequest to the **Temple Beth Israel Endowment Fund** in your will or estate. The founders of Temple Beth Israel not only built our beautiful synagogue here on Longboat Key, they also had the foresight to create an endowment fund to insure its future existence. By contacting the Temple office, you can begin to explore possibilities for creating your own legacy for future generations.

Organ Donation is a mitzvah of the highest order. All branches of Judaism encourage it as a means of saving other lives – *pikuach nefesh*. Be sure that your family knows if you have indicated *organ donation* on your driver's license or have signed organ donation documents.

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Contact Information and Key Documents

Losing a spouse or parent is one of the most difficult times a person will face. While the transition is difficult for the survivor, it can be eased if key documents and instructions are left and the survivor knows of their existence and location. Remember that these documents should be periodically updated.

FULL NAME(S) ENGLISH _____ HEBREW _____

ENGLISH _____ HEBREW _____

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER(S) _____

LOCATION OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE(S) _____

LEGAL ADVISOR _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ACCOUNTANT _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

LOCATION OF WILL WITH ORIGINAL SIGNATURES _____

LOCATION OF POWER OF ATTORNEY, POWER OF HEALTH ATTORNEY _____

HEALTH, ACCIDENT AND LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY/AGENT(S) _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

POLICY NUMBER(S) _____

LOCATION OF POLICIES _____

FINANCIAL ADVISOR _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

BROKER _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ATTACH TO THIS SHEET DETAILED FINANCIAL INFORMATION SUCH AS:

BANK ACCOUNT(S)

...CHECKING # _____ LOCATION _____

SAVINGS # _____ LOCATION _____

INVESTMENT ACCOUNT(S) _____

SAFE DEPOSIT BOX: NUMBER _____ LOCATION OF KEY _____

LOCATION OF BOX _____

REAL ESTATE _____

MILITARY SERVICE: BRANCH _____ DATES OF SERVICE _____ VA CLAIM # _____

GOV'T INSURANCE # _____ LOCATION OF DISCHARGE PAPERS _____

CEMETERY INFORMATION: NAME OF CEMETERY _____

DEED # _____ # OF PLOTS _____ LOCATION OF PLOTS _____

FUNERAL HOME OF CHOICE _____ LETTER ON FILE _____

RELATIVES AND CLOSE FRIENDS TO BE NOTIFIED

NAME(S) _____

TELEPHONE _____ EMAIL _____

ADDRESS _____

From Death to Funeral

Jewish funeral homes offer services under contractual agreements between the funeral home and the family. These contracts may be prearranged. Services provided may include transporting the deceased to the funeral home, preparing the body for burial, providing a simple pine or other type of coffin, transportation for the family to the funeral service and to the burial site. These arrangements also may include obtaining the death certificate and assisting in the placement of obituaries.

Jewish tradition defines mourners as the spouse, children, siblings and parents of the deceased. Progressive Judaism includes among the mourners other relatives as well as life partners. From death until burial – the period known as *aninut* – the mourners' only religious obligation is to make arrangements for the funeral. Traditionally, a Jewish funeral service takes place as quickly as possible, generally within 24-48 hours of the death, with allowances permitted for unusual circumstances. In order for the planning to be completed in a short period of time, this booklet provides an outline of the steps that need to be taken.

Some families wonder whether Jewish customs should be followed by non-Jews mourning Jews or by Jews mourning non-Jews. This decision is an individual one. The bereaved are encouraged to observe Jewish rituals for anyone for whom it seems appropriate and whenever the rituals are comforting.

First Steps

- 1. Immediately contact the Temple Beth Israel office at 941-383-3428** to inform the Rabbi of the death. Our Rabbi or Ritual/Shiva Committee will contact you to offer support and to assist you as needed in making arrangements for the funeral. Setting a time for the funeral must take into account the schedules of the funeral home and the officiating clergy, and non-resident and friends and family.
- 2. Contact the funeral home of your choice** (see list at end of this booklet.)
- 3. Notify all family members** of the death and of the pertinent details available about the funeral arrangements.
- 4. Meet with the Rabbi** to make plans for the funeral, to confirm on the time and place of the funeral and burial, and to decide on the number, time and location of shiva *minyanim*. When these decisions have been made, Temple Beth Israel will notify the congregation. The mourner(s) also might want to discuss the mourning rituals described below. If there is a question concerning an autopsy, the family may wish to consult with the Rabbi.
- 5. Arrange for Military Honors**, where applicable, by notifying the clergy immediately after the person's death if you wish these to be part of the funeral, since coordinating veterans groups to attend a Jewish funeral on short notice requires prompt action.

