

comforting the mourner

What do you say? How do you say it? What are all the customs about? Someone has just lost a loved family member, how can you possibly offer any comfort? The support of friends is so significant to the fabric of family and community that Jewish tradition believes it's a greater deed to visit a house of mourning than a house of rejoicing. Giving comfort and support to people who have lost someone is one of life's most meaningful acts.

The custom is to allow the mourners to open the conversation. Everyone experiences their pain and loss in a different way and the idea is to let

them lead the conversation based on how they are feeling. They may be experiencing a range of very deep emotions: pain, despair, helplessness, sadness and a sense of deep and meaningful connection to the person they have lost. Don't distract them while they want to feel the emotions.

A central principle is to not distract mourners from their pain. It's natural to feel compelled to do this, but ideally Shiva is not about hiding from pain, it's about facing it. Talking about the weather, the football or where to go on holiday might temporarily distract the mourner from their grief, but will not necessarily benefit them in dealing with the loss more effectively. Equally, don't try to make them feel emotional when they are looking for a distraction from their grief.

The idea is not to lead them where you would like to take them, but rather be led by

them to where they feel like going.

You are there to give them what they need – whatever it may be. And if they don't want to talk, then it's best not to talk. You may feel uncomfortable sitting there in silence, but it's often very therapeutic for the mourner. Your presence, your care and your wanting to be there for them can often mean a great deal more than anything you could say.

Silence is often a better conveyor of emotion than words. Judaism, like all cultures,

encourages us to express how we feel about the person we have lost.

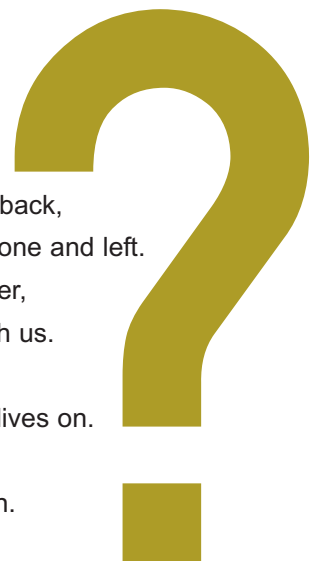
Generally, mourners do want to hear about the person they are mourning.

They may want to hear how you felt about the person, what he or she meant to you, how your life was richer because of them and how you also feel a sense of loss. This can be

very meaningful for mourners because they can see directly that you share their pain. Obviously, this can only be done to the extent to which you knew the person who passed away. If you have stories and fond memories, Shiva would be a good time to share them. Let the mourners talk about their loved one also, about what he or she meant to them, what they learnt from them, and how they made a difference to the world.

Perhaps more than anything else, the thought that the person they have lost made a difference and a lasting impression, can be a great comfort to the mourners.

what would they want



We can shed tears that she is gone,
Or we can smile because she has lived.
We can close our eyes and pray that she'll come back,
Or we can open our eyes and see all that she's done and left.
Our hearts can be empty because we can't see her,
Or we can be full of the friendship she shared with us.
We can remember her and only that she's gone,
Or we can cherish her memory and make sure it lives on.
We can cry and feel empty and turn our back,
Or we can do what she'd want: smile and carry on.

leader's kaddish

יְתַגְדֵּל וְיִתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא.
בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְרָא כְרַעוּתְהָ,
וְיִמְלִיף מַלְכוּתְהָ, בְּחַיֵּיכוּן
וּבְיוֹמֵיכוּן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

Congregation respond:

אָמֵן, יְהִי שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ
לְעַלְמֵי עֲלְמֵיָא:

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר
וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר
וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא
בְּרִיף הוּא.

לְעֵלְא (בעשׂו"ת: וּלְעֵלְא מְכַל)
מִן כָּל בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא

תְּשַׁבַּחְתָּא וְנַחֲמְתָא דְאִמְרוּן
בְּעֵלְמָא וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן:

For the next three pages everyone will be praying quietly.
If you prefer you might take the time to remember the deceased
or think about the mourners.

