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## BURIAL & CEMETERY CONTACTS

To make arrangements for burial in the Beth Jacob section of Crestlawn Memorial Park or Greenwood Cemetery, the first calls to be made are to:

- Beth Jacob Senior Rabbi
- Rabbi's Executive Assistant
- Funeral Home

Once they have been contacted, the Executive Assistant will assist in making all necessary arrangements.

Please note: After interment, any questions or issues regarding any matters at the cemetery should be directed to the Executive Director of Beth Jacob.

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## INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been produced by the Cemetery Guardians (“Guardians”) to assist the membership of Congregation Beth Jacob (“Beth Jacob”) in better understanding the *halachic* issues and protocols for burial. Beth Jacob has sections in Crestlawn Memorial Park (“Crestlawn”) and Greenwood Cemetery (“Greenwood”).

Note: Beth Jacob’s section in Greenwood is fully reserved. Beth Jacob’s section in Crestlawn has plots available.

There are many intricate laws that govern an Orthodox Jewish cemetery and interment. This document addresses only a few of them. The Senior Rabbi is the final authority regarding these matters.

Guardians is a group of Beth Jacob members who have assumed responsibility for ensuring the Beth Jacob sections are maintained properly and respectfully. Guardians oversee ongoing care and maintenance of the cemeteries and beautification and improvement projects. Its activities are authorized by the Beth Jacob Board of Trustees (“Board”).

The Board has complete control and responsibility for all aspects of cemetery operations including assignment and selling of burial plots, relationship with cemetery operations, coordinating with the various entities involved in a funeral and establishing rules for operations, markers and decorations. The Senior Rabbi is the final authority in all religious matters concerning the cemeteries and their operations, including exceptions regarding who may purchase plots.

The rules concerning the sale and assignment of burial plots in Crestlawn have been established by the Board. Staff responsible for the administration of all cemetery activities are the Executive Director and/or Rabbi’s Executive Assistant (“Executive Assistant”), who is also the primary contact.

In the event of a death requiring burial in one of the Beth Jacob sections, the first calls to be made are to: Senior Rabbi, Executive Assistant, and funeral home. Once they have been contacted, they will assist in making all necessary arrangements.

It is Guardians’ responsibility and privilege to maintain these cemetery sections.

## **HALACHIC PRACTICES APPLYING TO JEWISH CEMETERIES**

## Consecration of a Cemetery

- A Jewish cemetery is consecrated ground. A special ceremony is used to consecrate a cemetery.
- A Jewish cemetery should be physically separated from other areas by a fence, shrubs or other physical boundaries.

## Proper Conduct in a Cemetery

- One should conduct him/herself with utmost respect for the dead while in a cemetery. One of the main concerns in Jewish law is *loeg larosh*, not “mocking the dead.”
- A cemetery is dedicated exclusively to honoring the deceased, so much so that even extending greetings to anyone within four cubits (7½ feet) of a grave is prohibited.
- One does not study Torah, pray or even expose one’s *tzitzit* in a cemetery, as it mocks the deceased who are not capable of performing *mitzvot*.
- One may not eat, drink or smoke while in a cemetery.
- No personal use may be derived from anything growing on a grave (flowers, fruit, etc.)
- One may not walk over a grave, unless it is impossible to access another grave without doing so. In Beth Jacob’s section in Crestlawn, the walkway is demarcated with darker tiles to indicate proper step-off points between the rows of graves.

However, there is currently no delineation of the walks between the rows.

- There is a custom when visiting a grave to “add” to the monument by leaving a stone on it. (There is a repository at the entrance of Beth Jacob section with stones for this purpose.)
- There is a custom (based on mysticism) to tear some grass and throw it backwards after leaving a grave.
- After visiting a cemetery, one should ritually wash one’s hands before reentering a private residence. (There is usually a washing area at the cemetery at a funeral.) It is customary that the vessel is not handed from person to person, but rather is placed on the ground or another surface.

## Interment

- Only Jews, as defined by *halacha*, are permitted to be buried in a Jewish cemetery.

- A widow(er) who remarries is interred next to the spouse from whom children are born. If children were born from both spouses or no children were born and both marriages were pleasant, he/she is buried next to the first spouse.

## Reopening of Graves

Reopening a grave is a serious matter and may be done only in limited circumstances and only with the consent of Senior Rabbi.

## Monuments

(“Monuments” as used in this booklet refer to the upright, stone memorial at the foot of the grave)

- It is discouraged to place photographs of the deceased on a monument.
- The monument minimally should include *Pay-Nun* (*Poe Nitmon* - “Here lies”) at the top of the monument.
  - Also can be included: *Tuf-Nun-Tzadi-Bet-Hay*. (*T’hai Nishmato Tzrurah B’Eretz HaChaim* - “May his/her soul be bound up in the bonds of the land of the living [i.e., eternal life]”)
- Monuments should be humble in nature, in character with the other monuments. One should not inscribe excessive praises on the monument.
- It is prohibited to derive any benefit from a monument; for example, sit on it, lean on it, etc.
- One is not permitted to erase writing on a monument unless it is incorrect.
- If replacing a monument, the new one may not in any way reduce, delete or omit praise from the first one.
- One may erect a monument for a person whose burial site is not known.
- One may not plant flowers or trees over a grave.
- Note: Monuments installed before these Protocols were formalized are grandfathered for exceptions to the above.

