

Parent-child projects transmit HFBA's values from generation to generation

13-year-old chooses *chesed shel emet* as a way of “giving back”

Day school student crafts a “life cycle” project for his bar mitzvah

Chesed isn't a new concept for 13-year-old Noah Goldman. He has helped his Long Island *shul* move tables and chairs. He has cleaned out lockers and reorganized an office at the Long Island day school where his father works. So when his father suggested that Noah do *chesed* — an act of kindness — in conjunction with his *bar mitzvah*, Noah was all in.

But what should he do? Noah, his father Hillel, and his mother Deena,

put their heads together and came up with “A Lifetime of *Chesed*.” The project consisted of activities whereby

Noah would engage in acts of kindness in seven different arenas: beginning of life; *shul* (synagogue); school; Israel; *chesed*; civic responsibility; and *chesed shel emet* (an act of kindness that cannot be repaid).

Noah makes it sound easy, but his activities demanded thought and follow-through. Along with one or both of his parents, Noah:

- Made a donation to Atime, an organization dedicated to helping Jewish couples with fertility issues.
- Volunteered at Anshei Shalom, his *shul*, to help collect supplies for soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces.



Noah Goldman helps keep Mount Richmond Cemetery clean as part of a bar mitzvah *chesed* project.

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A father finds a teachable moment at a lonely funeral

A daughter learns what “we are family” means

One recent Shabbat evening, Efrem Reis mentioned an upcoming funeral to his wife.

“I’ve got nothing going on this Sunday morning,” I said,” HFBA’s assistant director told *Chesed*. “I was worried the only attendees would be our volunteer *minyán*. My wife and I agreed I could show respect for the 80-year-old decedent simply by turning up without any agenda.”

Efrem’s nine-year-old daughter Leba asked to come too.

“Absolutely,” I said. As an educator, I knew attending this lone woman’s funeral was a real opportunity for Leba to learn about Jewish burial and continuity without the emotional turmoil of grieving a friend or family member.”

Despite being a stranger, the woman made an impression on father and daughter.

“HFBA learned about this woman only after we heard from her lawyers in January 2024,” Efrem recalls. “She died in 2023, and lay in the Medical Examiner’s morgue for eleven months.”

Efrem credits Yelena Kleban, one of HFBA’s funeral coordinators, for staying in touch with the attorneys, as well as with one of the decedent’s cousins.

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13-year-old chooses *chesed* continued from front page

- Volunteered at Rambam Mesivta, the all-boys school where Hillel is associate principal.
- Supported the collection of much-needed supplies at a distribution hub in West Hempstead (Long Island) for Israeli soldiers.
- Spent a few hours at a Jewish Community Center (JCC) food pantry.
- Sent a care package and letter of support to a U.S. soldier through a group called Any Soldier.
- Did clean-up at HFBA's Mount Richmond Cemetery.

"My goal was to get involved in issues affecting the whole life cycle, from birth to death," Noah told *Chesed*.

School ties make the connection

The Goldman family has had an ongoing connection with HFBA, largely because of Hillel's

association with Andrew Parver, HFBA's former director of operations.



Hillel and Deena Goldman supported their son in his decision to do a "lifecycle" *chesed* project

"Andrew's a Rambam graduate, and he put me in touch with Efrem Reis, HFBA's assistant director," Hillel says. "Efrem brokered our morning of *chesed*, where Noah and I were fortunate to meet Rabbi Plafker. HFBA's chaplain is really a special person. He takes pride in maintaining the dignity of Mount Richmond Cemetery, so for Noah and me to go there for an hour or two to clean up was really an honor."

"The honor goes both ways," says HFBA assistant director Efrem Reis. "When people like the Goldmans donate their 'sweat equity,' they truly honor the HFBA mission." ■

To find out how you can "give back," write to us at info@hebrewfreeburial.org.

A father's teachable moment continued from front page

"As I told Leba, without Yelena's dedication, we may not have been able to give this woman the *kavod*, or honor, of a traditional Jewish burial," Efrem says.

Averting a Hart Island burial

Efrem filled Leba in on the woman's plight in her last days on earth.

