

May 6-12, 2019

Luke 12–17; John 11

“Rejoice with Me; for I Have Found My Sheep Which Was Lost”

Summary: *Jesus teaches, Beware of hypocrisy; lay up treasures in heaven rather than on earth; prepare for the coming of the Lord; where much is given, much is required; preaching the gospel causes division.*

Jesus teaches, Repent or perish—He gives the parable of the barren fig tree, heals a woman on the Sabbath, and likens the kingdom of God to a mustard seed—He discusses whether few or many are saved and laments over Jerusalem.

Jesus again heals on the Sabbath—He teaches humility and gives the parable of the great supper—Those who follow Him must forsake all else.

Jesus gives the parables of the lost sheep, the piece of silver, and the prodigal son.

Jesus gives the parable of the unjust steward—He teaches of service and condemns divorce—He gives the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Jesus speaks of offenses, forgiveness, and faith—Even the faithful are unprofitable servants—Ten lepers are healed—Jesus discourses on the Second Coming.

Jesus testifies that He is the Resurrection and the Life—Mary and Martha testify of Him—He raises Lazarus from the dead—Caiaphas speaks prophetically of the death of Jesus.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

How can word-insights help me find that which is lost?

The study chapters include key words that represent our blessings and responsibilities. Some Jewish thoughts on forgiveness, leprosy, gratitude, work and burial may add insights to the parables and scriptures to be studied this week.

How can I better understand forgiveness?

“Although Judaism sees sin as a most serious matter, even the sinner is not without hope. One of the most important theological doctrines of both the Bible and the Talmud is that if a sinner repents his bad deeds, God will forgive him. Repentance consists of several stages --- firstly the sinner must reflect on his actions and realize that he has indeed done the wrong thing. He must then make up his mind never to do it again, and confess his sin. This confession is not made to any other human being but is made by the sinner directly to God. On this basis the two confessions *Ashamnu* and *Al-Het* were introduced into the prayers for the Day of Atonement

which is a special occasion for repentance and forgiveness. However, even when a sinner has done all these things, his repentance is still not final until he has been exposed to the same temptation and withstood it. Of course he should not deliberately put himself on that spot again.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What caused God to choose me?

“The rabbis insist that Israel was elected because it voluntarily accepted the Torah whereas other nations would not. Mercy and forgiveness, says the Talmud, are distinguishing characteristics of Abraham and his seed, and these characteristics motivated God to choose Israel as His people. ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

What can I learn about leprosy – that may not always represent a physical disease?

“The Hebrew word *zara’at*, which has been translated as leprosy is not actually the physiological disease of leprosy as we know it today (i.e., Hansen's disease). Rather it is a general biblical term to describe an affliction which strikes in one of three ways: on one's person, one's clothing or one's house. Several chapters in the Book of Leviticus and the entire Talmudic tractate of *Nega'im* are devoted to a discussion of the disease. They explain the system of diagnosis of skin, garments and home, and enumerate the symptoms of the disease. These are generally a discoloration and deterioration of the flesh, the cloth or the stones. It was the priest who made the inspection; if he diagnosed the disease as *zara’at*, he then imposed a quarantine. At the end of the quarantine period, he made another examination. If no further degeneration was apparent, the patient was isolated for another week, after which he could be pronounced healed. The priest played no part in the healing, however, and only performed rituals after the person was cured.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How then, will the cure of leprosy affect my daily life?

The opposites of speaking ill, haughtiness and rebelliousness, that cause “leprosy-of spirit,” with prayer and fasting, are a cure! “It was the responsibility of the afflicted person himself to pray and fast in order to win God's favor. *Zara’at* was seen as a disease inflicted by God and cured by God. The *aggadah* explains that *zara’at* was inflicted as a punishment for slander. Thus, according to the *aggadah*, the Hebrew word for leper, *mezora*, is a play on words of the Hebrew *mozi shem ra*, meaning to slander a person's reputation. The Midrash cites the case of Miriam who was stricken with leprosy after she had spoken ill of her brother, Moses. Then, after Moses had prayed for her, she was healed by God.” “Another case of *zara’at* mentioned in the Bible is that of King Uzziah of Judah, in whose case haughtiness and rebelliousness were seen as causes of the affliction. Despite the warning of the priests, King Uzziah had entered the Temple and burned incense on the altar, a privilege granted only to priests. As a result, he was immediately stricken with *zara’at*.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How can I anchor the healing process?