Prayer is about connection and the Amidah is the time set aside for that connection. We stand before God and try to feel his presence. You can read the Hebrew, read the modern English translation, make your own prayer or look through some of the thoughts offered in this booklet. God is close to all who call him in truth. God listens to all prayers, but those that interest him most, so to speak, are those which are sincere – the prayer of a mother for her sick child, the prayer of a student about to sit his exams, the prayer of a sailor in a storm at sea, the prayer of a person who sees his friend in pain. Whether or not God listens is not dependent on lifestyle or observance. It simply depends on sincerity. All you need to do with a prayer, is mean it.

the amidah

The Amidah is a quiet, standing, meditation. Sometimes the leader of the service, recites the first section aloud.

כי שם ה' אֶקְרָא, הִבּוּ גֵדְל לְאַלְהֵינוּ:
אֲדוּנֵי, שְׁפֹתַי תִּפְתָּח וּפִי יִגִּיד תְּהִלָּתְךָ:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאַלְהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ,
אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם, אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק, וְאַלְהֵי
יַעֲקֹב. הָאֵל הַגָּדוֹל הַגִּבּוֹר וְהַנּוֹרָא, אֵל
עֲלִיוֹן, גּוֹמֵל חַסְדִּים טוֹבִים, וְקוֹנֵה
הַכֹּל, וְזוֹכֵר חַסְדֵי אֲבוֹת, וּמֵבִיא גּוֹאֵל
לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה:

בעשׂי"ת זְכַרְנוּ לְחַיִּים, מְלַךְ חַפְצֵי בְחַיִּים,
וּכְתַבְנוּ בְּסֵפֶר הַחַיִּים, לְמַעַן אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים:

מְלַךְ, עוֹזֵר וּמוֹשִׁיעַ וּמִגֹּן:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מִגֹּן אַבְרָהָם:

אַתָּה גְבוּר לְעוֹלָם אֲדוּנֵי,
מַחְיֶה מֵתִים אַתָּה, רַב לְהוֹשִׁיעַ.

בְּחֻרְף מְשִׁיב הַרוּחַ וּמוֹרֵד הַגֶּשֶׁם:
מְכַלְכֵּל חַיִּים בְּחַסֵּד, מַחְיֶה מֵתִים
בְּרַחֲמִים רַבִּים, סוֹמֵךְ נוֹפְלִים, וְרוֹפֵא
חוֹלִים, וּמְתִיר אֲסוּרִים, וּמְקַיֵּם אַמּוּנָתוֹ
לִישְׁנֵי עֶפְרַי, מִי כְמוֹךָ בְּעַל גְּבוּרָתוֹ וּמִי
דוֹמֵה לָךְ, מְלַךְ מַמְיִת וּמְחַיֶּה וּמְצַמִּיחַ
יְשׁוּעָה:

בעשׂי"ת מִי כְמוֹךָ אֵב הַרְחַמִּים,
זוֹכֵר יְצוּרֵי לְחַיִּים בְּרַחֲמִים:

וּנְאָמֵן אַתָּה לְהַחְיֹת מֵתִים:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' מַחְיֶה הַמֵּתִים:

This is only said with a minyan:

Leader נְקַדֵּשׁ אֶת שְׁמֶךָ בְּעוֹלָם,
כְּשֵׁם שְׁמִקְדִּישִׁים אוֹתוֹ בְּשְׁמֵי מְרוֹם,
כְּפָתוּב עַל יַד נְבִיאָךְ וְקָרָא זֶה אֵל זֶה וְאָמַר:

Congregation קְדוֹשׁ, קְדוֹשׁ, קְדוֹשׁ,
ה' צְבָאוֹת, מְלֵא כֹל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ:

Leader לְעַמְתָּם בְּרוּךְ יֵאמְרוּ:
Congregation בְּרוּךְ כְּבוֹד ה' מִמְּקוֹמוֹ:

Leader וּבְדַבְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ כְּתוּב לְאִמְרוּ:
Congregation יְמִלְךָ ה' לְעוֹלָם,

אַלְתֵּינוּ: צִיּוֹן לְדֹר וָדֹר, הַלְלוּהָ:
Leader concludes לְדוֹר וָדֹר נְגִיד גְּדֻלָּךְ, וּלְנִצְחָ

נְצָחִים קֹדֶשְׁךָ נְקַדִּישׁ, וְשִׁבְחֵךְ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מִפִּינוּ לֹא יִמוּשׁ,
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד. כִּי אֵל מְלַךְ גָּדוֹל וְקֹדֶשׁ אַתָּה: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה
ה', הָאֵל (בעשׂי"ת: הַמְּלַךְ) הַקְּדוֹשׁ:

אַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ וְשִׁמְךָ קְדוֹשׁ,
וְקֹדֶשִׁים בְּכָל יוֹם יְהַלְלוּךָ סְלָה:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הָאֵל
(בעשׂי"ת: הַמְּלַךְ) הַקְּדוֹשׁ:

אַתָּה חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת וּמְלַמֵּד לְאִנּוּשׁ
בִּינָה: חַנּוּן מֵאַתָּךְ דַּעַה בִּינָה וְהַשְׁכֵּל:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', חוֹנֵן הַדַּעַת:

prayer or reminder?

The Shma is the most famous of all Jewish liturgies. And rightly so, for it is the most significant. It's a statement of the most fundamental of all Jewish beliefs - that there is an infinite and absolute God; that He created us because He loves us; that there is a purpose to existence; that our actions matter and there are consequences to our decisions. It is comforting in a house of mourning to remind ourselves that life matters, that we don't simply live and then pass away, leaving no trace; to remind ourselves that a life lived with meaning is a life that continues beyond its passing from this world. **If you aren't able or interested in saying this part of the service, perhaps take the time to reflect on what is meaningful in your own life. What are you living for? What do you aim to achieve that will make your life matter?**

the shma

אֶהְבֶּת עוֹלָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל עַמּוֹ
אֶהְבֶּת, תּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים
אוֹתָנוּ לְמִדָּת, עַל כֵּן ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ,
בְּשִׁכְבֵּנוּ וּבְקוּמָנוּ נִשְׁיחַ בְּחֻקֶיךָ,
וְנִשְׁמַח בְּדְבָרֵי תוֹרָתְךָ וּבְמִצְוֹתֶיךָ
לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד, כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ וְאַרְךָ יָמֵינוּ,
וּבְהֵם נִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה. וְאֶהְבֶּתְךָ אֵל
תָּסִיר מִמֶּנּוּ לְעוֹלָמִים:
בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל:

When praying without a minyan,
recite the following:

אֵל מֶלֶךְ נֹאֲמָן

שִׁמְעֵ יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ
ה' אֶחָד:

Say quietly:

בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלֻכּוֹתָנוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְהוּא רַחוּם יְכַפֵּר עֲוֹן וְלֹא יִשְׁחִית,
וְהִרְבָּה לְהִשִּׁיב אָפּוֹ וְלֹא יַעִיר כָּל
חַמְתּוֹ. ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה הַמֶּלֶךְ יַעֲנֵנוּ בַּיּוֹם
קָרָאנוּ:

Leader:

בְּרַכּוּ אֵת ה' הַמְבָרֵךְ:

Congregation responds:

בְּרוּךְ ה' הַמְבָרֵךְ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר בְּדָבָרוֹ מַעְרִיב עַרְבִים,
בְּחֻכְמָה פּוֹתַח שַׁעֲרִים, וּבְתַבּוּנָה
מַשְׁנֶה עֵתִים, וּמַחְלִיף אֵת הַזְּמַנִּים,
וּמְסַדֵּר אֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים בְּמִשְׁמְרוֹתֵיהֶם
בְּרַקִּיעַ, כְּרִצּוֹנוֹ. בּוֹרָא יוֹם וְלַיְלָה,
גּוֹלֵל אֹר מִפְּנֵי חֹשֶׁךְ וְחֹשֶׁךְ מִפְּנֵי אֹר,
וּמַעֲבִיר יוֹם וּמַבְיֵא לַיְלָה, וּמַבְדִּיל בֵּין
יוֹם וּבֵין לַיְלָה, ה' צְבָאוֹת שְׁמוֹ. אֵל
חַי וְקַיִם, תְּמִיד יְמַלּוֹךְ עָלֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם
וָעֶד: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה', הַמַּעְרִיב עַרְבִים:

things you can do to help

Visiting the shiva is by no means the full extent of our ability to give to the mourners. If the mourners are not leaving home during the week of shiva, they often need help with small tasks (and even if they are leaving the home, they can often be too distracted to take care of their own needs). Offering to help them on a practical level, and is another way of showing that you're there for them.

