

## 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.

אגודת אהים חסד של אמר  
The Hebrew  
Free Burial  
ASSOCIATION

# Chesed

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1 • WINTER 2012 • KISLEV 5773

### 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 over 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.*

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CHESED IS PUBLISHED BY

THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Renée Septimus, *Editor* Adam Rawson, *Designer*  
Printed by Spencer and Worth, Ltd.

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UJA Federation  
of New York

## HFBA vs. Hurricane Sandy

**H**urricane Sandy's wrath and aftermath brought unimagined devastation to the greater New York City area. The agencies which serve the poor struggled to keep running despite monumental challenges.

Hebrew Free Burial Association runs 24/7, 365 days of the year, and calls are answered around the clock. Every time there is a warning about a major storm, the HFBA staff gathers and creates contingency plans. The HFBA staff lives throughout the metropolitan New York City area and during Hurricane Sandy some staff members lost power and phone service and others had to evacuate their homes. Despite all this, we worked by tele-commuting, taking calls about decedents who needed our services, until we were able to reopen our midtown office on Wednesday, October 31, with nearly all staff present.

Once the office reopened, HFBA encountered unforeseen challenges that affected the entire funeral industry in New York City. Road closures and driving restrictions on bridges and tunnels made it impos-

sible to pick up and transport decedents. A funeral director drives in a service van with perhaps one helper and since the city was making no exception to their "three person per vehicle" rule to cross the bridges, these trips were limited to midnight through 6 am, literally the graveyard shift! Removals from Bellevue, the largest morgue in Manhattan, were not permitted because of flooding and HFBA had a client there who was unable to be retrieved for six days following the death. The funeral home in Brooklyn that HFBA uses for their funeral preparations lost power as did many others. By the Friday after the storm, HFBA had several decedents to pick up and was scrambling for a funeral home that had power to accommodate our cases.



SILVER LAKE CEMETERY AFTER HURRICANE SANDY

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



# Dear HFBA

**HFBA receives many letters from grateful friends and acquaintances of those we bury. Below are several examples of the correspondence that comes to our office. Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.**

*I want to take this opportunity to thank you (Amy Koplow,) Rhonda and Rabbi Plafker.*

*The service today was so meaningful and brought such dignity to the burial of my dear cousin Molly Silver.*

*As I had told the Rabbi, I was suffering from anxiety attacks prior to finding your information on the internet. I was told that my cousin was failing and I knew that soon the decision that was imminent would fall to me. I did not know how I would be able to afford to bury her in the plot that was set aside for her next to her dear parents. She had no money, only the small amount left in her account at the nursing home where she had spent the last 6 years of her life unable to move from her bed. I was afraid that the only choice available to me would be to let the city bury her in potter's field, This caused me many sleepless nights... Then I found you!!!*

*I cannot express how much today meant to me. If it were possible that my aunt (Molly's mother) and my own dear Mother could smile today...they would have, in spite of the sadness of losing her, the dignity with which she left this life and with which her remains were given up to the earth will stay with me forever.*

*Molly now rests in the place where she belongs and it is all due to the incredible mitzvah that you all perform at the Hebrew Free Burial Association.*

*With my deepest thanks,*

*E.S.*

*I just wanted to express my tremendous gratitude for the services The Hebrew Free Burial Association provides. My family buried my grandmother, Hannah Hodes, today and if not for your altruism, assistance and intervention, to put it simply, I'm not sure what we, as her family would have done to give my grandmother a proper burial. Unbeknownst to us, she was unable to arrange adequate burial provisions for herself while alive and upon her death last week we were shocked to discover this unthinkable fact and were at a loss as to what to do next as you see we are not wealthy people. I imagine your organization hears this often but it bears repeating: Your organization provides the ultimate mitzvah. I will be making a donation...to give something back for the wonderful gift of charity you gave us. Please be confident that you provide a service that is benevolent and will not go unrewarded.*

*Thank you so much.*

*M.S.*

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**The following letter was written by the executive director of a Jewish organization for the developmentally disabled:**

