

Comforting Mourners at Beth Emet **A Brief Guide to Practices in Our Community**

Jewish laws and traditions encourage us to surround mourners with a supportive community. At Beth Emet, there are many ways to provide comfort and support to those in mourning. Your presence at a funeral is one important way to honor the person who died and provide comfort to those who are grieving. It is also a mitzvah to visit the home of mourners during the shiva period, which may range from one day to seven, and to participate in the prayer service held in their home.

According to Jewish custom, mourners should not greet or entertain visitors during shiva, or provide food for visitors. However, in our Beth Emet community – as in many others – friends often help arrange food for family and shiva visitors. Beth Emet's Ozerim committee can also provide assistance.

At the shiva, don't worry about what to say – a simple "I'm sorry" will be appreciated. In fact, tradition counsels comforters to respond to the needs and mood of the mourners, rather than to initiate conversation. Your presence is what is most meaningful. Often, sharing memories or asking questions about the deceased can offer a way to provide comfort. Remember that shiva is not a social gathering and chitchat is discouraged unless initiated by the mourner, who may prefer silence.

Whether or not you are able to make a personal visit, you can also call, write a note, sign an online guestbook, and/or donate to Beth Emet or a charity identified by the mourners in memory of the deceased. Knowing that their loved one is remembered helps comfort those who are grieving.

As Judaism recognizes, healing is a process that takes time. Staying in touch or offering a meal in the weeks or months following a death also can be a source of support and comfort.

If you would like additional information or guidance about Jewish mourning practice, Rabbi London, Cantor Friedman, and the Ozerim committee welcome your questions.

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