

THEY SERVED AMERICA: The Veterans of HFBA

This summer, the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding, alongside the annual observances of Memorial Day and Independence Day. As Americans reflect on the country's history and those who helped shape it, the Hebrew Free Burial Association remembers a group of individuals whose lives embody both Jewish history and American patriotism.

Scattered throughout HFBA's cemeteries in Staten Island are the graves of veterans whose service spans generations. Some served in conflicts now remembered only in history books. Others fought in wars still recalled by living family members. Together, they represent generations of Jewish Americans who helped defend and build the nation they called home.

Many ultimately passed away with limited financial resources, no surviving family, or no one able to arrange a burial on their behalf. At that critical moment, HFBA stepped forward to ensure they received a dignified Jewish burial.

A TRADITION OF SERVICE

Jewish Americans have served in every major American conflict, from the Revolutionary War through the present day. For many immigrants arriving in the United States seeking safety and opportunity, military service became a way to contribute to their adopted homeland while building a new life for themselves and their families.

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**689
VETERANS
BURIED BY HFBA**




NATHAN M
PERLMAN
PFC
US ARMY
KOREA
AUG 1 1922
NOV 25 1992
IN LOVING



**SO FAR
THIS YEAR**
JANUARY - MAY 2026

150
BURIALS

13
HOLOCAUST
SURVIVORS

13
VETERANS

**45-
102**
AGE
RANGES

**NY, NJ,
AZ, DE**
STATES
SERVED

35
CASES FOR
UNCLAIMED BODIES

BEHIND EVERY BURIAL:

The Work of a Funeral Coordinator

When people gather at a graveside service performed by the Hebrew Free Burial Association, they see only the final act: prayers recited, shovels lifted, and a loved one laid to rest according to Jewish tradition.

What often goes unseen are the countless phone calls, records searches, family outreach efforts, coordination with medical examiners and public administrators, logistical arrangements, and urgent decisions that make that moment possible.

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 Phone: (212) 239-1662 Fax: (212) 239-1981
 Email: info@hfburial.org Website: www.hfburial.org

(Other form per individual)

Name (After-AKA) _____ Date _____
 Hebrew/Jewish Name (if known) _____
 Place of Birth _____ Citizenship _____ How Long in USA _____
 Date of Birth _____ Gender _____ Born of Parents _____ Adopted _____ Step child _____
 Social Security # _____ Medicare # _____ Medicaid # _____
 Deceased Survivor Y N Marital Status S W D M Separated Other _____
 Father's Name _____ Mother's First and Maiden Name _____
 Maternal Grandmother's Maiden Name _____
 Residence _____ Your phone number _____
 Any funeral arrangements Y N If yes, with whom _____
 Is there a decedent or assigned grave Y N If yes, where _____
 US Veteran Y N Social # _____ From _____ To _____ War _____
 Highest Level of Education Reached _____
 Occupation for most part in life _____ Industry _____
 Date Last Employed _____
 Will a reservation be required to Mount Richmond Cemetery for a next of kin? Y N
 CONTACT: NEXT OF KIN, EXECUTOR, GUARDIAN, SOCIAL WORKER, ETC.
 All information is confidential. Please keep this information private.
 Name _____ Relationship Title _____
 Address _____ Telephone _____
 E-mail _____ Cell Number _____
 Fax Number _____
 NOTES (list other relatives/contacts or other pertinent information)

For nearly ten years, **Yelena Kleban** has helped carry out HFBA's sacred mission, working behind the scenes to ensure that every Jewish person served by the organization receives a proper and dignified burial, regardless of their circumstances.

Like many people who come to HFBA, Yelena did not set out to build a career in this industry. She joined the organization in 2016 seeking a new professional opportunity and a chance to become more involved in the Jewish community. What began as a new job soon became a calling.

"The most important part of my job is making sure people get buried as soon as possible"

That decision led to a decade-long commitment to HFBA's mission.

As a funeral coordinator, Yelena serves as a bridge between families, funeral directors, cemeteries, government agencies, and HFBA staff. She helps families navigate final arrangements, coordinates complex logistics, conducts research, and verifies a deceased person's Jewish status—often while working against the clock to ensure a timely burial.

