

THE PERIODS OF MOURNING

Shiva (the first seven days according to tradition): Shiva is the period of intensive mourning observed by the immediate family of the deceased. Shiva begins on the day of burial, not the day of death. The “official” mourners are:

1. Spouse
2. Siblings
3. Parents
4. Children

Those who have married into a relationship with the deceased are affected by the loss but are not obligated to perform the rituals of mourning.

The mirrors in a Shiva house are traditionally covered, and a seven-day memorial candle is kindled. Mourners sit on lower seats where possible. It is customary to arrange for a meal of condolence (which traditionally includes round foods such as eggs) to be served to the mourners and those who have accompanied and returned home with them from the cemetery. A pitcher of water and hand towels should be placed outside the door of the house for those who went to the cemetery to wash their hands before entering the house. No blessing is recited.

Mourners are encouraged to participate in morning prayer services at synagogue and hold evening prayers in the Shiva house except for on Shabbat. Reciting Kaddish is one of the key parts of these services. Mourners may lead the prayer service in their home or request that the synagogue provide a leader.

While people will be coming to the Shiva home, the mourners are not hosting the event. It is the obligation of the community to support the mourners and thus it is customary to provide the mourners with food and assistance. Friends and relatives should help supervise the preparation and/or ordering of necessary food and supplies. Beth El provides a platter at a time arranged with the family, either for the meal of condolence or later on in the Shiva period. Many who come to the Shiva house will bring food with them.

During the Shiva period, mourners are urged to stay away from work or school to have time to contemplate the meaning of the cycle of life and the adjustments that will be required of them.

Public mourning observances are suspended on the Sabbath as the sanctity and serenity of this day supersede one’s personal grief. Mourners are encouraged to attend Sabbath services but are not given an Aliyah. *Kria* (the torn garment) is not displayed publicly. A major Holiday Festival terminates Shiva (consult the clergy for details.)

Shloshim (the first thirty days): during the thirty days following burial (except during Shiva) mourners may return to work and normal activities but refrain from public entertainment or social activities. They are encouraged to attend services on a regular (daily) basis and recite Kaddish. The *Kria* is worn by some during shloshim, while others cease doing so at the conclusion of the Shiva.

Shanah (the first year): mourners for deceased parents continue to attend daily services to recite Kaddish for eleven months and continue to refrain from celebratory activities for a full year.

Yahrzeit (anniversary of death): the Kaddish is recited each year on the anniversary of the death (not the burial).

Yizkor (memorial prayers): Yizkor prayers are recited on Yom Kippur, Shemini Atzeret, Pesach, and Shavuot.

Memorial Stones: There are many locations in Maryland that offer monument services. Each cemetery has its own specifications for a monument, so it is important to check with the cemetery first. You can order monuments from cemeteries, or work with a private company. Fram Monuments and Sagel Bloomfield Danzansky Goldberg are just two of the private companies that one can order a monument from.