

chesed

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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.

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The Hebrew Free Burial Association

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UJA Federation
of New York

Teaching Us About Life

The Jewish way of death can also teach us about the Jewish way of life.

Maurice Lamm, in *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, notes that “Jewish tradition recognizes the democracy of death...all are equal before God...” In death, each individual is treated and dressed the same, and is accorded the same respect and dignity as any other. There is no regard for prior social status, financial ability or level of Jewish observance. We learn that the true “measure of man” derives not from society’s criteria of success nor from our own stereotypes.

Jewish laws concerning the care and burial of the dead also remind us that “we all stand in judgment before God” (Lamm,

ibid.), and no human being has the wisdom, nor right, to judge his fellows in life. Also, as Lamm points out, since “man was created in the image of God... although the pulse of life is no more, the human form must be respected for having once embodied the spirit of God.” The ultimate brotherhood among people derives from our creation *b’ tselem elokim* (image of God) as well as from the “divine spark” that Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook believed resides in all Jews motivating us all to do God’s work.

“The principle governing the care of the body immediately following death” and the lovingkindness with which it is treated, derives from the notion of “the sacredness of man”

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TO OUR Supporters

Since 1888, HFBA has buried tens of thousands of indigent Jews who had no family or friends to arrange, or pay for, a funeral. We ensure that the deceased is treated with the dignity and respect mandated by our tradition rather than end up in an anonymous grave in Potter's Field.

Our referrals come from acquaintances of the deceased, various government agencies and the staff of hospitals and nursing homes. As soon as we are notified, we take immediate action so that the decedent can be buried quickly, as required by Jewish law. Our work begins with the retrieval of the body and continues with the ritual preparations, a funeral with a rabbi who recites the appropriate prayers, and the burial. We also provide support and comfort to grieving relatives.

This act of lovingkindness is a *chesed shel emet* because it can never be repaid in kind. As the only agency in the New York metropolitan area which performs this vital work for any Jew, regardless of affiliation, we thank you, our supporters, for helping us continue the work we have done for over one hundred years.

HFBA Helps: From Our Files

HFBA was recently called upon to help in the following cases:

Because of Boris G.'s drug problems, he left the family home to get help at a residential facility run by the Educational Alliance.

Boris had originally come to New York from Russia and was getting more and more interested in Jewish tradition and observance. He was popular with the other residents at the agency and respected by members of the staff, all of whom appreciated his good humor and willingness to help others. Motivated by a strong desire to be with his six year old son, and eager to impart to him his own new love for Judaism, Boris was encouraged in his rehabilitation by his friends at the residence. All recognized how hard he was trying to overcome his difficulties.

It came as a deep shock to all involved when Boris was discovered dead of an overdose. In tribute to their friend, a diverse group of fifty

people, peers and professionals, came to the funeral arranged by HFBA and filled in his grave by hand. Boris was eulogized by those who knew him best—as a good man, ultimately defeated.

Bobby S. was a fixture in the Washington Heights area. He was an unthreatening, homeless, fifty-seven year old man whose neighbors befriended and looked out for him. He told many about his Jewish mother and would wish "Good Shabbos" and "Good Yom Tov" to the passersby.

One day, the nephew of an HFBA Board member walked past Bobby's regular spot and was saddened to see a sign announcing a memorial service. He called HFBA and a member of our staff reached Bernard W., the man who was organizing the service. Bernard told our representative that Bobby, a Viet Nam veteran and skilled construction worker, had been in the same area for twenty years since suffering a

mental collapse after his wife and daughter were killed in a fire which had also destroyed his home.

Although Bernard had tried to help Bobby many times, the help was rejected and Bobby continued to deal with the harsh realities of life on the streets, foraging for food from garbage cans, running from those who tried to steal his few possessions and harm him.

After his death, dozens of people left flowers, lit candles or said prayers at Bobby's old hangout. Over one hundred people, including area residents and "street people," attended his memorial service. Neighbors recalled his affable presence, kindness and gentle manner, his offer to carry packages and his sweet greeting of "God bless you" in return for food, medicine, clothing or money. In his moving eulogy, Bernard noted that, "Bobby gave us many gifts. (He) united this community with one more strand of con-

nection through his presence. He gave us every day the opportunity to be kind to another person, to practice the Golden Rule..."

HFBA made certain that Bobby avoided a pauper's grave in Potter's Field. He was buried in the HFBA cemetery with the dignity and respect he was often denied in life.

Peter R. called our office for help with an unusual problem. He had located the remains of his mother who had estranged herself from him many years before because of her severe schizophrenic condition. Peter wanted her remains disinterred from Potter's Field and reburied in a Jewish cemetery. This difficult situation involves careful coordination with different city agencies. The HFBA office staff persisted and Mrs. R.'s remains were reburied in our cemetery according to the wishes of her son.



FROM THE Mailbox

Letters such as these remind us that every person has a story, even when the end is sad and solitary.

I never thought I would personally know a family who needed your services...What you do on a regular basis, perhaps you take for granted, but not this family. Your *chesed* left an indelible impression on them and to (sic) all who heard their story.

B.H.

I want to thank everyone there for all of your help and kindness. I am sending the cost of putting a marker on someone's grave as this was so kindly done for my mother. As you know...I would have done it but was unable at the time.

I.S.

I am enclosing a check... I have just received from the international Holocaust era insurance claims. I can't think of a more worthwhile organization than HFBA...the time also corresponding with my husband's *yahrzeit*...I wish you well and the best of luck to you...

C.K.

