

UNVEILING CEREMONY

The Ceremony

Despite widespread practice, there is no religious obligation to hold a public unveiling. Just as our tradition provides for the expression of mourning, so does it require that we resume our normal life pattern with the end of the mourning period so that we may weave new patterns of interpersonal relationships. The unveiling can be part of the healing process, though it is not a second funeral; it is a moment to mark the passage of time.

The unveiling ceremony, if it is desired, is most commonly a private family affair and has a minimum of ritual. The recitation of a psalm and the Mourner's *Kaddish*, or even silence in the presence of the intimate family circle is always appropriate as an expression of tribute and personal reflection for the person who has passed away. The presence of clergy is not essential.

[Click here](#) to view **Beth El's Unveiling Ceremony Guide**.

When does the unveiling take place? The ceremony can take place anytime between the *Shiva* and the *Yahrzeit*. However, it should be held sometimes during the first year after someone has died. Some people hold it close to the *Sheloshim*, which is the 30th day after the burial. It is usually planned for a time when close family can attend. However, there are days that are generally not religiously appropriate for [visiting the cemetery](#), such as days of celebration, festive periods, or [holidays](#) such as Rosh Chodesh or Sukkot. It is important to note that the actual date set for the unveiling is flexible, and often the family selects a time that fits best with personal circumstances.

Who attends the unveiling? Unveilings are generally much smaller and more intimate than funerals. However, family members typically welcome others who they feel will provide the level of support and comfort that they seek. There is no strict regulation on who can attend.

Who officiates the unveiling? According to religious law, it isn't necessary for clergy to be involved. The family can personally designate who will lead the ceremony and conduct the actual unveiling. If a clergy member participates, it is often one who knew the person who passed away.

What is the significance of the cloth covering the headstone? This part of the ceremony is meant to create a moment in which the monument is unveiled in front of the family almost as though it was just constructed. This harkens back to the days when family members erected the monument themselves.

Is a minyan required for an unveiling? Traditionally, a minyan is required to recite the Mourner's *Kaddish*. That means at least 10 Jewish adults are to be present. In circumstances where it is not possible to have a minyan, the unveiling can still take place.

Why do people place stones on the monument? A custom that is frequently part of the unveiling is placing stones or pebbles on the monument. This practice has many origins and interpretations, but in its simplest explanation, it is a clear representation and reminder that the family was at the gravesite. Unlike flowers, stones are permanent and represent the enduring nature of the loved one's memory.