



עמנואל

The Emanuel Synagogue
PASSIONATE JEWISH LIVING

The Unveiling Ceremony

Adapted by Francene Turken Weingast and Rabbi David Small with permission from *How to Do an Unveiling Ceremony*, by Rabbi Edward Feinstein, Valley Beth Shalom, Encino California. Selections also come from *A Rabbi's Manual* edited by Jules Harlow, published by the Rabbinical Assembly 1965, and *The Rabbinical Assembly Rabbi's Manual* by Rabbi Perry R. Rank and Rabbi Gordon M. Freeman, 1998.

Introduction

It has long been a custom of the Jewish People to place a marker on a gravesite. The marker is made of some permanent material— usually stone—and contains the Hebrew and English name of the deceased and the date of death. It may also contain the date of birth, some very brief description of the deceased, or a phrase of prayer. Near the top of the marker the Hebrew acronym פ"נ (meaning “Here is interred”) is inscribed. Near the bottom of the marker are the letters תניצ'בה (meaning “May his/her soul be gathered up in the bond of life.”) This marker represents our conviction that the life of a person does not evaporate when the body dies. Some significant part of the person lives on among family, friends and community. Establishing and dedicating this memorial stone is an act of *K'vod haMet*, honoring the dead; it often helps with *rachamim avelim* comforting the mourners, as well.

It has also become customary to gather some time after the death and burial to “unveil” and dedicate the marker. This ceremony is a strong customary practice or *minhag*. Therefore, it is open to our own variations and inventions. While the presence of clergy is not required, Rabbi Small, Cantor Cohn and Mr. Pinchover are available and willing to lead an unveiling ceremony. To schedule an unveiling ceremony, contact Rabbi Small. If you are motivated to conduct it yourself, provided that it is more convenient for you to do so, Rabbi Small will be happy to coach you.

The unveiling is generally done any time between the end of *shiva* and the end of the first year. If you cannot do so because of weather or family schedules, you may wait longer. Most families schedule the unveiling ceremony at a time they are available to gather at the gravesite. Often family and friends gather for a light meal after the ceremony.

The Purpose of the Unveiling Ceremony

Time has passed since the death. The shock has worn off. The pain of loss is still very real, but it has changed. We have begun to learn to live without the regular presence of our loved one. We have begun to find our way back into life again.

The unveiling ceremony gathers us together at the gravesite to recall what is immortal and lasting in this life. We can talk about our loved one with a different spirit than the painful words of eulogy. We may talk of what we miss most in our loved one's life. We may celebrate what was triumphant and unique in this life. We may laugh at their humor, feel the warmth of their love, bring close their wisdom, recall the moments we most cherish, and cry at the loss.

Preparing for the Ceremony

1. Ask members of the family and close friends to prepare a few words recalling your loved one. This is not a eulogy, but a brief reflection on the person we miss.
 - What one moment best reveals their character?
 - What part of them will you never forget?
 - In what did your loved one find greatest joy?
 - What did you learn from this life?
2. Bring a bagful of stones to place on the gravesite (one per person). This is an old Jewish tradition showing that we have visited the gravesite to recollect the memory of our loved one. You can use either ordinary garden or driveway gravel, or decorative polished stones. The stones express the lasting quality of our loving memory

The Ceremony

1. Gather at the gravesite. Bring everyone gathered close together. The ceremony is brief; most people can stand through it. Begin with a few words of poetry or prayer to set the mood. We have come to a special place to recall what is eternal in our loved one's life. You may look in a synagogue prayer book or the booklet of prayer provided by the memorial park or find one from another source of your choosing.
2. Remove the cover and read the marker. This is usually done by the children of or someone very close to the deceased. Say the following:

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

תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתוֹ (נִשְׁמָתָהּ) צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים.
T'hi Nishmato (Nishmatah) tzerura b'tzror hachayim
May his (her) soul be gathered up in the bond of life.

3. Ask those gathered to share their words of memory of your loved one. Be patient. Not everyone speaks with fluency and grace. Let everyone who wishes share a reflection and a memory. After memories are shared say the following:

Almighty God, eternal Creator, we are thankful for the life of _____, for the years which he/she was granted and for the privilege of having shared those years. May the memory of his/her . . . (incorporate some of the descriptions given for example, sense of humor, dedication to family, generosity, etc.) . . .continue to inspire us, that we may live a better life. Oh God, help all who mourn _____ honor his/her memory through our daily lives. Comfort us and grant us strength, for You are our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

5. Other prayers that can be said:

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

_____ has been 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.

4. Read the prayer El Maley Rachamim* in Hebrew (if you are able) and English, and be sure to include the name of the deceased.

Man

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה
 על פני השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר הרקיע
 מזהירים,
 את נשמת name בן parents names שהלך לעולמו,
 תהא מנוחתו, אָנָּא בעל הרחמים יסתירהו בסתר פניו בגן עדן
 לעולמים, ויצרור בצרור החיים את נשמתו, יי הוא נחלתו,
 וינוח בשלום על משכבו. ונאמר אמן.

