

## *The Laws and Customs of Mourning*

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# A Letter of Consolation

(QUOTED BY RAV SHLOMO WOLBE, ALEY SHUR)

To my dear and beloved sons and daughters,

The purpose of this letter is to console you for when I will not be with you anymore. A person does not know when his time will be up, but the day will come (May Hashem bless me with long life) when my place at home will be empty, and you will be orphans.

My beloved, I have seen many orphans, most of whom find themselves in darkness without hope. Some are jealous, thinking, "Others have parents, but not me." Others feel that their world has tumbled down. Few are able to strengthen and brace themselves and to eventually elevate themselves after the tragedy in their lives. I therefore came to the conclusion that before one can comfort a mourner, it is essential to teach him how to deal with the situation. I hope I succeed in this endeavor, and may you understand these words so that they illuminate your lives.

The key to the mystery of life is faith in the true G-d, the Creator of the Universe! It is G-d's power that keeps the world going, even each and every blade of grass derives its sustenance from the Creator and surely each human being. This spirit of life is the essence of everything, and the most important part of a person is his spirit and soul.

I trust that I have raised you to have faith in G-d. I now encourage you to strengthen your faith and to realize that this is also the secret to the mystery of death! If life would be over for a dead person, it would be difficult to comfort a mourner. But that is not so! Although the body passes away, the person continues to exist!

Our great teacher (Rav Yeruchem Levovitz of Mir) wrote: "Death should be understood as one who moves from one city to another. This is the real truth. Your father has not died, may his memory be blessed, for he is alive. He has merely moved. To the understanding person there is even more to say. The deceased is now even closer to you than before for now there are no separations."

One who has faith is able to deal with the concept of death. The truth is that the deceased is alive! He is aware of everything, and he is close to his relatives at all times!

However, I realize that you will still be bothered by his seeming absence. Children are accustomed to seeing their parents, asking for advice and being helped. Even after they move away from home they rely on and know that they can always turn to their parents. Who can fill this void?

But, think it over, my beloved ones. If you really loved me when I was with you, and if your love was not just superficial, you can always picture me in front of your eyes. You will know what I would have said and how I would have advised you. As an example, we see what our Sages say about Yosef Hatzadik; that he withstood temptation because of the vision of his father before his eyes.

Use the vision of your father to give you strength and encouragement. Keep in mind: The essence of a person is the spiritual, and that part continues to live!

Another point. All people feel an urge to come closer to mitzvos and good deeds at a time of mourning. Even those who were non-observant come to say Kaddish, they put on a *tallis* and *tefillin* and pray. What is the reason for this?

There is a deep reason. Our Sages teach that there are three partners to every human being: his father, his mother and the Holy One, Blessed be He. A child is used to seeing only his father and mother. The third partner is invisible to him. However, when the physical partners leave this world, there is an inner feeling in the person that pushes him closer to the third partner.

One whose faith is strong tells this in a concrete way: "My father and mother (may) have left me but Hashem is always there."

The truth is: The physical parent was merely a messenger from the Heavenly Father. Now that the physical father's job is over the child's relationship to his Heavenly Father becomes stronger.

This is the most important message to bear in mind, for all people at any age: to strengthen one's faith, to sense Hashem's Providence, to realize how Hashem guides and leads a person daily and provides all his physical and spiritual needs. You will not lack anything if you keep your faith strong!

Through faith one will be consoled. Normally, a person is surrounded by his family, his teachers, his friends—all of them help him to maintain his life properly. However, when a relative passes away, may Hashem spare us, one of the supports has been removed.

The process of *Nichum Aveilim* to comfort the mourners, is to help replace the missing support, to raise his spirits and to help him continue.

Now my beloved ones, come closer to each other, help and encourage each other; your friendship should be wholesome, faithful, amidst the love of Torah and of those who study Torah. Always be willing to learn and improve. Hashem will surely comfort you and help you continue . . . Be strong in emunah (faith) and in Torah, build for yourselves loyal homes with the aim of fulfilling Hashem's mitzvos. Your actions shall then serve to benefit me, as our Sages say:

When one's children observe the mitzvos it is considered as if the father has not passed away. This is my advice and last request of you.

