

HFBA**THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION**

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 City 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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UJA Federation
 of New York

Acts of Chesed

Suddenly, little Devora flew through the air. Thrown from a train headed for Auschwitz, she was found and rescued by righteous gentiles who raised her with care and an awareness of her Jewish heritage. Later, while working in a Hungarian hospital after the war, Devora met her husband, Tuvia B., and, in the 1960's, immigrated to the United States. Over the years they had five children, spent time living in Israel and returned to the United States. Financial difficulties, misfortune and illness haunted them. Devora developed multiple sclerosis, one child was killed in a car accident and the others scattered, estranged from their parents.

Mr. B., destitute but devoted to his wife, had the foresight

to make his own funeral arrangements with HFBA, certain he would pre-decease his wife. However, fate intervened and when Mrs. B. recently died, Mr. B. again contacted HFBA. Reflecting Mr. B.'s devotion, we made funeral and burial arrangements, laying to rest the little girl once bound for Auschwitz.

Many of HFBA's clients are Holocaust survivors who end their lives destitute or alone. A grave marker ensures that their names will be remembered, unlike their relatives whose remains are ashes. Through HFBA's "Leave Your Mark" program, you can donate \$150 for such a grave stone. *Please call the HFBA office (212-239-1662) for more information.*

** Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.*

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 our **new email address: info@hebrewfreeburial.org**

In Appreciation

HFBA offers thanks and appreciation to its outgoing president, Mr. Bjorn Bamberger. Over the past three years, Mr. Bamberger's efforts and hard work have contributed to making HFBA a more active, efficient organization. Despite many other obligations, Mr. Bamberger devoted himself wholeheartedly, and without expectation of honor or reward, to the growing needs of the Jewish community, whose impoverished members deserve and receive a dignified Jewish burial. **His commitment to *chesed* is an example to all.**

Message from our President

We are approaching Passover, the season of our redemption, and the beginning of our history as a unified people. When the Jews left Egypt, they became a nation, responsible to the laws of the Torah and to each other.

For more than a century, the Hebrew Free Burial has been a quiet and powerful force in maintaining our contract with other Jews. No Jew goes to his or her final resting place without a proper burial. There are no clauses in this contract as HFBA has faithfully provided burials for nearly 60,000 Jewish souls without regard to their income or personal circumstance.

The challenges before the Hebrew Free Burial Association are the same as those at the organization's inception: to assure that no Jew dies without a proper Jewish burial. Yet, over time,

our contract has expanded to include two cemeteries, Silver Lake and Mt. Richmond, in Staten Island, N.Y. Both cemeteries must be properly maintained to ensure the dignity of those departed souls and the memories of their families who come to mourn for them.

We are about to embark on an ambitious Capital Campaign that requires a significant investment on the part of the Hebrew Free Burial and the metropolitan New York Jewish community. I ask you to continue and, if possible, increase your support of our work during this season of Passover and throughout the coming year.

Wishing you a wonderful and meaningful Passover.

Fred Sugarman

HFBA Board of Directors Installed

On December 17, 2003, a new Board of Directors assumed the leadership of HFBA. **Fred Sugarman** of Riverdale became our new president. The other officers are:

Vice Presidents:

Andrew Feinman (Manhattan, East Side)
Stanley Kaplan (West Orange, N.J.)
Jack Weiss (Manhattan, Upper West Side)

Secretary:

Ethel Goldberg (Long Beach)

Assistant Secretary:

William Kantrowitz (Long Beach)

Treasurer:

Fred Kornreich (Manhattan, East Side)

Board Directors:

Brian Alter (Teaneck), Bjorn Bamberger (Long Beach), Rabbi Moshe Gottesman (Oceanside), Jack M. Gross (Manhattan, Upper West Side), Andrea Harris (Riverdale), Howard Millendorf (Riverdale), Irving Waxman (West Hempstead)

HFBA Helps

A call from an NYPD missing person's detective started us on our own detective work about the Steicher twins, both ex-cons and drug addicts. Irv Steicher, who had died at the age of 45 from AIDS, was slated for burial in City Cemetery where his brother Tom had been buried in 2001. Some sleuthing revealed a sister living in New Jersey who, though unable to help financially with the burial, confirmed that the brothers were Jewish and had had yeshiva educations as children. HFBA arranged Irv's burial, leaving the adjacent plot for Tom who will be disinterred and reburied next to his brother.