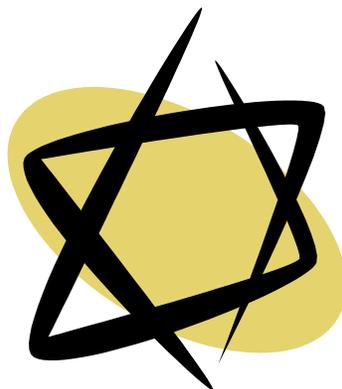
6. Decide on traditional burial rituals that the deceased may have requested, or the family may wish to practice. You may discuss these practices with Rabbi or the *Chevra Kadisha*., The Sarasota-Manatee Chevra Kadisha may be reached at (941) 224-0778. There may be fees associated with some of these practices.

- a. **Tahara:** A respectful washing of the body, accompanied by the chanting of psalms, to honor the body as the vessel that held the spirit in life. The funeral home can help you make arrangements, or you may contact the Chevra Kadisha by yourself. After the ritual of *tahara* is performed, the body is dressed in *tachrichim* (soft, white gauze garments), and placed in the coffin.
- b. **Shmira:** As a sign of respect, the body is always attended from death until burial. The *Chevra Kadisha* provides *shomrim* (watchers), to the extent possible. *Shomrim* watch over the body and chant psalms at the funeral home until burial.
- c. **Aron:** The traditional *aron* (coffin) is simple, made of wood without nails or decoration. Such simplicity reflects the Jewish value that all are equal before death. The simple wooden coffin facilitates the completion of the natural cycle, “from dust to dust.”

Although the family may not desire to follow strict Jewish tradition, it should know that Jewish tradition does not permit embalming or the public display of the body. However, this does not preclude a member of the family identifying the body before the casket is sealed. Although cremation has not historically been permitted, some individuals now prefer it. Liberal voices in contemporary Judaism are revising their policies and practices regarding cremation for those people who request it.

7. Tzedakah: It has become the custom of friends and family to give *tzedakah* in memory of the deceased. You may wish to designate one to three charities that reflect the values of the deceased.

8. Flowers: It has not been a Jewish tradition to use flowers at a Jewish funeral. However, Jewish law does not forbid them. Discuss with the officiating Rabbi.



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Funeral Services and Burial

1. The service may be held at the funeral home chapel, the grave site, or possibly Temple Beth Israel. In keeping with the idea that all are equal in death, the various elements of this ritual are usually quite simple.
2. If the burial will not take place in Florida, **the first call should be to the funeral director where the funeral and burial will take place.** He will coordinate with the local mortuary.
3. When burial is not in the Sarasota area, families may wish to add a memorial service at Temple Beth Israel.

The Service

1. Before the funeral services, mourners participate in the custom of *K'riah*: The rending of garments. The mourner tears a garment or a black ribbon, symbolizing death rending the fabric of life. The mourners stand together and recite a blessing acknowledging the inevitability of death. With the exception of Shabbat, the ribbon may be worn either for the 7 days of *shiva* or for the 30 days of *shloshim*.
2. During the funeral service, the immediate family usually sits in the front row. The service includes the chanting of psalms, a eulogy honoring the deceased, and *El Malei Rachamim* (traditional memorial prayer) asking for eternal peace for the deceased.
3. Additional readings or musical offerings may also be included.
4. A family member, the clergy, or a friend of the deceased may deliver a eulogy or eulogies. Mourners are not expected to deliver the eulogy, but may do so if they desire.
5. The closed coffin remains in view, often covered with a special cloth called a pall.
6. At the end of the service the coffin is borne from the funeral to the hearse, and taken from the hearse to the gravesite by family or friends (pallbearers) selected by the mourners or funeral director's staff.
7. Six pallbearers are usual; women and men, Jews and non-Jews, may all serve in this capacity, though immediate mourners generally do not. The staff of the funeral home will assist with moving the coffin.

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Burial

The burial ceremony includes commitment prayers and the *Mourner's Kaddish* (If the service and burial are conducted at the graveside, *El Maleh Rachamim* and the *Mourner's Kaddish* will be recited). The coffin is lowered into the grave and mourners and others are encouraged to cover the coffin with earth. This is considered in our tradition to be a great act of *hesed*, of loving-kindness. Mourners may leave the cemetery by walking between two lines formed by family and friends offering support and comfort.

Mourning

On returning from the cemetery, family and friends traditionally wash their hands before entering the house of mourning. This custom is an affirmation of life after close contact with death. Also a special *yahrzeit* candle, provided by the funeral home, is lit and burns for the next seven days. Usually relatives and friends serve a meal of consolation to all who return from the cemetery with the mourners. If the family desires, Temple Beth Israel will organize the meal of consolation as a sign of the congregation's participation in the mourning process.