In Ancient days, when the person had prayed and fasted, a purification ritual was performed. Since the restoration of the priesthood, the partaking of the Sacrament is a way to “anchor” the experience of repentance. “After a person was cured of *zara’at* he went through a purification ritual conducted by the priest, which lasted eight days. On the first day, the priest performed the ritual outside the city or camp. He took cedar wood, crimson cloth and a live bird and dipped them in an earthen vessel containing a mixture of fresh water and the blood of another bird. The leper was sprinkled with this mixture seven times, after which the live bird was set free. The leper was then admitted to the camp after washing his clothes, shaving his hair, and

bathing. After the seventh day, he repeated this washing process again, and then was allowed to enter his residence. On the eighth day he brought an offering to the Temple.”

([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How is leprosy viewed as a physical disease by the Jews of today?

“Leprosy as it is known today is a physical disease and those who suffer from it must be isolated. In 1887 a leper hospital was built in Talbiyyeh, Jerusalem. For many years of the hospital's existence, the famous Rabbi Aryeh Levin acted as chaplain of the hospital, and despite the quarantine on lepers, continued to visit the hospital and extend his kindness to the patients.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How does the increase of my attitude of kindness become an expression of gratitude?

“As a sign of gratitude for having been spared the fate of Egypt's firstborn who died on the eve of Passover, tradition has made it incumbent upon Jewish firstborn to fast on the day before Passover. If the child is too young, his father fasts in his place. If the father himself is a firstborn, then the child's mother fasts for him. Should Passover fall on a Sabbath, the fast takes place on Thursday, not Friday.” “The contents of Grace After Meals are as follows: The first blessing (*Birkat ha-Zan*) praises God for providing food for all His creatures. The second (*Birkat ha-Arez*) expresses particular gratitude for the redemption from Egypt, the covenant of circumcision, the revelation of the Torah and the "good land" of Israel which God has given the Jewish people.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How can hospitality increase my sense of gratitude?

“In Talmudic literature, hospitality is a great *mitzvah*, and is even more important, according to some rabbis, than prayer. The guest should be shown his room on arrival, so that he will enjoy his meal and not have to worry about where he will sleep later. The host is forbidden to make his guest uncomfortable by appearing miserable or sad, or by watching him too closely when he eats. The guest too, has responsibilities, including showing gratitude to his host, and complying with his host's wishes. Guests must not accept hospitality if they think that doing so will impoverish the host.” “Because Jerusalem was regarded as the common possession of the entire Jewish people, householders in the capital were forbidden to take rent from pilgrims, but as a token of gratitude, the pilgrims would give their hosts the hides of the sacrificial animals.” ([Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.](#))

How does gratitude extend into “the word?”

It is interesting that hides of animals are still used for writing Torah Scrolls. Since there are no sacrifices, the supply of first born, unblemished animal skins is rare. A provision has been made to use the skins of unborn calves that have to be taken to prevent the traumatic death of a cow. Incidentally, for many years, a major source of this special leather for scripture scrolls in Israel is provided by a Latter-day Saint, Tom Thomaser, from Oklahoma.

How do I feel about the graciousness of the landlord?

The thoughts on the subject of work, labor and charity prompt a memory for me almost every day as I pass the “temporary labor market” close to the Damascus Gate in Jerusalem. Arab laborers are waiting for a day's work. Some are skilled masons or capable in other crafts. Some get hired in the morning, others only later-on in the day when contractors discover an urgent need for some temporary help. It is usually the custom to pay a full day's wage even if the hire is only for part of the day.

How is “labor” part of the commandments?

“The Bible regards labor as an aspect of world order. In the story of Creation, man working the soil is the important element in the development of vegetation (**Genesis 2:5**). Work is praised not only for purposes of earning one's bread but also for the contentment which results. Idleness, on the other hand, is condemned as a social evil. The sages declared, “He who does not teach his son a trade is as though he had taught him to be a thief.” Rabbinic literature stresses the dignity of labor and refers with pride to its great scholars who did work that might be thought menial to avoid being dependent on others. Rabbi Johanan the shoemaker is only one example. The ideal suggested and followed by most of the sages is to combine learning and work. Maimonides proposed that the day be divided into thirds, with equal time for learning, labor and other matters.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What are Bible instructions on labor relations?

