

We make sure nobody dies truly alone

“Sometimes it’s just me, the workers and our volunteer minyan”

Rabbi Shmuel Plafker remembers the case of Ira Schildman, a mentally-, hearing- and speech-impaired man who died at a Far Rockaway rehab center. He was days away from having his unclaimed body harvested for its organs when HFBA intervened to give Mr. Schildman a traditional Jewish burial.

Only the volunteer *minyan* showed up.

Every year HFBA buries scores of people like Ira Schildman who leave this world with no one to mark their passing.

“If there’s no one to ask what this person did in their life, or what they enjoyed, there’s nothing I can say,”

says HFBA chaplain Rabbi Plafker. “Sometimes we don’t know a person’s Hebrew name. When someone dies alone, and we don’t have a *minyan* to say *kaddish*, all I can do is say *Kel Maleh Rachamim*, the prayer for the soul of the departed and some psalms.”



Rabbi Shmuel Plafker (courtesy of Staten Island Advance)

The rabbi says that sometimes it’s just him, the workers, and the deceased.

“We try to find someone connected to the departed, perhaps a disabled relative or friend who can’t come to the cemetery,” Rabbi Plafker says. “I’ll get them on the phone and ask if they can say something about their loved one. I might even just hold up my phone so they can hear the ceremony. In the sad event that no one is present, we remain committed to doing the burial with the greatest respect.”

An experience Rabbi Plafker had in his early days as HFBA chaplain cemented

his commitment to doing his best on behalf of each individual who “had a life.”

“It was a cold, rainy November day at Mount Richmond Cemetery,” he recalls. “We had four women

continued on page 2

HFBA helps a niece mark her baby uncle’s grave

Genealogical research locates an ancestor who died in infancy

On October 29, 1905, 21-year-old Tauba Dina Schwade arrived at Riverside Hospital in the Bronx to visit her 18-month-old son Menashe. To Tauba’s alarm, the child’s bed was empty. Riverside hadn’t been able to explain to the new immigrant from Moldova that her baby had died.

Tauba and her husband Jacob, 26, had arrived in the U.S. with Menashe only nine weeks earlier. With the help of HFBA, their son was buried at Staten Island’s Silver Lake Cemetery.

One hundred and eighteen years after Menashe’s passing, Jacklyn Schwade Hakimian — Menashe’s niece — is working with HFBA to honor her father’s oldest brother by marking his grave.

Jackie’s project had complications.

“My father believed him to be buried at Silver Lake Cemetery under the name ‘Max,’” Jackie told HFBA. “In fact, I was able to locate Baby Max — my uncle — on [ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and [Find-a-Grave](https://www.findagrave.com) by Max, his American

continued on page 2

Nobody dies truly alone *continued from front page*

to bury. None of them had any relatives. The mud kept sliding into the graves. When the last funeral ended, I went to the office and said, 'That was terrible.'

"I got the biggest lesson of my life from the funeral director, who was not Jewish. 'Terrible?' he echoed me. 'Those four women might have been buried anywhere,

including a potter's field.'

"The funeral director brought home to me the real point of what we were doing. 'You gave these women a proper Jewish burial,' he said. I keep that in mind with each person entrusted to me." ♦

HFBA helps a niece *continued from front page*

first name; date of death; cemetery — but with a last name spelled 'Schwede.'"

The discrepancy in surnames spurred Jackie to speak with staff at HFBA, who sent her Baby Max's "Application for burial to the Charity Agudath Achim Chesed Shel Emeth," dated 1905. The form revealed her uncle's Hebrew name — Menashe — and burial location.

The search continues in the midwest

When Jackie moved to Chicago in 1979, she persevered in her mission to honor her ancestors.

She searched in a local cemetery for the grave of her grandfather, who moved to Chicago and died before she was born. Cemetery records did not help identify his gravesite, and Jackie combed the grounds until she stumbled upon her grandfather's headstone.

"It was complete with a beautiful glass picture of him," Jackie says. "But the grave had not been visited in 47 years, and there were garter snakes in the weeds." The cemetery has since remedied the situation.

Jackie praises HFBA for its commitment to the care of Silver Lake Cemetery — a landscape named in 2017 to the New York State and National Register of Historic Places.

