

Every Jew is Precious

This year, with the belief that every Jew deserves a dignified burial in *kever Yisrael*, HFBA launched the Mount Richmond Cemetery Mapping Project. The mapping helps visitors find the graves of family and friends with ease. Even more urgent, however, it helps us ensure that no Jew is lost, that we account for each one of our people.

Here's the story of one elderly Jewish woman, lost and then recovered after a decade, thanks to this project.

Marion and Sylvia G. lived together in Manhattan. Marion, the younger sister, cared for Sylvia who was suffering from dementia. But Marion, herself, was dying from cancer. She was admitted to hospice care and Sylvia was sent to a nursing home. Sylvia was 84.

Marion passed away in July 2006 and hospice asked us to bury her. When we learned that Marion had an elderly sister; we reserved the adjacent grave for Sylvia.



Aerial view of Mount Richmond Cemetery

Ten years passed. This summer we mapped section 70, where Marion is buried. We noticed Sylvia's plot and wondered what had become of her; it didn't seem likely that she was still alive, a decade later. We called Sylvia's social worker and nursing home. They had no record of her. We checked the Hart Island/City Cemetery website — and there she was. Sylvia had died only a month after her sister.

The Public Administrator had known the case of the G. sisters; we had worked with their office when Marion passed away. They should have notified us of Sylvia's death and told the morgue to release her to us. They didn't, however. Nor did they let anyone know that we had arranged to bury Sylvia. Since her body seemed to be unclaimed, the morgue sent Sylvia to City Cemetery six weeks after she passed away. Managed by the NYC Correction Department, City Cemetery is a mass burial ground: 15 in a grave, 3 burials deep.

Once we learned of Sylvia's fate, we arranged for her body to be disinterred from City Cemetery and laid to rest next to her sister. Ten years after her death, Sylvia was finally where she belonged.

What the Mount Richmond Cemetery Mapping Project Can Accomplish

1. Pinpointing the exact location of each grave – making it much easier for visitors;
2. Digitalization and verification of our records;
3. Identifying available plots for a far more efficient use of cemetery space and significant cost savings; and
4. Finding unmarked graves and ensuring that these burials are appropriately remembered.

Your help is urgently needed to complete Mount Richmond's mapping project. The cost to survey and catalog each section is \$5,000. **A gift of \$25,000 would cover the cost of mapping an entire decade of burials.**

THANK YOU TO...

...the following school groups

- ASHAR
- HAFTR High School
- Hebrew Academy of Nassau County
- Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls
- Rambam Mesivta
- Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey
- Solomon Schechter School of Queens
- Solomon Schechter School of Westchester High School
- Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls
- The Frisch School



Ma'ayanot
Yeshiva High
School for
Girls

...and *Chesed* Day volunteers

- Oheb Shalom Congregation Men's Club
- Forest Hills Jewish Center Men's Club
- Brooklyn Brandeis Society



Chesed Day
volunteers



HAFTR
High School

for helping to clean and clear debris at Silver Lake Cemetery!

Annual Young Leadership Event is Great Success!

On Thursday night, November 17th, 50 young adults came together to socialize, enjoy the delicious pairings of wines and cheeses from Montefiore Winery and The Cheese Guy and appreciate the art and music of Betzalel Cadena & Laurance Rassin. In a fun, convivial atmosphere, they, as "young leaders" were also eager to learn what they can do to support HFBA's important work. Ari Schwartz-Weitz, a new member of the HFBA Young Leadership Board, spoke about his newfound passion for HFBA and announced the launch of a yearlong campaign to raise \$10,000 from the young leadership community. A great time was had by all!



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 *Helps*



Paula T. was developmentally disabled and lived in a facility for many years. She had no family.

When Paula died in a hospital at the age of 62, her body was sent to the Medical Examiner. The Public Administrator's office "forgot" about her and only realized two months later that she had still not been buried. They called HFBA and we quickly arranged for burial with the volunteer *minyán* present. Although all relevant prayers were recited, it was not possible to deliver a meaningful eulogy as little was known about her life.

The G. family was known to HFBA since 1997 when Mikhail G. had called to have his wife buried by us after having lived in the United States for only five years. Subsequently, his sister, Olga, arranged the burial of her only child, dead from cancer at the age of 54 and then called us to bury Mikhail. In none of these cases was there any family money available for the burials.

Olga herself had lived for many years in a nursing home in Queens. She was born in Moldova, in the FSU and came to New York 25 years ago. We learned from the nursing home staff that Olga, mentally alert and physically active, was loved and respected by everyone with whom she interacted, staff and residents alike.

Sadly, there were no family members at her burial. Her only survivors were a second cousin who was recovering from heart surgery and a nephew in Israel who sent a eulogy about his aunt. Rabbi Plafker included the eulogy at Olga's funeral, attended by HFBA's volunteer *minyán*.

