

Rabbi Anchelle Perl Launches Jewish Burial Awareness Campaign: 'Cremation or Burial? What Does Judaism Really Teach?'

Don't Wait Until the Funeral: Rabbi Urges Families to Learn the Jewish View of Cremation Now

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- With cremation becoming increasingly common, Rabbi Anchelle Perl, spiritual leader of Chabad of Mineola, is launching a new educational campaign urging Jewish families to understand Judaism's teachings about burial before they are confronted with an irreversible decision during a time of grief.

The campaign, "Learn Before the Crisis," accompanies Rabbi Perl's new essay, "Cremation or Burial? What Does

Judaism Really Teach? — Covenant Over Consent: A Jewish Answer on Burial and Cremation."



"Too many families first learn Judaism's position on cremation after someone has died, when emotions are overwhelming and decisions must be made quickly," Rabbi Perl said. "The time to learn is before the crisis, not during it."

"BUT IT WAS THEIR WISH"

The essay directly confronts one of the most difficult questions families raise when discussing cremation: "But it was their wish. Don't we have an obligation to honor it?"

Rabbi Perl argues that Judaism begins with a fundamentally different understanding of the human body.

"Judaism does not regard the body as property that belongs absolutely to us," he said. "The body is created b'tzelem Elokim, in the image of God. It housed a holy soul. We are its guardians and stewards, not its absolute owners."

For thousands of years, Jewish tradition has called for burial. Abraham buried Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah; Jacob asked to be carried back for burial; Joseph's remains were carried from Egypt; and the Torah commands kavor tikberenu — "you shall surely bury him."

"Jewish burial is not simply a method of handling human remains," Rabbi Perl said. "It is the final act of sacred stewardship."

COVENANT BEFORE CONSENT

A central theme of the essay is what Rabbi Perl calls "Covenant Before Consent."

A Jewish boy enters the covenant of **brit milah** as an infant, long before he can give consent. Jewish women are equally and inherently daughters of that covenant.

"Judaism teaches that we belong to something greater than ourselves — to family, generations, the Jewish people, the covenant and ultimately to God," Rabbi Perl said. "At the beginning of life, loving hands welcome us into that covenant. At the end, loving hands return us gently to the earth."

Jewish tradition calls burial *chesed shel emet* — the truest kindness — because it is an act performed for someone who can never repay it.

The essay also examines the historical meaning of Jewish burial, including the painful memory of the Holocaust, when Jews were deliberately denied graves, as well as the connection between burial and Judaism's belief in *tehiyat hameitim*, the resurrection of the dead.

NO JUDGMENT — BUT AN URGENT CALL TO LEARN

Rabbi Perl stresses that the campaign is not intended to condemn families who have already chosen cremation.

"People make these decisions out of love, often without ever having been taught what Judaism says," he said. "This is not about adding pain to anyone's grief. It is about reaching the next family before the next decision."

He is encouraging families to discuss burial wishes now and to seek guidance before assuming that cost, fear of burial or other practical concerns make cremation necessary.

"Please don't make an irreversible decision because you believe there is no alternative," Rabbi

Perl said. "Ask questions first. Learn what Judaism teaches. Explore what help may be available."

His message can be summarized simply:

"Learn before the crisis. Ask before deciding."

FREE COMPLETE ESSAY AVAILABLE

Rabbi Perl is making the complete essay, "Cremation or Burial? What Does Judaism Really Teach?" available free of charge to individuals, families, rabbis, educators, funeral professionals and community organizations.

To request the complete essay, email Rabbi Anchelle Perl at rabbiperl@chabadmineola.com and write "Burial Essay" in the subject line.

Questions concerning Jewish burial, advance planning or individual family circumstances may also be directed confidentially to Rabbi Perl.

"They began life embraced by a covenant they did not create," Rabbi Perl said. "Let us allow them to leave this world embraced by that same covenant — returned to the earth whole, honored and home."

LEARN BEFORE THE CRISIS

Because the time to understand one of life's most important decisions is before you are forced to make it.

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