“Two basic principles helped shape biblical labor policy. First, the employer's duty to pay his worker on time (**Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15**). Second, the right of the worker to eat from the produce of the field while he is working (**Deuteronomy 23:25, 26**). The worker's duty is to do his work in a faithful manner. Throughout the ages, rabbinic interpretation of these biblical precepts has developed the labor relations that are a model of social justice. Recent rabbinic decisions have upheld the right of workers to organize and, where unavoidable, to strike. In the modern state of Israel, labor, especially a return to agriculture, is regarded as a basic political philosophy. (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How does the “landlord’s” responsibility extend to charity?

“When necessary, accepting charity is perfectly legitimate and no shame attaches itself to the poor who are otherwise unable to support themselves. However, one is advised to do everything in one's power to avoid having to take alms: “Make your Sabbath a weekday (by not eating special food or wearing good clothes) rather than be dependent on other people.” Great Sages did physical labor in order to support themselves and remain independent. A person who is really entitled to take charity but delays doing so and consequently suffers rather than be a burden to the community will surely be rewarded and not die before he reaches a position in which he will be able to support others.” “. . . specific Torah laws . . . apply to all firstborn human beings and animals of the following types: cattle, sheep, goats and donkeys. The purpose of these laws is to teach us that everything in the world belongs to God and man owns only what God has given to him. When a man has worked hard to raise a family or rear a herd of animals, and finally sees the first fruits of his labor, the Torah tells him that these first fruits belong to God. Therefore, if man wishes to own and enjoy these gifts, he must redeem them from their rightful owner.” (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What does Jericho’s wealth teach me?

In examining the oasis of Jericho and its history, a reflection of three Biblical events teach us something about wealth. In Joshua’s time, Achan stole wealth when “the walls came tumbling down.” In Jesus’ time, He experienced a temptation of wealth and then in a tax collector’s conversion, wealth is returned.

What can I learn about the “Walls Came Tumbling Down?”

Just north of the Dead Sea is Jericho, nestled at the bottom of the Judean Hills. It is still a quiet town of fruit and vegetable growers. It is a trade-route city that has encountered at least twenty-eight different conquests, as evidenced in the excavations of this ancient *tel*. One of those

conquests was by Joshua, who led the Israelites on six silent daily walks around the walls of the city. On the seventh day they made another six silent walks around the city. All the noiseless marching may have confused the ancient inhabitants of Jericho. It was the seventh walk around the city on the seventh day that was made noisily. Accompanied by trumpets and shouts, the walls came tumbling down! “. . . at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the LORD hath given you the city.”

(Joshua 6:2-3, 15-16)

What do I learn from Achan being stoned for coveting wealth?

During the conquering of Jericho, the prophet Joshua commanded that all living persons and animals were to be killed except for Rahab (the harlot who had saved the Israelite spies). All gold, silver, other metal, and worthwhile items were to be brought to the Lord's treasury. Though no loot was to be taken at Jericho, a certain man named Achan succumbed to the temptation of wealth and took some spoils. Because he took a Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold and hid them in his tent, the Israelites experienced a terrible defeat at their next battle. After Joshua had interviewed them man by man, he found Achan, who confessed the theft. He and his entire family were stoned to death and then with all of their possessions they were burned with fire. **(Joshua 7:20-25)**

How did the Savior react at the Mount of Temptation?

As recorded in the New Testament, Jesus was tempted with the wealth of the world by Satan. This probably happened at Jericho, an oasis, an important and busy crossroad. This way station was obviously a place of wealth, both natural and manmade. The Mount of Temptation just above Jericho marks the traditional spot where Jesus' temptation with wealth may have occurred. **(Matthew 4:8-10)** A monastery has been built into the side of the mount. Tradition indicates that for many years, the monastery was “wordless.” Possibly this was done in symbolic gesture of the silent walks the Israelites made around the site.

What was a tax Collector doing in a tree?

When Jesus was teaching at Jericho, the tax collector, Zacchaeus, climbed a tree to better see Him. Jesus invited Himself to Zacchaeus's house to dine with him. People murmured that Jesus was socializing with the expropriator of their taxes. It is interesting to note that tax collectors had to reach a quota set by the Romans. It was imperative that taxes were collected above the normal rate when the economy was good so that the quota could be met when the economy was bad. The people murmured that Zacchaeus may have abused that system for his own benefit. However, a better look into his personality shows a different story, or at least indicates a complete change. Zacchaeus became so impressed with Jesus' teachings that he offered half of his wealth to the poor and fourfold repayment to the people he had wronged.

