The Frutnal Mitzvah

Bikkur Holim

Becoming Godlike

In the midst of our daily lives, we often find ourselves in situations that challenge our understanding of what it means to be a God-like being. In this context, the Grodenbush Hebrew Center Rabbi A. Kenter invites us to reflect on the mitzvah of Bikkur Holim, which involves visiting the sick and offering comfort. This practice is not only a physical act of care but also a spiritual exercise that helps us connect with our divine nature.

The concept of Bikkur Holim is deeply rooted in Jewish tradition and is seen as a way to embody the qualities of compassion, empathy, and selflessness. It is an opportunity to honor the sanctity of human life and to strive for a world that is more just and compassionate. By engaging in this mitzvah, we are not only fulfilling a commandment but also nurturing our own souls and deepening our relationship with the Divine.

In Hebrew, the word Bikkur Holim translates to "visit the sick." This has a dual meaning: first, it refers to a physical visit, which can be a simple gesture of presence or a more involved act of service. Second, it signifies a deeper spiritual visitation, one that penetrates to the core of the human experience, offering comfort and hope in times of need.

The mitzvah of Bikkur Holim is connected to the concept of "kavanah," or intention. When we perform this mitzvah with a conscious and heartfelt intention, we are not only fulfilling an obligation but also experiencing a profound spiritual transformation. This practice can be a path to becoming God-like, for it teaches us to see the sacred within the everyday moments of life.

In the words of Rabbi A. Kenter, "The Frutnal Mitzvah of Bikkur Holim, is an invitation to become God-like, not by struggling against the human condition but by embracing it. Through acts of compassion and empathy, we can transcend our limitations and touch the divine within each other."
VISITING THE SICK

Jewish law and tradition understand the commandment of bikkur holim not to be simply a visit to someone who is ill. There are three purposes of a visit: to inquire after one's welfare, to seek curative treatment and to pray for a full and complete recovery. Sefer Ha-Hayyim, an eighteenth century text, elaborates. We visit the sick, "first to see whether in some way we are able to alleviate or soothe their pains, to call their attention to some effective remedy, or to procure the aid of a good and skillful physician; second, to afford the sick monetary support, in case they need it, and thereby contribute to their comfort; third, to instill in them an implicit trust in God and pray on their behalf".

From the outset, Jews have viewed sickness and disease as part of a complex dynamic. As the late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "Sickness while primarily a problem of pathology is a crisis of the total person, not only a physical disorder. There is a spiritual dimension to sickness. At a moment in which one's very living is called into question...the ultimate question of what it means to be alive [is] of...importance ["The Patient as a Person," Conservative Judaism, 19:1, Fall, 1964]."

Our physical presence alone can do much to alleviate the loneliness that so often accompanies illness and hospitalization. Our willingness to give of ourselves and of our time brings warmth into an often seemingly cold environment. Our care, concern and compassion bring God into the room and into the lives of those we visit and into our own as well.

Assisting us in our visits are remarkably sensitive insights from Jewish tradition, as preserved in the authoritative sixteenth century code of Jewish law, the Shulkhan Arukh.

It is a religious obligation to visit the sick. To reduce the anxiety level of the person who is ill and to remove the fright that may accompany a sudden onslaught of visitors, those who are not relatives and close friends should not visit the sick immediately after they have become ill. Rather, one should wait a few days. In the case of sudden, serious illness one should not postpone a visit at all [Yoreh Deah, Hilkhot Bikkur Holim 335:1].

Apparently based on a rabbinic tradition that each visit removes one-sixtieth of the illness [Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Nedarim 40a], regardless of one's status within the community, one should visit the sick, up to several times a day. By the same token, one must be sensitive to the patient's need for rest. While praised for frequent visits, one is cautioned not to overburden the patient [Yoreh Deah 335:2].

When visiting the sick, despite our own need to be close to the patient, one should not sit on the bed. Aware that the bed is the patient's home, it must be respected as such. Sitting on the bed is an invasion of one's space; it may also cause discomfort. Both to facilitate conversation and to preserve dignity, one should take up a position at eye level [Yoreh Deah 335:3].

One should not visit the sick early in the morning or late at night. Aside from the practicalities of patient care, the Shulkhan Arukh recognizes varying psychological states that may preclude a successful visit. In theory, well-rested
FROM PERSONAL MUNIZAN TO COMMUNAL CONCERN

In the early hours of the morning, a

...
number of visits to the sick, required the submission of regular reports on the condition of patients in the community, and designated night care for more serious cases.

Societies of women, often called nashim zadkaniyot ("pious women") were formed in the eighteenth century to act as nurses, to visit women who were sick or recovering from delivery, to provide medical care, and to offer prayers on behalf of the ill.

The mitzvah of bikkur holim encompasses several positive Jewish value concepts, among them hesed v'emet (compassion and truth), kol Yisrael arevim zeh baseh (every Jew is responsible for the other), pikuah nefesh (preservation of life), and tikun olam (repairing the world). Advances in medical technology, the expansion of intimidating procedures, and the growth of a seemingly sterile and sometimes inhospitable hospital environment serve to reinforce the need to reactivate bikkur holim as a Jewish communal concern. Shortened hospital stays, increased periods of recuperation at home, and the ever-expanding reality of family members living at a great distance from one another further mandate the extension of bikkur holim to members of our extended community.

Throughout most of its history as a congregation, the Greenburgh Hebrew Center has practiced bikkur holim on an informal, as needed basis. We have now decided to formalize our committee which will reach out to the home and hospital-bound and their families. Through programs and publications generously funded by the family and friends of our beloved late member, Phyllis Feerst, zikrona l'vrakha, we want to assist congregants to help one another in more significant ways. We want congregants to know that we are available and accessible. Critically important, we want to educate congregants in the art of visiting the sick.

ANATOMY OF A VISIT

In recent years, much has been written about the practice of bikkur holim. Practical tips to help the visitor better understand a patient's sensitivities have also been developed. Among some of these are the following:

---Budget your time so that a visit is truly a visit and not merely a brief courtesy call.

---Before visiting, check with the individual, the family or, in the case of hospitalization, a nurse on the floor.

---In the hospital, before entering knock on the patient's door; do not enter suddenly.

---Come in and sit down. Pull up a chair and make yourself comfortable. Take off your coat.

---Do not enter the room if it is crowded with other visitors, if a test is being administered, or if the person you have come to visit appears to be embarrassed by your presence. Do not stay if you see signs of fatigue or excessive irritability.

---Step out of the room when the doctor or nurse is attending the patient.

---If a person has a scar or a disfigurement, do not stare. If a piece of clothing comes off, put it back on.

