SHIVA

Frequently Asked Shaylos

Preparing the Shiva House

The First Meal

I have heard something about bagels after the funeral. What am I supposed to be doing?
The first meal after the funeral is called he seudas havraa. This meal should be provided by others for the aveilim.[1] Usually the chevra Kadisha of the shul organizes this meal.

What is the reason for this practice?
There are many reasons:

1. To ensure the aveilim are cared for when they are in grief.[2]
2. There is often no time for the aveilim to take care of themselves.[3]
3. It is to remind them that one doesn't want to receive a free giveaway and that is why we are in this world, to earn our keep before the next world.[4]

Can I grab a snack after the funeral or do I have to wait for this meal?
One can take a snack but the first meal should not be had before this meal.[5]

What should this meal be made of?
It should typically be a round food like lentils or eggs. This reminds the avel of the circle of life and the fact that they have no mouth – there is silence in grief.[6]

When is this skipped?
If the burial is on the afternoon of erev Shabbos[7] or on Chol Hamoed[8], this meal is skipped.

Mirrors

Which mirrors need to be covered?
All the mirrors that the avel would see. The mirrors in the breakfront need not be covered.

What is the reason for this practice?
There are a few reasons for this:

a. Shiva is a time of lack of self-care as one focuses on the deceased. As such a mirror is not used.[9]
b. It is used as a vehicle of self-beautification and connection between spouses. Spousal relationships are forbidden during the shiva so the mirror is not used.[10]
c. One davens in the Beis Avel so the mirrors should be covered.[11]

Should I cover mirrors on Shabbos?
The mirrors should be uncovered on Shabbos since there is no public display of mourning on Shabbos

Should I cover the mirrors at my house if it is not the shiva house?
The mirrors should be covered in the rooms the avel uses(e.g. the master bathroom).

Low Chairs

Why can we not sit on regular chairs?
This was originally overturning the beds to demonstrate the overturning of the tzelem elokim in the human being.[12] It should be lower than 10 inches from the ground but lower than usual is fine.[13]

Do I need to sit low for eating?
One may sit on a regular chair to eat.

Do I need to sleep n a low bed?
No, a regular bed is fine.[14]

Where do I get these chairs from?
Our volunteer chevra Kadisha is proud to help provide this service. You do not need to call misaskim. Just let the Rabbi know how many chairs you need and by when.

Restrictions during shiva

Tefillin

Do I wear Tefillin during shiva?
Yes, except the first day of shiva, even after the funeral.[15] This continues till sunrise the next morning.[16]

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[1] Shulchan Aruch YD 378:1
[2] Pnei Baruch 7 sk 1
[3] Be'er Heitev
[4] Gesher Hachaim
[5] Aruch Hashulchan YD 378:2
[6] Shulchan Aruch YD 378:9
[7] Shulchan Aruch YD 378:5
[8] Ramo YD 378:11, note the Shulchan Aruch says there is one on Motzei Yom Tov.
[9] Keser Shem Tov I:3
[10] Chasam Sofar
[11] Responsa Chelek Halevi YD 132
[12] TB Moed Kattan 15a
[13] Aruch Hashulchan YD 387:3
[14] Pnei Baruch
[15] Shulchan Aruch YD 388:1
[16] Shach sk 1

Rabbi Ya'akov Trump

Self-Care

Am I allowed to shower?
An avel may not shower during shiva in both hot or cold water. If one becomes dirty and need to clean, they may use warm water and soap in that spot to remove the dirt.[17]
A person who usually showers every day and will suffer extreme discomfort by not showering, may shower after the first day quickly.

Can a woman go to the mikva during shiva?
If the woman is in aveilus, she must wait till after shiva. [18]If her husband is in aveilus, she may go to the mikva because it makes it easier to be able to have pass things to each other during this time even though intimacy remains forbidden.[19]

May I put on deodorant?
An avel may not wear aftershave or perfume.[20]
They may wear deodorant which is used to remove or prevent a bad odor.[21]

May I put on makeup?
A woman may not wear makeup for the entire Shloshim. However, a married woman may put on makeup but only after Shiva. This includes erev Shabbos during the Shiva. A newly-wed woman, or a young lady in shidduchim may put on makeup even during Shiva.[22]

May chapstick be used during the shiva?
Yes, chapstick may be used since it is there to heal or prevent cracking in the lips. Perfume or any creams for pleasure or self image are not allowed.[23]

May I brush my teeth?
Yes, no restrictions.

May I wear jewelry?
Not during the shiva.

