



THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

# Chesed

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## In this Issue

2

*President's Message*

3

*Meet HFBA's Diverse Group of Volunteers*

5

*HFBA Reaches out to the Russian Community*

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 send us email at **hebrewfreeba@aol.com**

Upon request, a copy of our annual report may be obtained from our office, 224 W. 35th St. Room 300, New York, NY 10001 or from the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.

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UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

## Acts of Chesed

### "Too Good to Be True"

In most cases, HFBA assists with burials because family, friends, or a medical institution request that an indigent Jew be buried as a Jew. But there are also situations in which HFBA does the requesting; we spare no effort to ensure that every Jew receives a Jewish burial.

HFBA recently received a call from Josh M.,\* inquiring about our work. Josh was calling in reference to his mother, but refused to disclose any pertinent information. A few phone calls later, HFBA learned that Josh's mother had passed away over a week earlier. The body was lying in the city morgue.

*"He was amazed that we cared so much about the dignity of a woman we had never met."*

Frustrated that his mother did not make her own arrangements, Josh was prepared to allow her to be buried in a city cemetery. He remarked that he had cared for her during her life, and felt that his obligation toward her ceased with death. Claiming that he was not a practicing Jew, Josh was not concerned that his mother be buried as a Jew. "A person turns to dust, so it does not matter where they are buried," Josh told us.

Unsure of how he wished to proceed, Josh was reluctant to fill out the necessary documents required for burial in New York

*...continued on page 6*

# Message from our President

*Bjorn Bamberger*

In the Torah (Genesis 35,19) we read of the death of our matriarch Rachel during the difficult childbirth of Binyamin: "Thus Rachel died and was buried on the road to Ephrat, which is Bethlehem. Jacob set up a monument – a *matzevah* – over her grave; it is the monument of Rachel's grave until today."

For close to four thousand years, and still today, thousands flock to *kever Rachel* to pray in her merit. For as we read in the *haftarah* on the second day of Rosh Hashanah (Jeremiah 31,14), although "Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be consoled," G-d Himself offers comfort, declaring, "Restrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, for there is a reward, there is hope."

Throughout our long and varied history, in far-flung corners of the world, the Jewish people have always considered the final resting places of our sages and leaders as holy ground. And from our earliest days we have carefully tended these holy places and frequently visited them to recite Psalms and pour out our hearts in prayer.

Yet in a fundamental sense, the gravesite of every Jew – no matter how great or small – is equally holy, for every Jew has a spark of the divine during his or her lifetime, and every Jew deserves equal dignity and respect at the moment of death.

In fact, almost two thousand years ago, Rabbi Gamliel decreed that all Jews should have exactly the same burial rites – whatever their status or station in life. Ritual purification, simple white shrouds, a plain wooden casket; no music, no flowers, no excess or ostentation would be permitted, no matter how rich or famous the deceased. And, on the other hand, no less could be offered even to the lowly, the

indigent, the stranger, even the criminal put to death by orders of the court.

For more than a century, the Hebrew Free Burial Association has proudly and reverently tended to the needs of the indigent Jews in the New York area, whom we bury in full compliance with the demands of Jewish law. The graves are marked by an appropriate *matzevah* bearing the deceased's name and dates of birth and death.

Unfortunately, for many years, funds were insufficient to place such a marker on every grave at the time of interment, and it is our current project to place headstones over the remaining unmarked graves.

To complete this urgent task and to continue to provide our sacred services to the least fortunate among us, we need your generous continuing support. And in our shared merit of performing this most selfless of all *mitzvot*, may we all rejoice in the final fulfillment of G-d's promise to our mother Rachel, "I will remember...I will take pity...Your children shall return!"



## Breakfast Honoring Leonard and Lorraine Kunin of Lido Beach

Please join us Sunday, November 3, 2002 for our Chayei Sarah Gala Breakfast at the Young Israel of Long Beach, 120 Long Beach Boulevard.



