

COUNTING DOWN THE DAYS...

Challenge Grant About to End!

When this issue of *Chesed* lands in your mailbox, there are just days before the bell rings on our historic challenge grant.

We've been given a year to raise \$500,000 in major gifts of \$5,000 and above. If we succeed, we'll get an additional \$250,000 from an anonymous donor.

THE FUNDS ARE URGENTLY NEEDED!

We'll be using this grant to ensure that every indigent Jew is buried with dignity. We will comfort the mourners – if, indeed, there are any – and help them through these timeless rituals. With the number of burials rising each year, we will be preparing new sections of our

Mount Richmond Cemetery. And we will see to it that every grave has a headstone.

It costs us \$5,400 for each decedent's funeral, burial, and cemetery costs at Mount Richmond Cemetery.

Those we bury at Mount Richmond Cemetery are often Holocaust survivors, many of whom were left behind in nursing homes, without resources and without family.

This is our last chance to make the most of this challenge grant – please join us today, if you can. While all gifts are gratefully accepted, **your gift of \$5,000 will yield \$7,500 to HFBA.** Every dollar counts!



SPOTLIGHT ON: RICHARD FISHMAN HFBA Board Member



"I have had so many opportunities to do *mitzvot*," says HFBA Board member Richard Fishman, "working with families to have their loved ones buried quickly and with dignity."

For some 18 years, Fishman served as Director of the Division of Cemeteries, under the jurisdiction of New York's Department of State. During his tenure, Fishman uncovered corruption in the cemetery industry, referring his discoveries to the State Attorney General. He streamlined the bureaucracy, trying to make it easier for the cemeteries to function. Although Jewish cemeteries, run by religious institutions, are not regulated by the

state's Division of Cemeteries, Fishman worked with Jewish leaders to create uniform policies, to which all 1800 non-profit New York State Jewish cemeteries signed on.

Fishman believes that there are major challenges facing the Jewish community regarding burial practices. One is "the diversity of attitudes regarding observance and ritual. Traditional cemeteries have to contend with a variety of burial practices including cremation and burying intermarried couples together." Both are often incompatible with the cemetery's practices or unacceptable to the local Jewish community.

Fishman also notes that family dysfunction appears on the rise. The fault lines can be seen among family members when it comes to funerals and burials. He recalled one case in which one sibling took a firm position against the wishes of the other two over the marking of their mother's

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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 metropolitan area dedicated to assuring that every Jew, regardless of financial means or religious affiliation, receives a dignified, traditional Jewish funeral and burial.



HFBA receives many letters from people who have had experience with our organization. Below are recent examples.

This letter is long overdue. I just want to tell you how grateful my daughter and I are for your help with my father's funeral. I don't know what we would have done without your organization during our time of need. To put it bluntly, we were in a desperate situation.

The morning my father died, I did not have the \$10,000 to pay what our local commercial funeral home was demanding from us. While we are not poor, we are far from rich and it was impossible for me to pay such a high amount all at once. Also, my father did not have a life insurance policy from which I could draw the funds.

I don't know what we would have done without your organization... we were in a desperate situation.

We did not have the money because of something my father, an exceptional human being who was very kind-hearted and generous, insisted on doing. For the three years prior to his death, he had been sending money every month to his friend and business partner of 55 years. His friend could not meet the mortgage payments on his home and this elderly man and his wife would have been thrown out on the street had it not been for the monthly sums my dad and I were sending him.

Without you, I may have had to do the unthinkable with my beloved father's remains – have them buried in potter's field or donate his body for medical research. Thanks to you he received a beautiful and dignified Jewish funeral. The respect and care shown to him, myself and my daughter is something I will never forget. Rabbi Plafker took so much time with me, not only to comfort me, but

to give me guidance about the mourning process. The members of the volunteer minyan who brought my father to the cemetery and helped to bury him were so kind and caring. They asked questions about who my father was and how he lived his life. For that, I am eternally grateful.

While I am struggling right now, I will make sure to send you small donations regularly so that other families may benefit from the help you gave us.