My Beloved Ones: Have faith and your faith will be fulfilled, and may your lives be successful forever!

With love,  
Your father

*"And the day of death (is better) than the day of one's birth." (Ecclesiastes VII, 1)*  
*To what can this be compared? To two ships that were in the ocean laden with merchandise. One ship was coming to port, the other was leaving. People were praising the ship coming into port. Others stood by amazed and said, "Why are you praising this ship and not the other?" In reply they said to them, "We are praising the incoming ship since we know this ship has departed in peace and arrived at its destination in peace. But what the future will bring to the ship that has just begun its journey we do not know. "So it is with a person who is born: we do not know the nature of his future deeds. But when he leaves this world we know the nature of his deeds. (Yalkut Shimoni)*

## Before the Burial

- 1) From the time of death until after the burial, the close relatives, which are the father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, brother and sister, are considered *onenim*, which means:
  - a) They should be involved in the burial preparations
  - b) They are to respect the deceased:
    - i) by not behaving in a light-headed manner
    - ii) by not eating in the presence of the body
    - iii) by not eating meat or drinking wine
  - c) They are exempt from mitzvos:
    - i) not to say berachos (even for eating, berachos are not required, but the hands are washed for bread without a beracha)
    - ii) not to pray, or say Amen or put on tefillin
  - d) They may not bathe, take haircuts, or do work, but they may wear shoes until the burial at the cemetery. They may also leave the house to take care of the needs of the deceased.
- 2) An autopsy is forbidden because the Torah considers it a defilement to the departed. In case one is requested by authorities to do so, you may call our number: (323) 653-8886.

- 3) The deceased may not be left alone. A person is therefore designated to serve as a shomer (watchman) in honor of the deceased. Since the watchman is exempt from mitzvos while on duty, it is helpful to appoint two watchmen so that they may relieve each other. (If there is no alternative, the watchman may leave for brief periods.) They may not study Torah, but they may say Tehillim (Psalms). They may not eat while on guard. (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 195:11)
- 4) Beware of funeral homes that are ignorant of the Torah laws and Jewish traditional customs. Check with a competent Orthodox Rabbi or with a reliable friend for a reference to authentic Jewish services and proper pre-burial preparations for the deceased (taharah).

## Burial Preparations

- 1) The shrouds for the deceased are to be made of inexpensive, nice, white material. Even for a wealthy person one may not use expensive shrouds.
- 2) If a male child, G-d forbid, died before being circumcised, a circumcision (without a blessing) is performed before burial. The child, whether male or female, is to be given a name before burial.

## The Funeral

- 1) It is a mitzvah to escort the deceased to the cemetery.
- 2) One should walk along for at least a distance of 7-8 feet, (if he is unable to go to the cemetery).
- 3) It is important that at least a minyan of ten are present at the cemetery, so that there is a minyan for kaddish.
- 4) It is a great mitzvah to eulogize the deceased properly:
  - a) by raising the voice and saying things that will cause the people to be heartbroken and to weep
  - b) to mention the praises and good character traits of the deceased (without too much exaggeration, for that would be harmful to the speaker and to the deceased)
- 5) It is a mitzvah to cry and mourn upon the passing of a righteous observant person. Hashem counts and treasures the tears of weeping for a righteous person.
- 6) The primary objective of eulogy is to honor the deceased. We also speak about his parents and family. If the deceased left instructions that he prefers not to be eulogized, we omit the eulogy.
- 7) A male kohen may not enter a cemetery or be in the same room with a deceased who is not related to him. However, he may attend to relatives whom he is obliged to mourn for,

except not to attend a sister who has been married. At the cemetery, a deceased kohen is buried near the cemetery gates so that the relatives do not defile themselves from other graves.

