

We've Been Challenged!

HFBA must raise \$100,000 to meet a \$50,000 match

To meet the continuing urgent need for indigent burials, an anonymous foundation has stepped up with a \$50,000 matching gift challenge. We have to raise an additional \$100,000 in response.

Our goal of \$150,000 will enable us to underwrite the cost of some 30 burials – the final *chesed* we can provide to the poorest and most vulnerable among us. The funds will cover the *tahara* (ritual cleansing), the shrouds and coffin, the funeral service and burial.

Please match this magnanimous gesture with one of your own. Every Jew, no matter how poor or diminished, deserves a proper burial.

Right now, every two dollars you contribute will release another dollar of funding.

**To donate, go to www.hebrewfreeburial.org/donate
or send in your gift in the enclosed envelope.**

The Dishes We Serve Mourners: Our Foods Express Both Love and Wisdom

Even the foods we serve to mourners, brought with comfort and love, teaches us Jewish approaches to loss and mourning. The prescribed meals are filled with symbolic meaning and while different Jewish cultures have distinctive ingredients and cooking styles, the symbolic meanings are always similar.

The nexus of our customs comes from the Talmud, which tells us that “A mourner is forbidden to eat of his own bread on the first day [of mourning]” (*Moed Katan* 27b). Over the years, this dictum – for others to prepare the mourners’ meals – has extended to the entire week of *shiva*.

Rashi, the renowned 11th century commentator, explains that mourners are offered lentil soup because

lentils “are as round as a wheel, for mourning is like a wheel revolving the world.” It is the custom, he says, to give mourners eggs because “they are round and have no mouth.” It is often difficult for mourners to speak.

In European (Ashkenazi)

homes, the eggs may be simply hard boiled or even served with ashes. For Sephardi Jews, the eggs will be prepared as *huevos haminados*, hard-boiled eggs cooked overnight.

Maimonides, writing a century after Rashi, describes an even more austere custom. Describing the pious of earlier generations, he writes:

“A person would sit alone between the oven and the cooking range. Others would bring him dried bread and salt. He would dip it in water and drink a pitcher of water while worried, forlorn and in tears, as one whose dead was lying before him.”

In our own time, the concept of round foods – symbolizing the circle of life – continues to resonate. In addition to eggs, bagels are now a mainstay of the American mourner’s home.

In Israel, the first foods served are bourekas or rugelach. For Mizrahi Jews, those from the Middle East, there is pita bread or *ka’ak*, a round bread that may be sprinkled with sesame seeds and topped with

continued on page 6





HFBA Receives the Highest Rating from Charity Navigator, America's Largest and Most- Utilized Independent Evaluator of Charities!



139 Harristown Rd • Glen Rock, NJ 07452
phone (201) 818-1288 • fax (201) 818-4694
www.charitynavigator.org

June 1, 2021

Amy Koplow
Hebrew Free Burial Association
125 Maiden Lane
Unit 5B
New York, NY 10038

Dear Amy Koplow:

On behalf of Charity Navigator, I wish to congratulate Hebrew Free Burial Association on attaining the coveted 4-star rating for demonstrating strong financial health and commitment to accountability and transparency.

The nonprofit sector is advancing and expanding. As our organizations evolve, so do the desires and interests of our supporters. Astute donors are yearning for greater accountability, transparency, and for concrete results from us. With more than 1.5 million American charities, Charity Navigator aims to accentuate the work of efficient and transparent organizations. The intent of our work is to provide donors with essential information to give them greater confidence in both the charitable decisions that they make and the nonprofit sector.

Based on the most recent information available, we have issued a new rating for your organization. We are proud to announce Hebrew Free Burial Association has earned our fifth consecutive 4-star rating. This is our highest possible rating and indicates that your organization adheres to sector best practices and executes its mission in a financially efficient way. Attaining a 4-star rating verifies that Hebrew Free Burial Association exceeds industry standards and outperforms most charities in your area of work. Only 17% of the charities we evaluate have received at least 5 consecutive 4-star evaluations, indicating that Hebrew Free Burial Association outperforms most other charities in America. This exceptional designation from Charity Navigator sets Hebrew Free Burial Association apart from its peers and demonstrates to the public its trustworthiness.

Forbes, *Business Week*, and *Kiplinger's Financial Magazine*, among others, have profiled and celebrated our unique method of applying data-driven analysis to the charitable sector. We evaluate ten times more charities than our nearest competitor and currently attract more visitors to our website than all other charity rating groups combined, thus making us the leading charity evaluator in America. Our data shows that users of our site donated more than they planned to before viewing our findings, and in fact, it is estimated that last year Charity Navigator influenced approximately \$10 billion in charitable gifts.

