

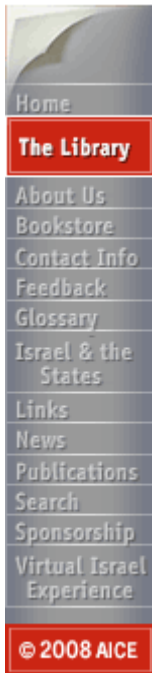
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## Autopsy

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## Autopsy

By Ariel Scheib

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Some scholars judge that autopsy should be strictly forbidden. Jewish law forbids the despoliation of a body once it is deceased, to provide the body with the utmost respect and honor. If a body undergoes mutilating examination in an autopsy, many [rabbis](#) deem this practice makes the body impure.

Nevertheless, other rabbinic scholars argue that saving and preserving lives is one of the highest commandments in the [Torah](#). If physicians can utilize a deceased body to uncover medical enigmas, it could prevent unnecessary deaths. These rabbis argue that performing autopsies benefit of the living.

In the early 1950s, Israeli law bestowed upon doctors a great deal of leeway when determining the permissibility of performing an autopsy. However, in 1980, many [Orthodox](#) communities in Israel were disturbed by the abuse of autopsies being performed. These communities had the law modified to make performing autopsies more difficult. Unless essential medical concern, doctors have to receive special consent from the deceased family to perform an autopsy. In the cases of a homicide, autopsies are acceptable. If an autopsy is performed, a body must still be buried with all its parts according to Jewish law, and within three days.

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Sources: Eisenberg, Ronald L. [The JPS Guide to Jewish Traditions](#). PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2004; Kolatch, Alfred J. [The Jewish Book of Why/The Second Jewish Book of Why](#). NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1989.

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