meals

So that the mourners don't have to spend time worrying where their next meal is coming from, the community often provides for them during the whole shiva period – and often even beyond. If you're interested in helping, contact a family member or close friend of the mourners to find out if and when a meal is needed as

there might be a rota. If food isn't needed for the shiva period, they might be happy to have it a week or two later.

after shiva
Immediately after the shiva week, mourners can feel very vulnerable. The house was full and now there's nobody about. This empty period can often be when they need a friend the most.

It's a special skill to be aware right through the first year after the loss, of the needs of a mourner. With care and delicacy, you can continue to offer your warmth, love and encouragement to someone you care about.

ברוך ה' לעולם אמן ואמן: ברוך ה' מציון שכן ירושלים הללויה: ברוך ה' אלהים אלהי ישראל, עשה נפלאות לבדו: וברוך שם כבודו לעולם וימלא כבודו את כל הארץ, אמן ואמן: יהי כבוד ה' לעולם, ישמח ה' במעשיו: יהי שם ה' מברך, מעתה ועד עולם: כי לא יטש ה' את עמו בעבור שמו הגדול, כי הואיל ה' לעשות אתכם לו לעם: וירא כל העם ויפלו על פניהם ויאמרו ה' הוא האלהים ה' הוא האלהים: והיה ה' למלך על כל הארץ, ביום ההוא יהיה ה' אחד ושמו אחד: יהי חסדך ה' עלינו, באשר יחלנו לך: הושיענו ה' אלהינו וקבצנו מן הגוים להודות לשם קדשך, להשתבח בתהלתך: כל גוים אשר עשית יבואו וישתחוו לפניך אדני, ויכבדו לשמך: כי גדול אתה ועשה נפלאות, אתה אלהים לבדך: ואנחנו עמך וצאן מרעיתך נודה לך לעולם לדור ודור נספר תהלתך: ברוך ה' ביום. ברוך ה' בלילה. ברוך ה' בשכבנו. ברוך ה' בקומנו. כי בידך נפשות החיים והמתים אשר בידו נפש כל חי ורוח כל בשר איש: בידך אפקיד רוחי, פדיתני אותי ה' אל אמת: אלהינו שבשמים, יחד שמך וקיים מלכותך תמיד ומלוך עלינו לעולם ועד:

השכיבנו ה' אלהינו לשלום, והעמידנו מלכנו לחיים. ופרוש עלינו סכת שלומך, ותקננו בעצה טובה מלפניך, והושיענו למען שמך. והגן בעדנו, והסר מעלינו אויב, דבר וחרב ורעב ויגון, והסר שטן מלפנינו ומאחרינו, ובצל כנפיך תסתירנו, כי אל שומרנו ומצילנו אתה, כי אל מלך חנון ורחום אתה. ושמור צאתנו ובואנו לחיים ולשלום מעתה ועד עולם: ברוך אתה ה', שומר עמו ישראל לעד:

We pray for the soul that has departed this world. We affirm that the person has not ceased to exist, just that they now exist in a different realm. The person is no longer with us, but we still care very much and we pray for their welfare. We want what's best for them and so we pray as a community because a group has much more power than an individual.

O Lord and King, full of compassion, God of all spirits, in whose hand are the souls of the living and the departed, receive, we beseech You, in Your great lovingkindness the soul of [NAME] Who has been gathered to her/his people.

Omit the next italic section in the case of a young child. Have mercy upon her/him, pardon all her/his transgressions, for there is none righteous on earth who does only good and never makes mistakes. Remember to

her/his credit the righteousness which she/he has done, and let her/his reward be with her/him and her/his recompense before her/him.

Shelter her/his soul in the shadow of Your wings. Make known to her/him the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy, at Your right hand bliss for ever. Give her/him the great happiness that is reserved for the righteous, As it is written, 'how great is Your goodness which you have reserved for those who fear You, which you created for those who publicly yearn for you. Oh Lord who heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds, may You grant consolation to the mourners.

