

Most people think of *Shiva* as the first seven days after the death of a loved one, and when the healing begins. But what if you don't get the full 7 days? Then what happens? That's when you become truly aware of how blessed you are to have a community like we do here at temple Emunah –

But let me start from the beginning-

110 hours. That's the amount of time from when my father had a stroke on the second day of Rosh Hashanah 2016, to when he passed away 3 days before Yom Kippur.

I missed the first 12 hours – I was in shul, and I turned my phone off for Yom Tov. When I turned on my phone after the holiday, there were multiple voice and text messages from my sister, and my stepmother. I saw the words “hospital” and “stroke” in a few of the texts. I thought it must have been autocorrect. But it wasn't.

I immediately made arrangements to fly to Asheville, North Carolina to be with him in the hospital. I thought I would stay for a couple days until he was on the way to recovery. My father was a fighter, and faced adversity with a smile and the idea that this too, was all part of “life's rich pageant,” as he used to say.

I imagined it would be the first of many trips I'd be making during long road to recovery. It wasn't the first of many.

I didn't fully grasp the extent of the damage until I arrived at the hospital and met with his doctors. Then everything changed. My sister flew in from Detroit to meet me the following day, Friday late morning. She and I spent Shabbat in our father's hospice room. My brothers, who both live in Israel, got on the first flight out after Shabbat. My father passed away late Sunday morning. My brothers arrived about 3 hours too late to say goodbye to him.

Burial arrangements were made for the next day, in Detroit Michigan where my father lived since he was a boy; where my siblings and I grew up and where he would be put to rest.

The local mortuary in Asheville was baffled by the idea that we would have the burial so quickly, and so far away. We were their first Jewish clients. They were very respectful and did their best to understand and accommodate Jewish mourning practices. As hard as they tried though, they weren't able to arrange for air transport. It was a Sunday and holiday weekend, and the last flight of the day had left Asheville.

A mortuary driver volunteered to make the 9-hour drive from western North Carolina to Michigan. Not allowed to ride with him (for insurance purposes), my brothers and I rented a car and followed the mortuary vehicle. I explained that I was father's Shomer, or escort, and needed to be with him at all times until burial. The driver commented on what a beautiful custom that was, and made sure we were right behind him the entire trip as we drove through the night. By the time we arrived in Detroit there were just a few hours before the funeral.

Shiva was a day and a half; cut short by Yom Kippur. Shloshim, the first 30-day period of mourning was reduced to 7 days by Sukkot. My brothers couldn't get a flight back to Israel before Sukkot, so we all stayed in Detroit together.

With my sister in Detroit, my brothers in Israel, and me in Boston, it had been almost 3 years since the four of us had all been together, and much longer still since we'd been together for a Yom Tov. I'm positive my father would have been pleased that he could bring us all together, even if he wasn't there to share it with us.

When I returned to Boston after Sukkot, Rabbi Lerner suggested a Yom Nechama, a day of consolation, to allow my friends and my community to show their support. I had no idea what to expect, and was a bit leery of the benefit- Shiva, after all, was over- but I agreed. I was truly overwhelmed by

the outpouring of support and the feeling of relief and closure it brought me. I will always be thankful to one special person from Emunah; it was a small gesture on her part, but it was immensely powerful... this woman- who I knew from sitting in the same section on high holidays, came and offered her condolences...then she asked one simple question: "so, tell me about your father." I want to thank her for coming, and asking...I will always remember what a special gift it is to a mourner to be asked this question. To be given the chance to share some thoughts and memories.

When I began saying Kaddish here, I felt a real sense of community. Seeing many of the same people each night was comforting. Seeing a new person join the ranks of the mourners always made my heart ache, but they became part of that community too. I've told Kathy Macdonald how incredibly grateful I was to have a place to go to say Kaddish. It gave me a space to elevate the Neshama of my father, Dr. William Roskind, Zev Volf ben Yaakov.

I also want to thank all those who come to minyan each day to allow those who are in mourning to say Kaddish – this is a real gift you are giving.

To the mourners among us, I say take advantage of the support you can get from this group who may start as strangers or acquaintances, but they can become part of your chosen family.

Thank you to the rabbis and lay leaders who created this community. We are all blessed to have found Emunah as a place to come for strength. And finally, when comforting a mourner, don't forget to ask the simple question- so tell me about [them]...