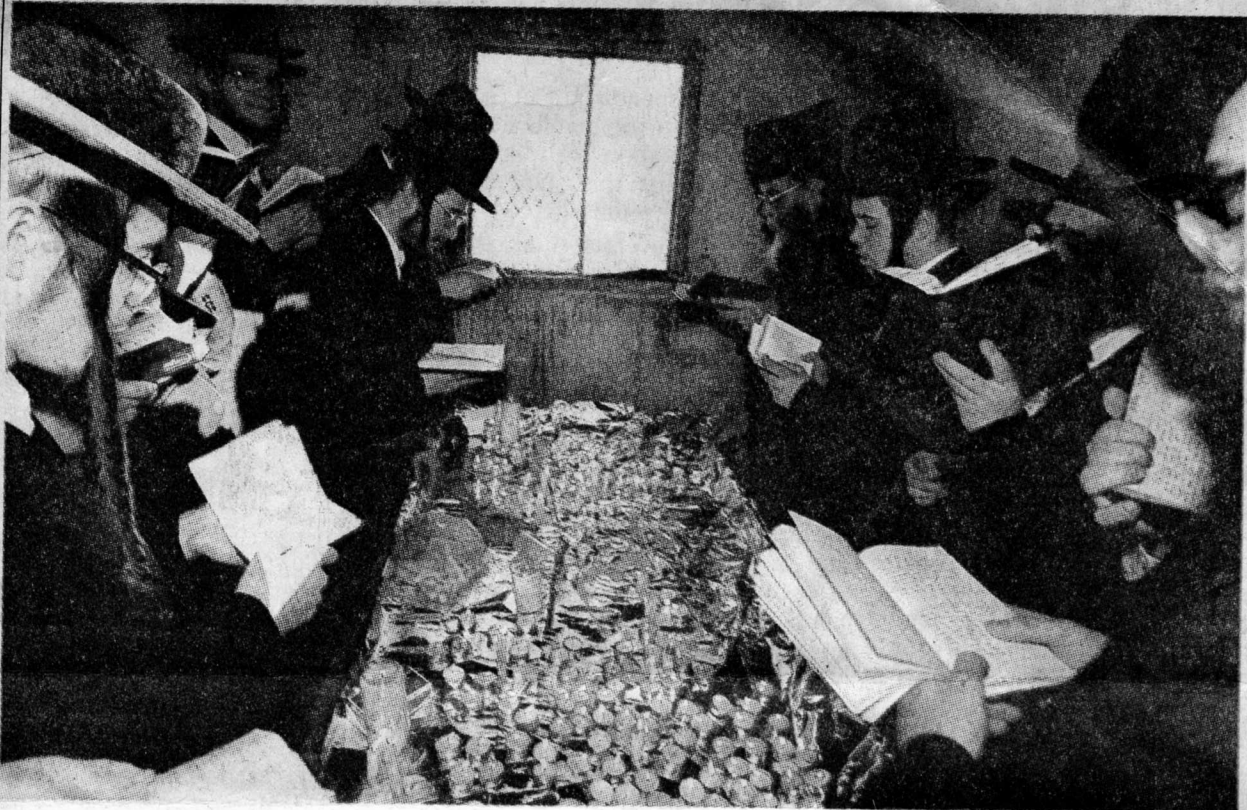


Several senior lieutenants and a captain filed a grievance because Maras- not make seniority the only cri-

"He was a very pious man who devoted his life to God. He was very righteous. He spent his days in study of the Torah and because of it reached a very high level of holiness."

Rabbi Sholem Fishbane, speaking at the grave of Rabbi Joseph Rabinowitz.



JAMES P. McCOY/Bufalo News

Hasidic rabbis chant Psalms in Hebrew after lighting candles at the Cheektowaga grave of Rabbi Joseph Rabinowitz, the first Hassidic rabbi to come to the United States.

*Israel + Morry Rabi Dow
Derohack night to this temple
maybe
Rabi*

Forgotten grave, holy site

By DAVE CONDREN
News Religion Reporter

It could have been a scene from "Yentl."

Dozens of bearded rabbis, each wearing the traditional black hat, surrounded a small, red-brick building. They took turns filing in and out. They lit candles. And they chanted Psalms in Hebrew, bowing repeatedly as they prayed.

But it wasn't celluloid make-believe set in Eastern Europe. It was reality unfolding in Cheektowaga.

About 150 Hassidic Jews gathered in Ahavath Sholem Cemetery along Pine Ridge Road Wednesday to pray at the grave of Rabbi Joseph Rabinowitz, the first Hassidic rabbi to come to the United States and a greatly revered leader of that movement.

"He was a very pious man who devoted his life to God. He was

very righteous. He spent his days in study of the Torah and because of it reached a very high level of holiness," explained Rabbi Sholem Fishbane of Saranac Synagogue in North Buffalo.

An Orthodox rabbi, Rabbi Fishbane is not a member of the Hassidic movement, whose members aspire to a mystical level of Judaism. But a few people in his congregation are members and his synagogue later was host to a religious service and dinner for the visitors.

Rabbi Rabinowitz, who is said to have had healing powers because of his holiness, came to Buffalo about the turn of the century to serve as rabbi of the former Congregation Ahavath Sholem on Jefferson Avenue. He died in 1910.

Born in Russia, he lived for a short time in Manhattan before moving here.

His grave, which is barely off the highway, is sheltered by a small, faded, red-brick building that could be mistaken for a cemetery pump house. The structure, identified only by an inscription in Hebrew, is known as an "ohel," a word meaning tent or dwelling place.

"It was a European tradition to put a cover on the grave of someone of great importance," said Rabbi Jacob Blugrond of Baltimore, who visited the cemetery with Rabbi Fishbane.

The delegation of Hassidic visitors, most from the Williamsburg area of Brooklyn, came on three buses to pray at the long-forgotten grave.

"He was one of the biggest rabbis in America. He was spiritually very big," said Joshua Schwartz, one of the visitors.

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