



International Committee  
FOR THE PRESERVATION OF  
**HAR HAZEITIM**  
הוועד הבינלאומי להגנת הר הזיתים

International Committee For The Preservation of Har Hazeisim

# UPDATE

Winter 2017

## The International Historic Cemetery of the Jewish People



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## Restoration of Safety Dramatically Increases Visits to Har Hazeisim; ICPHH to Remain Vigilant

Thousands of Jews are once again flocking to Har Hazeisim after years of refraining from visiting the holiest Jewish cemetery because of the threat of attack. The dramatic change is directly related to the vastly improved security situation, thanks to the work of the ICPHH that began in May 2010.

Security officials say that there has not been a grave desecration since October 2015 and only one or two isolated incidents of rock throwing on access roads and not in the cemetery itself. Whereas an average of 300 visitors came to Har Hazeisim daily in 2015, that number today has swelled to 1500. In addition, large numbers participated this year in such major yahrzeits as the Rebbes of Zhvill and Ger as well as the Ohr Hachaim and to several large events, including the Chol Hamoed concert co-sponsored by the ICPHH.

Remarkably, people who have not been to the graves of parents and grandparents for many years once again feel safe enough to make the visit. One couple recently visited their parents' grave after 12 years, which turned into an extremely emotional visit that could not have taken place just two years ago. Many of the visitors chose to use the government security service as added reassurance and others took extensive tours of the holy mountain with Josh Wander, the ICPHH representative on Har Hazeisim (see [www.harHazeisim.org](http://www.harHazeisim.org) ).



THE POLICE STATION ON HAR HAZEISIM

Despite this historic development, the ICPHH recognizes its responsibility to maintain its vigilance so that the situation in the cemetery does not revert back to the days of daily vandalism, trafficking of drugs, the piles of refuse, donkey races, soccer games, all defiling our holiest cemetery. In addition, the ICPHH is working with government agencies on extensive plans to further secure and develop the 3000-year old cemetery.

## New Fence Going Up - Greatly Adding to Improved Security

Har Hazeisim will soon be ringed with a wall/fence that will be particularly noticeable on the Eastern side of the mountain that includes the sectors of Gur, Afghanistan, Yemenites, Poland, and others. These were the sections that were frequent targets of Arab vandalism since the marauders were able to gain quick access and an even quicker escape. With the new fencing, the once troubled areas will be secured. The fencing, added to the network of 173 cameras, 24 police officers and a garrison of border police will add up to maximum security for the 3000-year old cemetery.



Crews have been working to install the foundation and wiring for electricity (new lighting) and additional cameras. The fencing idea was first raised by the ICPHH in 2012 with much resistance but the idea eventually gained momentum and finally enjoyed overwhelming support in the Knesset and in the Government. Through the efforts of the ICPHH, more than NIS 4.5 million was secured from municipal authorities and the national government, finally sealing the crucial fencing project. Kudos to Mayor Nir Barkat, Deputy Mayor Yosef Deutsch, Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Zev Elkin and MK Moshe Gafni, whose Finance Committee approved and funded the project. The entire project is expected to be completed in March.



## MK Gafni in NIS 2 Million Security Grant for Har Hazeisim

A strong supporter of security on Har Hazeisim, MK Moshe Gafni, chairman of the Knesset Finance Committee, recently announced a special grant of NIS 2 million to further beef up security on Har Hazeisim. In making the grant, MK Gafni said: "The ICPHH has lobbied me for years for additional security measures on Har Hazeisim which is why I am making this grant."

## Officials Promise to Clean up Area Around the Sainly Bartenura's Grave

For the Arab residents of Silwan, the small mount above the grave of the saintly Bartenura has become a dumping ground for garbage, creating a stench and an awful sight overlooking the holy cemetery. The ICPHH recently joined a group of municipal officials to evaluate the possibility of cleaning up the area. Rav Ovadiah ben Abraham of Bartenura (1445 -1515) came to Jerusalem from Italy and is best known for his popular commentary on the Mishnah, commonly known as "The Bartenura". In his later years, he rejuvenated the Jewish community of Jerusalem and became recognized as the spiritual leader of the Jews of his generation. In addition to being a great tzaddik and gaon, the Bartenura built the first yeshiva in 1000 years and many institutions for the elderly and poor including a hospital. He also got the Muslim authorities to eliminate a tax on the Jews. The Bartenura's kever is just below the troublesome Silwan neighborhood. The Arabs who live in the apartments above simply dump their refuse on the cemetery below. This will now become a major priority of the ICPHH.



THE MUNICIPALITY OF JERUSALEM BEGINS CLEAN-UP NEAR GRAVE OF THE SAINTLY BARTENURA.

## ICPHH Hosts Many Notables on Har Hazeisim

Donald Blome, the American Consul General in Jerusalem, was one of a number of notables to visit Har Hazeisim under the auspices of the ICPHH. Accompanied by the ICPHH leadership in Israel, Harvey Schwartz, Jeff Daube and Josh Wander, Consul Blome saw firsthand what the ICPHH accomplished to date and the serious security issues that remain. The ICPHH gave a similar briefing to members of the European Union after an extensive tour of the mountain when the Europeans learned of the enormous importance of Har Hazeisim to Jews of Har Hazeisim. Also touring Har Hazeisim was MK Michael Malkieli, one of the newer members of Knesset. The ICPHH has been hosting similar visit for members of Knesset from all the political parties.



