

KERIAH

Stand and tear the mourners' garment
Rend the cloth for the one torn away
from the matrix of the mishpachah.

The broken inner heart cries out for a public act
For father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, spouse,
we tear the ribbon
On the left side, for parents
On the right side for the others,
to honor and remember them.

More than words chanted or eulogy spoken
The tearing bears witness to a life no longer seamless
So David tore his clothes when hearing of the death
of King Saul, his wife's father,
So Job ripped his garment again and again and again.

Before Keriah and before Kaddish,
we are bidden to stand on our own two feet
Not seated in resignation nor lying down in supine surrender
Death does not remove the possibilities of the world
which call for sanctification.

Biblical wisdom teaches
A time to rip and a time to sew
A time to rent and a time to repair
A time to accept the wound and a time to honor the scar
A time to cry and a time to dry the tears.
Keriah, a time to tear apart, bound to a time to
unite unraveled strands
And mend the torn fabric of the world.
Kadosh, Kadosh, Kadosh.

- *Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis*