Interment of Cremated Remains at Clover Hill Park Cemetery
Honoring the Deceased, Comforting the Living

A Sacred Understanding of Burial in Jewish Tradition

Jewish tradition teaches that the human body, created "*b'tzelem Elohim"* ("in the image of God") is to be treated with dignity in life and in death. For this reason, burial in the earth has long been the normative Jewish practice, reflecting the Torah's teaching: "for dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).

When our matriarch Sarah died, Abraham purchased a plot for her in the town of Hebron and personally attended to her burial and funeral. Isaac and Ishmael reunited to bury their father, Abraham, next to his wife. Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Leah, too, were buried alongside Abraham and Sarah. When Rachel died far from Hebron, her husband Jacob buried her and erected a headstone, ensuring a proper burial for his beloved. Since the inception of Judaism, in-ground burial has been how our People have honored their loved ones.

We are mindful that, for a variety of reasons, cremation is a growing trend in the United States. We are mindful too that, over the generations, cremation has been forced upon us by those who seek to insult and humiliate the Jewish People. Our enemies know that preventing a traditional burial was heartbreaking to the murdered one's family, friends, and community. Especially following the Holocaust of World War II, and also as recent as the attacks of October 7, 2023, notions of cremation can carry with them layers of pain and trauma.

Because of this history and because of Judaism's desire to honor the human body in death as in life, cremation is not endorsed within Jewish law and is not understood to fulfill the mitzvah of *kavod ha-met* ("honoring the dead") in its traditional sense.

If you or a loved one is considering cremation, we invite you to call Rabbi Aaron Starr or Rabbi Yoni Dahlen of Congregation Shaarey Zedek to talk about alternatives.

When Cremation Has Occurred

At the same time, we recognize that families sometimes arrive at the cemetery after cremation has already taken place. These decisions are often shaped by complex personal, emotional, or practical considerations. In such moments, our responsibility expands. Alongside our commitment to honoring the deceased, we are called upon to fulfill the equally sacred obligation of *nichum aveilim*: to comfort those who mourn.

Clover Hill Park Cemetery's policies reflect this careful and compassionate balance.

Clover Hill Park Cemetery permits the burial of cremated remains under specific conditions:

- Cremated remains are interred in a designated area of the cemetery reserved for this purpose.
- This section is distinct from *Admat Kodesh*: land consecrated for traditional Jewish burial.
- The remains of the deceased must be buried in the ground; they may not be scattered anywhere on cemetery grounds.
- Even if a family owns a plot elsewhere in the cemetery, cremated remains may not be interred in those consecrated sections.
- Pre-arrangements and advance purchase of plots for cremated remains are generally not permitted. In limited cases, lots may be purchased at the time of need, typically by or on behalf of a Jewish individual, with provisions allowing for spouses and immediate family members to be interred within this section.
- Arrangements for the interment of cremated remains must be coordinated through one of the two local Jewish funeral homes that will accommodate such a request: either the Dorfman Chapel or the Ira Kaufman Chapel.

Services and Ritual at the Time of Burial

Our approach to services involving cremated remains reflects our commitment to both *kavod ha-met* (honoring the deceased) and *nichum aveilim* (comforting the mourners); All services should remain rooted in Jewish liturgical tradition and dignity:

- A full funeral service should ideally take place prior to cremation, with the body present. Congregation Shaarey Zedek clergy may officiate prior to cremation but not at the burial of cremated remains. Other Jewish clergy may officiate at an off-site funeral home if cremation has already taken place.
- A private cemetery graveside gathering may be held at the time of interment, including the recitation of the Mourner's Kaddish. Non-Jewish clergy may participate but not lead services; no crosses or non-Jewish religious symbols are permitted; and no non-Jewish liturgy or references to other deities are permitted at the graveside.
- Whether a cremation takes place or not, all families are encouraged to observe a traditional *shiva*. The Barnett Shiva Center at Clover Hill Park Cemetery is available for rental if *shiva* will not take place in a private home. Please note: Cremated remains are never brought into indoor spaces, and funeral services involving cremated remains are not conducted inside any building at Clover Hill Park Cemetery.

Holding Our Values with Integrity

Our policies reflect a balance between honoring Jewish burial traditions and caring for mourners. We affirm traditional burial while extending dignity and compassion to all families. Clover Hill Park Cemetery has and will continue to be a sacred trust connecting

generations. For Jewish Detroit and for all Am Yisrael (People Israel), we are committed to honoring those who have passed, supporting those who mourn, and upholding the rituals, traditions, and values of our Tradition as we navigate an ever-changing world.

Rabbi Aaron Starr
Congregation Shaarey Zedek
April 2026