

RABBI GAVRIEL GOLDMAN

*From
This
World
to the
Next*

A HANDBOOK FOR MOURNERS

Eliyahu Weinstein Edition

Translated by Rabbi Gideon Weitzman and
Liron Kranzler-Feldman

Maggid Books

From This World to the Next
A Handbook for Mourners

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*In memory of
Eliyahu Weinstein
of blessed memory*

Eliyahu Weinstein was a fine, good-hearted and welcoming man. An enthusiastic Zionist, he and his wife left a comfortable life in the US in order to fulfill their dream of living in Eretz Yisrael.

They established their home in Kfar Adumim, a community of both religious and secular, who live together with love and mutual respect.

Eliyahu loved the Torah, and despite his advanced age, traveled daily to Ohr Somayach yeshiva to learn Torah.

The greatest joy Eliyahu had besides immigrating to Israel was to become the adoptive father of two little boys at age fifty-seven.

Eliyahu died in Jerusalem at the age of seventy-eight, and was buried in Kfar Adumim.

May his soul be bound up in the bond of life.

With loving memories
Ronald Asserson, London
רפאל צבי בן אלחנן דוד

For my dear parents
Dr. David Shlomo and Shifra Goldman
with love and respect.
May you be blessed with long and happy lives.

15th Adar 1, 5765

I was presented with a large section of this book, which has been written by a treasured rabbi, a man who works industriously for the sake of Torah, Rabbi Gavriel Goldman.

Rabbi Goldman serves as the rabbi of Kfar Adumim and as a rabbinical counselor at the PUAH Institute.

Through his years of responding to questions posed to him, Rabbi Goldman came to recognize that there was a true need for a mourners' guidebook. Such a book would include advice and halakhot about the arrangements during the mourning period, as well as sections on: **Halakhot and Customs, Analysis and Thought, Guidance for Supporting the Bereaved, Wills and Inheritance, and a Key Concepts section.**

Through great efforts, the author has compiled the numerous halakhot that people encounter when mourning. He has included Ashkenazic customs, *nusah Sepharad*, and *Edot HaMizrah* (Sephardic customs).

I have studied the book a little and have seen the significant work that Rabbi Goldman has invested in this comprehensive and useful text.

I was not able to study the whole book. I therefore asked the esteemed head of the PUAH Institute, Rabbi Menachem Burstein, to sit with the author and review it, so that his own insights, from his knowledge and experience, could inform this valuable and important book. He indeed reviewed it and approved it.

I bless the author with long life and that he should see great blessings from his notable efforts. We should merit to the resurrection of the dead when the Holy Creator wills it and that death shall vanish eternally and God shall dry the tears from all faces; and we will no longer suffer, Amen.

With blessings,

Mordechai Eliahu

Former Chief Rabbi of Israel and Rishon LeTzioon

Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg

Member of the Rabbinic High Court
Head of the “*Da’at Moshe*” Kollel – Sadigura

B”H

14th Shvat, 5765

I come to give my praise for an exceptional Torah scholar, Rabbi Gavriel Goldman, Rabbi of Kfar Adumim, who strove and toiled in Torah and merited to compose a work called *From This World to the Next*, a handbook for mourners. The book is a treasure trove in which one can find all the halakhot and customs. May God help us and fulfill the promise that “Death shall eternally vanish,” and then this book will only be used for Torah study and its rewards.

Signed, in honor of Torah and those laboring on her behalf,

Zalman Nechemia Goldberg

OVADIA YOSSEF
RISHON LEZION
AND PRESIDENT OF TORAH SAGES COUNCIL

ב"ה
עובדיה יוסף
הראשון לציון
ונשיא מועצת חכמי התורה

Jerusalem
15th Adar 1, 5765

I was presented with sections of this book on mourning, *From This World to the Next*, which contains guidance for mourners. It is the work of an artisan, an esteemed, dear, and faithful person who seeks the good of his people, Rabbi Gavriel Goldman. He has written, provided insights, and gathered, like cut grain from the threshing floor, compiling new thoughts and explanations, arranged and orderly like apples of gold in settings of silver, each idea in its proper place. He is to be commended for his valuable and reliable work.

May it be God's will that he succeed in completing the work soon and that his wellsprings shall gush forth, in good health and with God's guidance, for many years to come. "May he be like a tree planted beside streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, whose foliage never fades, and whatever it produces thrives."

Ovadia Yossef

Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl

BS"D
Jerusalem

5765

To our brothers, the whole house of Israel, who study Torah and hold it dear,

I have seen Rabbi Gavriel Goldman's book, *From This World to the Next*, on matters of passing away from finite life to eternal life, in terms of halakha, customs, and theoretical perspectives. I found the book to possess an abundance of information and to be well-arranged. It can be of benefit in those painful hours when someone has died, God forbid, seeing as the index makes it easy to find each item in its place. Our hope is that death will soon be eternally erased. May the author merit to study Torah in peace and in health, and may his wellsprings flow forth until the land is filled with knowledge.

