



The Hebrew Free Burial Association

Chesed

Volume 9 • Number 3
June 2001 • Sivan 5761

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As always, we welcome your comments. Please write to us at 363 Seventh Avenue, New York, NY 10001, call 212-239-1662 or send us email at hebrewfreeba@aol.com

Acts of Chesed

HFBA Provides a Final Resting Place for Homeless Jews

Recently HFBA buried Emma B., a forty three year old woman who passed away in a health care center for the terminally ill. Prior to her stay in the health care center, Emma had been living on the streets, after ending a marriage to an abusive man. Emma's case came to the attention of the city's social service agencies, which enrolled her in the Workfare program. Through the program, Emma was connected with an attorney's office, for which she performed messenger and secretarial work. Despite the fact that she was working, Emma was still unable to afford rent in a permanent apartment, and was forced to seek shelter on the streets.

When Emma passed away, the attorneys she worked for contacted a number of Jewish burial societies, none of which would bury the body because Emma was not a paid member. The attorneys then contacted HFBA, which immediately arranged for a funeral. Employees at the office at which Emma worked remember her as a caring woman, who despite her own difficult circumstances, always gave money to those less fortunate than herself. Through her kindness, Emma touched the lives of many. Over twenty people attended her funeral, at which the *kaddish* prayer was recited. On the day following the funeral, HFBA received a phone call from one of the

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Chesed is published by
The Hebrew Free Burial Association
363 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001
Telephone (212) 239-1662



UJA-FEDERATION OF NEW YORK

Message from our President

Bjorn Bamberger

The Hebrew Free Burial Association began in the 1880's as a free burial society serving the residents of the Lower East Side of Manhattan and was incorporated as a non-profit institution in 1889. In the first years of the Association, needy Jews were buried in a cemetery in Queens. With time, the needs of the community grew and the Association bought a cemetery at Silver Lake, Staten Island. A second cemetery - Mount Richmond, in Staten Island, was procured in the early twentieth century. This cemetery is still in use today.

We bury *any* Jew who does not have the means to provide for his or her own funeral. All burials are conducted in strict accordance with Jewish tradition. We will not permit our brothers and sisters to be buried in a mass grave on Potter's Field. Such burials are in direct violation of Jewish tradition. Fifty years after the Holocaust it would be a moral outrage for any Jew to be unceremoniously forsaken in a mass grave.

In 1911 we buried twenty two out of the one hundred and forty six women who died in the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire. These women were young laborers whose families could not afford the costs of burial. The Hebrew Free Burial Association was there for them in their time of need. Walking through the cemetery and seeing the plaques on their graves is a reminder of the struggles of our parents and the ways in which HFBA reached out - and still reaches out - to help Jews in times of sorrow.

Since its inception, HFBA has buried approximately sixty thousand indigent Jews. I often think about the lives of these individuals. How many of them died alone in apartments, hospitals, nursing homes or even on the streets of New York? How many died surrounded by loving families and friends? These sixty

thousand souls were united only by their religion and their poverty.

Many are the laws and customs that from time immemorial are associated with the care of the departed Jew. We consider our service and caring a holy act, and it is for this reason that those involved in burying the dead are called a "*chevra-kadisha*" - a holy society. HFBA is available day and night all year round, always ready to arrange a burial with the appropriate *tabara* (cleansing) and *shmira* (guarding of the body) required by Jewish law. We perform the same services for our indigent clients that any other Jew would receive.

HFBA realizes that caring for the dignity of the deceased extends beyond the day of burial. Many of the families we serve are too poor to afford continual gravesite maintenance. A donation of \$500 will ensure perpetual care for a grave. Donors will receive a written document detailing the history of the individual whose grave they are caring for. Caring for the upkeep of a grave is a wonderful way to participate in the *mitzvah* of *kavod hamet* - honoring the deceased.

Several years ago we started a "*Leave Your Mark*" campaign. Gifts of \$150 - the sum needed to purchase and erect an engraved headstone, are acknowledged with a beautiful framed certificate. Contributors of four or more headstones (\$600 or more) are recognized on a distinguished plaque at the Mount Richmond Cemetery Chapel.

I want to thank each and every one of you for your generous contribution. Your understanding and concern for our work is truly commendable.



