Practices surrounding the anniversary\(^1\) of the passing of a loved one

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**Introduction**

I am partly motivated to compile this essay by my experience in Elwood Shule, where my father was a board member, senior vice president, and treasurer over decades. Like many, I am the child of survivors. I recognise that each second or third generation of survivors, endures their own “baggage”. Their manifestation of Judaism is channelled through modern events, most notable of which is support for the nascent State of Israel, as born from the ashes of the Holocaust. Other are romantically attached to elements of the behaviour of their parents and grandparents, who doggedly refused to give up any vestige of Jewish tradition because to do so would be to give the Nazis a victory _after the fact_.\(^3\) The survivor, even the one with unanswered questions, knew that they had a duty to infuse the next generation with felicity not only towards their country and people, but also to critical elements of their traditions, culture and religion.

As a boy and adult in Elwood Shule, the pews were filled to capacity with a wide range of congregants. Almost all shared that common experience of having suffered as a survivor of the Holocaust. Survivors, in the main, remained dedicated in the extreme, to their very last breath. They worked overtime, quite literally, to ensure that their children were never deprived of those items and opportunities cruelly denied in their lost youth. Survivors had various attitudes to Judaism. On the one hand they had powerful questions to both God and man:

~ How could God bear witness to such atrocities?
~ How could sophisticated, “Moral,” man descend to such a low level morality, more reminiscent to that of an animal?
~ Why was I chosen to survive? How do I move forward when faced with that reality?

On the other hand, sometimes paradoxically, on important Jewish Festivals and events, they were religious- like in zealously protecting and upholding traditions and practices that their own parents and grandparents tenaciously guarded.

It was _not_, therefore, a surprise to witness a mass entry of congregants to Shule on Pesach, Shavuos, and Shmini Atzeres/Succos, not to mention Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, in order to respectfully intone the _Yizkor_ (remembrance) prayer for a loved one, even though they would not describe themselves as “religious” Jews. Paradoxically, some came _despite_ the fact that they could _not_ fathom answers to the unanswerable. Others even bore a

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1 Yohrtzeit in Yiddish, and Yom Hashana in Ivrit.

2 Dedicated in memory of my father. ר. שואל זליג ב ר’ יהודא הקוה בליבון יד

Mr Soniek (Shaul Zelig) Balbin of blessed memory, on the third Yohrtzeit of his passing, on the third day of the Jewish month of Shevat.

3 Sadly, intermarriage around the world is statistically threatening to do just that due to modern-day “tolerance.”
level of animosity towards aspects of their heritage and sat in Shule without opening a Siddur or participating in the formal prayers.

Yizkor, however, is an ingrained religious, human and/or cultural affiliation, in the least. The connection to a mother, father, wife, child, grandfather or grandmother could never be erased by the sub-human brutal acts of Nazis, or by the vicissitudes of time.

Despite busy schedules, they made the time to attend. Some chose to also sadly intone the Kaddish prayer because they were not aware of the exact day of the murder of loved ones: they were forced to choose a date. I watched these men and women attend like clockwork. They never missed the opportunity. To do so was tantamount to the ultimate disrespect one could demonstrate towards their Jewish ancestry and family: it was not negotiable.

To be sure, there probably wasn’t a day that went by where they did not think about those who had perished. Many a day presented its own challenge, and every memory invaded their headspace. Nevertheless, a formalised, traditional service where some multiple of (18) ח ו (Life) dollars is donated in memory of loved ones and helped them materialise a desire for continuity. The explicit reading of a memorial prayer, was De jure: it was inviolate and could not be breached or dispensed with.

No doubt, there was also the attraction of the masterful Drasha of the beloved “Shepherd of the Flock”, the charismatic and oratorically-gifted Rabbi Chaim Gutnick, who tended to tender sheep in a way that left his congregation both in tears and uplifted. This attraction was the icing on the cake. Ultimately, though, it was the dearly departed, and a fidelity to the formal Jewish practice of remembering, that was and remains magnetic. This could not be missed. To do so, was unthinkable.

Over time, I watched with sadness, and some dismay, as generations of survivors completed their journey from our physical world to a higher abode, leaving their memory and soul to enrich those who had survived them. Paradoxically, while parents never missed either a Yohrtzeit or a Yizkor, many of the next generation, my generation, went “missing”. That’s not to say that they were so estranged from their religion and culture. I think such an explanation is a generalisation and over-simplistic.

Many a time, I heard survivors express their dismay in Yiddish words along the lines of:

“Look at Nebach X. Their body is still warm. I can’t understand it. No sooner has X been buried, and their children have forgotten them in the formal religious-cultural sense. There is no Shiva, they just observe a “one-day minyan”. They gladly accept the Yerusha money, and subconsciously say “good bye Tatte”, or “good by Mamme”, put up a plaque, and are “gone” thereafter. Sadly, sport, the mundane shvoiltugen have become their new culture.”