Avigdor Nebenzahl



BS"D

23 Iyar, 5765

My dear friend, our teacher, Rabbi Gavriel Goldman
Greetings and blessings,

Congratulations on your commendable work, your book on the laws of mourning, "From This World to the Next." In these times, we see clearly that the merit of the deceased protects the living since, sadly, many people's only connection to Judaism and to Torah and mitzvot is through the rituals of mourning, God forbid. On the other hand, the adherence to these laws demonstrates the strong force within Jewish souls, who are not willing to give up entirely on the laws of Torah and Jewish tradition; the faith in the eternity of the soul shines through the confusion of the prevailing secularism. This leaves room for hope that the light of Torah will overcome the darkness and, when the days of mourning have ended, a new light of living Torah will shine.

In order for this hope to be realized, our generation needs books on the laws of mourning that open a doorway to pure faith and to an understanding that all mitzvot lead to eternity. This requires accommodating to the emotional needs of mourners, which would not be satisfied by a stark presentation of the laws alone. I have no doubt that a book that is truly attuned to modern mourners has the power to create a positive transformation for many readers. I believe that your book shows clear indications of being able to meet this requirement.

May it be His will that you bring about the merits of others and a return from sin, and may the passage soon be fulfilled: "God shall wipe the tears away from all faces."

With blessings for the sake of Torah and her students,
Nahum Eliezer Rabinovitch

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Introduction

Before the silver cord snaps, and the golden bowl is shattered, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel falls shattered, into the pit. So the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. (Eccl. 12:6–7)

This book is a guide for mourners. It is not a halakhic work in the usual sense; its primary goal is to guide mourners and those around them in coping with a relative's death. Following a relative's passing, mourners are left not only with sadness and pain, but also with confusion and questions.

Jewish law, in all its detail, provides a significant amount of support and answers – a response to the confusion and distress of the bereaved. However, over-involvement in the details can often distract a person from the guiding principles. Emphasizing the basic principles, rules, and explanations can lead to a better, deeper understanding of the halakhic details and enhanced fulfillment of the laws and customs. Approaching the bereavement process with this broader approach – which includes and integrates the detailed halakhot and customs – may also provide the mourners a degree of comfort and calm.

Through my job as Rabbi of Kfar Adumim, a town where religious and secular Jews live side by side, and as a member of the Binyamin Regional Council's burial society, *hevra kaddisha*, I have felt for some time that there

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is a need for a handbook for mourners. Such a book would not only present the halakha and halakhic rulings but would also explain the Jewish perspective and general halakhic principles in a simple and user-friendly way. There are many excellent halakhic works on this topic, written by the best of Torah scholars; however, often the simple reader who is not proficient in halakha is interested in understanding the reasons and the sources for the laws, but is unable to achieve this by reading the halakhic texts.

For this reason, the corpus of the halakhot of mourning is not addressed here in a scholarly manner. Rather, the book is intended to provide practical and halakhic guidance, food for thought, explanations and reasons for the laws and customs, and to motivate readers to become familiar with the concepts related to mourning. The book is intended not only for Torah-observant readers but for those who are non-observant, as well. Therefore, much of this book is dedicated to explanations and guidance.

In composing this book, the intention was to do so in a clear and accessible manner. In various places I included reasons for the laws, as well as some laws pertaining to particular Jewish subgroups. It is important to provide these, not only for those seeking more knowledge, but also so that the bereaved can be more intimately acquainted with the laws and customs; this may allow for a greater sense of understanding and awareness in their encounter with the rituals. It may also help them to grasp the meaning and the spirit of the halakha as it applies to marginal cases or those not discussed in this book.

For the most part, the book has been arranged in chronological order. The beginning of the book offers a practical guide for **Arrangements** leading up to the funeral and burial: Navigating practical and technical aspects, coordinating with the *hevra kaddisha*, and organizing the family for the funeral and for sitting shiva.

The main section of this book is the part on **Halakhot and Customs**. This section presents the halakhot together with introductions, explanations, and sources. The laws that are presented generally follow Rabbi Yosef Karo's *Shulhan Arukh*, as well as the notes of Rabbi Moshe Isserlis (the Rema). Together with its commentaries, this work serves as the primary halakhic text adopted by the Jewish people. The *Shulhan Arukh* was written five hundred years ago, and so in order to present contemporary halakhic decisions from the past few generations, as well as

customs particular to Jerusalem, the halakhot have mostly been written in line with rulings by the following rabbis: For Ashkenazic customs, the halakhot largely follow Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukachinsky's rulings from his book *Gesher HaHayim*. For Sephardic customs, they follow the halakhic rulings of the late Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yossef in his book *Yalkut Yosef* and those of the late Sephardic Chief Rabbi Mordekhai Eliahu in the book *Tzror HaHayim*. Halakhic rulings are also brought from a variety of other books. This book is intended to try and provide answers for all subgroups and traditions. At the same time, it aims to present the laws clearly, without leaving too many things open-ended in undecided halakhic disagreements. With this in mind, some of the halakhic disagreements are discussed only in the footnotes.

