

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 metropolitan area dedicated to assuring that every Jew, regardless of financial means or religious affiliation, receives a dignified, traditional Jewish funeral and burial.

חברת
אגודת
אחים חסידים של אמת
The Hebrew
Free Burial
ASSOCIATION

Chesed

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THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION was formed in 1888 on Manhattan's Lower East Side by a group of philanthropic and community-minded Jews who were committed to burying their indigent dead according to Jewish tradition, rather than having them buried in a mass grave in Potter's Field. Since its inception HFBA has interred nearly 60,000 Jews in its two cemeteries. HFBA is also committed to retrieving the identities of those interred and is attempting to provide a gravestone for each unmarked grave.

For more information about how you can help please see page 8.

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THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Renée Septimus, Editor

Adam Rawson, Graphic Designer

224 WEST 35TH STREET, ROOM 300

NEW YORK, NY 10001

PHONE: (212) 239-1662

FAX: (212) 239-1981

EMAIL: INFO@HEBREWFREEBURIAL.ORG

WEB: WWW.HEBREWFREEBURIAL.ORG

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REMEMBERING A YAHRZEIT

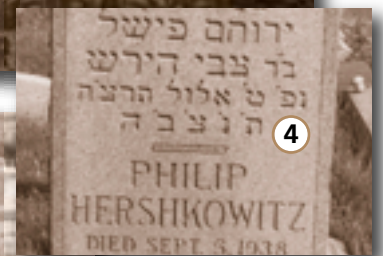
Y*ahrzeit* refers to the ancient custom of annually commemorating the day of the death of a loved one, particularly a parent. This anniversary has inspired the development of various customs which include fasting, contemplating the legacy of the deceased, lighting a commemorative candle in the home, studying Torah, giving charity, visiting the cemetery and saying *kaddish*. Rabbi Maurice Lamm notes that "tradition regards this day [*yahrzeit*] as commemorative of both the enormous tragedy of death and the abiding glory of the parental heritage" (*The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*).

If you need help ascertaining the day of a *yahrzeit* according to the Hebrew calendar, and if you would like a yearly reminder of when that day falls, HFBA can help you. Please inquire with the HFBA staff (212-239-1662).



JEWISH CEMETERY SYMBOLS

- > A grave stone in the shape of a tree trunk often marks the grave of someone who died young. (pic. 1)
- > A stone decorated with hands held as during the priestly blessing indicates the grave of a *kohein* (one belonging to the priestly class.) (pic. 2)
- > A stone decorated with a hand holding a pitcher indicates the grave of a Levite. The Levites washed the hands of the priests prior to rituals in the Temple. They still do so prior to the priestly blessing recited several times a year in the synagogue.
- > A ball is a symbol of the cycle of life. (pic. 3)
- > Five Hebrew letters ה, ה, ב, צ, נ are an acronym for the Hebrew phrase translated as “may his/her life be bound with bonds of life.” (pic. 4)
- > An urn, or container, symbolizes the body as a vessel of the soul.
- > The Hebrew letters ה, ה stand for “here lies...” (pic. 5)
- > A lamb signifies the grave of a baby or young child. (pic. 6)



Q&A

Q: The economy is terrible and philanthropic funds are severely limited.

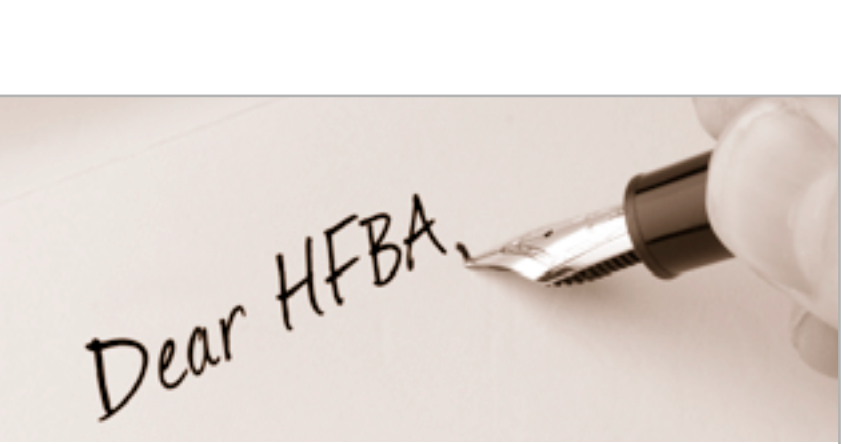
Shouldn't members of the Jewish community give charity to help the living, rather than concern themselves with the Jewish dead?

