

## The Next Generation

There are members of the HFBA Volunteer *Minyan* group who have attended over three hundred burials. And among them are three very special father-son “teams.”

In April 2010, a Staten Island synagogue sent out a request for people to make up a *minyan* (prayer quorum) for an individual who had died alone, with no friends or family. That Sunday, 75 people showed up so that a man none of them knew could be buried with the full service of a Jewish funeral. Upon learning that most HFBA burials were attended only by HFBA’s rabbi, and perhaps one or two others, the community members immediately organized a group from across the Jewish denominational spectrum to ensure that a *minyan* would attend every burial, allowing the *kaddish* prayer to be recited.

Scott Diamond and his then fourteen year old son Zachary were among the first volunteers.

Zach’s previous experience at the funerals of relatives prepared him for the volunteer *minyan* and, despite

**“Do the *mitzvah* that many would turn down. All kids should have this experience! It will truly change you!”**

also spent many hours in the summer of 2013 helping to maintain Mount Richmond Cemetery and this May

his youth, Zach had already participated in many volunteer activities. At the age of ten, this student at Staten Island Academy became a certified Therapy Dog Handler, visiting residents of a rehabilitation and nursing home facility. He

he was recognized by the South Shore Rotary Club and awarded the Dr. Abraham Workman Scholarship Award for “Service Above Self.” After high school graduation, Zach, a competitive swimmer, will attend Brandeis University.

Zach believes that helping others makes him more grateful for the life he has and that “it is in fact a life-changing experience.” Asked to advise his peers, he says, “Do the *mitzvah* that many would turn down. All kids should have this experience! It will truly change you!”



(l to r) Lee Brosnick, Zach Diamond and David Berger

David Berger, now 13 years old, is an honor student in the seventh grade at I.S. 24. Among his many interests are sports, camping, biking and anything pertaining to survival in the

wilderness. A few weeks before his *bar mitzvah*, David began to join his dad Marc in the volunteer *minyan*. Addressing his involvement, this very sensitive and loving young man says that although, “I felt a little weird at first, like everything else you get used to it.” David adds, “It has made me feel good about myself. It feels good to give back to my community. Nobody should be buried alone. When we leave we know we have done a good deed... because a little effort makes such a big difference in others’ lives. If we all gave back to our communities we would have a better world.”

**“Nobody should be buried alone. When we leave we know we have done a good deed.”**

Lee Brosnick, Kevin’s son, who joined the *minyan* right

...continued on page 4

### 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 NY metropolitan area dedicated to assuring that every Jew, regardless of financial means or religious affiliation, receives a dignified, traditional Jewish funeral and burial.



## Update: Julian Edelman Visits Silver Lake Cemetery

In the previous edition of *Chesed*, HFBA Executive Director Amy Koplow wrote about traveling to Brookline, Mass. to meet Julian Edelman who had grown up in HFBA's Silver Lake Cemetery as the son of the cemetery caretakers. Recently Mr. Edelman, now eighty-six years old, visited his boyhood home with his son Danny who lives in Teaneck, NJ.

Mr. Edelman's return to the site at which he grew up brought back many memories of his childhood. Back for the first time after many decades, he toured the area, looking at landmarks, showing where the original water well had been, where there had been ornamental fruit trees and lilac bushes, and where he had picked blackberries in late summer.

*Julian Edelman outside his family's home at Silver Lake with his aunt and cousin (1940's).*



Julian Edelman is a link to HFBA history and we are honored and delighted that he came back to see his old home.



*Andrew Parver, Director of Operations; Yosi Shalem, cemetery superintendent; Paul H. Nagelberg, president; Amy Koplow, Executive Director; Julian Edelman, Danny Edelman, Shy Shalem, contractor.*

## HFBA Gratefully Acknowledges Gisela Zamora

This past year, HFBA was the beneficiary of a generous bequest from Gisela Zamora, of blessed memory.

Mrs. Zamora was a Holocaust survivor who was born in Germany in 1928. She was deported first to Theresienstadt with her family and ultimately to Auschwitz. In one of the notorious "selections" in Auschwitz, Dr. Mengele sent her to one side and her family to the other, causing their immediate deaths. Somehow, she survived the Mattsdorf work camp and severe illness in Auschwitz. She finally came to the United States in 1947 after being liberated by the Russians, recuperating from tuberculosis in a German hospital and living in the Feldafing displaced

persons camp in Germany. Although she married, her husband did not want to bring children into a world of suffering.

