
the archives of the former Soviet Union created a reasonable doubt of his identity as Ivan, and so the Supreme Court was placed in a bind. The protocols of extradition stood as an obstacle to try him for crimes other than those on the original petitions, but the Court cited strong evidence that Demjanjuk, was nevertheless, guilty of war crimes. The court was caught between its own inclination not to release a party guilty of Holocaust-related acts and the protocols of the international judicial community. Yet, the delay in his release underscored the fact the Demjanjuk's past had hardly been acquitted.

Looking back from an Israeli point of view, despite whatever errors and occasionally poor judgment may have been executed, this affair was hardly a fiasco. Put simply, it has had both its winners and losers. Surely, the Israeli judicial system retained its international reputation for high standards of fairness. A heavy blow of tremendous consequence has been struck, however, to those who insist that trials of those accused for participation in the Holocaust must continue some fifty years after the events. Any case dependent on the testimony of survivors will prove most difficult to prosecute from now on. The Demjanjuk trial may very well be the last of its kind in Israel. That, after all, represents a natural development of historical cycles. But if Holocaust testimony is now in its last stages, it remains to be said that especially over the last three decades, the survivors have fulfilled their duty with dignity and courage. They have told their tales of suffering in so many different ways. □

Mending a heart that's torn

Alisa Rubin Kurshan

From the moment that I learned of my father's death, I experienced immediate, utter, shattering chaos. My world, as I had understood and defined it, was no longer the same. The shiva was the beginning of a long painstaking journey from emptiness and confusion toward a rediscovery of meaning.

Kriah, the ritual tearing or cutting of one's clothing, is the first act which the mourner is obligated to perform after learning of the death of an immediate family member. Whether done immediately upon death, as was traditional, or just before the burial, *kriah* is an act of acknowledgement of the newfound chaos.

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The Ritual of *Kriah*

Kriah is the mourner's first admission that life will never be ordered the same way again--the fabric of the mourner's life will never be whole anymore. That act is the admission that one's world has been torn asunder and what follows is the liminal state of shiva.

The halakhic rituals of mourning guide the mourner through the dark, unknown paths of reentry to life. Hazal understood that before reentry, one must deal with grief and pain. Therefore, shiva removes the Jew from the worries of everyday life and gives the mourner time to grieve. The mourner does not need to make any decisions during this period--all behavior is legislated by halakhah.

One of the most puzzling aspects of the ritual of *avelut* (mourning) is *kriah*. The act of *kriah* is an undeniably powerful moment. Yet, with all of the attention that halakhah devotes to the details of proper *kriah*, there is no mention of how to bring closure to the *kriah* experience. Precisely when, how, and with whom, should the *avelim* (mourners) remove the *kriah* garment? What should they recite while removing it? What should they do with the garment? In a system of halakhah and Jewish custom which is so rich in detail, it is striking that there is no mention of what a mourner should do with the *kriah* garment.

Expounded upon in great detail are the halakhot of when and how to mend the garment. The general agreement among the *poskim* is that for a parent the tear can only be crookedly mended and for other immediate relatives it can be mended straight. In our day and age, however, when it is rare that a Jew mends a *kriah* garment, we should focus on the way to remove the garment, and perhaps recapture the ways of mending.

In the transition between shiva and resumption of life's awesome responsibilities, some people need tangible reminders of the healing which they must yet undergo.

After Shiva, What?

When I sat shiva for my father, the *kriah* garment came to symbolize my grief and pain. When it was time to get up from shiva, something seemed amiss. The walk around the block with my family strengthened us as a family. We understood that this walk was not only to help our reentry into everyday life, but also an acknowledgement that the shared experience of the past seven days would always be part of our collective memory. Yet, I felt the need for a ritual to help symbolize the private healing and mending that I needed to continue to experience in the future.

The guidance and strength which halakhah had provided for me throughout shiva eluded me when I stood

in my bedroom poised to remove the *kriah* garment. Throughout the shiva, I would look down at my scarf and recall the sound of the tear during *kriah*. I repeatedly asked myself during shiva: Will I ever recover from this rupture? Will I ever feel whole again?

When it was time to remove my *kriah* garment, I was confronted with questions that I could not answer: What do I do with my scarf? Do I throw it away? In a literal sense, it is only a piece of ripped material. But symbolically it had become emotionally associated with the experience of mourning and recollecting my father. Do I save it? If so, for what purpose?

After talking with many people, I have learned that many other people have wondered what to do. I became convinced that a ritual for personal healing involving the *kriah* garment was necessary to complement the family ritual of walking around the block.

Healing the Symbol of Grief

This ceremony will not speak to everyone. Some mourners cannot wait to remove the *kriah* garment and to never look at it again. Yet for others the very act of throwing a garment of clothing away (simply for lack of direction from the halakhah) seems improper and hollow--not to mention ecologically irresponsible.

Each mourner is still at a very early point in healing. The ritual of "*kriah* mending", described below fits this early stage. Although there is a shared grief among all the mourners, each mourner's memory is unique, as was each mourner's relationship with the deceased. Each mourner will heal at a different pace and in a different way. Therefore, each mourner's healing process must be uniquely acknowledged. Each mourner must mend his/her own tear.

This ceremony would also coax mourners away from the prevalent practice of the black ribbon which is so common in Jewish communities today. The black ribbon does not sufficiently express the emotional intensity of a mourner's grief.

