

RESOURCES RELATED TO DEATH AND MOURNING

This section outlines the key steps to be taken, in accordance with Jewish law, in the event of a death; useful contacts to call to make the necessary arrangements; and some on-line resources explaining the laws and customs surrounding Jewish death and mourning.

While the DC Minyan is not yet equipped to offer many of the ritual aspects of the bereavement process that a full-service synagogue is able to provide, DC Minyan is a member of the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington (JFPCGW) (<http://www.jewish-funerals.org/index.htm>). The JFPCGW stands ready to be a source of guidance, assistance, and comfort during the bereavement process, and DC Minyan will work with JFPCGW to provide the support that DC Minyan members need in the event of bereavement. Also, as a member organization we have access to the rates that the JFPCGW has negotiated with two funeral homes in the Greater Washington area (these contracts and rates can be viewed at <http://www.jewish-funerals.org/aboutus.htm>).

In addition, while DC Minyan does not hold daily minyanim, the DC Minyan leadership is happy to help coordinate *shiva* minyanim. Please email the Steering Committee at sc@dcminyan.org if you would like our help in this regard. For a list of synagogues in the area that hold daily minyanim, please reference the *Synagogues* section of this Guide.

Please note, as with all sections of this resource guide, this by no means represents a comprehensive set of information or exhaustive list of resources. We would welcome any and all suggestions for adding to the usefulness of this page. Please email us at lifecycle@dcminyan.org. The information listed below was accurate as of November 2009; please email us if you find that it is no longer accurate.

OVERVIEW

The list of resources at the end of this section provides a good starting point for getting a thorough grasp on the rituals and practices pertaining to death and mourning in the Jewish tradition. Here, however, is a brief explanation of some of the fundamentals:

Chevra Kadisha (“holy society”) is essentially a burial society comprised of community volunteers – for more information about the nature and duties of a *chevra kadisha*, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chevra_Kadisha). Because Jewish Law dictates that the deceased should be buried as quickly as possible after death, one needs to make the necessary funeral arrangements and preparations as soon as one can. A *chevra kadisha* typically will do much of the work in this regard.

Tahara (“purification” or ritual washing”) This ceremony, usually coordinated and performed by the *chevra kadisha* is a central component of the death rites in Judaism and is designed to preserve the dignity of the deceased and, accordingly, provide comfort to the mourners who can be assured that their loved one is being respected in death as though in life.

Shomrim (“guards”) are people who watch over the body until the funeral. While often the *chevra kadisha* will provide this service, traditionally the duty is performed by close family and friends of the deceased. According to Jewish law, the deceased should never be left alone before burial. While this tradition dates to a historical period when risk of corpse-theft was high, today the practice is continued as a mark of respect to the deceased.

Shiva is a seven day period which begins immediately after burial and during which the mourners are surrounded by friends, family, and fellow mourners. It is generally held at the home of a mourner, or the home of a family member or friend of those mourning. Sometimes the seven days are split among different homes. The mourners traditionally do not leave the 'mourning house' the entire week, and friends and acquaintances will visit constantly. Shiva commences immediately after burial.

Kaddish is a prayer recited daily by many mourners for a certain period of time following burial (up to a year). To fulfill the *mitzvah*, one is supposed to recite it in the presence of a *minyan*. While the DC Minyan does not hold daily minyanim, please reference the **Synagogues** section of this Guide for a list of synagogues that hold daily minyanim.

For additional information about the practices and rituals relating to Jewish Death and Mourning please consult the resources section below.

WHAT TO DO

If you are also a member of another congregation – one which is a full-service synagogue – in the unfortunate event of bereavement, the first thing you should do is contact that synagogue’s office to be in touch with the rabbi. Most synagogues will have their own *chevra kadisha* and existing relationships with Jewish funeral homes, taking much of the responsibility away from you. Of course we want to support our members to the best of our abilities and will do our utmost to provide the additional community support you will need to help you through the bereavement process. Please email sc@dcminyan.org to ask for our support.

If your only affiliation is to the DC Minyan:

1. Contact a *Chevra Kadisha* (see above)

While, as explained above, *chevra kadisha* services are generally provided in a congregational context, the Orthodox community maintains men's and women's *chevrai* that will serve anyone on request.

If the deceased is a woman, contact: Bev Morris, 301 649 7333

If the deceased is a man, contact: Menasha Katz, 301 681 6787

You could also contact the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington (see above), 410-733-3700. They would also be able to facilitate the *Chevra Kadisa* process.

2. Contact the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington at 410-733-3700. As mentioned above, the JFPCGW has negotiated contracts with two Jewish Funeral Homes in the area (Hines-Rinaldi in Maryland, and Jefferson in Virginia), and would be able to assist you in this regard. Should you prefer to make arrangements with other funeral homes, volunteers from the JFPCGW would also be happy to help you navigate this process. Please see below for a list of funeral homes providing Jewish funeral services and Jewish cemeteries in the Greater Washington area.

Funeral Homes

Hines-Rinaldi Funeral Home
11800 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20904
301- 622-2290
<http://www.hinesrinaldifuneralhome.com/>

Borgwardt Funeral Home
4400 Powder Mill Road
Beltsville, MD 20705
301-937-1707
<http://www.borgwardtfuneralhome.com/>

Danzansky-Goldberg Memorial Chapels
1170 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301-340-1400

Jefferson Funeral Chapel
5755 Castlewellan Drive
Alexandria, VA 22315
703-971-7400
<http://www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com/>

Edward Sagel Funeral Home
1091 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
301-217-9400
<http://www.dignitymemorial.com>

Torchinsky Hebrew Funeral Home
254 Carroll Street NW
Washington, DC 20012
202-541-1001
<http://www.torchinsky.com>

Cemeteries

Adas Israel Cemetery
1400 Alabama Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20032
202-362-4433

Judean Memorial Gardens
16225 Batchellors Forest Road (at Georgia Avenue)
Olney, MD 20832
301-384-1000

King David Memorial Gardens
7482 Lee Highway
Falls Church, VA 22042
703-560-4400

Menorah Gardens
12800 Viers Mill Road
Rockville, MD 20853
301-881-2151

Mount Lebanon Cemetery
9500 Riggs Road
Hyattsville, MD 20783
301-434-4640

RESOURCES

<http://www.jewish-funerals.org/aboutus.htm>

This is the website of the Jewish Funeral Practices Committee of Greater Washington and a wonderful and comprehensive resource both for Washington-specific information, and general information about Jewish death and funeral practices.

<http://eng.itim.org.il/?CategoryID=207>

From the Jewish Life Information Center [ITIM] website, which provides in-depth information about all Jewish lifecycle events. Some information is specific to the Israeli context, but there is also a wealth of generally relevant information.

<http://www.jewfaq.org/death.htm>

An informative site covering the “basics” of death and mourning in the Jewish context.

<http://adasisrael.org/pdfs/FuneralPractices2004.pdf>

A pamphlet produced for its members by Adas Israel congregation in DC. Much of the information pertains to what a member of Adas should do in the event of experiencing bereavement, but there is also some generally relevant and very good information