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4 sermon.
5 Rabbi Gutnick’s first wife’s yohrtzeit is the day after my father, as it turns out.
6 poor.
7 Seven days of mourning.
8 inheritance.
9 father.
10 mother.
11 comparatively empty pursuits.
I heard this form of expression from survivors many-a-time. I didn’t respond. I had my parents. I consciously refused to disengage and even contemplate a situation which I had not experienced. Nonetheless, older congregants, in typical survivor-speak, called a spade-a-spade. I did not have answers in any case.

As time progressed, there are less survivors, and even though they have children, those children are “missing”. We see some on the **first** day of Rosh Hashanah [two days was fine for the parents, but apparently too much for some children, let alone parts of Yom Kippur]. Of course, some attend other Shules or Shteiblach and that is perfectly fine, but my observation suggest that there has been an exodus from Minhag Yisrael and there isn’t formal respect expressed in terms of ensuring that the **yearly** Yohrtzeit is zealously upheld, or that Yizkor is intoned during the year.

The purpose of this essay is **not** to admonish, God forbid. Nothing is achieved by admonishment in our day. Rather, I hope to re-invigorate practices of yore by listing age-old customs associated with Yohrtzeit, in the hope that many will consider returning to observe some of those customary roots as practiced by their parents and grandparents, and observe that **single personal day of the year** in the manner that it was, and should, continue to be cherished. Yes, we do remember the departed each day. That is existential and not unique to Jews. Our Jewish tradition and practices on the anniversary of the passing of a loved one, is the topic of this short essay.

**Disclaimer:** I am not an ordained Rabbi. **All** questions of Jewish Law should be referred to one’s local orthodox Rabbi or Posek. Please treat this publication as a **guide only**, and **always** ask your Orthodox Rabbi or Posek for Halachic advice. As it contains words of Jewish Law, any disposal should be made by leaving it in a Shule or with your Rabbi.

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12 Chabad houses and the like.

13 Jewish customs and law,

14 Halachic/Rabbinic Authority.
LAWS AND CUSTOMS

1. It is customary to attend Shule on the Shabbos immediately preceding the week of the yohrtzeit and for men 15 to be called to the Torah 16

2. Those men who are able, should seek to lead the prayers on the Shabbos, including Friday Night, and Mincha. Where this is not practical, there is no loss in the regular Chazan or Ba’al Tefillah doing so. Attendance, however, is strongly indicated for each of the three prayers on the Shabbat prior 17.

3. There is a custom to for men 18 to say the standard shorter Kaddish once during the Shabbat prayers 19 (either after the Song of the Day 20 or the longer Kaddish before Aleynu 21.

4. In general, one follows the practice of the Shule in which one prays.

5. Similarly, there is a custom for men to lead the Ma’ariv service on Saturday evening, immediately after the Shabbat, if one is able and suitable to do so.

6. On the actual day of the yohrtzeit, a son, if able and suitable, should be invited to lead the prayers. 21

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15 The interested reader may refer to http://www.rcarabbis.org/pdf/frimer_article.pdf regarding women being called to the Torah.

16 If one is able, one may say the Haftorah, otherwise an ordinary Aliya is sufficient, and according to some, preferred, anyway. At some Shules, they expand the number of Aliyos to ensure that there is an Aliya available to each person who needs to be called up. It is a good practice to bring one’s children on that Shabbos as the soul of the departed exalts in the continuity of Jewish Tradition/Law.

17 Ma’ariv, followed by Shacharis the day after the next morning and then Mincha that afternoon. (This is not necessarily the Minhag of Chabad, where that applies to you.)


19 Even though the yohrtzeit itself may be in the following week. (This is not necessarily the Minhag of Chabad, where that applies to you). Personally, I have not seen many follow this custom. I suspect it is an Ashkenazi (German) custom, where originally only one person per Kaddish was given the honour to say Kaddish.

20 At a Shule which has a regular employed Chazan (Cantor), the Cantor often leads the prayers as usual, however, if one is a Shomer Shabbat and has a melodious voice, the Rabbi should be approached beforehand for permission if one feels they would like to lead the service.

21 To ensure a healthy sized minyan, it is a good idea to request that other male members of one’s family and friends attend the prayers. Women are, of course, welcome and accommodated as per usual. Some have a custom (for example, Chabad) to divide a larger minyan into smaller ones, so that each son can lead prayers. Others (as relayed to me by HoRav Hershel Schachterprefer that there be one large minyan in keeping with the verse “the honour of a King (Hashem) is enhanced with a larger minyan” (ברוח עמל הדרת מלך).
7. Even if a man chooses not to lead the three prayers, in the least, they should attend all the prayers for that day and recite Kaddish. The sequence of prayers is Ma’ariv, Shacharis and then Mincha. Assistance with the Kaddish should be gladly rendered in a friendly fashion, including the provision of any transliteration, as needed.

