

## Guide For Leading A Shiva Minyan

***“...no one ever promised us a life free from pain and disappointment. The most anyone promised us was that we would not be alone in our pain, and that we would be able to draw upon a source outside ourselves for the strength and courage we would need to survive life’s tragedies and life’s unfairness.” (When Bad Things Happen to Good People. Pg. 133. By Harold S. Kushner)***

- 1) The Grieve Case: Often, synagogues have a Grieve Case (it could be called something else) that contains shiva booklets and kippot. If you are the first person leading the minyan, you will likely need to stop at the synagogue to pick up this case to have it available for family and guests attending the shiva. If shiva is observed for more than one day, ask the Rabbi or synagogue admin. If it’s possible for you to leave the case at the family’s home. If you are conducting shiva on the last night, make sure to take the Grieve case with you to return to the synagogue.
- 2) Obtain from the Rabbi or synagogue admin. the following basic information: Names of family members (or other relatives) that are hosting the shiva, address, name of the deceased in English and Hebrew.
- 3) Arrive only a few minutes before the start time (5 to 10 minutes is enough), identify the immediate family members, introduce yourself, identify the room where the service will be performed and the Grieve Case.
- 4) Announce that the service will begin and ask people to gather around. Hand out kippot and booklets (or ask for a volunteer to help with that if you have a large crowd) and ask people to turn off or silence their phones. Some people will be seated, some will be standing. As the prayer leader, remain standing for the entire service.
- 5) At the start of the service, thank people for performing this mitzvah of attending the shiva and allowing the family to recite Kaddish. Encourage them to participate in the way they are most comfortable, with Hebrew or English readings, or with the singing, and by sharing stories and vignettes when the time comes.

6) A service outline for Mishkan T'filah for the House of Morning:

You may choose to begin with a simple niggun or Hineh Ma Tov

Reading "*We are assembled...*" (pg. 1a)

"*Please Rise*" Bar'chu (pg. 4a)

Read Maariv in Hebrew or English (pg. 5a or pg. 5b)

"*Please be seated*" Choose English reading and invite the group to read with you (pg. 6b)

Sh'ma (pg. 7a)

V'ahavta (pg. 8a)

Read "*there are times...*" (pg. 9b)

Mi Chamocha (pg. 10a)

Choose English reading and invite the group to read with you (pg. 11b)

Chatzi Kaddish (pg. 12a)

Introduce the Amidah, and invite people to recite the opening sections out loud, together (pg. 13a, pg. 14a, pg. 15a, pg. 16a) "*Please Rise*"

You can say "*We continue silently reading, praying our own words or meditation through the rest of the Amidah, pg. 18-25. Please be seated when you are finished.*"

Oseh Shalom

"*Please Rise*" Aleinu (pg. 26a-27a)

Read or Sing Psalm 23 (pg. 28a)

Choose two to three readings and invite people to read along (don't read everything!!) (pg. 28b-32b)

You can say "*We now invite those who would like to share a story or vignette about (name of the deceased)*" After people have shared, you can end by saying "*May the memory of (name of the deceased) always be a blessing. We continue with El Male Rachamim on pg. 33a*"

**\*Note that if you are leading the first few night of shiva, there will likely be more people attending and wanting to share. If you are leading towards the end of the period of shiva, it's possible less people will share. Nonetheless, offer the space. If people don't step up, don't be afraid of the silence. Allow a full minute before you decide to move forward from that section of the service.**

"*Please Rise*" El Male Rachamim in Hebrew or English, chanted or read. Include the name of the person in Hebrew or English (pg. 33a)

"*Please remain standing*" Chatzi Kaddish (pg. 34a)

Conclude with a simple niggun or by saying "Erev Tov (have a good night)"