Your achievement and the 4-star rating will enhance your organization's fundraising and public relations efforts. Our favorable review of Hebrew Free Burial Association's financial health and commitment to accountability & transparency is now visible on our website.

We wish you continued success in your charitable endeavors.

Sincerely,

Michael Thatcher
President and CEO

www.charitynavigator.org



In the Mail

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

I want to thank you for your support and coordination to ensure that J. had a proper send-off. The funeral went forward on Monday as planned. As I told you, I had made that commitment to him. The officiating rabbi was very kind and respectful. Another friend came down from Danbury to attend.

We have high praise for the work you do on behalf of the Jewish community.

Be well, stay safe and know you are appreciated.

L.B.

It is heartbreaking reading the stories of all those poor unfortunate souls who had to die all alone. It is so sad. There are people out there who have had so much tragedy in their lives. Anyway, we can't afford much but we want to help. A donation is enclosed.

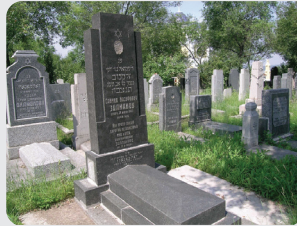
V.N.

Thank you so much for calling me about Joan. Even though I never met her, she was related to me- she was my father's sister's daughter. We had spoken a few times each year and the last time, months ago, she had wanted to meet me and then Covid-19 arrived. I am glad she is resting in peace. She had a hard life. Please accept this donation in her memory. Continue your kind deeds.

E.O.

DID YOU KNOW? Jewish Life in Harbin, China

During the late 19th century through the mid-20th century, Russian Jews immigrated to Harbin, in northeast China, to escape pogroms, persecution and unfair economic restrictions. There they lived with full civil rights and built a thriving community working as businessmen, professionals, merchants and railway workers on the Trans-Siberian Railway connecting Moscow and Peking (now Beijing.) After the Japanese occupation in World War II, the community began to disband. People left for Shanghai, the United States,



Canada and other countries. Between 1951 and 1953, about 3500 "Chinese Jews" settled in Israel and established their own community. The Harbin Jewish community stopped functioning in 1963 and the last Jew left in 1985.

In 1958, the Chinese authorities selected 853 of the more than 3000 Jewish graves to move to the Public Cemetery, effectively closing and abandoning the Jewish cemetery. These graves may still be found although most of the gravestones are illegible. In 2004, the Harbin Museum of Jewish History and Culture located at the site of the New Synagogue, was established. The museum features documents, photographs, films, and personal items documenting the lives of some of the more than 20,000 Jewish residents of Harbin.



The November 18, 2020 edition of Time Magazine included an article in which HFBA featured prominently. The article, "Lost in the Pandemic: Inside New York City's Mass Graveyard on Hart Island," described how this "potter's field," in existence for over 150 years and containing over a million bodies, still becomes the final resting place for so many unclaimed bodies.

During the current pandemic, the frantic rush to bury resulted in the subsequent need for some bodies to be disinterred and re-interred. The Time article movingly describes the journey of one Jewish woman's body from an unmarked mass grave to HFBA's cemetery. There she was buried with dignity according to the tradition and rites of her Jewish faith.

The full article may be read here: <https://time.com/5913151/hart-island-covid/>

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

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

Русский Дайджест Еда, подаваемая скорбящим, выражает любь и мудрость

Даже блюда, подаваемые скорбящим по усопшим, выражают традиционный подход иудаизма к потере близких и к ритуалу скорби. Помимо успокаивающего действия, предписанная в этих случаях еда имеет и символическое значение. И хотя еврейские традиции в разных уголках света обращают больше внимания на те или иные ингредиенты и стили приготовления пищи, этот символизм в еврейской культуре неизменен.

Как объясняет Раши, живший в 11-м веке знаменитый толкователь Торы, скорбящим предлагают суп из чечевицы, потому что зёрнышки её «круглы как колесо, а ритуал оплакивания подобен колесу, вращающему весь мир». Он добавляет, что принято давать скорбящим яйцо, поскольку «круглое оно и не имеет зева». Это напоминает о том, что скорбящие не должны разговаривать.

В домах европейской (ашкеназской) традиции подают сваренное вкрутую яйцо или даже яйцо смешанное с золой. Для сефардов яйца готовят в стиле huevos haminados (дословно «побитые яйца»), яйца вкрутую, которые варятся всю ночь.

