

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.

התורה אומרת חסד של אמת
The Hebrew Free Burial Association

Chesed

VOLUME 13, NUMBER 3 • PESACH 2007 / NISAN 5767

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 6.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bryan Alter, Esq.
Herbert Block
Andrew Feinman
Jack M. Gross
Andrea Harris
Ari Kadish
Gary Katz
Andrew Levy
Howard W. Millendorf
Richard Miller
Yitzhak Pastreich
Minna Monte Seitelman, Esq.
Fred Sugarman
Jack Weiss, Esq.
Daniel Werlin

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Elliot P. Gibber
Maurice S. Spanbock, Esq.

RABBINIC ADVISORY BOARD

Rabbi Moshe Fuchs
Rabbi Moshe Gottesman
Rabbi Jonathan Rosenblatt
Rabbi Elchonon Zohn

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Amy Koplow

CEMETERY CHAPLAIN

Rabbi Shmuel Plafker

CHESED IS PUBLISHED BY 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

MOURNING NEW YORK'S HOMELESS AND UNCLAIMED DEAD

The New York Times City Section of November 12, 2006 highlighted the plight of New York City's homeless upon their death. Since the 1870's, approximately 800,000 of "the poor, the unknown and the unclaimed" have been buried by prison inmates in Potter's Field on Hart Island, east of the Bronx. They are "New York's lost and abandoned, the people whose burial there underscores the powerlessness they bore in life."

The typical road to this end, reported the Times, begins with an unidentified body at the city's morgue. Photographs, fingerprints, dental x-rays and, at times, blood for DNA are collected in an effort to identify the deceased. If no one claims the body, or if it remains unidentified, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene issues a permit to have the body interred in a mass grave in Potter's Field. It sometimes happens that the body is identified well after burial and if, at that time, members or friends want to pay their respects, substantial bureaucratic hurdles exist. Special permission from the Department of Corrections to visit Hart Island must be obtained, as it is not open to the public. The island is accessible only through prior arrangement by ferry. Access to burial records and visitation rights are procured only through the prison system after the death certificate is received from the Department of Health. Only recently, at the initiative of a group called "Picture the Homeless," has a monthly memorial service been held with members of the clergy of different faiths, to dignify the passing of a human soul.

The Hebrew Free Burial Association exists precisely to prevent the

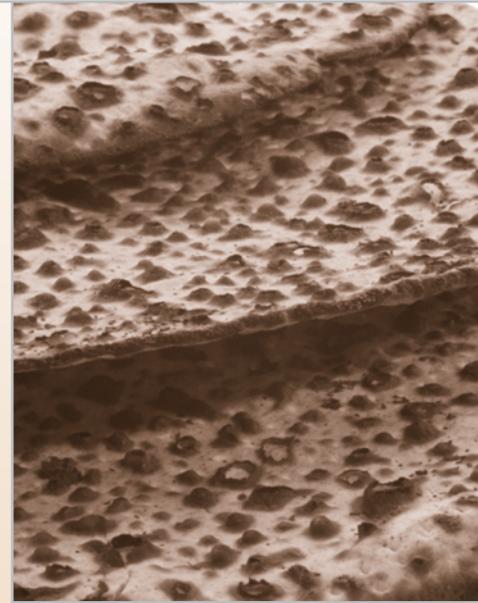
THOUGHTS FOR PESACH

Although he is never mentioned in the *Haggaddah*, Moses' presence hovers over the *seder*. The leader of the Jewish people, the penultimate prophet, Moses was G-d's partner, so to speak, in the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. And the description of his death, at the end of the book of Deuteronomy, is one of the most poignant scenes in the entire biblical canon.