"We make sure we cross all our t's and dot our i's," she explains. "We want to make sure everybody we bury is Jewish and that everything goes smoothly for the family."

Much of the work requires careful investigation. In some cases, a person's Jewish identity is clear. In others, the search can lead through decades of immigration records, family documents, and historical archives as staff work to ensure that every individual receives the burial they are entitled to under Jewish tradition.

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STORIES OF IMPACT

REMEMBERING STEVEN

Earlier this year, HFBA buried Steven B., a man whom we had known for nearly three decades. Throughout his life, Steven faced many challenges, and HFBA had previously assisted with the burials of both of his parents. Over the years, our staff stayed in touch and offered support when possible. When Steven passed away with limited resources and few family connections, HFBA ensured that he received the dignified Jewish burial he deserved. Though only a handful attended, Steven was not alone.

NOT FORGOTTEN

Several months after a Jewish man was buried in New York City's municipal cemetery after his death went unclaimed, HFBA learned of his case. Through careful research and coordination with public agencies, we confirmed his Jewish identity and arranged for his disinterment and reburial at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery. Though no family members were present, he was laid to rest in accordance with the traditions every person deserves.

AN OCEAN APART

HFBA recently assisted in the burial of a Jewish immigrant whose only advocate was a step-daughter living in Ukraine. Though separated by thousands of miles and unable to make arrangements herself, she remained determined that he receive a proper burial. Working with public agencies and community partners, HFBA ensured that he was laid to rest, giving his family peace of mind an ocean away.

Riverdale Community Breakfast

Thank you to everyone who joined us at this year's Riverdale Community Breakfast in support of the Hebrew Free Burial Association.

It was a meaningful morning of community, remembrance, and appreciation as we honored Amy Koplow upon her retirement after 25 years of devoted service and recognized members of the Riverdale *Chevrei Kadisha* for their quiet and selfless dedication to *Chesed Shel Emet*.



Top, from left: Rabbi Dovid Zirkind, Amy Koplow and Avraham Groll

Right: Rabba Sara Hurwitz and Amy Koplow



Staff Profile, continued from page 2

"Sometimes you don't know if the person is Jewish or not," Yelena says. "Then you find Ellis Island records, and you discover that the great-grandparents were definitely Jewish. Suddenly the whole picture opens up. The records you find can be amazing."

The research is not merely academic. Every answer brings HFBA one step closer to ensuring that someone who might otherwise be overlooked receives a proper Jewish burial.

Time is often the greatest challenge. "The most important part of my job is making sure people get buried as soon as possible," says Yelena. "Sometimes we're searching for information and it takes time, but in these cases time is working against us."

Many of the cases HFBA handles involve individuals with few or no surviving family members. Some require locating distant relatives. Others involve navigating difficult family dynamics. Still others concern

people who would otherwise have no one advocating for them at all.

For Yelena, helping these individuals is one of the most meaningful aspects of her work. "Every time we get somebody buried, especially people who don't have family, it feels rewarding," she said. "We were able to put another soul to rest and provide a proper Jewish burial to somebody who was laying there in the morgue."

The work does not always fit neatly into business hours. Because Jewish tradition places great importance on timely burial, emergencies sometimes arise on weekends and holidays that require immediate attention. Yet even in these difficult moments, Yelena remains motivated by the opportunity to help others.

"It's rewarding to know that I'm helping families during their time of grief," she says. While her work is vital to HFBA's success, Yelena is quick to emphasize that no burial

is accomplished alone. "It's not just my work," she explains. "We work as a team. We have the rabbi, the cemetery staff, and everyone else involved. It's a team effort."

That team effort has enabled HFBA to help countless individuals receive a proper Jewish burial, including many who otherwise would have had no family members or advocates to ensure their final wishes were honored.

