

## TEMPLE ISAIAH BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE

The primary mission of the Bereavement Committee is to console those who have suffered a loss and to facilitate the bereavement process, in keeping with Jewish tradition and Temple Isaiah custom, at the time of a loved-one's death. As soon as committee members are notified of a death within the Temple community, they contact the bereaved family to offer sympathy and support and to help facilitate the rituals, demands, and challenges of the funeral and mourning period. Key activities include the following:

- working with local funeral directors to set up an "Isaiah Plan" — a pre-selected casket and other details — to ease the burdens of decision-making at the time of a death
- expressing condolences on behalf of the congregation
- helping to arrange for leaders to conduct shiva minyans in mourners' homes
- helping to arrange for housesitters on the day of the funeral
- contacting friends and relatives who can help in setting up meals and in other preparations for the funeral and shiva period
- coordinating the training of shiva minyan leaders
- providing materials and occasional programs to help families understand and prepare for future losses

All congregants who suffer a loss should contact the Temple office immediately so that the Rabbis and the Bereavement Committee can offer their sympathy, support, and guidance during the funeral and mourning process. The Temple should be called even when the funeral is out of town.

### Temple Isaiah Bereavement Committee Members

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*Temple Isaiah  
Funeral Guide*

*Temple Isaiah  
Lexington, Massachusetts*

When there is a death in the family, there are immediate decisions to be made regarding the funeral. The “Isaiah Funeral Guide” is designed to help the mourner make those decisions, in the hope that it will ease the stress and confusion of one part of the mourning process. It is intended to be used only as a guide.

When a death occurs in the family of a Temple Isaiah congregant, the Temple office should be notified at once. If the office is closed, the answering service will contact one of the clergy immediately when the call involves a death. The Temple should be called even if the funeral will be out of town. A loss within the community is a loss no matter where it occurs, and our clergy will want to extend their support and sympathy.

The family may want to contact a funeral director themselves, or they may prefer to wait to talk to one of the Rabbis for guidance. Because a Jewish funeral takes place soon after death, arranging the time and place is often the first decision to be made. In general, it is the clergy’s availability that determines the exact time, along with the family’s wishes and the schedule of the funeral home.

The next step is to meet with the funeral director to arrange the details of the funeral. Traditionally, this meeting has taken place at the funeral home, where a casket is chosen from the samples on display. Some funeral homes also provide samples on-line. To ease this often difficult task, an attractive but moderate-priced casket has been recommended by the Isaiah Bereavement Committee. If you are using one of the funeral homes listed in this pamphlet and decide to follow the “Isaiah plan,” using the pre-selected casket, the meeting can take place at your home or another quiet place, such as the Temple.

Cemeteries will also be discussed at the meeting with the funeral director. The director can help arrange for the purchase of a plot, if necessary. (Lexington and Bedford have cemeteries with Jewish sections available to town residents.) In addition, a series of questions will be asked relating to specific funeral arrangements. Stress or uncertainty may make the process of answering these questions difficult. This guide therefore includes a list of suggested answers, together with a brief explanation of the reasons behind them.

In the meantime, a member of our clergy will be in touch with you to offer sympathy, advice, and support and help you make plans. A Bereavement Committee member will also call to offer sympathy as well as guidance in the planning of the post-funeral details.

The booklet *A Time to Mourn* presents a detailed discussion of these as well as other aspects of the mourning process, including the shiva period. It is available in the Temple office. Please take the time to read it.

The basis for the recommendations is as follows

Recommended:

1. Suggested Casket
2. Shrouds
3. Family or friends as pallbearers
4. Closed casket
5. The following arrangements be made by the funeral home:
  - a. newspaper notices
  - b. acknowledgement cards
  - c. procuring of death certificates
6. Tahara (ritual washing and prayers)

Not recommended:

1. Use of Shomer (one who remains with the body until the time of the funeral)
2. Embalming, hairdresser or cosmetologist

Optional:

The funeral director will ask you if you want to use the following. These are personal decisions and are dependent on the circumstances.

1. Limousine for the family on the day of the funeral
2. Tent at the cemetery
3. Police detail
4. Flowers

Funeral homes will often instruct the cemetery regarding whether or not to lower the casket while the family is present and to shovel the dirt. You may want to discuss your preferences in this matter with your family and the rabbi so that you will be prepared to make your wishes known to the funeral home.

Please Note:

For security reasons, on the funeral day, arrange for someone to stay at the homes of all family members who are listed in the obituary notices. Upon hearing of the death, people will ask if they can be helpful to you. This is one way that they can.

