

Attending Shiva

Shiva, is Hebrew for seven, and it is the initial seven-day period of mourning following the death of a loved one. This is a time and space for those who are mourning to fully experience their deep grief without any social obligations.

What to expect:

- The door is open, please head inside without knocking or ringing the doorbell. This prevents the mourners from having to shift into being hosts.
- Mirrors might be covered inside, this is done intentionally to free the mourners from worrying about their appearance in this time of grief.
- There might be a candle burning, it will burn throughout the seven days as a memorial for our loved one.
- Those who are in mourning might be sitting close to the ground, a practice that dates back to Biblical times.
- Mourners might have a black ribbon attached to their clothes or a tear in their clothes. This act of tearing the fabric is called *kriah*. This ritual serves to make visible our grief; the tear in our clothes is akin to a tear in our world, and even if it's mended, it will never be what it was.

What to say:

- We let the mourners guide the conversation and wait for them to speak before we speak. We come to support them in their grief journey, whatever form that takes.
- There are common phrases we say to a mourner (typically upon leaving). They are:
 - *HaMakom y'nachem etkhem b'tokh sh'ar aveilei Tzion v'Yrushalayim*: May God comfort you among all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem
 - *Zichronam livracha*: May their memory be a blessing
 - *Baruch dayan haemet*: Blessed is the True Judge
- Share your love, a memory, your compassion. It is important not to share your personal grief with the mourner.

What to do:

- Bring food and drink to the mourner if they have none. In grief, we might forget to care for ourselves the way we usually do.
- Eat the food that is laid out.
- Stay for as long as you feel is the right amount. Do not feel obligated to stay for an extended period of time.
- If there is a prayer service (*shiva minyan*) taking place during your visit, you are invited to stay and participate as you can. It might last 15-20 minutes.
- Listen, witness, and be present.