A: Jewish tradition mandates caring for the dead to be as important as caring for the living. When a new community of Jews is formed, land is immediately set

aside for a *mikvah* (ritual bath) and for a cemetery. A human corpse is treated with the same respect and dignity as a living human being, both serving as vessels for the eternal soul. Jewish burial practices and cemeteries ensure the future of the Jewish community as do synagogues, community centers and Jewish educational institutions.

The Jewish community can proudly point to its many organizations which help the needy. Further safety nets are provided by governmental and private agencies. However, HFBA is unique in its mission and task. It is the ONLY organization in the tri-state area which will assume the responsibility of burying any Jew, no matter how poor or estranged from Judaism. Rather than allowing our Jewish sisters and brothers to rest in mass graves in potter's fields, each and every HFBA client is buried with the full and equal dignity of Jewish funeral rites.

If past generations of Jews managed to ensure Jewish continuity during life and during death, surely we, the most privileged generation, living in a free society, should be able to do so as well. *Tzedakah* (charity) must be directed to all needs of the Jewish community, both in life and in death.



Dear HFBA,

Susan Kennedy wrote to us after HFBA buried Frederick, her uncle and the subject of the following narrative:*

Two Jewish brothers, Harry, age 13, and Frederick, age 19, left their home in Vienna in 1938. Harry reached England via the *kinderttransport* while Frederick found refuge in Vatican City until he had to flee to Switzerland. Although Harry later fought for the Allies and married in England, his life deteriorated as he embarked on a life of crime.

After many years of having no contact with his brother, Harry received word in 1993 that Frederick, now in New York, was looking for him. Harry managed to track down a social worker at a daycare facility for the homeless and mentally ill in Manhattan. He was told that his brother, tormented by his past, had a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia and was homeless. Over the next several years, the brothers occasionally spoke by phone. One day Harry received a call from the social worker. Frederick was ill with cancer and had only a short time to live.

Because Harry was unable to go himself, his daughter Susan went on her father's behalf. Despite her best efforts, Frederick cancelled and postponed several meetings. Finally, despite his anxiety, he agreed to see her.

Although his left eye had been poked out in a fight and he had few remaining teeth, he still looked like the elderly Viennese gentleman he was. Susan was surprised by his uncanny resemblance to her father — his looks, mannerisms, and shy vulnerability. They spent several days together.

At their last meeting, Frederick opened his coat and took out a bunch of yellowed documents. They included some old banking statements, his Austrian passport and some money. He poignantly told Susan that they were all for her "because (you) are the only member of (my) family I'll ever see."

**Names have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals described.*

My father, Victor H. was orphaned at an early age and rarely spoke of his parents. When he died...he took with him whatever knowledge existed of that part of our ancestry.*

Recently...our...family had the opportunity to spend time with...our cousin Jack H. who ...opened a long sealed box of mementos handed down from his great-aunt and father. He found a burial notice of Ben H., our grandfather, who was buried at Mt. Richmond Cemetery in 1938.

...you confirmed his burial...(and) also told us the circumstances of his burial, the eventual marking of the originally unmarked grave through philanthropy and the exact location of the grave. My mother...brother and his wife...and their granddaughter Carrie visited the grave and it was a very touching moment for all of us. For the first time in our lives we had some exposure to Ben H....(T)he fifth generation, Carrie (age 6 months), was photographed there along with us and the sentiments were very moving....

On behalf of the H. family we enclose a donation to HFBA to be used toward the marking of other graves of indigent deceased persons...

M.H.