8. During Shacharis, in general, men should don their own Tefillin. It is strongly encouraged that Tefillin be bought if they have gone “missing” since Bar Mitzvah. Where Tefillin have not been checked for validity in a while, this should be done immediately, or at least a few months before the yohrtzeit.

9. Rabbinic staff of a Shule will gladly visit a member or non member’s house and re-acquaint them with the Tefillin donning process, so that it is natural for men to put these on, without any issue of embarrassment on the day of the yohrtzeit.

10. Unless there are health or other circumstances, one should not choose to go on holidays such that they will miss the yohrtzeit (unless it is unavoidable).

11. A male who is travelling, and cannot find a minyan to say Kaddish, need not spend an inordinate amount of money to bypass his travel in order to find a minyan.

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22 A Jewish day commences in the evening (Ma’ariv) and ends the next late afternoon (Mincha) with the morning service (Shacharis) in between.

23 As is known, women may certainly attend, but they are not counted towards the minyan.

24 To ensure the correct day and times, one should contact the Rabbinic staff of the Shule, or consult a reliable shule app. I recommend the Siddur and Tehillim apps sold by the Rusty Brick company which is available for Apple iPhones and Android devices (I have no connection with the company).

25 One exception is when Yohrtzeit is on Shabbos or Yom Tov or Tisha B'Av.

26 If looked after meticulously, then once in seven years, suffices. Many have the custom to perform this once a year. Certainly, one who has not worn Tefillin for a number of years, should have those Tefillin checked since there are unfortunately many occasions where original Tefillin were invalid even at the time of Bar Mitzvah due to unscrupulous merchants.

27 One should seek the services of a God-fearing and trustworthy Sofer. In Melbourne, I recommend Rabbi Eli Gutnick.

28 Advice on where to get Tefillin checked or purchased can be obtained from our Rabbinic staff. It should be noted, that unfortunately some older and small Tefillin may be faulty due to age and/or other reasons, so it’s well worth performing this check every few years.

29 Consult your local Rabbi or Posek.

30 If one misses a Kaddish, one remedy is to call family or a friend in another timezone to say the Kaddish on their behalf. Although many Shules offer to say Kaddish for a fee on one’s behalf, it is clearly not the ideal on the yohrtzeit, and one should make every effort to personally recite the Kaddish and attend the three minyanim.
12. It is meritorious for the male who will say Kaddish on a Yohrtzeit to prevail on children, family members and friends to assist in attending Shule so that an honourable and well-attended minyan will answer Amen to their prayers.

13. There are opinions which contend that if a male simply forgot or was lax and did not say Kaddish during a given year, he should say the Kaddish on the next day, and in the following years, as a reminder mechanism, they should say Kaddish on the day before as well as on the actual day.

14. There is a well-established custom for a male to recite Kaddish also for one’s grandparents. (or indeed one’s wife’s grandparents where there is no other male available to do so)

15. There is a custom to cease saying Kaddish 100 years after a person has passed away (e.g. in the case of a grandparent or great grandparent)

16. In summer time, where the evening service, Ma’ariv, is often commenced earlier during daylight savings time, men should recite the Kaddish even though it is still technically daylight.

17. Some men are not at all comfortable leading prayers, whereas their children are quite proficient at doing so. If that is the case, it brings Nachas to the soul of the departed when a child (grandchild) leads (for example the afternoon Mincha) service, and the parent says Kaddish for their own parent or grandparent.

18. Many opinions encourage the male mourner who is able, to honourably lead the congregation on a Yohrtzeit that occurs on the actual Shabbos.

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31 Many shules provide a paid service for a member of the Shule to say Kaddish on one’s behalf. Ideally, this should not be used unless there is an emergency. It is far better for children to say Kaddish personally.

32 A similar notion exists where a woman forgot to light Shabbos Candles. According to many opinions she should light an extra candle for the rest of her life. One should consult Rabbinic staff in all cases for a final determination.

33 This is especially the case where one knew one’s grandparents, or was carrying on a custom at the request of his parents.

34 Many say 50 years, while others say there is no time limit

35 During long summer days, especially with daylight savings there is a robust opinion that contends that if one prays Mincha before a certain time (Plag Hamincha=1¼ halachic hours before sunset) it is perfectly okay to pray Ma’ariv after this time even though it is still daylight at both Mincha and Ma’ariv. (Indeed R’ Shlomo Zalman Auerbach opines, in general, that it is important to ensure that Mincha is prayed before the Plag Hamincha, even alone, rather than mixing the two times: that is, pray Mincha and Ma’ariv after Plag Hamincha.

36 This was the case in my situation, on the first Yohrtzeit of my father
19. It is customary for men to be called up to the Torah on the day of a Yohrtzeit\(^{37}\) when the Torah is read on that day.