- 8) It is important that men and women do not mingle during the eulogies or funeral procession.

## Honoring the Deceased

- 1) It is forbidden to delay a burial, for it is a disgrace to the deceased, and it may cause pain to the soul of the departed.
- 2) In urgent situations, if a short postponement will be a definite honor to the deceased, i.e. to prepare shrouds, coffin, etc., or so that people can attend the funeral, it is permissible. (We do not make a late Friday afternoon burial if it may lead to the desecration of Shabbos.) It is necessary to consult with a competent Orthodox Rabbi before delaying a burial. It is wrong to delay on account of extra fees to the gravediggers on a legal holiday.
- 3) For parents, it is proper to extend the eulogies in their honor.
- 4) It is proper that only Jews be involved in caring for and carrying the deceased.
- 5) If a person passes a funeral procession, he is obligated to join and escort the deceased for at least 7-8 feet.
- 6) One is obligated to even interrupt his Torah study in order to escort the deceased.
- 7) It is customary to recite Tehillim (Psalm) 91 during the funeral.
- 8) Some have a custom that women do not go to the cemetery.

## Burial

- 1) It is a mitzvah to bury the deceased in the ground.
- 2) A wooden coffin is used but it is preferable to minimize the wood and even the shrouds, so that the deceased is closer to the ground.
- 3) The deceased is placed on his back as one who is sleeping.
- 4) We ask forgiveness from the deceased in case we did not show the proper respect.
- 5) It is customary not to hand the shovels from one person to another to show that we do not hand sadness to other people, but rather the shovel is put down and then taken from the ground.
- 6) One may not act in a light-headed manner in the cemetery, which includes:
  - a) not to eat or drink there (it is also improper to smoke at a cemetery. [Yalkut Yosef])
  - b) not to engage in business matters
  - c) not to take a shortcut through a cemetery

- 7) It is generally forbidden to reopen a burial plot after it has been closed.

## After the Burial

- 1) At the conclusion of the burial, the seven-day mourning period begins.
- 2) If the deceased is being sent to another country, the mourning begins after taking leave of the deceased, except for those who are going along with the deceased.
- 3) At some point the mourners remove their shoes. Some have the custom to wait until coming home before removing their shoes. (Some say that those who do not remove their shoes until later should put some earth into their shoes.)
- 4) Tzidduk Hadin is recited, and the mourners then recite a kaddish prayer.
- 5) Upon leaving the cemetery, everyone should:
  - 6) lift up some earth (to remind ourselves that we are compared to earth, and that our end is in the earth)
  - 7) and some grass (to demonstrate that the dead will sprout back to life when the dead are resurrected [Techiyas Hameisim]), and throw it behind themselves
- 8) The hands have to be washed three times afterwards. One should not enter a private home before this hand washing. The cup should not be handed to one another-to show that we do not hand sadness over to another person, but rather it is placed on the ground with the opening turned downward to indicate that all life eventually comes to an end.

## Tearing the Garments

- 1) Upon the passing of a close relative: a parent, child, brother, sister or spouse, the mourners are required to tear their garments.
- 2) The garments are torn:
  - a) while standing
  - b) beginning near the neck and torn downward through the rim of the garment (It is customary to have someone else begin the tear and then the mourner finishes the tear by hand.)
- 3) Torah law prescribes the limits and procedures for mourning. One may not do more or less than what the law requires. One may not tear his hair or flesh as a sign of mourning. "You are children of Hashem, do not cut your flesh on account of death." (Devarim 14) The Seforno explains that a Jew should realize that Hashem is our closest relative, and He is always with us. We may not, therefore, overreact with pain over the loss of a relative, for our closest relative, our dear Father in Heaven is always present.