An oral history recorded by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum may be seen here: <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn513273>

We are grateful for Ms. Zamora's generosity to HFBA and her commitment to the important work we do.

***If you would like to learn how you, too, can name HFBA as a beneficiary in your will, please call HFBA Executive Director Amy Koplow.***



## In the Mail

*HFBA receives many letters from people who have had experience with our organization. Below is a recent example.*

*... I just wanted to compliment you on your work with the HFBA cemetery in Staten Island. I was recently there for my mother's yahrzeit and, as always, I was impressed and comforted by the excellent condition of the grounds and the headstones. As I made my way to the grave, I could see workers busy landscaping and keeping up the high standards of the place. There was no sense of neglect or desolation but instead beauty and serenity. In Hebrew a cemetery is called bais hachaim (place of life) and that describes the atmosphere at the HFBA cemetery.*

*I would especially like to honor the dedication, competence, and sincerity of Rabbi Plafker. Knowing that my mother's resting place is in the hands of a man who recognizes the value of the neshama (soul) and is firmly committed to accomplishing his tasks with scrupulous adherence to halacha (Jewish law) and with a sense of compassion was an indescribable comfort at the time of the funeral and gives me a sense of security now...*

C.M.

## HFBA Helps



Uri H., born and brought up in Israel, had been a big Yankees fan and was part of a group called the “Bleacher Creatures.” He was described by friends as a committed Jew and entrepreneur. About a year ago, following the loss of his job, he became depressed and starting drinking. After he died suddenly, his family wanted to have him cremated and have his ashes scattered over Yankee Stadium and other places he enjoyed, as well as sending some cremains to family in Israel. After talking to the HFBA staff, his sister, living in Israel, agreed to have him buried in the HFBA’s Mt. Richmond Cemetery. She was able to listen to the funeral service by phone and his fellow “Bleacher Creatures” came to pay their last respects at the burial.

Victor V. was in a hospice program in a Borough Park care center after suffering heart failure. Although Victor was a U.S. citizen, he spent most of his time in the Ukraine with his son, causing his U.S. government benefits to lapse. When he returned to New York, he tried to get his benefits reinstated but became ill with heart failure before that could be accomplished. Unfortunately, he soon entered hospice care and when he passed away, the social worker referred him to HFBA. We were able to reach his son and a brother in Israel but neither was able to attend the funeral.

Yulia T. had been treated for many years for her mental illness and, over time, had estranged her entire family. She lived in subsidized housing and had a

history of medication abuse. When she died at the age of fifty eight, HFBA attempted to locate a cousin and brother, neither of whom wanted to be involved at all in funeral and burial arrangements. Yulia was buried with no one attending her funeral except for Rabbi Plafker and the volunteer *minyán*.

The K. family had emigrated from Russia and Vadim K., who had a prominent position in Moscow, succumbed to depression and alcoholism when he was unable to secure a job in New York. He died at the age of forty three and was buried by HFBA in the late 1990’s. His son Alec also abused alcohol and drugs and was unable to hold a job despite repeated attempts at rehabilitation. Alec was supported by his mother who worked as a home health aide and by Social Service Disability payments. After a recent discharge from the hospital, Alec refused to be compliant with his medications. Sinking into a deep depression, saying he was “very tired of life” at the age of 37, he died suddenly at the home of a friend. After his burial in Mt. Richmond Cemetery, HFBA reserved graves for his mother and ninety five year old grandmother at their request.

Paul A. lived in a nursing home after many years of living in a group home for people with addictions. Paul was known for his sociable and helpful personality but could not escape the inner demons which led to his addictions. Upon his death, the hospital, believing him to be Catholic, assigned him to a Catholic funeral home. However, when the social worker at the nursing home learned of his death, she immediately reported that he was Jewish and his case was assigned to HFBA. Two months after his death, he was finally laid to rest by HFBA.