"The Medical Examiner wasn't able to find relatives," I explained, and it looked as if the woman would be buried on Hart Island, New York City's potter's field. The ME investigator found a will connected with her name, located the cousin who was reluctant to get involved,



Efrem Reis and daughter Leba

and found the lawyers who didn't want to sign off on her burial."

At the funeral, Efrem learned that HFBA's funeral director had spoken with the lawyers and ultimately convinced them this woman deserved a respectful Jewish burial.

Uncertainty about the woman's estate still exists, but Efrem is clear about HFBA's role.

"We wanted to show respect for a Jewish woman who lived in this world," Efrem said.

Leba walked away with the message Efrem hoped she would learn.

"I feel like the people appreciated me being there," she said of HFBA's volunteer *minyán*. "They care that the next generation's going to know what to do." ■



Getting to know Rabbi Shmuel Plafker

A quarterly series about the relationship HFBA staff and donors have with New York's oldest free burial association. In this issue, we spotlight HFBA's cemetery chaplain.

What is a good day for you at HFBA?

A day when I do not have any burials.

How did you find your calling in life?

After college, I worked at a couple of big corporations. Corporate life wasn't for me. I knew someone involved in many not-for-profit organizations and told him I was looking for a job. He was on HFBA's board. "I think we can use you," he said. I'd never heard of HFBA. I fell into my life's work — and the rest is history.

What memory do you cherish?

I cherish the gratitude I got from families during COVID. They could only participate in the burial service of a loved one from inside their cars. They couldn't pick up a shovel to put earth on the coffin, as is customary. They couldn't even use the bathroom. And yet they thanked me from the bottom of their heart. It blew my mind.

What memory gives you pain?

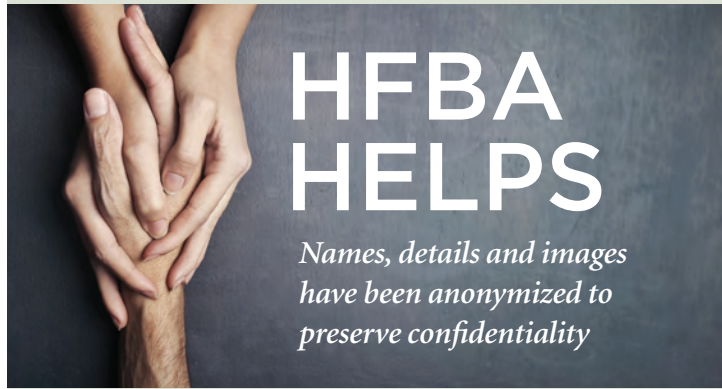
It was a cold, overcast November day. We were burying a 44-year-old woman who left behind a mentally challenged teenaged son and a four-year-old child. The older boy was very animated, and he talked about a rock musician his mother loved. He really didn't understand what was going on. The woman's mother, who would now help raise these children, threw herself on the coffin. I've officiated at many sad funerals, but this one stays etched in my mind.

What are you most grateful for?

Being alive. There are no guarantees that when we go to sleep we will wake up in the morning. Because I see so much death, I value each day.

What gives you hope?

The Jewish people. We are a resilient nation. And a paradoxical one. When Abraham, our patriarch, negotiated with the Hittites, he said, "I am a stranger and an inhabitant among you." Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik observed, "That's the story of the Jewish people." We have always been apart and a part. Therein lies our specialness — and our strength.



HFBA HELPS

*Names, details and images
have been anonymized to
preserve confidentiality*

BORIS T., 53, died this year in his Brooklyn apartment. Until 2016, he lived with his mother and worked at a car wash. At that time, Boris's mother died and was buried alongside her family in a Brooklyn cemetery. In 2020, Boris was diagnosed with stomach cancer. Boris's divorced father moved in with Boris to take care of him. When Boris died, his father sought help at a local *shul*. The *shul* rabbi contacted HFBA, which set about making burial arrangements at Mount Richmond Cemetery. HFBA also made pre-funeral arrangements for Boris's father.

