

Alone

What does it mean to die truly alone? What happens to a person who leaves this earth without friends and without family, without a will or final instructions and completely destitute? These are the individuals who need us the most. We handle over 130 such burials each year, about one-third of our caseload.

First comes the call. Usually, we hear from a neighbor, the landlord, a rabbi or a social worker. In some especially difficult cases, we hear from the Medical Examiner. At times, bodies are held there for weeks or months before there's a call; the ME's office is a busy one. We will hear from the Medical Examiner if the decedent has a Jewish name and/or a circumcision. Usually, there's nothing else to go on.

When no next of kin steps forward to make funeral arrangements, we contact the borough's Public Administrator. The PA's office is connected to the borough's Surrogate's Court and serves in place of next-of-kin when there is none. It is the PA's role to search the decedent's apartment – to look for a will, an address book, and bank account. Most often, nothing is found.

At the same time, we do our own research. We comb genealogy websites and other resources looking for family members.

Time is not on our side. If we cannot establish a Jewish identity, the person will be sent to city cemetery – the modern equivalent of a potter's field, a mass grave. We ask the PA for permission to hold the body, so that we know it is being handled with respect. When all options to locate family or friends are exhausted, the body is released, and we are given authorization to bury.

Every Dollar Counts

If there are no funds, we cover all costs for the funeral, grave, burial and headstone. These expenses can reach about \$5,000. We bury these Jews whom time and

continued on page 2

It took five weeks to bury Beatrice B.

Beatrice was 81 years old when she died of cardiac arrest at Coney Island Hospital on December 6, 2017. A week after her death, the hospital chaplain called Hebrew Free Burial Association. No one had claimed her body.

Beatrice lived alone in an apartment that she had shared with her brother, Morris, until his death 20 years before. There was a phone number for a niece, Anne, but she was unreachable.

HFBA turned to the Kings County Public Administrator to report the death and ask for authorization to bury Beatrice. The PA's investigator searched Beatrice's apartment for a will, any relevant paperwork or an address book with family contact information – nothing was found.

Beatrice suffered from schizophrenia. Deborah, her former home health aide was located. She explained that Beatrice no relationships with any members of her family.

Deborah, the caregiver, was the only mourner at the funeral who had personally known Beatrice. HFBA's volunteer minyan was present.

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.

Alone ...continued from page 1

community have forgotten. Acting on your behalf, HFBA ensures that every Jew receives a proper burial.

Now, I hope you will consider making a gift to HFBA as winter comes upon us – often a brutal season that many frail Jews cannot survive.

Please give as generously as you can.

Thank you,



Amy Koplow

Executive Director

P.S. Sarah K. would thank you, if she could.

Read her story below.



Sarah K. died on April 5th. She was buried on August 22nd.

For the seven months before she died, Sarah K. had bounced between hospitals and rehabilitation centers in New York City. She had been homeless for many years. With good fortune, Sarah finally was able to secure a subsidized apartment in 2010. The last eight years were probably some of her most stable and happiest.

Sarah passed away on April 5th. However, just as she had been in life, Sarah was invisible and “homeless” in death. We first heard of Sarah on July 18th, when the Medical Examiner called. Sarah had been in the morgue since the day of her passing and remained there, unclaimed. The ME’s office could find no next of kin.

That same day, we alerted the borough Public Administrator and asked for a release, so that we could bury Sarah. As the days and weeks passed without authorization, we ramped up our appeals and mobilized community support.

The PA’s permission and release to bury Sarah was key. Without it, the ME’s office would have had to send Sarah’s remains to city cemetery for burial.

On August 21, the Public Administrator responded to the appeal of a very influential borough official and released Sarah to us. It had taken over a month to receive authorization. Sarah was buried the next day at HFBA’s Mount Richmond Cemetery. The funeral was conducted with the dignity and respect that Sarah’s life had lacked. Our volunteer minyan was present to listen to a brief eulogy, to chant psalms and respond to kaddish.

April 5, 2018

Sarah K. dies

May

June

July 18

ME’s office notifies HFBA; HFBA calls PA for release of Sarah.

