

## **FUNCTION OF THE CHEVRA KADISHA**

- Jewish funeral and mourning practices have developed over centuries. Many people comment that the guidance offered by Jewish tradition was extremely helpful and provided support during the difficult time of loss. The rituals for friends and families have been developed to address the feelings of intense grief that the death of a loved one. People are often overcome with feelings of hurt, loss, anger, guilt, or listlessness. The Jewish way of mourning lessens the loneliness and isolation of the bereaved and brings the individual into a community of comforters.
- The Chevra Kadisha is a group of men and women dedicated to serving the needs of congregants who experience a death in the family. It will, on request, perform *tahara*. The clergy will notify the Chevra Kadisha if *tahara* is requested. *Tahara* is the careful and caring preparation of the body of the deceased for burial, in accordance with Jewish custom and law. The traditional view is that each person is holy. Hence, the preparations for burial are done with respect and honor for the deceased.
- The work of the Chevra Kadisha constitutes a *Chesed Shel Emet*, a true act of kindness that is performed without ulterior motive, for the service can never be repaid. There is no charge for these services and no synagogue funds are allocated for them. Donations to Beth El's Chevra Kadisha Fund allow it to continue its work.
- If Beth El's Chevra Kadisha is not available, we will help plan for *tahara* with the Area-Wide Chevra Kadisha.
- Beth El's Chevra Kadisha does not offer *Shomrim* services. *Shomrim*, guardians for the body, sit with the body at the funeral home 24 hours a day until the time of burial. If you would like this to occur, you can make these arrangements directly with the funeral home you have selected or speak to the clergy about it.
- Any questions regarding the operations of Beth El's Chevra Kadisha should be directed to Alan Morrison, Chairman, at 301-229-3696, or to the clergy. At the time of death, the clergy will contact the Chevra Kadisha.