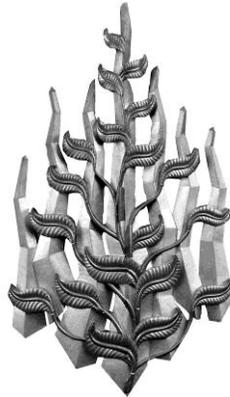




## **When Death Occurs**

### **A Comprehensive Guide For Temple Partners**



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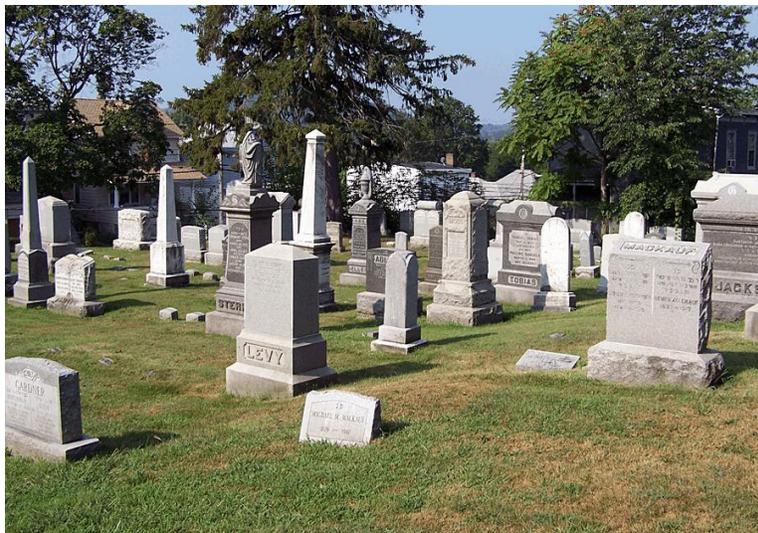
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## WHEN DEATH OCCURS

### A Comprehensive Guide For Temple Partners

Death ends our life. It is as much a part of life as birth, a *Brit Milah* or a Naming Ceremony, entry into Religious School, Bar or Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, or the Wedding Ceremony. In a sense, it is even more because, as our prayer book tells us, “death gives meaning to life.” It can be a time for you to fulfill a *Mitzvah* of helping the mourners, helping the Jewish community, and properly burying the dead.



Death makes us a “prisoner of our years. Yet that very prison is the room of discipline which we create, driven by the urgency of time.” It is for this reason that Temple Beth Jacob has two, fine, well-tended, and attractive cemeteries for member Partners who have arranged and paid for “Cemetery Privileges.” Non members can be buried in our cemetery or inurned in our mausoleum.

#### HOW DOES ONE OBTAIN CEMETERY PRIVILEGES?

Cemetery privileges can be purchased by any Temple Single Partner or a Temple Family Partner who has paid annual dues. The purchase price is the current price of a cemetery plot. The price is adjusted each year by the Cemetery Committee to keep pace with current costs. There is also a Perpetual Care Fee that is not paid until the time of burial. *Once purchased, this privilege is permanent as long as the family remains a Partner in good standing, by continually paying dues. If dues are not paid, this Cemetery Privilege is lost and*





there is no refund. If a family moves out of the Newburgh area, they can maintain their Cemetery Privilege by continuing to pay minimum annual dues.

Should a family want more than one plot, so family members can be buried next to each other, those additional plots must be purchased at the same time, or at least by the time of the first burial. This is important because graves are used or reserved in consecutive order within the

cemetery. *Families have up to one year to pay for the Burial Privilege*, but should a death occur from the time of purchasing a privilege and before the year is up, the combined plot must be paid in full, including the Perpetual Care Fee, before the burial. Should additional privileges be purchased at a future date, those are purchased at the current rate, not the original rate of the first purchase.

If a joint plot is reserved for the spouse of the deceased person, the living spouse must continue to pay dues to retain the Cemetery Privilege. If a double or triple stone is desired on a joint plot, all fees and dues must be paid on the combined graves before the stone is erected.