20. It is customary that when one is called up to the Torah, they also say the half-kaddish at the conclusion of the Torah Reading\(^{38}\).

21. If the yohrtzeit doesn’t fall on a day when there is Torah Reading (e.g. not on a Monday, Thursday or Shabbos\(^{39}\)), the male should endeavour to get called up for an Aliyah on the preceding opportunity. For example, if one has Yohrtzeit on a Tuesday, then come to Shule in the morning on Monday and get an Aliya then (or on the Shabbos before\(^{40}\)).

22. If the yohrtzeit falls on Shabbos itself, there are opinions contending that it is best to seek the Maftir Aliya\(^{41}\), and other opinions contend that it’s better to obtain one of the “ordinary” Aliyos. Of course, someone who isn’t skilled to say the Haftora should certainly choose the ordinary Aliya.

23. There is custom for Shule functionaries to recite the Kel Moleh Rachamim\(^{42}\) prayer, after the reading of the Torah, in the name of the deceased, on the day of the Yohrtzeit. The children should be present for this prayer. Again, if it is not a day of Torah reading, then the prayer should be recited on a day of Torah reading preceding the yohrtzeit\(^{43}\).

\(^{37}\) This could be: a Monday, Thursday, Shabbos or Yom Tov as well as other days. Check with your Rabbi or Posek.

\(^{38}\) This is the custom of Eydot Hamizrach and Chabad, but not of Ashkenaz.

\(^{39}\) Of course there are other days in the year, including Yom Tov, Tisha B’Av etc. One should always check with Rabbinical staff.

\(^{40}\) Many have a preference for the Shabbos before over, say, a Monday or Thursday Aliya.

\(^{41}\) This view was communicated to me personally by HoRav Hershel Schachter of YU and the OU based on the view of R’ Moshe Feinstein \(_{בע’ב}^{41}\) (as communicated to R’ Moshe’s student R’ Nissan Alpert \(_{בע’ב}^{41}\)).

\(^{42}\) Some groups do not perform this Minhag; e.g. Chabad. Many perform the recitation on the Shabbos prior to the Yohr Tzeit (Ashkenaz and some Sefard/Chassidic customs)

\(^{43}\) See previous footnote
24. There is a long standing custom to learn some Mishnayos and dedicate this\textsuperscript{44} to the memory of the deceased on the yohrtzeit day, followed by Mishnayos which commence with the letters of the word Nechama (נשמה). Indeed the word Mishna נשמו contains the same letters as the word נשמה. The Shule will happily organise a study session for any person with Yohrtzeit who wishes to participate in a one-on-one study session of Mishna for this purpose. Alternatively one may use the English translations readily available. One should contact Rabbinical staff to facilitate this. This applies to males and females. Those who are unable may recite Psalms (Tehillim) in any language that they understand.

25. It is customary to choose chapters of Mishna which correspond to the name of the deceased, followed by four Mishnas\textsuperscript{46}

26. After the Mishna has been completed, and there is a minyan present, males who have yohrtzeit, should recite the (longer) Kaddish D’Rabbanan\textsuperscript{47}.

27. It is more meaningful to understand the Mishna that is being studied than to simply recite it like a “prayer”.

28. If Yohrtzeit in a given year falls on Shabbos (or Yom Tov), then one learns the Mishna on that day. Some prefer to learn it before Shabbos (or Yom Tov)\textsuperscript{48}

29. It is customary for males and females to light a 24 hour Yohrtzeit candle from the evening when the yohrtzeit commences\textsuperscript{49}. We do not extinguish this flame, and allow it to burn until completion even if the flame lasts longer than the 24 hours of Yohrtzeit

\textsuperscript{44} With Mishnayes that commence with the Hebrew letters of the deceased’s name. Rav Soloveitchik rarely ever finished learning the Mishnayes as his depth was such that in the winter, after his father, which coincides with my father’s Yohrtzeit, Mincha time had arrived in the USA.

\textsuperscript{45} This is a Minhag (custom) in Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh.

\textsuperscript{46} The conclusion of the Tractate describing the laws of ritual purity (Mikvaos). Some also learn other Mishnayos (eg from the Tractate Kelim which is about the purity of vessels, implying the purity of the soul of the departed).

\textsuperscript{47} Transliterated versions of the Kadish are available from your local Orthodox Shule. This one can be a tongue twister if not attempted at home first.

\textsuperscript{48} This is the custom in Jerusalem. In all cases, where one has a family custom, that should take preference; otherwise consult the Rabbinic staff at your Shule.

