

Second Annual TEAM Shabbos Movement to Increase Awareness Surrounding End-of-Life Decisions

On Shabbat Parshat Vayechi, January 14, 2017, more than 300 shuls and communities in 136 cities nationwide will join the second annual Traditional End-of-life Awareness Movement (TEAM), a project of the National Association of Chevre Kadisha (NASCK). Following last year's resounding success under the leadership of Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, this initiative will continue to help raise awareness throughout our community about the Torah's perspective on end-of-life matters.

Beginning the preceding week and throughout the Shabbat, shuls around the country will be participating in the TEAM Shabbos movement in various ways. Rabbis will dedicate their sermons, lectures and shul programs to generate the discussion. Many shuls will be utilizing their weekly program and shul material (i.e., newsletters, e-blasts) to focus on relevant topics, while some will collaborate with NASCK to coordinate a special event in their community to boost awareness. Some of the topics that will be addressed include the inherent sanctity of life, the importance of making proper medical decisions, choosing and helping others to choose traditional Jewish burial practices and writing wills in accordance with halacha.

The Torah perspective on end-of-life is not easy to talk about. As such, many of these very important obligations and far-reaching matters are infrequently mentioned.

"Due to a lack of awareness about the inherent sanctity of every moment of life," says Rabbi Elchonon Zohn, "many people make end-of-life medical decisions that are contrary to Torah values. The goal of TEAM

Shabbos is to open the discussion about "Respecting Life—Here and Hereafter" in a unified national movement to facilitate the necessary awareness about these issues."

2015's TEAM Shabbos movement was a national success with overwhelming positive feedback. "Many of the rabbonim that presented shiurim on end-of-life were surprised at the positive and accepting attitude that their communities responded with," Rabbi Zohn explained. "The 'It's about time' sentiment was an oft-repeated phrase this Shabbat."

"The tzibbur welcomed the opportunity to learn about the importance of end-of-life directives and halachic wills, as well as hear an overview of the halachot of end-of-life situations and issues related to a bait hakvarot," explained Rabbi Dovid Heber, Rav of K'hal Ahavas Yisroel Tzemach Tzedek in Baltimore, Maryland. "Thanks to

the efforts of NASCK, these sensitive topics were addressed 'I'maaseh uv'rov am' in our shul, together with many other kehillot in our community and nationwide."

Many Torah-observant people do not fully understand the modern-day practical applications of end-of-life concepts such as pikuach nefesh and mes mitzvah. These important concepts require us to make proper medical decisions and assist our less-observant friends, relatives, acquaintances and co-workers in choosing traditional Jewish burial practices.

In fact, a rabbi from Maryland noted, "Given the level of knowledge of the people in my shul, I was very surprised how unfamiliar they were with the many important hashkafot and halachot that pertain to end-of-life. I'm so grateful to TEAM Shabbos and NASCK for giving me the push and the opportunity to speak about it."

So, what's the next step for NASCK and TEAM Shabbos?

"We will continue to keep the discussion open and to generate awareness surrounding the importance of the inherent sanctity of life and choosing traditional afterlife choices. We look forward to expanding the TEAM b'ezrat Hashem next Parshat Vayechi," says Rabbi Zohn. "We encourage communities to join NASCK's many ongoing programs dedicated to support, inform, educate and inspire all those seeking information about traditional Jewish burial, including programs promoting halachic living wills and EMES (Emergency Medical Education and Sign-up) cards."

To have your community join or for more information about the National Association of the Chevre Kadisha (NASCK) and TEAM Shabbos, please visit www.nasck.org or call 718-847-6280.

Bergen Performing Arts Center to Present A Jew Grows in Brooklyn



Bergen Performing Arts Center, located at 30 North Van Brunt Street in Englewood, will present *A Jew Grows in Brooklyn* on Sunday, November 13 at 3 p.m. Purchase tickets at www.ticketmaster.com, www.bergenpac.org or at the box office at 201-227-1030. Ticket prices are \$39, \$49, \$59 and \$79 each. From its record-breaking, award-winning run in the heart of Broadway, Jake Ehrenreich presents this newly minted version of his hit comedy musical. The New York Times hails "Brooklyn is beautiful, touching and funny—like Billy Crystal's *700 Sundays*" and New York Magazine raves "Poignant and hilarious—haimish wisdom with a modern sensibility."

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