Rena Cott, a woman in her 70's, was a character larger than life. Married nine times, she adopted different religions to get benefits from various faith-based charities. When she died, her neighbor contacted HFBA, certain that Rena was Jewish. Our investigation located a priest who confirmed that although she "hung out" at his church, Rena was indeed Jewish. In the end, claimed by her own religious brethren, Rena Cott was buried as a Jew.

** Names have been changed to protect the privacy of our clients.*

For more information on our services or to find out how you can help, please call (212) 239-1662.



Mailbox

Letters such as these remind us that every person has a story, even when the end is sad and solitary.

Thank you so much for arranging F's burial. I know he is pleased to be near his parents. He was very devoted to them. Thank you for comforting me. You have a very comforting voice.

Sincerely, N.G.

My heart overflows with thanks observing my beloved son's grave—the grief never subsides. He was a very special son and friend. Please accept this small token of appreciation in his memory.

Sincerely, Mrs. S.M.

I feel impelled (*sic*) to say thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Leave Your Mark program, by accepting a small contribution towards it. It is an excellent idea for it permits people of even the most modest means, or perhaps on fixed incomes, to be a part of a meaningful project.

Very truly yours, F.B.D.

Volunteers Needed!

Volunteers are always needed to help clean and clear debris from our two cemeteries, Silver Lake and Mt. Richmond on Staten Island. This spring, the freshman class of the Torah Academy of Bergen County (TABC), the Caldwell Chapter of United Synagogue Youth, Congregation Agudath Israel of West Essex and a UJA-Federation of New York Young Leadership Group have all arranged dates with HFBA to perform this act of *chesed*.

Groups and individuals are welcome! Please contact Amy Koplou at the HFBA office (212-239-1662) to schedule a visit.

Avi Olitzky: HFBA's Rabbinic Intern



Our new rabbinic intern aspires to be a “Renaissance man,” one who can learn, teach, write, and serve the community in many different ways. Avi Olitzky, a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, decided that he had to get out “from under the pile of books” and commit himself in a practical way to the Jewish community. His dean at JTS, Rabbi Mychal Springer, recommended a semester working for the Hebrew Free Burial Association several hours a week as he continues his studies.

As fate would have it, this proved to be a good “*shidduch*” (match), with a sign from above. During a perusal of some of HFBA’s old records, Avi came across paperwork about Abraham Olitzky, a baby buried in 1905. The family believes that this is the child after whom Avi’s grandfather was named.

Avi’s background includes a childhood growing up in South Brunswick, N.J., learning about Judaism from his father, a Reform rabbi. He completed the joint Columbia College/JTS program with degrees in Sociology and Talmud and Rabbinics. His past experience working with children and teenagers will be put to good use as he develops an outreach program for HFBA aimed at these groups. Avi intends to target youth from schools, synagogues, USY, NCSY and NIFTY to heighten their awareness of *tzedakah* (charity) and *chesed* (acts of loving kindness). He hopes to inspire them to include HFBA in their first philanthropic efforts and to encourage them to give time helping out at the HFBA cemeteries, cleaning and clearing debris.

Surprised by how busy the HFBA office is, Avi realized that each phone call represented a call for help. He began to recognize the huge need of the Jewish community in matters regarding death. He finds his exposure to HFBA “humbling” and believes that HFBA’s work is especially important since it “saves people from anonymity—if they were forgotten in life, they will not be forgotten in death.”

Donate Your Car to HFBA

Perform the greatest mitzvah by providing burial for indigent Jews. Receive an IRS tax deduction as allowable by law. HFBA will arrange pickup of your car. To participate in this mitzvah please contact us at (212) 239-1662



Details about our next Breakfast in Riverdale will be announced soon.

If you can organize a fundraising Breakfast for HFBA in your community, please call the HFBA office at (212) 239-1662.