## PLOT OWNERSHIP & PRICING

The Executive Director and staff are responsible for the sale and assignment of plots within the Beth Jacob section in Crestlawn. The following are the rules as per Beth Jacob By Laws concerning who is entitled to purchase plots. (The only plots available for purchase are at Crestlawn.)

- A Full Member who joined Beth Jacob prior to December 15, 1997 and has been a continuous full member in good standing will receive one free plot for the use of that member or his/her spouse. The second plot may be purchased at the Standard Price.
- A Full Member who joined Beth Jacob after December 15, 1997 and who has been a continuous full member in good standing may purchase two cemetery plots at the Member Price to be used or reserved for the member and his/her spouse.
- A Full Member in good standing may purchase additional plots for the use of the member's immediate family or his/her spouse's immediate family (i.e., children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents and siblings) at the Standard Price per plot.
- If a Full Member allows his/her membership to lapse, that individual shall have the following rights:
  - If immediate family members are buried in the Beth Jacob section, the former member may purchase plots for him/herself and immediate family members (as designated above) for the Standard Price per plot.
  - If a former Full Member had purchased a companion plot while being a full member in good standing when he/she qualified for a free plot, that person retains ownership of both the free and the purchased plots.
  - If a former Full Member had not purchased a companion plot while being a member in good standing when he/she qualified for a free plot, that person forfeits the right to a free plot at the time he/she allowed his/her full membership to lapse.
- Member and Standard Prices are set by the Board. The Beth Jacob office has the current prices.

Note: Any exceptions to the above purchase rights is at Senior Rabbi's discretion.

## **MARKER & MONUMENT POLICIES**

The design for all monuments and burial markers must be submitted to the Beth Jacob office for review and approval by Senior Rabbi before the monument may be installed. No existing monuments or markers may be removed or altered without prior approval by Senior Rabbi.

Just as the rabbis determined that all Jews, regardless of their station in life, are buried in a plain pine box (so as to not embarrass the poor who cannot afford more and to bring humility to all), this Monument Policy is to bring *tzniut* (modesty) and *kovod* (respect) for all our beloved interred in the cemetery.

Note: Preexisting exceptions to this policy were “grandfathered in” before this policy was formalized.

### **Layout of BJ section**

- One enters the Beth Jacob section through two “gates” (at the east end) and continues down the main walk that bisects the section. The walk lies east-west. The walk has dark tile markers with letters A through K. These tile markers designate the rows between the plots. However, there is currently no delineation of the rows on the grass between the graves.
- Plots are laid out in the same direction as the walk. The casket is placed in the grave with the head of the deceased at the west end and the foot at the east.
- The large upright monument is placed at the foot of the plot with the Hebrew lettering facing east and the English wording facing the grave. The flat grave marker is over the head.
- See Diagram on Page .

### **Markers**

A grave must have a marker at all times identifying the deceased.

- Temporary Markers:
  - At the completion of a funeral, Guardians will install a Crestlawn-approved temporary marker at the grave. This will remain in place until the family arranges to have a permanent marker installed.
  - Temporary markers must be replaced by a permanent marker within a year of the funeral.
  - If the temporary marker is moved or missing, contact Beth Jacob’s office.
- Permanent Flat Markers
  - This is a flat marker at the head of the grave.
  - The flat marker can be either white marble or granite or can be bronze on granite.
  - This marker must be at least 24 inches wide x 12 inches high x 4 inches thick.

## Monuments

The prevailing practice for installation of the permanent monument by the family is no less than 30 days and no more than one Jewish year, i.e., the first *yartzeit* (anniversary of death).

- The upright monument is to have a maximum height of 33 inches, maximum width of 24 inches for a single plot and 48 inches for a double plot, and a thickness of 8 inches. The base will have a size of 14 inches x 1.33 times the width and a depth no less than 12 inches below the surface of the ground.
- All stone will be either gray or white marble or granite.
- No vases, containers or urns may be included in the fabrication of any markers or monuments.
- No flat slabs may cover the plot.
- No borders are permitted around the perimeter of an individual or family plot(s).
- If a deceased is buried in a plot adjacent to that of the spouse, the existing monument for the spouse may be duplicated for the new grave even if it might not comply with the rules if it was installed prior to the current rules. All other monuments will comply with these rules or they will be removed.

## UNVEILING PROCEDURES

The prevailing practice in the United States Jewish community is to erect a monument before the first *yartzeit*. Although an unveiling ceremony is not required, most people prefer to have one. This does not have to happen before the first *yartzeit*.

To schedule the unveiling with Crestlawn:



- If the monument was purchased from Crestlawn, it will provide a tent and chairs for 12 people for an unveiling.
- If a different monument vendor is used, check with Crestlawn regarding tent and chair availability and cost.
- Note: If on the day of the unveiling, a funeral gets scheduled in close proximity to where the unveiling is, the ability to provide a tent and/or chairs for the unveiling may not be possible.

### **FLORAL ARRANGEMENT POLICY**

Consistent with Jewish tradition, no flowers or floral arrangements may be placed at the grave site.

### **MEMORIAL BENCHES**

One may purchase a memorial bench for the Beth Jacob section. If interested, call the Chairperson of the Guardians.