Schools, Synagogues and Community Centers Participate in Cemetery Beautification

Early this spring, HFBA received a call from Sheila Lipton, the Assistant Director of the Jewish Community Center of Staten Island.

Sheila had been searching for the graves of her immigrant grandparents for some time with little success. It occurred to her that perhaps the century-old HFBA had been involved in their burial. Since its inception, HFBA has kept careful records of every person buried in its cemeteries. The records were consulted, and as it turns out, Sheila's grandparents were buried in HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery in Staten Island, just minutes from where Sheila currently works. After years of being uncertain of the location of the final resting place of her grandparents, Sheila was able to visit their gravesite and honor their memory.

"...aiding in the upkeep of HFBA's cemeteries provides a unique opportunity to teach youth about the value of chesed shel emet."

Moved by the role HFBA played in her family's history, Sheila wished to contribute meaningfully to the organization. As the Assistant Director of a Jewish Community Center she was in a unique position to do so. Sheila put us in contact with another staff member at the JCC who is arranging for a group of teenagers to visit Silver Lake Cemetery this summer and

take part in its upkeep. The involvement of the teenagers will be a worthy tribute to the memory of Sheila's grandparents.



Students from the Torah Academy of Bergen County working at Silver Lake Cemetery

Other organizations have recognized that aiding in the upkeep of HFBA's cemeteries provides a unique opportunity to teach youth about the value of *chesed shel emet* and the importance of the *mitzvah* of burying the dead. HFBA is grateful for the work of volunteers who care enough to donate their time to ensure that our cemeteries retain their grace and cleanliness. Our volunteers are grateful for the opportunity to participate hands-on in an important *mitzvah*.

This year, students from both the Westchester Hebrew

High School and Torah Academy of Bergen County spent hours cleaning up our Silver Lake Cemetery in Staten Island. HFBA's first cemetery, Silver Lake was acquired in the late nineteenth century. The students helped to ensure that the historic graves remain in respectful condition. In March, Temple Israel Reform Congregation and Temple Emanuel, both in Staten Island, sent volunteers to participate in cemetery beautification. HFBA would like to thank all those who gave of their time to help upkeep our cemetery. To find out how your organization can get involved in cemetery maintenance please contact HFBA Executive Director Amy Koplów at 212-239-1662.

HFBA Hosts 3 Successful Breakfasts

This year, HFBA organized 3 community breakfasts to help raise funds so that we can continue our work in caring for the deceased.

The annual West Side *siyum mishnayos* was held on January 28th at Congregation Ohab Tzedek. This year's *siyum* was dedicated to the memory of Rabbi Zev Tzvi Vorhand z"tl. Each year, participants in the *siyum* study *mishna* in memory of those buried by HFBA, and in commemoration of those who perished in the Holocaust.



Mr. Bjorn Bamberger,
HFBA President (left) and
Mr. Marvin Bienenfeld (right)

On February 25th the annual Long Beach breakfast was held at the Young Israel of Long Beach. The guest of honor was Mr. Marvin Bienenfeld,

who received HFBA's *Anshei Chesed* Award. The breakfast was graced with guest speaker Rabbi Moshe Bane.

As we headed into spring, the annual Riverdale breakfast was held on April 22nd at the Riverdale Jewish Center. Yocheved Liss received HFBA's *Chesed* Award, and Jane S. Flechner received the Community Service Award.

HFBA extends a hearty *mazal tov* to all of the honorees. We would like to thank those who aided in organizing the breakfasts and all those who attended. Your participation is what made these breakfasts a true success.

The Epitome of A Mitzvah

A Reflection by State Senator Carl Kruger

Sometimes you are not aware of life's small miracles until adversity strikes. I would like to tell you about one such miracle.

Recently, a devoted member of my district office staff passed away suddenly at the age of fifty eight. A hard worker with a quick mind, the proud gentleman left this world with few survivors and without the means to ensure a proper Jewish burial.

"This important but unheralded organization steps in when family and friends cannot."

We knew, however, that he deserved nothing less.

That's when we learned about the Hebrew Free Burial Association, a century-old organization

that provides a Jewish funeral and private cemetery plot to needy individuals whose fate in death would otherwise be uncertain. This important but unheralded organization steps in when family and friends cannot. With the help of private donations — donations that are never in ample supply — the Hebrew Free Burial Association offers one last measure of support and pride to impoverished Jews who never wavered in their faith in G-d despite life's daunting obstacles.