This book is not a substitute for obtaining a halakhic ruling, especially when one is faced with a complex situation or question. In such cases, the issue should be discussed and clarified with a rabbi who is knowledgeable in the practical laws of mourning.

The book includes a part called **Analysis and Thought**. It includes discussions of: the various types of Kaddish and the mourner's relationship to Kaddish; perspectives on organ donation and organ donor cards; thoughts from the great rabbis – Maimonides, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, and others – on death, the world to come, and the resurrection of the dead; and a section on purity and impurity and how they are related to death.

Because this book is also intended for people who are helping and supporting the bereaved, it includes a section titled **Guidance for Supporting the Bereaved**. It discusses: how to inform the deceased's family of a tragedy; how friends and relatives should conduct themselves while helping the bereaved; and psychological aspects of mourning. This section also gives special attention to the topic of bereaved children and their needs and feelings within the context of the bereaved family. These guidelines have been written by or with the input of professionals in the relevant fields. This section also includes information for *hevra kaddisha* volunteers: How to prepare in advance for conducting funerals and burials, organizational and technical aspects, and attending to the family. The section concludes with a chapter on memorialization.

In the part **Wills and Inheritance**, we have provided a preliminary outline for writing a will and inheritance order, with consideration

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of both the Jewish legal perspective and the secular legal perspective. Here too, the goal is to provide information and basic guidance about the various possibilities, but it should not substitute for a consultation with professionals in this field.

The **Key Concepts** part of this book is an important one. It is a sort of condensed encyclopedia on Jewish mourning that may be quite useful. People often seek to understand a particular concept and are not sure where to find information about it; sometimes people want to know a certain halakha but do not know where or in what context it would appear in a halakhic text. The listing of terms is arranged alphabetically and can make such situations easier.

The **Selected Prayers and Passages** part is a list of prayers said before one's death as well as prayers recited during mourning. In addition, it is customary to study Mishna during shiva, as Torah study serves as a great comfort to mourners. This part also provides a list of *mishnayot* to be learned.

* * *

At the conclusion of blessings said in the Temple, they used to say: "Until this world." When the Sadducees perverted their ways and asserted that there was only one world, it was ordained that the response should be; "From this world to the next." (Mishna Berakhot 9)

The title of this book, *From This World to the Next*, expresses the deeply held Jewish belief in the eternal nature of the soul. The Jewish perspective views the world with awe and respect for its Creator, with an understanding that there are entire worlds beyond our human comprehension. It has gratitude to the Master of the universe for giving us the opportunity to contemplate and be in relationship with His phenomenal world through the Torah and the eternal life that He has placed within us. This book's title seeks to convey that when a person dies, he moves from his transient existence to the world of eternal life. The title also alludes to the book *Gesher HaHayim* (lit. "Bridge of Life"), upon which much of this book is based. This is out of a sense of appreciation and admiration for that book and its author.

The beginning of the verse, “And God’s kindness is from this world to the next” (Psalms 103:17) expresses gratitude for God’s infinite kindness that is bestowed upon us. The continuation of the verse, “And His justice to the children’s children,” is a prayer that the Torah never depart from our children and our children’s children.

* * *

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Were our mouths filled with song like the sea, and our tongue full of joy like many waves, and our lips full of praise as the breadth of the heavens, and our eyes bright as the sun and the moon, and our hands spread out like the eagles of the sky, and our legs as swift as deer, we could still not suffice to thank You, God, and the God of our fathers, for one of the thousand thousands myriad goodnesses, miracles and wonders that You performed with our fathers and with us. (Shabbat morning prayer)

Were our mouths filled with song like the sea, we could not sufficiently thank the Creator for his kindness and goodness. I offer thanks to You for giving me the opportunity to learn and teach Torah and for giving me the courage to write this book about halakha and its guiding principles. I know that I am not worthy of the task, and I have therefore striven to show my work to those greater than I, in the hopes of producing something of value and integrity.

This is the place to thank the many wonderful individuals who have helped me immensely. Their words and comments had a significant impact on the book’s form and content. Firstly, I would like to thank my teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Nahum Eliezer Rabinovitch *zt”l*, who encouraged me to write and who graciously reviewed my imperfect manuscript, offering his invaluable, detailed comments. I will take this opportunity to express my gratitude to Rabbi Rabinovitch for the support and guidance he gave me for decades.