---Time your visit to late morning or mid-afternoon. Try not to arrive at what would ordinarily be meal-time. Check to see if there are dietary restrictions before bringing any food.

---If you bring books, make sure they are not too heavy either in weight or in content. Attention span may be lessened as a result of the illness. Perhaps you would want to bring a short story or poem to read.
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and ensuing! providing hospitality; visiting the
attending the house of study punctually, morning
honoring parents; doing deeds of loving kindness;
and continue to yield truth in time to come.
These are the deeds which yield immediate final

--- Remember that confidentiality is es-
tak throughout the time of your visit.
do not feel that it is necessary to
are actually able to perform.
offer to help only with things that you
Do not make promises for other people.
do not make promises you can not keep.

--- do not offer medical advice. Do not
before leaving, with a quick and
recovery. recovery.
been there with a wish for a speedy
the state table. Interacting what you have
return? It possible to leave a note on
Do not awaken a sleeping patient.

--- Do not wake patient. Talk about the
setting subject matter. Talk about the
Do not bring up old news; avoid up---
A Guide to Practice

A Guide to Life by Rabbi H. Rabinowicz, Jewish Chronicle

The Bond of Life by Jules Harlow (R.

Between death and burial:

Anyone, not only for the relatives listed above,

We are permitted to observe the mourning rites for

one year and one day after the laws of mourning.
The laws of mourning from the age of twenty
years and one day and females from the age of eighteen
years and one day. Daughters from the age of eighteen
days, sons-in-law sixty days, and the husband or wife who dies with no infants less

We are permitted to mourn for a father, mother, son.

Who is a mourner:

Shulchan Aruch (Code of Jewish Law), York Beach, 340

Mourners: Jews, Jews in mourning, by Rabbi

The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning.
the appropriate public observances of the day, which include eating meat, drinking wine, and reciting benedictions.

While one may want to offer an onen assistance in making the funeral arrangements, it is not appropriate to visit the onen during this time, at home or at a funeral chapel.

Respect for the dead

Human life is sacred. The human body deserves respect, even after the breath of life has left it. Respect for the dead (k'vod hamet) is a fundamental principle governing Jewish practice. One expression of this respect is the ritual washing (taharah) of the dead body which is then dressed in shrouds (takhrikhim). This is done by members of the hevrah kadishah, a group traditionally devoted to the proper burial of the dead.

A dead body is not to be left alone before the funeral. Although some sources trace this practice to the necessity of protecting the body from harm, not leaving the body unattended is essentially another way of showing respect to the dead. It is appropriate for mourners and other members of the family and friends to be with the body. In order to maintain a constant watch, however, arrangements are made for other individuals (shomrim, watchers) to be with the body day and night. Those who are with the body should spend their time chanting and reading from the Book of Psalms.

Since ancient times it has been considered degrading to leave the dead unburied. Jewish tradition teaches that the dead must be buried as soon as possible, usually within twenty-four hours after death. A delay is permitted when it is needed to obtain shrouds or a proper coffin, or for the sake of honoring the dead by waiting for relatives and friends who must travel great distances.

The dead are not to be put on display. It is improper to apply cosmetics to the dead, just as it is improper to dress the dead in anything other than shrouds or to provide an expensive coffin. The coffin, which is covered with an appropriate cloth, is not opened at the funeral.

People who want to express their respect and their sympathy in a tangible way should contribute to a favorite cause of the deceased, rather than send flowers to the home or to the chapel. Mourners generally prefer being notified of charitable contributions made in memory of the dead to receiving specially prepared baskets or cartons of food or sweets. Jewish tradition has always emphasized concern for the living, helping the needy in this world. This is also a way of extending the influence of the dead after he or she is no longer walking this earth.

Shrouds and coffin

The body of the dead is clothed in plain white linen, cotton, or muslin shrouds (takhrikhim).

The Talmud records that at one time the bodies of the wealthy were brought to burial on a richly ornamented, stately bed, while the bodies of the poor were brought to burial on a plain platform (bier). This
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The cemetery. For at least four feet immediately after the funeral of the body accompany the dead, which being behind the coffin is only to attend the funeral service, but especially not involved in the interment. It is a misfortune and an evil to be present at any other funeral service.

The Jewish translation of legha'ah, "accompanying," "accompanying," the funeral service.

Death.

The length of time that has elapsed since the day of death may be visible throughout the funeral service, but not on Shabbat. Whenever one learns of a parent's death, regardless of the time of death, one learns of a parent's death, regardless of the nature of the service. If one learns of a death within thirty days, one may not attend the funeral service, but if one learns of a death in any other manner, one may attend the funeral service.

A prayer, "Kaddish," is said at the funeral service. It is customary for a dead parent to be buried on a Friday, which he needs during the week in which he is buried, a week in which he needs during the week in which he is buried. He is buried in the same way as if he had never been born. Our tradition teaches what all Jews are to be buried.

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Alas, a tear made in the mourner's clothing is an external symbol of grief. The ribbon attached to the clothing is an external symbol of grief. Alas, a tear made in the mourner's clothing is an external symbol of grief.
Both the funeral and the burial services are brief. The Biblical and other texts read generally emphasize human mortality, resignation to God's inscrutable will, affirmation of life, acknowledgment of God as the true judge, and immortality of the soul.

At the cemetery

The dead are buried in the earth. "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:10).

We show our respect and love for the dead through personal involvement in the funeral and burial. Members of the family and friends serve as pallbearers, carrying and escorting the coffin to the hearse after the funeral service and to the grave at the cemetery. The procession pauses several times on its way to the grave.

It is appropriate for relatives and friends to drop several spadefulls of earth on the lowered coffin, another act of involvement reflecting their constant concern for one whom they loved. Laborers may then fill the grave. (Some recite kaddish after the coffin is covered with earth; others wait until the grave is filled.) After reciting kaddish, the mourners walk between two lines formed by the others present, who say Hamakom y'nahem etkhem b'tokh sh'ar aveilei tzion virushalayim. "May the Almighty comfort you with all the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

Before leaving the cemetery it is customary to rinse the hands. Further, it is also customary to rinse the hands before entering the home upon returning from the cemetery.

Mourner's kaddish

A mourner first recites kaddish at the cemetery after burial. This particular kaddish is known as the burial kaddish; thereafter the regular mourner's kaddish is recited. The kaddish is generally thought of as a prayer for the dead. But while the mourner's kaddish certainly is recited in that context, it does not mention death or the dead. Essentially it is an affirmation of life and faith. It confronts death with life. Reciting the mourner's kaddish is an act of looking to the future and all of life with faith and hope, in the presence of grief and despair.

