

TRADITIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE UNVEILING

The custom of placing a monument over the grave of a departed person is a very ancient Jewish tradition. The Book of Genesis, for example, records that Jacob erected a tombstone over the grave of his wife Rachel. From Biblical times onward, wherever Jewish communities have existed, Jews have continued this practice of erecting a memorial in honor of their deceased.

The tombstone is erected to indicate clearly where a person is buried, so that family and friends may visit the gravesite. It is also a way of remembering and honoring the memory of the person who has died.

Today, we refer to the ceremony of formally consecrating a tombstone as an "unveiling". While this ceremony has no origin in pre-modern Jewish life, this has become an acceptable practice today.

An unveiling takes place during the first year after death. There are no strict guidelines for the timing of an unveiling, and, while families may choose a date at any time after the end of the Shiva, it has become a contemporary practice to schedule this ceremony for some time between the end of Shloshim, the thirty day period of intensive mourning, and the first Yahrzeit, the anniversary of a death.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF THE UNVEILING

The unveiling is a mourning ritual which serves a very specific function in the healing process of the bereaved. It is not simply a perfunctory ritual, but rather, like the funeral, Shiva, Shloshim and Kaddish, the unveiling provides mourners with the opportunity for emotional and psychological healing.

The physical act of erecting and unveiling a monument allows for the expression of the sad and painful emotions of grief. Family members gather together, often from cities which are miles apart, and continue their mourning as a family, lending each other comfort and support in dealing with their grief.

For individuals who were not able to attend the funeral or Shiva, the unveiling ritual provides yet another opportunity to grieve and to acknowledge one's loss. Although painful, this realistic experience of grief can, over time, be very healing for mourners.

During the unveiling of a monument, as one sees the name of a beloved family member etched in stone, there is a stark realization of the finality of death. The impact can be quite jarring to some, and yet, at the same time, can provide a further opportunity to accept the reality of the loss. Thus, the unveiling ritual allows mourners to face death and loss realistically, and to affirm a commitment to life and to living.

The unveiling also allows the bereaved family members to honor and to recall the memory of their departed. It is a chance to continue to reflect upon the significance of that person's life, his or her accomplishments, and the people who were important. In a sense, through the unveiling, the memory of a person's life is etched permanently into the collective memory of the Jewish community.

Eil Malei Rachamim-Male

EIL MALEI RACHAMIM

*When Visiting the Cemetery
For Male*

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה
נכונה על כנפי השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים
זוהר הקיע מזהירים, את־נשמת _____ בן _____
שהלך לעולמו, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתו. אָנָּה, בעל
הרחמים הסתירהו בסתר כנפיד לעולמים, וצור
בצור החיים את־נשמתו, יי הוא נחלתו, וינוח
בשלום על משקבו, ונאמר אָמֵן.

*Eil malei rachamim sho-khein bam'romim,
hammtzei m'nukhah n'khonah al kanfei ha-
sh'khinah, b'ma-alot k'doshim u-t'horim k'zohar
ha-rakiya maz-hirim et nishmat _____ ben
_____ sheh-halakh l'olamo, b'gan eiden t'hei
m'nuhato. Ana, ba-al ha-rachamim, hassti-rei-hu
b'seiter k'nafekha l'olamim, u-tzror bi-tzror ha-
hayim et nishmato, Adonai hu nahalato, v'yanu-
ah b'shalom al mishkavo. v'nomar amen.*

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure who shine with the splendour of the firmament, to the soul of our dear _____ who has gone to his eternal home. Master of mercy, remember all his worthy deeds in the land of the living. May his soul be bound up in the bond of life. May his memory always inspire us to attain dignity and holiness in life. May he rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

Personal Meditation

Compassionate God, at this time of remembrance, I offer my prayers on behalf of _____. Keep his beloved soul in Your providential care. May his memory and the goodness which he wrought in his life find continuity in my life, and unto all eternity.

Personal thoughts may be added.

Eil Malei Rachamim-Female

EIL MALEI RACHAMIM

*When Visiting the Cemetery
For Female*

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה
נכונה על כנפי השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים
כזהר הרקיע מזהירים, את־נשמת _____ בת _____
שהלכה לעולמה, בגן עדן תהא מנוחתה. אָנָּא, בעל
הרחמים הסתירה בסתר כנפיד לעולמים, וצרור
בצרור החיים את־נשמתה, יי הוא נחלתה, ותנוח
בשלום על משכבה, ונאמר אָמֵן.

*Eil malei rachamim sho-khein bam'romim,
hammtzei m'nuhah n'khonah al kanfei ha-
sh'khinah, b'ma-alot k'doshim u-t'horim k'zohar
ha-rakiya maz-hirim et nishmat _____ bat
_____ sheh-halkhah l'olamah, b'gan eiden t'hei
m'nuhatah. Ana, ba-al ha-rachamim, hassti-reha
b'seiter k'nafekha l'olamim, u-tzror bi-tzror ha-
hayim et nishmatah, Adonai hu nahalatah, v'tanu-
ah b'shalom al mishkavah, v'nomar amen.*

Exalted, compassionate God, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and the pure who shine with the splendour of the firmament, to the soul of our dear _____ who has gone to her eternal home. Master of mercy, remember all her worthy deeds in the land of the living. May her soul be bound up in the bond of life. May her memory always inspire us to attain dignity and holiness in life. May she rest in peace. And let us say: Amen.