I am grateful to the late Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, great teacher of Israel, for giving his letter of approbation for this book. I am also

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grateful to our great teacher, the late Chief Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, for graciously supplying many oral and written answers to my questions and for his letter of approbation and blessing for this book. Thank you to the late Rabbi Zalman Nechemia Goldberg who agreed to review the book and gave his letter of approbation and blessing. My special thanks to Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl *shlita* who took the time to review the entire manuscript, offering his valuable comments and was gracious enough to sit with me numerous times and answer my questions. I thank Rabbi Nebenzahl for agreeing to have his comments included in the book. I thank Rabbi Yaakov Ariel *shlita* for allowing his article on organ donation to be included in the book.

A special thanks to Rabbi Yaakov Ruza *shlita*, rabbi of the Tel Aviv *hevra kaddisha* and expert in the halakhot and customs of mourning and burial, for meeting with me and answer my questions numerous times. I would also like to express my deep thanks to Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef *shlita* who reviewed the book and made important comments that have been incorporated into the book.

I thank Rabbi Shlomo Aviner *shlita* for allowing his article on organ donation to be included in the book. I would like to express thanks and appreciation to my friend Rabbi Yishai Buchris *shlita*, who agreed to write about the halakhic and Torah principles of inheritance and composing a will.

I have no words to express my thanks, appreciation, and respect for my friend and colleague, my teacher and rabbi, Rabbi Menachem Burstein, Head of the PUAH Institute. Rabbi Burstein invested many hours of his precious time, with unending patience, and read large sections of this book with me, word for word; he contributed dozens of comments on what was written. Thank you to my friend Rabbi Eliezer HaCohen Altshuler, rabbi of Susia and a rabbinic counselor at the PUAH Institute, who gave his input on the halakhot for *kohanim*. I also thank Tova Teper, secretary at the PUAH Institute, for all her help. I would like to express my gratitude to the librarian Binyamin Solomon z"l, who took the trouble to bring me books from the National Library of Israel; his passing was unexpected, may his memory be a blessing.

Thank you to my teachers and colleagues at the Maor Tuvia Yeshiva in Mitzpeh Yericho. A special thank you to the *rosh yeshiva*, Rabbi

Acknowledgments

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Thank you to my friends from Kfar Adumim: I want to first thank Ilan Greenfield; years ago, he approached me with a request to write a user-friendly guide on the subject of Jewish mourning, intended also for non-observant Jews, seeing that such a work was needed. I would like to express my thanks and deep appreciation to my friend Dr. Uzi Fuchs for his comments and advice, to Sarah Fuchs for her dedicated and precise language editing, and to my friend Dr. Zion Ukashy for his linguistic advice. Thank you to my beloved neighbors Elchanan and Dr. Vered Noam for their help, advice, and support. A special thanks to my friend and colleague Rabbi Yoel ben Harush for his guidance and assistance; to the psychologist Dr. Meir Perlov and the psychiatrist Dr. Forto ben Harush for the content they composed for this book; to the lawyer Yehuda Elram for his attention to the legal factors addressed in the book; and to Eyal ben Eliyahu and Aryeh Cohen for their assistance. I thank David Yehoshua and his brother Peter for their excellent work on the design and layout of the book. A special thank you to Justice Tzvi Tal who agreed to write a section about handling inheritance in accordance with an inheritance order or will, in consideration of both the Jewish and civil law perspectives.

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Before concluding these acknowledgements, I would like to express my thanks, appreciation, and love for my first teachers at the Maaleh Adumim Yeshiva. Rabbi Yitzhak Shilat *shlita* and Rabbi Haim Sabato *shlita* welcomed me into the yeshiva when I was a young man. Since then, the education and guidance they have given me have had a tremendous impact on me and my life, and for this I am truly grateful.

And the best for last: My deepest, most loving thanks to my wife, parents, and children for their patience, encouragement, and support along the way. May you all be blessed.

I pray that I have merited to understand the words of the halakhic authorities correctly and that I have not made any mistakes. Despite the great efforts invested in it, it is likely that this book contains things that require improvement or clarification. If a halakhic decision has been understood incorrectly, the responsibility is entirely my own, and I ask forgiveness from those whom I did not fully understand. I welcome feedback and insights; thank you in advance to anyone who sends me their comments on what is written in this book.

I hope and pray that no problems result from my work and that I may merit to be aligned with the truth of Torah.

Gavriel Goldman

Part 1

Arrangements



This section outlines the procedures involved in arranging for a relative's funeral and burial. It first presents the accepted practices in the State of Israel. Afterwards, we relate to the common practices in Jewish communities outside of Israel, particularly those in North America.

A RELATIVE HAS DIED – WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

Finding out that a relative has died is extremely upsetting. It is natural to experience turbulent emotions and a sense of shock and confusion; this can lead one to turn inward. At the same time, the deceased's family members must immediately begin making arrangements for the funeral and burial. In Jewish law, caring for the deceased is an immediate imperative – so much so that there is a distinct halakhic category called *aninut* (intense mourning) during which the relatives are exempt from all mitzvot, so that they can dedicate themselves entirely to dealing with the deceased and his needs. In the following pages, we try to offer practical guidelines for this process.

