

FAQ VOL II

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J.K. McKee

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Frequently Asked Questions

VOLUME II

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P.O. Box 516
McKinney, Texas 75070
(407) 933-2002

outreachisrael.net / outreachisrael.blog
messianicapologetics.net / messianicapologetics.blog

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Frequently Asked Questions, Volume II is a multi-year work in progress. Please note how the text may be corrected, updated, or amended, before final publication. Page numbers are also likely to be altered.

Abbreviations and Special Terms

The following is a list of abbreviations for reference works and special terms which are used in publications by Outreach Israel Ministries and Messianic Apologetics. Please familiarize yourself with them as the text may reference a Bible version, i.e., RSV for the Revised Standard Version, or a source such as TWOT for the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, solely by its abbreviation. Detailed listings of these sources are provided in the Bibliography.

- ABD: *Anchor Bible Dictionary*
AMG: *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament, New Testament*
ANE: Ancient Near East(ern)
Apostolic Scriptures/Writings: the New Testament
Ara: Aramaic
ASV: American Standard Version (1901)
ATS: ArtScroll Tanach (1996)
b. Babylonian Talmud (*Talmud Bavli*)
B.C.E.: Before Common Era or B.C.
BDAG: *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich)
BDB: *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
C.E.: Common Era or A.D.
CGEDNT: *Concise Greek-English Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Barclay M. Newman)
CGL: *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* (2021)
CHALOT: *Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Holladay)
CJB: *Complete Jewish Bible* (1998)
CJSB: *Complete Jewish Study Bible* (2016)
DRA: Douay-Rheims American Edition
DSS: Dead Sea Scrolls
EDB: *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*
EJ: *Encyclopaedia Judaica*
ESV: English Standard Version (2001)
Ger: German
GNT: Greek New Testament
Grk: Greek
HALOT: *Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Koehler and Baumgartner)
HCSB: Holman Christian Standard Bible (2004)
Heb: Hebrew
HNV: Hebrew Names Version of the World English Bible
IDB: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IDBSup: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*
ISBE: *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*
IVPBBC: *IVP Bible Background Commentary (Old & New Testament)*
Jastrow: *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (Marcus Jastrow)
JBK: *New Jerusalem Bible-Koren* (2000)
JETS: *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
KJV: King James Version
Lattimore: *The New Testament* by Richmond Lattimore (1996)
LITV: *Literal Translation of the Holy Bible* by Jay P. Green (1986)
LES: *Lexham English Septuagint* (2019)
LS: *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott)
LSJM: *Greek-English Lexicon* (Liddell-Scott-Jones-McKenzie)
LXE: *Septuagint with Apocrypha* by Sir L.C.L. Brenton (1851)
LXX: Septuagint
m. Mishnah
MT: Masoretic Text
NASB: *New American Standard Bible* (1977)
NASU: *New American Standard Update* (1995)
NBCR: *New Bible Commentary: Revised*
NEB: *New English Bible* (1970)
Nelson: *Nelson's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament Words*
NETS: *New English Translation of the Septuagint* (2007)
NIB: *New Interpreter's Bible*
NIDB: *New International Dictionary of the Bible*
NIV: *New International Version* (1984)
NJB: *New Jerusalem Bible-Catholic* (1985)
NJPS: *Tanakh, A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (1999)
NKJV: *New King James Version* (1982)
NRSV: *New Revised Standard Version* (1989)
NLT: *New Living Translation* (1996)
NT: *New Testament*

OT: Old Testament
REB: Revised English Bible (1989)
RSV: Revised Standard Version (1952)
t. Tosefta
Tanach (Tanakh): the Old Testament
Thayer: *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
TDNT: *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
TLV: Messianic Jewish Family Bible—Tree of Life Version (2014)
TNIV: Today's New International Version (2005)

TWOT: *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
UBSHNT: United Bible Societies' 1991 Hebrew New Testament revised edition
v(s). verse(s)
Vine: *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*
Vul: Latin Vulgate
YLT: Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)
WMB: World Messianic Bible (2020)

Funeral Customs, Messianic

Can you give me a good idea about the various funeral customs witnessed within today's Messianic movement, regarding the final disposition of the deceased?

It is safe to say that everyone's Messianic funeral experience is going to be different, and that there is a wide variance of traditions and customs likely to be encountered. The final disposition of the deceased, as witnessed within today's Messianic movement, widely in North America, is seen to involve funerary customs consistent with observant Judaism, Protestantism, as well as the options available by the funeral industry.

