

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 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 “Mourner’s Kaddish”

Even Jews who are unfamiliar with the Jewish liturgy are aware of the “Mourner’s Kaddish.” Although the prayer itself is over 2,000 years old, it came to be associated with the mourning period only during the Middle Ages. Written in the vernacular of the time, rather than in Hebrew, the language of the liturgy, it was to be recited by scholar and layman alike, following the death of a relative.

*May His great name grow exalted and sanctified
 in the world that He created as He willed...*

Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, mighty...

May He give reign to His kingship...

May there be abundant peace from heaven...

(Translation: The Artscroll Siddur)

There are various explanations for why this litany of G-d’s holy attributes is to be said precisely at the time of loss. One reason given is that the *kaddish* honors the deceased by demonstrating that he has left behind a son who continues to be loyal to, and to praise, G-d. A related reason is that the *kaddish* is a request for the spiritual salvation of the deceased who deserves a good fate, having left behind a descendent who continues to sanctify the divine name. The most common explanation, one with psychological truth and the recognition of the prayer’s therapeutic value, is that the *kaddish* maintains the connection between the bereaved and G-d at a time when that connection may feel fragile because of anger and pain. As human





HFBA Thoughts for Chanukah

Among the many themes of the holiday of *Chanukah* are: liberation in the face of oppression, the victory of the few over the many, and the struggle against assimilation. The Syrian-Greeks forbade Jewish practice and even identification as a Jew was punishable by death. The miracle of *Chanukah* reminds us of G-d's involvement in our history and destiny and our obligation to "light our own candle" to illuminate the darkness of this world.

Identification as a Jew is important in death as well as in life. HFBA assures every Jew their last opportunity to identify with their people by arranging a Jewish funeral and burial among Jewish brethren. Help us "light candles," by participating in the mitzvah of *chesed shel emet* (acts of lovingkindness which can not be reciprocated) and make a donation to HFBA so that any and all Jews can identify themselves with Judaism even in death.

HFBA Helps: From Our Files

No matter how famous and well-regarded one may be in one's lifetime, in death one may be alone and forgotten. Two Russian poets, well known and celebrated in their homeland, died without relatives in the United States. Members of the staff from the hospitals in which each died called HFBA to arrange funerals and burials. This we did and although their souls are at rest, we are confident that their poetry lives on as their legacies.

Jacob Y., the 41-year old son of Russian immigrants, was an alcohol abuser who spent his last days in a nursing home. He had lost a leg after being hit by a car and was evicted from his apartment for non-payment of rent while recuperating in the hospital. He ultimately died of alcohol-related disease and his mother, who could not afford a funeral for him, called HFBA. We were able to give some comfort to Mrs. Y. by providing her son with a Jewish burial.

Morris S., who had been a World War II veteran and successful car salesman, used up his entire savings on his wife's medical care during her ultimately futile struggle with cancer.

He left no money and his only surviving relative, a nephew, authorized HFBA to arrange the funeral as he himself could not afford to. Ironically, Morris was buried on Veteran's Day.

Mrs. K. was an elderly Russian widow and registered nurse who had served in the Soviet army in World War II. She immigrated to New York in 1990 and her son immigrated to Israel at about the same time. As a nurse, she was well aware of end-of-life issues. She had signed a health care proxy expressing her desire not to have her life prolonged if she was in severe pain and poor health with no hope for survival. However, her proxy would not assume the responsibility of honoring Mrs. K.'s wishes and she died a slow, painful death. Her son avoided getting involved and her body lay in a morgue for three weeks. Finally, a distant cousin called HFBA and also convinced the son to allow the Public Administrator to take over. The PA gave the case to HFBA and Mrs. K., after a difficult life and death, was finally laid to rest. No one came to the funeral.

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Thank You to Our Volunteers



Students from Solomon Schechter School of Queens marking graves for grave care at Mt. Richmond Cemetery



The CIT's of JCC of Staten Island Lillian Schwartz Day Camp cleaning debris at Mt. Richmond Cemetery



Campers from Young Judaea's Camp Tel Yehudah spending 4 days clearing debris at Silver Lake Cemetery



Members of the Park Avenue Synagogue Men's Club cleaning at Silver Lake

*A special thanks to
Joseph Kamali and a
group of students from
North Shore Hebrew Academy
High School
for sorting mail and
inputting data at the HFBA office*



Can You Help HFBA... by Donating Your Time?

Volunteer opportunities with HFBA include maintaining our grounds by **cleaning and clearing** the debris in our cemeteries. Perhaps your synagogue, women's organization, men's club, JCC or school could organize a group to help out on a Sunday.

In our office, volunteers help **organize our records** as well as **do data entry, research** and **other clerical tasks**.

Driving visitors to the cemetery for funerals or to visit the graves of their friends or family members is a particularly important *mitzvah*.

Can HFBA Help You?

If you, or someone you know, cannot afford the cost of a Jewish burial, we are here to help.

We can make pre-need arrangements for those who are income eligible and concerned that there will be no one to arrange for their eventual Jewish burial.

If you suspect that HFBA might have buried a friend or relative, we can help you locate the information and the grave.

Links on our upcoming web site to other organizations will be able to help you with genealogical research, understanding rituals of Jewish death and mourning as well as educate and inform you about other services for the Jewish community.