"I'm so grateful we can memorialize my little uncle on Staten Island with a new obelisk that includes his name along with the names of other children buried nearby," Jackie says. "He was an entity. He had a life, however short. I want Baby Max to be remembered in a way that lasts hundreds of years." ♦



Baby Max's siblings — Jacob and Tauba Schwade's children (c. 1982)



Jacob Schwade (c. 1902)



Tauba Minascovitz Schwade (c. 1903)

HFBA Helps

Names, details and images have been anonymized to preserve confidentiality



Galina A., 54, committed suicide by jumping off the roof of her Brooklyn apartment building. Galina was known to HFBA: We buried her son Boris in 2015 after he died at 24 of complications from cerebral palsy. Even then, Galina had shown signs of mental illness and was only marginally involved with Boris's burial arrangements. We learned that Boris had been living with Galina's parents and later in a care facility. Galina's ex-husband and surviving son did not wish to be involved with Galina's funeral arrangements. A cousin worked with HFBA to give Galina a traditional burial.

Shirley K., died of heart failure in a Manhattan rehab facility. A non-Jewish neighbor at the senior housing residence where Shirley lived before moving to rehab called HFBA nine days after her death to ask if Shirley could have a Jewish burial. The neighbor also told us that Shirley had never been married and had no living family. We encountered a serious problem: We weren't able to locate Shirley. The rehab facility told us they keep the deceased in the morgue for two days only — and they no longer had the body. Moreover, Shirley's death had not been reported to the Public Administrator (PA), a county agency that administers the estates of people who die when no one else is eligible or willing to administer the estate. A call to the Office of Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) revealed she wasn't there. We inquired again at the rehab facility and discovered she indeed was there, and had been, unregistered, for two weeks. We reported the case to the PA and Shirley was released to us. HFBA buried Shirley 17 days after her death with our volunteer *minyán* at her graveside funeral.

Alvin S., 83, died of cardiac arrest in a nursing home/rehab facility in March. Never married. No next of kin. HFBA found Alvin's name in May in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs) — a database used by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner (OCME) in cases where nobody steps forward to claim the decedent. We reached out to the PA about handling Alvin's burial. Meanwhile, HFBA learned the

names of Alvin's parents. And we discovered he had a graduate degree. After the PA determined that Alvin had no funds, he was released to HFBA and buried in June.

Claudia M., 78, died in February at a Long Island hospital. Before her hospitalization, she lived in a Queens care facility. The Queens PA contacted us in June with the understanding that Claudia might be Jewish. We found out Claudia had a son named Jon, but the hospital staff hadn't been able to reach him. We got Jon's contact information from Claudia's care center and reached him where he lives near Rochester, NY. Jon was a disabled veteran of Operation Desert Storm, confined to a wheelchair and living on limited funds. He knew his mother had died, but he couldn't afford to pay for a funeral. Jon was grateful for HFBA's intervention. He told us his mother had suffered from mental illness.

His father was killed in Vietnam before Jon was born, and his mother's family helped raise him. Jon couldn't travel to Staten Island for the funeral in June, but he did attend remotely via phone. He heard HFBA's volunteer *minyán* respond to *kaddish* and expressed his gratitude to HFBA for giving his mother a Jewish burial.



Martin H., 87, died in his Manhattan apartment in November. His body lay in the OCME morgue for more than five months before a friend located his name in NamUS and called HFBA. Our research revealed that Martin had a brother Sidney, buried in New Montefiore Cemetery. We also discovered Sidney had a daughter who had arranged her parents' burials, but did not wish to make funeral arrangements for her uncle. She did tell us Martin had a wife who died two years ago. In the end, Martin's friend served as an agent who could authorize his burial, thus enabling HFBA to bury him in May. Only a volunteer *minyán* attended his funeral.

Yevgeny E., 57, died in February. HFBA staff discovered his Jewish-sounding surname on NamUs in March. Our own records showed we had had previous contact with Yevgeny's family: We buried his father in 2008 and his mother in 2022. In both cases our contact had been solely with Yevgeny's sister Olga. HFBA and the OCME tried several times to reach Olga, but were always unsuccessful. We contacted the Kings County PA and requested that Yevgeny's body be released to us for burial at Mount Richmond Cemetery. The PA gave the release and Yevgeny finally received a Jewish burial in May. HFBA's volunteer *minyán* responded to *kaddish*.

РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

Translated summaries of articles appearing in this issue of *Chesed*

Чтобы никто не умирал в одиночестве

Зачастую только усопший, рабочие кладбища и я

Раввин HFBA Шмуэль Плафкер вспоминает похороны Айры Шилдмана, инвалида, скончавшегося в реабилитационной клинике. Никто не затребовал его тело для погребения, и за несколько дней до того, как оно должно было пойти на donorские органы, HFBA смогло вмешаться и обеспечить Айре достойные еврейские похороны. На кладбище не было никого из знакомых либо родственников Айры.

Из года в год HFBA хоронит многих, на чьи похороны не приходит никто, чтобы проводить их в последний путь. Говорит раввин Плафкер: «Когда кто-то умирает в одиночестве, если у нас нет миньяна из десяти человек, я читаю особую молитву Кель Мале Рахамим (Как милосерден Ты) за душу усопшего. «Мы всегда стараемся найти кого-то, кто знал усопшего. Даже если они не могут сами приехать на кладбище, я звоню им по телефону, чтобы они могли сказать несколько слов о покойном или хотя бы могли слушать церемонию похорон».

Рав Плафкер поведал нам, какой он усвоил важный урок, когда ещё только начинал работать в HFBA. «Мы хоронили четырёх женщин в тот холодный дождливый день», вспоминает он. «Родственников не было. Только рабочие, усопшие и я. Мокрая глина сползала в могилы. Когда я вернулся в офис, то воскликнул, «Ужасно!». «Ужасно?», переспросил директор похоронного бюро. «Вы помогли этим женщинам, похоронив их по еврейскому обряду, чего они бы лишились без Вашей помощи!» Так он объяснил истинное предназначение нашей работы. И я вспоминаю те слова во время каждого погребения».

Молитва Хашкава и утешает, и укрепляет связи в общине

Как историко-географическое разделение породило две поминальные традиции

Для многих ашкеназских евреев самый торжественный момент в праздник еврейского Нового Года – это чтение *Изкор*, поминальной службы в память об усопших родственниках или мучениках еврейского народа. Однако у евреев-сефардов поминальная молитва – это *Хашкава*, во время чтения которой скорбящий перечисляет вслух имена усопших близких. *Хашкава* (дословно «за упокой») произносится также на похоронах, когда хазан (кантор) перечисляет имена предков скорбящего. Помимо этого, имена предков перечисляются в первый год траура, в каждую годовщину смерти и при вызове к Торе во время службы в синагоге.

«Молитва *Хашкава* – это мощная терапия», говорит раввин и профессор иудаики Ричард Хидари. «Она не только показывает, как сильно мы скорбим по любимому человеку, но и способствует связям внутри общины, поскольку евреи разделяют потерю с другими».

Историческое и географическое разделение евреев способствовали расхождению ашкеназской и сефардской поминальных традиций. Ашкеназы в Германии ввели *Изкор* в двенадцатом веке после погромов крестоносцев, прошедших по еврейским общинам на Рейне. Раввин Хидари отмечает, что *Хашкава* возникла в послеталмудический период и уже отражает идеи Каббалы.

Как ашкеназские, так и сефардские евреи посещают кладбище накануне еврейских праздников. «В это время года посещение кладбища становится общим событием для сефардских евреев», – говорит раввин Хидари. «Вы видите друзей. Вы видите надгробия

с именами людей, которых вы знали. Вас вдохновляет их память. Это действенное напоминание о том, что важно в жизни».

HFBA помогло женщине найти могилу родного дяди

Генеалогия помогла найти могилу родственника, умершего в младенчестве

Когда Менаше Шваде, младенец 18 месяцев отроду, скончался 29-го октября 1905 года в больнице Риверсайд в Бронксе, его родителей рядом не было. В больнице Риверсайд не смогли объяснить смерть младенца Таубе и Якову Шваде, недавним иммигрантам, но Еврейское Благотворительное Похоронное Бюро (HFBA) помогло им похоронить сына на кладбище Сильвер Лейк, на Стейтен Айленде.

И вот, 118 лет после смерти Менаше, его племянница Жаклин Шваде-Хакимян участвует в работе HFBA по поиску могилы старшего брата своего отца и установлению на ней памятного надгробия. «Мой отец был уверен, что его рано умерший старший брат был похоронен на кладбище Сильвер Лейк под именем Макс», вспоминает она.