Guidelines for Making Arrangements in Israel

SECTION 1: OFFICIAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED IN THE STATE OF ISRAEL

For official documentation, the following items are needed:

- A death certificate signed by a doctor
- The deceased's *teudat zehut* (identity card)

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- A permit from the police (only if the person did not die in a hospital)
- A burial permit

Death certificate

If a person has died at home, a doctor must be summoned in order to declare the person's death and to prepare the death certificate. A death certificate signed by a doctor is an official document in the State of Israel. If the person died in a hospital, the certificate is issued by the hospital. Outside of the hospital, the certificate will generally be given by a doctor from Magen David Adom who declares the death, or by the family doctor.

In order to receive a burial permit, one needs **three copies of the death certificate**, as well as the deceased's *teudat zehut* (identity card). If one does not have the identity card, one may try to obtain a burial permit without it.

The deceased cannot be buried without a burial permit.

Police certificate

In the case of an accident or suspicion of unnatural death, a document of **police authorization** must be obtained. This is a legal procedure; it is the police's responsibility to ascertain how the person died. The permit is usually given by the police after a relatively short inquiry, in order to proceed with the burial.

One copy of the death certificate is given to the police, and the family retains the other two.

Burial permit

The burial permit is issued by the **Regional Health Office**. If one needs to reach them outside of office hours, one can speak with the Health Ministry's **on-call doctor**. It is often possible and helpful to get help from the *hevra kaddisha*. In **public hospitals**, the burial permit is usually issued to the family in the hospital's **admittance office**, since public hospitals are under the jurisdiction of the Health Ministry. If the person has died outside of a hospital, the family will need to make arrangements to have the permit issued. In certain places, the *hevra kaddisha* takes care of obtaining of the burial permit.

Section 2: Coordinating with the *Hevra Kaddisha*

In certain cases, the body must be taken to the Institute of Forensic Medicine. After releasing the body, the Institute will issue a burial permit. Generally, the family has the right to refuse an autopsy unless there is a court order to perform one.¹

Death certificate

The Health Ministry offices may have a form available to request the death certificate from the Ministry of Interior. This can be requested if one is already there in the offices. If so, the form should be filled out there, and the death certificate will be mailed to one's house. The death certificate usually must to be obtained from the Ministry of Interior. Note that the official death certificate is used for purposes of inheritance and estate and is not necessary for the burial.

SECTION 2: COORDINATING WITH THE HEVRA KADDISHA AND/OR FUNERAL HOME

Burial location and time of funeral – standard procedures in Israel
A *hevra kaddisha* should be contacted to coordinate the **place of burial**. Relatives should be aware of the fact that there are different kinds of burial plots, for example, for different Jewish subgroups (e.g., Ashkenazic, Sephardic), for *kohanim*, etc. There are different prices for the various kinds of plots. The family should obtain information about the different types of graves, what they cost, how accessible they are, etc.; knowing the different possibilities and costs from the outset can help prevent misunderstandings.

The exact **time of the funeral** should be determined in close coordination with the *hevra kaddisha*. The main concern when setting the time for the funeral is the **honor of the deceased**. On the one hand, it is most respectful to the deceased for the body to be buried as soon as possible after death. On the other hand, it is an honor to the deceased

1. Rabbi Nebenzahl: One should make efforts to oppose an autopsy, or in the case of murder, to limit it as much as possible, even if the family is told that no damages will be awarded to them without an autopsy (e.g., in a car accident). See **Autopsy** in the Key Concepts section for practical advice on this matter.

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if more people, especially close relatives, are able to attend the funeral to accompany the deceased to their final resting place.

One should take into consideration how much time will be necessary to inform people of the death and funeral, make arrangements, and allow for people, especially close family members, to arrive. If there are first-degree family members who are far away, the timing of the funeral will sometimes be set accordingly, in order to wait for them to arrive.²

There is a halakhic principle stating that one must try to avoid leaving the body overnight without a burial (see Key Concepts, **Leaving the Body Overnight** [*Halangat HaMet*]). In Jerusalem, it is customary to make special efforts to adhere to this. There are times when it is difficult to comply with this principle, especially if the death occurred in the late afternoon or evening. However, some families and some *hevra kaddishas* are strict about this issue and prefer to hold by it even in such cases.

Another consideration when setting the time for the funeral is that, if the burial is completed before sunset, that day is counted as the first day of shiva (see Key Concepts, **Part of the Day Is Counted as a Whole Day**). This is another reason to try to complete the burial before sunset.³

One must also keep in mind that the *hevra kaddisha* needs time to prepare for the funeral and burial. It takes time to prepare the body, dig the grave (if they have taken on that task), and transport the body. In large towns or cities, there may be several funerals taking place on the same day. To ensure that the *hevra kaddisha* will have enough time to take care of all of the necessary preparations, the time of the burial and funeral should not be determined or announced before coordinating with them.