# The Many Faces of HFBA's Volunteers

On a warm day this past June, twelve year old Ethan Reed came to Silver Lake Cemetery with family and friends to help with cemetery upkeep. The volunteer group was organized as a chesed project in honor of Ethan's bar mitzvah. Ethan's interest in the Hebrew Free Burial Association was sparked when his father, researching genealogy, found that an aunt had been buried by HFBA in the early twentieth century.

"I learned that caring for the dead is highest mitzvah of all," said Ethan of his experience helping HFBA. "It was meaningful to me to know that after eighty six years, family members could return and help out in a place where a relative is buried." Ethan is planning to use some of the money from his bar mitzvah gifts to purchase a headstone for his great-aunt.

Ethan's story reflects the energetic commitment that characterizes all of our volunteers. Of all ages and from all walks of life, our volunteers share a desire to help the less fortunate in whatever way they can. Teenagers from the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island who help with cemetery upkeep, and retirees who volunteer in our office are all grateful to HFBA for the opportunity to participate in an important mitzvah. We, in turn, are grateful to our volunteers for aiding us in our important work.

Lately, Chaim Marks has been brightening our office with his genial personality. A retiree from Riverdale, Chaim helps out with mailings and general office work. Despite the fact that



*Teen volunteers from the JCC of Staten Island and Rabbi Shmuel Plafker at Silver Lake Cemetery.*

it is difficult for him to make the trip into Manhattan, Chaim comes in often, happy to chip in with whatever work needs to get done. When he is not at HFBA, Chaim can be found organizing blood drives in Riverdale. He is someone who is involved both in sustaining life and helping at the moment that life ceases.

***"Of all ages and from all walks of life, our volunteers share a desire to help the less fortunate in whatever way they can."***

Brian Chenensky represents yet another face of HFBA's volunteers. A young man in between jobs, Brian wanted to do something meaningful with his extra time. He found out about HFBA through a UJA orientation pro-

gram for volunteers. Brian helped us organize our phone data last year. Interested in genealogical research, Brian was happy to find in our records that HFBA had buried a friend's grandfather.

***"I learned that caring for the dead is highest mitzvah of all," said Ethan of his experience helping HFBA."***

HFBA recognizes and appreciates the unique talents of our diverse group of volunteers. To find out more about the ways that you can help HFBA, please call Amy Koplow at 212-239-1662.



*Ethan Reed and his family at Silver Lake Cemetery.*



## *From Our Mailbox*

*Each year, students at Temple Shaari Emeth Religious School in Manalapan, New Jersey send HFBA tzedakah money they collected as a culmination of study of the Jewish life cycle. Here is the letter we received from last year's class six aleph:*

Dear Hebrew Free Burial Society,

**W**e think that it is very good that you have this organization to help poor families. We hope we raised enough money to make a difference. All year, we worked hard collecting money, so that we too can help the poor!

Some of the kids in this school have gone through death. Its people like you that make this grief easier for people in hard situations.

We hope this program keeps going on, so that more people can keep getting help. We know how hard it is to lose a loved one, but your assistance helps people who are less fortunate to get through this tough time.

Keep doing great things in this program!

*Sincerely,*

David Siegel  
Frankie Drogotta  
Jacqueline Kate  
Adrienne Viola

Stefanie Lazow  
Samantha Quinn  
Allison Wachtel

Dara Hesslein  
Ryan Cowen  
Meryl Silver

Matt Cohn  
Morgan Miller  
Matt Mondary

# HFBA Reaches Out to the Russian Community

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**H**FBA was founded in the late nineteenth century to provide respectful burials for New York's indigent Jewish immigrants. Today, we continue this tradition of assisting newcomers in our work with New York's Russian Jewish community.

Forty percent of the cases referred to HFBA stem from the Russian Jewish community. Some of the individuals we assist just recently arrived in New York, others already acclimated to life in the city. All are treated with the respect and honor a Jew deserves in his or her time of need.

Our staff includes Russian and Yiddish speaking professionals, easing the emotionally charged task of making burial arrangements. HFBA understands the challenges of Jewish immigrants in New York City, and are there to help at the time of greatest need.