*On behalf of our dear resident Fern Berson, we would like to express our gratitude to HFBA for the compassion and speed with which everyone worked in order to provide Fern with a dignified burial service. The HFBA arranged for everything from pick up at the hospital to tahara to burial...(the staff of the) office were helpful every step of the way.*

*At the cemetery, Rabbi Plafker arranged for volunteers...to help make a minyan in order to say kaddish at the gravesite. Rabbi Plafker was very warm and welcoming, explaining various aspects of the ritual along the way. With respect and sensitivity, all the volunteers were eager to hear about Fern's life.*

*May HFBA be blessed to continue in this special chesed for many years to come.*

*J.W.*



**Q: What are "burial societies?"**

**A:** Burial societies, also called *landsmenshaffen* in Yiddish, are made up of groups of people who share an affiliation, such as being born in a town in Europe, or being a descendant of such a person, or belonging to a particular synagogue. It is understood that members share common values. The group purchases contiguous burial plots and only members of those groups, or people close to them, are eligible for burial in these graves.

# Many Thanks...

to the following groups who helped clear and clean Silver Lake Cemetery in the past months:

- Hunter College Hillel
- Ma'aynot Yeshiva High School for Girls
- Rambam Mesivta
- Richmond Borough Post-Jewish War Veterans
- SAR High School
- Shalhevet High School for Girls
- Solomon Schechter School of Westchester (12th Grade)
- Solomon Schechter School of Westchester (9th Grade)
- Stella K. Abraham Yeshiva High School
- The Frisch School
- The Heschel School
- Yeshiva of Flatbush
- ...and the many volunteers who helped on HFBA's Nov. 11 Parshat Chayei Sara Community Chesed Day.

If you would like to have your group participate in this act of *chesed* (lovingkindness) please call HFBA Director of Operations, Andrew Parver. We can also arrange for a speaker to come and address your organization.

Ma'aynot Yeshiva High School for Girls



Shalhevet High School for Girls



The Frisch School



Community Chesed Day Volunteers



*We wish all HFBA supporters a Happy Chanukah and a world filled with light, goodness and peace!*

## HFBA vs. Hurricane Sandy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

HFBA's Mt. Richmond Cemetery in Staten Island was closely monitored throughout the storm by its dedicated superintendent and contractor even as Sandy began to smash through the area. The good news was that Mt. Richmond suffered less damage than had been expected. Some trees fell at the far end of the cemetery, shingles blew off the roof of the historic building that houses the staff offices and chapel and although there was some rain, there was no flooding of the cemetery grounds.

In Silver Lake Cemetery, HFBA's original burial ground established in 1892, large branches snapped off trees and fell, as did some fence panels. Fortunately, the community wide Clean-Up Day had been scheduled for November 11. The devoted volunteers had plenty to do!

The hurricane reminded us that ultimately there is much that is out of our human control. But it also reaffirms the strength of the human spirit to rise to meet challenges that cannot be anticipated nor ignored. And despite the difficulties, HFBA was able to continue its mission of burying those who died alone and impoverished, but whose deaths were honored according to their wishes, conforming to ancient Jewish practice.

## SAVE THE DATE!

**Staten Island Community  
Parshat Vayechi Breakfast**

Sunday, December 30, 2012 • 9:30 a.m.  
Young Israel of Staten Island

***Honoring Rabbi Avi Feinstein  
and Rabbi Eli Kogan***

For more information, or to make a reservation,  
please call the HFBA office (212) 239-1662



# РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

BELOW ARE TRANSLATED SUMMARIES OF THE ARTICLES  
APPEARING IN THIS ISSUE OF CHESED.

## Ураган Сэнди

Ярость стихии вызвала небывалые разрушения в районе Большого Нью-Йорка. Агенства, оказывающие помощь нуждающимся, прилагали колоссальные усилия, чтобы не прерывать свою работу. В их числе было и Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA).