(Luke 19:1-8) “Taxes would be assessed against the community as a whole, and amongst themselves, the Jews would determine how to distribute the tax burden.”

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What's important about wealth?

A tree in Jericho marks the traditional site of that Zacchaeus event. I recall that some professional tree surgeons touring with me a number of years ago remarked that the supposed Zacchaeus tree looked more like two hundred years old than two thousand. Fortunately, it's not the tree but the story that reminds us of what is important. The three Jericho stories have some connection to wealth. Achan succumbed to temptation, disobeyed, and stole. Jesus was tempted but refused the wealth of the world. Zacchaeus, may have surrendered to temptation,

yet, he was willing to repay his wrongs – fourfold. The important lesson underlying these accounts is that there is no ownership; it is all stewardship. Everything belongs to the Lord. Whatever wealth man assembles is a test of his stewardship. The test of stewardship is manifested by faith. The following information about taxation is also interesting.

How old are taxes?

“The collecting of money or goods for the maintenance of political and social institutions and services, has been an integral part of organized communal life from earliest times, although in different ages and places in history, various forms of taxation have been imposed. From biblical times onward, the Jews have been subject to many types of taxes. The kings in the Bible imposed taxes on the people to maintain their own residences and households, to equip and maintain armies, and to provide for the needs of the Temple. Among the taxes collected were set portions of the annual yield of the fields, vineyards, flocks and olive groves. In addition, individuals would sometimes be "drafted" to perform required personal services for the king. The Book of Kings tells of King Solomon's division of the kingdom into 12 administrative units, each under the charge of an officer, each of which was responsible for providing the king and his household with food for one month of the year. In certain instances, for example after special acts of bravery, individuals would be rewarded with the lessening or elimination of their tax burden.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Obligation – or an opportunity to bless?

“In the Bible itself, the concept of taxation actually has a very broad connotation. Thus the tithe given to the priest or to the poor, the obligation to leave a "corner of the field" for the poor, and the requirements of the Sabbatical year and Jubilee, can also be seen as imposed duties, or as a form of taxation on the people.” “The urge to evade payment of taxes has always been strong, and as a result rabbinic leaders throughout the generations frequently stressed the need to be forthright in the payment of taxes. Tax evasion was seen as a form of robbery subject to severe punishment, for it was "robbery of the public" -- it increased the burden on the remaining members of the community by obliging them to pay more than their due share for the satisfaction of the community's needs.” “In the modern State of Israel, there is a taxation system similar to that found in most countries of the western world. However, because of the disproportionate defense burden, Israelis pay the highest tax rate in the world.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

What connection do death and taxes have in Israel?

Taxation in Israel covers many social responsibilities and also benefits society. Today, a standard burial is one of those services. There are some interesting facts that correspond with Lazarus' burial two thousand years ago. The procedure in Jesus' day was to bury within a day of death and leave the burial room open for three days as the family and friends begin a seven-day mourning period, including meeting in the pre-chamber, the weeping or mourning room.

What can I learn from Bethany, the House of the Poor?

About five miles north of Bethlehem and less than two miles east of Jerusalem is another ancient village called Bethany. The word *Beth-ani* means house of the poor. There are still honorably poor people living here. Their faith is exemplary. For more than twenty years I have been visiting the poor crusader-built room of the family of Abu Issa Mukahal, a Moslem married to a Christian Arab woman, Shifa. She has demonstrated her simple faith by raising eight children in that one room. Over the years the children have added one more room and a kitchen hut. At last count, twenty-one grandchildren assemble there almost daily. There are one

full-time job and some scattered temporary jobs to support them all. Shifa often begins preparing food by reaming out carrots and small zucchini squashes to stuff with rice and crumbs of ground meat—which she does not have. Her faith is that before the evening, some money will somehow trickle in and she will be able to purchase the last ingredients. Some tourists do sense that Bethany is still home to the honorably poor.

What are the traditions about the city of Lazarus?

More commonly Bethany is called Al-Azaria. This is derived from the two-thousand-year-old name of an inhabitant of Bethany who was called Eliezer. In modern English his name became known as Lazarus. Traditional churches mark the events involving Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. These friends of Jesus anxiously awaited His swift return to their home. They had sent a message to Him across the Jordan River that Lazarus was ill. (The message may have taken an overnight journey to reach Him, and Jesus would have needed at least another overnight journey to return if He left immediately.) However, “When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was . . . Then when Jesus came, he found that he [Lazarus] had lain in the grave four days already.” (John 11:6-17)

How authentic is the Tomb of Lazarus?

