



Doesn't burial pollute the environment?

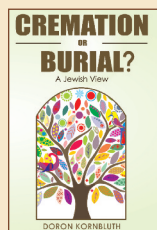
Ash scattering seems like a beautiful, almost poetic, eco-friendly alternative. However, environmentalists worldwide now choose 'green burial' (with no embalming or metal caskets - in line with Jewish tradition) because cremation causes pollution, releases mercury and other toxins into the air and uses an enormous amount of fossil fuels. If environmentalism is your concern, cremation is NOT the environmental choice.

Isn't cremation cheaper?

Cremation may be cheaper but when all other costs are added in, it is often the same cost as a modest burial. Even when cremation does cost less, we shouldn't allow finances alone to dictate our choices. ***Cremation and burial are not equal choices.*** While everyone would like to save money, important life events and milestones that affect our soul and family forever are not the time to think ONLY of the cheapest choice. ***Burial is well worth it.*** If you really wish to be buried, pre-planning, or family and community assistance can make it happen.

No one will visit the gravesite – we live far away. Shouldn't we cremate and keep the ashes?

In the long term, people don't retain ashes. Will you take them with you when you retire? Will the grandkids keep them? Our homes and our lives simply aren't designed for long term storage of ashes. In many families, a child or grandchild may find closure and comfort in visiting the gravesite of their family members, experiencing a sense of belonging and continuity. With burial, this is possible because our loved one has a permanent resting place, and the family has a permanent memorial of the deceased.



About the Author

Doron Kornbluth is a world-renowned author and speaker, his interactive and engaging talks are popular around the world. Contact him through his website, www.doronkornbluth.com



Peaceful Return

Peaceful Return is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping every Jewish person make an informed choice of burial over cremation.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Cremation or Burial?

Based on the book
Cremation or Burial? A Jewish View
by Doron Kornbluth

Burial seems to waste land. Is that true?

Actually, burial uses very little land. If ALL Americans were buried in individual graves it would take 10,000 years to use up just 1% of America's land, and few cemeteries would exist that long. Furthermore, Jews constitute only 1.5% of the population! There is PLENTY of land available, most of it within a short distance of urban centers.

What do burial and cremation symbolize?

Burial represents a calm acceptance of death as part of an eternal cycle, replete with the symbolism of an eventual rebirth. Cremation ends our time on earth with the total destruction of our bodies, an act expressing human control and power. After creation, G-d tells Adam, "For earth you are and unto earth you shall return" (Genesis, 3:19). At a deep level, burial provides comfort for the soul. Cremation causes anguish and suffering for the soul and hinders its return to G-d. "The dust returns to the earth as it was and the spirit returns to G-d who gifted it" (Ecclesiastes, 12:7). Burial is a natural, peaceful and comforting process.

Have Jews always buried?

For more than 3000 years, Jews and Judaism have avoided cremation – and chosen burial – although both options (and many others) existed. When the Roman historian Tacitus described the Jews, he noted that Jews "bury rather than burn" the dead. Historically, monotheists chose burial while polytheists chose cremation. The Bible talks about burial often, including that of the patriarchs and matriarchs. G-d Himself buried Moses. It is worth noting that the definition of tradition is: The transmission of customs or beliefs from generation to generation. When caring for the dead, burial is THE Jewish tradition for three millennia. There is NO Jewish tradition for cremation – and a very strong tradition against it.

Why is traditional Judaism opposed to cremation?

The body is considered holy and created in the image of G-d. Burial respects and honors the body which housed the soul. For this reason, Jews go to great lengths to show respect and bury every bit of human remains, paying heavily for the return of soldiers' remains, interring Torah scrolls and other holy objects. The holiest of all is the person. ***We bury treasure while we burn trash.*** Burial is also a Biblical commandment, while cremation is a severe transgression, denying many principles of our faith.

Why should I care if I am dead anyway?

Our bodies are a gift and we have no right to hurt ourselves in life or death. Cremation is often chosen due to social or cultural influences based on misconceptions about its impact on our family, our soul, our environment, and our Jewish tradition, beliefs and values. On a deeper Kabbalistic level, when a soul departs from 'its' body, it gets closer to The Source of knowledge, and therefore has a much greater understanding of the spiritual implications of cremation. Looking "down" at its body, there is nothing the soul wants more than a proper Jewish burial. No matter how religious you were or weren't, choosing burial means: You were born a Jew and want to be remembered as a Jew.

Decomposition scares me. Isn't cremation quicker and cleaner?

While it seems quick and clean to push a button, the truth about cremation is frightening. A typical body burns, at 1800 degrees, for approximately two hours, with larger bodies taking even longer. The bones are removed and ground up to fit in an urn. While decomposition isn't a comfortable thought, it is the way of ALL living things. Burial respects the cycle of nature, and our bodies give back, in some small way, to the earth.

Are cremated remains permitted burial in a Jewish cemetery?

While in recent years some Jewish cemeteries have decided to accept cremated remains, many Jewish cemeteries follow a prohibition against the burial of ashes. Because cremation is such a serious departure from Jewish tradition and belief, one forfeits his/her place in a Jewish cemetery. There is actually no requirement to bury ashes, since they are not the same entity, devoid of any DNA, and no longer represent the body. A Kohen, who by Jewish law cannot be in the presence of a dead body, is permitted to be in the presence of ashes. Legally, ashes have no status of human remains and can be sprinkled on your neighbor's lawn without asking or put out with the trash. A body placed in the ground has its regenerative potential intact, reflecting our belief in the eternity of the soul. Ashes.....are just ashes.

FOR YOU

YOUR FAMILY

YOUR ENVIRONMENT

YOUR SOUL

BURIAL IS BETTER