For Yelena, each completed burial represents more than a successful case. It is ultimately a fulfillment of HFBA's mission and a final act of dignity for a fellow Jew. "We make sure they're where they belong." ■

**HELP OUR STAFF PERFORM
CHESSED SHEL EMET
AND VOLUNTEER**



**The Hebrew
Free Burial
ASSOCIATION**

То, чего не видно: деятельность координатора похорон

Когда близкие собираются у могилы на церемонию, проводимую Еврейской Благотворительной Похоронной Ассоциацией (НФБА), они видят лишь заключительную часть традиционного еврейского погребения: чтение молитв, опускание гроба, забрасывание земли лопатами. А не видят они бесчисленные телефонные звонки, поиски документов, зачастую непростое общение с семьёй усопшего, согласование с судмедэкспертами и госчиновниками, выстраивание логистики и принятие срочных решений, то есть всё то, что делает погребальную церемонию возможной.

В качестве координатора похорон, г-жа Елена Клебан является мостиком между семьями, похоронными домами, кладбищами, госучреждениями и сотрудниками НФБА.

Она помогает семьям с последними приготовлениями, занимается исследованиями, чтобы подтвердить еврейство усопшего, и зачастую всё это в цейтноте, чтобы похороны прошли вовремя. Уже почти десять лет Елена помогает НФБА выполнять эту священную миссию.

«Важнейшая часть моей работы – это подготовить похороны как можно скорее», добавляет Елена. Часто это нелегко сделать, так как у многих усопших не осталось родственников. Помощь таким людям для Елены – не просто работа, а призвание.

Елена Клебан также подчеркивает, что ни одни похороны не проводятся одним человеком. Она объясняет: «Это работа целой команды: наш раввин, сотрудники кладбища и все, кто участвует в подготовке похорон».

Эти-то общие усилия и позволяют НФБА обеспечивать надлежащее еврейское погребение бесчисленному множеству людей, включая тех, у кого не осталось никого, кто мог бы исполнить их последнюю волю. Елена: «Мы следим, чтобы они покоились с миром».

Памяти Пола Нагельберга

НФБА с прискорбием сообщает о смерти бывшего президента и давнего члена совета директоров, Пола Нагельберга. Вечная ему память. Связь Пола и НФБА началась с организации им добровольцев от различных синагог для работы на кладбище Сильвер-Лейк. Его глубокая преданность миссии Ассоциации привела его в Совет директоров, а затем и на пост президента Совета.

За годы его руководства НФБА пережила значительный рост и

модернизацию. Даже после завершения срока президентства Пол оставался вовлечённым в работу организации, руководя в том числе и в нелёгкие периоды, включая пандемию COVID-19. Мы всегда будем благодарны Полу за многолетнюю службу и за тот пример, который он подавал своей преданностью и щедростью. Память о нём – это благословение для всех нас.

Годовщина открытия здания для омовения усопших (Тахара)

В этом году мы отмечаем 12 лет с начала работы здания Тахара. Это важное событие стало возможным благодаря преданности добровольцев Хевра Кадиша (похоронная команда). С открытия отдельного здания для омовения усопших, члены Хевра Кадиша подготовили к похоронам более 2,270 мужчин и 1,880 женщин, делая это с заботой и соблюдением принципа кавод хамет (уважение к усопшему).

Большая часть этой работы делается без огласки. Но для тысяч семей эти последние проявления доброты дают утешение и уверенность, что еврейские похоронные традиции будут соблюдены с величайшим уважением. Сотрудники НФБА выражают глубокую благодарность членам Хевра Кадиша за их сострадание и преданное выполнение своих священных обязанностей.

Помним о Стивене

В начале этого года НФБА похоронила Стивена Б., человека, которого мы знали почти три десятилетия. Стивен сталкивался с серьёзными трудностями практически всю жизнь из-за серьёзных проблем с психическим здоровьем. Его семья тоже переживала затруднения, и в прошедшие годы НФБА помогла организовать похороны родителей Стивена. Наши сотрудники регулярно связывались со Стивеном и время от времени предлагали ему подработку.

Когда Стивен умер, без достаточных средств и без семьи, НФБА позаботилась, чтобы обеспечить ему достойные еврейские похороны. В последний путь Стивена провожали те, кто заботился о нём и помнил его.