Our family is so appreciative of what you have done to help us provide Lucy F. with a Jewish funeral...It wasn't until your association was referred to us...that we knew Lucy would be buried as the loving Jewish woman she was...Rabbi Shmuel Plafker conducted a funeral service that spoke to the needs of Lucy's family, her caregivers and her friends, many of whom are elderly women from diverse faiths who are also mentally retarded. Lucy's friends understood what the Rabbi told them. He touched their hearts with his deep respect for Judaism, life, Lucy's life and their lives... we will never forget your kindness.*

I have read on your website that it is possible to donate to your fund to support the placement of a grave marker on unmarked graves. My husband and I wish to do this and will send our donation...

E.J.

The New York Times

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009

On Staten Island, a Jewish Cemetery Where All Are Equals in Death

By Jim Dwyer

Two shovels were planted in the mound next to the open mouth of the grave. “For those of you who don’t know about this,” said the rabbi, Shmuel Plafker, “let me show you.”

He lifted the first pile of dirt with the back of the shovel. “To symbolize that we really don’t want to do this,” Rabbi Plafker said.

It was a perfect early spring day: acres of blue sky, the lightest of breezes moving past the graves of Mount Richmond Cemetery on Staten Island. Here, 55,000 Jews are buried in plots owned by the Hebrew Free Burial Association.

These are the graves of the poor, which, under Judaic law, do not differ from those of the rich. The ritual of burial is a rope across time: families who lived a century ago at 108 Orchard Street on the Lower East Side — now known as the Tenement Museum — are buried at Mount Richmond. The maternal grandparents of Mel Brooks are down one row. In another corner are 23 of the girls and boys who were killed in the Triangle shirtwaist factory fire in 1911.



Rabbi Shmuel Plafker at a funeral service for Jeffrey Lynn Schneider at a plot owned by the Hebrew Free Burial Association on Staten Island. Mr. Schneider, 54, died by his own hand weeks ago in Midwood, Brooklyn.

On Tuesday afternoon, in Section 35, it was the time to lay Jeffrey Lynn Schneider to rest, in a box of raw pine, the lid barely held on with three wooden pegs.

As the rabbi worked, a man named Stanley Weinstein, a cousin of Mr. Schneider’s, picked up another shovel and pushed earth into the hole. A spray of cousins and friends stood around the

Kirsten Luce for The New York Times

grave, a dozen or so, waiting their turn. After a minute of work, Mr. Weinstein drove the shovel back into the mound. “We don’t hand it off to the next person, to show that we don’t want to pass on death,” Rabbi Plafker said.

It was the rabbi’s third funeral of the day. At the first two, for elderly people, he and three men who work in the cemetery were the only people at the graveside. The rabbi said the prayers; the men performed the ritual with the shovels.

“We are the only friends all the time for poor people,” said Joe Shalem, the superintendent of the cemetery, nodding to the two gravediggers, Cesar Bustamante and Wilson Montes Deoca. The free burial society began in 1888, after the first waves of immigrants from Eastern Europe. The society



Kirsten Luce for The New York Times

In Mount Richmond Cemetery, 55,000 Jews are buried in plots owned by the Hebrew Free Burial Association.

bought the 23 acres on Staten Island and began burials at Mount Richmond in March 1909. The aim is to provide traditional Jewish burials to people who cannot afford them, said Amy Koplow, the society’s executive director.

The thumps hitting the pine box became more muffled as the mourners piled dirt upon dirt. The first person of Creation, Rabbi Plafker said, was Adam, whose name comes from the Hebrew word “adamah,” meaning the ground. Thus, he said, the body is returned to the earth as it came, washed and wrapped in a shroud with no pockets.

Mr. Schneider was 54. He grew up on East 17th Street in Midwood, Brooklyn, a bright boy who went to a yeshiva and then Stuyvesant High School, mastering chess and backgammon. “He would prefer to read than go out to a restaurant,” said Carol Metrick, a cousin who as a child lived in the same house as Mr. Schneider. He went to the University of Arizona but gave it up after a freak snowstorm.

For a while, he worked on the crews of television shows. He ran a car service. He owned homes in Rockland County, but sold them under financial pressure. He had girlfriends but never married, Ms. Metrick said, and seemed easygoing at family gatherings. Physical ailments led to a hermetic existence, the family said.

“He had disk problems of some sort, which isolated him from a lot of things,” Mr. Weinstein said. “I’d call him on the holidays, I’d offer to take him out to dinner. He said he couldn’t because his back hurt.”