Abbie P. was born with Down syndrome and was institutionalized and denied by her family soon after birth. She spent many years living in the infamous Willowbrook State School in Staten Island. When that institution was closed in 1987, she was transferred to a group home for people similarly disabled. The staff of the home described her as a "pleasant individual who liked people and enjoyed everyday life." Upon her death at the age of 62, HFBA conducted Abbie's funeral with her roommate, another friend and two staff members from her group home in attendance.

Names changed to protect confidentiality.

Staten Island Community Breakfast

The annual Community Breakfast took place on Sunday, November 20, 2016 at the Young Israel of Staten Island. Over 140 people came to support HFBA and hear from guest speaker Rabbi Mordechai Becher. We are especially appreciative of the dedication of the neighbors of HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery.

Pictured (l to r): Andrew Parver, Director of Operations; Andrew Feinman, Board member; Rabbi Mordechai Becher; Amy Koplow, Executive Director; Paul Nagelberg, President; Rabbi Shmuel Plafker, Cemetery Chaplain; Scott Diamond, breakfast chair; Charles Greinsky, Board member; Mark Seitelman, Secretary of Capitol Funeral Service of NY.



РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

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

Каждый еврей ценен – составление карты кладбища Маунт Ричмонд

Ваша помощь требуется срочно для завершения картирования кладбища Маунт Ричмонд. Стоимость обследования и каталогизации одной секции кладбища составляет 5,000 долларов.

Картирование кладбища позволит посетителям легче найти могилы родных и близких. Это также поможет обеспечить каждого еврея достойными похоронами на еврейском кладбище и поможет учесть каждого, как это случилось с Сильвией Г*. Вначале ее похоронили на городском кладбище вместо зарезервированной могилы на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд рядом с ее сестрой Марион. Этим летом мы составили карту секции 70, где десять лет тому назад была похоронена Марион Г*. Мы обратили внимание на пустой участок рядом с могилой, который был зарезервирован для Сильвии. Мы удивились и заинтересовались тем, что случилось с Сильвией, поскольку она была старше Марион и страдала старческой деменцией в то время, когда скончалась Марион. Оказалось, что Сильвия была по ошибке похоронена на городском кладбище для бедняков (на острове Харт), всего через месяц после смерти сестры. Мы организовали извлечение ее тела с городского кладбища и упокоение на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд, рядом с сестрой. Таким образом, пусть и через десять лет, но Сильвия была наконец-то среди своих.

HFBA помогает

Пола Т* была умственно отсталой и жила много лет в спецзаведении. У нее не было семьи. Когда в возрасте 62-х лет она скончалась, ее тело было передано судмедэксперту по линии городского администратора. Это учреждение «забыло» о Поле и только два месяца спустя забеспокоилось, что тело до сих пор не погребено. Последовал звонок в HFBA, и наши сотрудники оперативно организовали погребение с участием миньяна из добровольцев. Все нужные молитвы были произнесены, хотя было трудно посвятить панегирик специально Поле, поскольку очень мало было известно о ее жизни.

В HFBA впервые узнали о семье Г* в 1997 году, когда Михаил Г. позвонил нам, чтобы организовать похороны своей жены, умершей спустя всего пять лет по приезде в Америку. Позже сестра Михаила, Ольга, организовала похороны своего единственного сына, умершего от рака в 54 года. А еще через некоторое время Ольга хоронила своего брата Михаила. Во всех этих случаях семья не могла даже частично оплатить похороны.

* имена изменены

Ваши истории

В нашей сентябрьской электронной рассылке мы просили вас поделиться своими историями о том, как HFBA повлияло на вас или ваших близких. Ниже мы приводим несколько рассказов, отредактированных для краткости и большей ясности.

Мои родители были долгое время в разводе, но моя мать знала, где находится магазин моего отца. Когда она увидела,

что магазин закрыт уже несколько дней, то попросила меня выяснить, в чем дело. Я поговорила с владельцами соседних бизнесов, пока кто-то не посоветовал обратиться в полицейский участок. Так я узнала, что мой отец скончался и был похоронен в безымянной могиле на городском кладбище для бедняков.

Это мучило меня, и я, работающая мать-одиночка, стала выяснять доступные мне варианты действий. Полицейские рассказали мне о Еврейском Благотворительном Похоронном Бюро (HFBA), о котором я до этого ничего не знала. Когда я позвонила и сообщила всю требуемую информацию, HFBA достало разрешения, необходимые для эксгумации на городском кладбище и перезахоронения на кладбище, принадлежащем HFBA. Сотрудники позаботились обо всем, и все было сделано по сниженной цене. В этих ужасных обстоятельствах HFBA было для меня как проблеск света.

