

The Beth Tzedec Centre for
Spiritual Well-Being

Shiva
and Beyond

Beth Tzedec
בית צדק
CONGREGATION

My name is

I am using this booklet in memory of

He/She/They was my

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Beth Tzedec CARES

We created this publication for those in our community that have been touched by death. We have one simple message for you. "You are not alone."

It's not uncommon to feel scared and alone in your grief.

In the Torah, when God created the world, God blew the breath of life into a cloud of earth and called it a person. Upon seeing Adam's loneliness, God said, *lo tov heyot adam levado*" – "It's no good for a human being to be **alone**" (Genesis 2:18).

You must know that you are never alone in your grief.

It is better for us to be together.

We are here with you.

Some of you might be asking yourselves:

- How can this happen?
- How will I continue on?
- Will I only know sorrow for the rest of my days?
- How can anyone else know what I am going through right now?

The Jewish community takes care of each other, creating specific times and rituals that bring the community to your home to pray, reflect and share a meal together.

The following pages note the major phases of the year of mourning and provide resources to assist you on your journey.

We created *Beth Tzedec CARES* to help you through the first year of mourning. Use it as a journal or as a time keeper that can help you ask, "How am I doing?" When you look at this booklet, we hope you will remember that we haven't forgotten about you because we really do believe that **you are never alone in your grief.**

If you wish to contact a member of the Spiritual Leadership Team (SLT), our contact information is on the last page.

Who is a Mourner?

In our tradition, we mourn the seven immediate family members—Mother, Father, Brother, Sister, Daughter, Son, Spouse.

Traditionally, Kaddish is recited until 30 days after the funeral for all, except the child who traditionally recites the Mourners Kaddish for their parent for 11 months or one year after the death.

Aninut אֲנִינוּת

The moment one learns about the death of a loved one until burial is called *aninut*. One is not yet a mourner, but most of the traditions related to mourning are observed during this period of time. In addition, one is exempt from most *mitzvot* (commandments) so as to be free to arrange for the funeral and burial.

During the period between death and burial, the bereaved is called an *onen*. *Aninut* can be a somewhat chaotic time, even when burial arrangements have been made prior to the death. There are meetings with the funeral home, phone calls and texts with family members, coordinating travel, eulogy writing, delegating tasks and talking with the rabbi.



Shiva* שִׁבָה

Seven days of Shiva (literally sitting), begin at the conclusion of the funeral (Day One) through the next six days. During this time, you might feel overwhelming sadness and melancholy. You might also feel relief if the person who died had suffered from a long illness and you felt it was their time to go.

The first three days are for intense mourning followed by four days of mourning and reflection. You might feel the comfort of the warm embrace of your community. You might be exhausted. These are all normal emotions.

You can hold a minyan (prayer service) in your home as a focused time of reflection, and say the Mourners Kaddish prayer. Your community comes to you so you are never alone in your grief. If needed, volunteers and SLT members can help lead. If it is not possible to arrange a minyan at your home, you are encouraged to attend the Daily Minyan at Beth Tzedec, where you will be warmly embraced by our SLT and other members of our congregation walking a similar path to you.

At the very beginning of Shiva, mourners:

- continue to wear their torn clothing or ribbons,
- wash their hands with a water basin left outside the front door,
- remove shoes and refrain from wearing leather,
- light a large shiva candle that burns for seven days and nights,
- maintain a Condolence Book at the front entrance,
- eat a *seudat ha-havara'ah*. The first meal includes round foods like eggs or bagels to symbolize the circle of life.

Other Shiva customs include:

- sitting low to the ground,
- covering mirrors
- keeping the front door unlocked
- not shaving or getting haircuts

A member of the Beth Tzedec Spiritual Leadership Team will be honoured to "get you up" at the conclusion of shiva, as you begin to re-engage with the world.

Shloshim* שְׁלוֹשִׁים

Shloshim (literally 30 days) is observed for 30 days following the funeral. During this period, you come back into the world, but not fully. Typically you go back to work, but do not enjoy entertainment. Many mourners come to the Synagogue for daily services to recite the Mourners Kaddish. It is in this period of time that you feel the world is strange and different.

Waves of sadness may overcome you. A sense of loneliness may be felt as you experience a "normal" week but without the presence of the one who died. You may also feel a compulsion to "keep busy", like cleaning out the house or taking on a major project at work, only to be overwhelmed by the sadness of loss.

Again, these are all normal feelings. By coming to synagogue or joining a bereavement group, you can work through these emotions. By joining the community, **you are never alone in your grief.**

**Shiva and Shloshim are sometimes abbreviated at certain times during the year.*

Yahrtzeit יאָרצַייט

This is the anniversary of the day of death. It is customary for the mourner to attend services to say Kaddish. On the evening of the yahrtzeit, we light a candle of remembrance that lasts 24 hours.

