

**ONE OF THE MOST** difficult situations we face in life is arranging for the funeral of a loved one. Today as in ancient times, families often feel pressured into spending huge sums of money on funerals, sometimes even going into debt—especially if they are making all the decisions about arrangements immediately after someone has died.

Jewish tradition stresses simplicity and affirms the equality of all human beings at death. We are encouraged to take the money that might otherwise be spent on a more lavish funeral and direct it toward life-giving *tzedakah* (righteous giving).

PSJC offers its members the opportunity to participate in a simple Jewish funeral plan, currently in cooperation with Shomrei HaChomos Chapels in nearby Borough Park. Those who elect to participate in this plan will be able—with one telephone call—to arrange for a traditional Jewish funeral that includes:

- **Services of a licensed funeral director and all basic arrangements**
- **Transfer of the dead to the funeral home**
- **Refrigeration (as required by law)**
- ***Sh'mirah*—the traditional vigil over the dead**
- ***Taharah*—the traditional ritual washing, purification, and dressing of the body**
- ***Takhrikhim*—simple white burial garments**
- **A simple, unfinished wood coffin**
- **Use of the funeral home chapel and facilities**
- **A hearse to transport the dead to the cemetery**
- **A temporary grave marker, *shiv'ah* candle, guest registry book and acknowledgment cards**

By agreement with the funeral home, the total cost for this plan will be **\$1950** through November 30, 2012 (after which adjustments may be made for inflation). A PSJC

representative will be available as liaison between bereaved families and the funeral home. Families will not be required to visit the funeral home to make arrangements, and may submit a check post-dated 30 days on the day of the funeral.

PSJC volunteers will provide *sh'mirah* and *taharah* for our members and for their immediate relatives (parents, siblings, spouses/life partners and/or children). Other charges may apply, such as the cost of death certificates, tolls and mileage beyond the local range, and the optional use of a limousine by the family.

This plan does NOT include the cost of a burial plot, or non-negotiable cemetery charges on the day of the funeral. PSJC members in good standing may purchase burial plots at well below market rates (currently \$900 each, subject to change).

If you are interested in participating in the PSJC funeral plan, please complete the attached form and return it to the PSJC office. It will be kept on file, and a representative of our Burial Committee / *Hevra Kadisha* will contact you with confirmations and updates. If you have any questions about completing the form, please write to [hevra.kadisha@psjc.org](mailto:hevra.kadisha@psjc.org) or call the PSJC office at 718-768-1453.

The time of death, whenever it comes, is sacred and vulnerable. Facing these issues while we are still healthy, and making our wishes known in advance of crisis, can help us to clarify and express the most cherished values of our lives. This process can also strengthen our relationships with family, friends and community, and help us to leave a legacy of comfort and hope for our survivors and our world.

*Only goodness and lovingkindness will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Eternal forever.*

Psalm 23:6

## PSJC SIMPLE FUNERAL PLAN (PLEASE PRINT)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Day Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Evening Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

**I / We intend to participate in the PSJC funeral plan.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I / We would like to purchase (a) burial plot(s) through PSJC. OR:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I / We have already purchased (a) burial plot(s). Here is the cemetery name and telephone number, as well as the plot location(s):**

**Primary contact (other than above) in event of death:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

(Continued on Reverse)

Secondary contact (other than above) in event of death:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ My / Our family members (up to 8) will accompany the body in the hearse to the cemetery. OR:

\_\_\_\_\_ My / Our family members will use car service or other alternate arrangements for transportation to the funeral home and cemetery. OR:

\_\_\_\_\_ I / We request a limousine for family members, at an additional (currently \$595+) charge.

\_\_\_\_\_ I / We request a graveside service only. OR:

\_\_\_\_\_ I / We request a service at the funeral home as well as at the graveside (no additional charge). OR:

\_\_\_\_\_ I / We request a service at PSJC as well as at the graveside (subject to limitations of PSJC policy).

Other information and specific requests (please attach additional pages as appropriate):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## TRADITIONAL JEWISH BURIAL PRACTICES

**Sh'mirah / Vigil:** The body of one who has died should not be left alone from the time of death until the completion of burial. Traditionally, one or more Jews watch over the body around the clock, reciting Psalms during this time.

**Taharah / Purification:** The ritual washing and dressing of the body in *takhrikhim* (shrouds; see below) is performed by members of a *Hevra Kadisha* (Sacred Society) in an atmosphere of reverence and dignity, accompanied by the recitation of special prayers.

**Takhrikhim / Shrouds:** The body is dressed in simple white burial garments which symbolize the equality of all human beings at death, as instituted by Rabban Gamaliel (see panel to the right).

**Aron / Coffin:** Although the dead in Israel are buried in shrouds alone, Jews in the Diaspora are buried in coffins (also called "caskets"). The coffin should be simple and made entirely of wood, so that the body can return to the earth in keeping with the Biblical teaching: *And the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it* (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

**K'vurah / Burial:** The body should be buried in the ground, as soon as it is possible and feasible to assemble the significant others after death. To participate in filling in the grave with earth is considered a privilege and a duty.

Two other rituals—*kri'ah* (tearing of garments, often symbolized by a ribbon) and *hesped* (eulogy)—are arranged with the officiating rabbi or cantor. **Please feel free to contact our PSJC rabbi with any questions or concerns about these or any other traditions.**

## THE PSJC SIMPLE JEWISH FUNERAL PLAN:

### Leaving a Legacy of Comfort and Hope

*At first they would bring out the [deceased] rich on an ornamented couch and the [deceased] poor on a plain bier, and the poor were ashamed—it was decreed that all should be brought out on a plain bier for the honor of the poor....*

*At first, burial of the dead was for their relatives more difficult than their death [because of the inordinate financial outlay], to the point at which relatives would leave their dead and flee—until Rabban Gamaliel came and, disregarding his own honor, came out [to be buried] in [plain] linen garments, and the people after him followed the custom of coming out [to be buried] in linen garments. Said Rav Pappa: And now it is customary even in hemp cloth worth one zuz!*

Babylonian Talmud, *Moed Katan* 27a-b

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