

## A Guide to... Leading a Shiva Service



*Shiva* is the term for the seven days following the death of a close relative. The counting of these seven days begins with the day of the funeral. During *Shiva* there are many ritual observances that mourners can elect to take on. One of the most common is to punctuate these days with services in one's home at which family, friends, and community members gather to express their condolences, share memories and stories of the deceased, and make a minyan (quorum or 10 Jewish adults) to say *Kaddish*. In the Or Hadash community, it is most common for mourners to choose to hold shiva minyanim (service) for 1 or 3 days in the evening only, though some may elect to hold services for all 7 days, or to hold them in the mornings in addition or instead.

The service at a *shiva* is, in most cases, a typical weekday evening (*ma'ariv*) service with no special additions. The only thing that changes in the liturgy is that, if a mourner is leading the service, there is one line in the *Kaddish Shalem* that they do not say while still in mourning.

### Sample outlines

(from Kol Haneshamah: Prayers for a House of Mourning)

#### #1 | a simple service

- 🔗 Open the Space – ONE opening song, *niggun*, or reading (pg. 3-7 has good options, but there are wonderful gems to be mined for opening readings throughout the siddur below the line!)
- 🔗 Pg. 13 | (*V'hu rachum...* and) *Barchu*
- 🔗 Pg. 17 | Interpretive Version: *Ahavat Olam* "We are loved by an unending love," by Rami Shapiro
- 🔗 Pg. 21 | *Shema* (and *V'ahavta*, first paragraph)
- 🔗 Pg. 35 | *Mi Chamocha*
- 🔗 Pg. 36 | *Hashkiveinu*/ Divine Help "Help us to lie down, DEAR ONE, our God..."
- 🔗 Pg. 41 | "Life After Death," by Laura Gilpin ("These things I know: How the living go on living...")
- 🔗 Pg. 45-75 | Silent *Amidah*, a few minutes for silent reflection and personal prayer – end this with *Oseh Shalom* or a *niggun*
- 🔗 Pg. 89 | *Aleynu*
- 🔗 Sharing stories, reminiscences, and memories
- 🔗 Pg. 103 | Mourners' *Kaddish*
- 🔗 Pg. 103 | Mourners' *Kaddish*

#### #2 | a more traditional service

- 🔗 Open the Space – Opening song, *niggun*, or reading
- 🔗 [Is it still daylight out? If so, the family may wish to start with a brief *Minha* (afternoon) service. To add *Minha*:]
  - Pg. 9 | *Ashrei* (chanted aloud, read silently/ privately, or a melody to the first line)
  - Pg. 45 | *Amidah* (first 3 blessings aloud, then conclude silently, through pg. 75)
  - Pg. 87 | *Kaddish Titkabal (Shalem)*
  - Pg. 89 | *Aleynu*
  - Pg. 103 | Mourners' *Kaddish*
- 🔗 Pg. 13 | *V'hu rachum...* and *Barchu*
- 🔗 Pg. 15 | KAVANAH below the line by Anne Frank, then *Ma'ariv Aravim*

- 🕊 Pg. 17 | *Ahavat Olam*
- 🕊 Pg. 21 | *Shema* (and *V'ahavta*, first paragraph, then *Adonai Eloheichem Emet*)
- 🕊 Pg. 35 | *Mi Chamocha*
- 🕊 Pg. 36 | *Hashkiveinu/ Divine Help* “Help us to lie down, DEAR ONE, our God...”
- 🕊 Pg. 41 | “Life After Death,” by Laura Gilpin (“These things I know: How the living go on living...”) OR  
*Baruch Adonai l’olam, amen v’amen*
- 🕊 Pg. 45-75 | Silent *Amidah*, a few minutes for silent reflection and personal prayer – end this with *Oseh Shalom* or a *niggun*
- 🕊 Pg. 87 | *Kaddish Titkabel (Shalem)*
- 🕊 Pg. 89 | *Aleynu*
- 🕊 Sharing stories, reminiscences, and memories
- 🕊 Pg. 103 | Mourners’ *Kaddish*
- 🕊 [Pg. 113 | Psalm for the House of Mourning]
- 🕊 [Pg. 103 | Mourners’ *Kaddish*]

### #3 | a more poetic service

- 🕊 Open the Space – Opening song or *niggun*
- 🕊 Pg. 74 | “Strange is our situation here on earth...” by Albert Einstein (below the line)
- 🕊 Pg. 13 | (*V’hu rachum...* and) *Barchu*
- 🕊 Pg. 59 & Pg. 15 | Begin with the poem, “The Peace of Wild Things,” by Wendell Berry, then chant or read the *chatima* for *Ma’ariv Aravim* (in Hebrew or English)
- 🕊 Pg. 17 | READ TOGETHER: “We are loved by an unending love,” by Rami Shapiro
- 🕊 Pg. 21 | *Shema* (and *V’ahavta*, first paragraph, then *Adonai Eloheichem Emet*)
- 🕊 Pg. 23 | “When men were children...,” by R.F.B. (below the line)
- 🕊 Pg. 35 | *Mi Chamocha*
- 🕊 Pg. 36 | Sing: *Ufros Aleinu* or
- 🕊 Pg. 41 | “Life After Death,” by Laura Gilpin (“These things I know: How the living go on living...”)
- 🕊 Pg. 45-75 | Silent *Amidah*, a few minutes for silent reflection and personal prayer – end this with *Oseh Shalom* or a *niggun*
- 🕊 Pg. 89 | *Aleynu*
- 🕊 Sharing stories, reminiscences, and memories
- 🕊 Pg. 103 | Mourners’ *Kaddish*

A few things to keep in mind, or “quirks” of *shiva*:

- **If it’s the 1<sup>st</sup> night of *Shiva***, there is a custom of lighting the tall 7-day candle. If the family has not yet done this, it might be nice to start the service with lighting this candle (pg. 2)
- **If it’s Saturday night**, see whether the family wants to include a brief *havdallah* service (pg. 129-130) – and ask the family whether they have supplies, or if you should bring them. Traditionally, *havdallah* would get inserted just before *aleynu*
- **If it’s between Passover and Shavuot**, Count the *Omer* (pg. 123) between the silent *Amidah* and *Aleynu*.
- **If it is Virtual/ Digital (either in whole or in part, rather than in person)**, be sure you have the log-in credentials for the Or Hadash Zoom account so that you can have the “host” controls during the service. If there is a Zoom attendance option, but you are leading on site from the family’s home, be sure to bring your own laptop/ phone & tripod (or double-check with the family to be sure they’re set with tech on their side)

so that you are comfortable with the equipment and are best able to create a welcoming environment for those who are attending digitally.

**Before the service:**

- Check in with the family, and see if they'd like to share reflections about their loved one just before *Kaddish* (or right after).
- Ask the family if they have any specific requests for the service (eg.: balance of English and Hebrew? more traditional? more singing?)
- Take a minute to set up:
  - Do chairs need to be set out?
  - Make sure that *shiva* books and kippot/ yarmulkes are out and easy to grab
  - Determine which way is east
- **In a small group**, if there are fewer than 10 (Jewish) people present (i.e.: not a *minyan*), you might choose to swap out Mourner's Kaddish (which you traditionally need a *minyan* in order to recite) with Psalm 23 "*Adonai is my shepherd, I shall not want...*" (pg. 116).