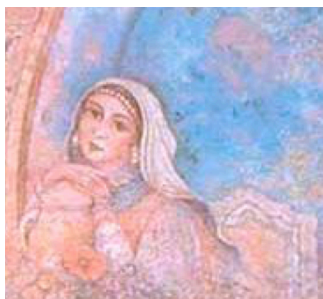


RESPONDING TO BRURIAH'S CRY: INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNAL GRIEF IN PANDEMIC TIMES



BRURIAH THE WISE WOMAN - Pes. 62b

Berurya, wife of Rabbi Meir and daughter of Rabbi Hananya ben Teradyon was so sharp and had such a good memory that she learned three hundred *halakhot* in one day from three hundred Sages.

BRURIAH'S GRIEF STORY - Midrash Mishle 31:10

It once happened that Rabbi Meir was teaching in the study house on Shabbat, and his two sons died. What did their Bruriah do? She laid the two of them on the bed and spread a sheet over them.

After Shabbat, Rabbi Meir came home from the house of study. He said to her "where are my two sons?" She said, "They went to the house of study." He said, "I was watching the house of study, and I did not see them."

He gave him a cup for havdalah, and he recited the havdalah prayer. He again said, "Where are my two sons?" She said to him, "They went to another place and will soon come."

"Master," said Bruriah, "some time ago a man came and gave me something to keep for him. Now he comes and seeks to take it. Shall we return it to him or not?" He said to her, "Daughter, whoever has an object in trust must return it to its owner."

"What did she do? She took him by the hand and led him up to the room. She led him to the bed and removed the sheet that was on them. When he saw the two of them lying dead on the bed, he began to cry and say, "My sons, my sons..."

At that time she said to Rabbi Meir, "Master, did you not say to me that I must return the trust to its master? He said, "*Adonai gave, Adonai has taken away; blessed be the name of Adonai*" (Job 1:21). R. Hanina said, "In this way she comforted him, and his mind was set at ease. Regarding such an instance does it say, "*A good wife who can find?*"

THE SEDUCTION OF BRURIAH - Rashi on AZ 18b

One time Bruriah mocked what the sages said [Kiddushin 80b], "Women are flighty." Rabbi Meir said to her, "By your life! You will eventually concede [the correctness of] their words." He instructed one of his students to tempt her to infidelity. The students urged her for many days, until she consented.

BRURIAH SEDUCED - Saga of *Bruriah* by Rabbi Elyse Goldstein

That evening as she read alone entranced by sacred lore
A student trusted and well-known came knocking at her door
O Bruria my sweet white dove your scholarship I know
Now give to me your earthly love that would delight me so

SUICIDE OF BRURIAH - Rashi on AZ 18b

One time Rabbi Meir instructed one of his students to tempt her to infidelity. The student urged her for many days, until she consented. When the matter became known to her, she strangled herself...

RABBI MEIR'S DISGRACE - AZ 18b

Then Rabbi Meir ran away to Babylonia. Some say that was because of the story of Beruriah.

BRURIAH'S PARENTS' TRAUMATIC DEATH - AZ 17a

For studying Torah, Romans brought Rabbi HANINA BEN TERADYON [one of Ten Martyrs] for judgment... They sentenced him to death by means of burning, and sentenced his wife to execution by decapitation, and his daughter was condemned to sit in a brothel.

BRURIAH'S BROTHER'S TRAUMATIC DEATH - Semahot, 12 end

It happened that the son of Hanina ben Teradyon fell into evil ways. Brigands seized him and slew him. His mutilated body was found after three days. They wrapped it in a net and placed it on a bier.

JUDAISM'S APPROACH TO GRIEF - Sotah 14a

What does it mean to walk in God's ways? As the Holy One visits the sick, so shall you visit the sick; as God comforts the mourners, so shall you comfort the mourners, as God buries the dead, so shall you bury the dead.



BEREAVEMENT RISK ASSESSMENT

What are the elements to look for in a person's life, and in a family, which provide information on how people will deal with death and bereavement?