**All fees, including all back dues must be paid in full before burial.**



### **WHAT DOES CEMETERY PRIVILEGES ENTITLE YOU TO?**

Cemetery Privileges entitles the single person or Family Partner to the burial of the single member or first member of the family (i.e., husband, wife, or dependent unmarried child under the age of 25) who dies. When Cemetery Privileges are purchased there is no deed to a specific plot, only privileges to be buried in the Cemetery. In Cedar Hill specific plots for the family are not determined until the first burial, then, those number of reserved plots are designated to the family. **These privileges and plots remain reserved as long as the family maintains Partnership in Temple Beth Jacob. If Partnership is not maintained in good standing, the cemetery privileges are forfeited and there is no refund.**

Upon burial, the family will be required to pay a one-time per grave payment for Perpetual Care. Payment of Perpetual Care fees assures that your loved one's grave will be properly maintained (e.g., grass cut, topsoil replaced when necessary, leaves raked, etc.) It also helps pay for the upkeep of fencing and structures at all Temple Beth Jacob Cemeteries, a responsibility we all share.

Cemetery privileges do not include the cost of opening and closing the grave. Those fees are paid through your funeral home. Those fees also do not include the cost of casket, other funeral costs, and gravestones. At Big Rock Cemetery, winter funerals

may have snow removal charges.

### WHAT DO I DO WHEN DEATH OCCURS?

When death occurs, the Rabbi should be called to give comfort, advice you as needed in matters pertaining to Jewish ritual, acquaint you with the nature of the funeral service, design the service to meet your needs, and arrange to use the Sanctuary if the family wishes. You will be asked by the hospital or nursing home (or, if at home), which funeral home you wish to use. You should contact the Cemetery Chairman who will make the necessary cemetery arrangements and assist you as needed. The Cemetery Chairman will also consult with the Rabbi. If neither is available, the Temple President or office staff will assist you in reaching the Rabbi and Cemetery Chairperson. They will help you understand the Temple rules and payment policies.

### WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT CEMETERY GROUNDS?

You should know that the Big Rock Cemetery of Temple Beth Jacob is bound by certain regulations. The same rules apply to our Cedar Hill Cemetery. The casket containing your loved one, is your choice, but by Jewish tradition should be as simple as possible. Traditionally, Jews are buried in a plain wood casket. The casket is required to be placed in a concrete vault. This vault will have been placed within your reserved grave just prior to burial. A single plot measurement is 3 feet 6 inches x 10 feet. A double plot measures 7 feet x 10 feet. A triple plot, adds another 3 feet 6 inches, etc.



It is traditional to erect a stone or tablet of memorial upon the grave of an immediate relative at any time after one month following the funeral. *We require all graves to be marked with a stone.* Tradition does not require a ceremony of dedication, although most American Jews have become accustomed to such a ceremony, known as an Unveiling. The Rabbi can be consulted regarding the rituals of an Unveiling. The memorial tablet, like everything connected with Jewish burial should be simple and dignified. *No non-Jewish religious*

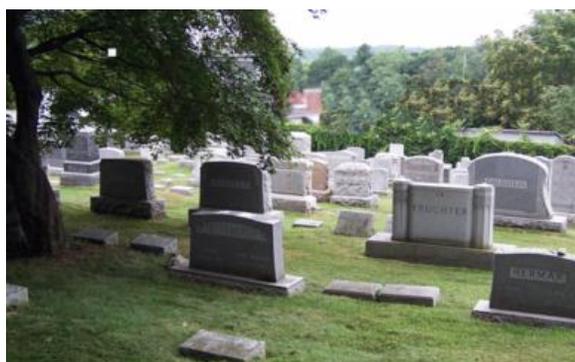
*symbols may be placed or carved onto any casket or gravestone in any of our cemeteries.*