Защитники Америки – ветераны НФБА

Этим летом Соединённые Штаты отмечают 250-летие со дня своего основания. Когда мы размышляем об истории страны и о тех, кто помог создать эту историю, НФБА особо вспоминает людей, чьи жизни соединяют в себе как еврейскую историю, так и американский патриотизм.

На кладбищах НФБА на Стейтен-Айленде находятся могилы ветеранов, чья служба стране охватывает многие поколения.

Вместе эти могилы повествуют о многих американцах-евреях, которые помогали защищать и строить страну, которую назвали своим домом.

С 1993 года НФБА идентифицировала примерно 689 ветеранов, похороненных на её кладбищах. Только с начала 2026 года НФБА организовала похороны для 13 ветеранов.

«Почётный караул приезжает по нашему запросу, если хоронят ветерана», объясняет раввин НФБА, г-н Шмуэль Плафкер. «На похоронах ветеранов звучит салют фанфар, военные складывают американский флаг и передают его ближайшим родственникам умершего, супруге или кому-то из детей.» Эти военные почести проходят вместе с традиционными еврейскими похоронами, включая тахара (ритуальное омовение), традиционное погребение и чтение Кадиша. Каждый ветеран также имеет право на официальную военную надгробную табличку, которая увековечивает годы военной службы.

Кто-то из ветеранов иммигрировал в США и позже поступил на военную службу. Другие были рождены в Америке. После многих остаются семьи, а у кого-то нет оставшихся в живых родственников. Что всех их объединяет – это связь как с еврейским народом, так и с Соединёнными Штатами.

Мы благодарим всех ветеранов за их службу. Для нас – огромная честь помогать сохранить память о них.

Девятое Ава

В пост Девятого Ава (Тиша Б'Ав) мы вспоминаем разрушение Первого и Второго иерусалимского Храма. Талмуд приводит известную историю о Камтце и Бар-Камтце, показывающую, как зарождается беспричинная ненависть евреев друг к другу (синат хинам). Эта ненависть послужила одной из причин, по которой был разрушен Второй Храм.

Семнадцать веков спустя великий хасидский ребе, Нахман из Бреслова, прописал средство от этой ненависти, это «ахават синам», любовь к ближнему без каких-либо условий и без ожидания награды. В НФБА мы стремимся к этому идеалу. С вашей помощью мы обеспечиваем достойные похороны каждому еврею. Ваши пожертвования – это подлинная ахават хинам, ведь от усопших мы не ждём никакой награды.

Мы благодарим всех вас и желаем наполненного смысла дня Девятого Ава. ■

continued from cover

That tradition continues to be reflected within HFBA's cemeteries today.

Since 1993, HFBA has identified approximately 689 military veterans and service members among those buried in its cemeteries. In 2026 alone, HFBA has provided burial for 13 veterans through May, ensuring that those who wore the nation's uniform receive the same care afforded to every individual entrusted to the organization.

When a veteran comes into HFBA's care, efforts are made to recognize military history alongside Jewish identity. Whenever possible, military honors are arranged and the necessary documentation secured so that a veteran's contribution to the country is properly acknowledged.

"Honor guards attended the burials of veterans when requested," explains Rabbi Shmuel Plafker, Chaplain for HFBA. "They blew taps and formally folded the American flag. The flag was then handed to the relative who was closest to the deceased, such as a spouse or a child. The honor guard would be from the branch of the military that the deceased served."

These ceremonies take place alongside traditional Jewish burial practices, including *tahara*, burial according to Jewish law, and the recitation of *kaddish*. Veterans are also eligible for distinctive government-issued military markers that permanently commemorate their military history.

PRESERVING DIGNITY, HONOR, AND SACRIFICE

Military life is often associated with uniforms, medals, ceremonies, and public recognition. Yet many veterans ultimately face the same vulnerabilities as others in society: poverty, isolation, estrangement from family, or the absence of loved ones able to act on their behalf at the end of life.

No individual is denied a proper Jewish burial because of financial hardship or the absence of family

For more than a century, HFBA has provided a safety net for Jews facing these circumstances, ensuring that no individual is denied a proper Jewish burial because of financial hardship or the absence of family.