Paying for the burial – standard procedures in Israel

For residents of Israel, the cost of burial is generally paid by Bituah Leumi, the National Insurance Institute.

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2. Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl: Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach did not permit delaying the burial for this purpose.
 3. Rabbi Nebenzahl: It is sufficient if the grave has been closed and the mourners remove their shoes before sunset.

Section 2: Coordinating with the *Hevra Kaddisha*

According to the directives of Bituah Leumi, burial in Israel is free of charge in the following cases:⁴

1. A resident of Israel who died in Israel and is buried in their place of residence
2. A resident of Israel who died abroad and is buried in their place of residence in Israel

Funding for the day of burial is transferred to the *hevra kaddisha* by Bituah Leumi.

According to Israeli law, the *hevra kaddisha* can charge a fee in the following cases:

1. When a plot has been purchased while a person was alive (according to the legal rates, which are different for different locations)
2. Burial in a special plot (a plot recognized as atypical by Bituah Leumi)
3. Burial in a closed cemetery (a cemetery that has been declared closed due to a limited number of burial plots)
4. If a resident of Israel died and the family wants to bury the deceased somewhere other than their place of residence
5. A Jew who is not a resident of Israel who is buried in Israel
6. Deviation from the regular driving route for the funeral
7. Special/embellished shrouds

Bituah Leumi covers the standard burial procedure: burial in the standard shrouds and a short route from the funeral home to the gravesite. The deceased's family is responsible for any special burial procedures, as well as the tombstone, funeral notices, and travel arrangements. The *hevra kaddisha* will usually transport the body free of charge on the day of the death; however, transportation after regular business hours,

4. This information is accurate to the best of the author's knowledge at the time of writing. It pertains to Israel. In Israel, in all cases, one should contact Bituah Leumi to check the burial rights. They can be contacted through their website, www.btl.gov.il, or at one's local branch.

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transportation by private ambulance, or any other non-standard transportation will generally carry a fee.

A resident of Israel who has died abroad

A resident of Israel who falls under the jurisdiction of Bituah Leumi is entitled to burial free of charge in their place of residence – the place of residence written on their *teudat zehut* (identity card). It is the family's responsibility to arrange to fly the coffin to Israel and to transport it from the airport to the cemetery. Travel insurance usually covers the expense of transferring the body to Israel; this must be verified on a case by case basis.

If an Israeli resident dies in the U.S., a Jewish funeral chapel can be contacted; they will usually take care of the ritual purification and dressing of the body, travel arrangements, and coordination with the Israeli Consulate. International law in most places requires washing the body when transporting it from one country to another, and so the ritual purification will ordinarily take place outside of Israel; this is recommended. If the person dies in Europe, the local Israeli Consulate should be contacted to handle administrative concerns and the local Jewish community should be contacted to tend to the body.

In the case of someone who is not eligible for burial through Bituah Leumi (someone who is not a resident of Israel or who no longer resides in Israel), a family representative must first purchase a burial plot in Israel, obtain a permit from the *hevra kaddisha* that attests to this, and present this documentation to those dealing with the deceased outside of Israel. This allows the deceased to be brought to Israel.

A tourist who dies in Israel

If someone dies in Israel who is a Jewish non-resident, who does not hold Israeli citizenship, he is entitled to be buried in the city where he died. Halakhically, this person can be called a *met mitzva*,⁵ whom it is

5. Rabbi Nebenzahl: If there are no relatives and no one is prepared to tend to the deceased. Nowadays, because there are *hevra kaddishas*, there are practically no cases of a *met mitzva*.

Section 2: Coordinating with the *Hevra Kaddisha*

a mitzva to bury. Bituah Leumi accepts this halakhic stance and covers the cost of the burial.

Death subsidy for residents of Israel

If the deceased had been receiving one of the benefits listed below, a one-time grant is paid to the deceased's spouse at the time of death, or to the deceased's children if there is no spouse: senior benefits, benefits for surviving family members, general disability, low income, work-injury benefits (in accordance with the laws of Bituah Leumi). A request for this grant must be submitted at the branch of Bituah Leumi closest to the place of residence.

Guidelines for Outside of Israel, Particularly North America⁶

In most communities in North America, much of the technical and logistical aspects that follow the passing of a loved one are handled by funeral homes. Communities that have a sizable Jewish population almost always have a Jewish funeral home. One of the first things that should be done upon the passing of a loved one is to contact the local Jewish funeral home, inform them of the passing and ask them for information on the next steps that should be taken. Funeral homes can also help navigate the purchase of a burial plot in the local Jewish cemetery, if one had not been previously purchased for the deceased.

Most Jewish funeral homes have members of the *hevra kaddisha* who they work with, who will perform the ritual purification. One should also ask the funeral home to contact the local rabbi to officiate at the funeral and to deliver a eulogy.

While in Israel the *hevra kaddisha* is in charge of all aspects of the burial, outside of Israel, the community rabbi works together with the local (usually non-Jewish) authorities to ensure that the deceased receives a proper Jewish burial.

