

The Jewish Mourning System

1A Introduction:

- 1B Every culture has its way of coping with the loss of loved ones that is developed into a system of mourning.
- 2B The system of mourning is meant to adequately cope with the pain of mourning, through various traditions.
- 3B The traditions aim to deal with the issues of sorrow, guilt, pride, anger, loss, and generally, the meaning of life in this world.
- 4B Many traditions are woefully inadequate and plant the seeds of neurosis and insanity. Other traditions deal with the issues in a godly way, forming the basis for healing and the return of real joy in life.
- 5B A way to assess the elements of cultural tradition is to ask the questions:
 - 1C What is the purpose of the tradition?
 - 2C Does the tradition promote healing or harm?

2A Care for the body of the deceased.

1B Preparation of the body:

- 1C The closing of the eyes: Genesis 46:4, "4 I will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also surely bring you up again; and Joseph will put his hand on your eyes."
- 2C The proper clothing, Ezekiel 32:27, "27 They do not lie with the mighty Who are fallen of the uncircumcised, Who have gone down to hell with their weapons of war; They have laid their swords under their heads, But their iniquities will be on their bones, Because of the terror of the mighty in the land of the living."

3C Wrapping, but not embalming:

- 1D John 11:44, "44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."
- 2D Matthew 27:59, "59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,
- 3D Mark 15:46–16:1, "46 Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. 47 And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James observed where He was laid. 1 Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.
- 4D John 19:40, "40 Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury."

2B Burial or entombing:

- 1C Burial, Genesis 15:15, "15 Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age.
- 2C Entombment in a cave, Genesis 25:9, "9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite,
- 3C Entombment in a hand-hewn tomb, Matthew 27:59–60, "59 When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, 60 and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.
- 4C At a special place, Genesis 35:8, "8 Now Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried below Bethel under the terebinth tree. So the name of it was called Allon Bachuth.
- 5C In the family plot, 1 Samuel 25:1, "1 Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

3B Monuments:

- 1C Genesis 35:20, "20 And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.
- 2C 2 Kings 23:17, "17 Then he said, "What gravestone is this that I see?" So the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel."

3A The mourning period:

- 1B There were seven days of mourning: 1 Samuel 31:13, "13 Then they took their bones and buried them under the tamarisk tree at Jabesh, and fasted seven days.
- 1C The three days after death were called the days of weeping; the next four days were the days of mourning.
- 2C They would suspend mourning for the observation of the Sabbath.
- 2B For leaders, there were 30 days of mourning:
 - 1C Numbers 20:29, "29 Now when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, all the house of Israel mourned for Aaron thirty days.
 - 2C Deuteronomy 34:8, "8 And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days. So the days of weeping and mourning for Moses ended.
 - 3C 1 Samuel 25:1, "1 Then Samuel died; and the Israelites gathered together and lamented for him, and buried him at his home in Ramah. And David arose and went down to the Wilderness of Paran.

4A The physical emotion: Weeping:

- 1B Genesis 23:2, "2 So Sarah died in Kirjath Arba (that is, Hebron) in the land of Canaan, and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her.

2B John 11:31, "31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

5A The verbal portion: Lamentation and wailing:

1B Micah 1:8, "8 Therefore I will wail and howl, I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals And a mourning like the ostriches,

2B 1 Kings 13:30, "30 Then he laid the corpse in his own tomb; and they mourned over him, saying, "Alas, my brother!"

3B Jeremiah 22:18, "18 Therefore thus says the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah: "They shall not lament for him, Saying, 'Alas, my brother!' or 'Alas, my sister!' They shall not lament for him, Saying, 'Alas, master!' or 'Alas, his glory!'

4B Mark 5:38, "38 Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly.

6A The clothing portion: Clothing, tearing and sackcloth (like a burlap bag):

1B Genesis 37:34–35, "34 Then Jacob tore his clothes, put sackcloth on his waist, and mourned for his son many days. 35 And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and he said, "For I shall go down into the grave to my son in mourning." Thus his father wept for him.

2B 2 Samuel 3:31, "31 Then David said to Joab and to all the people who were with him, "Tear your clothes, gird yourselves with sackcloth, and mourn for Abner." And King David followed the coffin.

7A Body details:

1B Ashes:

1C 2 Samuel 13:19, "19 Then Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that was on her, and laid her hand on her head and went away crying bitterly.

2C Lamentations 2:10, "10 The elders of the daughter of Zion Sit on the ground and keep silence; They throw dust on their heads And gird themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem Bow their heads to the ground.

3C Ezekiel 27:30, "30 They will make their voice heard because of you; They will cry bitterly and cast dust on their heads; They will roll about in ashes;

2B Shaving the head and cutting the skin (which was forbidden by the Law):

1C Jeremiah 16:6, "6 Both the great and the small shall die in this land. They shall not be buried; neither shall men lament for them, cut themselves, nor make themselves bald for them.

2C Jeremiah 41:5, "5 that certain men came from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, eighty men with their beards shaved and their clothes torn, having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the Lord.

- 3C** Micah 1:16, "16 Make yourself bald and cut off your hair, Because of your precious children; Enlarge your baldness like an eagle, For they shall go from you into captivity.
- 3B** Fasting during the day:
- 1C** 2 Samuel 1:12, "12 And they mourned and wept and fasted until evening for Saul and for Jonathan his son, for the people of the Lord and for the house of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword.
- 2C** 2 Samuel 3:35, "35 And when all the people came to persuade David to eat food while it was still day, David took an oath, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if I taste bread or anything else till the sun goes down!"
- 8A** The friends and family: Typical mourning passages were cited again and again by family and friends:
- 1B** Psalm 112:6, "6 Surely he will never be shaken; The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.
- 2B** Proverbs 10:7, "7 The memory of the righteous is blessed, But the name of the wicked will rot.
- 3B** Isaiah 57:2, "2 He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness.
- 9A** Families would hire professional mourners.
- 1B** Ecclesiastes 12:5, "5 Also they are afraid of height, And of terrors in the way; When the almond tree blossoms, The grasshopper is a burden, And desire fails. For man goes to his eternal home, And the mourners go about the streets.
- 2B** Amos 5:16, "16 Therefore the Lord God of hosts, the Lord, says this: "There shall be wailing in all streets, And they shall say in all the highways, 'Alas! Alas!' They shall call the farmer to mourning, And skillful lamenters to wailing.
- 3B** Jeremiah 9:17, "17 Thus says the Lord of hosts: "Consider and call for the mourning women, That they may come; And send for skillful wailing women, That they may come.
- 4B** Matthew 9:23–24, "23 When Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the flute players and the noisy crowd wailing, 24 He said to them, "Make room, for the girl is not dead, but sleeping." And they ridiculed Him.
- 10A** Some elements of the American Mourning System:
- 1B** Care for the remains:
- 1C** *Embalming and the viewing of the body. Elaborate embalming prevents decay for a long time.
- 2C** *The casket. Fancy caskets seal the remains from insects and decay and are beautiful repositories in the ground, inside and out.
- 3C** The monument. Often monuments are elaborate as well, in line with the financial means of the bereaved.

2B The Memorial Service:

1C *Humanistic, focusing on the person and life lived, usually experience and accomplishment centered.

2C God-centered, focusing on eternal issues, especially Jesus Christ.

3B The crusade, a common response to death that cuts life shorter than expectation by accident or illness :

1C Gospel, focusing on eternal salvation and evangelism.

2C *Humanistic, focusing on giving and participating in efforts against the cause of death, thereby giving meaning to the death.

1D Cancer, MS, etc. foundations;

2D Gun control;

3D MADD.