Single monument size must be no larger than 26 inches in width x 8 inches in depth x 30 inches in height. (Sizes for other larger stones are available from the Cemetery Chairman.) It sits on a base slightly larger. *If a double or triple gravestone is desired, the additional graves must be paid in full before the erection of the monument.* A foot-stone may be purchased. It may be no larger than 8 inches x 12 inches and must lie flat with the ground. It is the responsibility of the family to purchase the stone(s) from a monument dealer and make repairs or replace monument stones should it become necessary. Temple Beth Jacob has the right to correct or remove monuments or foot-stones not in conformance with the above regulations, and at the expense of the plot owners. It is therefore advisable for families to share stone design with the Cemetery

Chairman before ordering and installation. Your monument company should get permission to set the stone from the Cemetery Chairman, to insure that all fees have been paid, and it is going on the correct plot.

*Should a family have a double plot, with a double stone, and they forfeit the second grave for any reason, Temple Beth Jacob has the right to remove the stone and replace it with a single stone, so the extra grave can be used by another family.*

For the purpose of cemetery care, plants, bushes, and flowers may not be planted on the grave at the gravesite. You may place plants and flowers in flower boxes which can be attached, off the ground, to the sides of the monument.



Keys to the Big Rock Cemetery are available to family members in the Temple Beth Jacob office to enable family members to visit the graves of their loved ones. A public key is also available. It is the responsibility of visiting family members to lock the gates when they leave. No key is necessary for Cedar Hill, as the gates are opened by their management during open hours. Our Jewish cemetery in Cedar Hill is Section 20 of the Cemetery.

## **PLANNING AHEAD**

It is our advice to Temple Beth Jacob Partners, to plan ahead. Prepare now for your loved one's death and for your own. This booklet is designed to help you and your family who must someday bury you and who now need your help to prepare them for this sacred task – a *Mitzvah*. “Like one whom his mother comforts, will I comfort you,” says the Lord, “and you will be comforted within Jerusalem.”

## **JEWISH PRACTICES WHEN DEATH OCCURS**

### **1. THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS**

The usual form of disposal of the deceased in the Jewish faith is interment. However, cremation is permitted in Reform Judaism, and cremains can be buried in our cemetery or preferably in the Columbarium at Big Rock Cemetery. For those choosing cremation, the Cemetery Chairman can provide size regulation of urns and costs. Temple Partnership is not required for use of the Columbarium. If funeral plans have not been placed on file with a funeral home, the Funeral Director must meet with a representative of the family to determine the choice of casket and to make such financial arrangements as may be necessary. It may be good to have a close family friend help in this consultation as members of the family are frequently too upset to make the necessary decisions. The Funeral Director will assist you in preparing and placing funeral notices in the newspapers. The Funeral Director can provide you with the necessary copies of

the Death Certificate. Families are encouraged to make pre arrangements with a funeral home long before a funeral is eminent.

The casket should be simple and made of plain wood. *For interfaith couples, no non-Jewish religious symbols can be on the casket.* Flowers are not considered necessary or even justifiable at Jewish funerals; all other arrangements should be in simple good taste. It is a common practice to designate a charity for donation at the time of death. Temple Beth Jacob depends upon donations to keep its doors open. Your help at this time is valuable and appreciated. An example of a wording that can be placed in an obituary is: ***In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial donations, in the name of . . . . ., be made to Temple Beth Jacob, 290 North St., Newburgh, NY 12550.*** If there is a special fund at Temple Beth Jacob that is of interest to you, was important to the deceased, or helpful in funeral planning, you can designate a special fund, i.e., Cemetery Fund, Music Fund, Scholar-in-Residence Fund, etc. The Cemetery Fund is especially dependent on these types of donations. This is the *Mitzvah* of *Tzedakah*.

## 2. OBLIGATIONS OF FRIENDS

It is not good Jewish practice for anyone except the very **closest** friends and members of the **immediate** family to visit the bereaved **before** the funeral. *The Ethics of the Fathers* offers sage advice: “Do not try to comfort the mourners while their dead lie before them.” To place the mourner in the kind of social situation which occurs at a pre-funeral visitation is contrary to the point of view of Judaism.