Будьте благословенны

Марлен Д. Бертман, Лос Анжелес

Моя двоюродная сестра прожила трудную жизнь. Ее родители иммигрировали в Америку и требовали, чтобы она заботилась о них в старости. Что она и делала, ценой своей личной жизни и здоровья. Не вышла замуж, не завела детей, всегда жила одна. Проработав секретаршей у партнера крупной юридической фирмы, она вышла на пенсию и смогла наконец осуществить мечту всей жизни: пойти учиться в колледж. Она получила степень бакалавра по английской литературе, затем степень магистра по греческой мифологии.

Жизнь ее была полна потерь и отнюдь не мифологических трагедий, и постепенно это стало сказываться на ее здоровье. Со временем, когда стало ясно, что она не может жить одна, сестру перевели в дом для престарелых, оплачиваемый через программу медикейд. Когда она скончалась, нас спросили о каких-либо планах, касающихся похорон. К сожалению у нас не было ни планов, ни средств. Тогда социальный работник предложил нам связаться с Еврейским Благотворительным Похоронным Бюро. HFBA организовало похороны сестры по еврейскому обряду. Для ее покойного отца, ортодоксального еврея, это было бы невероятно важно.

HFBA также связалось с племянником и двоюродным братом сестры, и один из них смог приехать на похороны чтобы показать, что и в конце жизни семья не покинула ее. HFBA сделало всё возможное, чтобы этого не случилось. Мы всегда будем благодарны за вашу щедрость и доброту.

Д-р Лори Куслански

Мы благодарим все школьные группы и всех наших добровольцев, приходивших летом, осенью и в организуемый HFBA в 2016 году осенний день милосердия к усопшим на наше кладбище Сильвер Лейк, для расчистки зарослей и уборки мусора.

Счастливого Вам Хануки! Желаем всем, кто поддерживает HFBA, праздника, наполненного радостью и светом!

Your Stories

The HFBA September e-News asked our supporters to “tell us your stories” about how HFBA affected you or a loved one. Below are several accounts which have been edited for brevity and clarity.

My parents were divorced for a long while, but mom knew where dad’s business was. After a few days of seeing a closed store, she asked me to investigate. I spoke to many neighboring business owners and finally one suggested that I try the neighborhood police precinct. Soon I learned that my father had died and was buried as an indigent in potter’s field.

This tortured my soul, so as a young single working mother I started to research my options. The detectives told me about HFBA of which I had absolutely no knowledge. After calling to give all the required information, HFBA arranged for the permits required for the disinterment at potter’s field and the reburial at the HFBA cemetery. They took care of it all and at discounted fees. Under these awful circumstances, they became my rainbow.

G-d bless this organization.

Marlene J. Bertman
Los Angeles

A second cousin of ours lived a challenged life. Her immigrant parents relied on her to keep them going. She did so, at the cost of her own freedom and well-being. She never married nor had children and always lived alone. After retiring as a legal secretary to a top-notch law partner, she fulfilled a lifelong dream of going to college. She achieved a B.A. in English Literature and a Master’s degree focused on Greek Mythology. However, her life posed too much tragedy and loss for one person, and it took its toll.

The time came when it became apparent that she could no longer live alone. Her resources dwindled and no one could care for her, so she was transferred to a nursing home paid for by Medicaid.

When she died, we were notified and asked about her final arrangements. Sadly, there were none and no resources. A social worker at the nursing home suggested we contact the Hebrew Free Burial Association and we did. We arranged her funeral so she would have a proper Jewish burial, which would have meant the world to her Orthodox father. Her surviving nephew and cousin were contacted and one was able to attend the funeral to show her that her family did not abandon her at the end. And neither did the HFBA. We will be forever grateful for your generosity and mercy.

Dr. Laurie Kuslansky

My mother thought all her funeral costs would be covered since she paid monthly to a place that promised her so. When she passed, I called the phone number on the policy. They told me just a small amount would be paid by them. I was frantic since I did not have any money to pay the remainder. I called Hebrew Free Burial and spoke to a wonderful woman named Mrs. Stein, coincidentally also my mother’s name. Mrs. Stein worked throughout the night to make the arrangements. She arranged for a rabbi, a casket, and a gravesite. I was amazed and extremely grateful.

This organization is wonderful. What a mitzvah to do this for those of us who cannot afford a proper burial and service for our loved ones!

Anonymous

My husband and I talked about funerals we had attended many times. We both said we wanted simple services, plain pine caskets and as little pomp as there could be. When he passed away, I was astounded by the cost!! Charges upon charges kept being added on to the bill and I wondered how people less fortunate than I could afford to bury a loved one. Plan A turned into Plan A++++ before you could take a breath. That was when I first contributed to the Hebrew Free Burial Association and will continue to do so. A Jew should be able to be buried according to his tradition.

Anonymous

We want to hear your stories too! Please send them to: stories@hebrewfreeburial.org

HAPPY CHANUKAH!

Wishing our community of HFBA supporters a holiday filled with light and joy!



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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