Kaddish originally referred to a brief prayer and response recited at the close of Rabbinic lessons in the ancient synagogue and house of study. Such lessons would end with a discourse containing a message of comfort and consolation. The kaddish extended that message as a prayer of messianic hope. The name of God is not mentioned in the kaddish, which emphasizes hallowing and praising Him through redemption of life in this world and through the universal acceptance of His sovereignty. In addition to the form of kaddish known as mourner's kaddish, there are several variations recited at the conclusion of various sections of the prayer service.

Kaddish is an Aramaic word meaning holy. Recitation of kaddish is an act of hallowing and praising God and His name. In Jewish tradition, such an act must take place in public assembly, which is defined as at least a quorum of ten adults (minyan). Thus the kaddish, in any variation, is recited only in the presence of a minyan.
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would result from not working, the mourner is permitted to return to work after observing the mourning for three days, including a brief observance the third day.

Mourners sit only on low stools or benches and do not wear leather footwear. (Exceptions are made for pregnant women and others for whom this might cause difficulties.) The mourner should be seated when people offer their condolences; the mourner is not to act as a host or hostess. Mirrors (symbols of vanity) are either covered in a house of mourning or turned to the wall.

The first three days of shivah constitute a period of more intense mourning. During this period, mourners observing tradition strictly will not greet people. They may, however, initiate a conversation. It is customary for people visiting a mourner not to speak before the mourner begins the conversation.

The day of the burial counts as the first day of shivah. Shivah ends on the morning of the seventh day, after one hour.

Shabbat is included in counting the seven days, though on Shabbat no outward signs of mourning apply. The mourners should wear regular shoes, sit on regular chairs, and change into clothing that bears no signs of mourning. They also attend synagogue services.

On Friday (unless it is the seventh day of shivah) or on the day before a Festival, shivah is observed until two and one half hours before sunset. On Pesah eve it ends at noon.

A Festival, Rosh Hashanah, or Yom Kippur, annul the remainder of shivah, provided that the mourner has first observed at least one hour of shivah.

A candle, which burns continuously for seven days, is lit upon returning home from the cemetery. The light of the candle symbolizes the soul. “The soul of man is the light of the Lord” (Proverbs 20:27).

At the end of shivah the mourners should take a short walk together, symbolizing their return to life’s normal routine.

When speaking of the deceased, a Hebrew phrase is generally added: alav hashalom (may he rest in peace) or aleha hashalom (may she rest in peace). Zikhrono livrakhah (for a male) and zikhronah livrakhab (for a female) are also used, meaning “of blessed memory.”

Shloshim

Shloshim (“thirty”) ends on the morning of the thirtieth day after the funeral. The period from the end of shivah to the end of shloshim is one of transition from deep bereavement to resuming life’s normal routine. A mourner during this period does not wear new clothes or cut the hair, does not participate in general festivities, and avoids public places of entertainment. A mourner does not attend parties celebrating a brit milah, pidyon haben, or a wedding, though he or she may attend the ceremonies. When mourning a parent’s death, restrictions continue until twelve months after the day of death.

At the end of shloshim it is appropriate for family and friends to gather together to read or study appropriate texts and to speak about the dead.

If mourning has been observed for at least one hour before a Festival, shivah is ended by that Festival. In that event, shloshim ends fifteen days after the last

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A funeral ceremony is an appropriate place for family and friends to gather in respect of the deceased. It is a time to express grief and honor the memory of the deceased.

In Jewish tradition, the formal mourning period is 7 days, or 30 days if the deceased was elderly. During this time, certain customs are observed, such as wearing black, and refraining from certain activities, like eating meat or working.

The formal mourning period is a time of reflection and remembrance. It is customary to attend the funeral service and to wear black. It is also customary to refrain from eating meat and to limit social activities.

It is important to remember that each culture and family may have their own traditions and customs for mourning. It is important to respect these customs and to support the family during this difficult time.

The Twelve Days of Shiva

Shiva is a period of mourning for a deceased family member. The length of Shiva varies depending on the culture and family's traditions. In Jewish tradition, Shiva is 7 days long, known as Shloshim.

During Shiva, it is customary to sit in a clean, quiet place and to refrain from eating meat. It is also customary to spend time in prayer and reflection.

Shiva is a time of grief and mourning. It is a time to remember the deceased and to support the family. It is important to respect the family's traditions and to be present for them during this difficult time.
memory of the dead, to the meaning of their lives, to their influence upon our lives, and to appropriate ways of perpetuating their memory.

Yahrzeit

Yahrzeit is observed on each anniversary of the day of death according to the Hebrew calendar.

One who is not certain of the day when a relative died should select an appropriate date on which to observe yahrzeit each year.

A candle should burn in the home during the twenty-four hour period of yahrzeit, sunset to sunset, starting on the evening preceding the day. Light symbolizes the soul, as it is written in the Book of Proverbs: "The soul of man is the light of the Lord."

When the yahrzeit coincides with Shabbat or a Festival, the yahrzeit candle should be lit before the candle-lighting for the day.

It is appropriate to fulfill some mitzvah in honor of the dead on this day. This could consist of study, acting as ba'AL tefillah in the synagogue, or contributing to some worthy cause in memory of the deceased. It is also appropriate for family and friends to gather on the yahrzeit for the purpose of recalling various aspects of and events in the life of the dead, perpetuating his or her memory in a warm and intimate atmosphere.

Mourner's kaddish is recited at all services on the yahrzeit, from evening services on the night before through afternoon services on the day itself. On Shabbat before the yahrzeit one should receive an aliya at synagogue services and perhaps recite the haftarah as well.

One who is unable to recite Mourners' kaddish on the day of yahrzeit may do so at the evening service following the day of yahrzeit.

Yizkor

Yizkor ("May God remember") services in memory of the dead are held on Yom Kippur, the eighth day of Sukkot, the last day of Pesah, and the second day of Shavuot. Contrary to popular opinion, a person with a living parent may attend yizkor services.
Grief and mourning

Our loving attachments, though we like to think of

they are spared...
our craving for reunion with the person from whom we are being separated. As infants, we cry to compel our mothers to return and care for us. Thereafter we weep when we are overwhelmed by a craving for reunion with someone we have loved when we have abused, alienated, or lost the love. We weep when we witness a change, as at a Bar Mitzvah ceremony, a wedding ceremony, or a funeral. We may also weep when illness, accident, defeat, or catastrophe make us feel helpless and force us back into the position of the infant who cries for his protecting and rescuing mother. When someone we love has died, we weep because we wish to undo that separation; and we weep also because we feel so helpless in our loss and pain.