The placing of the body of the departed on public exhibition in the presence of the grief-stricken family, is a strain on the mourner and not in Jewish tradition. At this moment of the height of grief, to feel compelled to “receive” those who have come to the chapel should not be expected.

How, then, would Judaism have us comfort the mourner and pay our last respects? First, you do this by attending the funeral itself and escorting the departed to the cemetery, traditionally regarded as the fulfillment of a divine commandment – a *Mitzvah*. Second, it is a *Mitzvah* to help bury the dead, therefore, join the family in placing a shovel of dirt in the grave. Third, you show respect by comforting the mourner in the post-funeral period of *Shiva*, a *Mitzvah* of compassion.

## 3. THE FUNERAL

While there are no “special requirements,” mourners should wear somber clothing. The wearing of black and the custom of “*keriyah*” (rending of garments/cutting of the mourner’s ribbon) are optional in Reform Judaism, but it is customary for parents, spouses, and children to wear a *Keriyah* Ribbon for a week after the funeral.

The Jewish funeral service usually consists of the reading of Psalms, *T'hillim*, a brief eulogy, and the memorial prayers. Cantorial participation may be included. Family members who feel comfortable can participate in the giving of eulogies. Friends can

also give a eulogy, but should do so, only on invitation of the family. Non-Jews may give a eulogy. The Rabbi will plan the funeral to meet the needs of the family.

Funerals and burials conducted at Temple Beth Jacob are officiated by Temple Clergy or co-officiated by Temple Clergy, if the presence of an outside clergy is requested by the family. If requested, the family should discuss this with the Temple Rabbi. Fees for outside clergy are the responsibility of the family.

The casket is kept closed during the service. The practice of opening the casket to be “viewed” by those in attendance is out of keeping with the spirit of Jewish tradition. The deceased should not be on “display.” In Judaism we are to remember the individual as he or she was in life. It is acceptable and important, however, for legal reasons, for one member of the family to privately identify the body with the Funeral Director before the funeral service begins.

The graveside service consists of a prayer in praise of “The True Judge” and concludes with the recitation of the *Kaddish*. All members of the immediate family, women as well as men, should familiarize themselves with the *Kaddish* prayer. For those who need to review *Kaddish*, it can be found in transliteration in our prayer book and many other sources.

Upon request of the family, the Temple is available to Temple Partners for funerals without charge. Some families choose to have the entire service at the graveside. Masonic or other Lodge or military services or honors are permitted in conjunction with our Jewish funeral service. When the family chooses such additional ritual, the Rabbi should be consulted.



The honor of being a pallbearer is usually reserved for the close friends and associates of the deceased. However, there is no bar to the rendering of this last service by members of the family except parents, children, siblings, or spouse. Non-Jews may serve as pallbearers.

#### 4. AFTER THE FUNERAL

Upon returning from the cemetery, the immediate family mourners (parents, children, spouse, siblings) kindle a memorial light which lasts seven days. You are usually given this by your Funeral Director. It is customary to hold a brief service of worship in the home of mourners. The Rabbi or Cantor, whenever possible, will lead the service after the funeral. A member of the family or congregation may also conduct such services during this time of *Shiva*. The Temple will provide a sufficient number of copies of an appropriate home prayer book. *Shiva* Chairs are also available for loan. This home service is usually conducted each evening, except Friday evening, while the family is sitting *Shiva*.

Simplicity should mark the meal served to the mourners after the funeral and reverent decorum should prevail at the home. Covering mirrors, setting out a bowl for washing

on return from the cemetery, and the eating of hard boiled eggs by the immediate family, are Jewish customs that are optional in Reform Judaism.