Наш офис отвечает на звонки круглосуточно и «круглогодично». Каждый раз, когда поступает серьёзное штормовое предупреждение, наши сотрудники действуют по плану, разработанному на случай чрезвычайных обстоятельств. В первые несколько дней после урагана наши сотрудники работали из дома. Как только офис вновь открылся, мы столкнулись с непредвиденными трудностями, коснувшимися всех похоронных домов Нью-Йорка. Блокированные улицы и ограничение проезда по мостам и туннелям сделали невозможной транспортировку усопших. У множества похоронных домов в Бруклине, включая тот, который HFBA использует для организации погребений, было отключено электричество. На пятый день после урагана HFBA лихорадочно изыскивало хоть какой-нибудь функционирующий похоронный дом и способы доставки к нему усопших за эти дни.

Смотритель и подрядчик нашего кладбища Маунт Ричмонд на Стейтен Айленде отслеживали ситуацию как по мере приближения урагана, так и в последующие дни. К счастью ущерб здесь был сравнительно небольшим. Повреждения на кладбище Сильвер Лейк, где HFBA открыло свои первые захоронения ещё в 1892 году, оказались более значительными из-за упавших крупных ветвей и повалившихся участков ограды. Но так удачно сложилось, что проводимый каждой осенью день помощи в поддержании кладбищ в порядке был намечен на 11-е ноября. Работы добровольцам предстояло много!

Ураган ещё раз напомнил всем, что многое не поддаётся нашему контролю. Но он же продемонстрировал силу человеческого духа, поднимающегося навстречу непредвиденным опасностям и трудностям. Невзирая на все препятствия, HFBA смогло продолжить свою благородную миссию – погребение усопших, зачастую бедных и одиноких, в соответствии с их последней волей и древней еврейской традицией.

## Нам пишут

Я хотела бы выразить HFBA огромную благодарность. Сегодня мы хоронили мою бабушку, Ханну Хоудс. Если бы не ваши вмешательство и помощь я не представляю, как бы моя семья смогла обеспечить бабушке достойные похороны. Мы не знали, что она не смогла заранее договориться об организации и оплате своих похорон. Это стало шоком для нас, когда она скончалась на прошлой неделе, так как, по

правде говоря, мы небогаты. Я понимаю, что вы это часто слышите, но всё же скажу: ваша организация делает подлинную мицву. Я буду делать пожертвования, чтобы хоть немного участвовать в вашем благородном деле.

С благодарностью, М.С.

*Это письмо было написано исполнительным директором еврейской организации, занимающейся людьми с отставанием в развитии:*

От имени нашего пациента, Ферна Берсона, позвольте выразить благодарность HFBA за заботу и за то, как быстро вы смогли организовать для него достойные похороны. Ваше Бюро предусмотрело всё от доставки тела из госпиталя до церемонии погребения. Ваши сотрудники помогали постоянно. На кладбище р. Плафкер собрал добровольцев, которые составили миньян, чтобы прочитать кадиш у могилы усопшего. Р. Плафкер тепло и сердечно рассказывал о различных аспектах погребальной церемонии. Собравшиеся слушали речь о жизни Ферна с уважением и сочувствием.

Да продолжится ваша благословенная миссия много-много лет.

Д.У.

## Вопросы и ответы

**Вопрос:** Что такое погребальные сообщества?

**Ответ:** Погребальные сообщества, или *ландменишафен* на идиш, – группы людей, объединяющихся по какому-либо признаку. Это могут быть выходцы из одного города, или чьи-то потомки, или посещающие одну синагогу. Члены таких сообществ как правило придерживаются общих ценностей. Такие сообщества совместно приобретают участок на кладбище, и только члены группы и их близкие могут быть похоронены там.

**Мы с прискорбием сообщаем о кончине бывшего президента HFBA, г-на Бьорна Бамбергера (1931-2012 гг.).**

**В воскресенье 30-го декабря 2012 г., когда во всех синагогах читают недельную главу Торы *Вайехи*, в синагоге Young Israel на Стейтен Айленд HFBA проведёт ежегодный завтрак. Во время этого мероприятия мы будем чествовать р. Эли Когана и р. Ави Файнштейна.**

**С радостью сообщаем, что недавно HFBA удостоилось высшего балла от организации Charity Navigator, самой крупной в Америке независимой компании, оценивающей деятельность благотворительных организаций!**

