WHEN DOES THE BURIAL TAKE PLACE?

Our Torah indicates that burial must take place as close as possible to the moment of death. To leave the body without burial once the soul has returned to God, according to our tradition, might represent a transgression of a biblical prohibition (lo talin) and a disrespect for the memory of the deceased. Jewish Law, therefore, requires that the body be buried preferably within the day the person died or at least within 24 hours after the decease In some extraordinary occasions –as it shall be explained below – burial could be delayed.

1. As a general rule, the proper time to perform the burial is within the first hours of the morning. If the person died during the early hours of the morning, burial might take place in the afternoon. If death occurred during the afternoon and there was no time to bury the body before sunset, one should wait until the following day. There are factors which are obviously beyond the power of the relatives in charge of the burial arrangements, like obtain the death certificate and sometimes other procedures which might not allow to bury the body as explained above.

2. Only in a situation which would be considered "in the honor of the deceased" the burial might be postponed beyond the time already explained. For example, if a son or daughter or any other relative of the deceased, whose presence in the funeral would bring honor the deceased, must come from overseas. In all these cases, one must consult a rabbinic authority to approve the delay. In no case this delay should take more than three days.

3. If a person died during Friday there is not enough time to perform the burial before Shabbat, or if the person died

during Shabat, the burial should be delayed until Sunday morning.