The entrance and steps to Lazarus’s tomb were made by Christians just hundreds of years ago. However, they do lead down through the crest of a hill to the remains of a first-century Jewish tomb. Typically, such tombs had two chambers. One chamber was for the mourners who returned for seven days, praying and weeping. (This mourning is called *Shiva* in Hebrew.) Another chamber is the burial room, wherein the bodies were placed within a day of passing away. After three days it was customary to close the burial room but to continue mourning for the rest of the seven-day period. Jesus asked, “Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord come and see. [Then] Jesus said, Take ye away the stone . . . [Jesus] . . . cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.” (John 11:34-43)

How can the dead arise?

Lazarus’s family was amazed! They knew that within a day of his death, the body had been washed, completely immersed, and anointed with fragrant spiced oils. They probably assisted in dressing the body, fastening his hands and feet, and reverently wrapping the *talith* over his head and around his body. As they laid him in the burial chamber, they knew that he was dead, and now, before their very eyes, he was alive again. His “shuffling” out of the burial chamber must have astonished the mourners so much that Jesus had to reassure them: “Loose him and let him go.” (John 11:44) Lazarus was one of several people Jesus had raised from the dead. They would all eventually die again. Jesus himself would become the first to resurrect from the dead, never to die again. The raising of Lazarus aroused great interest among the people. The miracle was reported to the high priests who immediately felt threatened. In their minds, Jesus’ popularity imperiled their social and political standing.

Who would object to the wonder of life-again?

A council convened, and Caiaphas, the High Priest that year, suggested that Jesus should die. Caiaphas further justified his wicked proposal by exclaiming that Jesus’ popularity was spreading to other Jews in other lands. Again, that would imperil his influence throughout the Jewish world. Caiaphas’ anger justified his call for Lazarus’ death as well. This was in sharp contrast with the respect and decorum given to death and burial practices. Since Lazarus’ death and rising, as well as Jesus’ eventual death and resurrection, are so significant to building faith, added insight to Jewish burial practices may be of value. “Decent burial was

regarded to be of great importance in ancient Israel, as in the rest of the ancient Near East. Abraham's purchase of the cave at Machpelah as a family tomb (**Genesis 23**) and the subsequent measures taken by later patriarchs to ensure that they would be buried there occupy a prominent place in the patriarchal narratives. Biblical biographies ordinarily end with the statement that a man died, and an account of his burial reflects the value assigned to proper interment. To bury an unidentified corpse was considered to be so great a good deed that even the high priest was required to do it although it involved him in becoming ritually unclean." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Where do Jewish burial rituals come from?

"There is no explicit biblical evidence as to how soon after death burial took place, but it is likely that it was within a day after death. This was dictated by the climate and by the fact that the Israelites did not embalm the dead (Jacob and Joseph were embalmed following Egyptian custom)." "In Talmudic times, burial took place in caves, hewn tombs, sarcophagi, and catacombs; and a secondary burial, i.e., a re-interment of the remains sometimes took place about one year after the original burial. Jewish custom insists on prompt burial as a matter of respect for the dead, a consideration of particular relevance in hot climates. The precedents set by the prompt burials of Sarah (**Genesis 23**) and of Rachel (**Genesis 35:19**) are reinforced by the Torah's express command that even the body of a man who had been hanged shall not remain upon the tree all night, but "you must bury him the same day" (**Deuteronomy 21:23**). Some delays in burial are, however, justified: "Honor of the dead" demands that the proper preparation for a coffin and shrouds be made, and that the relatives and friends pay their last respects. Certain delays are unavoidable. Funerals may not take place on the Sabbath or on the Day of Atonement; and although the rabbis at one time permitted funerals on the first day of a festival, provided that certain functions were performed by gentiles, and regarded the second day of festivals "as a weekday as far as the dead are concerned," some modern communities prefer postponement. Where there are two interments at the same time, respect demands that the burial of a scholar precedes that of an *am ha-arez* ("average citizen"), and that of a woman always precedes that of a man." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Who is responsible for the burial?