His parents died nine years ago. He moved back to Midwood around 2004, with no apparent source of income. By February, he faced a Housing Court judgment of \$24,000, Mr. Weinstein said, and told a friend he was going upstate.

Instead, he drove back to 17th Street, parked across the street from his boyhood home, got in the back seat under a blanket, and shot himself in the head. His sister tried to track him down and Mr. Weinstein filed a missing person’s report. Six weeks of parking tickets were stuck on the windshield when his body was found last Thursday.

The rabbi recited a prayer. The family members, clasping each other, walked to the cars. Mr. Shalem and his gravediggers filled the hole, then raked the ground to smooth it.

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WE THANK OUR VOLUNTEERS...

Sunday, April 26th dawned bright and clear and our annual **Community Chesed Day** to clean and clear Silver Lake Cemetery was a success! Many thanks to volunteers from Staten Island, Long Island, Brooklyn, Queens and New Jersey!

We also thank groups from Solomon Schechter School of Westchester (12th Grade), Congregation Beth Abraham (Bergenfield, NJ), Oheb Shalom Congregation Men's Club (S. Orange, NJ), Temple Emanu-El Mitzvah Corps (NYC), SAR High School (9th grade group), Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey (8th grade), and Yavneh Academy (Paramus, NJ) for volunteering during the last several months.

Please consider giving some of your valuable time for this mitzvah of maintaining the dignity of the departed members of the Jewish community. *(For information, please call the HFBA office 212-239-1662.)*



Oheb Shalom Congregation Men's Club
(S. Orange, NJ)



Congregation Beth Abraham
(Bergenfield, NJ)



Temple Emanu-El Mitzvah Corps
(New York, NY)



Solomon Schechter School
of Westchester

Veterans Buried at HFBA's Mt. Richmond Cemetery are Remembered on Memorial Day, 2009



STAY CONNECTED!

If you would like to sign up for HFBA's e-Newsletter, or if you'd like to receive a copy of our DVD, please send an e-mail to info@hebrewfreeburial.org. To become a fan of HFBA on Facebook, please follow the link on our website.



РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

Поминовение усопших

Йорцайт – это древний еврейский обычай поминовения близких, в особенности родителей, в годовщину их смерти. С этой годовщиной связаны многочисленные обряды, такие как соблюдение поста, зажигание поминальных свечей, изучение духовного наследия ушедших близких, чтение Торы, щедрое пожертвование, посещение кладбища и чтение поминальной молитвы Кадиш. Так, раввин Морис Ламм отмечает: “Традиция рассматривает день *йорцайт* как память о величайшей трагедии, и в то же время о непреходящести славного родительского наследия” (по книге “Смерть и траур в иудаизме”).

Если Вам нужна помощь в установлении точной даты *йорцайт* по еврейскому календарю, и если Вы хотели бы получать напоминание о том, когда эта дата выпадает в каждом следующем году, организация HFBA сможет Вам помочь. Пожалуйста, позвоните нам по телефону (212) 239-1662.

Вопросы и ответы

Вопрос: Нынешняя экономика в плачевном состоянии, что резко ограничивает возможности благотворительных фондов. Не следует ли еврейским общинам помогать в первую очередь ныне живущим, а не тем, кто уже перешел в мир иной?

Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) отвечает:

Еврейская традиция предписывает, что забота об усопших не менее важна, чем забота о живущих. Так, когда создаётся новая еврейская община, она немедленно выделяет землю под микву (помещение для ритуальных омовений) и под кладбище. Телу умершего оказывается такое же уважение, как и живому человеку, ибо и то и другое –местилище души. Еврейские кладбища и погребальные традиции обеспечивают будущее общины в не меньшей степени, чем синагоги, общинные центры и еврейские образовательные учреждения.

Любая еврейская община может гордиться своими учреждениями для нуждающихся. Социальную помощь также оказывают многочисленные государственные и частные организации. Однако, на этом фоне миссия HFBA уникальна. Это – ЕДИНСТВЕННАЯ организация в районе Большого Нью-Йорка (штаты Нью-Йорк, Нью-Джерси и Коннектикут), которая берёт на себя погребение любого еврея, независимо от его финансового положения и религиозности. Мы не должны допустить, чтобы наши еврейские соплеменники покоились в безвестных массовых захоронениях. Каждый клиент HFBA будет похоронен с достоинством и в соответствии с еврейской погребальной традицией.

