

## CHAPTER FIVE

# INTERMENT

### *Checklist: The Steps at the Cemetery*

- One who has not visited a cemetery in more than thirty days should recite the Mechayeh Meitim blessing below.

#### HEBREW:

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר יצר אתכם בדיו, וזן וכלכל אתכם בדיו, והמית אתכם בדיו, ויודע מספר כלכם בדיו, והוא עתיד להחיותכם ולקיים אתכם בדיו. ברוך אתה יי, מחיה המתים.

ENGLISH: Blessed are You, Ado-noy, our God, King of the Universe, who formed you all with justice, nourished and sustained you all with justice, took your lives with justice, knows the count of all (of you) with justice, and will in the future revive and maintain you with justice. Blessed are You who revives the dead.

- The casket should be carried with the deceased's feet facing forward.
- Avoid stepping on other graves.
- It is customary to stop the procession that escorts the casket seven times and recite Psalm 91 during each stop.
- If the funeral is graveside, the eulogies take place at this time.

- If it was not done previously, the mourners rend their garments.
- The casket is lowered into the grave, positioned so that the deceased's head is where the memorial stone will be erected.
- The grave is closed. Those in attendance take turns shoveling in dirt, avoiding taking the shovel directly from one another. This demonstrates their reluctance to part with the deceased. It is more respectful to the deceased to have the grave filled by the Jewish attendees, and not by the cemetery workers or with a backhoe machine. If that isn't possible, Jewish attendees should at least fill the first three *tefachim* (approximately 10.5 inches).
- After the grave has been filled, the mourners recite Tziddok Ha-Din, in which they accept God's decree. This is followed by Psalm 49. Although mourners are primarily required to recite Tziddok Ha-Din, in some communities, everyone in attendance recites it as well. (Tziddok Ha-Din is omitted on days that Tachanun is not said in the daily prayers.)
- After the grave has been filled, the graveside Kaddish is recited.
- This first Kaddish, coming immediately after interment, is often very emotional. For that reason, it is omitted on festivals and other joyous days.
- Like every Kaddish, this Kaddish requires a minyan (a

quorum of ten Jewish men). If Kaddish isn't recited, Psalm 16 is recited instead.

- *El Malay Rachamim* (O God, Full of Compassion) is recited.
- As the mourners prepare to leave the gravesite, the non-mourners form two rows for them to walk between. As the mourners walk between them, the non-mourners recite the traditional blessing of consolation:

HEBREW: המקום ינחם אתכם בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

ENGLISH: May God comfort you among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

TRANSLITERATION: *Hamakom yenachem etchem b'toch shar aveilei Tzion v'Yerushalayim.*

- If the mourners have non-leather shoes to change into or the conditions allow them to walk in socks, they should do so. However, if they didn't bring non-leather shoes and the terrain is rough or weather is inclement, it suffices for them to untie their shoes, before walking between the non-mourners.
- The day of burial counts as the first day of shiva. If the burial is not completed until after dark, the mourners will have to sit shiva an extra day. As cemeteries are often located far from where mourners will sit shiva, mourners typically start the shiva period while at the cemetery. This is done even when there is still time until nightfall, as it signals the transition from being an *onain*

to being an *avel*. Mourners remove their leather shoes and sit briefly on the ground or on a low object.

- When departing the cemetery, all attendees must wash their hands with water, three times each hand, alternatingly. It is customary to pick up the washing cup from the ground, and not take it directly from someone else. This momentary delay demonstrates our hesitation to leave the deceased.