

Flight Plan
May 5, 2022

Q I am going to accompany the body of my father *a.h.* on a plane to Eretz Yisrael for burial. Will I be considered an *onein* while in flight?

A Between death and burial, immediate relatives of a *niftar* are in the halachic state of *aninus*, in which three halachos apply:



- They are exempt from almost all positive mitzvos, because a) an *onein* is required to attend to the burial, and *ha'oseik bemitzvah patur min hamitzvah* (one who is involved with one mitzvah is exempt from others); and b) even if others are attending to the *niftar*, in the eyes of onlookers unaware of that, doing mitzvos would appear disrespectful to the *niftar*.
- They may not eat meat or drink wine, so that these indulgences not distract them from the burial arrangements.
- According to many *Rishonim*, *onenim* may not do things that are forbidden during *aveilus* (e.g., washing, cutting one's hair, greeting people), because an *onein* is no better than an *aveil*. The Rama rules this way. The Shulchan Aruch rules that in certain cases where the relatives are not involved in burial (e.g., where authorities will not release the body), some of the laws of *aninus* are inapplicable (see Y.D. 341:3-4). The Levush writes that even in those cases, the relatives are no better than *aveilim*, so *aveilus*-like restrictions apply. The *poskim* discuss whether your case is like those cited by the Shulchan Aruch, given that you cannot do much to further the burial arrangements while en route. R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach and R' Chaim Pinchos Scheinberg are quoted as ruling that it is, but Rav Elyashiv and R' Yisrael Yaakov Fisher are cited as saying it isn't. It would seem that one may be lenient. All agree that if you are in fact preparing while on the plane, e.g., working on a eulogy or making arrangements via email, you are an *onein*.