

## CHAPTER TEN

# THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR OF MOURNING AND SUBSEQUENT YEARS

### *Checklist: How Is a Yartzeit Observed?*

- On the Shabbat afternoon that precedes the Yartzeit, the *El Malay Rachamim* prayer is recited at Mincha. Additionally, if the Yartzeit falls on a Monday or Thursday—days on which the Torah is read—*El Malay* is recited again. It is important to pledge a donation to charity at the time *El Malay* is recited, as this benefits the deceased's soul.
- On the date of the Yartzeit, Kaddish is recited. (The Jewish day starts with the evening and ends at sundown the next day. Thus, Kaddish is first recited during the Maariv [evening] service, and then during the morning and afternoon prayers the next day.)
- Lead all three prayer services, if possible.
- Receive an aliyah on the Shabbat that precedes the Yartzeit.
- If a Yartzeit is on a day the Torah is read, receive an aliyah.
- Light a twenty-four-hour Yizkor, memorial candle.
- If someone is able do so, it is appropriate to fast on a

parent's Yartzeit (provided that it doesn't fall on Shabbat or a Festival). Some people do not fast, as it weakens them, and they prefer having strength to perform the important tasks of the day, such as studying Torah, giving charity and performing mitzvot in the merit of the deceased. If a full-day fast is not possible, some Rabbinic authorities suggest fasting a half day. In any event, a person should not eat meat or drink wine on a parent's Yartzeit.

- It is customary to visit the parent's grave. If this can't be done, one may visit on the day before the Yartzeit.
- It is inappropriate to attend a wedding or partake of a communal meal on a parent's Yartzeit, but one may do so the following evening, after the Yartzeit has ended.
- On the other hand, it is customary to perform as many positive deeds as possible on the Yartzeit, as these accrue spiritual benefit to your parents and elevate their souls. Examples of this include studying Torah, giving charity, or performing other acts of kindness.
- Some have the custom of putting out light refreshments, typically cake and whisky, in synagogue, at the end of the morning prayer service. All who partake tell the mourner, "May the *neshama* (soul) be elevated." The blessings recited on the refreshments benefit the soul of the parent.

## ***Checklist: Appropriate Times***

### ***to Visit the Cemetery***

- The ceremony in which the memorial stone is unveiled.
- The Yartzeit—the Jewish calendar anniversary of the date of passing.
- Upon the completion of shiva.
- Upon the completion of the thirty-day mourning period.
- Before the High Holidays.
- On Tisha B'Av, the date that the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed.
- To invite your relative's soul to an upcoming family wedding.
- To pray to God, when facing a major challenge or important decision.
- On the eve of Rosh Chodesh (i.e., the day that precedes the Jewish new month).
- On the other hand, we do not visit on Shabbat or Jewish holidays, as these days are meant to be days of joy, and a cemetery visit will be bittersweet, at best.

## *Checklist: Visiting the Cemetery*

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

### HEBREW:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר יָצַר אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְזָן וְכִלְכַּל  
אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְהֵמִית אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין, וְיֹדֵעַ מִסְפַּר כְּלָכְם בְּדִין, וְהוּא עֹתִיד  
לְהַחְיֹתְכֶם וּלְקַיֵּם אֶתְכֶם בְּדִין. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, מְחַיֵּה הַמֵּתִים.

### 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.

- Many pregnant women have the custom to refrain from attending funerals or visiting cemeteries. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein allowed women to attend a funeral or Yartzeit of a close relative, if the woman felt strongly about attending. Others extend that to close friends who passed away.
- One should be very respectful at the cemetery, and more so, at the graveside.
- Be careful not to step on other graves. Tzitzit should be tucked into one's pants.

- Psalms are often recited, particularly the verses of Psalm 119, which spell out the deceased's name.
- Prayer, both formal and informal, may be recited.
- Meditation, reflection, and talking to the soul of your parent or other relative are all appropriate, but not required.
- It is customary to put a small stone on the monument, as a sign that we have visited and that our loved one has not been forgotten.