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|--|---|
| 1. SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK | children; other family; friends; recently moved to area? established family? |
| 2. LIVING SITUATION | with family; alone; community housing |
| 3. CIRCUMSTANCES OF DEATH | sudden; after long illness (e.g. Alzheimer's or cancer); violent death; suicide; homicide; |
| 4. RELATIONSHIP WITH DECEASED | length of marriage; ambivalent unresolved relationship; over-identified with deceased; guilt; anger |
| 5. AGE OF DECEASED | |
| 6. ACTIVITIES | employment, social contacts, congregation, community involvement, changed social roles |
| 7. RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION | belongs to synagogue; attends services; religious attitude to death |
| 8. APPARENT COPING MECHANISMS | awareness of grief; openness to communication; verbal expressions of grief |
| 9. EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TO DEATH | guilt; anger; denial; adjustment to loss; overall attitude |
| 10. UNRESOLVED EARLY GRIEF/
MULTIPLE LOSSES | childhood bereavement; Vietnam/Gulf War veteran; Holocaust survivor; traumatic grief history |
| 11. CONCURRENT LIFE TRANSITIONS | adolescence; marriage; divorce; retirement; menopause; "empty nest" |
| 12. PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS OF GRIEF | insomnia; loss of appetite; overuse of sedatives |
| 13. PHYSICAL HEALTH | handicapped; chronic illness; history of illness, addictions |
| 14. MENTAL HEALTH | history of addictions; substance abuse; sex addiction/pornography |
| 15. OTHER RECENT LOSSES | recent deaths; divorce; job loss |



HEVRUTA TIME - CONSIDER THESE QUESTIONS

1. FAMILY GRIEVING STYLES

Are the styles of dealing with grief learned in your family helpful or problematic for you?

2. INDIVIDUAL LOSSES

Are there recent losses that have been difficult for you that you want to talk about?

3. PROFESSIONAL/COMMUNAL GRIEF EXPERIENCES

Are there recent deaths in your communal/professional context that have been difficult? If you are in chaplaincy, how have you been impacted by COVID-19 limitations?

Anything else along these lines?

In doing this exercise, remember to use active listening skills. You can ask questions to help each person share their experiences, but be sure to keep the focus on only one person at a time. I am available to follow-up with anyone afterwards if you wish...



**AVAILABLE FOR ADULT EDUCATION,
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
BEREAVEMENT COUNSELING**

**DEATH AWARENESS
EDUCATION**

*"To everything there is a season:
a time to be born, a time to die;
a time to laugh, a time to mourn."*

These words remind us that death is inherently part of life. Yet our society has a long-standing cultural taboo on talking about death. As a result, we have lost touch with ancient spiritual wisdom which sees death and loss as a natural dimension of human existence.

In recent years, the growth of hospice care and concern with final directives have created a need to speak more openly about dying and death. As baby-boomers, Gen-X and millennials confront death and mortality more openly, there is a search for practical resources to deal consciously with aging, death and mourning.

I offer classes, workshops, "death cafés" and scholar-in-residence weekends, as well as professional development workshops on the "mysteries of life, death and the world beyond" examining spiritual and mystical teachings about the death, dying and the afterlife journey of the soul, and also provide practical, spiritually-based guidelines on death rituals and bereavement practices.

**UNDERSTANDING THE
GRIEF JOURNEY**

Grief is a natural response to the death of a loved one. During a period of bereavement, one slowly adjusts to loss, accepting the reality of death. But bereavement can be an intense emotional experience, with frequent mood changes, and a variety of other physical and emotional reactions. It is important for a grieving person to know that these kinds of responses, while painful, are a normal part of the healing process.

Comfort from family and friends is necessary during this vulnerable time; and bereavement rituals can provide solace and comfort. Nonetheless, sometimes people still have difficulty resolving the pain of mourning. In such times, supportive bereavement counseling is helpful to help cope with problematic personal and family situations. Bereavement counseling offers a nurturing environment for expressing and clarifying turbulent, unfamiliar emotions of grief, and for resolving and healing the pain of loss.

I offer bereavement counseling services to individuals, couples and families, designed to provide support, guidance and a compassionate understanding of the grief process.

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