
Unveiling Service

הקמת מצבה

In Western European countries and in America, it has become the custom to mark the setting of the tombstone with a service. In America, the tombstone or marker is covered with a cloth which is removed by the family during the service, so the ritual is called the “unveiling.”

The unveiling usually takes place near the first *yahrzeit*, that is, twelve months after the death, but it may be as soon after as thirty days, or after a year has passed. While there is no traditional basis for this service, except for the custom of visiting

the grave on the day of the *yahrzeit*, it has become an accepted practice, offering the family an additional opportunity to pay tribute to their loved one together.

The ceremony does not require the presence of a rabbi or cantor; a family member or friend may lead the service in Hebrew or in English. There is no set liturgy for an unveiling. You can follow the service in this booklet, or you can substitute or add other psalms, poems, or readings as well as personal reflections or reminiscences.



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הקמת מצבה

• **Begin the service with one or more of the following readings, in Hebrew or English or with other psalms, poems, or readings that you have chosen.**

Psalm 23

A Psalm of David.
Adonai is my shepherd;
I shall not want.
God makes me lie down in green pastures.
God leads me beside the still waters.
God restores my soul.
God leads me in the paths of righteousness
for God's name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the
shadow of Death,
I will fear no evil: for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of Adonai
forever.

מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד
מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד
יֵי רֵעִי לֹא אֶחְסֵר:
בְּנֵאוֹת דְּשֵׂא יִרְבִּיצֵנִי
עַל־מֵי מְנוּחֹת יְנַהֲלֵנִי:
נַפְשִׁי יִשׁוּב
יְנַחֲנֵי בְּמַעְגְלֵי־צֶדֶק לְמַעַן שְׁמוֹ:
גַּם כִּי־אֵלֶךְ בְּגֵיא צַלְמוֹת
לֹא־אִירָא רָע כִּי־אֵתָה עִמָּדִי
שִׁבְטְךָ וּמִשְׁעֶנְתְּךָ הִפְיָה יְנַחֲמֵנִי:
תַּעֲרֹךְ לִפְנֵי שְׁלֹחַן נֹגֵד צַרְרֵי
דִּשְׁנָת בְּשֶׁמֶן רֹאשִׁי
כּוֹסֵי רוּיָה:
אֶף טוֹב וְחֶסֶד יִרְדְּפוּנִי
כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי
וְשִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה
לְאֶרֶךְ יָמִים:

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הקמת מצבה

Psalm 121

A song for ascents.
I turn my eyes to the mountains; from where
will my help come?
My help comes from Adonai, maker of
heaven and earth.
God will not let your foot give way; your
guardian will not slumber;
See, the guardian of Israel neither slumbers
nor sleeps!
Adonai is your guardian, Adonai is your
protection at your right hand.
By day the sun will not strike you, nor the
moon by night.
Adonai will guard you from all harm; God
will guard your life.
Adonai will guard your going and coming
now and forever.

שיר למעלות

אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל־הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יָבֹא עֲזָרִי:
עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יִי עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ:
אֶל־יִתְּנֵן לְמוֹט רַגְלִי אֶל־יְנוּם שׁוֹמְרִי:
הֲנִיחָה לֹא יְנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל:
יִי שׁוֹמְרִי יִי צִלְּךָ עַל־יַד יְמִינִי:
יּוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא־יִכְבֶּה וַיְרַח בַּלַּיְלָה:
יִי שׁוֹמְרִי מִכָּל־רָע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת־נַפְשִׁי:
יִי שׁוֹמְרִי צִאֲתְךָ וּבּוֹאֲךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד־עוֹלָם:

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הקמת מצבה

A Litany of Remembrance
by Rabbi Sylvan Kamens and Rabbi Jack Riemer

At the rising sun and at its going down, we remember them.
At the blowing of the wind and in the chill of winter, we remember them.
At the opening of the buds and in the rebirth of spring, we remember them.
At the blueness of the skies and in the warmth of summer, we remember them.
At the rustling of the leaves and in the beauty of the autumn, we remember them.
At the beginning of the year and when it ends, we remember them.
As long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as we remember them.

When we are weary and in need of strength, we remember them.
When we are lost and sick at heart, we remember them.
When we have decisions that are difficult to make, we remember them.
When we have joy we crave to share, we remember them.
When we have achievements that are based on theirs, we remember them.
For as long as we live, they too will live, for they are now a part of us as, we remember them.

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הקמת מצבה

• **Remove the cloth and read what is written on the marker out loud. Then continue the service:**

In the name of the family of _____ and in the presence of his/her family (and friends), we consecrate this marker to his/her memory, as a token of our love and respect.

FOR A MAN:

תְּהִי נִשְׁמַתּוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים. אָמֵן.
Thi nishmato tz'rurah bitzror ha-hayim. Amen.
May his soul be bound up in the bond of life. **Amen.**

FOR A WOMAN:

תְּהִי נִשְׁמַתָּה צְרוּרָה בְּצִרוּר הַחַיִּים. אָמֵן.
Thi nishmatah tz'rurah bitzror ha-hayim. Amen.
May her soul be bound up in the bond of life. **Amen.**

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 _____

[mention characteristics like: • *Devotion to family & friends* • *Loyalty*
• *Thoughtfulness* • *Dedication to his/her work*
• *Integrity* • *Sense of humor*
• *Patience* • *Intellectual curiosity*
• *Courage* • *Love of nature*]

continue to inspire us, so that we may live better lives. O Adonai, help us all honor _____'s memory through our daily lives. Comfort us, and grant us strength, for You are our Rock and Redeemer. **Amen.**

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הקמת מצבה

• ***If you wish, invite family members and friends to share reflections. They may like to talk about their experience of mourning or share a memory of the person whose marker is being unveiled. These reflections are optional and the service is still complete without personal reflections. After this time for sharing, continue***

הַרֹפֵא לְשִׁבְרֵי לֵב וּמְחַבֵּשׁ לְעֵצְבוֹתָם:

Ha-rofeh li-shvurei leiv u-m'habeish l'atzvotam.