VERA R., 64, died of heart disease in March. HFBA learned about Vera's death from Andrei, her 32-year-old son. Andrei and seven others attended Vera's burial, which HFBA arranged three days after her death. The staff at Mount Richmond Cemetery was alarmed by Andrei's appearance. Even with the aid of a walker, he could barely walk. Andrei told cemetery staff that his disability stemmed from ongoing kidney dialysis. HFBA made a pending arrangement with Andrei for his burial should it become necessary at any time soon.

SARAH W., 62, died of cardiac arrest and was buried the following day. HFBA discovered that when Sarah got divorced in the 1990s, she couldn't take care of her two children. They were ultimately put up for adoption. Several women, including an old friend named Bracha, and several men showed up for Sarah's funeral. One man spoke with great emotion about the struggles Sarah endured throughout her life. Bracha remembered Sarah as a simple soul who loved to sing. All of Sarah's friends expressed gratitude toward HFBA's volunteer *minyán* for responding to Rabbi Shmuel Plafker's *kaddish*.

13-летний подросток творит добро, участвуя в «chesed шель эмет»

Chesed (доброта) – вовсе не новая идея для 13-летнего Ноя Голдмана. В своей синагоге на Лонг-Айленде он много раз помогал расставлять столы и стулья. В школе, где работает его отец, Ной часто чистил шкафы и делал уборку в кабинетах. И когда его отец предложил, чтобы Ной отметил свою бар-мицу добрыми делами (*chesed*), Ной прямо-таки загорелся этой идеей.

Но как этого достичь? Ной и его родители, Гиллель и Дина, разработали план «Хесед на всю жизнь». Он состоял из конкретных добрых дел, которые Ной будет совершать в семи направлениях: начало жизни; *шул* (синагога); школа; Израиль; *chesed*; гражданская ответственность; и *chesed шель эмет* – милосердие к усопшим, то есть тем, кто не может отплатить добром за добро.

Рассказывая об этом, Ной держится беззаботно, а ведь его действия требовали продуманности и упорства. Иногда с одним, иногда с обоими родителями он:

- сделал пожертвование в пользу Атимэ – организации, помогающей еврейским парам с проблемами фертильности;
- в своей синагоге «Аншей Шалом» собирал припасы для солдат Армии обороны Израиля;
- был волонтером в школе для мальчиков «Рамбам-Месивта», где отец Ноя работает заместителем директора;
- участвовал в сборе предметов первой необходимости для израильских солдат в распределительном центре в Уэст-Хемпстеде (Лонг-Айленд);
- провёл несколько часов на раздаче пищи в Еврейском общинном центре;
- отправил посылку и письмо поддержки американскому солдату от имени группы под названием «Любой солдат»;
- участвовал в уборке принадлежащего HFBA кладбища Маунт-Ричмонд.

Ной поделился в интервью нашей газете Хесед: «Моей целью было участвовать в вопросах, затрагивающих весь жизненный цикл от рождения до смерти».

Отец учит дочку доброте во время похорон одинокой женщины

В один из недавних субботних вечеров Ефрем Рейс, один из заместителей директора Еврейского Благотворительного Похоронного Бюро (HFBA), упомянул своей жене о похоронах, куда он собирался пойти по работе. «Я сказал жене, что буду не занят в это воскресенье», рассказывает он. «Жена и я решили, что я могу оказать уважение усопшей 80-летней одинокой женщине, просто придя на похороны».

Либа, девятилетняя дочка Ефрема, попросилась пойти с ним. «Я конечно же согласился. Как педагог я полагал, что присутствие Либы на похоронах незнакомой для неё женщины будет возможностью узнать о еврейском погребении и других традициях, при этом не переживая так сильно, как если бы это горестное событие было связано с родными или друзьями».

История этой незнакомой женщины произвела глубокое впечатление на обоих, отца и дочь. «Как сообщили сотрудникам HFBA юристы, эта женщина скончалась в 2023-м, но пролежала в морге судмедэксперта 11 месяцев, до января 2024 года», вспоминает Ефрем. Во время погребения распорядитель похорон рассказал Ефрему, Либе и *миньяну* добровольцев, что он в конце концов убедил юристов усопшей, что она заслуживает достойного погребения по еврейскому обряду.

