

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.

תורת אבות חסד של אמת
The Hebrew Free Burial Association

Chesed

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 1 • WINTER 2011 • KISLEV 5772

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 City Cemetery. 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.	Robert Mendelsohn
Herbert Block	Richard Miller
Andrew Feinman	Paul H. Nagelberg
Jack M. Gross	Yitzhak Pastreich
Andrea Harris	Minna Monte Seitelman
Gary Katz	Hank Sheinkopf
Paul Lowenthal	Daniel Z. Werlin

RABBINIC ADVISOR

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, *Designer*
Printed by Spencer and Worth, Ltd.

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

UJA Federation
of New York

A longer version of this article first appeared in *Text/Context: Fresh Encounters with Jewish Tradition*, a publication of *The Jewish Week and Nextbook* (August 2011). Reprinted with permission.

A DAUGHTER'S KADDISH

No matter how familiar you are with death,
it's impossible to be prepared for the loss of your mother

By Amy Koplow

Death is the subject I deal with daily as the executive director of the Hebrew Free Burial Association. HFBA arranges approximately 350 burials a year, and at least twice a month I am in one cemetery or another as part of my job. But my work didn't inure me against the profound sadness I felt when my mother, Dorothy Koplow, *Chaya Doboh bat Meir v'Breindl*, died in the summer of 2010, at the age of 90.

My mother was observant all her life, and despite many personal hardships and misfortunes she endured, her faith in G-d and Judaism was rock solid. I regret that I never asked her why her faith was so strong. In my grief I needed to draw strength from her faith to help me through the mourning process. I decided to say *Kaddish* for her daily, although in the Orthodox tradition that is still an unusual obligation for a woman to assume, as public prayer requirements differ for men and women. I could have opted out of saying *Kaddish* altogether.

Yet I felt a strong need to sanctify my mother's memory. I viewed *Kaddish* as a way of bringing my mother's soul to repose. I also knew it would help me accept her death and affirm my belief in G-d. I felt it was an honor to recite it daily, and an honor to observe the laws of *aveilut* (mourning).

Much has been written about the *Kaddish* prayer. Mourners recite it although it doesn't reference death or mourning — instead it praises

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

MINYAN VOLUNTEERS

Since June 2010, Hebrew Free Burial Association has been fortunate to have a group of volunteers who attend burials at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery in Staten Island to make a *minyán* (quorum needed for the recitation of certain blessings) when there are no friends or family to accompany lonely souls on their final journey to the grave. These men carry the coffin, recite Psalms and say the special *Kaddish* that is said only at the grave site. Often at great inconvenience, in weather as challenging as the heat of the summer, the downpour of a spring rain and bitter cold of the winter, ankle deep in snow, they perform a true act of *chesed* (lovingkindness) and we are grateful for their gracious participation in this *mitzvah*.

Recently, one volunteer brought his 10 year old grandson with him and another volunteer brought his 11 year old son. They participated in covering the coffin with mounds of earth and said Psalms with the adults. It is heartening to see young members of the next generation being trained to participate in this most special work.

JOIN US!

Sunday, January 8, 2012

HFBA Staten Island Community Breakfast

Young Israel of Staten Island

For reservations go to

<http://hebrewfreeburial.org/si.htm> or call 212-239-1662

GUEST SPEAKER:



Rabbi

Ben Tzion Shafier

Director of TheShmuz.com

KADDISH CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

G-d. The prayer is mostly in Aramaic, except for the last few lines, making the words more challenging to pronounce than the usual liturgical Hebrew. One has to be focused and concentrate to pronounce the words correctly. The rhythm created by the words was comforting. As the year progressed, I was able to think more about the meaning of the words.

So much of being in *aveilut* involves restriction, as observed traditionally. You are conscious of all the things you cannot do: No live music. No parties or theater. No new clothing. Saying *Kaddish*, however, is something you can do. It let me believe that I helped my mother's soul move to its eternal rest. And

paradoxically, it helped me move away from the pain of her last days and her death.

It has been over a year since my mother died. For the first few months and on holidays it was difficult for me to say *Kaddish* without falling apart. The end of the 11-month *Kaddish* recitation period was also challenging for me. It was hard to stop saying *Kaddish*. When that obligation ended I felt I was letting go of my mother in an intangible way — her soul no longer needed my help. For me it was the final difficult separation.

I am grateful to the *Kaddish*, whose incantatory language took me out of my suffering, one day at a time.



Betty L.* called HFBA about ten years ago to arrange for a pre-need funeral. She was mentally disabled and paranoid and was terribly concerned about what would happen to her upon her death. She called the office many times, once anxiously inquiring how she would be able to breathe in a burial shroud. Our sensitive staff tried to allay her fears and when she finally did die, she was buried with care and dignity in our Mount Richmond Cemetery.