Grief, then, is the experience of pain which occurs when we acknowledge a loss. We grieve for our deserted and abandoned selves, and we grieve the loss of fulfillment and the loss of joy which death has imposed upon the one who has died. Mourning begins after we have acknowledged our loss. It is driven by grief. Grief impels us, since we cannot really undo the loss, to review the pleasures and gratifications of the past. We feel pain as we contrast the remembered pleasures of the past with the stark loneliness and frustration of the present and of the future, in which our loved one will no longer participate. But fortunately, as this painful review proceeds, the ties gradually become relaxed, the loss seems less overwhelming, and each successive remembering of each pleasurable event in the past is a little less painful than the previous one. The process of mourning, therefore, is the process of accommodating ourselves to the new reality, to the world in which the loved individual no longer exists. It makes it possible for us to make peace with this reality and to live with it.

As we mourn, we gradually revise the image of the world with which we live. In the new world, the loved individual no longer exists. We change our way of life so that we no longer look to the individual whom we have lost for the pleasures to which we have become accustomed. We replace that person to some extent, with one or more others, or we learn to do without the individual and the love. Just as the adolescent often finds it helpful, in the process of detaching himself from his parents, to adopt their views, their values, their standards and ideals, so many of us find it helpful to accommodate ourselves to the loss of someone we have loved, even late in life, by changing our own way of life so that it resembles more that of the individual we have lost. When our parents die, we model ourselves after them more faithfully than before. When a husband or wife dies, we adopt his or her interests more seriously than before. When a child of ours dies, we make his or her individual personality or interest a central focus of our lives. The process of mourning cannot be evaded. The more we immerse ourselves in it, the sooner it is over. If we try to ignore it, we impose upon ourselves the handicap of living in a world that no longer exists.

Grief is least intense and mourning is easiest when an adult son or daughter has lost an aged parent. The emotional disengagement actually has occurred gradually over a period of years. The importance of the parent has been eclipsed by the role of spouse and children. And the death of an aging parent spares him the
Grief and mourning

Pain and humiliation which physical debility and mental suffering bring. On the other hand, there areaderoelated, and the wonder whether any of these hurts could have facilitated the ultimate death. Grief also has a positive aspect that is expressed in the desire to reconcile the individual with the individual who has lost by his anger to force reality to return to him that which has been taken away, as if that were possible.

His anger is directed in many instances against the dead parent or parent-substitute who has deserted him. It may be directed against the individual who died, the doctor who took care of the individual who died, the doctor who did not provide adequate care, or the doctor who was called too late.

The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. The individual who feels guilty becomes obsessed with incidents in which he hurt the person who is now dead. 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Expression of guilt and sadness will vary with the individual's disposition and with the expectations of the community in which he lives. Some individuals express their feelings openly while others try to restrain the expression of their feelings. A few individuals tend to exaggerate their feelings in order to elicit sympathy or to express their feelings in a ritualized way. In many societies today it is considered to be a sign of sophistication and especially of manliness to show almost no feeling. No one degree of visitation is necessary.
ble expression of grief is more wholesome than another, or more useful in reaching an accommodation with the changed reality. For as we noted above, it is not grief or its expression which brings about the healing, but the silent and time-consuming process of mourning.

There is ordinarily no need for medical attention to the bereaved individual. Most of us become frightened when we see an individual displaying raw emotion, especially grief and anger. We would like to suppress such displays. But comforting the mourner does not mean that we must discourage his expression of grief. In fact, the expression of grief itself may be comforting in the sense that the process of weeping often brings relief to the individual who feels misery. Comforting the bereaved individual means helping him to pass from the world which has been destroyed, the world in which he enjoyed the love of the individual who has died, to the new world in which he must live without that individual. When we comfort the bereaved individual we are offering him our own love, in the hope that it may to some slight extent replace the love which he has lost.

If there is persistent insomnia, the individual’s physician may or may not wish to prescribe sedation in small amounts. If expression of grief or the process of mourning becomes protracted so that the individual remains seriously disabled for more than a month or so, then it may be that mourning has been gradually transformed into incipient depressive illness. If that is the case, then medical attention is required. It would be wise when severe grief and mourning are unduly protracted to arrange to have a physician, preferably a psychiatrist, attempt to assess whether and to what extent mourning has been usurped by illness.

In daily life, society requires that we attempt to protect those around us, with whom we live and work and play, from the unpleasant and potentially offensive impact of inappropriate or excessive displays of feeling. We do this by observing an etiquette, a set of rules of conduct which tell us what is appropriate and what is inappropriate in most of the situations we ordinarily encounter. When we grieve for someone whom we have loved and lost, our feelings are generally far more intense than they are in other circumstances, and if we are angered by the loss, our anger is apt to hurt those around us. Those who come to visit us fear lest they inadvertently hurt us in our grief-stricken state, and they also fear lest our anger and resentment hurt them. Therefore, in every society and culture a special etiquette is imposed for grieving and mourning and for visiting and comforting the bereaved. In fact, because our feelings toward the individual whom we have loved but who has abandoned us are often so mixed, containing both yearning and anger in varying proportions, there is a fairly strict etiquette that determines the burial ceremony itself. In its most important features, the etiquette becomes a fixed ritual; in its less crucial aspects, it remains a preferred mode of conduct.

Jewish burial requires a frank acknowledgement of the loss by insisting that the bereaved witness and indeed participate in the burial. The act of kriah serves as a visible expression of grief and symbolic acceptance
Chief mourning

surviving child should be permitted to attend the pu-

kabib and physicians are often asked whether a

child who is physically ill or malnourished

be considered only in the case of childhood diseases. Exception should

be made in the case of terminal illness. In the case of the

patient, the diagnosis of the illness and his or her capacity to

(continue)
neral and the burial. The injury which threatens his stability and mental health is the actual loss of his parent. He will not be protected against that loss by being shielded from the normal rituals. These rituals are painful but they are not the cause of illness. If the child is old enough to understand what is happening, he should not be shielded from the funeral ritual. The actual burial would probably be too shocking for a younger child, but one might be guided by the wishes of a child eight years old or older. In making plans for the child, one should keep in mind that what the child does not see or hear, he fills in for himself by fantasy. Since his fantasy is created in the midst of a catastrophe, it is usually a horrid fantasy, far worse than reality. The more of reality he can observe, the less opportunity there is for distressing fantasy. If the child is left at home while the other members of the family go off to the funeral service and burial ground, what must he think is going on that he is not permitted to see?

Similar considerations obtain in the case of adults who are not well. Since they cannot be protected against the loss itself, depriving them of normal ritual mourning makes the loss more painful for them to endure. However, while the shock of disclosure is extremely painful but not dangerous for the normal individual, it might be dangerous for one who is physically or mentally ill. Under such circumstances, one is best guided by the physician who is caring for the ill individual.