- 4) The mourner may change to old garments before performing the mitzvah of tearing his garments.
- 5) The "tearing" may not be done on Shabbos or Yom Tov.
- 6) for parents, the children tear:
  - a) clothing that is commonly worn (shirt, dress, blouse, except for undershirts, coat or tzitzis. Women are to cover over the tear or pin it up or even stitch it up, so as not to expose themselves.)
  - b) on the left side towards the heart
  - c) by hand
  - d) in public
  - e) an obvious tear on the garments all the way down to the heart
  - f) If he changes clothes during the seven-day mourning period, he must also tear those clothes. It is improper to merely tear a ribbon or to wear a black ribbon instead of tearing one's garment.)
- 7) For other relatives (children, brothers, sisters or spouse):
  - a) the upper garment is torn for about 4 inches
  - b) on the right side
  - c) a hidden tear (under the coat) is sufficient
  - d) a knife or scissors may be used (for the entire tear)
  - e) If he changes clothes he does not have to tear them.
- 8) When a righteous person passes away, even non-relatives are obligated to cry and mourn for them.
- 9) It is customary to fulfill the mitzvah of "tearing" the clothes after the eulogies, or at the cemetery after the burial of the deceased. The blessing "the truthful judge" is said before the "tearing."
- 10) It is proper for men to assist men and for women to help women mourners tear their garments.

## The First Meal

- 1) A mourner may not eat his first meal of his own food.
- 2) It is a mitzvah upon the friends and neighbors to provide the food for the first meal.
- 3) The meal consists of bread, hard boiled (peeled) eggs or cooked lentils as a symbol of mourning (eggs do not have an opening, to show that the mourner is unable to speak) and some wine. They may then continue with meat, wine, etc. (they should not drink a lot of wine).



- 4) It is very important to consider all of the possible needs of the mourners and try to be helpful. The needs include: Arranging the minyanim, preparing meals, contacting other potential visitors, caring for the house, caring for the children, etc...

## Praying and Saying Kaddish

- 1) It is a mitzvah for prayer services to be held during the seven-day mourning period at the home of the deceased.
- 2) Tachanun is not said when praying at a house of mourning. Hallel is not said on Rosh Chodesh. On Chanukah, the non-mourners do say Hallel after leaving the house of mourning.
- 3) When a son leads the prayers in public during and after shiva and says kaddish for his parents, he is redeeming them from Gehenom. The Maariv prayer after Shabbos is especially significant because that is when the souls return to Gehenom after Shabbos.
- 4) A mourner does not lead the prayers on Shabbos and Yom Tov, but he does say kaddish. In addition, being called up to the Torah for Maftir is also a benefit to the deceased.
- 5) Kaddish is said for 11 months after the passing of the deceased and on the day of Yahrzeit.
- 6) If there are no sons to say kaddish, the family should pay someone to say at least one kaddish per day for this period.

## Visiting the Mourners

- 1) It is a great mitzvah to visit a mourner, and it is considered a kindness to the relatives and to the deceased whose soul is also in mourning.
- 2) A visitor may not begin to speak but he should sit by silently until the mourner begins. (The mourner can begin by saying "Blessed is the Truthful Judge.") The mourner may not greet others by saying shalom; and he may not receive greetings from others.
- 3) The mourner sits up front on the ground.
- 4) The topic of conversation should be about the merits of the deceased, not topics that will distract from the loss, such as sports, clothing, business, parties, cars, etc.
- 5) The mourner should not say, "My punishments have not equalled my sins," indicating that he is deserving of more punishment. (Even if it is true, one should not voice such thoughts as it may bring on more suffering.)
- 6) One may not tell the mourner, "What can you do, it is impossible to change Hashem's decisions," but rather we say, "Whatever Hashem does if for the good, and He knows best. He knows what is really good, and we should accept his decree with love."

- 7) As soon as the mourner indicates that his visitors may leave, they should not delay. (Be considerate, do not overdo your visit or stay late.)
- 8) Upon leaving, one should say, "May Hashem comfort you among the other mourners of Tzion and Jerusalem."
- 9) It is customary to cover the mirrors in a house of mourning.
- 10) It is proper to have a minyan for prayer three times a day at the house of mourning. After the morning and afternoon prayers, an additional Psalm, chapter 49, is recited. It is also good for the others to learn mishnayos for the benefit of the neshamah of the deceased.