\textsuperscript{49} Many Shules send out a reminder of the date. The English (secular) date is not relevant. Only the Jewish (Hebrew) date constitutes the yohrtzeit, and will vary a little from year to year. There are many apps available for one’s smartphone or one can simply visit hebcal.com and download or obtain a printout for 20 or more years. Please be careful to tick the correct box if the deceased passed away in the evening. If unsure whether it was Halachically evening, check with your Orthodox Rabbi or Posek.
30. The custom originally was to light a candle at Shule, however for Health and Safety concerns, this is not always practical. Accordingly, many have a custom to also purchase a small memorial plate in the Shule, with a globe that is lit on the day of the yohrtzeit. This will be automatically performed by the Shule, and it is a good practice to organise such a plaque through the administration of one’s Shule.

31. If the yohrtzeit occurs on Shabbos and one forgot to light the memorial candle, and it is still not the “end of sunset”, one may instruct a non-Jew to light the candle for them.

32. Someone who unfortunately has Yohrtzeit on the same day for both their mother and father, should preferably light two candles, out of respect for both.

33. If there are multiple people in a house who have Yohrtzeit together for the same person, then one set of candles is sufficient. It isn’t necessary for each to light a candle. Some, however, contend that it is meritorious if each male and female lights their own candle for a parent(s).

34. It is customary to also light candles at the Amud in Shule, where the prayers will take place, on the day of a Yohrtzeit. This will be problematic on Shabbos, for example. Some opinions contend that a globe with a filament will also fulfil this purpose. There are different customs concerning how many candles to light at the Amud at Shule. Some light two, while others light five.

35. A male or female who has lost their spouse, may avoid lighting a Yohrtzeit candle if they have remarried, in the house of their new spouse. One could, of course, do so quietly at a child’s house. As this is a sensitive issue, and there are different opinions it is best to consult one’s Orthodox Rabbi or Posek.

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50 If it is possible to light a candle at Shule, it is questionable whether one can benefit from this light. Check with the Rabbinic Staff.

51 This is similar to someone who slightly misses the set time to light normal Shabbos candles. There is a short passage of time (Bein Hashmashos/twilight) after the advertised time of Shabbos where one can ask a non-Jew to assist, although the blessing is slightly different. Discuss this with Rabbinical staff. It is best to be safe and know than be sorry! This time changes from country to country and time of year (for those who keep to the opinion of Rabbeinu Tam, it is later time than the accepted opinion of the Geonim).

52 You may wish to discuss this with the Rabbinical staff if you are unsure how to proceed in the absence of a family custom.

53 The stand where the Chazan leads the service.

54 Following the famous opinion of R’ Chaim Ozer Grodzenski.

55 Some authorities come to different conclusions based on gender.
36. If one inadvertently forgot to light Yohrtzeit candles, then it is customary to donate money to a genuinely poor Jewish person.

37. There is a long standing custom amongst many to visit the grave of the departed on the day of the yohrtzeit and to approach close to the Matzeyva. It is important to remember that this is not permitted for a Cohen who may not approach, but only a Levi or Yisrael. It is equally important to remember that the soul is in heaven, and the bodily remains are on earth, and the ideal intention of a visit is to inspire one to not only emulate the good deeds of the departed but to improve oneself by realising that one day, before the Messiah comes, we will all be reduced to this lowliest form. The humbling experience should result in action and improvement. In reality, nobody “forgets” the departed, and they are constantly reminded of them, even if have not physically visited the grave.

38. Jewish tradition is that an element of the soul of the departed descends into this world above their burial place, on the day of their Yohrtzeit. During the first year, it hovers for 12 calendar months.

39. It is important that when one visits a grave that one does not remotely appear to be praying to the deceased. Rather, one may ask the deceased to intercede and implore God in the abode above, as a Shaliach/Messenger on behalf of the family etc.

40. One doesn’t visit graves on Chol Hamoed.

56 In Melbourne, one may wish to donate to the Melbourne Charity Fund, online, at mjcf.com.au

57 Males and Females, although some Hungarian females do not visit graves, and some have a custom that a pregnant woman does not do so either.

58 It is customary for women and men to be modestly attired. A head covering (for example, scarf) and modest skirt or dress should be worn. Men should not come in shorts and the like. Tzitzit which are worn out normally, should be tucked in before entering the cemetery. Comportment should be solemn and respectful. Eating or chewing gum is not encouraged. My father taught me that I should wear a hat and jacket at the cemetery; he always did so.

59 Headstone. Some can be seen prostrating themselves in a mournful manner.

60 Mystic explanations advise that the נפש, the lower aspects of the נשמה, remains in the cemetery and are in touch with the נשמות. When one goes to the burial place of the person they hear what one says, and able to attempt to intercede with Hashem. This notion is not universally held, vis a vis those such as the Vilna Gaon and Brisk who never enter a cemetery.

61 At the time of redemption

62 Intermediary days of Pesach, Shavuos and Succos.
41. Tradition has it that, each year, the soul ascends higher (Aliyas Haneshama).

