

Chesed

HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Volume 8/No. 2

April 1998 / Nisan 5758

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Chesed is published by the Hebrew Free Burial Association,
363 Seventh Avenue,
New York, NY 10001.
Telephone 212 239-1662
HFBA is a beneficiary of
UJA/Federation.

Restoration of Silver Lake Cemetery Moves Forward

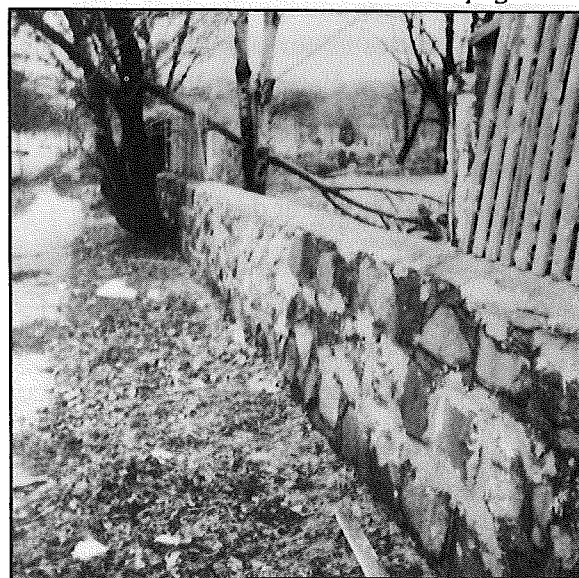
Silver Lake Cemetery, the first burial grounds owned by the Hebrew Free Burial Association, is slowly being restored to its former dignity.

Although burials are no longer taking place in Silver Lake Cemetery, also on Staten Island, the cemetery is an important part of our history and the history of the New York Jewish community as well as a consecrated burial ground. Maintaining the cemetery is a responsibility for the Association in perpetuity.

In the first part of the restoration, the stone wall that fronts the cemetery was recently repaired. This old stone wall had been severely damaged when a truck crashed into it on Halloween

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The old stone wall in the front of Mt. Richmond Cemetery was recently repaired. The wall, which had been damaged by a truck, was recemented, enhancing security and making the wall functional once again.





FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

As the Jewish Community Moves, So Do Our Donors

When the Hebrew Free Burial Association began over 110 years ago, it was a local charity in the fullest sense of the words. It was a local burial society, one of many in the New York area, that sprang up to fill a need within the community in which it was located. Our funds came from community residents, many of whom contributed by filling their *pushkas* with pennies and sending us the change.

In time, the agency changed, a result of shifting population, changing needs and the eventual shuttering of other burial societies in our city. In the end, the Hebrew Free Burial Association was the only burial society left. We stepped in to ensure that regardless of where a poor Jew lived, he or she could receive a traditional Jewish burial at death.

As our mission gradually changed, the organization's leadership wisely moved to expand fund raising as well, following the changing demographics. Still, we remained a local agency.

In the past few years, we have branched out even further, expanding our educational and fund

raising efforts to communities throughout the United States. At first glance, this might seem a bit overreaching; after all, why should a Jew in Los Angeles or Atlanta support a charity that buries Jews in New York?

The Hebrew Free Burial Association is not "just another charity"; its roots intermingle with the roots of communities thousands of miles away. Its history is the story of American Jewry. From the hundreds of thousands of Jews who stopped on the Lower East Side on the way to making more prosperous lives in other parts of the United States, to the

fifty five thousand who never succeeded in climbing out of the grinding poverty in which too many lived, there is nary a single community in the United States that cannot connect in some way to the beginnings of HFBA. Additionally, our historic cemeteries are pieces of American Jewish history. The rows of graves are testament to the "other side" of the American Jewish experience, the silent witness to poverty and the illness and premature death that it caused.

As we began to expand our fund raising efforts to other communities, we discovered that many of our cousins "out of town" understood and connected to

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Restoration of Silver Lake Cemetery

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The industrial-strength chain that separates Silver Lake Cemetery from adjoining property is part of a multi-faceted approach to deterring crime and safeguarding the cemetery.

night, 1996. After the accident the wall was unstable and unsightly. Using the same stones, the wall was recently reconstructed.

"The difference is dramatic," said Bjorn Bamberger, vice president of HFBA. "The wall is functional once again and provides the cemetery with the stately appearance one associates with an historic cemetery."

The stone wall is not the only perimeter barricade to be erected during the first phase of the renovation. The northern border of Silver Lake is now clearly marked by a industrial-weight link chain, which provides a clear demarcation between Silver Lake and Silver Mount Cemetery,

a non-Jewish cemetery which abuts our property.

"It is important for us to separate Silver Lake physically from all adjoining property," stated Howard Wallick, assistant secretary. "First, our tradition mandates that the boundaries of the cemetery be set and that the graves of Jews be kept separately. Second, we hope that the chain will deter the dumping of fallen branches, discarded flowers, grave covers and other natural growth from the neighboring cemetery onto our property. Third, it will discourage trespassers and provide perimeter security."

As part of a challenge grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg foundation, HFBA has pledged to restore Silver Lake Cemetery and is actively seeking individual, corporate and foundation sponsors for this purpose. The work will be completed over a three year period as funds are raised.

**Remembering the
Hebrew Free Burial
Association in your will
is as easy as inserting a
sentence into the
document. Call us at
212 239-1662
for more information.**

Chayei Sarah Campaign Expands Activities in 5758

Members of many communities in the Greater New York area now have the choice of contributing to the 5758 Chayei Sarah campaign in one of two ways: either donating through their synagogues' appeals or attending one of the many community events being coordinated by lay leaders throughout the year.