6. Thank you to Rabbi Avi Poupko and Rabbi Shai Finkelstein for their help in composing these guidelines.

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In the process leading up to the funeral, the local community rabbi will usually give his personal attention to the bereaved family. (This is not the case in Israel with regard to the *hevra kaddisha's* involvement.) The local community rabbi will be involved at the time of the burial and also during the week of shiva. The rabbi will usually be notified of the death, especially if it occurs in the daytime; if this has not occurred, then the funeral home will inform both the rabbi and the administrative director of the local synagogue. The rabbi will set a time to meet with the family; they will determine when the funeral will take place, in coordination with the funeral home and in accordance with the family's needs. The community rabbi will accompany the family during this time, sitting down with them and hearing from them about the deceased. The rabbi is the one who oversees the funeral, introducing the speakers and saying psalms and a eulogy. Furthermore, in many cases, the rabbi will come to the shiva house daily, especially if the family is not well-versed in the prayer-services, etc.

New immigrants to Israel should be aware of these differences and not become angry with the *hevra kaddisha* in Israel since they are operating according to the accepted standards in Israel. In Israel, the *hevra kaddisha's* role finishes once the burial has ended.

SECTION 3: ARRANGEMENTS BY THE FAMILY FOR THE FUNERAL

Special coordination with the *hevra kaddisha* or funeral home

Apart from coordinating the **time and place** of the funeral with the *hevra kaddisha* as discussed above, other arrangements may be necessary: Some people take care to have the body **guarded** (see Sec. 5 "Caring for the Dying and the Deceased: Guarding the deceased") at all times and to have psalms recited beside it. If so, this must be organized. Friends can usually be asked to help with this.

If the family members want to say Kaddish at the burial but are not sure whether there will be a *minyán* present, this can be discussed with the *hevra kaddisha* to see if they can help.

The *hevra kaddisha* must be informed if the family is a family of *kohanim*. *Kohanim* are generally buried next to pathways so that relatives

Section 3: Arrangements by the Family for the Funeral

can visit the gravesite without becoming ritually impure by walking through other gravesites. The shrouds used for a deceased *kohen* are also different. See **Shrouds** in the Key Concepts section.

A **sound system** will sometimes be needed for the eulogies. One can check whether the cemetery has one. If it does not, a portable sound system can be brought. The sound system should be tested beforehand and someone capable should be given the task of operating it. If the funeral attendees include sick or elderly individuals, it may be relevant to ask if the gravesite is accessible by car or whether there is wheelchair access.

Funeral announcement

Once the time and place of the funeral have been determined in coordination with the *hevra kaddisha* or funeral home, friends and relatives of the deceased should be informed as soon as possible.

One should keep in mind that the *hevra kaddisha* may be working on a tight schedule; they cannot usually deviate from the agreed-upon time. Attendees can be told to try to arrive early so as to avoid the stress of waiting for latecomers.

The mourners themselves need not spend a lot of time calling people to inform them about the funeral. It is preferable to have a **designated individual from each circle of acquaintances** (different sides of the family, neighbors, co-workers, etc.) who is responsible for passing on the information to others.

In general, **it is a good idea to enlist friends for help** in the arrangements. Mourners are often greatly agitated. They may have trouble making decisions because of the intense or overwhelming emotions. Friends are in a natural position to help the family members make balanced and calm decisions. In most cases, they will be able to recognize the relatives' needs and be both respectful and empathetic. Enlisting their help can greatly ease the pressure on the relatives during this phase. The mourner's group of friends and community generally share in their grief, and they will often feel a desire to help out. Apart from the help itself, which can be very significant, the involvement of friends and community members can foster positive emotions in both the mourners and those helping them.

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Death notices

Families that want to have a printed death notice should contact a printer who offers this service. One can also pay to have the notices hung up for a fee. Alternatively, the notices can be printed from a home computer and hung by friends.

The notice generally includes the **name of the deceased, the address for the shiva, and a list of the mourners**. If the notices are posted before to the funeral, the **place and time of the funeral** can be included. **Times of prayer services** in the shiva house can be added if they have already been decided. In Israel, the printers may have a standard text that can be used.

The family should keep several notices on hand to hang outside of the mourners' homes and at the house where shiva is taking place.

Preparing eulogies

The family should decide in advance which family members will deliver eulogies. Whoever is taking on this responsibility will need to dedicate time and thought to it. For this reason, the decision should be made as early as possible. Rabbis and public figures can be asked to say a few words during the funeral itself, since it is not always known ahead of time who will be present. However, where possible, it is best to decide ahead of time. If the rabbi delivering the eulogy did not know the deceased personally, it is appropriate to tell him about the deceased, including some of his or her good qualities. This should be done without exaggeration. It is best to designate **someone to coordinate the eulogies** and to be in contact with the *hevra kaddisha* about this. It may be that, during the funeral, friends or acquaintances will ask to speak. The family might appreciate this, but it is also possible that the family will not be pleased by it. One should be prepared for this, as well.