- **Shiva** (Seven):

1. The time set aside for mourning. The traditional seven-day period of mourning – observed by the immediate family of the deceased – begins on the day of burial and is called *shiva*. During *shiva* mourners are encouraged to remain home and refrain from routine activities, so that friends and relatives can visit and offer support. Mourners can use this time to adjust to the death. Some families observe *shiva* for a shorter period of time. Traditionally, after the funeral, *kaddish* is said daily in the home in the presence of the *minyan* (10 Jewish adults). This provides an opportunity for members of the congregation to join the mourners in prayers, reminiscences, and in offering emotional support. Temple Beth Israel will arrange evening *shiva minyanim* for the mourners for as many days as they would like.
2. There are numerous customs associated with mourning, such as covering mirrors and art, having mourners sit on low seats, and not shaving or grooming oneself so as not to be concerned with personal appearance during the seven-day period. Observance of these customs is a personal decision.
3. While light food often is provided for visitors during *shiva*, families in mourning should not be concerned about securing it. If needed, the Ritual Committee will also help with these arrangements and will observe the congregation's *kashrut* policies (dairy/vegetarian).
4. *Shiva* is suspended for Shabbat, when mourners are encouraged to go to the synagogue to say *Kaddish*. Because the death is considered a loss for the entire community, the name of the deceased will be read by the Rabbi or service leader shortly before the *Mourner's Kaddish* on Friday evening and/or on Shabbat morning.
5. Major festivals traditionally impact the duration and schedule of *shiva*. Please consult Rabbi on this situation, if applicable.
6. Please consult with the Rabbi on the matter of scheduling of *Shiva* and if assistance is needed with food.
7. At the end of *shiva* it is customary for a friend, relative or the Rabbi to walk those who are in mourning around the block to signify the conclusion of *shiva* and the resumption of ordinary activity.

8. If the funeral and burial occur out of town, mourners may wish to seek emotional support from our congregation when they return home, in the form of a *shiva minyan* memorial service. Please contact the Rabbi or the Ritual/Shiva Committee to arrange for these services
- ***Sloshim (thirty):***
 1. The thirty day period after the burial (including *shiva*) is called *shloshim*. Mourners return to work and normal activities, but usually refrain from public entertainment or socializing.
 2. The *K'riah* ribbon may be worn during this time.
 3. At the end of *shloshim*, there also may be a gathering of friends and family honoring the deceased by sharing stories and pictures, singing or playing favorite music, reading tribute letters received, studying a Jewish text, or engaging in other activities that evoke memories of the deceased.
 - ***Shnat Ha-evel (Year of Mourning):***
 1. Traditional Jewish practice requires mourners who have lost a parent to say *Kaddish* daily for 11 months, whereas mourning for all other relatives ends with *shloshim*.
 2. Mourners also may choose to recite *Kaddish* for 11 months for other immediate relatives, though they are not obligated to do so.
 3. Temple Beth Sholom offers a daily morning *minyan* open to the entire Jewish community at which you are welcome and may recite *Kaddish*.
 4. *Kaddish* is just one way of remembering the deceased during this year. Consult with clergy to consider other appropriate ways.
 - ***Unveiling:***
 1. It is customary to “unveil” the grave marker some time before the *yahrzeit*. An unveiling is a simple gathering of family and close friends at the headstone where one honors the deceased.
 2. When visiting the cemetery, it is customary to place small stones on the gravestone as a symbol of remembering, since stone is everlasting.
 3. There can be a short service which includes *El Malei Rachamim*, and *Kaddish*. Some share stories of the deceased at unveilings.
 4. The monument company or cemetery may provide simple coverings for the headstone, or the family may bring a covering that has personal meaning.
 5. An unveiling can be performed by family or friends without clergy.
 6. The Rabbi may be consulted to assist you, and can usually officiate if that is your preference.
 - ***Yahrzeit:***
 1. *Yahrzeit* marks the Hebrew anniversary of the death, rather than of the burial, and it is commemorated by reciting *Kaddish* in the synagogue and by lighting a *yahrzeit* candle at home.
 2. *Yahrzeit* candles burn for 24 hours and can be purchased in any of our area supermarkets or synagogue gift shops.
 3. On the Shabbat immediately before the *yahrzeit*, the Rabbi or service leader may read the name of the deceased.
Our custom is to invite all those saying *Kaddish* to indicate aloud whom they are remembering.

Notes

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A sampling of Sarasota-area funeral homes follows. Temple Beth Israel neither recommends nor endorses any of these funeral homes. However, the Temple's cemetery section is located at Palms-Robarts Memorial Park.

Brown & Sons Funeral Home
604 43rd Street West
Bradenton, FL
941-758-7788

Manasota Memorial Park
and Funeral Home
1221 53rd Avenue East
Bradenton, FL
941-755-2688

Mansion Memorial Park and
Funeral Home
1400 36th Avenue East
Ellenton, FL
941-722-6602

Jennings Funeral Home Funeral Home
5750 Swift Road
Sarasota, FL
941-926-2223

Toale Brothers Funeral Homes
40 N. Orange Avenue
Sarasota, FL
941-955-4171

Wiegand Brothers
7454 S. Tamiami Trail
Sarasota, FL
941-921-5755

Shannon Funeral Homes
5610 Manatee Avenue West
Bradenton, FL
941-746-2111

Palms-Robarts Funeral
Home
170 Honore Ave
Sarasota, FL
941-371-4962

