

ADATH SHALOM POLICIES RELATED TO DEATH, SHIVA AND MOURNING

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1.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 This policy applies to regular members only, and not to associate or High Holy Day members with one exception – see Addendum 1.
- 1.2 This policy addresses the seven “close” relatives (father or mother, son or daughter, sister or brother, and spouse) referred to in this text as “family.” In other circumstances, a card may be sent and/or congregants encouraged to undertake private acts of comfort.
- 1.3 This policy follows guidelines adopted by the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), which in turn follow *Halacha* developed over millennia by rabbis. If there is one guiding principle throughout, it is *gemilut hasidim*, which is to say that when there is a doubt about appropriate policy or action, decisions are taken in such a way as to bring the most comfort to mourners.
- 1.4 In accord with recent rulings of the USCJ Committee on Jewish Laws and Standards, it is the religion of the mourner that determines appropriate practice. This means that it is certainly permissible (and, according to some authorities, obligatory) for Jews by Choice or Jews who are intermarried, to say *Kaddish*, sit *Shiva*, and otherwise observe Jewish rites of mourning for family members who are not Jewish. Burial could not of course occur in a Jewish cemetery. [See Adath Shalom Policy on Mourning For, and Burial of, non-Jewish Close Family Members].
- 1.5 In parallel with 1.4, Adath Shalom services will always be egalitarian, regardless of the congregation or the preferences of the deceased individual.
- 1.6 There are a number of variations in the appropriate kinds and extent of action for Adath Shalom Congregation. The ones that require the greatest involvement by the congregation are the death of a member of the congregation or a close family member of a congregant who is not a member of another congregation. Other possible situations include family members who are i) members of another congregation; ii) not living in the Ottawa area; iii) not among the seven close relatives, or iv) not Jewish. (The extent to which Adath Shalom commits itself to respond depends on the situation, as elaborated below.
- 1.7 In order to minimize stress on the Mourner, it is only necessary for him/her to make one phone call. The Bereavement Committee contact is listed on the back page of the Adath Shalom Bulletin and once this person (or their back-up) is contacted then it is that person’s responsibility to ensure that all members of the Bereavement Committee are so informed and that Adath Shalom meets its responsibilities, as defined below, including determining the level and type of assistance needed and desired by them.

2.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADATH SHALOM

- 2.1 Adath Shalom accepts the following responsibilities in the case of a death involving a member or a family member of a congregant (always to the extent desired by the bereaved family), according to the above principles.
- 2.2 To co-ordinate Shiva services, according to the wishes of the mourner, either:
 - 2.2.1 morning only;
 - 2.2.2 evening only; or
 - 2.2.3 both.
- 2.3 To provide a condolence meal, according to one of the following options, to a maximum cost of \$200.00:
 - 2.3.1 Prepare and serve the first meal after the funeral at the Shiva house;
 - 2.3.2 If other family members are doing this, send/deliver food to the Shiva house;
 - 2.3.3 If the Shiva is out of town, send food to the Shiva house;
 - 2.3.4 Send/deliver food to the member's home for or upon their return from an out-of-town funeral or shiva.
- 2.4 To co-ordinate the Shiva food preparation, if there are no other family members who can do this.
- 2.5 In special circumstances to play a greater role than that described above. For example, perhaps a deceased member of Adath Shalom has no known relatives or no one willing or able to be involved. In such cases, the Board will decide what action should be taken.

3.0 ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE WITH RESPECT TO ONE OF THE SEVEN "CLOSE" RELATIVES

- 3.1 Deceased is a member of Adath Shalom and the funeral is in Ottawa.
 - 3.1.1 Assist with funeral arrangements (which ideally have been pre-arranged) and according to the family's wishes, assist with Shiva services plus related activities, such as food.
 - 3.1.2 Advise the membership of funeral and Shiva plans.
- 3.2 Deceased is a member of Adath Shalom but the funeral and/or Shiva is not in Ottawa
 - 3.2.1 Advise the membership. If the Bereaved so desire, provide contact information so that members may call or email to offer condolences during the Shiva period.
 - 3.2.2 If the family wishes, provide for a condolence meal during the Shiva after the family returns from the funeral.
 - 3.2.3 If desired by the family, arrange for an informal memorial gathering and/or prayer service, at a time after the Shiva period and convenient for the family.

- 3.3 If the deceased is Jewish but not a member of Adath Shalom, Adath Shalom will support our bereaved member by taking formal action as if the deceased were a member of the congregation (if the member so wishes), as described above, with variations dependent on the location of the funeral and Shiva and the extent of help needed.
- 3.4 If the deceased is not Jewish, normal mourning rites can be observed can be observed by the bereaved member of Adath Shalom in all respects other than that of burial. In any event, the congregation should be informed, and individual actions for comforting should be urged.