A word should be said about the fact that most children can neither grieve nor mourn. The thought of death is far too disturbing for them to acknowledge or to come to terms with. To a much greater extent than most adults, they can simply ignore it. They do not revise the image of their world to correct it for the loss, but manage to ignore the discrepancy between the absence of the lost parent or relative and their silent expectation that he is still around somewhere. They will talk as though they know and have come to terms with the facts, but inwardly they cling to old images and out of date realities. Nothing can or should be done to force them to grieve or to mourn. The process of mourning will come about spontaneously some time later, during adolescence.

One would think that philosophy is of little consequence to the survivor at the time of bereavement. Yet we all feel that we have to know why things happen. Psychoanalysts speak of a “need for causality.” When death is expected and prepared for, the survivor can easily see the naturalness of the event and, though he acknowledges his pain, he reconciles himself to its inevitability. But when death is unexpected or the loss too overwhelming, the survivor feels disappointed and let down by whatever kind of order he has assumed to exist in the universe. He recollects religious concepts of reward and punishment, and protests as though moral behavior guaranteed eternal life and freedom from pain and disappointment. The anger to which we have referred previously, may now be directed against God, against religion or against the rabbi. The survivor sees in the death a sign of the absence of order and constancy, a sign of chaos in the universe. Humans cannot tolerate a world without order, without cause and effect, controlled by what may seem to be a capricious
Your material possessions... your life, with all your might, with all your soul, with all your heart (Deuteronomy 6:5). In Hebrew text, the verb "love" is written as "as it is written, "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your might." One is obliged to bless God for the evil in life, in the presence of a minyan. After the formal study of exposition of one or more sources.

Rabbinic Sources
I praise the Lord
whom all men praise
with separate song.
He made the earth,
the sky, the throng
of those who raise
in prayerful phrase
their souls to Him.

This holy hour, this hush, this lull
I yield to Him whose glory is beyond all praise
and bless His name,
and say Amen.

Ruth Brin

THE GIFT OF MEMORY

We thank Thee, O God of life and love,
For the resurrecting gift of memory
Which endows Thy children fashioned in Thine image
With the Godlike sovereign power
To give immortality through love.
Blessed be Thou, O God,
Who enablest Thy children to remember.
Rabbi Morris Adler

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Reflections

WHEN GOD CLAIMS HIS OWN

Something precious is taken from us, and we think of it as something we have lost, instead of something we have had. We remember only how empty our lives are now, we forget how full and rich they were before; we forget all the many days and years of happiness we lived while the beloved object was still with us. We praise God for our treasures while we have them; we cease to praise Him for them when they are fled. But God never gives; He only lends. What is life itself but a loan?

When God claims His own shall we rebel? Instead of murmuring because He takes our precious things from us, let us be grateful to Him for having spared them to us so long. Let us count the past happy days not as loss, but as gain. We have had them; and, now
The submission to the love of God, as it is felt here, is
draws under the power of a face which has broken him
once of the person who becomes familiar and service-
less does it have any connection with the dull intellec-
contusory in the face of the world's inaccessibility. Still
II Samuel 12:16-23

This brings him back? I shall go to him, but he will not return
will he? but now is dead. Why should I fast? Can I
where the Lord will be gracious to me, that the child
shall arise. And the child was not. While the child was
have done. And David rebuked. While the child was
have been in all sufferings and in spite of all suffer-
I. The only God is the source of life and life is borne
These are the words that his servants were wise
When David noticed that his servants were wise.

The wisdom of Solomon.

His life is full of years, for his soul pleased the Lord.

Upon the king of kings, nor is it measured by the number

David prayed to God for the child was dead, and

David rebuked. With a wider outlook on life and duty.

The sin that comes with new courage, with no

A righteous person, though dying early in life.
not a banal "philosophy" and contemplation; nor does it involve an indifference to life. It is simply the yearning of man to overcome his feeling of God's remoteness by the feeling of God's nearness. It is devoutness and it is prayer; it prays by asking questions, but even in its questioning it prays. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" (Job 2:10).

One of the peculiar words of the Bible, repeatedly emphasized, is the word "why," but this "why" also remains a word of prayer. Just because that submission is a prayer is it so different from many other questionings which seem to resemble it. Its deepest characteristic is the silence of devotion. "I have stilled and quieted my soul" (Psalms 131:2). "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because it is Your doing" (Psalms 39:10). "It is good for a man that he sit alone and keep silence, because he has taken it upon himself" (Lamentations 3:28).

Man can bless only the One God and only that man can bless Him who experiences Him as the God of all times, the God of the fathers and the children, the God of darkness and of light. The prayers of suffering could also therefore appropriate this conception. In the talmudic scripture we find the words: "Man must bless God in his affliction as well as in his joy" (Mishnah Berakhot 9:5). "Be not like one of the idolators: when all goes well with him, he honors his gods, but if misfortune overtakes him, he curses them. Not so with the Israelites. If God sends them happiness they bless Him, and if God afflicts them with sorrow, they bless Him" (Mekhilta to Exodus 20:23). The last sentence—in which is displayed a stability of attitude toward life that is the very essence of monotheism and is its major difference from paganism—is the saying of Rabbi Akiba. He also coined the saying: "Whatever God does, is done for the best" (Berakhot 60b). This was his life's confession; for he had come to know suffering in all the ways that man could. He had the right to say this without sounding as if he were mocking misfortune. It was not the mere wisdom of reason, but religiousness which found this and many a similar word. In them the peculiarity of Judaism reveals itself, conveying the sense of something higher, something lasting and eternal which the soul possesses and by which it retains its assurance in the ways of God.

Rabbi Leo Baeck

ON LIFE AND DEATH

There is no cure for death. Not even health. But the healthy man has the strength to walk alive to his grave. The sick man invokes Death and lets himself be carried on his back, half-dead from fear of him. Health experiences even Death only "at the right time." It is good friends with him, and knows that when he comes he will remove the rigid mask and take the flickering torch from the hands of his frightened, weary, disappointed brother, Life. He'll dash it on the ground and extinguish it, and only then under the skies that flame up for the first time when the torch has been extinguished, he'll enfold the swooning one in his arms and only then, when Life has closed its eloquent lips, he'll open his eternally silent mouth and say: "Do you recognize me? I am your brother."

Franz Rosenzweig
Reflections

He had served in his lifetime, spirt continued to guide and direct the people whom Moses, through his did not once the promised land. His other teachers who continued to walk in the footsteps of whom the Egyptians, who were called the people centennial by the prophets and called the number of the covenant was consciously brought to the sense of commitment and his dominating figure, the sense of commitment and yet the subsequent history of Israel is dominated.

