

Funeral Practices of the Synagogue

The Torah teaches the equality of all men before the Creator, the sanctity of human life, the dignity of the human personality, as well as the sanctity of the human body. The attitude that the Nazarene Yisraelite expresses towards death and the funeral services manifest these doctrines of our faith.

The Torah demands respect for and consideration of man, in life and death, and his earthly remains. Our faith calls for understanding, sympathy, and thoughtfulness in expressing consolation to the bereaved.

The Torah commands that humility and simplicity be the rule and guide for all in the performance of the sacred mitzvah of burial of the dead. We understand that these principles are to be expressed in acts of true loving-kindness (*chesed*).

In keeping with these principles, we recommend the following Hebraic funeral practices be observed in the funeral and burial of the dead.

- A plain wooden coffin. Expensive caskets are in conflict with the simplicity, humility and equality of the Torah.
- The casket should remain CLOSED to the public. Even the family is not required to visit the funeral home prior to the funeral. Pre-funeral chapel visitation and reviewal of the body by the public are contrary to our tradition and should not be practiced.
- It is a *mitzvah* to attend the funeral service and to join the procession to the cemetery.
- It is traditional for the mourners to partake of a “meal of condolence” upon their return from the burial service. This meal should be provided by friends or family. This is not a social occasion. Elaborate food or drinks should be avoided.
- It is a *mitzvah* to visit the bereaved during the *shiva* period (seven days). Such visitation should be with understanding and compassion and should not become burdensome to the family. This visit is not to socialize, but to comfort the mourners.

These guidelines should be followed and also consult the local rabbi for any local *minhag* (customs) to be followed in the time of bereavement.