In many cases, HFBA becomes involved only after hospitals, nursing homes, public administrators, or government agencies determine that there is no one available to make arrangements. The organization then coordinates every

aspect of the burial process, allowing the deceased to be laid to rest with dignity and respect.

"One of the things that always struck me about our veteran funerals was the sense of shared responsibility," Rabbi Plafker recalls. "In the early days of the volunteer *minyan*, some of the volunteers were veterans themselves. They would often express their solidarity with the deceased as fellow Americans and fellow Jews."

The stories of these veterans are as diverse as the Jewish community itself. Some immigrated to the United States and later entered military service. Others were lifelong Americans. Some left behind families who remain connected to their memory, while others had no surviving relatives at all. What united them was a shared connection to both the Jewish people and the United States.

MEMORY AND STEWARDSHIP

Today, visitors to HFBA's cemeteries encounter military markers bearing the names of veterans whose lives are no longer widely remembered. Yet their graves remain cared for, their names preserved, and their contributions acknowledged.

Each Memorial Day, volunteers place American flags at veterans' graves throughout the cemetery grounds. The gesture is simple but meaningful: a visible reminder that these individuals served both their country and the Jewish community of which they were a part.

As America commemorates 250 years of history, HFBA remains committed to ensuring that Jewish veterans receive the dignity, honor, and remembrance they earned through their service. Their names may no longer be familiar to many, but their contributions, and their final resting places, remain preserved for future generations.

We thank all veterans for their service and are honored to help preserve their memory. ■

Military honors accompanying the burial of a Jewish veteran





On Tisha B'Av we remember the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem. The Talmud tells a famous story which illustrates the *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred, that contributed to the destruction of the Second Temple.

A prominent man in Jerusalem was hosting a party and wished to invite a friend named Kamtza. However, the invitation was mistakenly sent to a rival named Bar Kamtza. The host insisted that Bar Kamtza leave immediately, even after being offered increasing sums of money to allow him to stay. Bar Kamtza was further angered when the respected leaders present remained silent. He then slandered the Jewish community to the Romans, setting in motion the chain of events that led to the Temple's destruction.

Seventeen hundred years later, Rabbi Nachman of Breslov prescribed a remedy. He advocated for *ahavat chinam*, love without condition or expectation of reward. Only through genuine concern for one another can we overcome hatred.

Nearly one-third of the burials HFBA arranges are for individuals with no family. With your help, we can ensure that every Jew receives dignity in death and that none are forgotten. Your support is an act of true *ahavat chinam*, helping us fulfill our duty to the community.

HFBA wishes everyone a meaningful Tisha B'Av.



In Memory of Paul Nagelberg z"l



HFBA mourns the passing of former president, and longtime board member, Paul Nagelberg, z"l.

Paul's involvement with HFBA began through organizing annual synagogue volunteer efforts at Silver Lake Cemetery. His dedication to the organization's mission led him to join the Board of Directors, where he ultimately served as President.

During his years of leadership, HFBA experienced significant organizational growth and modernization. Even after completing his term as President, Paul remained deeply engaged with the organization, offering guidance, support, and steady leadership through many challenges, including the difficult years of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Paul was known not only for his leadership, but also for his kindness and compassion. He regularly participated in the volunteer *minyan*, visited the cemetery, and took a personal interest in the families and individuals served by HFBA. Whether speaking with bereaved families, supporting staff, or mentoring fellow board members, he treated everyone with dignity and respect.

As HFBA continues to grow and serve the Jewish community, we remain grateful for Paul's many years of service and the example he set through his dedication, generosity, and commitment to ensuring that every Jew receives the dignity of a proper Jewish burial.

May his memory be a blessing.

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MOUNT RICHMOND CEMETERY

HOURS OF OPERATION

GENERAL HOURS

Sunday - Thursday
9 AM - 3:45 PM

Friday

9 AM - 1 PM

CLOSED ON SHABBAT AND
JEWISH HOLIDAYS



TO DONATE



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