May I do laundry or change my clothes?
An avel may not wear freshly laundered clothes during shiva.[24] This does not include undergarments.[25]

Shoes

Which shoes can I wear?
One may not wear leather shoes during shiva. All others are allowed.[26] Some avoid wearing really comfortable non-leather shoes.[27] Others are less concerned about this. [28]

Relationships

Are husbands and wives allowed to be together?
Not during the shiva.[29]

What kind of contact is allowed?
Beyond actual intimacy, a couple may not kiss or hug but all other forms of contact forbidden during nidus are permitted during shiva.[30]

Learning Torah

May I learn Torah?
Since Torah is something which bring simcha, an avel must avoid Torah study whether reading, writing, speaking or listening.[31]

Are there sections of Torah I may learn?
One may learn Iyov, Yirmiyahu and Eicha, and one may say Tehillim. One may also learn the gemaras and halachos about the destruction of the mikdash, which are allowed on Tisha B'Av.[32]

May I recite Tehillim?
If it is recited as a tefilla not an academic study, it is allowed.[33]

What about reading or watching the news?
If Torah is prohibited, then certainly one should not read/watch the news to distract themselves from the deceased.[34]

May a child in aveilus go to school?
Children should be sent to school as regular.[35]

Are there different rules for davening in the shiva home?
Yes, please ask Rabbi Trump for the guide to tefilla on the house of aveilus.

Greeting

Are there any restrictions about what I can say to people who visit?

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[17] Shulchan Aruch YD 381:1
[18] Shulchan Aruch YD 381:5
[19] Darkei Tahara page 171
[20] Shulchan Aruch YD 381:2
[21] Chukei Chaim sk 11 quoting Rav Neventzal
[22] Shulchan Aruch YD 381:6
[23] Shulchan Aruch YD 381:2
[24] Sulchan Aruch YD 389:1
[25] Pischei Teshuva YD 389 sk 2
[26] Shulchan Aruch YD 382:1
[27] Mishna Berura OC 514 sk 5
[28] Halichos Shlomo 5:17
[29] Shulchan Aruch YD 383:1
[30] Ramo YD 383:1
[31] Shulchan Aruch YD 384:1
[32] Shulchan Aruch YD 384:4
[33] Gesher Hachaim 21:5:1
[34] Aruch Hashulchan 384:9
[35] Shulchan Aruch YD 383:5

The avel should not greet visitors with the words 'shalom aleichem.' In turn the visitors should also not greet the avel in such a way.[36] This also includes other more colloquial types of greeting.[37]

Work

Am I allowed to work in order to make sure things are running in the office?
An avel is not allowed to work during the course of the shiva so that their focus remains completely on the deceased.[38] That means that anyone who is an e mployee should take off bereavement days for the duration of the shiva.

What if I will lose a lot of money if I don't do what I need?
If one is the expert on this matter and if one does not attend to it, there will be a significant loss, one may attend to that specific issue after the 3rd day of shiva.[39]

Am I allowed to write?
Writing is prohibited during shiva in the same way it is not allowed during Chol Hamoed.[40] Texting or typing on the computer is fine.[41]

I am a doctor – what if I get a call?
One should take off the week and find coverage. If one gets an urgent call and the only doctor who can address this is you, you make take the call and even make a house call.[42]

I have a business, may my workers continue to work during shiva?
Yes, because not doing so would mean losing all the money one has to pay them anyway.[43]

I am in real estate, what do I do about my assets which are growing over the course of shiva?
Profit which accrues because of investments which one is not directly involved with is fine to allow to continue during shiva.[44]

What if I am a business owner?
A business owner may not run his/her business during Aveilus. If one is not able to shut down the business during the shiva, it is best to sell one's business to a partner or manager who will run the business. That means that you will not be receiving profits from this week. The partner or manager may give you a bonus after the week of shiva as a gift.[45] For the document of sale, please ask Rabbi Trump.

What about household chores?
An avel may help with household chore which are necessary during the shiva. Thus, the avel may continue to employ someone to help clean the house as well.[46]

Food

I heard that one cannot remove things from the shiva house, what if there is leftover food?

The general custom it not to remove food from the beis avel because of 'ruach ra.'[47] Leftover food which was brought after the death may be taken out.

Travel

May I go out of the shiva house to pick up something from the store?
The avel should not leave the shiva house except if it is related to travel which is for the need of the shiva or to get to another place to sit or to sleep back home.[48] Walking into the back yard or onto the porch is allowed.

Can I travel to and from the shiva house if I am staying at home?
One may but one should have a chaperon.[49] The chaperon may be another avel.