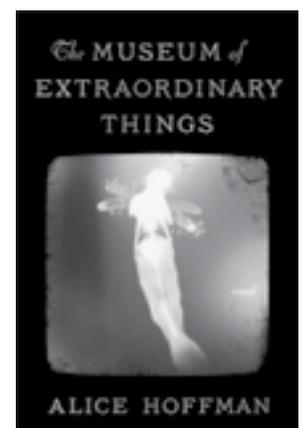
*Names changed to protect confidentiality.*

## HFBA Mentioned in New Novel

In Alice Hoffman’s newest work of literary historical fiction, *The Museum of Extraordinary Things*, HFBA is mentioned in connection with the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire: “The families of the dead were aided by the Red Cross and Hebrew (Free) Burial Association to ensure that burial plots could be purchased for the girls whose families could not afford plots in the muddy cemeteries of Staten Island and Brooklyn and Queens...(p. 145)” And, “ There were nearly fifty people in attendance...as well as several officers of the Hebrew Free Burial Association, the organization

paying for the funeral, including the carriages and the horses draped with purple ribbons and black netting (p. 285.)”

HFBA buried twenty two victims in Mount Richmond Cemetery after that disastrous conflagration in 1911.



# Many Thanks to the Following Groups for Helping to Clean and Clear Winter Debris from HFBA's Silver Lake Cemetery

- Rosenbaum Yeshiva of North Jersey
- The Abraham Joshua Heschel High School
- The Frisch School
- SAR High School
- Oheb Shalom Congregation Men's Club (S. Orange, NJ)
- North Shore Hebrew Academy High School

and the many volunteers who participated in the annual spring HFBA Community *Chesed* Day!



*The Abraham Joshua Heschel High School*



*Spring Community Chesed Day*



*The Abraham Joshua Heschel High School*



*The Frisch School*

## Q&A

**Q: Is a Jewish burial “eco-friendly”?**

**A:** Traditional Jewish burials are absolutely “eco-friendly” and environmentally safe. There are no chemicals released into the earth since embalming is prohibited. No fossil fuels are used which release air pollutants since cremation is proscribed. And the plain pine casket is bio-degradable unlike a metal or concrete vault.

### *The Next Generation (continued from page 1)*

after his *bar mitzvah* two years ago, was comfortable from the start. Lee is an eighth grader at the MARSH Expeditionary School and is an active member of Boy Scout Troop 118 at the JCC of Staten Island through which he has participated in many community service projects including several food drives for the JCC kosher food pantry and Hurricane Sandy victims. Lee was recognized by the JCC Youth Department with

***I also realize that it is the biggest mitzvah I can do as a Jew to help others...who have died and are buried with no family to recognize their passing.***

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the “Honorable Mentschion Award” in 2012. Of his experience with the volunteer *minyan*, he says, “It has made me feel proud because I know I’m helping people who may not have had any family when they died.

Jew to help others...who have died and are buried with no family to recognize their passing.”

Clearly the performance of this *mitzvah* resonates with the participants. Knowing that they are participating in the only *kaddish* that will be said for the deceased is a powerful spiritual experience. As Scott said, engaging in this *chesed shel emet* (act of lovingkindness) has “helped me grow as a Jew and how I interact with other Jews. It has helped me grow spiritually and given me an opportunity to serve G-d and other people, even in death.”

We are grateful to, and proud of, the many men who have taken it upon themselves to make certain that no Jew buried by HFBA is buried alone, that each is attended at his final resting place, the melody and words of the *kaddish* echoing among the many, many graves.

***HFBA needs more volunteers for the minyan. If you can help, please call the HFBA office.***

# РУССКИЙ ДАЙДЖЕСТ

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

## Наши волонтеры

В HFBA есть группа волонтеров, которые приходят на похороны, чтобы составить миньян - группу молящихся из десяти человек. Некоторые из них – а это люди из ортодоксальных, консерваторских и реформистских общин или не состоящие в какой-либо общине – посетили более трехсот погребальных служб. Без них на похоронах не было бы миньяна, а без миньяна нельзя читать кадиш. Есть среди этих людей три удивительные команды «отец и сын»:

