

The Gamliel Institute

Who We Are

We are *the* center for study, advocacy, and training, concerning Chevrah Kadisha and related Jewish end-of-life practices.

What We Do

We educate, guide, train, and empower Jewish communal leaders and foster the development of a Jewish corps of Chevrah Kadisha professionals and volunteers.

The Program

Our Certificate Program brings together diverse disciplines and skills, including community organizing, consumer advocacy, chaplaincy, bikur cholim, taharah and shmirah, rabbinic texts, thanatology, hospice care, grief therapy, funeral direction, cemetery management, and legacy planning, to create a comprehensive program of Chevrah Kadisha education and training.

What Students Do

Gamliel Institute students and graduates work in their synagogues and communities. They facilitate the organization of bereavement committees and Chevrah Kadisha groups and provide education about the full range of Jewish funeral, burial, and mourning practices creating a holistic 'continuum of care.'

The Ultimate Goal

Our goal is to reclaim the mitzvot — the Jewish traditions, practices, rituals, and liturgy along the entire continuum of care at the end of life — thereby empowering and enriching families and communities across North America.

The Program

We offer a Chevrah Kadisha certificate program and individual courses that cover life's spectrum of illness, comfort, death, funerals, burial, and mourning.

Course 1: Chevrah Kadisha: Origins and Evolution

This course presents relevant texts and resources as it discusses the evolution of Chevrah Kadisha practice and the Chevrah's role in the community from early times, through the standard of practice in Medieval Europe, and into the changes that took place in the transition to the Western Hemisphere and modern times.

Course 2: Chevrah Kadisha: Taharah and Shmirah

The central elements of Chevrah Kadisha practice include the rituals of taharah - preparation of the body for burial - and shmirah -the watching of the body between death and burial. This course addresses a wide range of issues, including liturgy, kavanah, training, safety, and complications.

Course 3: Chevrah Kadisha: Education, Organizing, and Training

Creating and maintaining a Chevrah Kadisha involves leadership, communal education, and training, including issues with funeral homes and funerals, cemeteries and burials.

Course 4: Chevrah Kadisha: Nechamah

The mitzvah of nechamah for comfort for the ill (bikur cholim) and comfort for the grieving (nichum aveilim) is a vital part of Chevrah Kadisha work. This course looks at the skills involved in this work, and includes areas such as listening techniques, ethical will, and remembrance.

Course 5: Chevrah Kadisha: Liturgy and Ritual Practice

Our tradition has a broad and rich liturgy and practice around end-of-life issues. This course examines the liturgy and related practice in detail, focusing on funeral and burial prayer and practice using traditional sources, variations in practice, and examines the role of the rabbi.

Course 6: Chevrah Kadisha: International Perspectives

Jewish end-of-life practice has changed not only over time, but from place to place. This course examines variation in practices around the world, centered around a two-to-three week study mission to New York, Prague, and Israel.

Course 7: Chevrah Kadisha Project

Each student completes a course project to improve students' leadership skills and/or knowledge and to serve as a contribution/resource for others in the field. Projects can involve various aspects of Chevrah Kadisha work, including organizing and education as well as more academic pursuits.

Faculty and Staff

Rabbi Stuart Kelman

Founding Dean Emeritus, Gamliel Institute

Rabbi Richard Address

Dean, Gamliel Institute

David Zinner

Executive Director, Kavod v'Nichum and Gamliel Institute

Rabbi Joe Blair

Dean of Administration, Gamliel Institute

Dr. Dan Fendel

Dean of Students, Gamliel Institute

Rena Boroditsky

Senior Educator

Rick Light

Senior Educator

Edna Stewart

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Kerry Swartz

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For more information on Gamliel Institute course and seminar offerings, visit:
jewish-funerals.org



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Kavod v'Nichum Honor and Comfort

Kavod v'Nichum provides education, resources, technical assistance, training, and advocacy along the end-of-life continuum — from illness and healing through dying, death, and bereavement — for Chevrot Kadisha and individuals in any part of North America's Jewish community. This support helps communities provide essential services and comfort in a time of profound need; helps them recognize the power of the mitzvot of honoring the dead and comforting the bereaved, and enables them to take steps to protect bereaved families from exploitation.

Reclaiming the Mitzvot

Our guiding principles are rooted in a tradition over 2,000 years old. Throughout the North America, in rural and urban areas, large synagogues and small are heeding the call to full participation in Jewish funeral practices and return of control to the community. We are reclaiming the mitzvot of a communal response to Jewish death and dying, and are dedicated to education related to formation of Chevrei Kadisha, our traditional institution which engages in Jewish end-of life practices.

Resources:

We've developed great resources - on our website and books we supported or published. Our website, jewish-funerals.org has more than 400 pages of information and over 1,200 external links. More than one million visitors have utilized our site. We've published or supported a dozen books, from the annotated taharah manual - Chesed Shel Emet, to Nichum Aveilim, a guide for comforters, to Jewish Rites of Death - Stories of Tahara, and new publications Mapping the Journey of the Soul and the Mourner, Health and Safety Precautions for Taharah, and El Baruch - Seven Sacred Circles.

Annual Conferences:

The North American Chevrah Kadisha and Jewish Cemetery Conference is publicized to an extensive list of over 6,000 Chevrah Kadisha members, clergy, cemetery managers, funeral home directors, and others interested in our work. Since 2003, we have gathered over a thousand people to study, attend workshops, plenaries, and network. Because the conference is held in different parts of the continent each year, we have been able to develop strong relationships with many Jewish communities and their Chevra Kadisha members.

Chevra Kadisha Training:

We provide intensive Chevrah Kadisha day and weekend trainings in communities throughout North America, focusing on all aspects of Tahara & Shmira, including liturgy, kavanah, hands on practices as well as community education.

On-line Education:

In addition to our Certificate Program, the Gamliel Institute provides A Taste of Gamliel webinar series, as well as continuing education for graduates.

Kavod v'Nichum and the Gamliel Institute

*When all Jews are educated
about our funeral, burial, and
mourning traditions;*

*when each of us is visited when
sick, supported when dying,
and cared for after death;*

*when every bereaved family
is comforted, guided in
funeral and burial planning,
and assisted in the mourning
and grieving process;*

*then we will know that every
Jewish community is being
served by a Chevrah Kadisha,
a Holy Society.*



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