

CONFIDENTIAL

March 22, 1991

It was almost 25 years ago, that I first thought of acquiring the land for a cemetery ground to serve the needs of Temple Sinai congregation. Out of the ensuing preliminary discussions, the idea developed that perhaps it would be possible to establish a cemetery which might serve the needs of the total Jewish community. It was 20 years ago that I signed an offer to purchase this land. It was January of 1975 before most of the approvals to operate the cemetery were had and it is now almost 16 years since we met on site to consecrate this land as the first burial ground belonging to the total Jewish community. We named this cemetery Pardes Shalom--The Garden of Peace and not long afterward the first interment took place.

For me and for those who stood with me, it has been a long and sometimes arduous undertaking. To establish something new which cannot have a ready credibility but which it is hoped will endure is never a task easily accomplished. When I consider what we set out to do and see how far we have come to this day I can say with gratitude and humility that it has been a blessing to the community and to those who have shared in this undertaking. We have been privileged to see our dream come true. We have experienced the commandment that our lives count for something and that our passing through must make a difference to our community.

We meet today to dedicate the finally completed entrance parquet and to dedicate the entrance gates. The very building of these gates reflects our priorities. The first priority was to somehow find the money to buy the land and to improve and develop the property. The second priority

was to build the operational facilities. The third priority was to pay back our seed money and so on. Only when our principal obligations were met could we afford to construct this entrance, and in building it we kept to the basic feeling of naturalness, of peace, and of serenity.

Now, PARDES SHALOM is a going concern with its major development costs in hand, and with its concept principles enshrined for the future.

In 1975 when I addressed the community on the occasion of the consecration of Pardes Shalom I said in part "We today dedicate our first ground PARDES SHALOM, 'The Garden of Peace'. We do so in a gesture of devotion and respect to the diverse elements in our community realizing that however we differ we are a part indivisibly of a society that reflects the best in our tradition, and that reflects the solidarity of our people as tested through the ages. Though the days of the village shtetl community are past, we strive to keep our greater community together in death as in life.

In this respect we will still link ourselves to the past and maintain our traditions by designating sections in PARDES SHALOM to various brotherhoods, congregations, to the societies, or to any body of Jews who wish to be identified as belonging one with the other. We will also make plots available for those who have no particular affiliation and we will claim them as ours precisely because we represent the entire community. Each of the sections can and will be consecrated separately by, and for the mini-community that subscribes to it, and all, from our

revered orthodox brethren, to our esteemed conservative congregations and our reform friends will have the ability and right to their own religious customs and practices within the general operating rules as laid down and accepted by the Province of Ontario."

That was in October of 1975. Today, we are gratified to have accomplished what we set out to do so long ago. First we wanted to establish the cemetery facility as an available reality. Then we wanted to create a supporting legal structure to guarantee the retention of our aims and principles, and well onto the foreseeable future. We established a fund which would be maintained towards additional purchases of land as the community may require it. And finally we established a trust which would administer surplus funds, as generated, for charitable purposes. We have, in fact, established and initially funded the PARDES SHALOM Charitable Fund. Today, within our cemetery we number thirty-nine synagogues, landsmanschaften, brotherhoods, and various societies, representing the full spectrum of the community.

Our most important achievement, however, is that we have been able to unite the Jewish community in achieving these purposes. We have, I believe, changed the structure of cemetery ownership and administration in a way that mirrors the successful institutions and social agencies which have always served the Jews of Canada well. We were always known for the institutions established to take care of the sick, the elderly, the homeless. These are now matched in sophistication and in repute by the creation of PARDES SHALOM as a community endeavour. The esteem in which our social agencies have been held has now, I believe, been earned by this

organization which I know will endure so long as there is a Jewish community in this great city.

This is the day we dedicate the entrance to PARDES SHALOM. It is also the day when I take formal leave from the responsibility I have been honoured to carry; although I must confess that there were moments when the honour seemed to be about the only thing that was real. I cannot make my farewell as I do without publicly acknowledging the work of others who contributed much to our common effort. Let me salute and remember the original contributing institutions -

- Adath Israel, Beth Tikvah, the Judaen benevolent and friendly society, Temple Emmanuel, Temple Sinai and Holy Blossom. I salute the United Jewish Welfare Fund and the ^{Toronto} ~~Canadian~~ Jewish Congress who came forward with help when we needed it most. I commend all those who have served on our executives and boards throughout the years. I recognize Ben Schneider who stood with me from the beginning and I remember with warmth the esteemed Rabbis and community leaders who gave us of their knowledge, wisdom and encouragement. It was in fact my own Rabbi Jordan Pearlson of Temple Sinai who suggested the name Pardes Shalom and Pardes Shalom it became. We salute as well the mayors and councils of the City of Vaughan who supported our cause from the beginning, as did the Ministries of the Government of Ontario. We acknowledge the help of the Managers of the Toronto General Burial Grounds who always received us warmly and offered us encouragement and advice from time to time. While I cannot hope to publicly acknowledge all those who contributed to the success of this organization, I would like you to know that we never lacked for supporters and friends.

PARDES SHALOM is our first burial ground. It will not be our last. I know that those who follow in this work will build on what we have begun. I know that others will continue to do their duty to our community and through it to the broader community of which we are such a significant part. May it be said of all those who contributed to this undertaking that our effort has born excellent fruit and that we served well.

I therefore now participate in the dedication of these gates and of the parquette, of which the gates are a part, to the Jewish Community of the City of Toronto. It is fitting, that future generations should reflect upon other lives that have gone before, and [to] do so from time to time, as the community generationally restructures itself within and upon these consecrated grounds. For it is here that we come to remember relatives and friends who were so much a part of our lives for better or for worse. It is here that the recently departed seem to linger a while. It is here that we can still come to grieve, to take inspiration, to right old wrongs, and to talk to stones that mark a very special place. It is here we touch our past, and it may be here that we should value our present and ponder upon our future.

May the enduring peaceful calm of these grounds remind us of how sacred and eternal is each life that is commemorated here. May those who mourn and remember therefore pass through these gates in peace. May there sorrows be softened within the tender, forgiving and healing beauty of this place. Baruch ato adonai ehlohanoo melach haolom, shehechiyonu, vikimonu, vehigionu lazman hazeh.