After being told by G-d that he would not enter the Promised Land, after blessing the tribes and appointing Joshua as his successor, Moses climbed to the top of Mount Nevo. He surveyed the land promised to his ancestors, and the Torah tells us that "his eyes were not dim nor his natural force abated" when he died at the age of 120 years. The *Midrash* remarks that he died "with the kiss of G-d" and it is common to wish people a life of "120 years" recalling Moses' life span. Although he was denied the privilege of leading his people into the Land of Canaan, Moses certainly had an enviable death after a very long, full life.

Although no one can choose, plan or foretell their own end, we would all wish for a death such as Moses'. Although his grave is purposely left unknown, his memory is revered and blessed.

HFBA helps those whose deaths are unrecognized, whose lives are unremarkable to anyone but themselves, but who, nonetheless, were part of the brotherhood of man. Each of us, no matter how we live our lives, no matter how we die, deserves the dignity of a Jewish funeral and burial with, we hope, "the kiss of G-d" after 120 years.



NEW YORK'S HOMELESS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

scenario described above. When a case is referred to us, we verify the religious affiliation of the deceased and apply to the Public Administrator for permission to bury the unclaimed body. It is cleansed, purified and shrouded by the *chevra kadisha* (burial society), tenderly placed in a coffin and then in an individual grave in HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery. The burial is attended by HFBA's rabbi who conducts the same services for paupers as he would for princes. Grave locations are recorded and our efforts to mark each grave continue. No burial is anonymous, friends can visit to pay respects to the deceased, and although they may have been isolated and forgotten in life, in death these departed rest in peace and dignity surrounded by their Jewish brethren.

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.

HFBA HELPS



The three L. brothers lived in Hungary with their parents until the outbreak of World War II when the oldest, M.L., arranged for entry into the United States for his younger siblings. Their parents were killed but M.L. managed to survive imprisonment by the Nazis and escaped, ultimately arriving in New York. The three brothers were unable to live the “American dream” and the two younger men were eventually buried by their older brother and HFBA.

R.K. lived with his mother, a Holocaust survivor, who was buried by HFBA upon her death. Unable to support himself and suffering from severe depression, R.K. committed suicide and was buried by HFBA near his mother.

S.M., a 51-year old mother of two, was found deceased by her 17-year old son at home, upon his return from school. Her husband was living in a nursing home, incapacitated by Parkinson’s Disease. Her 20-year old daughter, also a student, knew that HFBA had previously buried a great-aunt and she called us immediately. To the children’s relief, our office staff took over and the children received some comfort from the presence of many of their mother’s co-workers at her funeral.

Although G.S. was homeless, he frequented a synagogue in Queens. When he died, the rabbi of the synagogue identified him and called HFBA to arrange for the funeral. A daughter, who had never really known her father and who was going through a divorce at the time, was unable to help with any financial arrangements. She did not attend the funeral.

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:



HENRY ABOODI

RUTH ADISE

DR. MICHAEL AND BARBARA AXELROD

THE CALO FAMILY

DR. JEFFREY FELDMAN

PHILLIP FRIEDMAN

MICHAEL GOLDSMITH

COL. MARK L. HAIMAN, USMC (RET.)

STEVEN AND CHANI LAUFER

DR. DAVID L. LERNER

ESTHER MUIRHEAD

RISA AND JEFF PULVER

MIMI AND WALTER ROSENBLATT

EZRA AND NICOLE SOLOMON

PAUL M. AND CHAYA TRENK

*PLEASE CONSIDER ADDING YOUR NAME
BY SPONSORING FOUR GRAVE MARKERS
FOR UNMARKED GRAVES FOR \$600.*

FROM THE MAILBAG



“...I enclose two money orders to pay for [my eventual burial]. Last year I thought I don’t need a grave marker because I have nobody who will come visit me in the cemetery but I did change my mind...no Jewish person (should) be buried in an unmarked grave... Enough that 6 million have no headstones...and I survived (the concentration camp)...(A)fter the open heart surgery I had time to save the money...Please let me know which one of the cemeteries will be my resting place. I would like to know...For the Rabbi, in Hebrew, ...ask God to forgive me for everything what I did and were not good (*sic*)...and (say) the *kaddish*... Nothing else- no English speech... pray for the dead... Forgive me for this long terrible letter but my heart fills with sad memories and I have nobody I can tell why I am sad. I am the one who was in a concentration camp by Hitler and they told me to forget it, it was a long time ago!! God bless all of you who care for us who has (*sic*) nobody and supervise everything and we can get a real Jewish burial. We will not ‘rest’ in a hole somewhere...” *M.M.*