## The First Three Days

- 1) For the first three days of mourning, it is a mitzvah to cry in mourning.
- 2) During this time, one should consider that he is required to improve his ways.
- 3) People may not greet or be greeted by a mourner. If they greet him in error, he should reply, "I am unable to return the greeting, for I am in mourning."
- 4) The "work prohibitions" during these days apply even if the mourners will suffer financial loss.

## The Seven Days of Mourning

A mourner may not:

- 1) Work (for situations with partners, employees, etc. one should check with a competent Orthodox Rabbi before the burial takes place in order to make arrangements.)
  - a) Regular, necessary housework (House-cleaning, dishwashing...) and food preparation are permitted.
  - b) We are required to provide financial assistance to poor people, so that they can afford to take off from work during shiva (seven days of initial mourning).
- 2) Mourners may not wash or bathe except for the face, hands and feet with cool water (using cosmetics is also included in this prohibition).
  - a) If the person needs to bathe to remove dirt (not for included in this prohibition).
  - b) A woman of marriageable age (or a bride) may beautify herself even during the seven-day period.
- 3) They may not wear leather shoes.
- 4) They may not have intimate relations (not even on Shabbos).

- 5) They may not study Torah (because it causes happiness). A mourner may study Iyov, Kinot, the sad portions of Yermiyahu and the laws of mourning. He may not study other sciences or read things (i.e. newspapers) that will take his mind away from his mourning. (Aruch Hashulchan) He may study works of Mussar. (*Sdei Chemed, Aveilus 25*)
- 6) They may not greet others. If someone does greet a mourner after the first three days, he may respond in a low voice.
- 7) They may not wash or clean clothing or change into clean clothing.
- 8) They may not speak excessively nor engage in laughter and rejoicing as it says: "May they remain silent." This prohibition is understood from the fact that they may not even say "Shalom" to others.  
A mourner may also not hold a child in his lap or engage in similar activities that may lead to laughter. (*Rambam, Aveilus 5:20*)
- 9) He may not shave or take a haircut (hair combing is permitted).
- 10) He may not cut his nails with a utensil but he is allowed to bite or pull them off.
- 11) He may not sit on a seat. One who is ill or in an unusual situation should consult a competent Orthodox Rabbi for exceptions to the above.
- 12) A mourner may not go out of his house during the first week. However, he may leave the house to sleep elsewhere in the evenings if there is a need for it.
- 13) On the seventh day, after the morning-visitors leave (or after the time they would normally leave), the seven-day period is over. It is customary for some friends to assist the mourners in rising from the floor.

## On Friday

- 1) The mourners stop their mourning to allow themselves time to prepare for Shabbos according to their needs.
  - a) they may change their clothes
  - b) even to put on Shabbos clothes
- 2) They may put on their shoes and rise from sitting on the floor as close to Shabbos as possible.

## Shabbos and Yom Tov

- 1) Shabbos is counted as one of the seven days, although obvious demonstrations of mourning are forbidden.
- 2) On Shabbos, marital relations, washing, and Torah study are forbidden, because these activities are not obvious to others.

- 3) He may greet others on Shabbos and say "Gut Shabbos." <
- 4) He may recite the weekly Torah portion by reading the text twice and the Targum once.
- 5) Yom Tov interrupts the seven day period of mourning. Even if the burial was right before Yom Tov, it is considered as if the seven days are over.
- 6) If the burial took place during Yom Tov or Chol Hamoed, obvious mourning demonstrations do not begin until after Yom Tov. The last day of Yom Tov (outside of Israel) is considered the first day of the seven day period of mourning, although the obvious mourning laws do not begin until after Yom Tov.
- 7) There are differences concerning the various Yomim Tovim as to how to calculate the thirty day period. A competent Orthodox Rabbi should be consulted.

