

chesed

Volume 11 • Number 4
February 2005 • Adar 1 5765

HFBA Mission Statement

The **Hebrew Free Burial Association** devotes its resources to performing *chesed shel emet* (the ultimate act of loving kindness). It is the only agency in the New York City metropolitan area dedicated to assuring that every Jew, regardless of financial means or religious affiliation, receives a dignified, traditional Jewish funeral and burial.

Chesed is published by
The Hebrew Free Burial Association

Amy Koplow, Executive Director
224 West 35th Street, Room 300
New York, NY 10001
Telephone (212) 239-1662

UJA Federation
of New York

As always, we welcome your comments. Please write to us at:
**224 W. 35th St., Room 300,
New York, NY 10001**, call
(212) 239-1662 or send us email
at our **new email address:**
info@hebrewfreeburial.org

"An Extraordinary Privilege"

"More Jews Turn to Ritual of Caring for Their Dead" declared a recent (December 25, 2004) headline of the *Saturday Religion Journal* of the New York Times. The article described how a "growing number of synagogue volunteers prepare the deceased for burial," following Judaism's ancient rituals, rather than relying on funeral homes as they have in past decades. Conservative, Reform and Reconstructionist synagogues are joining the Orthodox in forming *chevra kadishas* (burial societies) to perform practices which "call for everyone, rich or poor, to be treated the same. In a ritual that is opened and concluded with prayer, the body is washed by people of the same sex as the deceased and then clothed in simple white shrouds...At all times the body is kept company as the soul begins its journey away."

According to the article, many of the volunteers find peace and healing in performing the ritual. One woman, whose 54-year old sister had been cared for by the *chevra*, joined one immediately after *shiva*, remarking, "They were so caring. Knowing what they did helped me through it, and knowing what would happen to her body really gave my sister a pathway to die...It gave her great peace."

An active member of a *chevra* declared, "You come out of this experience...of holiness, and...yet you feel that a bridge has been created between being alive and being something else. It is the most extraordinary privilege."

This act of ultimate kindness, can be shared, not only by those who actively participate, but by

continued on page 4

HFBA Helps: From Our Files

Few people realize the extraordinary effort made by HFBA to fulfill its mission. Public agencies and governmental bureaucracies must be dealt with and long-missing, often uncooperative, family members must be found and consulted.

After Harry M., a Holocaust survivor, passed away, his friend, Dorothy, who had been in touch with us during his illness, contacted HFBA to arrange the funeral and burial. She knew that Harry had an estranged brother in Israel and, through her tenacity, she managed to locate him. Although he gave permission for HFBA to handle the funeral, he made it clear that he wanted nothing further to do with any arrangements, financial or otherwise.

Mrs. C. and her husband, who had advanced dementia, lived in a nursing home. Upon Mrs. C.'s death, the nursing home contacted HFBA to care for the deceased. However, because Mr. C. was alive and yet incapable of giving informed consent, HFBA engaged in negotiations with the Public Administrator for permission to arrange the burial.

Richard J. was found dead in his apartment by his wife, who, as a result of the shock, suffered a mental collapse. Because of the state of her mental health, she could not authorize a burial. For six weeks, HFBA worked with an attorney and with Richard's sister and brother-in-law who lived out of town. They were reluctant to get involved, and the body lay in the city morgue. Finally, after much effort by Mrs. J.'s psychiatrist, she was finally able to authorize her husband's burial two months after his death.



A compassionate physician, Dr. T., called us after the death of his patient, Mr. P. who, at age 47, had died of cancer. Dr. T. was distressed that his former patient was to be buried in an anonymous grave in City Cemetery. He pursued any lead he could to locate a next-of-kin, and, failing, he called HFBA. HFBA worked with the Public Administrator and applied for, and received, permission to bury Mr. P. among his religious brethren.

When Mrs. S., a Russian immigrant, died earlier this year, the only family member that HFBA could locate was a granddaughter who lived in a small town in the Former Soviet Union. The phone system was erratic and there were no fax machines in the entire town! However, HFBA staff members persevered and finally received the required signed authorization for burial.

Volunteers Help HFBA

Many opportunities exist to help HFBA with its unique work.