The goal of the community meetings is to make as many people as possible aware of the Hebrew Free Burial Association and its mission. Each meeting brings us closer to our goal of making HFBA a household word in community service, as ubiquitous as the other communal agencies taking care of needy New Yorkers.

Although the year 5758 is only a few months old, community breakfasts have already been held in Long Beach, Riverdale and Kew Garden Hills; evening meetings were held in Forest Hills, the Five Towns/Rockaway area and Westchester. Additional events are scheduled for later this year.

If you would like to help arrange a community meeting in your area, or if you are interested in hosting a Hebrew Free Burial Association speaker for your synagogue or organization, contact Sandra Wiesel, administrator, at 212 239-1662.

From Our Mailbox

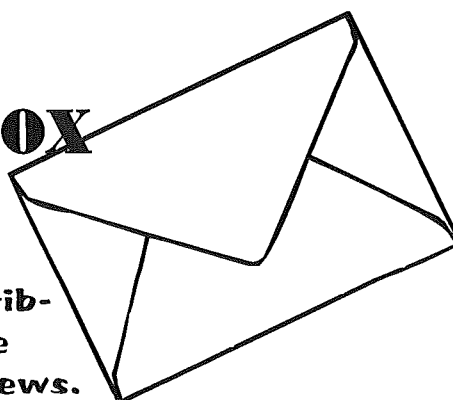
Dear Jack (Gross):

At this time it is our pleasure to contribute \$850 towards your good work. Please use it to provide burial services for poor Jews.

KAVOD is a non-profit tzedaka collective...Our goal is to support agencies that enable their clients to live in dignity and honor by enabling them to attain material, physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual well-being. As a tzedaka collective, we try to personalize our giving by visiting all our beneficiaries and encouraging our donors to do the same...We strive to operate as close to 0% overhead as possible and support only those programs that demand the same efficiency.

With shalom,

J.Z., Executive Director



Siyum Mishnayos Marks Another Year Of Study In Memory of Those Buried By HFBA

As part of the traditional mourning process in Judaism, many people take upon themselves the study of Torah and its related tracts during the mourning period. The learning of *Mishnayos*, six books of rabbinic commentary on the Torah, is usually undertaken by family and friends who wish to honor the memory of the deceased. Tradition teaches us that the study of the holy books will elevate the soul of the deceased, and many find that the learning process itself helps to work through the personal and communal grief when a member of the community is taken from us.

For the past six years, a number of men on the West Side of Manhattan has undertaken this extensive task in memory of those buried by

the Hebrew Free Burial Association during the previous year. The group, *Chevra Mishnayos Zichron Menachem*, includes more than 60 individuals and was originally organized by Jack D. Weiss, Esq., in memory of his late father Menachem, z'l.

This year's completion ceremony, or *Siyum Mishnayos*, celebrating the end of the learning cycle and commemorating the 400 men, women and children interred during the past year, was held on Sunday, January 11, 1998. Chaired by Hillel Gross, the event also paid tribute to two outstanding community leaders. Mendy Pollak received the Association's Anshei Chesed Award for his years of service to the Hebrew Free Burial Association and other community organizations. Rabbi Jacob J. Schachter, spiritual leader of The Jewish Center, received the Rabbinic Achievement Award in recognition of his decades of successful leadership on the West Side.

A Siyum of Firsts

This year's event marked the first time that the *Siyum Mishnayos* celebration took place at breakfast, rather than dinner. As part of a *siyum*, a festive meal must be served, and for many people, that means dinner. However, all who attended agreed that the combination of good food, inspiring rabbinic addresses and comradarie made the occasion especially joyous.

An Extended Family Finds a Friend at HFBA

Abe Rothman* had a substantial extended family, but they were truly spread out: only one lived within driving distance. His immediate family had died and he had only his nephew, Sammy, to look in on him every now and then.

He lived alone in a small apartment in a New York City housing development. During the last four years of his life, as he battled a number of age-related ailments, he was in and out of hospitals and nursing homes. He quickly depleted his savings. When he died, he was indigent. He had no will, no burial plot, and no resources for his funeral. All he had was Sammy and the number of the Hebrew Free Burial Association.

Sammy called us and we stepped in immediately. Abe's body was transported to a funeral home in Brooklyn and we arranged for his burial at Mt. Richmond Cemetery the next morning. Sammy stood with our Rabbi, Shmuel Plafker, as he intoned the traditional mourning prayers

over the grave, and was comforted as his uncle was laid to rest.

The story might end here, except that Abe Rothman's family keeps in touch through a family newsletter. Sammy alerted the editor, who published the news of Abe's death and funeral. Sammy described the circumstances surrounding the funeral to the editor, and noted that Abe's grave lacks a monument to mark it.

The family has begun its own internal *tzedaka* campaign to mark Abe's grave and those of other poor Jews buried in Mt. Richmond Cemetery. They hope to be able to sponsor several grave markers to help us reach our goal of placing a simple marker over every grave in Mt. Richmond Cemetery by the year 2000.

** Mr. Rothman's real name and some identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of our client and his family.*

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

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our mission. Fifteen percent of our donors now hail from thriving communities far from New York, including California, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Florida, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Texas. In the past year, we have added 1,000 new friends and supporters from these and other states.

In this era of government "downsizing" and shrinking social service budgets, it is crucial that the Hebrew Free Burial Association retain its ability to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of our poorest brethren in their times of need.