July 27

HFBA contacts borough elected officials

August 20

Borough Jewish community leaders get involved

August 21

Sarah K’s remains are finally released to HFBA

August 22

Sarah K’s funeral and burial

HFBA *Helps*



Yuri G., a 60-year-old widower, was born in Moldova in the Former Soviet Union. As a young adult, he had gone to live in Israel. Twenty three years ago, Yuri immigrated to the United States and was employed as a security guard.

Several months ago, Yuri came into our office to get information about setting up a pre-need funeral and burial. We gave him information about our services as well as some cards with HFBA contact information.

Some time after his visit, HFBA got a call from a NYPD detective informing us that Yuri had jumped from a window in his apartment in Brooklyn and died from his injuries. We discovered that his only relative was an elderly brother living in a nursing home in Israel and that his emergency contact was a friend in Brooklyn. We notified the friend of Yuri's death and informed him about the funeral. The friend did not attend.

(Contemporary suicides are buried in the main part of the cemetery, medical and halachic opinion recognizing that suicide is a result of mental illness.)

Sylvia T. died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 76. She was survived by two estranged sons, living out of state, who planned to cremate her. Sylvia's friend Evelyn informed us of her death after begging Sylvia's

sons not to cremate her. HFBA reached out to the sons for permission to give Sylvia a Jewish burial. When they informed us that they had started making arrangements for a \$500 cremation, we asked them instead to contribute the money towards a funeral and burial in Mount Richmond Cemetery.

Sylvia's son Robert agreed, and after sending the \$500, he stopped communicating with us. Evelyn, too, contributed modestly towards the cost. Neither son attended their mother's burial.

Barbara C. was a Jew-by-choice, 51 years old, divorced and a former a model and clothes designer. While house-sitting for a friend, she committed suicide, jumping from her friend's apartment window. Her family of origin did not want anything to do with arranging for her funeral and burial. HFBA, contacted by a prominent Orthodox rabbi, stepped in to bury her. The funeral was conducted by the rabbi, with several of his congregants in attendance.

Barry R. was mentally disabled and had been adopted as an infant 58 years ago having been given up by his young, unmarried mother, Nancy. In recent years Nancy was able to establish contact with Barry, and it was she who called HFBA when he died, alone, in a single room occupancy hotel in the East Village. According to Nancy, Barry's adoptive siblings wanted nothing to do with him after the deaths of their mother and father. Although Nancy had said she would come to Barry's funeral, she did not. HFBA's Rabbi Plafker performed the burial alone.

Parshat Vayechi Staten Island Community Breakfast Sunday, December 16, 2018 Young Israel of Staten Island



Guest Speaker:
Charlie Harary

**Honoring
Yosi Shalem**
for ten years of
service as Mount
Richmond Cemetery
superintendent



HFBA thanks Milano of Richmond town Corporation

(Shy Shalem, President)
for their eight years of
service as contractor
for Mount Richmond
Cemetery.



РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

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

Что это значит – умереть в полном одиночестве? Что случается с человеком, покидающим этот мир в нищете, без друзей, без семьи и без последней воли? Такие люди нуждаются в нашей помощи больше всего. Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) проводит около ста тридцати (130) подобных погребений в год, то есть примерно треть от всех погребений. Мы узнаём о таких людях от соседей или от лендлорда, от раввина или социального работника, а в особо трудных случаях – от врачей, работающих в городском морге. Если не находятся родственники, помогающие в организации похорон, мы обращаемся в офис общественного администратора в данном районе Нью-Йорка, и оттуда присылают следователя, который ищет завещание, записную книжку с адресами родственников или знакомых, информацию о банковском счёте. Параллельно с этим наши сотрудники ведут поиски родственников, а также доказательства еврейского происхождения усопшего. По завершении этих поисков HFBA получает разрешение от властей провести погребение.

Как правило в подобных случаях не находится никаких финансовых средств. Тогда HFBA покрывает все расходы на похороны, погребение и уход за могилой, установку надгробного камня. Расходы составляют около пяти тысяч долларов. Благодаря помощи наших дарителей и спонсоров, HFBA обеспечивает достойные похороны всем евреям, и в особенности тем, о чьём существовании позабыли время и еврейская община.