Furthermore this Aliya of the soul is directly related to the good deeds of male and female offspring. At the bare minimum, a child who keeps the laws related to Yohrtzeit once a year, brings Nachas to a parent in the heavenly abode, since it testifies to the uniquely Jewish continuity of custom and heritage zealously and precisely preserved by the ensuing family chain.

42. On the very first Yohrtzeit, even though 12 months worth of days have passed, one should assume the same laws of the mourning as before: for example, one does not attend a Simcha or perform activities that are designed for “joy” and the like.

43. If the day of Yohrtzeit falls on a Shabbos or Yom Tov, one should not show any public signs of mourning in any way, and should assume a comportment which is consistent with normal Shabbos and Yom Tov, both of which are inconsistent with mourning.

44. In a leap year, where the yohrtzeit may turn out in the 13th month (of days) one does not extend to the 13th month. Instead, one uses the 12th month. This due to the fact that the number of days in a leap year is longer (as in a year with two months of Adar). This depends on given year. For example, 2014 was a Jewish Leap year. It could be that the passing of a loved one occurred on a non leap year. The question arises as to which month of Adar in the leap year is the day of the yohrtzeit, the first Adar or the additional leap year Adar. Hopefully nobody has to deal with this question.

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63 If it is a family Simcha, discuss with the Shule’s Rabbinical Staff

64 The definition of prohibited and permitted activities during the year of mourning should be discussed with one’s Orthodox Rabbi or Posek.

65 Although in reality some 5% of people will face this situation. Please consult the Rabbinic Staff in your Shule for advice should this occur. Commonly, I have observed keeping the first Adar.
45. On the night or day of a Yohrtzeit, if there is a Seudas Mitzvah (a meal involving a Mitzvah, such as a Wedding, Bris Milah, and more) the person who has Yohrtzeit should *surreptitiously* avoid eating even though they are in attendance. Some limit this only to a wedding. Those opinions contend that this law is only applicable in the first year, but thereafter it does not present a problem, others opine that this practice continues each year in a manner consistent with the first year.  

46. There is a long standing custom to fast on the day of the yohrtzeit after a mother or father. This can be easy for some, but is harder for others. This practice may obviously not be observed on Shabbos or Yom Tov, where one is enjoined to eat.  

47. If one fasts, as this is codified in the Shulchan Aruch, then an additional prayer is inserted in the silent Shmone Esreh.  

48. If one does decide to fast, then they should make this decision on the afternoon just prior to the night commencement of the yohrtzeit. If one fasts on a yearly basis and forgot to have this in mind explicitly, then it is acceptable to fast nonetheless.  

49. It may make sense to say “Bli Neder” = “without taking on a Vow” when one fasts, otherwise the fast may imply that this practice will metamorphose into a yearly *requirement* that requires a Beth Din to annul. On the other hand, since this is codified in the Shulchan Aruch, some would argue that saying so is unnecessary.  

50. There is a custom to also fast on the day that one’s prime Rabbi/teacher passed away, especially when that person taught them much Torah and wisdom.  

51. If one normally fasts, and forgot, and ate by accident, it is possible to make this up on the next day.  

52. The idea of fasting is not for calorific loss. Rather, it is part of the process of heightening one’s awareness of their lowly physicality so that they appreciate that the physical is temporal, whereas the spiritual is forever.

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66 Not being in attendance draws undue attention to them, and this is not advised.  

67 For a definition of what Simcha is applicable one should consult with Rabbinic Staff. HoRav Hershel Schachter explained to me that the determining factor is *motivation*. If one attends with the sole motive to prevent the family making the Simcha-the Ba’alei Simcha-from feeling *bad* because of one’s absence, then it is acceptable. However, if one attends because “it’s a friend” or “I should be there” and they are also in attendance to enjoy and share in the Simcha, *so to speak*, then that is not ideal and one should not attend. HoRav Schachter told me that he does not approve of the “facade” of the mourner being a waiter unless they are paid, and wear the clothes of a waiter. Alternatively, HoRav Schachter contends that it is better not to pretend to be a waiter when one is not, and to attend, as there are lenient opinions one may rely on. In all cases, consult with your own Orthodox Rabbi or Posek.