We traveled to Mount Richmond Cemetery on Staten Island, the cemetery owned by the Hebrew Free Burial Association, to recall the life and work of our good friend during a prayer-filled graveside service. Thanks to the work of the Hebrew Free Burial Association, our valued colleague can now rest in peace and we can properly honor his memory.

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!**

Final Resting Place for Homeless Jews ...continued from page 1

attorneys with whom Emma used to work. Moved by the meaningful funeral, the attorney expressed his gratitude to an organization ready to care for those who could not even afford shelter.

Early this year HFBA was contacted by a woman regarding the case of Sam H., a forty six year old homeless man who passed away on the street. The woman's father had looked after Sam, who lived in a parking lot adjacent to a bar in an outer borough of New York. As Sam had no official address, his social security check would arrive at the bar. When Sam attempted to claim it, he was often beaten or forced to leave without his check. He spent his days in the parking lot and on the streets, begging for handouts and searching for food. He had no family, and little else is known of his life. The woman who found his body originally called a commercial funeral home, which refused to take the case, and referred her to HFBA. HFBA was able to provide a final resting place for a man who had no home.

These two cases represent an increasing percentage of HFBA's clients - Jews too impoverished to afford a permanent home. While some are aided by the city or other organizations, the assistance only goes so far. Checks from Social Security or Workfare programs are often not enough to make ends meet. In some cases individuals have been living on the streets since childhood, in others, tragic life events forced otherwise comfortable individuals onto the streets. In all cases, homeless Jews are left to beg for money and food, without a place to call home.

"HFBA was able to provide a final resting place for a man who had no home."

The cases that HFBA receives represent only a small number of the actual cases of homeless Jews in New York City. HFBA is called only when there is a caring relative, friend, or hospital worker who deems it important that a homeless Jew receive a proper Jewish burial. No doubt many homeless Jews are not this fortunate. The problem of homeless Jews is one which the Jewish community need grapple with seriously. HFBA is proud to continue its work providing those who found no shelter in life with a lasting resting place.

HFBA is in need of donations of *tallesim*. It is a Jewish custom to bury men wrapped in a *tallis*. Donating a used *tallis* to HFBA is a wonderful way of extending the life of a holy object. Please contact our office at 212-239-1662 to make arrangements to donate your *tallesim*.

Leave your Mark

Remembering the Children

Several years ago, HFBA embarked upon a campaign to provide grave markers for unmarked graves in our cemeteries. Our first priority is to mark the graves of children, most of which date to the early twentieth century. Their families too poor to afford a funeral, the graves of Jewish immigrant children were left unmarked. Many of the children died of the hunger and disease that plagued new immigrants to this country. HFBA strives to ensure that the memory of these children is forever etched in stone.

We are pleased to announce that the following names have been added to our *Leave Your Mark* Donor Plaque in the Weinberg Chapel at Mt. Richmond Cemetery:

Mrs. Robin Klass Anforth	Mr. Bernard R. Kling
Mr. and Mrs. Reuben Barkus	Ms. Judith Markowitz
Ms. Evelyn T. Baron	Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mengrone
Mrs. Shirley Beheshti	Mr. and Mrs. Daniel J. Ordan
Mr. and Mrs. Dani Blendis	Mr. and Mrs. Steven J. Pfeffer
Mr. Menachem David	Mrs. Mina Halpern Raskin
Mr. and Mrs. Elliot Dweck	Mr. and Mrs. James P. Roberts
Ms. Laura Naus	Dr. and Mrs. Richard A. Rosen
Mr. and Dr. Mordecai Friedman	Rabbi and Mrs. Jonathan I. Rosenblatt
Mr. and Mrs. Alan E. Goldberg	Mr. Jerome Shindelman
Ms. Dianne Golub	Mr. and Mrs. Jerome L. Sindler
Mr. Joseph Gurwin – J. Gurwin Foundation Inc.	Dr. Steven C. Tawil
Mr. Morris Kitchner	Mrs. Deborah Tolchin
	Mr. and Mrs. Neil S. Waldman

Remembering The Hebrew Free Burial Association in your will is easy.

Call **212-239-1662**

for information on how you can continue to ensure that every
Jew receives a respectful Jewish burial.