



Rabbi Weiner's Jan. 2008 Bulletin Article

Once again, our community has experienced another period in which we faced a large number of funerals within a short amount of time. As always when confronted with death and the bereavement of our members, the Jewish Community Center of Paramus and its members have responded well. Yet, despite the desire to help and respond, there are those who want to do more, but are not sure what to do. So again I would like to offer these suggestions to all our members, so their good intentions and wishes to help their neighbors will be guided by the wisdom of the tradition. For even in a large community like ours, the expression of sorrow of even the most casual acquaintance can be of such great significance to the bereaved. Let me offer the following suggestions:

1. **It is vitally important to make the effort to visit the mourners during the *Shiva* (week of mourning) period.** *Shiva* is the seven day mourning period during which the mourners traditionally remain at home and receive the greetings of friends and neighbors who are obligated by *Halacha* (Jewish Law) to help the bereaved mourn their loss. Cards and phone calls are also important and welcome. Yet nothing can substitute for a personal visit, a hug, and the heartfelt expressions of sorrow and regret. *Nichum Aveilim*, comforting those who are mourning is a great *Mitzvah*, and it is incumbent upon all of us to observe it. When paying a *Shiva* visit, it is important not to use this opportunity to socialize, but rather to comfort the mourner by engaging in conversation about their deceased relative, and reminding them that friends and community care about their loss and understand their feelings.
2. **Our community is obligated to prepare the meal for mourners upon their return from the cemetery, as well as prepare the home for the observance of *Shiva*.** We have a committee in our Synagogue specifically established for this sacred task, under the able direction of our dedicated members, Melitta Lorsch and Irene Reiss. Unless you have experienced it, you can never know what it means, at a time of such sadness, to have people willing to help with such tasks. However, we need more members to volunteer to serve on this committee and help out with its various functions. You don't need to have known the mourner or the family to participate. All that is needed is a willingness to get involved, and the knowledge that your efforts are indispensable, and appreciated. Don't wait to be asked. Volunteer before your services are needed, please! For too long, a dedicated group has

taken the lead in doing this sacred work. Please offer your help before being asked. Please contact the office or the Religious Committee and let us know that we can call upon you.

- Attendance of *Shiva* minyans:** During the week of “*Shiva*” *Maariv* (evening) minyans are usually held in the home of the mourners. In an age when so many communities can no longer provide this service, we should be proud that we continue this practice. To help mourners to recite the *Kaddish* in their own home during *Shiva* is a great *Mitzvah* indeed. Community members **must** come out and participate in this sacred task. We must have greater awareness and participation in our *Shiva* minyanim. Perhaps no other action or deed can remind a mourner that they are part of a vibrant Jewish community that stands with them in times of sorrow. The Jewish Community Center of Paramus always announces the location of the *Shiva* minyanim through cards and email. If there is a *Shiva* Minyan in your neighborhood, please attend.

By reacquainting ourselves with these basic Jewish communal responses to death, and rededicating ourselves to do our part, we will truly comfort mourners in their hour of need, and grow in our love and appreciation of Judaism. With our actions, we will teach all who look to our Jewish community of our Biblical truth: that in the way of righteousness, there is life.



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