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For this reason people tuck in their tzitzit when entering a cemetery in order not to be inconceivable of the feelings of the deceased (lo'g l'raish).

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi points out that the Torah does not encourage us to belittle this life, and long for life after death. Quite the opposite! The Torah makes it clear that we can enjoy the splendor of a deep and mystical connection with G-d while here on earth. Through prophecy and the like we enter the spiritual realm while still part of this world. While we are in this world, we are this-world centered, and are finally taken to the next world against our will.

Several years ago I asked Rabbi Michel Twerksi of Milwaukee why we allow the Yamin Tovim (Festivals) to bring an early end to the shiva mourning period. The law is that if a major Festival occurs during the shiva, that ends the shiva. He answered that there are three advantages to the mourner from the shiva: He relieves his anger at Hashem for causing this loss, he deals with denial of the event of his loved one's death, and he relieves the guilt he feels at being alive while the other is not. The Yamin Tovim directly deal with the anger and the guilt. When you properly celebrate the Yom Tov you see the "big picture" and the Divine providence in everything that happens. After that, how can you be angry or feel guilt? "Denial" is important, but without the other two factors of "anger" and "guilt" it is not enough of a reason to allow us to continue the shiva and once again withdraw from the dynamics of everyday life. Our lives were given to us to be lived to the fullest.

Sources:
- Pirkei Avos – 4:21.
- Talmud – Moad Katun, 27b.

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Look for a new riddle next week!

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Issue #50 - January 7, 1995
This edition contains:
1. Two Worlds – Which is Better?
2. Answers to Last Week’s Riddle

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Ask The Rabbi is written by Rabbi Yehoshua Karsh, Rabbi Benzion Bamberger, and various other Rabbanim at Ohr Somayach Institutions / Tanenbaum College, Jerusalem, Israel.

Production Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman
Production Design: Lev Seltzer CoD

Dedication opportunities are available for Ask The Rabbi — Please contact us for details
This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with due respect. Do not let this land on a garbage heap.

Susan from Seattle wrote:

Why is it that we mourn when someone dies, aren’t they going to a better place? Shouldn’t we be happy for them?

Dear Susan,

Your question highlights the paradox of how we experience the death of a loved one. Should we "be happy for them" as you say, or should we grieve deeply?

First of all, it is correct to mourn when someone dies. The Shulchan Aruch states "It is a great mitzvah to eulogize the dead in the proper way. The mitzvah is to raise one's voice and say those things that will break people's hearts to induce crying and to recall the praise of the one who has passed on."

The Talmud cautions, however, that this crying should not go on endlessly:

"There are 3 days for crying, 7 for eulogizing, and 30 days without laundering and haircuts. Eventually, though, it must stop. "Don't be more merciful than G-d." This implies that there is a need to mourn, but with limitation — that there is a reason to cry, but not forever.

On the other hand, it is also true that the deceased go on to a better place. We are taught that "This world is [but] a passageway to the next world" — the World to Come.

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