## HFBA (еврейское бесплатное похоронное общество) обращается к Русской Общине

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HFBA было основано в конце 19 столетия с целью обеспечения неимущих Еврейских иммигрантов Нью Йорка похоронными услугами. Сегодня, мы продолжаем эту традицию помощи для новоприбывших иммигрантов в Русско-Еврейской общине Нью Йорка.

Сорок процентов всех обращающихся в HFBA это евреи, выходцы из СНГ. Некоторые из них недавно прибыли в Нью Йорк, другие уже хорошо адаптировались к жизни в городе. Ко всем мы относимся с почетом и уважением, которое каждый Еврей заслуживает, в это тяжелое время.

Наши работники говорят на русском и идиш, что облегчает этот тяжелый эмоци, ональный процесс организации похорон. HFBA понимает проблемы еврейских иммигрантов Нью Йорка, и всегда готовы помочь в эти тяжелые минуты.

### HFBA Now Has Tzedakah Boxes

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**F**or over one hundred years HFBA has been involved in the mitzvah of burying the dead. Every donation helps our organization continue its important work.

You can now participate in this mitzvah by placing an HFBA tzedakah box in your home, school, or local kosher restaurant. The tzedakah boxes provide a unique opportunity to perform a mitzvah with your children and to teach them about the ways we can help those less fortunate than ourselves. It is especially appropriate to place an HFBA tzedakah box in a house of mourning, in memory of the deceased. To have a tzedakah box sent to you please call HFBA at (212) 239-1662.

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:

**Mr. and Mrs. Dovid Fleishman**

**Mr. and Mrs. Ernest G. Kahn**

**Mr. Yehuda Katz**

**Rowland and Henriette Pummill**

**Ms. Valentina Rabinovitch**

**Mr. Melvin Roth**

**Dr. and Mrs. Julian A. Seewald**

## “Too Good to Be True”

*...continued from page 1*

City. Our staff was in constant contact with him, addressing his questions and allaying his concerns. When Josh did not want to sign the official forms releasing the body for burial, we allowed him to sign a release in his own words. After postponing signing even this document, Josh finally faxed us a release. We buried his mother the next day, on Erev Rosh ha-Shanah, with a dignified funeral in accordance with Jewish law.

Much of Josh's skepticism towards HFBA stemmed from his disbelief that an organization that would bury people for no fee was too good to be true. He was amazed that we cared so much about the dignity of a woman we had never met. In attending to Josh's mother, we showed Josh what it means to be part of the larger Jewish family, and the effort we are willing to expend to ensure that every Jew is treated with honor in their final hour.

*\* All names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.*

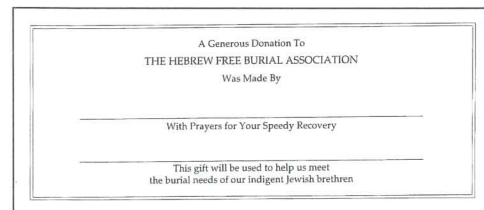
## Double Your Donation to HFBA Through Your Company's Matching Gift Program

You can double or even triple the dollar value of your gift to HFBA if you work for a company with a Matching Gift Program. It's easy – simply obtain a form from your company's Matching Gift Coordinator, fill it out, and send it along with your gift to us. Thank you!

## HFBA Cards: The Gift That Is Also A Mitzvah

We know how difficult it can be to find the perfect gift for a *simcha* or to locate the proper expression upon a loss. With HFBA's cards, the perfect gift is always on hand.

Whether you are celebrating a *simcha* or commemorating a loss, HFBA's cards let your recipient know that a donation has been made to HFBA in their honor. Each card costs \$10, and you can fill it in with your personalized message. Three different cards are available: In Memory of, Best Wishes for a Speedy Recovery, and In Honor of. To order cards please call HFBA at 212-239-1662.



**HFBA accepts credit card donations over the phone. Please call us at (212)-239-1662 to make a donation.**