



Kehillah Burial and Mourning Practices During The COVID-19 Pandemic

The Kehillah places the health and safety of the community as a top priority. This creates significant challenges in performing our traditional burial and mourning practices. This document outlines all of the practices our local Chevra Kaddisha (burial society) and the Kehillah will be able to perform to honor the deceased and observe, with adaptations, these sacred traditions.

We will work closely with the Hudson Funeral Home and their staff to do as much as we can. We will always follow the most current health safety guidelines put forth by local and national health organizations, so plans may need to change in response.

I. ATTENDING REMOVAL OF THE BODY FROM ITS PLACE OF DEATH

Funeral home personnel will coordinate this with the family.

II. SITTING WITH THE BODY FROM TIME OF DEATH UNTIL BURIAL (Shomrim)

As able, the Chevra Kaddisha will schedule remote sitters using Zoom to provide coverage.

III. TRADITIONAL CLEANSING AND DRESSING OF THE BODY (T'harah)

The funeral home will place the deceased, in a body bag, into the kosher casket. They will place kosher burial garments (tchrichim) on top of the body, along with a tallis (if desired), and will place the traditional shards of pottery and a measure of earth from Israel into the casket. The body bag and the above religious items will be wrapped in a clean, white linen shroud.

Prior to closing the casket, members of the Chevra Kaddisha will remotely offer prayers and blessings. These will include those that are traditional and additional prayers selected for this unusual time and circumstance. Funeral home personnel will leave the room while prayers are being recited. They will then return, close the casket and move it to the sitting room.

IV. FUNERAL

The funeral will be graveside and will be limited to immediate family or others called upon by the Chevra Kaddisha, family, or Rabbi. As appropriate, we will create opportunities for others to be present and to participate remotely.



The funeral home will provide black Kriah ribbons in a basket. Mourners will put on their own kriah ribbons and tear them themselves. If they are unable to tear them, the Rabbi will say the blessings without actual tearing.

V. PALL BEARERS

The funeral home will bring the casket to the gravesite using mechanized means if possible. A member of the Chevra Kaddisha or family will follow behind with a hand placed lovingly on the casket.

VI. SHOVELING DIRT AT THE GRAVE

Mourners will use disposable cups to shovel dirt.

VII. SHIVA GATHERINGS

The family may create opportunities for virtual Shiva gatherings. These gatherings might be open to the community, or in a private virtual room that can be joined only by those who have the link. When possible, the coordinator of the virtual gathering will provide the text of the service on half of the screen.

Please note that many of the above plans rely on video-conferencing technology which poses many challenges and may not work at the last minute.