Jewish End of Life

Judaism provides a sacred framework at the end of life. The practices and traditions provide structure and support when it's needed most. Every journey is unique to those experiencing it, and the rituals and traditions offer a container that can help hold us. An incredibly important aspect from illness through mourning is that the community is encouraged to be present. We have a communal responsibility to care for one another. This is the journey:

Bikkur Cholim

The obligation (*mitzvah*) to visit and extend aid to the sick is an act of simple kindness. It is giving of one's self to aid another who is in need of help. We show up for one another from a place of love and care.

Death

A Holy Society (*Chevrah Kadishah*) is often composed of volunteers in the community, and they sit watch over the deceased (*shmirah*) and wash and dress the deceased for burial (*taharah*). The body and soul are cared for with the utmost respect.

Aninut

The state of being between the death of a loved one and their final disposition. This is a liminal space within a liminal space. In this time, the mourner has no obligations and as a community we can show up to help make plans and provide whatever the bereaved might need.

Funeral & Burial

A Jewish funeral is about accompanying (*levayah*) both the deceased and the mourners by showing up, listening, helping to bury the deceased, and forming two lines as the mourners exit the cemetery to assure them that we are here to help hold them in their journey ahead.

Shiva

Jewish mourning begins with the seven days when a mourner is in their immediate grief (shiva). The community is there to hold them in these moments, to witness, to listen, and to provide nourishment and care.

Grief & Mourning

Judaism marks thirty days (*shloshim*) from a death when mourners move out of a public state of mourning. The year anniversary and subsequent years (*yahrtzeit*) are also significant moments to mark. How might we continue to show up for one another, to check in, and show care?