Хотя не всё ещё улажено с наследством усопшей, для Ефрема роль HFBA не вызывает сомнений: «Мы всегда заботимся, чтобы оказать уважение еврейской женщине, существовавшей в этом мире». И Либа усвоила то, чему Ефрем хотел её научить. «Я чувствовала, что присутствующие были мне благодарны за то, что

я пришла», сказала Либа о членах добровольного *миньяна*. «Их волнует, чтобы следующее поколение знало, что делать».

Знакомство с раввином HFBA Шмуэлем Плафкером

Новая серия ежеквартальных статей о сотрудниках и донорах старейшей в Нью-Йорке бесплатной похоронной ассоциации.

Как вы нашли свое призвание?

После колледжа я работал в нескольких крупных корпорациях. Жизнь большого бизнеса была не по мне. Я упомянул одному знакомому, работавшему во многих некоммерческих организациях, что ищу работу. Он был тогда в совете директоров HFBA. «Я думаю, что Вы нам пригодитесь», – сказал он мне тогда. А я до этого никогда и не слышал о HFBA. Так это и стало делом всей моей жизни, а остальное уже история.

Какое воспоминание Вам особенно дорого?

Я вспоминаю трогательную благодарность, которую выражали мне семьи усопших во время эпидемии ковида. Они могли участвовать в похоронах близких лишь сидя в машинах. Они не могли взять в руки лопату, чтобы присыпать гроб землёй, как это принято. Они даже не могли сходить в туалет. И все же они благодарили меня от всего сердца. Это буквально переполняло меня.

А что Вам больно вспоминать?

Стоял холодный, пасмурный ноябрьский день. Мы хоронили 44-летнюю женщину, у которой остались умственно отсталый сын-подросток и четырехлетний ребенок. Старший мальчик был очень оживлён и рассказывал о рок-музыканте, которого любила слушать его мать. Он скорей всего не понимал, что происходит. А мать усопшей, которая теперь должна была поднимать этих детей, бросилась в своём горе на гроб. Я был на многих печальных похоронах, но этот случай особенно врезался в память.

Что вселяет в Вас надежду?

Наш еврейский народ. Мы – стойкая нация. И мы полны парадоксов. Когда наш праотец Авраам вел переговоры с хеттами о покупке земли, он говорил: «Я пришелец, и я житель среди вас». Рабби Соловейчик заметил: «Такова история еврейского народа». Мы всегда были и отдельно от других, и вместе с ними. Это – наша отличительная черта, и в этом – наша сила.

HFBA помогает

Борис Т. скончался в 53 года в своей бруклинской квартире. До 2016 года он работал на автомойке и жил с матерью. Когда мать Бориса умерла, её похоронили в Бруклине, рядом с родственниками. В 2020 году у Бориса обнаружили рак желудка. Отец Бориса, который в своё время развёлся с его матерью, переехал к сыну, чтобы ухаживать за ним. Когда Борис умер, его отец обратился за помощью в местную синагогу. Раввин связался с HFBA, которое и организовало похороны Бориса на кладбище Маунт Ричмонд. HFBA также сделало необходимые приготовления на случай смерти отца Бориса.

Посетите кладбище на Девятое Ав

Тиша Бэ'Ав, или девятый день месяца Ав в еврейском календаре, – дата, отмечающая разрушение Первого (586 г. до н.э.) и Второго Храма (70 г. н.э.) в Иерусалиме. И это дата многих враждебных действий против нашего народа.

В этот торжественный день евреи постятся, а в синагогах читают Книгу Плача пророка Иеремии. Одной из традиций в этот день является посещение кладбища после полудня.

В этом году Тиша Бэ'Ав начнётся 12-го августа, с заходом солнца, и продлится до темноты 13-го августа. Кладбище Маунт Ричмонд будет открыто 13-го августа с 9 утра до 15:45



In his own words

Donny Tuchman,
HFBA board member

My children have participated in volunteer *chesed* days at HFBA’s Mount Richmond Cemetery, so I’ve known about the organization and its mission for a long time. It wasn’t until HFBA board member Bryan Alter reached out to me, though, that I realized I could join the board and add value to this great historic organization.