Adonai heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds.

—Psalm 147:3

Almighty God, Master of mercy, whose compassion endures forever, let neither death nor sorrow have dominion over us. Grant comfort, strength and consolation to those who mourn _____, as it is written: “Adonai shall be your enduring light, and the days of your mourning shall come to an end.”

Bless this family with love and peace, that they may serve You with a perfect heart. Accept our act of devotion, Adonai, as we consecrate this monument to the memory of _____ with love and respect.

FOR A MAN:

תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתוֹ צְרוּרָה בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים. אָמֵן.

T'hi nishmato tz'rurah bitzror ha-hayim. Amen.

May his soul be bound up in the bond of life. **Amen.**

FOR A WOMAN:

תְּהִי נִשְׁמָתָהּ צְרוּרָה בְּצִרּוֹר הַחַיִּים. אָמֵן.

T'hi nishmatah tz'rurah bitzror ha-hayim. Amen.

May her soul be bound up in the bond of life. **Amen.**

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הקמת מצבה

• *Recite the following prayer in Hebrew and/or English:*

FOR A MAN:

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים,
המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה,
במעלות קדושים וטהורים
בזהר הרקיע מזהירים,
את נשמת _____ בן _____ וְ
שהלך לעולמו,
בגן עדן תהא מנוחתו,
אנא, בעל הרחמים הסתירהו
בסתר כנפיו לעולמים,
וצרור בצרור החיים את נשמתו,
יי הוא נחלתו, ויגוה בשלום על משכבו.
ונאמר אמן.

El maleh rahamim,

O God, exalted and full of compassion,
grant perfect peace in Your sheltering
Presence,

among the holy and pure,

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.

Adonai is his/her portion.

May he/she rest in peace.

Let us say: **Amen.**

FOR A WOMAN:

אל מלא רחמים, שוכן במרומים,
המצא מנוחה נכונה תחת כנפי השכינה,
במעלות קדושים וטהורים
בזהר הרקיע מזהירים,
את נשמת _____ בת _____ וְ
שהלכה לעולמה,
בגן עדן תהא מנוחתה,
אנא, בעל הרחמים הסתירה
בסתר כנפיו לעולמים,
וצרור בצרור החיים את נשמתה,
יי הוא נחלתה, ותגוה בשלום על משכבה.
ונאמר אמן.

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הקמת מצבה

• *If there is no minyan (ten Jews over the age of bar/bat mitzvah), the service ends here. If a minyan is present, conclude the service with Mourner's Kaddish:*

MOURNERS:

Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'meih raba
b'alma di v'ra kiruteih,
v'yamlikh malkhuteih,
b'haveikhon u-v'yomeikhon
u-v'havei d'khol beit yisrael,
ba-agala u-vizman kariv, v'imru amen.

ALL TOGETHER:

Y'hei sh'meih raba m'varakh l'alam u-l'almei
almaya.

MOURNERS:

Yitbarakh v'yishtabah, v'yitpa-ar v'yitromam,
v'yitnasei, v'yit-hadar v'yitaleh v'yit-halal
sh'meih d'kudsha, b'rikh hu, l'eila min kol
birkhata v'shirata, tushb'hata v'nehamata da-
amiran b'alma, v'imru **amen**.

Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya v'hayim
aleinu v'al kol yisrael, v'imru **amen**.

Oseh shalom bimromav hu ya-aseh shalom
aleinu v'al kol yisrael, v'imru **amen**.

יִתְגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא
בְּעֵלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא כְּרַעוּתָהּ,
וְיַמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ
בְּחַיִּיכוּן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוּן
וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל,
בְּעֵגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהִי שְׁמֵהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ לְעָלְמָא וּלְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵינָא.

יִתְבָּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרוֹמֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא
וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל שְׁמֵהּ דְקַדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא.
לְעֵלְמָא מִן כָּל בְּרַכָּתָא וְשִׁירָתָא תְּשֻׁבְחָתָא וְנַחֲמָתָא.
דְאָמְרִין בְּעֵלְמָא, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

יְהִי שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שָׁמַיָא, וְחַיִּים עֲלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

עֹשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרְוַמָּיו, הוּא יַעֲשֶׂה שְׁלוֹם עֲלֵינוּ
וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאָמְרוּ אָמֵן.

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הקמת מצבה

MOURNERS:

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which God has created according to God's will. May God establish God's kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, **Amen.**

ALL TOGETHER:

May God's great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

MOURNERS:

Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy Blessed One, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, **Amen.**

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, **Amen.**

God creates peace in God's celestial heights; may God create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, **Amen.**

• *Some people have the custom to ritually wash their hands as they leave the cemetery.*