*Best regards,
Julie Anne Schwartz*

As a World War II veteran, I have to commend you for your ongoing efforts to those families who need the help of HFBA. Your continued work to ensure a Jewish burial for members of families who cannot afford it is a G-dly deed.

HFBA is like the Honor Guards of the United States military. They serve their fellow veterans in time of need as you serve fellow Jews in their time of need.

*Sincerely,
George S.**

I just wanted to express my tremendous gratitude for the services HFBA provides. My family buried my grandmother 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

I imagine your organization hears this often...Your organization provides the ultimate mitzvah.

your organization hears this often but it bears repeating: Your organization provides the ultimate mitzvah. I will be making a donation to show my indebtedness. It's not much but I feel the need 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.

Sharon M.*

*Names have been changed and letters edited for clarity and to protect confidentiality.

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SPOTLIGHT ON: RICHARD FISHMAN

grave. Because of her extreme antipathy towards her deceased mother, one sister refused to authorize a stone which needed her permission to be erected. This case has, as have others, dragged on for years.

During his career with the Division of Cemeteries, Fishman met HFBA executive director Amy Koplow. When he retired, he joined the HFBA Board because of his respect for HFBA's work with the indigent. "(HFBA's mission," says Fishman, "dating back 127 years, to bury every Jew properly is noble and important. They do it

with complete sincerity and really care about what they do. Being on the Board has allowed me to see the hard work and dedication of the HFBA staff who have to deal with a myriad of issues before a burial can take place. This commitment is based upon Jewish tradition that requires that every Jew have a respectful burial. Personally, I have provided whatever knowledge and experiences I gained from my State service, but the religious aspect of what we are doing doesn't escape me. There is an imperative in getting it right – a *tahara*, a *minyan*, the marking of the grave – all of it and more. Whatever I can do to add to these *mitzvot*, I will try my best."

HFBA is grateful to be able to benefit from Richard Fishman's time, expertise and dedication.



Oscar died while under hospice care at the age of 85 years. He had owned an art gallery for many years in Greenwich Village and was proud of his knowledge about Jews in the fields of art and music. Upon his death, his friend Joe called HFBA, certain that Oscar would have wanted a Jewish burial. HFBA managed to contact his brother, Lawrence who expressed a preference for cremation with a scattering of the ashes in the Massachusetts town in which they had grown up. After discussions with Joe and the HFBA staff, Lawrence agreed to an HFBA burial. Burial was arranged and Lawrence participated by phone at the funeral.

About two months later, mail that HFBA had sent Lawrence in Boston was returned, marked "Deceased." HFBA contacted authorities in Boston and discovered that although Lawrence had died a month prior at the age of 72, he was still not buried! Working through the Massachusetts authorities, it was concluded that no one

was interested in, or able to, pay burial costs. HFBA had Lawrence's body transported to New York and he was buried near his brother at Mount Richmond Cemetery. Lawrence had been divorced and had no remaining relatives. He had written several books under a pen name and had tried his hand at serious fiction and poetry. His ex-wife described him as "a kind, good person, a true humanist" who suffered from recurring bouts of depression which intensified after his brother's death.

Igor had immigrated to the United States at the age of 22. He had married and had two daughters. At the time of his death at the age of 58 from complications of alcoholism, he and his wife had a home for which they had not paid the mortgage for over a year and the wife had filed for personal bankruptcy. HFBA assumed the costs of the burial. No family members attended the funeral.

Donald's body was in the city morgue for five months before HFBA learned of his death and took action to bury him. Prior to his mother moving to Florida, Donald had lived with her and she helped care for her son who suffered from muscular dystrophy. He then moved into a rehabilitation center with help from an aide who may have stolen his social security payments. At the time of his death, both his mother and brother had already died. With no funds available to defray the cost of burial, Donald was buried at Mount Richmond Cemetery. The HFBA volunteer *minyan* participated in the funeral.

Names changed to protect confidentiality.