**Мы желаем всем поддерживающим нас счастливой Хануки. Да пребудут на земле мир, свет и добрые дела!**





## ***HFBA Receives the Highest Rating from Charity Navigator, America's Largest and Most-Utilized Independent Evaluator of Charities!***



139 Harristown Rd • Glen Rock, NJ 07452  
phone (201) 818-1288 • fax (201) 818-4694  
[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

October 1, 2012

Amy Koplow  
Hebrew Free Burial Association  
224 West 35th Street  
Room 300  
New York, NY 10001

Dear Amy Koplow:

On behalf of Charity Navigator, I wish to congratulate Hebrew Free Burial Association on achieving our coveted 4-star rating for sound fiscal management and commitment to accountability and transparency.

As the nonprofit sector continues to grow at an unprecedented pace, savvy donors are demanding more accountability, transparency and quantifiable results from the charities they choose to support with their hard-earned dollars. In this competitive philanthropic marketplace, Charity Navigator, America's premier charity evaluator, highlights the fine work of efficient, ethical and open charities. Our goal in all of this is to provide donors with essential information needed to give them greater confidence in the charitable choices they make.

Based on the most recent information available, we have issued a new rating for your organization. We are proud to announce Hebrew Free Burial Association has earned a 4-star rating. Receiving four out of a possible four stars indicates that your organization adheres to good governance and other best practices that minimize the chance of unethical activities and consistently executes its mission in a fiscally responsible way. Approximately a quarter of the charities we evaluate have received our highest rating, indicating that Hebrew Free Burial Association outperforms most other charities in America. This "exceptional" designation from Charity Navigator differentiates Hebrew Free Burial Association from its peers and demonstrates to the public it is worthy of their trust.

*Forbes*, *Business Week*, and *Kiplinger's Financial Magazine*, among others, have profiled and celebrated our unique method of applying data-driven analysis to the charitable sector. We evaluate ten times more charities than our nearest competitor and currently attract more visitors to our website than all other charity rating groups combined, thus making us the leading charity evaluator in America. Our data shows that users of our site gave more than they planned to before viewing our findings, and in fact, it is estimated that last year Charity Navigator influenced approximately \$10 billion in charitable gifts.

We believe our service will enhance your organization's fundraising and public relations efforts. Our favorable review of Hebrew Free Burial Association's fiscal health and commitment to accountability & transparency will be visible on our website as of October 1st.

We wish you continued success in your charitable endeavors.

Sincerely,

Ken Berger  
President & Chief Executive Officer

[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)





## HFBA Acknowledges With Sorrow The Passing of Former HFBA President Bjorn Bamberger

**B**orn in Germany, and anticipating the Nazi assault on the Jewish population, Bjorn Bamberger moved with his family to Denmark, his mother's birthplace in 1933. There, thanks to the heroism of the Danish citizens, the Bambergers, and virtually all the Danish Jews, were smuggled across the water to the shores of Sweden where the Bamberger family waited out the war, returning to Denmark in the spring of 1945.

The Bambergers eventually immigrated to the United States, first living in Baltimore and then in New York, where Bjorn married and raised his family.

Bjorn Bamberger dedicated his life to the needs of the Jewish community, becoming a key supporter of such organizations as the Hebrew Academy of Long Beach (HALB), the Mesivta of Long Beach (L.I.) and the Long Beach Mikvah, as well as the Hebrew Free Burial Association which he served as president.

He will be missed by all those who were fortunate to have known his charm, generosity, humor and friendship.

## CHESED SHEL EMET – HOW YOU CAN HELP

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

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

**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.

**REMEMBER** to include HFBA in your will with a bequest.

**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.

**CELEBRATE** a *simcha* or commemorate a loss with HFBA cards.

Cards cost \$15 and can include a personalized message.

**PLACE** HFBA *tzedakah* boxes in a house of *shiva* or in your home, school or local kosher establishment.

**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** unused graves. If the graves are not part of a burial society or family plot and are located in New York or New

Jersey, please consider donating them to HFBA and receiving a tax deduction for your gift.

**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.

**DONATE** your property, used vehicle or boat and receive a generous tax donation.



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