Уж если прошлые поколения евреев смогли обеспечить преемственность традиции по отношению как к живым, так и к усопшим, то наше привилегированное поколение, живущее в условиях свободного общества, наверняка сможет сделать не меньше. *Цедака* (еврейская благотворительность) должна

направляться на все нужды еврейской общины, связанные как с живущими, так и с умершими.

Символика на еврейском кладбище

- Надгробный камень в форме пня дерева часто ставят на могилу человека, умершего молодым.
- Камень, украшенный изображением благославляющих рук, обычно отмечает могилу *коэна* (т.е. человека из колена священников).
- Камень, украшенный изображением руки, держащей сосуд для омовения, ставят на могиле *левита*, поскольку во времена Храма именно левиты совершали омовение рук священникам перед храмовой службой. Левиты делают это и в наши дни, в синагогах, перед тем как *коэны* произносят особое священническое благословение во время праздников.
- Шар символизирует жизненный круг.
- Пять дрееврейских букв ,ן ,ד ,י ,ל - это сокращение фразы на иврите: “да будет его (её) душа привязана связями жизни”
- Урна или иной погребальный сосуд символизируют тело как вместилище для души.
- Древнееврейские буквы ,ד ,י означают “здесь покоится...”
- Изображением ягнёнка отмечают могилу ребёнка или младенца.

Из нашей почты

Мой отец, Виктор Х, осиротел в раннем возрасте, и поэтому почти никогда не говорил о своих родителях. С его смертью ... исчезли те крупницы знаний, которые связывали нас с нашими предками.*

Недавно ... у нашей семьи появилась возможность провести время с нашим родственником Джеком Х. который распечатал при нас ящик с бумагами, доставшийся ему от тётки его отца. Он выудил оттуда свидетельство о погребении нашего с ним общего деда, Бена Х. в 1938-м году, на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд.

Ваша организация подтвердила факт захоронения и ... сообщила нам точное местонахождение могилы, которая сначала не была помечена, и позволяющие найти могилу отметки, а позже установлен памятник на благотворительные средства. Мои мать, ... брат с женой ... и их внучка Кэрри посетили могилу, и для всех нас это был особенный момент. Впервые в жизни мы могли соприкоснуться с жизнью Бена Х. ... Мы сфотографировались вместе с представительницей пятого поколения его потомства, шестимесячной Кэрри, и это было очень трогательно.

От имени семьи Х. мы прилагаем пожертвование на имя HFBA, на цели установления памятников на безымянных могилах.

М.Х.

* имена изменены

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:

JCC OF MANHATTAN GENERATION R

THOMAS H. MAUPIN

RACHEL RENDEL

JEROME AND MARTHA STEINHART

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 establishment.

CELEBRATE a *simcha* or commemorate a loss with HFBA cards. Cards cost \$15 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 and receive a generous tax deduction.

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 to include HFBA in your will with a bequest.

CONTRIBUTE to HFBA to ensure an annual *Yahrzeit* reminder for your lost loved ones.

“LEAVE YOUR MARK” by sponsoring a grave marker for an unmarked grave for a donation of

\$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 Mount Richmond Cemetery.

ARRANGE for *kaddish* to be said for the eleven month mourning period following a death of a relative or friend for a donation of \$360.

INSTITUTE a perpetual *Yahrzeit Kaddish* for your loved one for a donation of \$180.

SPONSOR perpetual grave care for an indigent’s grave for \$600.

VOLUNTEER with your friends, classmates, fellow group members, or family at our cemeteries as part of our Cemetery Clean-Up Project.

GIVE us your old *talleisim* for use as part of the dress for deceased men who HFBA will be called upon to bury.

USE your clerical skills in our midtown office as a volunteer.

GET INVOLVED as a professional with HFBA by donating your expertise and skills in an area that can help us.



Original pushka from 1909 at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery

PLEASE HELP OUT TODAY BY SENDING A DONATION IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.