Reflections

He had served in his lifetime, spirt continued to guide and direct the people whom Moses, through his did not once the promised land. His other teachers who continued to walk in the footsteps of whom the Egyptians, who were called the people centennial by the prophets and called the number of the covenant was consciously brought to the sense of commitment and his dominating figure, the sense of commitment and yet the subsequent history of Israel is dominated.

Reflections
fellow men and only of ties with this earth. It is the loneliness of the man whose soul is far from all that is real, eternal and sublime. In this forlorn state man trembles with despair when he seeks answers to those questions about life that he cannot evade.

It is precisely from this fear — the fear of the night of infinitude and of the forlornness of the merely earthly and human — that there arises the yearning for that illumination and harmonizing One who is the creator of all eternity. The man who knows this yearning, which always also involves a finding, is lifted out of his forlornness; his night is filled with light and his soul redeemed from despair. “Thou art my lamp, O Lord; the Lord lightens my darkness” (II Samuel 22:29). “In Thy light we see light” (Psalms 36:10). Whoever knows himself to be intimately bound to the one and eternal God knows no loneliness, for his life is never solitary. No matter how intimately we may come in contact with our fellow man we still remain alone in our innermost soul, for every personality is unique upon earth, and loneliness is a part of individuality. But in God our life finds its peace. Peace — that is one of the words to which Israel gave a fresh meaning. All the struggle and striving of the world makes man weary. But in unity with God man finds his rest and his salvation: his peace. “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. . . . God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever” (Psalms 73:25f.). “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is” (Jeremiah 17:7). And the blessing ends in the word “peace” — “The Lord . . . give thee peace” (Numbers 6:26). “Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the Lord; and I will heal him” (Isaiah 57:19).

Rabbi Leo Baeck

REFLECTIONS ON DEATH

Existence embraces both life and death, and in a way death is the test of the meaning of life. If death is devoid of meaning, then life is absurd. Life’s ultimate meaning remains obscure unless it is reflected upon in the face of death. . . .

Death is grim, harsh, cruel, a source of infinite grief. Our first reaction is consternation. We are stunned, distraught. Slowly, our sense of dismay is followed by a sense of mystery. Suddenly, a whole life has veiled itself in secrecy. Our speech stops, our understanding fails. In the presence of death there is only silence, and a sense of awe.

Is death nothing but an obliteration, an absolute negation? The view of death is affected by our understanding of life. If life is sensed as a surprise, as a gift, defying explanation, then death ceases to be a radical, absolute negation of what life stands for. For both life and death are aspects of a greater mystery, the mystery of being, the mystery of creation. Over and above the preciousness of particular existence stands the marvel of its being related to the infinite mystery of being or creation.

Death, then, is not simply man’s coming to an end. It is also entering a beginning. . . .

Death may be the beginning of exaltation, an ultimate celebration, a reunion of the divine image with
Reflections

world is the arena where God manifests Himself and quaresh.

Doubtly valid is the biblical conviction that this 

The problem is that this principle must be fundamental to 

Living reflection. The perspective of one's attitude reveals the 

is the only safe without the desire for reward on the path of 

First, is the emphasis upon living the good life for 

effect. This attitude directs our actions and serves as a 

reason, we would do well to recall our basic instincts of 

On the Horizon

Aramband Joshua Heshel

...a new beginning.

The moment of its presence. Every moment is a new 

portion of the book, at moments as time passes.

...the very day. Each moment depends on 

the idea of a new birth.

The very moment of life is a step 

beyond death.

Is a distortion to characterize the life of man as 

beyond death.

and immediacy—such freedom can only be achieved 

is a guest for the last time.

The meaning of existence is in the sanctification of 

The meaning of death is in cinema, regardless of 

Summarization is an already a condition.
where man can fulfill his destiny. This view is echoed in Rabbinic thought: “Better one hour of repentance and good deeds in this world than all the life of the world to come, but better one hour of joy in the world to come than all the life of this world” (Abot 4:17). For the traditional believer, the full enjoyment of salvation is reserved for the world to come, but the achievement of salvation is a task to be accomplished in this world.

Third, the Bible emphasizes that children constitute a uniquely satisfying avenue of immortality for men. Whatever other forms of eternal life may or may not be open to man, he does live on, both in his descendants and in the effect that his life and work can exert upon the society of which he is a part.

Finally, there is a bewildering array of conceptions of the afterlife to be found in the religious and literary sources of Western religion, varying from the literal to the figurative, from the grossest and most material to the most spiritual. Yet underlying them all, one principle may be discerned: the conviction that physical death does not end all for man, that in some sense man’s life is indestructible and his spirit is endowed with immortality.

The belief in immortality remains an area where each individual must confront the wonder of existence for himself, and make peace on his own terms with the mystery of death. He may feel impelled to spell out in detail his hopes and fears, and draw upon the descriptions of the world-to-come to be found in many pages of religious literature. We believe that a man will be wiser to accept the limitations of existence and knowledge that are basic to the human situation, and not seek to peer behind the veil. What form man’s deathlessness may take in another realm of being we cannot discover, because it lies beyond the range of our earthly experience. To borrow an analogy from Maimonides, for us to conceive of life after death, an existence necessarily free from physical traits and attributes, is as impossible as for a color-blind person to grasp the colors of a sunset.

On the issue of man’s immortality, humility is the basic virtue and dogmatism the cardinal sin. That man lives on, we may affirm; how he lives on, we cannot know. Koheleth, the biblical thinker, has told us all we know or need to know: “The dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.”

Rabbi Robert Gordis
Excerpts from funeral liturgy,
Mourner's Kaddish, Yizkor

Viddui (confessional) recited on one's deathbed by individual (can be recited by someone else -- not necessarily a rabbi -- if the patient is incapable of its recitation)

My God and God of my ancestors, accept my prayer. Do not turn away. Forgive me for all the times I may have disappointed You. I am aware of the wrongs I have committed. May my pain and suffering serve as atonement. Forgive my shortcomings for against You have I sinned.

May it be Your will, Adonai my God and God of my ancestors, that I live now with a clear conscience, in accordance with Your will. Send a complete healing to me and to all who suffer.

My life and death are in Your hands, Adonai my God. May it be Your will to heal me.

Guardian of the bereaved, protect my beloved family, our souls are bound together. In Your hand lies my spirit.

Hear O Israel: Adonai is our God, Adonai is One. Adonai is God. Adonai is God.

Recited at the time of tearing one's garment (prior to funeral):

Praised are You, Adonai our God, Who rules the Universe, Who is Judge of Truth.

