

May 29, 1969

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE HEBRA KADISHA,
Men's and Women's Divisions

FROM: RABBI NORMAN LAMM

I want to take this opportunity to offer some words of special commendation to all members of the Hebra Kadisha for having carried out with such dedication and efficiency the very demanding tasks that unfortunately were imposed upon them several times in the last few weeks.

It is a tribute to the members of the Hebra, and a vindication of the esteem and affection in which they are held by our entire congregation, that despite especially trying circumstances, their voluntary work continued unabated and without reluctance.

As an addendum to this thank-you note, in which I know all The Center joins me, I want to record some observations which may be of importance for future activity of the Hebra.

It sometimes happens that post-mortems are performed on the bodies of those to whom the Hebra ministers. When this happens, please bear in mind that if the autopsy was performed against the decision of the Rabbis, or without obtaining their prior permission, then the Rabbis will usually (but not always) refrain from asking the Hebra to offer their services in that case. Whenever, therefore, you do find such a condition, you may assume that rabbinical consent was given, either because civil law demanded it, or because the Halakhah required it or permitted it.

In all such cases, please bear in mind that special delicacy and tenderness should be extended not only to the deceased, but also to the sentiments of the survivors. The less that is said to outsiders about such individual cases the better. The Hebra ought to treat all such information as confidential and privileged, in the same way that a lawyer does not disclose the affairs of his

client, or a Rabbi the problems of those who come to consult him. Otherwise, a great deal of the good that all of us try to do, and in fact do, is impaired.

I hope you will forgive this lengthy note, but I do think that the members of the Hebra ought to know how grateful the entire community is. I hope and pray that the Hebra will be completely unemployed for a long, long time to come.

My warmest wishes for a happy, healthy, and completely peaceful summer.