68 Check with your Orthodox Rabbi or Posek when in doubt.  

69 This is the paragraph known as “Aneynu”.  

70 or husband.
53. One should endeavour to complete the fast even if it is difficult.
54. It is customary to not eat a full meal until they have visited the Grave, even if they are not fasting.
55. If the day of the yohrtzeit is a Shabbos, or Yom Tov or Rosh Chodesh, in which case it is prohibited to fast, one may make up the fast on the next day.
56. If the yohrtzeit occurs on Chanuka one does not fast. Some contend that this is true on Erev Chanuka as well.
57. One doesn’t fast on Purim (even when it is two days, e.g. one who spends day one in Tel Aviv and the second day in Jerusalem where Purim is a day later)
58. During months/days when we don’t normally say Tachanun, for example the month of Nissan, and days between Succos and the end of Tishrei one does not fast.
59. If one’s first Yohrtzeit is on Friday, then as soon as the Ma’ariv (night time) service is over, one may eat (even though it might still be light outside).
60. There is some contention about someone who fasts on Erev Shabbos because they missed the previous day.
61. One who has Yohrtzeit on Erev Yom Kippur does not fast.
62. One who has Yohrtzeit on Erev Tisha B’Av should fast but break the fast at the last meal to prepare for the second day of fasting on Tisha B’Av.
63. If the yohrtzeit follows a fast, and it is understandably too difficult to complete, one may stop at mid-day.
64. If one’s mother passed away, and one always fasted that yohrtzeit day, and unfortunately their father passed away later, on the very next calendar day, it would be impossible to fast for two days, and so the first day’s fast is sufficient.
65. The father of a son and sandek, who is due to have a Bris on a Yohrtzeit or a Pidyon HaBen, doesn’t fast. If they wish, they may fast till Mincha G’Dola (approximately mid-day)
66. A Cohen who functions at a Pidyon Haben (redeeming of the first born male), and it is the Cohen’s Yohrtzeit, the Cohen should fast on the following day.

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71 Chabad do not fast and instead drink Lechaim.
72 It is best to discuss such issues with the Rabbinical Staff.
73 Please discuss this with Rabbinical staff. In all cases, it’s best to have in mind that this is a temporary fix and not something you have taken upon yourself in perpetuity.
74 Check with your Rabbi after the Bris regarding any scheduling of a Pidyon HaBen (which occurs a month after the birth). As I am a Cohen, I am more than happy to perform this Mitzvah in Melbourne!
75 and should eat there as part of the ceremony.
67. A groom or bride who has a Yohrtzeit that falls during the first seven days after their marriage should not fast. Many agree that this custom also applies to a Bar Mitzvah boy on his *specific* Bar Mitzvah day\(^76\) (as opposed to the day he may be called to the Torah).

68. If one is present or completes the end of a tractate on the day of the yohrtzeit, then the fast is completed at the point where food is eaten to celebrate the end of the learning of the tractate (Siyum).

69. **In our days**, where people are challenged by fasting, there are alternatives that should be employed in their stead on the yohrtzeit day:

69.1. One should donate charity\(^77\)

69.2. One should invite people to their house for a meal. Those people should be *needy* people, as opposed to a social occasion.

70. Chassidim, those who follow the Gaon of Vilna (Brisk), and Eydot Hamizrach\(^78\) (Jews from Middle Eastern regions, such as Yemen, Iran, Syria, Iraq etc), do **not** fast. Instead, when there is a Yohrtzeit, a bottle of whisky (or vodka) and some Lekach (for example sponge or honey cake purchased from a certified Kosher bakery) is brought to Shule\(^79\). At the completion of both the evening service (Ma’ariv) and Shacharis (Morning Service) fellow congregants wish L’Chaim to the person who has the yohrtzeit\(^80\). This is based on a Midrash that expounds that when Jews say L’Chaim to each other, God is assuaged and sweetens any judgement.

71. Some are of the opinion, that providing Alcohol and Cake (or a Tikun/L’Chaim) achieves more than leading the prayers as this is an expression of Gemilus Chassadim (kindness to many).

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\(^76\) The Jewish date of the 13th birthday. Check hebcal.com if unsure.

\(^77\) The ideal method is that the giver and receiver not be aware of each other.

\(^78\) this practice is also found amongst others now.

\(^79\) In my youth, Herring, Tzibbeles (onion) and Egg (Ayer) Kichel, was always supplied, but although these remain very popular, contemporaries tend to avoid them during the week, as their breath will be compromised during the ensuing day at work :-)

\(^80\) Mentioning the full name of the decceased and their father’s name. For example: הכהן יהודה בן זעליג שאול ר' נשמת ליעלווי בלביь ול
72. The story is told about the Rebbe, R’ Tzvi Hirsh from Zeydichov, who once inadvertently forgot to say Kaddish for his mother. She appeared in a dream and advised him that: she forgave him for forgetting to say Kaddish that night, and she forgave him for not learning Mishnayos, but that she would not forgive him until he supplied the Tikkun (e.g Whisky and Cake or Herring) for fellow congregants to say L’Chaim for her soul, and a long and healthy life for her progeny.

73. There is a verse which is recited at the grave prayers which states:

תשמור אתות מחבוט הקבר.

There are opinions that contend that this should only be said in the first year and skipped in ensuing years. Please consult Rabbinic staff.