{Adonai has given and Adonai has taken; praised be the name of Adonai." -- Job 1:21}

Memorial Prayer (El Maleh Rahamim)

Exalted, compassionate God, grant infinite rest, in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and pure to the soul of __________ son/daughter of __________ who has gone to his/her eternal home. Merciful One, we ask that our loved one find perfect peace in Your eternal embrace. May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of life. May he/she rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

Tzidduk Ha-din--Recited at the grave except on certain special days on the Jewish calendar (excerpts only)

The Rock, His work is perfect, and all His ways are just; a faithful God, never false, true and upright is He. The Rock is perfect in every way. Who can question Him about His deeds? God rules below and on high, causing death and giving life to the dead, bringing down to the grave and raising up.

Just in all His ways, the Rock is perfect, patient, and compassionate. Have pity for parents and children, as forgiveness and compassion are Yours, Adonai.
You are just, Adonai, in causing death and in giving life to the dead. In Your hand are all spirits. Far be it from You to blot out our remembrance. Consider us with mercy, for compassion and forgiveness are Yours, Adonai.

_Mourners' Kaddish in translation_ (communal responses are indicated by parentheses)

MOURNER: May God's name be magnified and sanctified (Amen) throughout the created world. May God's sovereignty soon be accepted, during our own life and the life of all Israel. And let us say: (Amen.)

ALL TOGETHER: Let us praise God's great name throughout all time.

MOURNER: Glorified and celebrated, lauded and worshiped, exalted and honored, extolled and acclaimed may the Holy One be (Praised be He), praised beyond all song and psalm, beyond all tributes that mortals can utter. And let us say: (Amen.)

MOURNER: Let there be abundant peace from heaven with life for us for all Israel. And let us say: (Amen.)

MOURNER: May the One who brings peace to His universe bring peace to us and to all Israel. And let us say: (Amen.)

_Yizkor Prayer_

May God remember the soul of my (father/mother/wife/husband etc.) who has gone to his eternal home. In loving testimony I pledge charity to help perpetuate the remembrance of his/her soul. May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of life, and may he/she rest in dignity and peace. Amen.
The Therapeutic Function of Sichah

In memory of my father, Harry Sholloway, with gratitude to Dr.
Joyce Sholloway.

The First Meal

not to appear1

1 Shull formation. The moment should not feel the sense of deja.

and no

and no
depth, it becomes necessary to clear your mind of any other thoughts. In thinking about what I look for in assemblage, my efforts to understand the motivations of other people are interrupted by the moment, as the moment

The patient's experience is unique; therefore, it is impossible to predict the moment when the moment will be interrupted by the moment, when my choice to proceed with the moment's actions is interrupted by the moment's actions. The purpose of the action is achieved. In the open, honest, and direct communication with the moment's actions, the patient experiences the moment's actions.

A word of caution: the moment's actions are not always clear or easy to understand. The moment's actions may be difficult to discern, and the moment's actions may be unexpected. It is essential to be aware of the moment's actions and the impact they have on the patient.
The Therapeutic Function of Shyna
When comparing to a work of art, it's important to consider how it might resonate with your own experiences and emotions. Simply showing up to a work of art is not enough; you must engage with it actively. It's about being present, fully immersing yourself in the experience. When you visit a museum, you're not just looking at the objects; you're considering the artist's intentions, the cultural context, and the historical background. Each work of art tells a story, and your role is to interpret that story through your own lens. This process is what makes each viewer's experience unique. So, when you visit a museum, don't just scan the artwork; dive into it, reflect on it, and let it resonate with your own thoughts and feelings. It's truly a transformative experience that can deepen your understanding of yourself and the world around you.
WHO'S THE HOST? WHO'S THE GUEST?

A break in the diary experience may actually begin to draw the holder's attention to the moment's needs and wants. The moment's needs were preceded by a period of anticipation in the moment. The moment's needs may be getting under to spread itself just as it can be with the moment, needs within the larger context of community occur. It is evident needs within the larger context of community occur. It is evident

...
A FEW JEWISH REFLECTIONS ON ILLNESS, LIFE & DEATH

Rabbi Anan said in the name of Rav: How do we know that the Shekhinah sustains a sick person? From the verse, "The Lord will sustain him upon his sickbed" (Psalm 41:4). Rabbi Avin said in the name of Rav: How do we know that the Shekhinah abides over a sick person's bed? From the verse [above as well]. One who visits the sick should neither sit on the bed...because the Shekhinah abides over a sick person's bed.

--Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim 40a.

Rabbi Huna said: When a person visits the sick, the sick person's illness is diminished by one-sixtieth. At this, Rabbi Huna was challenged: If so, let sixty people visit the sick person, and he immediately will be able to go down with them into the marketplace. Rabbi Huna replied: [It would only work] if each of the sixty loved him as one loves oneself. In any event, they will afford him some relief.

--Leviticus Rabbah 34:1

"Follow the Lord your God" (Deuteronomy 13:4). Is it truly possible to follow God when God is said to be a devouring fire? Rather, it means to follow the attributes of the Holy One: as God clothed the naked (see story of Adam and Eve, Gen. 3:21) so should you clothe the naked; as God visited the sick (following Abraham's brit milah, Gen. 18:1), so should you visit the sick; as God comforted those who mourn (Abraham and Isaac after Sarah's death, Gen. 25:11), so should you comfort those who mourn; as God buried the dead (Moses, Deut. 34:6), so should you bury the dead.

--Babylonian Talmud, Soiah 14a

Sickness while primarily a problem of pathology is a crisis of the total person, not only a physical disorder. There is a spiritual dimension to sickness. At a moment in which one's very living is called into question...the ultimate question of what it means to be alive is of importance.

--Abraham Joshua Heschel, "The Patient as Person"

"Our sages taught: One may interrupt the study of Torah to attend a funeral procession. It is said of Rabbi Yehudah bar Ilai that he used to interrupt the study of Torah to attend a funeral procession, but only when there were not enough people in the procession. When there are enough, study may not be interrupted. And how many are enough? Rabbi Shmuel bar Ini said in the name of Rav: 12,000 attendees and 6,000 trumpeters...

--Babylonian Talmud, Ketubot 17a
Rabbi Shimon ben Eleazar said: Do not try to comfort your fellow while the body of his dead lies before him.

--Mishnah Avot 4:18

It is a distortion to characterize the life of man as moving toward death. Death is the end of the road, and while moving along the long road of days and nights, we are really moving toward living, acting, achieving. Death is the end of the road, but not its meaning, not a refutation of living. That every moment of life is a step toward death is a mechanical view. Every moment of life is a new arrival, a new beginning.