US CONSUL TO JERUSALEM DONALD BLOME WITH JEFF DAUBE AND HARVEY SCHWARTZ, CO-CHAIRMAN OF THE ISRAEL COMMITTEE OF THE ICPHH.



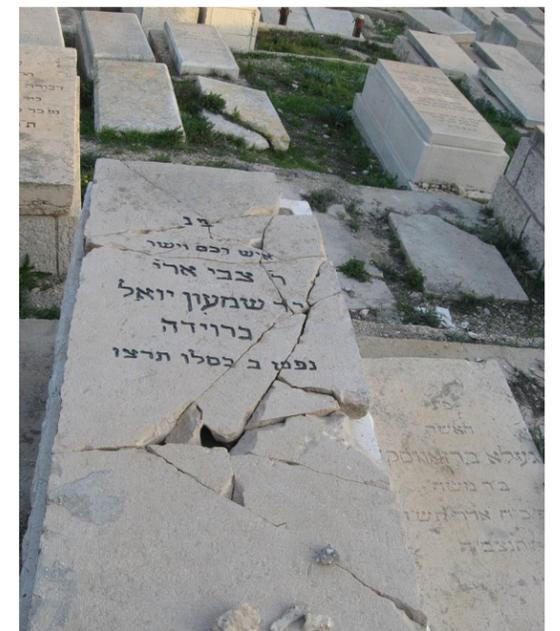
MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION ON A TOUR OF HAR HAZEISIM HOSTED BY THE ICPHH



AVROHOM LUBINSKY, CHAIRMAN OF THE ICPHH, THANKING MK MOSHE GAFNI, CHAIRMAN OF THE KNESSET FINANCE COMMITTEE.

## ICPHH Launches First Phase of Massive Grave Restoration on Har Hazeisim; American Section to be First

World Jewry has often focused on Jewish cemeteries abroad where graves were destroyed but few of these cemeteries have as many destroyed graves as Har Hazeisim. As many as 23,000 graves have still not been restored since they were uprooted by the Jordanians during their occupation of Har Hazeisim (1948-1967). "It is unfathomable that thousands of





Jews buried on the holiest cemetery should not have a tombstone," said Abe Lubinsky, chairman of the ICPHH. "How can we in the Jewish community turn a blind eye to the injustice of leaving desecrated graves in such a holy cemetery?"

The ICPHH is embarking on a worldwide campaign to begin to restore these graves by beginning with the section under Agudas Achim Anshei America, founded in the US in 1927 by a group of Rabbis and activists who also purchased a piece of land in the celebrated Geulah neighborhood so that they can live together. Amongst their many chesed activities was the establishment of a Chevra Kadisha. The first burials of Americans began in 1930 and ceased with the Jordanian capture of Har Hazeisim in 1948. The sector resumed burials in 1967 but many of the graves there were either totally destroyed or partially defiled. The section was so abused that in many case the Chevra Kadisha found body parts strewn in a wide area near the section., Although it managed to restore part of the mass destruction, 360 graves remain to be restored. Many Americans will recognize this sector as the area where the late Rabbi Mordechai Gifter, Rosh Yeshiva of Telshe in Wickliffe, Ohio is buried. The ICPHH is launching a campaign to restore these graves. You can participate by donating \$1800 for a full grave restoration and \$1000 for graves that have to be repaired and fixed up, \$250 to be a member of the Grave Restoration Committee, and \$500 for a part in restoring a matzeivah with someone else. Donors of a full grave(s) restoration will have their names on the bottom of the tombstones which can be in memory of a loved one.

## Plans for Visitors Education Center Move Forward

Final architectural plans are being drawn up. Some infra-structure designs are in the final stages. The remaining necessary permits are being secured. The Visitors Education Center, which is a joint project of the Government of Israel, the Jerusalem Municipality and the ICPHH is moving forward. When completed, the beautiful center will include exhibits, information center, seminar rooms and other features normally found in an Education Center on such a holy site. The ICPHH hopes to attract an additional 1.5 million visitors to the international historic cemetery of the Jewish people. The ICPHH hopes to raise at least \$5 million as its share of the participation in this historic project.

## Princess Katarina Planning to Visit Additional Shuls on Behalf of the UKCPHH

Princess Katarina of Yugoslavia is planning to continue her visits to some of the largest synagogues in the UK on behalf of Har Hazeisim. She recently visited the prestigious Edgware United Synagogue in London where she spoke during the Kiddush. The visits were arranged by Filip Slipaczek, a member of the UK Committee for the Preservation of Har Hazeisim and Jonathan Sigal, the ICPHH European Director. Princess



PRINCESS KATARINA OF YUGOSLAVIA

Katarina of Yugoslavia is the granddaughter of Princess Alice of Battenberg, the mother of Prince Phillip and the mother-in-law of Queen Elizabeth. In documents recently discovered, it was found that Princess Alice had hidden the Cohen family in 1943 when

she was in Athens. After her death it was found that Princess Alice had requested to be buried on Har Hazeisim and she is in fact interred in the garden of Gethsemane, the small Catholic cemetery on Har Hazeisim. Prince Charles visited the grave of his grandmother when he was in Israel for the funeral of Shimon Peres. Prince Philip is also believed to have made at least one private visit to the grave of his mother.



PRINCE CHARLES AT THE GRAVESITE OF HIS GRANDMOTHER PRINCESS ALICE WHO IS BURIED ON HAR HAZEISIM.



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