В наше время эта традиция «круглой» еды тоже жива и актуальна. Помимо яиц основным блюдом скорбящих в еврейских домах Америки стали бейгелы (бублики). В Израиле в первую очередь подают буреки (слоёные несладкие пирожки) или ругелы. Для евреев из стран Ближнего Востока (мизрахи) такой «круглой» едой служит пита или ка-ак – круглая лепёшка, обычно посыпанная кунжутным семенем и специями.

HFBA помогает

Сара скончалась в возрасте 74-х лет от коронавируса, и общественный администратор Нью-Йорка начал поиски её родственников. Несмотря на начатую процедуру поиска, Сара была в ускоренном порядке погребена на городском кладбище на Заячьем острове. Однако сестра её бывшего мужа заявила городскому судмедэксперту, что хоть у Сары была итальянская фамилия по мужу, по рождению она была еврейкой. К тому же проживающая в Калифорнии дальняя родственница Сары, Линда Ф*, связалась

с городскими властями и подтвердила, что Сара была еврейкой, вышла замуж за нееврея и затем развелась. Детей у пары не было. Линда смогла предоставить еврейское имя Сары, а также имена её родителей, бабушек и дедушек. Когда всё это выяснилось, тело Сары было эксгумировано и перезахоронено на еврейском кладбище. Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) провело обряд погребения. Вскоре Линда прислала благодарственное письмо с вложенным в него пожертвованием.

Нам бросили приятный вызов ! HFBA должно собрать \$100 тыс. пожертвований чтобы получить ещё \$50 тыс.

Чтобы HFBA имело возможность и дальше хоронить малоимущих, нуждающихся в еврейском погребении, некий анонимный фонд пообещал перевести \$50 тыс., если нам удастся собрать \$100 тыс. пожертвований.

Прямо сейчас на каждые два доллара, которые вы дадите, HFBA получит один доллар дополнительно.

Чтобы перевести деньги, зайдите на сайт www.hebrewfreeburial.org/donate или вышлите Ваше пожертвование в приложенном конверте.

Вопросы и ответы

Вопрос: Татуировки запрещены согласно еврейскому закону. Может ли человек с татуировками быть похоронен на еврейском кладбище?

Ответ: Татуировки действительно запрещены, основываясь на стихе из Второзакония (19:28) «не должен ты делать на себе порезы из-за умерших или наносить иные знаки на тело, Я – Вс-вышний». Этот запрет – часть всеохватывающего еврейского запрета изменять или увечить своё тело. Однако наличие татуировок не препятствует погребению на еврейском кладбище, и все еврейские источники сходятся в том, что такого человека должны и обязаны похоронить среди евреев, на освящённой земле.

HFBA's Covid Update

Even though the Covid pandemic in our area is waning, our caseload remains greater than prior to the pandemic.

We are still experiencing spikes in our caseload including 47 victims of Covid between January 1 and May 31, 2021. Infrastructure, like our 40' trailer that was bought last spring to accommodate the surge of deaths from Covid, is still being used to accommodate Covid and non-Covid decedents as needed.



HFBA *Helps*

*Names and details
have been changed to
protect confidentiality.*



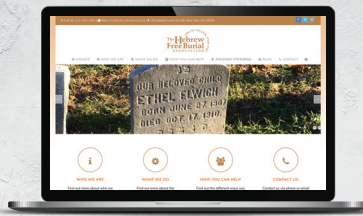
Although **Gerald H.** had died in October 2020, HFBA was only informed in May 2021 about his death at age 79. The New York City bureaucracy had done little to find any surviving family members in the intervening seven months and his body lay in the one of the refrigerated trailers put in place during the beginning of the Covid pandemic by the New York City's Medical Examiner's office. HFBA staff members embarked on their own research. We were able to locate the man who was currently living at Gerald's last known address and he was able to provide the name of Gerald's last employer. The employer, the owner of a messenger service, provided Gerald's social security number. HFBA staff also found a Facebook page dedicated to Gerald's memory. However, we were still unable to find a surviving family member who could authorize Gerald's burial. As a last resort, staff members reached out to the friend who had first called HFBA about Gerald's death. Asked if he would assume the responsibility of acting as an agent, he agreed, and Gerald's body was released from the Medical Examiner's custody for burial. HFBA was finally able to provide Gerald with a dignified, traditional Jewish burial.