The greatest problem is not how to continue but how to exalt our existence. The cry for a life beyond the grave is presumptuous, if there is no cry for eternal life prior to our descending to the grave. Eternity is not perpetual future, but perpetual presence. He has planted in us a seed of eternal life. The world to come is not only a hereafter but also a herenow.

Our greatest problem is not how to continue but how to return. "How can I repay unto the Lord all his bountiful dealings with me?" (Psalm 116:12). When life is an answer, death is a homecoming.

--Abraham Joshua Heschel, "Death as a Homecoming"

After a long illness I was permitted for the first time to step out-of-doors. And as I crossed the threshold sunlight greeted me. This is my experience -- all there is to it. And yet, so long as I live, I shall never forget that moment. In that instant, I looked about to see whether anyone else showed on his face the joy, almost the beatitude, I felt. But no no there was none to give it heed. And then I remembered how often I, too, had been indifferent to sunlight, how often preoccupied with petty and sometimes mean concerns, I had disregarded it. And I said to myself, How precious the sunlight, but alas, how careless of it are men. How precious -- how careless. This has been a refrain sounding in me ever since.

All of life is the more treasurable because a great and Holy Spirit is in it. And yet, it is easier for me to let go. For these things are not and never have been mine. They belong to the universe and the God who stands behind it. True, I have been privileged to enjoy them for an hour, but they were always a loan due to be recalled.

And I let go of them more easily because I know that as parts of the divine economy they will not be lost. The sunset, the bird’s song, the baby’s smile...all these I can well trust to Him who made them. There is poignancy and regret about giving them up, but no anxiety. When they slip from my hands they will pass to hands better, stronger, and wiser than mine.

This then is the insight which came to me as I stood some months ago in a blaze of sunlight. Life is dear, let us then hold it tight while we yet may; but we hold it loosely also!

And only with God can we ease the intolerable tension of our existence. For only when He is given, can we hold life at once infinitely precious and yet as a thing lightly to be surrendered. Only because of Him is it made possible for us to clasp the world, but with relaxed hands; to embrace it, but with open arms.

--Milton Steinberg, "To Hold with Open Arms"
FOURTEEN WAYS TO CREATE A COMMUNITY OF COMFORTERS

1) Find out more about the traditional role played by a Hevra Kaddisha. Consider forming a group of volunteers to assist with the preparation of the dead for burial.

2) Tradition strongly urges we show our respect for the dead by not leaving them alone prior to burial. The person who remains with the casket is called a Shomer. His/her job is to read from Psalms and serve as a kind of "honor guard," religiously speaking. Consider forming a communal Va'ad Shmira ("committee of guardians") of volunteers willing to remain with the deceased night and day until the funeral. Members of the committee can perform this mitzvah in shifts, 2-4 hours at a time.

3) Use phone squads and synagogue e-mail to publicize funeral time, Shiva Minyan times, directions to the house, and any philanthropic organization to which donations may be made in memory of the deceased.

4) Encourage your Sisterhood, Men's Club, Social Action Committee (a.k.a. "Good-and-Welfare"), or create an autonomous committee to provide a Seudat Havra'ah, the traditional meal of consolation that mourners eat upon their return from the cemetery. The meal need not be more elaborate than bagels, tuna, cream cheese, lettuce and tomatoes, and, of course, hard-boiled eggs. Set aside a separate fund to provide for this important Shiva meal. Solicit contributions for this project of Nishum Aveilim through your newsletter. In addition, you may also want to consider providing at least one Shabbat meal for the mourners, including all the "Shabbat fixings."

5) Have members of your "Comfort Committee" volunteer to help prepare the mourners' home for Shiva: schlepping chairs from the synagogue, bringing Siddurim, helping cover mirrors, moving furniture out of the way, cleaning up the house, setting up tables, putting out plasticware and setting up an urn for coffee etc. Find a volunteer to stay at the house during the funeral -- accepting deliveries, putting out food, making sure a pitcher with water is available outside the door etc.

6) Be sensitive to the particular needs of each family. Are there young children to babysit while the adults are at the funeral? Elderly or infirm relatives who are unable to attend that need looking after? By offering to care for those who cannot take care of themselves, you free the mourners' from other concerns, and allow them to do exactly what they need most to do...mourn.
7) Appoint a captain to make sure there is a quorum at each Shiva Minyan as well as someone capable of leading the service (assuming the mourner is unable.) While telephone calls are best when made in advance, keep a synagogue membership list with the Shiva Siddurim if the need arises to make phone calls from the house of mourning itself. A community in which the mourner himself is forced to make phone calls for a Minyan isn't worthy of being called a "community."

8) During the Friday evening of the Shiva week, mourners recite Kaddish in the synagogue. Customarily, however, they do not enter the sanctuary until the conclusion of Lekha Dodi. Have a member keep the family company in the vestibule. Assign ushers to escort them in when they do enter. Be sure to greet them collectively in Hebrew and/or English with the traditional formula of consolation: "May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem."

9) When paying a Shiva call, nod, smile, shake a hand or offer a hug without speaking. Allow the mourner to speak first. Avoid cliches and empty expressions. Let the mourner determine the content of the conversation. Don't shy away from talking about the deceased. Indeed, this is a good thing. You may want to focus, however, more on the life of the departed, rather than the manner in which s/he died -- unless the mourner steers the conversation in this direction. Don't be afraid to laugh; or for that matter, cry. The essence of Shiva is the catharsis that comes with the acceptance of loss, and the full range of emotions that come into play when we reflect upon what that means.

10) Avoid making a Shiva call very early in the morning, or late at night. Mourning is an exhausting business, and the bereaved need their rest. Whenever possible, plan to visit not just prior to Minyanim, but at other points of the day when there are apt to be fewer people present and your visit can be made more meaningful.

11) Spend a few minutes before or after each Minyan teaching a passage of Torah with some appropriately comforting theme. Traditionally, passages of Mishnah are taught in a Shiva house. Some spell out the name of the deceased by teaching passages that begin with consecutive letters of the person's name. If you're not comfortable with the above, read aloud each evening to those assembled an appropriate poem etc. designed to bring comfort to the mourners.

12) Be available to be with the mourners when they get up from Shiva the morning of the 7th day. Take a walk with them around the block.

13) Be attuned to the fact that the most difficult period of adjustment invariably follows Shiva during the weeks and months in which a person or family must redraw the map of reality. Members of the community should phone periodically, and invite such individuals to Shabbat dinners, social occasions, synagogue functions etc. Take "no" as an answer when necessary, but don't stop calling.

14) Create an adult education program that teaches Jewish practices regarding illness, dying, death and mourning vis a' vis the responsibilities of the community. Have your synagogue leadership discuss frankly how to improve its response to bereavement.