Сначала Жаклин нашла дядю на сайтах ancestry.com и Find-a-Grave, но под слегка изменённой фамилией Шведе. Тогда она обратилась в HFBA, и наши сотрудники выслали ей обращение в HFBA за 1905 год, в котором было указано еврейское имя дяди Жаклин и точное место его захоронения. Теперь Жаклин планирует присутствовать при установке надгробия. «Я благодарна за возможность увековечить память моего дяди на кладбище Сильвер Лейк», говорит она. «Он жил на этом свете, хоть и недолго. Я хочу, чтобы о нём помнили».

HFBA помогает

Евгений Е* скончался в феврале этого года в 57 лет. А в марте наши сотрудники обнаружили его еврейскую фамилию в Национальной системе пропавших без вести и неопознанных лиц (NamUs). Эта база данных используется Управлением главного судмедэксперта (ОСМЕ) в случаях, когда никто не запрашивает тело для погребения. Наши записи показали, что HFBA уже имело дело с семьёй Евгения: мы похоронили его отца в 2008 году и мать в 2022 году.

В обоих случаях мы общались только с сестрой Евгения, Ольгой. И наше Бюро, и Офис судмедэксперта несколько раз пытались связаться с Ольгой, но безуспешно. Тогда мы обратились к общественному администратору округа Кингс (Бруклин) с просьбой передать нам тело Евгения для погребения на кладбище Маунт-Ричмонд.

Общественный администратор разрешил выдать тело, и в мае Евгения, наконец, похоронили по еврейскому обряду. Миньян из наших добровольцев прочитал кадиш по Евгению.

Шана Това нашим друзьям и дарителям

Захор – помнить на иврите – встречается в Торе более двухсот раз, призывая нас помнить завет между Вс-вышним и домом Израиля, наш исход из Египта и помнить день субботний, чтобы освящать его. По мере приближения еврейского Нового Года мы осуществляем «захор», посещая могилы близких и читая *Изкор* в память о тех, кто повлиял на нашу жизнь.

Мы, все сотрудники Еврейского Благотворительного Похоронного Бюро, желаем вам и вашим близким Шана Това Уметука – доброго и сладкого Нового Года. Спасибо, что помните о нас и являетесь частью семьи HFBA.

Hashkavah provides comfort and bonding in the Sephardic community

History and geography contributed to two different memorial traditions

For many Ashkenazi Jews, the focal point of the Jewish new year is *Yizkor*, a Yom Kippur prayer service that commemorates deceased relatives and martyrs. Sephardic Jews, however, memorialize their loved ones with a prayer called *Hashkavah*, in which the mourner recites the name of the departed aloud.

Hashkavah, or “laying to rest,” is also recited at the burial, when the *chazzan* or cantor intones the names of forbearers. Ancestors and loved ones are acknowledged again when an individual receives an *aliya* to the Torah, a practice that continues throughout the year of mourning and on the anniversary of the loved one’s death.

“*Hashkavah* is essential therapy,” says Rabbi Dr. Richard Hidary, professor of Judaic Studies at Yeshiva University and rabbi at Brooklyn’s Sephardic Synagogue. “Saying *Hashkavah* not only invokes in prayer how much we miss a loved one, but also promotes communal bonding by sharing in each other’s loss.”

Two memorial streams

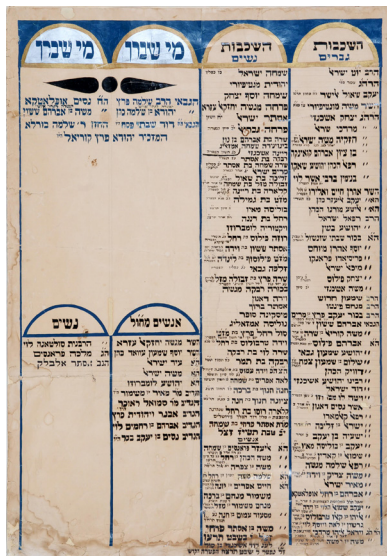
Rabbi Hidary observes that history and geography contributed to the divergence of Ashkenazic and Sephardic memorial traditions. In Germany, for example, *Yizkor* was embraced by Ashkenazim

in the twelfth century after the Crusades’ devastation of Rhineland Jewry. In the fourteenth century, it gained traction when Jews were wrongly accused of causing the Black Death and then murdered. *Yizkor* spread eastward, with Polish Jews adding a prayer commemorating the Chmielnicki massacres in 1648.