- Скотт Даймонд и его восемнадцатилетний сын Зэки были одними из первых наших волонтеров. Зак с детства бывал на похоронах родственников, и это подготовило его к участию в наших миньянах. По его словам участие в миньяне делает его более благодарным за всё, что у него есть, что этот опыт обогатил его. На вопрос о том, что бы он посоветовал своим сверстникам, Зак отвечает: «исполняя ту мицву, от которой многие хотели бы уклониться. Хорошо бы всем подросткам это испытать, это глубоко меняет каждого».
- Дэвиду сегодня 13 лет, он начал приходить на миньян со своим отцом, Марком Бергером, незадолго до своей бар-мицвы. «Вначале я чувствовал себя здесь немного не в своей тарелке, но ко всему ведь привыкаешь». Дэвид продолжает: «Благодаря этим посещениям я лучше к себе отношусь. Хорошо, когда делаешь что-то для других. Никто не должен быть похоронен в одиночестве. И когда мы уходим с кладбища, то чувствуем, что сделали доброе дело и изменили жизни других людей к лучшему. Если бы каждый давал что-то для общины, для других, весь наш мир стал бы лучше».
- Ли, сын Кевина Брозника, присоединился к нашим миньянам два года назад, сразу после своей бар-мицвы. С самого начала он не чувствовал неудобства или стеснения. Он говорит, что гордится собой, поскольку помогает людям, у которых зачастую не осталось никакой семьи. «Я осознаю, что это самая большая мицва, которую я как еврей могу исполнить – помочь тем, у кого не осталось родственников, чтобы помянуть их».

Конечно, исполнение этой важной мицвы отражается на участниках. Осознание того, что они читают единственный кадиш, который будет прочитан по усопшему, даёт им особый духовный опыт. Скотт, отец Зака, говорит что участие в акте хесед-шель-эмет (милосердие к усопшим) «помогает мне духовно расти как еврею, помогает общаться с другими евреями, позволяет служить Вс-вышнему и людям, даже после их смерти».

Мы благодарны и гордимся нашими волонтерами, благодаря усилиям которых каждого еврея, похороны которого организует HFBA, провожают к месту последнего упокоения со словами и мелодией кадиша, отдающимися эхом среди многих могил.

## Вопросы и ответы

Вопрос: Является ли еврейский обряд погребения экологически чистым?

Ответ: Традиционное еврейское погребение абсолютно экологически чисто и безопасно для окружающей среды. Не происходит смыва в землю никаких химикатов, поскольку бальзамирование запрещено. Не используется органическое топливо – источник загрязнения воздуха – поскольку кремация также запрещена. И простой гроб из сосновых досок со временем полностью разлагается в отличие от железных или каменных склепов.

## HFBA помогает

- Ури Х\*, родившийся и выросший в Израиле, был страстным болельщиком бейсбольной команды Янки и был членом группы фанатов «Бличерз Кричерз» («Стадионные скамейщики»). Друзья знали его как соблюдающего еврея и успешного предпринимателя. Год назад он потерял работу, впал в депрессию и начал пить. Когда Ури внезапно скончался, его семья хотела, чтобы он был кремирован, а пепел частично рассыпан на стадионе Янки и над другими любимыми местами Ури, а частично послан родственникам в Израиле. Но после беседы с сотрудниками HFBA, живущая в Израиле сестра Ури согласилась, чтобы его похоронили на одном из кладбищ HFBA. Она слушала погребальный обряд по телефону, а фанаты из «Бличерз Кричерз» пришли на похороны отдать последний долг своему товарищу.
- Виктор В\* жил в хосписе в районе Боро Парк после перенесённого инфаркта. Хотя Виктор и был гражданином США, он проводил большую часть времени на Украине, у сына. Из-за этого он лишился государственного пособия. Виктор попытался снова оформить пособие, но не успел из-за болезни сердца. Вскоре он оказался в хосписе. Когда Виктор скончался, социальный работник передал его дело HFBA. Мы смогли связаться с сыном Виктора и с его братом, живущем в Израиле, но ни тот, ни другой не смогли приехать на похороны.

\* имена изменены

**We thank the following for their generous donations to our Leave Your Mark Campaign. Their names will appear on plaques in the Weinberg Chapel at Mt. Richmond Cemetery.**

**Joseph Cohen • Murray and Sharon Goldberg • Adele R. Kraetz  
Bernard and Myra Lanter • Naomi and Brian Nadata • Dr. Murray Oratz • Kenneth Perry  
Debbie and David Sable • Shai and Esther Sasson • Buddy Skydell**

To participate, sponsor a grave marker for an unmarked grave at \$150 each and receive a framed certificate. Sponsor four markers and a plaque with your name will be added to our roster.

## 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 our cemeteries as part of our Cemetery Clean-Up Project.

**GET INVOLVED** as a professional with HFBA by donating your expertise and skills in an area that can help us.

### 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.



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