

# **Mode of Proper Behavior**

## *Jewish Cemeteries* *Body and Soul*

In Judaism both spiritual and physical aspects are holy and therefore the soul and body can bring holiness to the world. The soul is the source of holiness and the body is a receptacle in which the soul is kept. Thus, the soul and the body remain holy forever. That is why the bones of those who have died are holy.

The bones are holy so that they must be treated with great respect. Bodies need to be buried in the ground (they cannot be cremated or kept above-ground) and remain undisturbed. Therefore, an exhumation in Judaism is strictly forbidden except for extraordinary cases. There is a belief that the body and soul are connected even after the body's death, thus when bones are disturbed, here on the earth, the soul in heaven may be disturbed as well.

### **Practical instructions for appropriate behavior during works in a Jewish cemetery**

#### **It is forbidden:**

- a. to dig into the ground (including using heavy tools)
- b. to uproot trees and shrubs
- c. to dig out stones or tomb stones (macevot)
- d. to rebury bones ( without Rabbinic supervision)
- e. to excavate the fence of the cemetery (due to differences in cemetery's border previous and current)
- f. to open tombs.

#### **It is permitted:**

- a. to clear out weeds, flowers, mosses (only those not deep rooted), to mow grass, remove garbage
- b. to clear up tombstones (macevot) without using chemicals or sharp tools (not to damage them)
- c. to create a path going through the cemetery (only with Commission's supervision)
- d. to install memorial and informative plaques (text to be consulted with the Commission)
- e. to prune trees and shrubs only above-ground
- f. to cover the cemetery with extra soil.

**In case of any further questions or doubts do not hesitate to contact the Rabbinic Commission.**

**Attention! The above mentioned rules are according to Jewish law.**

**There are other laws applying to works on the Jewish cemetery that one should be familiar with (in Polish).**

- Law dated on July 23, 2003 applying to monuments protection: Dz. U. Nr 162 z 17 września 2003 r., poz. 1568
- Law dated on May 7, 1999 applying to the protection of the area of Nazi extermination camps (Dz. U. Nr 80 z 2003 r., poz. 717)
- Law dated on February 15, 1962 applying to cultural values (Dz. U. Nr 80 z 2003 r., poz. 717)
- Ordinance of the Ministry of Health dated on December 7, 2001 applying to behavior with corpses (Dz. U. z dnia 28 grudnia 2001 r.)
- Law dated on January 31, 1959 applying to cemeteries and burial. Dz.U.1959, nr 11, poz. 62; tekst jednolity Dz.U.1972, nr 47, poz. 298. Present valid Dz.U.2000, nr 23, poz. 295.
- Ordinance of the Ministry of Communal Administration dated on August 25, 1959 indicating properties where cemeteries can be located. Dz.U.1959, nr 52, poz. 315
- Ordinance of the Ministry of Local and Environmental Administration and Ministry of Health dated on October 20, 1972 applying to cemeteries, keeping the records of burial. Dz.U.1972, nr 47, poz. 299.