A mission-driven not-for-profit needs involvement from the community, and as the CEO of Cobble Hill Life Care, I understood I could apply what I’ve learned about residential care to my role as a board member. The fact is, many cases that HFBA deals with come from nursing homes. I’d like to contribute to the group’s strategy and execution so that I can aid HFBA’s executive staff in identifying more individuals who need us at the end of life.

People tend to shy away from thinking about death. It’s not a topic many of us are comfortable talking about. Yet I can think of no greater opportunity than bringing dignity to someone in their most helpless hour. HFBA keeps its doors open purely by the goodness of everyone’s heart. The beauty of HFBA’s mission is exactly what motivated me to become a board member.

Annual breakfast showcases giving spirit of Riverdale community

Volunteerism spans support for IDF to solidarity with Jews of Color

Some 200 HFBA supporters filled the Riverdale Jewish Center social hall on a cool May 5 morning to applaud the community service of five individuals whose volunteer efforts underscore their commitment to the Bronx Jewish community and the wider Jewish world.

The Riverdale Community Breakfast, HFBA’s annual appreciation and fundraising event, gave out four awards after a traditional bagel-and-lox spread. The recipients included:

Abby Marcus. A long-time HFBA advocate, Abby has put time and energy into organizing supplies for IDF soldiers, evacuees and families of reservists.

Valerie Altmann and Daniel Perla. Valerie, an OB/GYN at Long Island Jewish Hospital and assistant professor at Hofstra University, participates in her synagogue *chevra kadisha*. Her husband Daniel is a member of various boards, including Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT), Mechon Hadar and SAR Academy, among others.

Tamara Fish. A graduate of Harvard University, Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, Tamara partnered with fellow Jews of Color to form KHAZBAR, an educational-cultural organization aimed at stimulating productive conversations about racial justice.

Rabbi Stephen Shulman. A healthcare chaplain who has served at healthcare organizations in Chicago, New York and Bridgeport, Connecticut, Rabbi Shulman has overseen the spiritual and religious care for patients, nursing home residents and staff.

HFBA offers its congratulations — and gratitude — to all our award recipients.



HFBA community breakfast award winners and event organizers (from l. to r.): Andrea Harris, event chair and HFBA board member; Rabbi Stephen Shulman; Daniel Perla and Valerie Altmann; Amy Koplow, HFBA executive director; Tamara Fish; Abby Marcus, Daniel Pilarski, Doron Bar-Levav and Shari Safra, HFBA board members.



Dedicated members of the HFBA volunteer *minyán*.

Our heartfelt gratitude

HFBA volunteer minyan has answered the call for 14 years

Let us count the ways we are grateful to you — HFBA’s volunteer *minyán*.

You drop whatever you’re doing to show up for a funeral of a stranger that might otherwise go unattended. You share in the *mitzvah* of responding to the *kaddish*. You remind our community that every Jew deserves one last moment

of respect for having lived and struggled in this life. Over the past 14 years, your work has helped complete ours. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you.

Visit a cemetery on Tisha B’Av

Tisha B’Av, or the 9th day of *Av* on the Hebrew calendar, commemorates the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem (586 BCE and 70 CE), as well as other acts and decrees that had drastic consequences for the Jewish people.

On this solemn day, Jews read *The Book of Lamentations* and abstain from eating. It’s also traditional to visit a cemetery in the afternoon.

Tisha B’Av begins at sunset on August 12 and ends after nightfall on August 13. Mount Richmond Cemetery will be open 9:00 a.m. - 3:45 p.m. on August 13.

Paul Nagelberg retires from HFBA board of directors



We gratefully acknowledge the dedication of Paul Nagelberg, member of the HFBA board of directors since 2011. He also served as board president for five years.

Paul initiated his relationship with HFBA by bringing his synagogue men’s club to clean up debris at Silver Lake Cemetery.

Thank you, Paul. We wish you happiness and satisfaction in the next phase of your life.

**WE NEED YOUR HELP
NOW MORE THAN EVER**



You can support HFBA’s mission by making a donation at www.hebrewfreeburial.org/donate.

To donate via **Venmo**, use **@HebrewFreeBurial** or our QR code.



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.

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