74. The day of the yohrtzeit is the same (Hebrew Date) as the day of the death of the loved one, as opposed to the date of the actual burial (which may be later depending on a variety of circumstances). One should check this date with Rabbinical Staff, although hebcal.com can be of assistance. One should be especially careful with the (original) date when the deceased past away in the late afternoon, just before evening.

75. Eydot Hamizrach in the first year, will likely follow the date of burial.

76. The secular English date of the passing of a loved one has no Jewish significance and is not the yohrtzeit. Many Shules email or ring any congregant on a yearly basis as a reminder. Those who are technically proficient should note that by using hebcal.com one can easily import a yearly calendar of Yohrtzeit(s) into ones smartphone or computer.

77. A leap year (as in this Jewish year), may mean that the yohrtzeit which falls on a particular day of a particular Jewish month is actually 13 Jewish calendar months if one is counting months/days. We are always guided solely by the Jewish day of the Jewish month.

78. According to Eydot Hamizrach, in a leap year of 13 months, when the mother or father passed away before Adar, one should keep the yohrtzeit that year after 12 months and not 13.

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82 Mini Kiddush.

83 In the first year, if the burial is delayed, then discuss the issue of the first Yohrtzeit with Rabbinic staff as there are various opinions. For example, if there is a delayed burial in the first year, by three days or more, then there are opinions that the yohrtzeit follows the burial date of the first year and then the date of passing, for ensuing years.

84 This is the opinion of Chacham Ovadya Yosef amongst others.

85 If you happen to use a Mac: I will gladly help anyone who would like to use this facility and integrate it with their iCloud calendar, if they are unable to do so.
79. If someone has Yohrtzeit in Adar⁸⁶ and the deceased passed away in a non-leap year, then there are two possibilities for the yohrtzeit during a Jewish leap year (as in this year):

79.1. The first Adar

79.2. The second Adar

This is a matter of contention amongst Rabbinic authorities and one should consult Rabbinic Staff. In general, I have observed that many keep the first Adar as the yohrtzeit day⁸⁷ others keep the second or both.

80. Rosh Chodesh (the commencement of a new month) can engender problems. For example, in a given year, the first day of Rosh Chodesh Kislev, may be the 30th of Cheshvan, similarly for Teves. This is because there were two days Rosh Chodesh on the year of the death of the departed. In a subsequent year, Kislev or Teves may only have one day Rosh Chodesh. The consensus appears to be to follow the date itself rather than the fact that it was Rosh Chodesh initially. Again, consult Rabbinic staff for their advice and decision.

81. If one lives overseas, and it is a great expense to visit their parent’s grave, there are authorities that contend that it’s not critical to spend a fortune on travel. It would be better to make an honourable donation to charity. One should, however, endeavour to visit a remote grave at least once every ten years. If one cannot, one should send someone on their behalf as a Shaliach/Messenger.

82. There is an opinion that if one has not visited a grave for ten (some say 7) years (or sent a representative), that they should never visit that grave thereafter.

83. One should not visit the same grave twice in the same day.

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⁸⁶ This was the case for my mother after the passing her mother לאשה בת ישראל ע”י.“

⁸⁷ If one has vowed to fast on a Yohrtzeit, however, this may be more problematic, as עליה may need to fast in both Adars on the appointed date of the yohrtzeit.
84. It is customary, where there is a minyan at the grave site\textsuperscript{88}, to also recite the Kel Moleh Rachamim prayer, as found in a Siddur. When in doubt, please consult Rabbinic Staff to assist and advise.

Eydot Hamizrach\textsuperscript{89} recite what is known as a Hashkava, which comprises of an alternate text. This text was also preferred by the Ari\textsuperscript{90} ל"ז. On Yom Kippur Eydot Hamizrach say the Hashkava\textsuperscript{91} after Kol Nidrei

85. If the moment of death was in the period of the late afternoon, that might be seen as the day before or possibly the beginning of the day after. In some cases one may say Kaddish on both days. Consult your Rabbi. For fasting or (instead) bringing a bottle of whisky and cake, one may choose the date that they prefer\textsuperscript{92}.

86. If unfortunately someone knew that their relative passed away in a given month but cannot ascertain what day they passed away, it is customary to choose the last day of the month.

87. If one unfortunately has no idea when a parent passed away (common in the Holocaust, wars and terrorist kidnappings in Israel, and throughout Jewish History) then one may choose any date. It is best to choose a date initially where nobody else currently has yohrtzeit.

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\textsuperscript{88} Strictly speaking one need \textbf{not} have a minyan for this prayer to be intoned, however a minyan of ten men allows the shorter Kaddish to be recited at the gravesite.

\textsuperscript{89} \url{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sephardic_law_and_customs#Liturgy}

\textsuperscript{90} \url{https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaac_Luria}

\textsuperscript{91} \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPonH3L57bo}

\textsuperscript{92} Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ל"ז felt that one should assume the person passed away in the evening