*Suggested Casket:*

What is perhaps the most difficult decision and the one which traditionally has required a visit to the funeral home is the selection of the casket. At the funeral home there are several dozen caskets available, ranging from simple to ornate, all of which are acceptable. To make this often stressful visit unnecessary and to ease decision making, the committee has chosen a casket at each of the funeral homes listed in this pamphlet. The casket is medium-priced and of all-wood construction.

*Shrouds:*

Shrouds are white linen or muslin garments supplied by the funeral home. Dressing the body in shrouds is in keeping with the tradition that, rich or poor, we all leave the earth as equals.

*Family or friends as pallbearers:*

Pallbearers are generally provided either by the funeral home or from among the family and friends of the deceased. It has been expressed by people who have used family members or friends as pallbearers that they have appreciated the warmth of the personal involvement.

*Closed casket:*

Jewish tradition is firmly opposed to any public viewing of the body.

*Tahara:*

In this ritualized bathing of the body a same sexed member of the Chevra Kadisha washes the deceased. If this option is not chosen, a member of the funeral staff, regardless of sex, will bathe the body.

*No Shomer:*

This custom, often observed by Traditional Jews, is not common in Reform practice.

*No embalming:*

Embalming slows the process of returning to dust. Unless special circumstances require it, the recommendation is to not embalm.

*Flowers:*

While flowers at funerals are not commonly part of the Jewish tradition, it is permissible to have a tasteful floral arrangement.

## FUNERAL HOMES

The following funeral homes in the Greater Boston area are aware of the moderate-priced casket pre-selected by the Bereavement Committee. You may refer to it simply by mentioning Temple Isaiah. If you choose the "Isaiah plan," you need not go to the funeral home but can meet with the funeral director at your home, the temple, or other place.

1. Levine Chapel  
470 Harvard St., Brookline, MA 02146  
617-277-8300, 800-367-3708  
Contact: Barbara Levine
2. Stanetsky Memorial Chapels  
1668 Beacon St., Brookline, MA 02146  
617-232-0300, 800-842-4280  
Contact: Jane Salk, Bruce Schlossberg
3. Brezniak-Rodman Funeral Directors  
1251 Washington St., W. Newton, MA 02465  
617-969-0800  
Contact: David Brezniak, George Rodman
4. Schlossberg-Solomon Memorial Chapel  
824 Washington St., Canton, MA 02021  
781-828-6990, 800-828-6993  
Contact: Kenneth Schlossberg
5. Goldman-Fisher Funeral Chapel  
174 Ferry St., Malden, MA 02148  
781-324-1122  
Contact: Harvey Goldman, Jay Goldman
6. Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapels  
10 Vinnin St., Salem, MA 01970  
781-581-2300  
Contact: Edward Hymanson

Many congregants will find themselves using other funeral homes. It is hoped that this guide will prove useful no matter where the funeral is held.

## MOURNING OBSERVANCES

### **Mourners**

The laws of mourning apply in the death of seven family members: mother, father, brother, sister, husband, wife, child. Children under thirteen need not observe mourning.

### **Returning to the House of Shiva**

Usually only mourners, family members, and, possibly, out-of-towners return to the Shiva house after the interment. This is a time for the family to rest and to grieve with one another, unless they explicitly wish to open the house to friends.

### **Meal of Consolation**

A light Meal of Consolation is usually served by friends to the mourners after they return to the house. The Bereavement Committee can contact friends and offer guidance.

### **Shiva Candle**

A seven-day memorial candle supplied by the funeral home is kindled upon return from the cemetery. These words are recited:

*Ner Adonai nishmat adam.*

*Baruch atah Adonai noteya betochainu chayeit olam.*

"The human spirit is the lamp of God.

Blessed is the eternal one who has implanted within us eternal life."

### **Service at the House of Mourning**

The Bereavement Committee will guide the family in obtaining prayerbooks and conducting an evening service in the home, which usually begins at 7:30 p.m. The service can be led by a friend or family member (nonmourner), or the committee can try to arrange for a congregant to be leader. Reform Judaism does not require a minyan. Visitors are normally not restricted to the service time and should check the Temple announcement for visiting hours.

### **Comforting the Mourner**

The Shiva period is devoted to the mourner. Visitors should not linger at the house and should focus on speaking about the deceased with the mourner rather than on making conversation. Refreshments should be kept to a bare minimum, but providing meals for the family is a mitzvah.

### **Shloshim**

During the thirty-day period following the funeral, mourners refrain from joyful social events. The name of the deceased is read at Temple Shabbat services during this time.