Я рассчитываю на вас, на то, что вы подумаете и сделаете щедрое пожертвование в пользу HFBA, в особенности сейчас, когда к нам пришла зима. Это время года подчас жестоко к старым и немощным, и многие бедные евреи могут его не пережить. Пожалуйста, пожертвуйте столько, сколько можете дать. Огромное спасибо,

*Эми Коплоу – исполнительный директор
Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA)*

Нам пишут

Несколько лет назад в Нью-Йорке скончалась моя тётя, Сельма Н. Она была незамужем, и из родственников, кроме моего брата и меня, у неё была ещё только внучатая племянница. Та хотела, чтобы Сельму кремировали, а останками посыпали растение, которое предполагалось посадить на еврейском кладбище, на могиле сестры Сельмы. В городском морге соглашались это проделать только в случае согласия других тётиных родственников, то есть моего ныне покойного брата и меня. Нам позвонили, и конечно же мы не дали согласие. Мы связались с HFBA отсюда, из Лос Анджелеса, и теперь тётя Сельма покоится на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд. Если бы не помощь HFBA, я не представляю, что мы могли бы сделать отсюда, за 3000 миль от Нью-Йорка. Хотя вся наша семья из Бруклина, многие уже умерли, а остальные живут далеко.

Сол Л.

HFBA помогает

• Барбара С* стала еврейкой по своему выбору. Ей был 51 год, она была разведена. Раньше Барбара работала моделью и дизайнером одежды. Когда она присматривала за домом одного из друзей, она совершила самоубийство, выпрыгнув из окна квартиры. Её семья не хотела и знать об организации похорон и погребения. Когда один из уважаемых ортодоксальных раввинов связался с HFBA, наш офис занялся похоронами Барбары. Обряд был проведён этим раввином, на церемонии присутствовали несколько членов его общины.

• 58-летний Барри Р* был инвалидом из-за проблем умственного развития. В младенчестве он был оставлен своей матерью Нэнси, молодой и незамужней, и затем усыновлён. В последние годы Нэнси разыскала и начала общаться с Барри, и именно она позвонила к нам в HFBA когда Барри скончался в гостиничном номере в районе Нью-Йорка Ист Вилледж. Согласно Нэнси, приёмные братья и сёстры Барри не хотели иметь с ним дела после смерти приёмных отца и матери. Со своей стороны, хоть Нэнси обещала быть на похоронах Барри, она не явилась. Раввин HFBA г-н Плафкер провёл церемонию погребения сам.

• Юрий Г*, 60-летний вдовец, родился в Молдавии ещё во времена Советского Союза. Молодым человеком он уехал в Израиль, а 23 года назад эмигрировал в США. В Америке он работал охранником. Несколько месяцев назад Юрий пришёл к нам в офис, чтобы узнать о заранее оплаченных похоронах. Мы дали ему информацию о таких формах услуг, а также карточки с контактными номерами HFBA. Через некоторое время нам позвонили из детективного отдела полиции Нью-Йорка и сообщили, что Юрий покончил с собой, выпрыгнув из окна своей бруклинской квартиры. Мы выяснили, что из родственников Юрия остался только его престарелый брат, живущий в Израиле, а его доверенным лицом в случае особых ситуаций был некий друг, проживающий в Бруклине. Мы уведомили друга о смерти Юрия и сообщили подробности погребения. Но тот на похороны не явился.

(В наши дни самоубийц хоронят в основной части кладбища, поскольку как врачи, так и авторитетные знатоки еврейской Галахи считают самоубийство проявлением психического расстройства)

** имена изменены*

ЗАВТРАК ЕВРЕЙСКОЙ ОБЩИНЫ СТЕЙТЕН АЙЛЕНДА

Когда: 16 декабря 2018 г. воскресенье

Где: синагога Young Israel of Staten Island

Выступление: Чарли Харари

Чествуем: Йоси Шалема, проработавшего девять лет главным смотрителем кладбища Маунт Ричмонд

Счастливого Хануки !