Viktor S., originally from the Ukraine, died suddenly at the age of 52 years. HFBA arranged the burial with our volunteer *minyán* in attendance. Viktor's elderly mother was too sick to attend the funeral so we arranged to have her listen in by phone, with one of our Russian-speaking staff members translating the ceremony. At her request, we reserved a grave for her next to her beloved son.

Cecile Z., age 66, was sleeping when a small fire ignited in the living room of her Queens apartment. The fire department responded immediately to a neighbor's 911 call and CPR was administered until an ambulance arrived to take her to the hospital. Sadly, Cecile died from smoke inhalation, a result of a discarded cigarette sparking the blaze. She had lived alone in the building for 30 years, seemingly without

family or many friends. After ascertaining that Cecile was indeed Jewish, HFBA assumed the responsibility of burying her among her people.

Shelly S. died at the age of 70, impoverished and isolated. When her cousin called HFBA to arrange a burial, we were informed that Shelly had a 99 year old mother with terminal cancer. We reserved a grave next to Shelly's so that mother and daughter could rest in peace side by side.

Morris S. died alone in his apartment, his body undiscovered for more than a week. During the police investigation, a detective found HFBA's card and called our office. Morris was known to our staff as we had buried his sister in 1998 and our office manager had helped him with relevant paperwork. Because of the personal contact, we were able to secure release of the body for burial in an expedited way.

**Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*



The sudden October snow storm, with its high winds, hit the HFBA cemeteries hard and felled four large trees in Silver Lake Cemetery as well as many heavy tree branches there and in Mount Richmond Cemetery. This presented a special challenge as the first burial in a reserved grave at Silver Lake since the mid-1990's took place right after the storm. Since Jewish law mandates that a burial should take place as close to the time of death as possible, the dedicated cemetery staff and our volunteers rushed to clear the area so that this burial, and others scheduled to take place soon after at Mount Richmond, would not be delayed because of the damage.

SAVE *the* DATE!

Riverdale Community
Annual Breakfast in support of HFBA

Sunday, March 4, 2012

To organize an event in your community
please call HFBA Executive Director Amy Koplow

Below are excerpts from a letter received by HFBA:

... My 88 year old mother was going to bury her youngest and we were concerned about her state as well. I did not have high expectations for what the funeral or cemetery would be like, as my brother died indigent ... We were met by Rabbi Plafker, who led us in a most sensitive and meaningful ritual... He allowed time for all to share feelings and let my mother speak as much as she needed to. He explained clearly the meaning and importance of various elements of the funeral and left us feeling blessed to be part of this ritual. The cemetery itself was lovely on that autumn morning... **We were overwhelmed by the grace that has prompted your organization to not only fill this important need in the Jewish community, but to provide so much beauty and comfort as you do so.** Thank you again for making this an experience my family will cherish.



WE THANK OUR VOLUNTEERS

Thank you to the following groups who recently visited Silver Lake Cemetery to help clean and clear debris which was particularly extensive due to damage from Hurricane Irene and the October snowfall:

- Davis Renov Stahler —————→
Yeshiva High School (DRS)
- ASHAR
- Yeshiva of Flatbush —————→
- Brooklyn Heights Group of Synagogue Youth (BHGSY)
- Solomon Schechter School of Westchester (9th & 12th grades)
- North Shore Hebrew —————→
Academy High School
- Solomon Schechter School of Queens (SSSQ)
- Rambam Mesivta
- Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey



And a **very special thank you to The Frisch School (New Jersey)** for their many visits with students from all grades throughout this year.

HFBA Expresses its Gratitude and Appreciation To:

Irwin Unger, of blessed memory, for his most generous bequest to HFBA

Mr. Unger was born in Austria and studied to be a doctor, eventually working in Vienna prior to the war. He and his wife Stella, who predeceased him, were both Holocaust survivors who came to New York and established a dental laboratory. They were supportive of Jewish charities which helped poor Jews and were especially appreciative of HFBA's unique mission.

Felice Itzkoff, of blessed memory, for her generous bequest to HFBA

Ms. Itzkoff had lived modestly in New York City and worked as a secretary. She was known as being especially kind and helpful to those in need and carefully researched the organizations she supported. Her connection to HFBA was strong during her lifetime and continues after her death with her generous bequest.

The Laurence W. Levine Foundation, Inc. for its generous gift to HFBA

We hope you, too, will remember HFBA as part of your estate planning. For help on how to include HFBA in your will, please consult your attorney or call HFBA Executive Director, Amy Koplou.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

Кадиш дочери

Эми Коплоу

Даже если хорошо знаком со смертью, невозможно подготовиться к смерти матери

Будучи исполнительным директором Еврейского Благотворительного Похоронного Бюро (HFBA), я имею дело со смертью практически ежедневно. Бюро организует около 350 погребений в год, и по меньшей мере дважды в месяц я бываю на кладбище. Это – часть моей работы. Но работа не помогла подготовиться к той глубокой скорби, которая охватила меня после кончины моей матери, Дороти Коплоу (по-еврейски Хайи Добы, дочери Меира и Брейндель), скончавшейся летом 2010 года. Ей было 90 лет.

