

Yael Galinson

Gamliel Final Project - Jewish Bikur Cholim & End of Life Kit

One of the holiest *mitzvot*, commandments, in our tradition is *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick. Being with those that are ill is an example of *g'milut chasadim*, acts of lovingkindness, and according to the Talmud, visiting a sick person is said to take away 1/60th of their pain. As a hospice volunteer and End of Life Doula, I have the privilege of accompanying those who are sick and nearing the end of their lives and caring for them and their loved ones. This work is holy and deeply meaningful.

Whether visiting someone who is ill with a non-life-threatening illness or visiting someone who has a terminal diagnosis, there are important ways to prepare and to show up mentally, spiritually, and physically. For my final project to graduate from the Gamliel Institute, I have put together a list of items to bring for such visits, and I am calling it a Jewish Bikur Cholim & End of Life Kit. The items on this list can be useful when performing the mitzvah of *bikur cholim*, when accompanying someone who is dying, and when caring for the body of someone who has just died. Where possible, I have included hyperlinks to the items, so they are easy to procure.

List of items to bring for *Bikur Cholim*¹:

- Personal Protective Equipment
 - Disposable gloves
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Masks
 - Wipes

- Personal items for self-care
 - Water bottle
 - Snacks
 - Layers
 - Book to read
 - Journal
 - Reading glasses
 - Chargers for electronic devices

- Book of poetry/readings
 - Psalms - it is traditional to recite psalms on behalf of those who are sick ¹

The items towards the end of this list apply to visiting those that are terminally ill and/or nearing death

- [Psalms in the Key of Healing: A Text Study for Clergy, Chaplains and People Living with Illness](#) by H. Rafael Goldstein
 - The Shmira Books²(*READINGS* and *PSALMS*) from Kehilla Community Synagogue in Piedmont, California
- [To Life: Bedside Prayers](#) by Rabbi Shafir Lobb
- [May the Angels Carry You: Jewish Prayers and Meditations for the Deathbed](#) by Simcha Paull Raphael
- [Last Acts of Kindness](#) by Judith Redwing Keyssar

- Prompts for legacy work or ethical wills
 - [Ethical Will Workbook](#) from Jewish Foundation of Los Angeles
 - [Ethical Will Worksheet](#) from Everplans
 - Legacy Work and Life Review chapters in [The Doula Tool Kit](#) by Diane Button, Gabrielle Jimenez, and Angela Shook

- Card decks with prompts
 - [EOL Deck](#): a tool used by families, caregivers, and healthcare providers to help facilitate conversations about end-of-life wishes
 - [Go Wish](#): card game to help facilitate conversations about end of life

- [Candle - battery operated](#)

- [Portable bluetooth speaker](#)

- Playlist of music with niggunim and/or meaningful songs
 - My personal [spotify playlist](#) of end-of-life songs

- [Viddui options](#)
 - My personal favorites are:
 - [Rami Shapiro's viddui](#)
 - [Alison Jordan's mishaberach for those gathered at the bedside](#)
 - [Alison Jordan's viddui for the mourners](#)

- [Barbara Karnes books](#) - short, informative booklets about what to expect at end of life
 - A Time to Live: Living with a Life Threatening Illness
 - Gone From My Sight: The Dying Experience

- The Eleventh Hour: A Caring Guideline For the Hours to Minutes Before Death

²Contact [Cathy Steirn](#) to order the books from Kehilla

- My Friend, I Care: The Grief Experience
- Joe Blair's "Elements of My Jewish Funeral"
- Mouth swabs and/or chapstick
- Kria ribbons - from your local Jewish mortuary

List of materials for after death:

- Directory of local resources
- Information about Jewish funeral homes
 - Bay Area: [Sinai Memorial Chapel](#)

List of materials for Home Tahara³:

- [To Midwife a Soul book](#) by Rick Light
- PPE - disposable gloves and masks
- Washcloths and towels (preferably dark)
 - For cleaning the meit/meita
 - For drying the meit/meita
 - For catching/absorbing water during pouring
- Bag for dirty linens
- Bag for anything hazardous
- Bowl(s) for water
- Waterproof pads
- Scissors
- Nail Care
 - Nail polish remover
 - Cotton balls
 - Toothpicks
- Hair Care
 - Dry shampoo
 - Hairbrush
- Watering can or other water holder for pouring water

- Tachrichim (including bag for collecting any blood soiled items or things that need to be placed in the casket)
- Bag of soil from Israel

³I'd like to thank Sally Shannon for her teaching and guidance on home tahara and for identifying many of the items on the list.

- Sheet/sovev ●
- Candle & lighter