Personal Meditation

Compassionate God, at this time of remembrance, I offer my prayers on behalf of _____. Keep her beloved soul in Your providential care. May her memory and the goodness which she wrought in her life find continuity in my life, and unto all eternity.

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Mourners Kaddish

MOURNER'S KADDISH

יִתְגַּדֵּל וַיִּתְקַדֵּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא. בְּעֲלָמָא דִּי-בְרָא
כְּרַעוּתָהּ. וַיִּמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעָגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב.
וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלַם וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמַיָּא :
יְתַבְרַךְ וַיִּשְׁתַּבַּח וַיִּתְפָּאֵר וַיִּתְרַמֵּם וַיִּתְנַשֵּׂא
וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקֻדְשָׁא. בְּרִיךְ
הוּא. לְעָלָא מִן כָּל-בְּרַכְתָּא וְשִׁירְתָּא תְּשַׁבְּחִתָּא
וְנַחֲמִתָּא דְאִמְיָרָן בְּעֲלָמָא. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל
כָּל-יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל. וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן :

Kaddish-English Translation

THE MOURNER'S KADDISH (English Translation)

יתגדל May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified (**Cong. - Amen**) in the world that He created as He willed. May He give reign to His kingship, in your lifetimes and in your days, and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel, swiftly and soon. **Now respond:** Amen. (**Cong. - Amen**).

Congregation then mourner:

May His great Name be blessed forever and ever.

Mourner continues:

Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, mighty, upraised, and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He (**Cong. - Blessed is He**) beyond any blessing and song, praise and consolation that are uttered in the world. **Now respond:** Amen. (**Cong. - Amen**).

May there be abundant peace from Heaven, and life upon us and upon all Israel. **Now respond:** Amen. (**Cong. - Amen**).

Take three steps back. Bow left and say, "He who makes peace..."; **bow right and say,** "may He..."; **bow forward and say,** "and upon all Israel..."

He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace upon us, and upon all Israel. **Now respond:** Amen. (**Cong. - Amen**).

Mourner remains standing in place for a few moments, then takes three steps forward.

Kaddish-Transliteration

MOURNER'S KADDISH

(Transliteration)

Yit-gadal V' yit-kadash Sh' mey Raba, B' alma
Di V' ra

Hiru-tey. V'yamlich mal-hutey B'cha-yey-hon U-V'
yomey-chon

U-v' cha-yey D; hol Beyt Yisrael Ba - agala U- viz-
man Kariv,

V' imru **Amen.**

**Y' hey Sh' mey Raba M' varah L' alam Ul-almey
Alma-ya.**

Yit-barach V' yish-tabach, V' yit-pa-ar V' yit-romam
V' yit-na-sey,

V' yit-hadar V' yit-ale V' yit-halal, Sh' mey D' kud-
sha, **B' rih chu.**

L' eyla Min Kol Bir-chata V'shi-rata, Tush-b' chata

V' ne-chemaata Da-amiran B' alma, V' imru **Amen.**

Y' hey Sh'lama Raba Min Sh'ma-ya, V' cha-yim,
Aleynu V' al

Kol Yisrael, V' imru **Amen.**

Oseh Shalom Bi-m' romav, Hu Ya-aseh Shalom
אֱלֹהֵינוּ

V' al Kol Yisrael, V' imru **Amen.**

THE UNVEILING SERVICE

The service for the unveiling of a monument is a short and simple one. It consists of the recitation of several Psalms; the actual removal of the veil from the memorial; the recitation of the malei rachamiim (the Memorial Prayer) and the Kaddish. A Minyan is required for the recitation of Kaddish; however, if there is no Minyan available, the Kaddish is omitted.

At the unveiling it is certainly appropriate for a family member to choose to speak about the person who has died, or to read a supplemental poem or prayer. It is best to discuss this with the officiating rabbi beforehand.

The following wording may be used ...

A thousand Years, in the sight of our eternal and merciful Father, are but a day; the years of our life but a passing hour. He grants us life and life He has taken away; praised be His name.

_____ has taken from our midst. We are pained by the gap in our lives. Yet love is strong as death; the bonds love creates are eternal. And ours is the blessing of memory, through which the lives of our departed continue to be with us

(The Covering Is Removed)

In the name of the family of _____ and in the presence of his (her) family (and friends) we consecrate this monument to his (her) memory, as a token of our love and respect.

May his (her) soul be bound up in the bond of life.

Amen

The memorial prayer, Eil Malei Rachamim, is now recited.