Non Aveilim

Are there restrictions on those married to the aveilim but are not in mourning themselves?
One thing to be aware of is that one should not hand a baby to the mourner because a baby makes people happy.
In addition, anyone who is related to the mourner in such a way that they are invalid to be a witness for them, should have minor restrictions of Aveilus until Motzei Shabbos in the Shiva. This would mean not showering in hot water, just in luke warm water and not attending a big meal.[50]

Shabbos

What is allowed on Shabbos?
When Shabbos comes, the conspicuous aspects of Aveilus are lifted. That means the avel can change out of the

[36] Shulchan Aruch YD 385:1
[37] Aruch Hashulchan YD 385:2
[38] Shulchan Aruch YD 380:1
[39] Ramo YD 380:5, note that the Shulchan Aruch requires others to do it not he avel
[40] Ramo YD 380:2
[41] Shemiras Shabbos Kehilchesa 66:55
[42] Pischei Teshuva YD 380 sk 1
[43] Pnei Baruch 13:30
[44] Shulchan Aruch YD 380:11
[45] See Pischei Teshuva YD 380 sk 4 in the name of the Chasam Sofer
[46] Shulchan Aruch YD 380:22
[47] Rabbi Akiva Eiger YD 376:4
[48] Shulchan Aruch, Ramo YD 393:2
[49] Based on TB Brachos 54b
[50] Shach 345 sk 7

ripped shirt, change clothes to Shabbos, wear leather shoes, sit on a regular seat.

What is not allowed on Shabbos?
The private aspects of Aveilus remain. These include: marital relations, learning Torah, bathing, using perfume/aftershave, taking a walk, joyous activities.

When do I need to sit till on erev Shabbos?
There are different opinions on this topic. One can change clothes at the time of mincha ketana (2.5 halahcik hours before sunset).[51] That means that even if one has no more visitors after 1pm, one would still sit low till mincha ketana time.

Can I shower on erev Shabbos?
This is included in private Aveilus which is not allowed even on Erev Shabbos. One may clean one's face and spot clean. If a person experiences extreme discomfort by not showering, there is what to rely on to shower.

Is anything different about my behavior in shul on Shabbos?
Yes. An avel sits out for kabbolas Shabbos and enters before Mizmor Shir L'Yom HaShabbos for a communal nichumim.

Can I sing Zemiros?
Yes, if one usually does.

Do I give brachos to my children?
Not during the week of shiva.

May I wear jewelry on Shabbos?
During the week of shiva, a woman should not wear jewelry. On Shabbos she may wear the jewelry without which would make it clear she is in Aveilus.

Do I need a minyan on Friday afternoon or Motzei Shabbos?
It is not necessary. One can daven in shul for Mincha before Shabbos and for Maariv on Motzei Shabbos.

When does the Aveilus start again on Motzei Shabbos?
The Avel reverts back to public aveilus right after doing havdala.

Are there other practices we should be aware of at the shiva home?
Yes. It is inappropriate for people to greet each other or extend a hand in greeting at a shiva home.[52]

[51] Aruch Hashulchan YD 400:2, Gesher Hachaim 21:12:3 says until plag hamincha, others wait till shkiah
[52] Aruch Hashulchan YD 343:4

End of Shiva

When does shiva end?
Shiva is calculated from the time of burial. Partial days count as full days at the beginning and end of aveilus. So even if they funeral was in the late afternoon and the aveilim sat for 5 minutes before sunset, that was day 1. The last day of the shiva is observed until after Shacharis time on the 7th day. After the aveilim get up, shiva has ended.[53]

What if Shiva ends on an erev Yom Tov?
Yom Tov cancels the remaining days of shiva.
One still sits shiva until Plag Hamincha (roughly 1.25 hours before Yom Tov). One does not have to have visitation hours till then but if one were to be alone in the house, one would still sit low until then, wear non leather shoes and wear the torn garments. So, in terms of planning, it is a good idea to have visitation hours till 2pm and have a mincha then which marks to the public the end of their dropping in.
If one davens mincha early, from Plag, the avel may bath in hot water and change into Yom Tov clothes
One may eat the seudah mafsekes sitting regularly and wearing leather shoes.
One may not cut hair or nails on erev Yom Tov.

I have heard that the aveilim need to walk outside. How far must we walk? Why?
This is a later minhag. There are a number of reasons for it.

a. The mourners have not been allowed to leave the house. This is the public demonstration of the end of the shiva
b. The mourners have been protected from the world for 7 days. Now they must move back into the public space of regular life.
c. There is an element of escort of the Neshama which now moves on at the end of shiva.

[53] Shulchan Aruch, Ramo YD 395:1