## Thirty Days

- 1) Certain laws of mourning continue after the seven days, until the end of the first thirty days. These include a prohibition on:
  - a) bathing, laundering garments and wearing freshly laundered garments (without having someone else wear it first)
  - b) haircuts or shaving for men (women may cut their hair after shiva)
  - c) nail-cutting by means of a utensil
  - d) getting married
  - e) going to parties
  - f) one may not travel far away on business trips that bring joy to a person
- 2) When mourning for parents, there are restrictions that apply until the end of twelve months as will be explained in the following chapter.
- 3) After seven days, the mourner may wear leather shoes, sit on regular chairs, resume marital relations, return to work and resume regular Torah study.
- 4) He may greet others, but others should not greet him. If they do, he may return the greeting.
- 5) He may not attend a wedding, Bar Mitzvah Bris-Milah meal or similar celebration.
- 6) This period is over at sunrise of the morning of the thirtieth day.

## Twelve Months

- 1) Mourning over the loss of a parent continues until the end of twelve months. The obligation of children to parents is extended because of the commandment in the Torah to "Honor your father and your mother" which applies even after their passing.
- 2) Others should not greet him or send gifts until the end of the twelve months.

- 3) He may not attend an affair where they are playing music. He may attend a bris milah or a pidyon haben service but not the meal celebration.
- 4) He may get married (after the thirty days, during the twelve month period).
- 5) He may not start taking haircuts or shaves until people would start criticizing him for his long hair.
- 6) The twelve months are to be full months, but we do not count an extra month in a leap year.

## Yahrzeit

- 1) It is a mitzvah to fast (if fasting is permissible on that particular day) on the yahrzeit (the annual Hebrew date of their passing) of a parent (to repent and improve oneself in honor of his parents). Besides fasting, it should be a day of Torah study and mitzvos to bring honor to his parents. One who has difficulty fasting may instead distribute money to the poor. If fasting will make it difficult to study Torah one should not fast.
- 2) One says kaddish on this day, and one should lead the prayers if he can.
- 3) It is customary to study mishnayos (or to hire someone who will study) for the twelve months of mourning and on every yahrzeit. The word for mishnah (oral law) has the same letters as the word for neshamah.
- 4) It is customary for a son to be called up to the Torah on the day of yahrzeit and on the Shabbos before. It is customary to donate a seudah-meal in memory of the deceased. The blessings said at the meal are a merit for the deceased.
- 5) It is customary to light a candle for the twenty-four hours of the yahrzeit. (As a memorial to the departed soul which is compared to a candle, for the soul gives life to the body as the candle lights up the darkness.)
- 6) It is customary to mention the deceased in prayer and to pledge to give charity in his merit on the Shabbos before the yahrzeit.

## A Monument

- 1) It is customary to place a monument by the burial site of the deceased.
- 2) A monument should be erected as soon as possible after the conclusion of the shiva. However, the dedication service should not be scheduled on a day when tachanun is not recited, or within thirty days prior to a Yom Tov.
- 3) It is wrong to place a double monument when one of the spouses is still alive, for that shows lack of belief in Moshiach who will arrive any day now. (*Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:153*)
- 4) It is not proper to place a picture on a monument.

- 5) The Hebrew name of the deceased and his father's Hebrew name plus the Hebrew date of his passing is inscribed on the monument.

## Merits for the Deceased

It is important to keep in mind that for the entire twelve month period, Torah study, prayer, charity giving and saying kaddish is especially beneficial for the souls of the departed.

## Visiting the Cemetery

- 1) Some have the custom to visit the cemetery for prayer, for inspiration to spiritual elevation and to give honor to the deceased:
  - a) after seven days
  - b) at thirty days
  - c) on or before the yahrzeit (anniversary)
  - d) before Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur

- 2) We pray there
  - a) that the deceased should request mercy for us
  - b) Hashem should have mercy on us in the merit of our righteous ancestors

- 3) One should also give tzedakah at the time.

