

Myrna Matsa
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Bio

Since January 2010 Rabbi Myrna Matsa has worked in various capacities for Skirball Hospice a Program of the Los Angeles Jewish Home for The Aging. As a hospice rabbi she provided pastoral support to patients, their loved ones and caregivers; as bereavement counselor she aids survivors in the continuity of care as they reshape their lives in the loved one's absence. She also provides bereavement support to staff.

Rabbi Matsa served as the Rabbinic Pastoral Counselor to Southern Mississippi and Louisiana clergy after Hurricane Katrina, 2005-2010. This work provided support for clergy and Jewish leadership so that they could be present to the communities for whom they cared. Funding for this position was provided by the Jewish Federation National System through the NY Board of Rabbis.

Prior to this work, Rabbi Matsa served two synagogue communities: *Congregation Beth Israel*, Asheville, NC as Senior Rabbi 2000-2003 and *The Adath Jeshurun*, Minnetonka, MN as Assistant Rabbi 1995-2000. She earned a Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Care and Pastoral Counseling degree 2004 from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the NY Postgraduate Center for Mental Health. Rabbinic ordination was from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America 1995, Master's degree in Rabbinics in 1993. In each position she served as lead on Chevra Kadisha educating volunteers and mortuaries in Jewish customs and traditions for burial and bereavement. *The Adath Jeshurun* is renown for the pioneering work of Rabbi Arnold Goodman who revived a 125 year-old synagogue Chevra Kadisha and brought to national attention how communities could do the same. This resulted in the video and published book: [A Plain Pine Box](#),

Since the death of her beloved friend Annie Ballinger 1992 Rabbi Matsa has been committed to helping Jews bury their loved ones traditionally, regardless of their affiliation or level of religious practice.

Nancy Dotti
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Bio

Nancy is a leading force in the Chevra Kadisha of Sonoma County. She has been part of the Chevra Kadisha for fifteen years doing tahara, shimira, and organizing. Since being excluded from her mom's hospital room at the age of three she has been compelled to connect the honoring of death with the continuity of life. She has given presentations and taught about tahara, shimira and pre-planning. She feels honored to be able to do this work.

Nancy has a BS in scientific writing. She has two grown children who live near in California and she is blessed to have them around. She also has a horse, dog, cat and chickens. She loves animals and has worked in the horse industry for thirty years.

1. Project idea

A travel journal of the Gamliel trip to New York, Prague and Israel

2. Elevator Speech

A book about the Gamliel trip to New York, Prague and Israel. It captures many of the events we attended with incites, information and colorful photos. It is dense with information that we learned on the trip but in a format to make it easily accessible. One can flip through and just look at the photos or stop at any point and read in detail about any event.

3. Abstract

In April and May 2015 students of the Gamliel Institute traveled across the world. They met with Jewish leaders involved with death, burial and the continuum of care in their communities. They met with historians and saw original ancient documents, art work, and items used by Chevra Kadisha groups. The group visited taharah facilities, and explored cemeteries and they participated in the first Chevra Kadisha conference in Israel.

This book is an in-depth account through photos and essays of that trip. Using notes and photos from the trip, combined with additional research when needed, this book will share with others the many amazing things learned and seen by the Gamliel students.

Each section has an essay describing the event and ideas that were brought up from the event. Photos accompany all events in which we were allowed to take photos are used to further show events or the amazing artifacts we saw. When needed each section has a technical notes part at the end to give many details that don't fit in the essay format.

Due to the length of the work for our project we will have most of the events from the New York part of our trip. The book should be completed with the whole trip by the Chevra Kadisha Conference in June 2016.

4. Title

An Unusual Journey, New York, Prague, and Israel, with the graduating class of the Gamliel Institute

5. Type of Project

Book. Most likely online but might do a small print run.

6 Target Audience

Other Gamliel students currently taking the course of study.

Other Chevra Kadisha members

To be used in fundraising for future Gamliel trips