*Following the death of a child add
May the death of this child mark the end of all anguish and sorrow for her/his parents
Strengthen and support them at this time of sadness and grief; remember them and their loved ones for a long and good life.
Instill in their hearts a love and reverence for You, so that they are able to serve You with perfect hearts; and let their end be peace.*

amen

memorial prayer

For the first part, everyone listens closely and answers 'amen'. Then, on the next page everyone recites together, in english.

אָנָא ה' מְלִךְ מְלֵא רַחֲמִים. אֱלֹהֵי הַרוּחֹת לְכָל-בָּשָׂר. אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדְךָ נַפְשֹׁת הַחַיִּים וְהַמֵּתִים. אָנָא קַבֵּל בְּחַסְדְּךָ הַגָּדוֹל אֶת נַשְׁמַת _____
Insert Name

For a woman, say:
אֲשֶׁר נְאֻסָּה אֶל עַמּוּהָ:
חוּס וְחַמּוּל עָלֶיךָ. סִלַּח וּמַחַל לְכָל
פְּשָׁעֶיךָ. כִּי אָדָם אֵין צָדִיק
בְּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא:
זְכוּר לָהּ צְדָקָתָהּ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂתָה
וַיְהִי שְׂכָרָהּ אִתָּהּ וּפְעֻלָּתָהּ לְפָנֶיךָ:
אָנָא הַסְתַּר אֶת-נַשְׁמָתָהּ בְּצִל
כְּנָפֶיךָ. הוֹדִיעָה אֶרֶח חַיִּים שְׁבַע
שְׁמַחוֹת אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ נְעִימוֹת
בִּימֵינֶךָ נִצַּח. וְתִשְׁפִּיעַ לָהּ מֵרֵב טוֹב
הַצִּפּוֹן לְצַדִּיקִים.

For a man, say:
אֲשֶׁר נְאֻסָּה אֶל עַמּוּהָ:
חוּס וְחַמּוּל עָלֶיךָ. סִלַּח וּמַחַל לְכָל
פְּשָׁעֶיךָ. כִּי אָדָם אֵין צָדִיק
בְּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא:
זְכוּר לוֹ צְדָקָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה
וַיְהִי שְׂכָרוֹ אִתּוֹ וּפְעֻלָּתוֹ לְפָנֶיךָ: אָנָא
הַסְתַּר אֶת-נַשְׁמָתוֹ בְּצִל
כְּנָפֶיךָ. הוֹדִיעָהוּ אֶרֶח חַיִּים שְׁבַע
שְׁמַחוֹת אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ נְעִימוֹת
בִּימֵינֶךָ נִצַּח. וְתִשְׁפִּיעַ לוֹ מֵרֵב טוֹב
הַצִּפּוֹן לְצַדִּיקִים.

כְּמוֹ שְׂכָתוֹב. מָה רַב טוֹבְךָ אֲשֶׁר-צִפְנָת לִירְאֶיךָ פְּעֻלַּת לְחוּסִים בְּךָ נִגְדַּ בְּנֵי
אָדָם. אָנָא ה' הַרוּפָא לְשִׁבּוּרֵי לֵב וּמַחְבֵּשׁ לְעֵצְבוֹתָם. שְׁלֵם נַחוּמִים לְאַבְלִים.

For a female child:
וַתְּהִי פְטִירַת הַיְלָדָה הַזֹּאת קָץ
לְכָל-צָרָה וְצוּקָה לְאִבֶּיהָ וּלְאִמָּהּ

For a male child:
וַתְּהִי פְטִירַת הַיְלָד הַזֶּה קָץ
לְכָל-צָרָה וְצוּקָה לְאִבָּיו וּלְאִמּוֹ:

חֲזֵקִים וְאַמְצָם בְּיּוֹם אָבְלָם וַיְגוּנָם וַזְכָּרָם (וּבְנֵי בֵיתָם) לְחַיִּים טוֹבִים וְאַרְכָּיִם: תֵּן
בְּלִבָּם יְרֵאתָךְ וְאַהֲבַתְךָ לְעַבְדְּךָ בְּלִבָּב שְׁלָם: וַתְּהִי אַחֲרֵיתָם שְׁלוֹם אָמֵן:

amen