People at the funeral will be standing, often in cramped conditions or uncomfortable weather. Some may be elderly or frail, making it all the more difficult to stand for long periods of time. Some people may feel weak or heavy with emotion. Because of this, eulogies should **be kept brief** so as not to become burdensome. This should be mentioned politely, beforehand, to those preparing and delivering eulogies.

Section 3: Arrangements by the Family for the Funeral

What to bring to the funeral

The funeral and burial take time and can be mentally and emotionally draining. It is important to prepare logistically and mentally for the event.

Bottles of water, tissues, sunglasses, kippot for men and head coverings for women, and appropriate clothing should all be brought. If there will be elderly or frail attendees, **folding chairs** should be brought. The family's period of mourning begins when the burial is over. It is marked symbolically with the mourners replacing their regular shoes with non-leather shoes or putting some dirt inside their regular shoes. If they plan to change into **non-leather shoes**, these should be brought to the funeral. The **mourners may change their clothing** before or in preparation for the funeral. In this context it should be noted that, in accordance with halakha, close relatives (parents, siblings, children, and spouse) will have a rip made in their clothing during the course of the funeral. The torn clothing is to be worn throughout the shiva,⁷ while they sit on the ground or on a low chair. They should therefore take a moment to consider which clothing will be best suited for wearing during the week of shiva, in terms of comfort and modesty when sitting low to the ground. Women who are having their garment ripped will, for modesty's sake, need to rejoin the torn sides immediately afterwards using **safety pins**. These should be brought to the funeral.

Mourners who plan to say Kaddish at the funeral but who are not practiced in saying it are advised to review the correct pronunciation of the Kaddish beforehand. A **clear, readable copy of the Kaddish** (in the appropriate *nusah*) should be brought to the funeral, preferably with vowels for the Hebrew. Those who find it difficult to read Hebrew can use a transliterated text. The *hevra kaddisha* may have a copy for those who have not brought one. Nevertheless, if a mourner has not said Kaddish before, he should practice saying it so that he does not struggle with the text at the funeral.

The common Western custom of wearing black or dark clothing at the funeral is not the Jewish custom. (See Key Concepts, **Wearing Black**.)

7. Rabbi Nebenzahl: This is an obligation only for the children of the deceased.

Preparing the shiva house

After the funeral, mourners go to the place where they will be sitting shiva. The shiva location should be determined before the funeral. There is a halakhic preference that shiva be held in the deceased's home, but if necessary, or if it is more convenient for the mourners and those who will come to comfort them, shiva can take place elsewhere.

The following should be brought to the shiva house: **Memorial candles, benches and chairs** for the mourners and visitors, *siddurim* and *kippot* for prayer services in the house, copies of **Mishna passages** to give out, and **Psalms** for the shiva house and cemetery. A *sefer Torah* can be brought for the Torah reading during prayer services. This may be available from the local synagogue. If prayer services will be held in the house on Shabbat, then **Humash books** should be brought. A **lectern** can also be brought for the prayer leader to use. Some communities have a set of "mourners' equipment" that is lent out.

The mourners' seats should be set up in advance. Usually, **low chairs** are used. It is important to think about how to arrange the seating in the house. If many visitors are expected, a **mourning tent** may be set up outside of the house to accommodate the large number of people. In such a case, **lighting** for the tent should be arranged.

The first meal that the mourners eat after the funeral is called the **Seudat Havraah** – the meal of condolence. It will be discussed later on, in the section on halakhah and customs. The meal is usually prepared by relatives or friends and is eaten in the house where shiva is taking place.

It is customary to serve light snacks and drinks to visitors.⁸ There is a custom of visitors saying blessings over food and drink to bring merit to the departed soul. This is described in the Key Concepts, **Elevating of the Soul**. Those who have this custom must prepare **food and drinks**; they may prefer to use **disposable plates and cups**. It is also helpful to have a **hot-water urn for hot drinks**.

Sometimes a *tzedaka* box is put out in the shiva house, so that people can fulfill the mitzva of giving charity with the intention that it be a merit to the deceased's soul.

8. Rabbi Nebenzahl: This is not the custom among Ashkenazic Jews.

Section 3: Arrangements by the Family for the Funeral

A family that is leaving their home in order to sit shiva should ask neighbors to keep an eye on the house. Unfortunately, there have been instances of burglars taking advantage of the family's absence in order to break in to the house during the funeral or shiva.

Summary of the “Arrangements” Stage:

- Obtaining death certificate and burial permit
- Coordination with the *hevra kaddisha* – setting the place and time of the funeral
- Moving the deceased (this is not always necessary and is usually done by the *hevra kaddisha*)
- Publicizing the death and preparing a death notice
- Preparation of eulogies
- Things to bring to the funeral
- Deciding where to sit shiva and preparing the house