

THE RHYTHM & RESONANCE OF JEWISH LIFE

the **moment**



LIVING HIGHER

On Shemini Atzeres, the Misaskim hotline rang, answered by a non-Jewish dispatcher. The caller, a frantic relative of a man who had just passed away, explained that the next of kin was demanding that the Jewish *niftar* be cremated, as he was not a religious man and never requested a Jewish burial.

As the cremation was scheduled for Simchas Torah, this next of kin was contacted by Misaskim to see if the cremation could be stopped. The family member couldn't understand why it was so urgent and asked if she could speak to a rabbi.

Under the guidance of *poskei hador*, a Misaskim rabbi contacted her and shared a story. "A few years ago, in North Carolina, a non-Jewish medical examiner was preparing a body for an autopsy, when he noticed the numbers tattooed on his arm, an "eternal" souvenir of his stay in Auschwitz. The examiner frantically searched for, and found, a rabbi to ask his counsel on what to do.

The rabbi was able to track down the *niftar's* next of kin who protested that the *niftar* himself requested to be cremated so that he could meet his parents and other family members who were murdered, and then burned, by the Nazis in a crematorium.

The shocked rabbi collected his thoughts and explained that, in the Next World, souls are not connected through the way in which they were murdered, and it would be far more beneficial for his soul were he to obtain a traditional Jewish burial. Hitler *yemach shemo*, the rabbi continued, wanted to erase every last vestige of the Jews and that's why he resorted to cremation. "Don't you want to prove him wrong?" the rabbi asked. "And don't you, also, want an opportunity to visit his eternal resting place?"

The woman in North Carolina paused for a moment and said, "Rabbi, I agree. Let's do it the right way."

And now, on Simchas Torah 5778, the Misaskim rabbi echoed that argument and waited to hear this family member's answer.

The return call brought him the news he'd been praying for: On Sunday morning, Isru Chag, the *niftar* was *zocheh* to *kevuras Yisrael* in Passaic, New Jersey.