An inquiry from Ruth Frank led our staff to our micro-film archive which lists burial applications dating from 1889. When Sara*, Mrs. Frank’s great-grandmother, died in 1936 at the age of 68, her daughter Rachel* applied to HFBA for assistance.*

Ruth Frank wrote, “...When I was finally able to visit my great-grandmother’s grave a few weeks ago, I had an immediate sense that my grandmother had been there. You can’t imagine how happy I am to learn that that my beloved grandmother, who always claimed to have been completely estranged from her family, was the one who buried (her mother) with your help...It’s interesting that sometimes people you benefit, such as in this case, might be future generations who are so relieved that you took care of their family members when no one else could. So the work you do today, as in my case, may be not only a mitzvah of the moment, but also delivering a very important moment of reconnection and reconciliation...”

**Names changed to protect the identity of the correspondent and her family*

THANK YOU

Thank you to all who attended and supported HFBA’s West Side *Siyum Mishnayot* on December 10, 2006, held in memory of Mrs. Bella Weiss *o”h*, beloved mother of HFBA Board member Jack Weiss.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

Некоторые мысли в преддверии праздника Песах

В пасхальной *Хагаде* имя Моисея не упоминается ни разу, но его присутствие среди нас во время *сейдера* неоспоримо. Моисей был вождем еврейского народа, величайшим пророком и «помощником» Вс-вышнего, который вывел евреев из Египта. Описание смерти Моисея в последней части Второзакония является одним из самых волнующих повествований Библии.

Вс-вышний сказал Моисею, что тот никогда не войдет в Землю Обетованную, после чего Моисей благословил еврейский народ, назначил Йегошуа своим преемником и взшел на гору Нево, откуда он увидел землю, обещанную праотцам. Тора повествует, что когда Моисей умер в возрасте 120 лет, «его глаз был зорок и он был полон жизненных сил». В Мидраше отмечается, что смерть его была «поцелуем Вс-вышнего»; поэтому еврейской традицией является пожелание «дожить до 120 лет», как Моисей. Несмотря на то, что Моисей был лишен чести войти во главе своего народа в Землю Обетованную, он умер смертью, которой можно только позавидовать.

Пусть мы не можем предсказать или планировать свою кончину, мы все хотели бы умереть как умер Моисей. Волей Вс-вышнего, место его захоронения неизвестно, но мы чтим память о нем, и имя его благословенно.

Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро помогает тем, чья смерть остается незамеченной, чья жизнь была ничем не примечательна; тем не менее эти люди были частью нашей общины в узком и широком смысле этого слова. Все мы, независимо от того, как мы прожили нашу жизнь и как мы умрем, дожив до 120 лет и надеясь, что наша смерть будет «поцелуем Вс-вышнего», заслуживаем достойных похорон в соответствии с еврейской традицией.

Помощь Еврейского Благотворительного Похоронного Бюро HFBA

- Три брата Л. жили с родителями в Венгрии. Когда началась Вторая Мировая Война старший брат М.Л. смог организовать отъезд своих младших братьев в США. Родители братьев погибли, а М.Л. выжил в концлагере и по окончании войны добрался до Нью-Йорка. Жизнь братьев не стала воплощением американской мечты, и младшие братья были похоронены старшим при помощи, оказанной Еврейским Благотворительным Похоронным Бюро.
- С.М., 51 года, мать двоих детей и жена больного, страдающего болезнью Паркинсона и живущего в доме для инвалидов и престарелых, скоропостижно умерла дома и была найдена 17-летним сыном, вернувшимся из школы. Ее старшая дочь, 20-летняя студентка колледжа, позвонила нам немедленно, зная, что мы ранее похоронили сестру ее бабушки. Наши сотрудники помогли двум сиротам, организовав похороны С.М., на которые пришли десятки ее сотрудников.