IN THE *News*



Andrew Parver,
Director of Operations
for Hebrew Free Burial Association has been with the organization since 2004. He is a graduate of Yeshiva University and lives in New Milford, NJ with his wife and three children.

Andrew was recently profiled in *Mishpacha* Magazine. Below are excerpts from the article.

Why it's so important for everyone to have a "death plan:" "So often when someone dies, the family is scrambling to figure out where the funeral will be, if there is a grave, what would the deceased have wanted. All too often, they make emotional decisions that can set them out significant amounts of money. Even those with family and with adequate financial resources should have this arranged – it can be decades ahead of time – so when the time comes, all that's needed is one call to the funeral home, and the family can focus on grieving and not on detailed arrangements. Having a plan in place can also preempt conflict between family members."

The easiest part of training for this job:

"I started at HFBA when I was in college. It was a random summer internship. I saw the tremendous work being done and I wanted to be part of it, so after I graduated from college and began working for HFBA full-time, I received my master's degree in Public Administration. I'm now a few months away from becoming a licensed funeral director. But the best training has been the day-to-day work, because I started with the menial yet important tasks – data entry, digitizing old records, processing the mail and bringing it to the post office – I fully appreciate the importance of every part of the organization, even as I've moved up the ladder."

Reprinted with permission from Mishpacha, www.mishpacha.com

The full interview may be seen at www.hebrewfreeburial.org/dayinthelife

THANK YOU TO... ...the following school groups

- Solomon Schechter School of Westchester
- Hebrew Academy of the Five Towns and Rockaway High School (HAFTR)
- Solomon Schechter School of Queens
- The Frisch School
- Torah Academy of Bergen County (TABC)
- Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls (SKA)
- Rambam Mesivta



Solomon Schechter School of Queens



The Frisch School



Solomon Schechter School of Westchester



Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls (SKA)

....and community volunteers who came on November 8th's Fall *Chesed* Day for helping to clean and clear debris at Silver Lake Cemetery.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

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

Нам пишут

HFBA часто получает письма от людей, имевших дело с нами. Вот одно из писем.

Мне нужно было написать вам давно. Хочу выразить благодарность, которую испытываем я и моя дочь за вашу помощь в организации похорон моего отца. Не могу представить, что бы мы делали в это трудное для нас время. Честно говоря, наша ситуация была отчаянной.

В тот день, когда умер мой отец, у меня не было десяти тысяч долларов, которые запросило наше местное коммерческое похоронное бюро. Хотя мы не бедны, я не могла заплатить столь значительную сумму сразу. К тому же у моего отца не было страховки, из выплат по которой я могла бы заплатить за похороны.

Денег у нас не было потому, что мой отец, человек исключительной доброты и щедрости, за три года до смерти настоял на том, чтобы выплачивать обязательства по ипотеке за своего друга и партнера по бизнесу, с которым их связывали 55 лет дружбы. Мой отец и я высылали деньги каждый месяц, и без этих денег престарелый друг моего отца и его жена оказались бы на улице.

Поэтому без помощи HFBA я бы наверно рассматривала и недопустимые варианты – похоронить моего любимого отца в общей могиле кладбища для бедняков или передать его тело для медицинских исследований. Но благодаря вам мой отец удостоился торжественного, традиционного еврейского погребения. Я никогда не забуду те знаки уважения, которые оказывали покойному и нам с дочерью участники похоронной церемонии. Ваш раввин, г-н Плафкер, провел со мной много времени не только для моральной поддержки, но и чтобы рассказать о еврейской традиции, связанной со скорбью по усопшим. Добровольцы-члены миньяна, которые несли тело моего отца к могиле и помогали с погребением, тоже были необыкновенно заботливы и добры. Они спрашивали о том, кем был мой отец, и как он прожил свою жизнь. Я буду всегда благодарна за это.

Хоть нам сейчас тяжело, я буду регулярно высылать небольшие пожертвования, чтобы другие семьи могли и дальше получать от вас помощь.