- 4) One who has not been or seen a Jewish cemetery for thirty days says this special blessing:
 

*Boruch Atoh Hashem Elokeinu Melech Haolam asher yatzar eschem badin, v'zun v'chilkel eschem badin, v'hu asid l'hachayoschem u'likayem eschem badin, Boruch Atoh Hashem mechayeh hameisim. Atoh gibor l'olam Hashem, mechayeh meisim atoh, rav l'hoshea. Mechalkel chaim b'chaesed, mechayeh meisim b'rachamim rabim, somech noflim, v'rofei cholim, u'matir asurim, u'mikayeim emunaso lishenei afar. Mi chamoch baal gevuros, u'me domeh lach, melech meimis u'michaye u'matzmiach yeshuah, v'neman atoh l'hachayos meisim.*

Blessed are You, Hashem our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has created you with judgment, Who fed and sustained you in judgment, Who brought death upon you in Judgment, He knows all of you in justice and He will restore you back to life: Blessed be You, Hashem Who revives the dead.

The blessing is said when coming close to the burial plots.

- 5) Before leaving, one places his left hand on the monument and says, "May it be Hashem's will that the deceased should rest honorably and may his merit benefit us." One may kiss the monument in honor of the deceased. (*Yalkut Yoseif*)

- 6) Some have the custom to recite certain chapters of Tehillim (Psalms) (16, 17, 33, 72, 91, 104, 119, 130) on the Yahrzeit. In Chapter 119, we follow the letters of the person's name and say the verses corresponding to the initials of the name.
- 7) Before leaving the cemetery it is customary to place a pebble on the monument to show that you have been to visit and honor the deceased.
- 8) The hands are washed three times upon leaving.

## Maximum and Minimum

- 1) A person may not overreact on mourning for one who has died. (One who does overdo it, will suffer more of the same suffering, G-d forbid.)  
The proper amount is:
  - a) three day of crying (for these days he should consider the urgency of doing repentance)
  - b) seven days of mourning
  - c) thirty days to refrain from haircutting and wearing new clothing
- 2) For the entire year there is a heavenly judgment pending over the family. If a male child is born to the family within the year it is a healthy sign.
- 3) When one of a group passes away, the entire group should be concerned.
- 4) One who does not fulfill the obligations of mourning is considered a cruel person. One should be afraid and concerned in order to inspect his actions and come to repentance. May we merit the fulfillment of the prophecy (Yeshaya 25:8) Hashem will remove death forever and Hashem will remove the tears from all faces.

## Laws of Yizkor

*The yizkor memorial prayer is included in the regular holiday service on four Jewish holidays. This gives the mourner regular opportunities to pray for the soul of the departed, to renew his own religious commitment, and to contribute charity in the name of the deceased.*

- 1) Yizkor is recited at the following times: Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeres, the eighth day of Pesach, and the second day of Shavuot, even when these days occur on Shabbos.
- 2) Yizkor must be recited for a deceased parent. In addition, yizkor may also be recited for all deceased relatives and friends if the person reading yizkor has a deceased parent. The Hebrew name of the deceased and the Hebrew name of the deceased's father should be mentioned.

- 3) Although yizkor may be recited even if no minyan is available, it is preferable to recite it with a minyan.
- 4) Yizkor is recited in the synagogue after the reading of the Torah portion, if that Yom Tov falls out on a day other than Shabbos. If Yom Tov coincides with Shabbos, yizkor is recited before Av Harachamim.
- 5) Yizkor should be recited even during the first year after death.
- 6) When saying yizkor for several people, parents should receive precedence. If both parents are deceased, either may be mentioned first.
- 7) Names of men and women may be mentioned together.
- 8) A person whose parents are both alive should not remain in the synagogue while yizkor is being recited.
- 9) One who already is allowed to say yizkor for a deceased parent, may also say yizkor for a deceased spouse, even after remarriage.
- 10) One who resides in Israel, but is temporarily out of Israel during a Yom Tov, should recite yizkor on the eighth day of Pesach and the second day of Shavuos as is done outside of Israel.