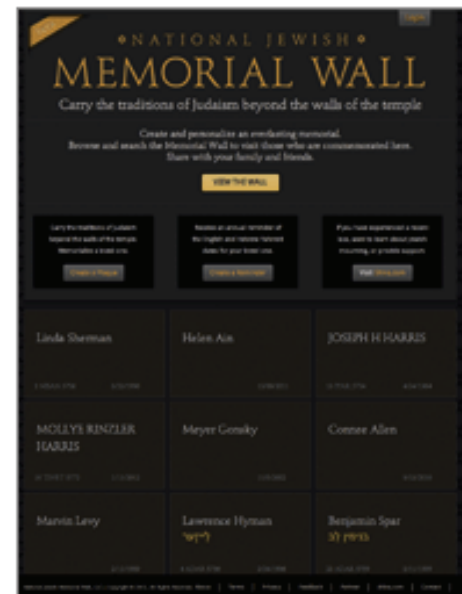


Moving Memorial Plaques To A Different Kind Of Wall

06/19/12 | Stewart Ain | Staff Writer

Memorial plaques placed on the walls of synagogues serve as touchstones for the bereaved. But a new website takes those plaques to the next level by not only allowing people to create them in cyberspace but also to write tributes to their loved ones, as well as post pictures and eventually videos.

Michael Schimmel, founder and CEO of the National Jewish Memorial Wall, said he created the fee-based website in part to help bring together family members who live in different parts of the world. In addition, a son or daughter who may erect a memorial plaque at their local synagogue may eventually move elsewhere, leaving the plaque behind.



The National Jewish Memorial Wall is a site, for a transient Jewish people, to memorialize their departed family members.

“Because of the way society evolved, people are constantly moving and this website is a centralized location – almost like a home base – for those who use it once a year or more often,” he said. “So when thinking of Mom, you can turn to your computer instead of going to the cemetery. It is not meant and never will be a replacement, but when someone is living in Paris or New York and their loved one’s cemetery is in Florida, this is a centralized common place where they can feel comfortable.”

He said that although his website, www.nationaljewishmemorialwall.com, is a business, “there is an altruistic component because a portion of the proceeds will go to temples we establish a relationship with.”

“We’re now meeting with executive directors and lay leaders of synagogues to build relationships at no cost to them,” he said. “For people who have moved from their synagogue, this will be an opportunity for the synagogue to re-engage with their former members.”

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Schimmel said the website will have hyperlinks to the website of partnering synagogues and organizations to which people might like to make donations. He said he also plans to install privacy walls for those who would like to restrict their tributes to those who know their password. The annual fee is \$18.

“The idea for this started with the idea of creating a shiva website,” he pointed out. That website, shiva.com, Schimmel said, will be launched in a couple of weeks and will be an information resource for people who want to know how, what and where about shiva. “It will provide various viewpoints – from the traditional to the Reform,” he continued. “So it will say that the traditional mourning period is seven days and that the Reform typically may sit one or three days. It depends on what your loved one would want you to do or what you feel you would want to do. We take no position. We just post the information and let people decide for themselves.”

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