Most of the supermarkets in our area have them. If you have more than one yahrtzeit on the same day, we recommend lighting one candle per relative, but you can still fulfill the custom with just one candle. If the yahrtzeit begins Friday night, it is proper to light the yahrtzeit candle first and then the Shabbat candles. If the yahrtzeit begins Saturday evening, it is proper to wait until an hour after sundown to light the candle.

The yahrtzeit is observed annually on the Hebrew date. It is also common to sponsor a breakfast, Kiddush or Seudah Shlisheet, and give *tzedakah* in your loved one's name. By giving back to your community, you honour them and yourself, showing that **you are never alone in your grief.**

Yizkor

Yizkor is the memorial service that is said four times a year:

- Yom Kippur morning
- Shemini Atzeret morning (8th day of Sukkot)
- Last day of Passover
- Second day of Shavuot

This is the brief service that we conduct while the Torah is out. It involves communal and individual prayers. Many people also choose to light a Yizkor candle for the 25 hours of the holiday in which we recite Yizkor. You can follow the same procedure listed above for yahrtzeit candles.

Honouring a Loved One with a Memorial Plaque

Beth Tzedec Congregation provides the opportunity to purchase a memorial plaque in the Sanctuary on special wall tablets. Lights are kindled beside the plaque in observance of yahrtzeit. Plaques may be ordered by filling out an on-line form at: **bit.ly/memorial-plaque-form**.



Psalm 121

שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֶשָּׂא עֵינַי אֶל־הֶהָרִים מֵאַיִן יָבֹא עֶזְרִי׃

A song for ascents.

I turn my eyes to the mountains;
from where will my help come?

עֶזְרִי מֵעִם ה׳ עֹשֵׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ׃

My help comes from the LORD,
maker of heaven and earth.

אַל־יִתֵּן לַמּוֹט רַגְלֶךָ אַל־יָנוּם שֹׁמְרֶךָ׃

He will not let your foot give way;
your guardian will not slumber;

הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל׃

See, the guardian of Israel
neither slumbers nor sleeps!

ה׳ שֹׁמְרֶךָ ה׳ צִלְּךָ עַל־יַד יְמִינֶךָ׃

The LORD is your guardian,
the LORD is your protection
at your right hand.

יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יַכֶּכָּה וְיָרֵחַ בַּלָּיְלָה׃

By day the sun will not strike you,
nor the moon by night.

ה׳ יִשְׁמָרְךָ מִכָּל־רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת־נַפְשֶׁךָ׃

The LORD will guard you from all harm;
He will guard your life.

ה׳ יִשְׁמָר־צֵאתְךָ וּבוֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם׃

The LORD will guard your going and coming
now and forever.

Understanding Grief

Presented in partnership with JF&CS



Grief is a pervasive process that is unique to each of us. The experience is impacted by personal history, current circumstances, the relationship with the deceased, and the death itself. It is the process of adjusting to life when someone important to you is gone. This experience is as singular as the way this person touched your life.

After the initial 30 days (*shloshim*), we begin to engage more with the world around us and try to do things as we "ordinarily" would. The challenge is that nothing is "ordinary". Think about all the ways this person was involved in your daily life. When someone close to us dies, we are struck by how intertwined our lives were with theirs. Often this means adjusting to change in big and small ways.

You may wonder why you feel so tired or you are more forgetful than usual. The answer is grief is heavy lifting. Your brain and body are continuously working hard to process new experiences, responsibilities, and information. The initial weeks after a death are filled with learning to navigate the world anew. From brushing your teeth to driving to work or the grocery store. These are all things you have done before, but not quite like this. We often have to learn to do new things as well. New tasks include learning to take care of things in the home that the deceased usually handled, navigating the legal and financial processes around death, managing relationships, and taking on new familial and social roles.

You may be experiencing fatigue, anxiety, sadness, anger, numbness, and feel overwhelmed. You may experience some of these emotions, all of them, or none at different points in your grieving process. You may also be surprised by what you feel and when. Some days you wake up and it may be all you can think about, and other days you feel like nothing has happened. There is no schedule for grief. All of this is normal, but this doesn't mean that it's not hard.

Self-care is extremely important at this time. You may be thinking "how can I find time for self-care with all of this to work through?" Self-care can look very different from one person to the next. For one person it may be taking a bubble bath and reading a good book. For another person it may look like crossing things off a to-do list. Pay attention to what soothes you and practice patience and compassion for yourself.

Lastly, one of the most important things in grief is support from others. No one's experience will look or feel quite like yours, but many find comfort in knowing that someone else cares and is present. You may ask a friend to call you once a week to check in. You may decide to invite the extended family over Friday night, or to just spend a night at home with someone close to you.

You may find support in a bereavement group where you can talk to others who are also processing a loss. It never hurts to reach out to a professional counselor. In grief we can find ourselves coping in a way that may not be healthy for us, or worrying if we are "doing it right".