Also included in the ceremony is the recitation of Psalm 23. It has been chosen for several reasons. It should resonate for the mourners as part of the funeral service. In addition, its message of hope in the face of death is clearly appropriate. Also, there is a beautiful, soothing melody to the text that would be consistent with the mood in the room. Finally, the recitation of:

*Ha'makom yinahem etkhem b'toch sh'ar
aveilei Zion V'irushalayim.*

May God comfort you along with all other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

might serve as an appropriate act of closure for the mourner. It will enable each mourner to express the hope of providing comfort and strength to the other members of the family.

A *Kriah* Mending Ceremony

As the mourners complete shiva on the last day, the immediate family leave to take the traditional walk around the block together as the final act of the shiva. After they return and before they disperse to their own homes, they should each remove their own *kriah* garments and hold them in their hands as they sit together in a circle one last time in the room where they sat shiva. As they are seated on the shiva boxes for the last time, they each prepare to mend their garments together. Each mends his/her own garment; however, all should begin at the same time. The mourner should not try to sew the tear so as to make the rip unnoticeable; just the opposite! The tear should be apparent to anyone who might look at the garment. There should be silence in the room--thereby allowing each mourner to reflect on the deceased and on the wounds they each are bearing inside. When the last person has completed the basting, all the mourners should rise.

The family might choose to have each mourner reflect aloud on the fears each feels in having mended the outward sign of the gaping wound they each feel. Perhaps the family might choose to read the following paragraph or some version of it together in unison:

As we mend our garments together, we realize that our wounds are not yet healed. We are in pain and we remain vulnerable. As we have removed our *kriah* garments and repaired the tear, we know that we must work hard to mend our torn hearts. Give us the strength, and the courage, Adonai, to face our pain and our grief. Help us to renew our lives even as we will always feel the absence of [NAME]. May we find a measure of comfort in Your presence and in each other.

The family then recites or sings the Twenty-Third Psalm.

Each member of the family then recites the following adaptation of the traditional statement of comfort addressing one another:

*Ha'makom yinahem otanu b'toch sh'ar
aveilei Zion V'irushalayim.*

May God comfort us along with all other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.

The *kriah* garments should not be thrown away. Some might choose to donate the clothing to an appropriate *tzedakah*, while others might choose to hold onto the garment as a reminder of the need to mend their inner wounds. Some might choose to put it away forever. Some might choose to wear it each day as they recite kaddish. Still others might choose to wear the basted garment each year on the *yahrzeit*.

🍷 End thoughts 🍷

The tragic events in Hebron this past Purim were unconditionally condemned by Jews around the world. Most of us wished to distance ourselves from such terrorism by believing that the murders were an isolated act performed by a crazed zealot. However, some have voiced the concern that in fact the seeds of such violence were sown in the sources of our own tradition. One Sh'ma reader, Adrian Ostfeld, sent us the following poem, written in 1989, as her response. She wonders whether the pursuit of national independence and autonomy compromises our ability to be a holy people. Can only a victim be holy? We welcome your responses.

A kingdom of priests and a holy nation

Adrian M. Ostfeld

In our ancient kingdoms,
We were brutal and warlike.
We butchered Anakites and Moabites.
Before the Lord, Samuel hacked Agag in pieces.
David's throne sat on the backs of mercenaries,
And Solomon built with thousands
Pressed into forced labor gang.
From the woods, Elisha summoned bears
Who tore asunder children mocking him.
We courted tyrants, spawned extremists
Who swam upstream at Qumran and Masada.
Jehu, monster, ruled eight and twenty years.
One Jewish woman cut off a head.
Another drove a tent pin through a skull.

In the diaspora
We became a gentler people,
Pleading with tearful brown eyes.
We entreated rather than fought,
Fled rather than resisted.
We had no warriors, only martyrs.
It's true we lived and died by false messiahs
But we collected and distributed
Loving kindness and bread to one another.
We adored the starveling scholar,
Consoled the orphan, pleaded for the lowly.
Justice we sought and righteousness
And wept over countless graves.

Now back in our ancient land,
A nation of tough Hebrew peasants,
We are ringed again by deadly threat.
Against mocking children, we summon no bears
But break bones and call up
Tear gas and rubber bullets.
Unwelcome labor builds our cities
mercenaries protect us feebly in the North.
We court religious zealots, spawn extremists,
Radical reactionaries, black clad men,
Create degrees of Jewishness.

Can we be a kingdom of priests
And a holy nation only in exile?

But others say about ...

A Postmodern Judaism

Daniel Landes' "A postmodern (and better) judaism" (*Sh'ma* 24/467) manages to cook an unappealing soup composed of deconstructionist peelings; neo-Orthodox triumphalism, half-baked (Torah-True, hoo-hoo-hoo); Habermas' tired, late-Marxist pomposity, somehow strangely reminiscent of a once-skilled athlete who is playing one season too many; a half-teaspoon or irrelevant Freud-bashing; a dash of erudite nonsense (it is obscene to interpret halakhah in terms of Foucault's neologisms); the whole cooked, none too thoroughly, in a pot prepared with the obligatory bow to overheated neo-quasi-feminist rhetoric ("power-driven hedonistic rape/seduction") and garnished with syntactic nonsense ("Post modernism and It's (sic) Critics", "valorization of the self within Modernity"). One wonders: how might a writer fluent in English have rendered that last phrase?