By contrast, Rabbi Hidary dates *Hashkavah* to post-Talmudic times. He notes that the prayer embodies kabbalistic influences and locates the custom in twelfth-century France and Spain. “*Hashkavah’s* plea, that ‘He who is merciful to all His creatures have pity, compassion and mercy upon the lower soul, spirit and higher soul of [NAME OF DECEASED],’ reflects the mystical concept that everything alive has some kind of life. Plants have a life, even an inanimate object, like a rock.”

Like Ashkenazic Jews, Sephardic Jews visit cemeteries before the Jewish High Holidays.

“At this time of year, visiting the cemetery becomes a communal event,” Rabbi Hidary says. “You encounter friends. You see headstones with the names of people you knew. You remember the good they did, and feel inspired by their example. It’s a powerful reminder of what’s really important in life.” ♦



Jerusalem synagogue *hashkavah* calendar, with names of men and women in right-hand columns. The *Mi SheBeirach* blessing for the sick appears in the left-hand column. Earliest date of death is 1849; the latest is 1955. Courtesy of Kedem Auction House, Ltd.



Shana tova to our donors and friends

Zachor — the Hebrew word for “remembrance” — appears some 200 times in the Torah. Again and again, we are commanded to remember the covenant between G-d and the Israelites; the exodus from Egypt to freedom; the Sabbath day to keep holy.

As we approach the new year on the Jewish calendar, we embrace “*zachor*” in at least two ways: We visit our departed loved ones in their final resting places, and we prepare to recite *Yizkor* in remembrance of the family, friends and martyrs who have shaped our lives.

All of us at Hebrew Free Burial Association wish you and yours a *shana tova u’mtukah* — a good, sweet new year. Thank you for remembering us and being part of the HFBA family.

We need your help now more than ever



Donate online at www.hebrewfreeburial.org/donate

Giving on our secure website is 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 | Paul H. Nagelberg |
| Doron Bar-Levav | Deborah Newborn |
| Richard Fishman | Daniel A. Pilarski |
| Andrea Harris | Samuel Ross |
| David Knapp | Shari Safra |
| PRESIDENT | RABBINIC ADVISOR |
| Shari Safra | Rabbi Elchonon Zohn |
| EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | ADVISORY COMMITTEE |
| Amy Koplow | Charles M. Greinsky |
| CEMETERY CHAPLAIN | Minna Monte Seitelman |
| Rabbi Shmuel Plafker | Rabbi Dr. Henry Sheinkopf |



CHESED IS PUBLISHED BY THE HEBREW FREE BURIAL ASSOCIATION

Ruth Seligman, *Editor pro tem* 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
Email: info@hebrewfreeburial.org
Website: www.hebrewfreeburial.org
Facebook: www.facebook.com/hebrewfreeburial



Holiday Cemetery Schedule

It is traditional to visit the graves of our ancestors and loved ones before and during the high holiday season.

Mount Richmond Cemetery

ROSH HASHANA

Sunday, September 17 CLOSED

YOM KIPPUR

Sunday, September 24 9:00 AM – 3:45 PM
Monday, September 25..... CLOSED

SUKKOT

Sunday, October 1..... CLOSED

SIMCHAT TORAH

Sunday, October 8 CLOSED

Yizkor is recited in the synagogue on Yom Kippur, September 25 and Shemini Atzeret, October 7.

Silver Lake Cemetery

Sunday, September 3 and 10 OPEN 9:00 AM – 3:45 PM

**Расписание работы кладбища Маунт Ричмонд
Еврейские праздники – осень 2023:**

РОШ ХАШАНА:

Воскр. 17 сентябряЗАКРЫТО

ЙОМ КИПУР:

Воскр. 24 сентября9:00-15:45
Пон. 25 сентябряЗАКРЫТО

СУККОТ:

Воскр. 1 октября.....ЗАКРЫТО

ШМИНИ АЦЕРЕТ и СИМХАТ ТОРА:

Воскр. 8 октябряЗАКРЫТО

Поминальную молитву Изкор будут читать на Йом Кипур, 25 сентября, и в праздник Шмини Ацерет, 7-го октября.

A lasting impact with HFBA

Did you know you can include Hebrew Free Burial Association in your estate plan?

A legacy donation in your will helps HFBA in our mission to treat every Jew with the respect so integral to Jewish law and tradition — regardless of financial status.

Let us know you've included us in your plans for the future by visiting FreeWill.com/Record/HebrewFreeBurial. You can get started by filling out the form on the website or by scanning the QR code above. Thank you in advance for your loving support and generosity.

