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CHAPTER X.

A. A mourner is exempt from reading Shema, from prayers, and all the precepts commanded in the Torah, during the time that the corpse is in his house. If one desires to be rigorous with himself, he shall not do so, for the honor of the dead. When the time for reading Shema approaches, all the people read; he, however, must be silent. When they rise to pray, he shall acknowledge the justice, saying: "Lord of the universe! I have sinned against Thee; a little only of my indebtedness was called in, although I deserve much more. May it be Thy will to close up our breaches [A1](#) and condole us!" R. Simeon said: He also prays for the departed soul.

B. The mourner must eat with his neighbors. If he has none, he shall eat in another room; if he has none, he shall make a partition of ten spans' distance; if he has nothing to make a partition with, he shall turn his face and eat. He must not lean [B1](#) and eat, neither must he eat meat nor drink wine; he must not pronounce the meal benediction, nor can he be included where three are required in pronouncing it, neither may others pronounce it singly or in three for him. All this is only on week-days; on the Sabbath, however, he may eat and lean, and is allowed all the things mentioned above. As Rabban Gamaliel said: On the Sabbath a mourner is not considered as a mourner at all.

[B2](#)R. Jehudah in the name of Rabh said: "A mourner on the first day must not eat of his own bread, for the Merciful One said [Ezek. xxiv. 22]: 'And the bread of other men shall ye not eat.'" Rabba and R. Joseph (when they were in mourning) used to exchange their meals between themselves. R. Jehudah in the name of Rabh said again: "When a case of death occurs in a town, all the inhabitants of the town are prohibited from doing any work." R. Hamnuna happened to be in Drumtha,

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and he heard the horn announcing the occurrence of a death. When he subsequently noticed certain persons doing some work, he said to them: "Let these persons be under the ban, for is there not a death-case in town?" They answered him: "There are special societies for burying the dead." And he thereupon said to them: "If such is the case, you are absolved." R. Jehudah in the name of Rabh said again: "One who laments excessively over a deceased may be sure to have to do so over another deceased." There lived a woman in the neighborhood of R. Huna who had seven sons. Once one of them died, and she was weeping very much. R. Huna sent her a message not to do so, but she paid no attention to it, and R. Huna sent her the following message: "If you listen to what I say, well and good; if not, you may as well prepare a shroud for another of your sons." Subsequently another son died, and one by one all of them died. He then said to her: "Now prepare a shroud for yourself." And she also died.

C. The corpse must not be carried out when near the time of reading Shema: it must be done an hour sooner or later. When the bearers of the hearse go out, those in front of it, as their services

are required, are exempt from reading Shema, but are prohibited to wear their shoes; those who are behind it, however, as their services are not required, are obliged to read Shema and are allowed to wear their shoes. Both are exempt from prayer and phylacteries. If on their return from the burial there is yet time to begin and finish Shema before standing in line, they first read, and stand in line afterward; otherwise they stand in line first, and read and pray afterward. The inside row which sees the mourner is exempt from it; the outside, however, is not. R. Jehudah said: Even if there is but one row, if they stand for the sake of the mourner, they are exempt; but if they stand for the sake of their own honor, they are not. The people who come to console, if they see the mourner they are exempt, otherwise they are not.

D. R. Simeon b. Elazar said: Rabban Gamaliel had a prepared sepulchre at Jamnia, wherein they used to deposit the corpse and lock the door. After that they came to stand in line around the mourner and consoled him; through this they exempted the public from doing these duties, and subsequently the corpse was brought up to Jerusalem.

The rabbis taught: At first in the houses of the rich (mourners), silver and gold baskets and white glass were used:

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and in those of the poor, willow baskets and colored glass were used, and the poor felt ashamed; and it was enacted that only willow baskets and colored glass should be used by all. At first they used to leave the face of the deceased uncovered and used to carry him on an expensive bier if he belonged to the rich class; but they used to cover his face (for their faces grew dim from hunger) and carry him on a common bier if he belonged to the poor class, and the poor people felt ashamed. So it was enacted that all should be covered and be carried on a common bier. At first they used to carry the rich in braided beds, and the poor in common ones, and the poor felt ashamed, and it was enacted that all should be borne in a common bed. At first spices used to be placed at the side of those who died from bowel-troubles, and those who suffered from that disease while still living used to feel ashamed; and it was enacted that spices should be placed at the side of every deceased person out of respect to those who were suffering from that disease while still living. At first the expenses accompanying the burial of a deceased person were more burdensome and painful to his relatives than the death itself, and they used to leave the corpse and run away, until Rabban Gamaliel, the Nasi, directed that he be buried in flaxen garments; and it became customary with the people to bury the dead in flaxen garments. Said R. Papa: "And at present, even in a flaxen garment of the value of one Zuz."

When the grave is closed, the mourner wraps up his head: [D1](#) when ready for the line, he bares it and exempts the others from doing it; if he steps outside the line, he covers it again; when he comes home and others come to visit him, he bares it again and exempts the others from doing it. [D2](#)

E. When a death occurs in the family of a sage or a disciple of a sage, they may come and discuss about the laws of mourning before him. If they err, he may set them right half-heartedly; but himself must not propound a question. He may speak himself, if he so desires, or he may permit another to

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speaking for him. It happened that the son of R. Jehudah died, and the latter permitted another to speak for him; so also did R. Jose the Galilean when his son died. It happened to R. Aqiba that his son died, and he sat and lectured all day; so also did Rabbi when his son died. If it is necessary to discuss about something, they must begin concerning the laws of mourning, and then branch off to other matters, and finish again in regard to mourning. In Judah, on the Sabbath they greet the mourner on entering and leaving the college, to show that no mourning exists on the Sabbath.

Footnotes

[45:A1](#)

CHAPTER X.

A. According to the translation of Leeser, and meaning that the doors shall be closed for further bereavements.

[45:B1](#) B. According to the custom in the Orient to eat leaning, and as we do at the *Seder* ceremony on the first eve of Passover.

[45:B2](#) *Gemara* from Moed Katan.

[47:D1](#) D. See above, [p. 27](#).

[47:D2](#) The literal translation of the text is to cover and to bare the head, and it may be that the custom was already in vogue, to honor those present in baring the head, as Paul required to bare the head in the house of prayer. We, however, translated "wrap up," in accordance with the text, page cited, and in accordance with other commentators.

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