4.0 CHECK LIST FOR BEREAVEMENT COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The Bereavement committee will serve as liaison with the bereaved family and as coordinator for Adath Shalom's response as soon as possible.
- 4.2 Initial actions:
 - 4.2.1 Determine if the funeral or Shiva will take place in Ottawa. If the burial is to take place in Ottawa, and they have not already done so, advise the member to contact Jewish Memorial Gardens (JMG) [see section 4.3.1]
 - 4.2.2 Ascertain family's wishes about assistance from Adath Shalom (within the guidelines detailed above).
 - 4.2.3 Advise as necessary about Rabbinic assistance and appropriate fees.
 - 4.2.4 Ensure that notification has gone to the Congregation and to the *Ottawa Jewish Bulletin*.
 - 4.2.5 Take other action as appropriate, eg. assist with transportation, shovel snow from entryway to home, make phone calls as needed, sit with the bereaved for a few hours, etc..
- 4.3 Funeral arrangements:
 - 4.3.1 If the family is not able to make funeral arrangements, assist to the extent of telephoning: Arrangements for burial can be handled with one phone call to Jewish Memorial Gardens (613-688-3530). This line is answered 24/7 except for Shabbat and *Yom Tovim* (Jewish holidays). JMG's Executive Director will guide the bereaved through the process and provide all necessary information. The ED will also assist with contacting the *Chevra Kadisha*, clergy, and funeral home.
 - 4.3.2 Even if the family has not made prior arrangements, Adath Shalom's formal role cannot extend beyond information and perhaps advice. The Bereavement committee might assist with making the initial phone call (once the family itself has made key decisions), but should not thereafter, serve as the link between the family, and say, the *Chevra Kadisha*.
 - 4.3.3 Exception: Though Adath Shalom would not assist with detailed funeral arrangements in non-Jewish cemeteries, acts of the nature of *gemilut Hasidim*, as with staying with the body, and reciting psalms, are permissible.
- 4.4 Shiva services, if Adath Shalom will be responsible for the daily minyan:
 - 4.4.1 Determine family wishes for Shiva services (number, times, etc.)

- 4.4.2 Provide guidance as necessary in the preparation of the Shiva house: for example, advising those who do not know about the practices of covering the mirrors, of leaving the front door unlocked for people to enter at the time of a Shiva minyan, and of setting out a bowl of water and towels for mourners on the day of the funeral, for their return from the cemetery. If a member of the Bereavement Committee is so inclined, she/he might assist with these preparations, but that would be an individual decision for friendship or *gemilut Hasidim*, not part of the “job description.”
- 4.4.3 Advise the family of the need to provide enough chairs and a memorial candle. The *Chevra Kadisha* can provide both and it would be the family’s responsibility to make such arrangements.
- 4.4.4 Notify congregation by email and telephone, and seek to ensure a minyan for every Shiva service.
- 4.4.5 If the *Chevra Kadisha* is involved, they generally bring Orthodox *siddurim* (some with no English). If the family prefers the Adath Shalom *siddurim* instead of (or in addition to) those provided by the *Chevra Kadisha*, obtain and deliver an appropriate quantity to the Shiva house.
- 4.5 Shiva food arrangements:
 - 4.5.1 Ensure that the family has arranged a convenient place to prepare and serve the food with as little fuss as possible. If not, urge that they do so.
 - 4.5.2 Arrange the purchase, delivery and preparation of food, **if** and as necessary. The food can either be purchased directly or ordered from a kosher caterer. The timing and size of the meals may vary according to the circumstances, but within the guidelines set above and within the Adath Shalom policy on *kashrut*.
 - i) First meal after the funeral – including arranging for its preparation and serving if the mourners so wish;
 - ii) Food for the mourners during the Shiva period. (Generally, this refers only to sending food to the Shiva house, but if the mourner(s) has no one who can coordinate the preparation and serving of all meals to him/her/them during the Shiva, Adath Shalom will assume this task.)
 - iii) Though there is no obligation to feed the Shiva minyan, it is a courtesy to do so, particularly in the morning, as many people go directly from services to work. School, etc. Assuming that the family is amenable to bearing this cost, the Bereavement Committee will assist in arranging for the delivery of fruit (and/or juice), hot drinks and some sweet rolls for *Shacharit*, plus drinks and dessert for *Ma’ariv*. Ensure that everything brought into the house has a *hecsher*.

Addendum One:

Adath Shalom accepts the following responsibilities in the case of a death involving an associate member: Advise the membership of funeral and Shiva plans.