

Funeral Service



Introduction

There is clearly an obligation to bury the deceased.

We find that Isaac and Ishmael buried their father, Abraham. Esau and Jacob, in turn, buried their father Isaac.

The Midrash tells us that it was in the merit of Japheth having joined Shem in the covering of Noah's nakedness, that the dead of Gog and Magog (nations descended from Japheth) merited burial. (Ezekiel 39)

Interment means burial in the ground, rather than in a tomb. Coffins are acceptable if made of wood.

The dead body is to be treated with respect; therefore viewing of the remains is not encouraged — the soul of the departed experiences agony that its former host is seen in an impure state. For the same reason cremation is discouraged (a person should not be cremated unless he or she has specifically requested it). (Amos 2:1)

Funerals are not an appropriate occasion for ostentation, the simpler the better.

The Service

The coffin is placed to the side of the open grave or on the device designed to hold it above the grave.

The director of the service leads the mourners in prayer in unison:

O LORD, what significance has man that You should consider him? Man is like a brief breath, a passing shadow; like grass which flourishes in the morning and in the evening fades and withers.

The years of our lives are threescore and ten or, with strength, fourscore; yet they are filled with toil and trouble, they are soon gone and we depart this world.

So teach us, O GOD, to use our days wisely. Guard the man who is blameless and behold he who is upright, for there is a future for the man of peace.

Surely the LORD will redeem my soul from the grave, He will surely receive me.

The LORD redeems the souls of His servants; none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned.

The dust returns to the earth as it was, but the spirit returns to GOD Who gave it.

The director says:

The Sheltering Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are rooted in justice.

Our LORD is a God of faithfulness without iniquity; He is just and perfect in all His deeds.

He rules above and below, He takes away life and He gives it, He brings down to the grave and raises up from the grave.

Eulogies are now given by those who knew the deceased and wish to share their memories.

It is good to reflect on the contribution the deceased made in his/her lifetime to the betterment of the world. It is appropriate to use the occasion to draw lessons from the life of the deceased for the improvement of his/her family and friends. The soul of the deceased will benefit from good deeds performed by those who were inspired by him/her.

All recite in unison:

Psalm 23

The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

The coffin is lowered into the grave and earth is shoveled into the grave by the mourners; enough to cover the coffin.

The director recites:

O compassionate GOD, Who dwells on high, grant perfect rest beneath the sheltering wings of Your Presence (Shechina), among the holy and pure whose souls shine as the brightness of the firmament, to the soul of *[Deceased]*, *[son/daughter]* of *[Father of Deceased]* and *[Mother of Deceased]* who has gone to eternal rest and in whose memory charity is offered.

May *[his/her]* repose be in paradise.

May the Lord of Mercy protect *[him/her]* under the cover of His sheltering presence forever, and may *[his/her]* soul be bound up in the bond of eternal life.

May the LORD be *[his/her]* possession, and may *[he/she]* repose in peace and let us say, "Amen."

The mourners reply:

Amen.

The chief mourners (closest relatives) say:

The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away, praised be the Name of the LORD.

Those gathered turn to the chief mourners and say to them:

May the LORD, blessed be His Name, comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

The director leads the assembled in the reading of:

Psalm 16

King David sang:

Protect me, GOD, for I have turned to You for shelter.

My soul declares that only the LORD is my God even though I am undeserving of His good.

It is only in the merit of my holy ancestors who are now in their graves that I enjoy Your favor.

Whereas those who run after pagan gods will see their sorrows multiplied; as for me, I will neither serve them nor allow their names to be on my lips.

The LORD is the source of my sustenance and it is He Who guides my destiny.

My role in GOD's plan is pleasant and all that befalls me is beautiful to me.

I will bless the LORD Who has given me good advice, even my own intellect steers me to choose His ways.

I have set the LORD before me at all times; because He supports me I shall not stumble.

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