The custom of seven days of strict mourning, *Shiva*, has great psychological value and has not been abolished by Reform Judaism. Whenever possible, mourners should refrain from occupational pursuits. Those who cannot observe the full week are urged to sit at home for at least three days, but it is an individual choice. Parents, spouses, siblings, and children of the deceased, usually sit on hard chairs or special boxes sometimes provided by the funeral home. Temple Beth Jacob has Shiva Chairs to loan to families. Families do not sit *Shiva* on Shabbat or on Jewish holidays. For instance, if the seven days of *Shiva* fall during Passover, *Shiva* would end on the first night of Passover. It would not continue when the holiday ends, as the seven days would be up.

Reform Judaism imposes the duty of *Kaddish* not only on male members of the family, but on women as well. *Kaddish* should be said at the Shabbat Service throughout a full year following the funeral.

During the first 30 days, *sh'loshim*, mourners should refrain from attending public entertainments or parties, but may attend meetings concerned with civic, religious, or welfare matters and may also proceed with weddings and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs previously arranged. After the 30 days, mourners should return to normal activities in accordance with personal inclination.

Except for the month following burial, the Sabbath, Festivals, and High Holy Days, the cemetery may be visited at any time. (A prayer on visiting the cemetery is *El Molay Rachamim*.)

The ritual of *Yahrtzeit* is observed on the eve of the anniversary of the death of a loved one. In Reform Judaism, *Yahrtzeit* can be observed on the secular or Jewish calendar anniversary. Most do this on the Jewish anniversary, but it is your choice. A 24 hour candle is lit. It is customary to visit the Temple on the Sabbath following the *Yahrtzeit* day, when the name of the deceased will be read in the service. Temple Partners should let the office know if they want the name read based on the Jewish calendar or the English calendar.

A perpetual memorial can be established, and the Temple office will assume responsibility for notification of the family for including the deceased's name on the *Yahrtzeit* list. Special *Yizkor* (Memorial) Services are held on Yom Kippur and at the end of other holy days. The custom of keeping children whose parents are still living away from these memorial services is based on old superstition and is not practiced by Reform Jews. On the contrary, children should have the opportunity to see their parents honor the memory of their dear ones. This is an important lesson and family responsibility. Being together is a comfort for mourners. Reform Jews all stand and say *Kaddish* with mourners. In Temple, we all stand, and if you don't have a specific person to say *Kaddish* for, you say it for the six million who perished in the Holocaust and may not have someone to say *Kaddish* for them.

## 5. AT THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

Prior to the service, unless one is an intimate friend of the family, one should permit the family to express its grief privately, and to attend to its preparation of the funeral.

Following the funeral, a condolence call should be made to the home of the mourners. It should be brief and quiet. Families sitting *Shiva* usually leave the door open. Ringing the bell is not necessary. They want you to just come in. A sympathetic ear is more desirable than considerable talk. Many people have the mistaken notion that the mourners are to be diverted from talking about the deceased – quite the contrary. One can be very helpful by permitting them to express their thoughts, feelings, and memories in connection with the deceased. Sharing stories, photos, and other memorabilia by family and guests are encouraged.

It is a *Mitzvah* to bring food to the house of mourning to eliminate concern for meals during *shiva*. When invited to, you should join them in eating. Visiting with those who are present to discuss business is out of place. And of course, condolence calls are not made on the Sabbath.

## 6. THE GRAVE STONE

It is traditional to erect a stone or tablet of memorial upon the grave of an immediate relative any time after one month following the funeral and is required for all graves in Temple Beth Jacob Cemeteries. The memorial tablet, like everything connected with Jewish burial, should be simple and dignified. *At a minimum, we require the full name, and date of birth and death on the stone.* Tradition does not require a ceremony of dedication (unveiling), although American Jews have become accustomed to such a ceremony. Temple prayer books can be used for this service, or it can be a creative service written by the family, with readings and prayers from the heart. It can be lead by a Rabbi, Cantor, or family member. It is appropriate for family members to say things in memory of the loved one. A small piece of white fabric is placed on the stone and “unveiled” during the ceremony. This ends the year of mourning.



Mausoleum at Big Rock Cemetery, May 2017

*Shalom,*  
Temple Beth Jacob Cemetery Committee  
April 2021