

REMEMBERING

"Blessed is he who remembers what is forgotten," wrote Agnon. Believing and remembering, that is what the Jew is about. Most of the occasions on the Jewish calendar, such as Passover, Chanukah, Purim, are occasions for believing -- and for remembering, sometimes with joy, sometimes with sorrow.

One group in San Francisco is launching an act of remembrance which has no other purpose than remembering. Remembering needs no other purpose, as Agnon's words point out. Bikur Cholim is going to erect a monument to the victims of the Holocaust in the Eternal Home Cemetery. "Many of us lost members of our family," notes the organization. "We have the duty to immortalize their memory and to erect a memorial gravestone, at the foot of which we could meet annually for Yizkor and to say Kaddish."

Bikur Cholim is a local charitable organization comprising mainly survivors of the Holocaust. It was created as a mutual self-help association, in order to help people in trouble. Bikur Cholim's general charitable enterprises in the larger community have been unpublicized. There are the bazaars at Laguna Honda for the often forgotten aged Jews who are resident there. There are the two ambulances which they have bought for Israel. And there is Beth Mazor in Arad, Israel's only institution for asthmatic children, which Bikur Cholim has adopted.

The Mayor of Arad, a town which cherishes its institute for asthmatic children and will not allow polluting industries to be established there, has publicly expressed the town's appreciation for Bikur Cholim's help. As the director of Beth Mazor put it: "During the last two years, Bikur Cholim has enabled Beth Mazor to steadily improve its physical, educational and social environment."

But now some members of Bikur Cholim feel an urgency about establishing the memorial monument to the victims of the Holocaust. "The years are passing," said one. "We must do it now." They hope to unveil it on Holocaust day, at the end of April, 1981. Sinai Memorial Chapel has assigned the rotunda on the left side of the Eternal Home cemetery. Some modest funds will be needed to complete the task, and they can be sent to Bikur Cholim at P.O. Box 22573 in San Francisco.

There will be another monument to the victims of the Holocaust in San Francisco in the near future, but that will be another matter. Remembering is a blessing in itself; but we also want to remind everyone about the Holocaust so that such a tragedy is less likely to happen again. That is another purpose for remembering history.

That is partly why this Jewish community, under the guidance of the JCRC's Committee of Remembrance, mounts a public Yom HaShoa observance every year. That is why the Jewish community's Mass Media Project makes sure that millions of Bay Area residents see and hear about the Holocaust in local programming throughout the year. That is why this Jewish community makes sure that our public school children read and hear about the Holocaust in the course of their educational careers.

And that is why the City of San Francisco is proceeding with plans to erect a monument in the civic center area, to remind people of the Holocaust and its implications. Those initial plans will be announced shortly. But that monument will not serve the purpose of the one that is being erected by Bikur Cholim; and vice versa. They both deserve our support.