Connecting with a doctor, therapist, or bereavement counselor can help you find safe and healthy ways to cope throughout this process.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov taught...

"Know! A person walks in life on a very narrow bridge. The most important thing is not to be afraid."

Jewish and Mainstream Resources on Healing, Grief, and Spiritual Well-Being

Attig, Thomas, *How We Grieve*

Angel, Marc, *The Orphaned Adult: Confronting the Death of a Parent*

Brener, Anne, *Mourning & Mitzvah: A Guided Journal to Walking the Mourner's Path Through Grief to Healing*

Diamant, Anita, *Saying Kaddish*

Frankl, Viktor, *Man's Search for Meaning*

Isaacs, Ronald H., *Every Person's Guide to Death and Dying*

Isaacs, Ronald H. and Olitzky, Kerry M., editors, *A Jewish Mourner's Handbook*

Kessler, David, *Finding Meaning: The Sixth Stage of Grief*

Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth, *On Death and Dying*

Kushner, Rabbi Harold, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*

Lamm, Rabbi Maurice, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*

Levy, Naomi, *To Begin Again: The Journey Toward Comfort, Strength and Faith in Difficult Times*

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, *The Empty Chair: Finding Hope and Joy*

Olitzky, Rabbi Kerry M., *Jewish Paths Toward Healing and Wholeness*

Remen, Rachel Naomi, M.D., *My Grandfather's Blessings*

Sandberg, Sheryl, *Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience and Finding Joy*

Spitz, Rabbi Elie Kaplan, *Does the Soul Survive?*

Weintraub, Simka, ed., *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*

Wolfson, Ron, *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort*

Wolpe, David, *Making Loss Matter*: *Creating Meaning in Difficult Times*

A Prayer to Be Heard

by Rabbi Naomi Levy

Help me, God, I can no longer hold my suffering inside. I feel so isolated and alone. I don't know whom to turn to, whom to rely on.

Give me the courage, God to trust someone enough to open my heart. Fill me with the faith that I will not be rejected. Please, God, show me how to find the right person to receive my words. Let it not be someone who will judge me or misunderstand me.

And when there is no one who will listen, hear me, God. Hear me and heal me. Amen.

"Adonai, hear my cry, heed my plea. Be attentive to my prayers, to my sigh of supplication." Psalm 130 ...



Notes / Ideas / Stories

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Beth Tzedec Resources

ChazaKits: A Hug from the Beth Tzedec Community

Beth Tzedec is the place where we share our lives' journeys–the ups and the downs. We'll all go through them, no one's immune. We're introducing a way to help our friends and families get through the most intense and challenging times: a collective Beth Tzedec hug in the form of a box with a handle.

ChazaKits have been carefully curated around life events such as the birth of a sibling, divorce and separation, a death of a loved one, when a loved one has a mental health challenge or disease, a newly blended family, a major change in living arrangements. Recipients can keep the ChazaKits for as long as they find them helpful, and return them when they're ready so other families can use them.

If you know of a family who could benefit from receiving a ChazaKit—just call the office or send an email to any Beth Tzedec staff member, tell them the family and the situation, and we'll get a ChazaKit to them. It's that simple.

For more information or to request a ChazaKit,
contact Penina Hoffnung at phoffnungl@beth-tzedec.org.

Grieving Together Bereavement Groups

The loss of a loved one is challenging. Judaism has a clear set of mourning rituals that help us relearn to be in the world after our significant loss.

For many of us, these rituals have been altered or limited, just as the rest of life has been full of uncertainties. What has not changed is our desire to support you at this time, and our belief in the power of coming together as a community. We are here to provide an opportunity for you to meet, support and share—together.

Beth Tzedec offers bereavement groups several times a year for those who have lost **parents** and for those who have lost **partners**.

For more information or to register for one of our upcoming groups, contact Karen Goldstein at goldstein@beth-tzedec.org.

Need to Talk to Someone?

Contact a member of the Beth Tzedec Spiritual Leadership Team.

Rabbi Robyn Fryer Bodzin
416-781-3514 ext. 219
rabbirfb@beth-tzedec.org

Rabbi Steven Wernick
The Anne & Max Tanenbaum
Senior Rabbinic Chair
416-781-3514 ext. 228
rebsteve@beth-tzedec.org

Yacov Fruchter
Director of Community Building
& Spiritual Engagement
416-781-3514 ext. 279
yfruchter@beth-tzedec.org

Rabbi Lara Rodin
Assistant Rabbi
416-781-3514 ext. 225
rabbilara@beth-tzedec.org

Or Contact a Grief Counsellor.

Debbie Berlin,
BSW, MSW, RSW
Psychotherapist/Consultant
debbieberlin@rogers.com
www.debbieberlin.com

Nicky Seligman,
MSc, CCLS
Child Life Specialist |
Grief Counsellor | Parent Coach
therapybynicky@gmail.com
www.nickyseligman.com

*These grief counsellors have been vetted by Beth Tzedec.

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