El maley rachmim, shochan bam'romim ham'tzeh m'nucha n'chona al cnafey hash'china. B'ma-a lot k'doshim ut'horim c'zhar harkiyah mazhirin et nishmat [name] ben (man)/bat (woman) [parents' names] shehalach [woman - hal'chah] lolamo [woman - l'olamah] ba-avur sheh [your name] yiten tz'dakah ba-ad hazkarat nishmato [woman - nishmatah] , b'gan eden t'hey m'nuchato [woman - m'nuchatah], ana ba-al harachamim yastirehu [woman - yastirehah] b'seter c'nafav l'olamim v'yitzror b'tzror hahayim et nishmato [woman - nishmatah], Adonai hu nachalato [woman - nachalatah] v'yanuach [woman - v'tanuach] b'shalom al mishcavo [woman - mishacavah]. V'nomar amen

Woman

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים, המצא מנוחה נכונה
 על פני השכינה, במעלות קדושים וטהורים כזהר
 הרקיע מזהירים,
 את נשמת name בת parents' names שהלכה לעולמה,
 בגן עדן תהא מנוחתה,
 אָנָּא בעל הרחמים יסתירה בסתר פניו
 לעולמים, ויצרור בצרור החיים את נשמתה,
 יי הוא נחלתה, ותנוח בשלום על משכבה. ונאמר אמן.

Oh God, exalted and full of compassion, grant perfect peace in Your sheltering Presence, among the holy and pure who shine like the firmament, to the soul of _____, who has gone to his/her eternal home. Master of mercy, we beseech You, remember all the worthy and righteous deeds that he/she performed in the land of the living. May his/her soul be bound up in the bond of life. God is his/her portion. May he/she rest in peace. Let us say: Amen.

*(You'll find this prayer in any prayer book and in the booklet provided by the memorial park.)

5. Read the Mourners' *Kaddish* prayer together. (See pages 5 and 6)

6. Distribute the stones and ask the gathered family and friends to place the stones on the grave marker.

7. You may end with a closing prayer of your choosing (some join hands for this) as you stand facing the newly dedicated memorial stone.

8. If you are gathering for a meal, announce where people are invited to go. Printed directions from the cemetery help.

9. It is fine to spend a few minutes at the cemetery wishing each other well, talking, or visiting the graves of other relatives or friends (after the ceremony).

Mourner's *Kaddish*

Please note that this page contains the name of God.
If you print it out, please treat it with appropriate respect.

Mourners and those observing Yahrtzeit:

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא אָמֵן.

Yit'gadal v'yit'kadash sh'mei raba (Cong: Amein).

May His great Name grow exalted and sanctified (Cong: Amen.)

בְּעֻלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְרַעוּתָהּ,

b'al'ma di v'ra khir'utei

in the world that He created as He willed.

וַיִּמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ בְּחַיֵּינוּ וּבְיוֹמֵינוּ

v'yam'likh mal'khutei b'chayeikhon uv'yomeikhon

May He give reign to His kingship in your lifetimes and in your days,

וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,

uv'chayei d'khol beit yis'ra'eil

and in the lifetimes of the entire Family of Israel,

בְּעֻגְלָא וּבְזִמְנוֹ קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

ba'agala uviz'man kariv v'im'ru: Amein

swiftly and soon. Now say: Amen

Congregation and Mourners:

יְהֵא שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעַלְמֵי עַלְמַיָּא.

Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varakh l'alam ul'al'mei al'maya

May His great Name be blessed forever and ever

Mourners and those observing Yahrtzeit:

יְתַבְרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמַם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא

Yit'barakh v'yish'tabach v'yit'pa'ar v'yit'romam v'yit'nasei

Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled,

וַיִּתְהַדָּר וַיִּתְעַלֶּה וַיִּתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא,
v'yit'hadar v'yit'aleh v'yit'halal sh'mei d'kud'sha B'rikh hu.
mighty, upraised, and lauded be the Name of the Holy One Blessed is He.

לְעֵלָא מִן כָּל בִּרְכָתָא וְשִׁירָתָא
l'eila min kol bir'khata v'shirata
beyond any blessing and song,

תְּשַׁבְּחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא, דְּאִמְרוּן בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.
toosh'b'chatah v'nechematah, da'ameeran b'al'mah, v'emru: Amein
praise and consolation that are uttered in the world. Now say: Amen

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא,
Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya
May there be abundant peace from Heaven

וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.
v'chayim aleinu v'al kol yis'ra'eil v'im'ru: Amein
and life upon us and upon all Israel. Now say: Amen

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמְרוֹמָיו, הוּא יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם
Oseh shalom bim'romav hu ya'aseh shalom
He Who makes peace in His heights, may He make peace,

עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאִמְרוּ אָמֵן.
aleinu v'al kol Yis'ra'eil v'im'ru: Amein
upon us and upon all Israel. Now say: Amen