Я решила произносить Кадиш по ней каждый день, хотя в еврейской ортодоксальной традиции это обязательство для женщин редкость, поскольку требования, касающиеся молитвы, намного меньше для женщин, чем для мужчин. Мне можно было вообще не произносить Кадиш. Но я ощущала потребность освятить память моей матери. Кадиш для меня был способом помочь душе моей матери обрести вечный покой. Я также понимала, что Кадиш поможет мне принять её кончину и укрепить мою веру. Я чувствовала, какая это большая честь – ежедневно произносить Кадиш в синагоге и соблюдать все установления «авейлут» (периода скорби). Эти установления в основном касаются ограничений: нельзя ходить на концерты, в театр или на праздничные вечеринки. Нельзя покупать новую одежду. Но Кадиш – это то, что можно и предписывается делать. Он помогал мне почувствовать, что я помогаю душе моей матери, а также облегчить боль её последних дней и самой смерти.

Больше года прошло с тех пор. В первые месяцы и во время праздников мне было тяжело произносить Кадиш сдерживаясь, чтобы не разрыдаться. К концу традиционного одиннадцатимесячного срока чтения Кадиша мне тоже было нелегко закончить это ежедневное чтение. Я как бы ещё раз – неосознанно – расставалась с матерью. Её душе уже не требовалась моя помощь, а для меня это было ещё одним прощанием, уже окончательным. Итак, я благодарна Кадишу, который своим размеренным ритмом понемногу, день за днём, смягчал моё страдание.

Добровольный миньян

С июня 2010 г. Еврейскому Благотворительному Похоронному Бюро регулярно помогает группа добровольцев, которые приходят на организуемые нами похороны на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд, на Стэйтен Айленд. Они приходят составить миньян – необходимый минимум из десяти человек для прочтения погребальных благословений – когда нужно проводить в последний путь тех, у кого не осталось родственников или друзей. Добровольно пришедшие евреи несут гроб, произносят псалмы и особый Кадиш, который читают при погребении. Они совершают «хесед» - проявление милосердия к усопшим,

незнакомым им людям: и в летний зной, и под весенним дождём, и зимой по щиколотку в снегу.

Мы безмерно благодарны им за участие в совершении этой важной мицвы. Один из добровольцев привёл своего 10-летнего внука, другой – 11-летнего сына. Подростки помогали засыпать могилу землёй и произносили псалмы вместе со взрослыми. Это просто замечательно, что наши добровольцы готовят новое поколение для выполнения столь благородного дела.

Вопросы и ответы

Вопрос: Как готовят тело к погребению?

Ответ: В обязанности членов погребальной команды (хевра кадиша) входит омовение тела с соблюдением правил скромности (приоткрывают только омываемую часть тела). Затем тело погружают в микву, и облачают в одежду из муслина, льна или хлопка. Тело помещают в простой деревянный гроб, и все члены хевра кадиша шепотом читают особую молитву, прося прощения за невольную обиду, причинённую душе усопшего.

HFBA помогает

- Бетти И* связалась с нашим офисом около десяти лет назад, чтобы договориться об организации похорон. Она была психически больна, страдала паранойей. Бетти непрерывно беспокоилась о том, что будет с ней после смерти, и часто звонила нам. Сотрудники HFBA успокаивали её со всем возможным терпением и тактом. Когда Бетти скончалась, она была достойно похоронена на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд.
- Виктор С., выходец с Украины, умер внезапно в возрасте 52-х лет. HFBA организовала его похороны, с участием миньяна из наших добровольцев. Престарелая мать Виктора была слишком больна чтобы присутствовать на похоронах, и мы устроили так, что она могла слушать церемонию по телефону. Переводила одна из наших русскоговорящих сотрудниц. По просьбе матери Виктора, HFBA зарезервировала для неё место на кладбище рядом с сыном.

* имена изменены

HFBA желает всем кто нас поддерживает и помогает, счастливой Хануки – праздника света и надежды. Пусть мир наполняется добрыми делами и актами милосердия.

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:

BARBARA FINKELSTEIN
JOSEPH AND GLORIA FRIEDMAN
GERDA KASSNER
EVELYN D. SALINAS
DAVID A. SCHWARTZ
LILLIAN ZEIDES

Wishing all our HFBA supporters a Happy Chanukah, a season of light and hope, a world bright with acts of kindness and *chesed*.



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.