Всего наилучшего,
Джули Энн Шварц

HFBA помогает

- Игорь К* иммигрировал в США в возрасте 22-х лет. Он женился, у него родились две дочери. Когда он умер в 58 лет от осложнений от алкоголизма, ипотека на дом Игоря и его жены не выплачивалась уже в течение года, и жена оформляла личное банкротство. HFBA взяло на себя расходы на погребение. Никто из членов семьи не приехал на похороны.

- Тело Дональда К. пролежало в городском морге пять месяцев, прежде чем HFBA узнало о ситуации и начало действовать. Оказалось, что Дональд жил со своей матерью. Он болел мышечной дистрофией, и мать помогала о нем заботиться. После переезда матери во Флориду Дональд перебрался в

реабилитационный центр с помощью социального работника, который по всей видимости забирая себе пособие Дональда.

Когда Дональд умер, ни его матери, ни его брата не было в живых. Дональд был похоронен на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд за счет HFBA, за неимением каких-либо других средств. Миньян из добровольцев участвовал в обряде погребения.

*имена изменены

Планирование на случай смерти

Директор Эндрю Парвер работает в Еврейском Благотворительном Похоронном Бюро с 2004 года, отвечая за каждодневные операции. Он окончил Университет Ешива и живет в Милфорде, штат Нью-Джерси, с женой и тремя детьми. Недавно журнал «Мишпах» посвятил Эндрю свою полосу. Вот выдержки из статьи «Почему важно иметь план на случай смерти»:

«Очень часто когда кто-то умирает, члены семьи в спешке решают где будут похороны, была ли зарезервирована могила на кладбище, какое погребение хотел бы усопший. Часто решение принимается эмоционально и стоит лишних денег. Даже те, у кого много родственников и достаточно средств, должны подготовить план своих похорон заранее, зачастую даже за много десятков лет. Затем, когда приходит печальное время, семье достаточно одного звонка в похоронное бюро, и не нужно будет думать об организационных подробностях. Составление такого плана заранее также предотвращает возможные конфликты между членами семьи».

Ричард Фишман, член Совета Директоров HFBA

Ричард Фишман проработал 18 лет в Управлении кладбищами штата Нью-Йорк. За это время он познакомился с исполнительным директором Еврейского Благотворительного Похоронного Бюро (HFBA) Эми Коплоу и узнал подробнее о работе Бюро. После выхода на пенсию г-н Фишман согласился стать членом Совета Директоров HFBA, так как был впечатлен миссией организации и стилем руководства г-жи Коплоу. «В течение 150-и лет», говорит г-н Фишман, «Бюро выполняет свою важную и благородную миссию – обеспечить каждому еврею достойные похороны. Сотрудники делают это с беззаветной искренностью и пониманием важности своей работы. Работа в Совете Директоров позволила мне увидеть вблизи отличную работу и самоотдачу Эми Коплоу и ее сотрудников, которые ежедневно решают множество проблем прежде, чем состоится каждое погребение. Эта их преданность работе соответствует еврейской традиции, требующей достойных похорон для каждого еврея. Со своей стороны, я счастлив делиться знаниями и опытом, приобретенными на государственной службе, и в то же время я многое узнал о религиозном аспекте работы HFBA. Есть множество предписаний о правильной последовательности погребения в соответствии с еврейской традицией: тахара (омовение), миньян (группа молящихся), пометка на могиле и многие другие. Я постараюсь сделать как можно больше, чтобы способствовать выполнению этих мицвот (заповедей)».

HFBA выражает искреннюю благодарность г-ну Ричарду Фишману за его преданность нашей организации.

Staten Island Community Breakfast

Sunday, December 20, 2015 • 9:30 a.m.

Young Israel of Staten Island

835 Forest Hill Road, Staten Island



Guest Speaker:

Rabbi Paysach Krohn

To make a reservation, please call the HFBA office (212) 239-1662

Chesed Shel Emet – HOW YOU CAN HELP

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 \$18 and can include a personalized message.

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.

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.

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.

VOLUNTEER with your friends, classmates, fellow group members, or family at Silver Lake Cemetery Chesed Days.

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.

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 65,000 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.



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