"The duty of burial is an obligation of the deceased's heir but if they cannot or do not perform it, the whole community is responsible. In Talmudic times, the communal fraternal societies for the burial of the dead evolved out of an appreciation of this duty. In many communities, even till modern times, acceptance into the *hevra kaddisha* (as the society is known) is considered to be an honor and only mature, respected men and women are initiated." "One of the functions of the *hevra kaddisha* is the *Tohorah* rite. This is washing the corpse and preparing it for burial. In ancient times various cosmetics were used but these have been largely discontinued. The corpse is dressed in simple white shrouds and, as a rule, wrapped in the *tallit* he wore during his lifetime. The *tallit* is, however, invalidated by having one of the *zizit* removed." "Coffins were unknown in biblical times. The corpse was laid, face upwards, on a bier and brought to his grave. The custom of burying important people in coffins developed only later. Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi, however, ordered that holes be drilled in his coffin so that the earth touch his body. This custom is always followed where coffins are used and in countries outside Erez Israel it is also customary to put earth from Erez Israel in the coffin." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Coffin or not?

"In ancient times a form of coffin was the ossuary which was a small chest in which the bones of the deceased were placed after the flesh had decayed. In various places in Israel, such as Bet She'arim, stone coffins, known as sarcophagi (singular sarcophagus) have also been found. Many were elaborately carved, some with non-Jewish motifs. In the Middle Ages there was no general rule as to whether burial should be in a coffin. In Spain the coffin was not used, while in France it was, and was commonly made from the table that had witnessed the hospitality of the deceased. Coffins were also used in Eastern Europe and often rabbis' coffins were made from the desks at which they had studied. In the 16th century the idea grew that it was meritorious to be buried in direct contact with the earth --- "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (**Genesis 3:19**) --- and interment without a coffin became the rule for strictly Orthodox Jews. In countries where the secular authorities insisted on the use of a coffin, their bottoms were either made of loose boards or holes were drilled into them." "In the Western world even Orthodox Jews nowadays use coffins in compliance with the law of the land but they are usually made plain and of cheap wood. In Israel, burial is without a coffin except for soldiers who are buried in plain wooden boxes." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

How is respect demonstrated in burials?

"Although nowadays burial always takes place in a cemetery, this was not always so. In biblical times the practice was to bury the dead in family sepulchers which might have been in natural caves or man-made buildings. In Talmud times, the custom developed of setting aside special places to bury the dead. This was primarily to keep the graves out of town since they can be a source of ritual impurity, particularly for the *kohanim* (priests). The cemetery, therefore, has no intrinsic holiness and is not "hallowed ground." However, great care has always been taken to keep the cemetery in the best possible order out of respect for the dead and sensitivity to the mourners. No activity showing disrespect for the dead, such as animals grazing there, was allowed. Further, anything that shamed the dead, such as eating and drinking or wearing *tallit* or tefillin or reading from the Torah, is also forbidden because the dead cannot do these things." "It is customary to visit the cemetery on the anniversary of a loved one's death, as well as during the month of Elul, preceding the High Holy Days. Cemeteries are usually owned by the community and some people reserve space next to their relatives. *Kohanim* are always buried in the first rows since their relatives, also *kohanim*, may not enter the cemetery and so can see their loved ones' graves from outside. Apostates and suicides were at one time buried in a separate section of the cemetery, but this law is usually not followed." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

Flowers or not?

"The custom of decorating graves with flowers is strongly opposed by some Orthodox rabbis on the ground that it is a "gentile custom." Neither Conservative nor Reform Judaism, however, objects and it is also common practice in Israel, particularly in military cemeteries."

"The first tombstone mentioned in the Bible is the monument the patriarch Jacob set up over the grave of Rachel. From other parts of the Bible and in Talmudic times, it seems that such monuments were set up for important people. Later the custom developed of erecting some sort of marker on the grave, most probably to be able to locate it easily, and so that *kohanim* should avoid it. Still later people started to inscribe epitaphs on the gravestones, recording the name of the person buried there, his dates and some biblical verse and statement in his praise. Some of the epitaphs described the function and position of the deceased and some, from early periods, have been found in Greek."

How is honor shown to the dead?

“Escorting the dead to his last resting place is considered a great *mitzvah* "the fruit of which a man enjoys in this world while the stock remains for him in the world to come." It justifies even an interruption in the study of the Torah and is called "the true kindness" since one can expect no reciprocation of any sort. The minimum duty is to rise as the funeral cortege passes, and accompany it for four paces." "One who sees a funeral procession and does not escort it," states the Talmud, mocks the dead and blasphemes his Maker." Only if the hearse passes a bridal cortege is the bride given preference; to honor the living is considered greater than to honor the dead.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**