Этот праздник напоминает нам, что добро и свет могут победить силы тьмы и отчаяния через усилия каждого по отдельности и в группе. Сейчас, когда мы будем отмечать это «празднество света», давайте каждый будет настойчив в привнесении в этот мир справедливости, честности и достоинства, в помощи бедным, вдовам, сиротам и чужакам среди нас.

In the Mail



Letters below have been edited for clarity and to protect confidentiality.

Thank you for your quick response to my request regarding my grandmother Kaya P., buried October 17, 1907.

The family had only been in the country a few months when she died. There was no money. Help came from relatives living in Connecticut. My mom, age seven, and her sister, age eight, were sent to live with a married sister in New Haven. I wish to thank you for the photos of the grave site showing the stone to be intact and unmarred. It seems to be in good condition as it was probably a replacement stone from when the family had some money.

Thank you, thank you.

Kate J. (I'm named for Kaya)

.....

Some years ago my aunt, Selma N., died in New York City.

She never married. Besides my brother and me, her only relative was a grandniece who wanted her cremated, with her cremains incorporated into a plant, which would be planted on her sister's grave located in a Jewish cemetery.

The mortuary in New York would do this only if my aunt's remaining relatives, my late brother and myself, would agree. They called us and of course, we did not agree.

We contacted HFBA from our homes in Los Angeles and Selma is now buried in Mount Richmond Cemetery. Had it not been for HFBA, I do not know what we would have done from 3,000 miles away. All our family, originally from Brooklyn, is either dead or living outside New York.

Sol L.

THANK YOU

To the students from the following schools, and groups who helped clean and clear debris from Silver Lake and Mount Richmond Cemeteries:

- ASHAR
- Brooklyn Brandeis Society
- Congregation Oheb Shalom Men's Club
- The Frisch School
- Manhattan Day School
- North Shore Hebrew Academy High School
- Rambam Mesivta
- Solomon Schechter School of Queens
- Stella K. Abraham High School for Girls
- Torah Academy of Bergen County
- Yeshiva Toras Chaim



*North Shore Hebrew Academy
High School*



Yeshiva Toras Chaim



*Torah Academy of
Bergen County*

Leave Your Mark

In October, Amy Koplow and Dana Riess, HFBA's assistant office manager, travelled to Elberton, Georgia to work with the staff at Everlasting Granite Memorial Company. Together they finalized the arrangements to ship this year's order of 211 monuments for Mount Richmond Cemetery, which included 146 donated grave markers, and explored initial design ideas with the Everlasting's staff for HFBA's next big grave marking project – marking 10,000 unmarked graves in Silver Lake Cemetery. **More information about that project will be coming in 2019!**



HAPPY CHANUKAH!

The holiday of Chanukah reminds us that goodness and light can overcome the forces of darkness and despair through the efforts of individuals and small groups. As we celebrate the “festival of lights,” let us each commit to bringing justice, honesty and integrity to our world and to helping the poor and the less fortunate among us.



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.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Herbert Block
Richard Fishman
Charles M. Greinsky
Gary Katz
David Knapp
Paul Lowenthal
Robert Mendeles
Paul H. Nagelberg

Yitzhak Pastreich
Daniel A. Pilarski
Shari Safra
Minna Monte Seitelman
Rabbi Dr. Henry Sheinkopf
Martha Steinmetz
Norman Weisman

RABBINIC ADVISOR

Rabbi Elchonon Zohn

CEMETERY CHAPLAIN

Rabbi Shmuel Plafker

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Amy Koplow

CHESED IS PUBLISHED BY

THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Renée Septimus, *Editor* Adam Rawson, *Designer*
Printed by Spencer and Worth, Ltd.

125 Maiden Lane, Unit 5B
New York, NY 10038
Phone: (212) 239-1662 • Fax: (212) 239-1981
info@hebrewfreeburial.org
www.hebrewfreeburial.org
www.facebook.com/hebrewfreeburial