High school students come with class, camp or Jewish youth groups to clean and help maintain the cemeteries. This past summer and fall, groups from Young Judea's Camp Tel Yehuda and the Stella K. Abraham High School got to work. Girls from Maayanot High School, whose principal, Rookie Billet, also rolled up her sleeves, and MTA (Yeshiva University High School for Boys) students, organized by Chesed Club president Keith Flaks, gave of their time and effort. College students worked in the office inputting old data. Nechama Liss Levinson organized a group of adults from the Great Neck Synagogue to work at the cemetery one Sunday. Igor Bychkov, a volunteer originally from Russia and now living in Brooklyn, comes to work alongside others devoted to this special cause.



A Maayanot High School volunteer

All our volunteers discover that in giving of themselves, they also receive the wonderful feeling of participating in a mitzvah, in a *chesed shel emet*.

Special chesed opportunity available!

Are you able to give some time to drive mourners to the cemetery for funerals or visits? If you have a car and would be willing to perform this mitzvah, please call Amy Koplow at the HFBA office, (212)239-1662.



Students from Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls



Be PREPARED

Do you know what to do in the event of an emergency or unanticipated illness or death? In 1997, the Baltimore County Department of Aging suggested creating a file with all vital and necessary information. The file should be kept in a secure place and a copy given to a reliable family member or friend along with information about the location of original documents and how to gain access to them.

INFORMATION SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Full name and address; date and place of birth; father's and mother's names; social security number
- Copies of: living will, health care proxy; power of attorney for healthcare and financial matters
- Copies of: marriage certificate, divorce/separation records; veteran's serial number; citizenship papers
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of lawyer, accountant, financial advisor, doctors, rabbi
- Health, life insurance and disability insurance policy numbers; company and agent
- List of assets including: home, car, stocks, bonds, mutual funds, IRA's, retirement benefits, other; deeds to property and titles to vehicles
- List of credit cards and other credit obligations
- Information about your bank accounts (location and account numbers)
- Copy of will, identity of executor of will and estate
- Information about whether you: are taking medication; are an organ donor; have pre-made funeral and burial plans; have a cemetery plot and its location

"An Extraordinary Privilege"

continued from page 1

all those who support the work of the many *chevra kadishas* which perform their holy tasks with dignity and devotion.

We appreciate our many supporters whose generosity involves them in the *chesed shel emet* of HFBA.

Upon request,
a copy of our annual report
may be obtained from our office,
224 W. 35th Street,
Room 300,
New York, NY 10001
or from the
Attorney General, Charities Bureau,
120 Broadway,
New York, NY 10271.

*The Russian Digest, translated summaries of the
articles appearing in this issue of Chesed, appears below.*

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

«Исключительная честь»

Недавно в газете *New York Times* была опубликована статья о возобновлении ортодоксальных еврейских религиозных традиций в похоронных обрядах. Многие неортодоксальные синагоги стали формировать свои собственные похоронные общества. Добровольцы из членов синагоги исполняют ритуальный обряд подготовки умершего к похоронам и читают надлежащие молитвы. Одинаковое исполнение обряда как для богатых, так и для бедных, считается деянием истинной доброты – *Chesed Shel Emet*, и, по словам добровольцев, является исключительной честью. Эту честь разделяют и те, кто оказывает финансовую поддержку похоронным обществам. Мы благодарим всех наших спонсоров за их щедрое участие в *Chesed Shel Emet* HFBA.

Помощь HFBA: из наших архивов

Немногие знают о трудностях, с которыми сталкивается наша организация, чтобы исполнить долг перед умершими. Нам приходится иметь дело с городскими и правительственными учреждениями, а также разыскивать отсутствующих родственников.

Врач **Т.** не хотел допустить, чтобы его пациент **П.**, умерший от рака в возрасте 47 лет и не имевший близких родственников, был похоронен в безымянной могиле на общегородском кладбище. Мы получили разрешение у городских властей похоронить его на нашем кладбище, **Mt. Richmond**, среди братьев по вере.

У иммигранта из России **С.** не было родственников в Америке. Нам удалось разыскать его внучку, которая жила в маленьком городке на территории СНГ. Несмотря на перебои в телефонной связи и отсутствие факс-машин в её городе, HFBA получило разрешение от внучки похоронить деда.

Необходимая помощь волонтеров

HFBA нуждается в волонтерах, и приглашает их участвовать в самых разных аспектах нашей работы. Группы добровольцев помогают в уборке кладбища и уходе за могилами, студенты колледжей работают в нашем офисе.