Из нашей почты

Я высылаю вам два почтовых перевода на оплату [моих похорон]. Ранее я думал, что мне не нужен памятник, поскольку у меня никого нет, кто пришел бы ко мне на могилу. Но теперь я решил, что... ни один еврей не должен лежать в могиле, на которой нет памятника... Достаточно того, что 6 миллионов не имеют надгробий... а я выжил (в концлагере)... Прошу прощения за это длинное письмо, но мое сердце переполнено трагическими воспоминаниями, и у меня нет никого, с кем бы я мог ими поделиться. Я был в гитлеровском концлагере, а мне говорят забыть об этом потому, что это было давно!! Да благословит Г-сподь Вас и всех, кто заботится (*дословно*) о таких одиноких, как я, и кто следит за всем и обеспечивает нам настоящие еврейские похороны. Нас не похоронят где попало... М.М.

Скорбя о скончавшихся нью-йоркских бездомных и «невостребованных» покойных

Статья от 12 ноября 2006 в городском разделе газеты *Нью-Йорк Таймс* рассказывает о том, что происходит с умершими бездомными. За последние 137 лет 800000 малоимущих и «невостребованных» было похоронено заключенными на Городском кладбище.

Как рассказывается в статье, начинается этот скорбный путь с того, что в городском морге находятся покойные, личность которых не установлена. Сотрудники морга делают фотографии покойных, снимки их зубов, берут отпечатки пальцев, образцы крови для определения ДНК. Если личность покойного все же не удается установить, либо никто «не востребует» тело, Департамент Здравоохранения выдает разрешение на захоронение тела на Городском кладбище в общей безымянной могиле. Если кто-либо захочет посетить могилу, он столкнется со значительными бюрократическими преградами, поскольку управление кладбищем осуществляет Департамент Исправительных Учреждений и оно закрыто для посещений. Лишь недавно, по инициативе группы «Picture the Homeless» там начали проводиться мемориальные службы.

Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро существует именно для того, чтобы одинокие и бездомные могли избежать такой участи. Всех тех, о кончине которых нам сообщили, мы хороним, соблюдая традиционные еврейские ритуалы погребения. На могилах устанавливаются небольшие временные таблички; друзья могут посетить захоронения и отдать последнюю дань уважения. Хотя эти люди жили одиноко и уединенно, они нашли место упокоения среди своих еврейских братьев.

Уборка кладбища Силвер Лейк

Приглашаем Вас принять участие (вместе с другими добровольцами) в уборке нашего исторического кладбища Силвер Лейк, которая состоится 22 апреля 2007 в 10 ч. Для этого Вам не нужны специальные навыки, лишь желание, засучив рукава, поработать на благое дело (*chesed*)! Для дополнительной информации звоните Эми Коплоу по телефону 212-239-1662. Надеемся на Вашу помощь!

UPCOMING EVENTS



The annual HFBA Riverdale breakfast will be held on April 22, 2007 at 9:30 AM at the Riverdale Jewish Center. Honorees include James and Ann Lapin. Riverdale's generous community-wide support for this yearly event is greatly appreciated!

CHESED DAY AT SILVER LAKE CEMETERY

Please join volunteers from around the NY metro area on April 22, 2007, at 10 AM as we do spring cleanup in our historic Silver Lake Cemetery (926 Victory Blvd., Staten Island, NY 10301). No special skills or training are needed—only the desire to roll up your sleeves, grab a rake, and do a good deed! For more information please call Amy Koplow—212-239-1662. We look forward to seeing you as part of our *chesed* team!

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 \$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 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 Mt. 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.