

Rabbi David Wolpe's

# *Off The Pulpit*

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## **The Funeral Director**

A word for a profoundly Jewish, but often disrespected profession: God bless funeral directors.

For many years as a Rabbi, I have marveled at the skill and care of funeral directors. My father, a Rabbi in Philadelphia, would often recount how his friend, Joseph Levine, would care for those who were bereaved and frightened, and gently guide them. I have seen the same care repeatedly in my own years conducting funerals and meeting with families who had suffered a loss. Death is the most sensitive time; when a funeral director is unkind, the results are devastating. But day after day, a mortuary worker must speak with families whom he or she does not know, and be warm without being cloying, caring without presuming too much,

discuss financial arrangements at a time when the family can barely add two and two.

Because my own synagogue has two cemeteries I have seen this work up close. In the Jewish world we do not sufficiently salute and applaud those who stand on the emotional front lines day after day. They help usher us through our most difficult transitions, and most of them do it with heart and skill. God bless funeral directors.

[Arianna Huffington's 'Thrive'](#)