

PROJECT ANCILLARY MATERIALS SALLY SHANNON  
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Sally Shannon, M.A., received a Master of Arts Degree from Lesley University. Her thesis: "Curriculum Development for Loss, Dying and Grief" included an internship at a hospice as well as studies with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, Stephen Levine, Raymond Moody, M.D. and other experts in End of Life studies and care. She currently coaches individuals and families about End of Life preparations, especially "Getting Your Affairs in Order Before Your Doctor Tells You To", and consciously empowered choices for memorial/remembrances and after-death care choices. She is particularly passionate about the tsunami of cremation and how to make choices that reflect your values and allow for community grieving. Her work is moving toward helping people die and home, including respecting someone's wishes for more quality of life and less technical intervention. Sally completed the training at Final Passages where she received a certificate as a Family Home Funeral Guide. She is a guest speaker at the top level of training of Final Passages and is a member of the Final Passages/Death Education Center Support Council. She has been a student and guest speaker at the Gamliel Institute and a team presenter at the Kavod v'Nichum Annual Conference 2015.



Project Completed December 2015 (January 2016?)**David, which date should I use?**

*Big Idea:*

I plan to provide resources so that whether or not Jews choose cremation, they understand Jewish values and traditions and they utilize these values and traditions to make informed choices, especially about taharah and shmira.

This Gamliel Project provides online information and resources for professionals advising, and lay people making, funeral and disposition plans. It is also research that can be used to create talks and workshops and co-lateral marketing for Threshold Consulting.

*Elevator Speech*

I've written a paper that can help someone think about why they are choosing cremation. And then, if they do, how they can do it so it is true to their values, traditions and spiritual beliefs.

*An Abstract: a more formal description that summarizes what the project is, and for whom it is intended.*

This is a Resource and Position Paper about choosing cremation in a Jewish context.

With a consumer focus in the Jewish community it is appropriate for all movements of Judaism (although not likely to have strong response from Orthodox and Chabad/Lubavitcher Jews), and including non-affiliated and non-practicing Jews. The resources and thinking are targeted to individuals and groups who provide End of Life support and services for individuals and families, including: Jewish clergy and teachers, End of Life counselors and coaches hospice staff (especially chaplains and social workers), elder setting staff, Jewish social services staff, members of chevra kaddisha, members of bikkur cholim, rabbinical students and Jewish mortuary staffs.

This paper begins with an overview of cremation – definition, trends and Jewish perspective. It then cities and sometimes challenges motivations for choosing cremation. When cremation is chosen it encourages Jews to consciously and intentionally include Jewish values and traditions, especially tahara and shmira. Concerns that arise when choosing cremation are addressed. What might be lost in the automatic pathway in the typical cremation: community involvement, Jewish traditions of cremation and shmirah, ritual, closure, transition to mourning. Cremation is cited as continuing death denial in Western culture.

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*A marketing blurb:*

“This paper will help you decide if you want your body (or the one of your loved one) cremated and how to do it with love and respect.”

*A formal title for the project :*

“Resources for Jews Considering Cremation:  
Importance of Jewish Values and Practices”

*A 'sexy' or 'interesting' title for the same project*

“So, You’ve Chosen Cremation”

*The type of project:*

Resource and Position Paper

*The target audiences:*

- Jewish clergy and teachers, affiliated and non-affiliated Jews, End of Life counselors and coaches
- Hospice staff, especially chaplains and social workers
- Elder setting staff
- Jewish social services staff
- Members of Chevra Kaddisha
- Members of Bikkur Cholim
- Rabbinical students
- Jewish mortuaries
- Jewish congregations
- Jewish Elder Law and Estate Attorneys

Your ABCD write up

Audience

See above

Behavior

- Individuals and groups will sign up for presentations by Threshold Consulting about this topic
- Individuals and families will retain Threshold Consulting for preplanning
- Jewish mortuaries will know about and consult with Threshold Consulting
- There will be an increase in the number of Jews receiving Tahara and Shmirah, especially when cremation is chosen.
- More members of Chevrot Kaddish are willing to consider tahara and shmira for individuals who will be cremated
- More cremated remains are buried in Jewish cemeteries

Condition

Seminars and talks in Synagogues, Communities (JCC, etc.), Seminaries and Conferences (Home Funeral Guide training, Death Salons)

Participation in Panels on Cremation - eg. Kavod v' Nichum annual conference

Talks in Libraries, Adult Education Centers

Degree

Anecdotally:

- I will begin to be recognized in the EOL and Jewish communities and called on for presentations and contributions on this topic. I am

already on the EOL circuit but would like to be known specifically on this topic and the expanded topic of "Conscious Cremation."

- I will begin to receive referrals from and to the target audience.

### Your Project Plan

This project has been entirely organic. I thought a lot about what I was excited and interested in studying more deeply. I came up with two topic areas: "Conscious Cremation" and "Home Tahara".

Then I thought about what experience and research I had already completed. I also reviewed materials I had already developed and presented. Because time and completion were important, I wanted to know how much material I already had that could be repurposed into this project. I created two drafts - one for each topic area and discussed them with David Zinner, Gamliel Executive Director.

The topic determining factor was that a business plan could easily grow out of the work on this project. The cremation topic was eager to become a business plan. In fact, I had to limit this project to complete the project by excluding a business plan. I decided that only because I was determined to complete the project according to the Gamliel requirements.

From there I cut and pasted in pieces of work I had already written. As I developed those scrapes into coherent and easy to read content, I came up with lots of questions. My main source for addressing those questions was the internet. I relied heavily on search engines, especially [google.com](http://google.com). From there and from resources on the <http://www.jewish-funerals.org> website, I found other sources like the Conservative Responsa collection.

I also told all of my friends and associates what I was up to. I'm well networked with the Jewish after-death care, home funeral movement, and conscious-dying community and several critical sources came to me through friends and colleagues.

David Zinner, Executive Director of the Gamliel Institute, has been a remarkable contributor, cheerleader and sanity-checker. I've relied heavily on his organizing skills, his sharp editing and ability to see the big picture. He also encourages creativity and exploration while respecting the limits of an academic exploration. He shared his enthusiasm and reminded me that I'm doing work that contributes to a larger body of work.

From there, I started gathering information. As it accumulated, I began to see themes and backed into an outline for the paper. I didn't start with an outline or proposal, just a Big Idea. I noted each chunk of information or data with a reference word from the outline which helped me figure out where that information fit into the paper. And sometimes there wasn't a link to the outline so I needed to 1) edit the outline to include it or 2) delete the information/file it for future use.

I also started creating a bibliography of:

url's  
Books  
Papers

Important names/organizations and contact information

As I found something through a search engine or a link, I copied the info into the above. That way I didn't need to go back and recapture my references at the end of the paper.

Then I started writing. I began with content areas that I was either most interested in or that were less controversial - no an easy thing (non-controversial) with this topic. That way I was able to move along rapidly and amass some volume and feel productive. Then I ground out the more difficult sections. Some people recommend that opposite and, in fact, I usually "eat the frogs first." That way you have easier material when you're running out of steam. However, I struggled with procrastination on this project and I needed to build up momentum. And I don't think that I've written anything linear in 30 years. These additional files for this project have been anything but linear, too.

I sent outline drafts and writing to David Zinner repeatedly. We used docs.google for that process. David like making notes in the "margins". And when I made a change per his comments, I wrote them in a special color (my preference is a deep, not angry, maroon). That way we could easily find them. We conferenced using Skype and occasionally wrote emails/gmails.

When we reached what we thought was the final version, I sent it, along with the Ancillary File and Anything Else file to David. Then it was in his hands.