Phil J., 69, received Meals on Wheels. When Phil did not answer the door to accept a food delivery, Meals on Wheels sent a team who discovered Phil had died in his apartment. A social worker was able to locate an estranged brother, Harold, who told HFBA that their parents were buried at New Montefiore Cemetery and that there was a grave reserved for Phil. However, because Harold could not afford to pay burial costs, he requested that Phil be buried at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery. Harold provided Phil's Hebrew name and told us that Phil had learning issues as a child and thirty

years ago developed multiple sclerosis. He also let us know that as a felon, he himself was prohibited from going to Staten Island to his brother's funeral. HFBA's volunteer *minyán* and the social worker who had known Phil attended the burial. Harold participated by phone.

Misaskim, the volunteer Jewish organization which provides bereavement services, called HFBA to report the death of **Ken D.** HFBA learned that Ken, 67, had died of Covid and had been buried in city cemetery. In an effort to have the body disinterred and reburied at Mount Richmond Cemetery, HFBA staff reached out to an estranged sister. Unfortunately, the sister refused to provide even the most basic information about her brother. She said she had nothing to do with him during his lifetime and wanted nothing to do with anything concerning his death. HFBA worked with the Medical Examiner and had Ken's remains reburied according to Jewish law five months after his death.

Sarah, 74, had died of Covid and the Public Administrator was conducting its usual investigation of an unclaimed body. Despite the ongoing search, Sarah was precipitously buried in city cemetery on Hart Island. However, a former sister-in-law told the Medical Examiner that, despite her Italian surname, Sarah had been born Jewish. Additionally, Linda F., a distant cousin in California, reached out and also confirmed that Sarah was Jewish. She had been married to a non-Jew and divorced with no children. Linda was able to provide Sarah's Hebrew name as well as the names of her parents and grandparents. Upon learning that her cousin had been disinterred and buried by HFBA in a Jewish cemetery, Linda sent a note of thanks, enclosing a donation.



**Your help is needed
now more than ever.**

Donate online at
www.hebrewfreeburial.org/donate

**Giving on our secure website
is both easy and efficient!**

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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bryan Alter	Deborah Newborn
Doron Bar-Levav	Daniel A. Pilarski
Richard Fishman	Sam Ross
Charles Greinsky	Shari Saфра
Andrea Harris	Minna Monte Seitelman
David Knapp	Rabbi Dr. Henry Sheinkopf
Paul H. Nagelberg	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 Print & Communication Services, LLC

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



Q. Tattoos are prohibited according to Jewish law. May a person with a tattoo be buried in a Jewish cemetery?

A. Tattoos are indeed prohibited based on the verse in Leviticus (19:28), "You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead or incise any marks on yourselves." This is part of the overall Jewish prohibition of bodily modification and mutilation. However, having a tattoo does not preclude a Jew from burial in a Jewish cemetery and all Jewish sources agree that such a person *should and must* be buried among Jews in consecrated ground.

The Dishes We Serve Mourners ...continued from page 1

spices. Persian Jews serve the mourners *kuku sabzi*, a traditional, local green herb frittata. In this context, it symbolizes renewal.

While Ashkenazi tradition suggests that the mourners eat alone and without anyone else at the table, other Jewish cultures take a more communal approach.

In Sephardi and Mizrachi homes, the mourners sit with their guests and eat together. Iraqis recite blessings over fruits and vegetables – but not over bread. Bukharan Jews will eat an entire meal with friends and extended family, including dessert. Yemenite Jewish mourners and guests have soup together.

During the week of *shiva*, friends will often send prepared meals for the mourners to eat. Some synagogues, communities or friends organize "meal trains," coordinated by day, meal and menu.

The foods we serve the mourner remind us that birth and death are inexorable and that we must be strong. Our community's support tells us that we are not alone. There are others who love us and count on us. The rhythm of the week, with its prayers, visits, and meals, takes us through a most wrenching time and prepares us for the full year of mourning and our eventual reconciliation with the death of our beloved.

Huevos Haminados

Ingredients

8 eggs
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon ground coffee (optional)
or 1/2 teaspoon tea leaves (optional)
4 - 6 yellow onion skins
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vinegar
1 teaspoon salt

Directions

- Place all ingredients into a pot and cover well with lukewarm water.
- After boiling the water, cover the pot and reduce the heat to very low. Cook overnight or for a minimum of six hours. Add more water as needed.
- After several hours, tap the shells gently with a spoon to crack them, and continue to cook. This will cause a beautiful marbled color to form on the egg whites.
- Drain the eggs, rinse the shells and refrigerate.

