

When Death Occurs

By Rabbi Sam Weintraub

When a member loses a dear one next steps often depend on advance preparations made by the deceased and the family. We encourage members to prepare: purchase plots, select a funeral parlor, discuss the type of service, as well as execute material and ethical wills.

Generally the family already owns a plot. If not, gravesites are available at Synagogue cemeteries. Purchases are arranged through Ellen Phillips, Cemetery Committee Chair. The Rabbi can help the family choose a funeral parlor.

First I speak with the family over the phone and we determine the place and time of the funeral and burial. Barbara Speregen (Ba8aLou@KaneStreet.org) emails the Congregation about the arrangements, together with introductory information about the deceased and survivors. Then I meet with the family. Whether or not I am giving the formal eulogy I elicit information about the deceased for the service and for prayers, and I explain the services. This is an important time for the family to come together and begin to focus on spiritual and material concerns.

We then decide on Shiva. Once that is set, I notify the Chesed Network Chair, Jay Brodsky, who arranges for Minyan leaders and gets the suitcase of prayer books, kipot and tallitot to the house of mourning. If we are having a Minyan on Monday or Thursday morning when we read Torah, we will also bring a Sefer Torah for that service.

Although there is no formal Synagogue committee dedicated to do this, members will frequently bring food for the house of Shiva especially for the *Se'eduot Hav'ra'ah*, the first meal of consolation eaten after returning from the funeral. For this meal, hard boiled eggs are eaten as a sign of the cycle of life. It is important for mourners to be served by others, not vice versa.

The congregation uses the Prayer Book, "The Bond of Life: A Book for Mourners" edited by Rabbi Jules Harlow and published by the Rabbinical Assembly. Bereaved families are given a user-friendly guide to Jewish funeral and bereavement laws and customs entitled: "A Time to Mourn, A Time to Comfort, A Guide to Jewish Bereavement" by Dr. Ron Wolfson, published by Jewish Lights.