Если Вы или Ваша организация заинтересованы в волонтерстве, позвоните Amy Koplow по телефону: (212) 239-1662

Специальный Файл»

К сожалению, наша жизнь полна непредвиденных ситуаций, среди которых могут быть и внезапная болезнь, и, не приведи Г-дь, смерть. Мы советуем хранить копии важных документов в специально отведённом месте. Второй экземпляр отдайте доверенному лицу, сообщив о местонахождении оригиналов.

Не забудьте включить следующую информацию и документы:

Укажите Ваше имя, дату, место рождения, имена родителей; включите копию карточки *Соушел Секюрити*, а также документов, определяющих Ваш иммиграционный статус и семейное положение

Копии завещания и доверенностей с указанием распорядителя завещания и лиц, уполномоченных в принятии финансовых и медицинских решений; информацию о медицинской и жизненной страховке

Информацию о Вашем финансовом положении: сбережениях, инвестициях, собственности, долговых обязательствах

Список контактных лиц, включая ближайших родственников, юриста, бухгалтера, врача, социального работника, рабби.

Список принимаемых лекарств, аллергий, хронических болезней, а также информацию о том, являетесь ли Вы донором органов, имеется ли распоряжение о похоронах или заранее приобретённый участок на кладбище

Чем Вы можете помочь

Неустанная поддержка наших спонсоров помогает HFBA продолжать свою необходимую работу. Пожертвования идут на оплату похорон неимущих, содержание наших кладбищ и установку памятников на необозначенные могилы. Вы также можете выбрать специальную программу:

Долгосрочное планирование дарений

Включение дара HFBA в завещание

“**Leave your Mark**”: Пожертвование на установку памятника на безымянной могиле

«**Mitzvah Circle**» для молодых

благотворителей: пожертвуйте часть подарков полученных в честь Вашей *Bar/Bat Mitzvah*

Подробности можно узнать, позвонив нашему директору Amy Koplow по телефону: (212)239-1662.

We are pleased to
announce that the
following names have
been added to our

Leave Your Mark

Donor Plaque in the
Weinberg Chapel at
Mt. Richmond Cemetery:



LEO AND DORIS DREYFUSS
DON GRUBMAN
PAMELA AND JEFFREY GUROCK
GISELE HAUSMAN
RALPH AND LINDA KAFFEL
SANDRA G. KRAKOFF
MIRIAM MENDLINGER
DR. ANITA MOALLEM
ROBERT J. PAWLEY
PAUL PINTEL
GLORIA SCHWARTZ
RHONDA JOY SCHWARTZ
BRANDY TUCHMAN
RONA KIPNES WEINBERGER
HOWARD AND DIANE WOHL

*Please consider adding your name by sponsoring
four grave markers for unmarked graves for \$600.*

Chesed Shel Emet — How You Can Help

- **Place** HFBA *tzedakah* boxes in a house of *shiva* or in your home, school or local kosher restaurant.
- **Celebrate** a *simcha* or commemorate a loss with HFBA cards. Cards cost \$10 and can include a personalized message.
- **Enroll** a Bar/Bat Mitzvah in our “Mitzvah Circle” by suggesting a gift to HFBA to your guests. The generous child who shares his/her *simcha* in this way receives a framed certificate.
- **Donate** your property, used vehicle or boat to HFBA.
- **Establish** an HFBA Forever Gift Annuity or Charitable Trust Plan. In addition to the guaranteed income and tax benefits, these plans ensure that HFBA’s promise of a Jewish burial to future generations of indigent Jews will be fulfilled.
- **Remember** HFBA in your will with a bequest.
- **A donation** sent with the appropriate information will ensure that HFBA will send out a *Yahrzeit* reminder letter. An additional call to our office can arrange for *kaddish* to be said for the eleven month mourning period.
- **“Leave Your Mark”** by sponsoring a grave marker for an unmarked grave for \$150 and you will receive a framed certificate. Sponsor four markers and a plaque with your name will be added to our roster at the Weinberg Chapel at Mt. Richmond Cemetery.
- **Establish** a Perpetual *Yahrzeit Kaddish* for your loved one for a \$150 donation.
- **Sponsor** Perpetual Grave Care for an indigent’s grave for \$500.
- **Help out today by sending a donation in the enclosed envelope.**