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

The Russian Digest, translated summaries of the articles appearing in this issue of Chesed, appears below.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

Дела Доброты

Неожиданно маленькая Дебора Б. оказалась летящей по воздуху. После того как она была сброшена с поезда, идущего в Аушвиц, Дебору спасла и воспитала добропорядочная нееврейская семья. Эти же люди рассказали ей о ее еврейском происхождении. Позже Дебора вышла замуж и родила пятерых детей. Дети не были близки с родителями. Дебора заболела множественным склерозом. Ее преданный, но не имеющий никаких средств муж обратился в HFBA, чтобы похоронить Дебору. Он также оставил HFBA распоряжения на случай его собственной кончины.

Помощь от HFBA

Недавно в HFBA поступил звонок с просьбой похоронить еврея – бывшего заключенного. Он умер от СПИДа. Небольшое расследование выявило, что его брат-близнец был раньше похоронен на городском кладбище. В будущем HFBA эксгумирует его останки и перезахоронит их рядом с братом.

Рита К. была замужем девять раз! Пользуясь тем, что она собиралась принять ту или иную религию, Рита обращалась за материальной помощью в благотворительные общества, действующие в рамках этих религий. Недавно HFBA похоронила Риту. Перед похоронами мы провели расследование и убедились, что Рита К. была еврейкой.

Выборы нового Совета Директоров

Мы высоко оцениваем и благодарим нашего уходящего президента Bjorn Bamberger за его огромную работу в течение трех лет на благо HFBA. Fred Sugarman, новый президент Совета,

направит усилия Совета Директоров на кампанию по сбору средств от имени малоимущих евреев. Г-н Sugarman просит HFBA и общину продолжать оказывать и усиливать финансовую поддержку, так как необходимость в нашей помощи возрастает, и кладбища требуют более тщательного ухода.

Новый раввин-стажер

Avi Olitzky, студент Еврейской теологической семинарии, проводит образовательную работу среди детей и подростков от имени HFBA. Он поощряет их включить HFBA в сферу их благотворительной деятельности и помогать приводить в порядок наши кладбища. Avi был поражен тем, какую большую работу продельвает HFBA, что каждый телефонный звонок – это крик о помощи. Его впечатление – тот, кто, возможно, „был забыт в жизни, не будет забыт в смерти”.
Интересное совпадение: Avi считает, что один из найденных им старинных документов HFBA хранит запись о похоронах ребенка в 1905 г., именем которого был назван его, Avi, собственный дедушка!

Нам нужны волонтеры

Мы приглашаем группы и отдельных представителей общины посетить оба наших кладбища в Staten Island и помочь в уборке этих кладбищ. Если Вы хотите быть волонтерами, позвоните Amy Korlow в офис HFBA по телефону (212) 239-1662.

Нам пишут

Письма, подобные тем, которые приведены ниже, напоминают нам, что у каждого человека есть история жизни, даже если конец ее – печаль и одиночество.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

„ Спасибо Вам большое за то, что Вы похоронили Ф. Я знаю, что он счастлив, что покоится рядом со своими родителями. Он был очень близок с ними. Спасибо, что утешили меня... У Вас очень успокаивающий голос. Искренне, Н. Г. ”

„ Мое сердце переполнено благодарностью за то, что Вы не забываете ухаживать за могилой моего сына... (хотя) горе никогда не отступает. Он был таким особенным сыном и другом. Пожалуйста, примите этот

небольшой взнос в знак благодарности Вам и в память о нем. Искренне Ваша, М-с С.М. ”

„ Я чувствую себя обязанным сказать Вам спасибо за возможность участвовать в программе „Оставь свой знак”, и за то, что Вы приняли мой малый дар. Это прекрасный замысел, так как он позволяет даже людям с весьма скромным достатком или ограниченным в средствах стать участниками столь значимого проекта. Искренне Ваш, Ф. Б. Д. ”

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.

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. An additional call to our office can arrange for *kaddish* to be said for the eleven month mourning period.
- **“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.
- **Establish** a Perpetual *Yahrzeit Kaddish* for your loved one for a \$150 donation.
- **Sponsor** Perpetual Grave Care for an indigent’s grave for \$500.
- **Help out today by sending a donation in the enclosed envelope.**

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!