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

Volunteers at Silver Lake Cemetery

This past spring, nearly a dozen members from a **UJA Federation of New York Young Leadership TAG group** (*Torah, Avodah, Gemilut Chasadim*) visited our cemetery to rake, clean and clear debris. Members of the group, professionals in their twenties and thirties, were impressed by the history of the organization and many remarked that this effort was the most meaningful volunteer work they had done to date.



UJA-Federation of New York TAG Group
at Silver Lake Cemetery.

Arielle Gindea, a freshman at **HAFTR High School** on Long Island, did a remarkable job organizing a large group of students to volunteer at the cemetery on a Sunday morning. A week prior to the visit, she invited HFBA Executive Director Amy Koplow to come to school and tell



Volunteers from HAFTR High School
working at Silver Lake Cemetery.

the students about *chesed shel emet* (the ultimate act of lovingkindness) and the work done by HFBA. The teens worked vigorously for over two hours in the rain and drizzle.

The freshman class of **TABC** (New Jersey) came to the cemetery, rolled up their sleeves and got to work. After learning about *chesed shel emet* (the ultimate act of lovingkindness), they embraced their task with dedication and enthusiasm and spent several hours cleaning around the graves.

If you would like to arrange to volunteer at our cemeteries, please call Amy Koplow at (212) 239-1662.

Teaching Us

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(Lamm, *ibid.*). Surely the lovingkindness with which a body is treated should be equal to, if not be exceeded by, the lovingkindness accorded the living. This lovingkindness, Rav Kook believed, is not only motivated by human empathy and com-

passion, but by a belief that it is mandated by God and His Torah.

The *chesed* (lovingkindness) with which Jews bury their dead teaches us that the ultimate act of *chesed* is not necessarily how we treat the dead, but how we treat the living—with respect and dignity regardless of their accomplishments, belief systems or lifestyles.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

"Хэсэд" в переводе с иврита обозначает милосердие.

Еврейское отношение к жизни и смерти

Согласно иудаизму, перед лицом смерти все равны. Каждый человек заслуживает уважения независимо от его достижений при жизни: социального статуса, финансового положения или степени религиозности. Достоинство человека не определяется общепринятыми критериями успеха или нашими личными стереотипами. Отношение к смерти в значительной степени влияет и на наше отношение к жизни. Эти традиции учат нас, что уважительное отношение к людям, независимо от их положения в обществе, и есть наивысшее проявление милосердия.

Помощь HFBA: из наших архивов

Когда **Peter R.** узнал о том, что его мать была похоронена на общегородском кладбище Potter's Field, он обратился к нам за помощью. Она страдала тяжелой шизофренией и давно прервала отношения с сыном. Мы помогли ему получить разрешение на перезахоронение матери на нашем еврейском кладбище Mt. Richmond.

Борис Г. лечился от наркомании. Его любили и уважали пациенты и сотрудники лечебницы, в которой он жил. К сожалению, он трагически умер от передозировки. Почтить память друга на его похороны пришли пятьдесят человек. Его вспоминали как прекрасного человека и хорошего отца.

Ветеран Вьетнамской войны **Роберт С.** был бездомным. Его дом был уничтожен пожаром, в котором погибли его жена и дочь. Жители района хорошо к нему относились и помогали чем могли. Так и не оправившись от нервного срыва, он отказывался от помощи врачей. После его внезапной смерти мы помогли жителям района организовать еврейскую мемориальную службу, на которую прибыли более ста человек.

Организация HFBA проследила, чтобы всем были оказаны почтительные, традиционные еврейские похороны.

Нашим благотворителям

С 1888 года наша организация захоронила десятки тысяч неимущих евреев, у которых не было родственников или друзей, чтобы организовать или оплатить похороны. Члены семьи, знакомые умерших, правительственные учреждения и сотрудники больниц и домов для престарелых обращаются к нам за помощью и советом. Мы следуем традиционному еврейскому обряду захоронения, включая омовение (*тахара*), облачение покойного в особые одежды (*тахрихим*) и, обязательно, прочтение молитв нашим раввином. Мы также оказываем моральную поддержку скорбящим родным и близким.

Наше агентство является единственным в районе Большого Нью-Йорка, выполняющим эту необходимую работу. Мы благодарим вас, наших спонсоров, за пожертвования.

We are pleased to announce that the following names have been added to our *Leave Your Mark* Donor Plaque in the Weinberg Chapel at Mount Richmond Cemetery:

HATALIE A. FILLER

MORRIS GOLDSTEIN

GAIL H. GOODMAN

JACKIE HERBST

JEFFREY KATZ

NECHAMA KELLERMAN

HERBERT LASKY

DR. JACOB and MRS. RUTH LEBOWITZ

ANDREW LEVY

ABRAHAM MASLIANSKY

ANNA L. SHEREFF

ALFRED TEITELBAUM

ROSE ULLMAN

ALAN M. BAXTER, SON

TO HONOR THE MEMORY OF
BEATRICE AND EMANUEL BAXTER

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MY PARENTS,
HERMAN AND DOROTHY FROGEL

NANCY SCHOLEM,
IN LOVING MEMORY OF ADOLF & REZIN STERN

IN MEMORY OF MILTON BLANK

IN MEMORY OF ASHLEY BOTNICK
BELOVED FATHER OF MARC, ERIC AND ALEC

IN MEMORY OF MR. AARON "BUDDY" GOTTLOEB

IN MEMORY OF MRS. NANCY KAY GOTTLOEB

IN MEMORY OF ARTHUR F. PAGELSON, 1917-2004

IN MEMORY OF DR. PHILLIP WILNER

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

Chesed Shel Emet — How You Can Help

- **Place** HFBA *Atzedakah* 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.**