1. **Observant Jewish:** Jewish tradition throughout the millennia has widely encouraged a quick burial of the deceased, usually within twenty-four hours, forty-eight hours at most. Burial tends to be something very simple, as the body is washed and wrapped in a linen shroud. Traditional synagogues have a special burial society (although these can also be accessed through a Jewish funeral home), special persons who are equipped with the task of both preparing and watching the deceased. Depending on cemetery requirements, a simple coffin or casket may be used for burial. A kosher casket cannot have any metal objects, nor could it have been produced on the Sabbath. Frequently in the Diaspora, the deceased are buried with dirt or rocks from the Holy Land. In modern Israel, direct shroud burial in the ground is frequent, although coffins may be used. Following burial customarily begins the process of sitting *shiva*, as family and friends in the Jewish community remember the deceased, and go through a process of mourning and closure.¹
2. **Traditional Protestant:** In the standard "Protestant funeral," widely witnessed in North America in the Twentieth Century and into the Twenty-First Century, the deceased are embalmed and dressed, casketed, and prepared for visitation, where loved ones are able to view the person one final time. Many religious funeral services will have an open casket, whereas many others will have a closed casket. A funeral service may take place at a funeral home, a church, or at a cemetery graveside. Depending on cemetery requirements in

¹ For a further review of some of the major Jewish funeral traditions, consult George Robinson, *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals* (New York: Pocket Books, 2000), pp 184-194; Ronald L. Eisenberg, *The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004), pp 74-122.

North America, a casket is normally placed within an outer container or vault, to keep the ground from collapsing in. Embalming the deceased may not always be required by a cemetery, but it can be required if the deceased is transported across U.S. state lines. What has been called green burial has been growing in popularity, with the deceased simply dressed, with no embalming, and given direct ground interment—although several centuries ago this would have just been considered “burial.”

3. **Cremation:** Cremation has become the most frequent disposition of the deceased, throughout Europe and now North America, in the past three to four decades. Cremation involves the incineration of the corpse in a furnace, and then the pulverization of remaining bone fragments into “ashes.” The cremains of the deceased can be placed into an urn, which itself can be interred at a cemetery or taken home by the family. A frequent custom involves the scattering of cremains. Cremation was strongly opposed by religious authorities in Europe until the past several centuries, when cemetery space started to wane. Today, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism tend to be open-minded about cremation, as God can surely resurrect cremated ashes. Judaism has been traditionally opposed to cremation, as it is believed to desecrate a human being made in God’s image. A wide number of the deceased in the American Jewish community are, however, cremated. A major reason why cremation has grown in popularity, has been its generally low cost in comparison to burial.

All three of these major methods of funeral custom, or some variance, have been witnessed within the worldwide Messianic experience. Outside of Israel, there are few Messianic funerals which would be seen to follow a strict observant Jewish protocol of burial within twenty-four to forty-eight hours, although it can happen. Will a Jewish funeral home actually be willing to service the needs of a Messianic Jewish Believer, or not? Will a commercial funeral home be able to cater to the stipulations of a traditional Jewish funeral? Can what has become known as “green burial,” be an option for those wanting something consistent with Jewish tradition?

Many in the Messianic community do opt for some modification of the standard “Protestant funeral” in North America, with embalming, visitation, and burial involving a vault. A funeral service can take place at a congregation, funeral home, or gravesite. Sometimes the deceased is buried in a *tallit*, and the *shofar* is blown at the gravesite.

There are people in the Messianic community who have opted for cremation, and/or the scattering of their ashes. This is not limited to non-Jewish people in the Messianic movement, either, as various Jewish Believers have been seen to choose cremation for their final disposition.

Funeral planning and pre-preparation have been stressed at Messianic leadership conferences, in no small part due to the fallout of COVID-19, with at least one rabbi having to

have led a funeral with less than twelve hours preparation.² The option which any of you may choose, both for your funeral and the final disposition of your remains, is something which you need to discuss with your family and congregational leadership—especially in the event of an unforeseen emergency. You may also wish to consult a local funeral home, to see what kind of pre-paid options they have available, and whether or not a plan is transferable across funeral home networks.

² Todd Lesser. (2022). “Practical End of Life Planning for our Congregants & Attendees,” at IAMCS 2022 Rabbis Conference, including Generic End of Life Checklist.