The "Mourner's Kaddish"

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beings, as Jews, we may be angry at G-d, we may doubt His wisdom, feel brutalized by His actions, stand bereft at His seeming lack of mercy, yet we accept His sovereignty and glorify His holiness—even, and especially, when we are most fragile.

The *kaddish* is a profession of faith, asserting confidence in G-d's good judgment and praising G-d with whom one may have conflict or quarrel in the face of loss. It is a brief summary of our belief system- an affirmation of G-d's greatness, a recognition of the limitations of man's understanding, an expectation of ultimate redemption and a desire for peace.

The *kaddish* is to be recited three times daily, in the presence of a *minyán*, a quorum, because, as Anita Diamant remarks in *Saying Kaddish*, "Only with a collective voice is there enough energy to lift the lonely mourner, the angry mourner, the mourner too hurt to even say 'Amen.'" The community must play its role in comforting and strengthening the bereaved during the months of mourning.

If, as is frequently the case, there is no relative to recite the *kaddish*, the Hebrew Free Burial Association will arrange for someone to assume the responsibility of performing the kindness of the *kaddish* for the eleven month mourning period. As part of the Jewish community, we will do our part to honor the dead and aid the soul's spiritual salvation as it journeys to the next world.

To arrange for kaddish to be recited for a loved one, please contact our office (212-239-1662).

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

«Поминальная молитва»

О том, что существует «поминальная молитва», известно практически всем евреям, даже тем, кто не имеет представления о еврейской литургии. Хотя сама молитва существует более двух тысяч лет, только лишь в период средневековья ее стали увязывать с периодом скорби по умершему. Молитва написана на языке, использовавшемся в просторечии, и была доступна для понимания как ученого-талмудиста, так и простого еврея, которые произносили ее в связи с кончиной члена семьи.

Существует несколько объяснений, почему именно в момент кончины близкого, мы произносим слова хвалы Вс-вышнему. Наиболее распространенным объяснением, которое отражает также и психотерапевтическую роль молитвы, является то, что поминальная молитва как бы создает связующее звено между скорбящим и Вс-вышним именно в то время, когда эта связь может показаться ослабшей в силу боли утраты. Поминальная молитва (кадиш) утверждает и подтверждает веру в справедливость Вс-вышнего и произносится в присутствии 10 мужчин («миньян»), что подчеркивает роль общины в поддержке скорбящего в пору утраты близких.

Зачастую случается, что в силу тех или иных обстоятельств некому читать кадиш по умершему. Еврейское Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) поможет Вам найти человека, который возьмет на себя ответственность произнесения поминальной молитвы в течение 11 месяцев скорби с момента кончины покойного. Являясь неотъемлемой частью еврейской общины, мы отдадим дань уважения покойному и поможем духовному спасению его души на пути в иной мир.

Мысли накануне Хануки

Среди многих тем, о которых мы вспоминаем и рассуждаем в дни Хануки,

одними из ведущих являются темы освобождения угнетенных, победы немногочисленной общины евреев над многочисленным противником, а также тема борьбы против ассимиляции. Греко-сирийцы запрещали практиковать иудаизм, и даже еврейская самоидентификация была наказуема смертью. Чудо Хануки напоминает нам о том, какую роль играет Вс-вышний в истории и судьбе еврейского народа, а также о том, что мы должны «зажечь свою свечу» перед лицом тьмы этого мира. Ваши пожертвования помогут Еврейскому Похоронному Бюро «зажечь эти свечи», и это будет Вашим участием в исполнении заповеди (мицвы) поддержки каждого еврея в его стремлении к еврейству, даже когда он отправляется в последний путь.

Иные виды добровольной помощи

Если Вы можете уделить нам немного Вашего времени, мы будем признательны за помощь по уборке кладбища Маунт Ричмонд, либо по сопровождению (на машине) тех, кто хочет посетить могилы своих родных и друзей. При желании Вы также можете помочь нам в офисе, работая с картотеккой и/или микрофильмами, а также вводя данные в компьютер.

Помощь HFBA: из наших архивов.

В недавнем прошлом в США жили и скончались два известных российских поэта. Они были одинокими людьми. Об их смерти нам сообщили сотрудники госпиталей, где умерли эти пожилые люди. Мы проводили их в последний путь.

Иммигрант из России в возрасте 41 года в силу семейных обстоятельств попал в дом для престарелых и инвалидов: он злоупотреблял алкоголем, потерял ногу в аварии и был выселен из квартиры за неуплату арендной платы. Его мать, не имея на то средств, обратилась к нам в Еврейское Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) за помощью в погребении сына.

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:



Joseph and Arlene Adler
The Joseph and Arlene Adler
Philanthropic Fund

Dr. Andrew and Doris Gershon

Dr. William and Jemmy Goldwasser

Ronald Margolis
Margolis Foundation

Roberta S. Popik

Sydney Rubenstein and Irene Fener

Jaime and Sylvia Sznajder

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.
- **“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.
- **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.
- **Establish** a Perpetual *Yahrzeit Kaddish* for your loved one for a \$180 donation.
- **Sponsor** Perpetual Grave Care for an indigent’s grave for \$500.
- **Help out today by sending a donation in the enclosed envelope.**

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 email us at: **info@hebrewfreeburial.org**