



HCRJ

MAY 2016

HOUSTON CONGREGATION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

Bread and Counting the Omer



In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read: ***[God] subjected you to the hardship of hunger and then gave you manna to eat. . . in order to teach you that man does not live on bread alone. . . (Deuteronomy 8:3).*** This passage draws a connection between the consumption of bread and the human spirit, as it seeks to remind us that there is more to eating than the mere cessation of hunger.

Most of us can fully relate to this concept, and we articulate it on a regular basis when we say, “Oh my God! This is delicious.” Others, like me, could actually “live on bread alone” and be very content. All kidding aside, food and faith go hand in hand in Judaism, and bread in particular plays a very central role (pun intended). Bread not only fills the belly, it also enriches the human spirit. Every culture has bread. Every faith includes bread in ritual practices.

In Judaism, bread holds a sacred place in every single meal we eat. Traditionally, there is a special blessing (*the Motzi*) that is recited **ONLY** when bread is going to be consumed. For any meal or snack that does not include bread, shorter blessings are recited before and after the meal.

Bread is also associated with the study of Torah. Our sages saw each as being part of a daily diet for the body and mind when they taught, “***Im ain kemach ain Torah*** – *Without flour (dough) there is no Torah.*” In other words, physical and spiritual nourishment are inextricably linked.

Indeed, few foods provide more emotional sustenance than bread, and for this reason references to bread linking us to God are found throughout the *Bible*. One such reference occurs in the Book of Numbers, as God commands the Israelites to leave a portion (*challah*) of thick dough as a sacrifice from every loaf of bread they eat.

When you enter the land to which I am taking you and you eat the bread of the land, you shall set a portion [challah] aside as a gift to the Lord. . . You shall make a gift to the Lord from the first yield of your baking throughout the ages. (Numbers 15:20-21)

Here, bread serves as a form of daily sacrifice. The word *challah* means “portion,” referring to the portion of bread that was sacrificed to God as a gift of gratitude. This commandment became a formalized practice, and during Temple times, one twenty-fourth of any dough being baked would be removed and given to the priests on the Sabbath. Today, Jewish bakers uphold this tradition and tear a small lump of risen dough from any type of bread and burn it while reciting a special blessing.

This simple ritual has remained an ongoing way for us to express gratitude for the bread we eat in a very physical way. Most of us, however, do not bake our own bread and for this reason, this ancient sacrifice is rarely experienced by the vast majority of modern day Jews. ***Continued on page 4.***

Pancake Breakfast and Annual Meeting - Sunday, May 15

Join us for our 1st Annual Pancake Breakfast followed by the Annual Meeting on May 15. This breakfast is intended to bring our community together as we celebrate the culmination of a great year of programming. The breakfast will begin at 9:00AM and will be immediately followed by the Annual Meeting at 10:00AM.



We need you for a quorum. Every vote counts. Every idea matters. Our community depends on the vision of its membership. Please join us to help shape the future of HCRJ. We encourage parents with children in Religious School to stay for this important meeting.

REMINDER: In order to vote at the Annual Meeting, please make sure your dues and building fund are current. Contact Justin in the temple office at 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org for questions about the status of your account.

May Calendar

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|--|
| 1 | 9:00AM | Religious School Family Breakfast and Yom Israel Program |
| 2 | 10:00AM | Senior Chai Yoga Class |
| 4 | 10:30AM
1:00PM | Interest Group
Senior Chai Pastels Class |
| 6 | 6:00PM
6:15PM
7:15PM | Tot Shabbat
Family Dinner
Shabbat Services/Teacher Appreciation and Game Night |
| 7 | 5:00PM | K-5 Babysitting, Pizza Party, Movies and More |
| 8 | 9:30AM | Religious School |
| 9 | 10:00AM | Senior Chai Yoga Class |
| 10 | 11:30AM | Knitzvah Group |
| 11 | 1:00PM | Senior Chai Watercolor Class |
| 13 | 7:15PM | Shabbat Services |
| 14 | 3:00PM | Greene Family Camp Sendoff |
| 15 | 9:00AM
9:00AM
10:00AM | Final Day of Religious School
Pancake Breakfast and Registration for Annual Meeting
Annual Meeting |
| 16 | 10:00AM | Senior Chai Yoga Class |
| 18 | 1:00PM | Senior Chai Watercolor Class |
| 20 | 7:15PM | Shabbat Services (A Shabbat of Unity) |
| 23 | 10:00AM | Senior Chai Yoga Class |
| 24 | 11:30AM | Knitzvah Group |
| 25 | 9:00AM | Senior Chai Glass Blowing Experience |
| 27 | 7:15PM | Shabbat Services/Confirmation |
| 30 | | Memorial Day (Temple Office Closed) |

Calling All K-5 Families

Saturday, May 7, 5-11PM

Who: Boys and Girls, Grades K-5

What: Babysitting. Pizza Party! Movies! Games! Fun!

Where: HCRJ

Cost: Donations Only - All Donations go to:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Houston

Chaperoned by: Dolph Simon

To RSVP, please email dolph.simon@sbcglobal.net.

For Our Tots:



Tot Shabbat Services on May 6 at 6:00PM. Join us for Shabbat fun.

Family Shabbat

May 6, 6:15PM

Cinco de Mayo Cuisine: Chicken and beef fajitas, flour tortillas, rice, beans, chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese.



Dinner is \$5 per person over 4 years old.

The May Family Shabbat Dinner is sponsored by Melinda Neumann.

Interest Group

Wednesday, May 4, 10:30AM

The HCRJ Interest Group will meet in May for a presentation of "Camera Judaica" by Michael Duke, associate editor of *The Jewish Herald-Voice*, which documents the work of many Jewish photojournalists in the 20th century and shows how much their work affected our culture and values. Come early for bagels and coffee and bring friends.

Looking to get involved at HCRJ? We need YOU!

Join any of our 12 committees: 60th Anniversary Planning, Buildings and Grounds, Caring and Concerns, Finance and Budget, Fundraising, Gifts and Memorials, Long Range Planning, Marketing and Communications, Religious School, Ritual, Social Action and Temple Life. Contact Justin - 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org.

Save the Dates for June

Social Action: Undies for Everyone Volunteering

Sunday, June 5, 11:15AM

Join HCRJ for a social action activity of underwear packing. Undies for Everyone collects and distributes undies directly into the hands of Houston students and also through school nurses in low income schools when a student has an accident.

New Member Shabbat

Friday, June 10, 7:15PM

Come to Shabbat Services on June 10 to welcome our new members who have joined the congregation in the past year. New members will be invited to participate in the service and we will have a special Oneg afterwards.

**Register
Online**



Online registration for Religious School is now OPEN for the 2016-2017 school year. Go to www.hcrj.org and click "Member Log In" on the top right of the page to get started. Please refer to the email from Hilary Kamin for detailed instructions. We will also have a registration table set up at Religious School on May 1 and May 15. Need Help? Contact the temple office at 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Honors and Memorials Fund

In memory of Esther Shelby

From **Elissa Atlas**

In honor of Rabbi Gross' 10 years at HCRJ and in memory of Donna Cameron and Esther Shelby

From **Fran Brochstein and Jimmy Jones**

In honor of Rabbi Gross' 10th Anniversary at HCRJ

From **Laura Cohen and Mike Seale**

From **Amber and Byron York**

In honor of Bob and Johnita Lebow

From **Larry and Doris Bernard**

In honor of a speedy recovery for Larry Bernard

From **Amy and Michael Lawch**

From **Bob and Johnita Lebow**

In memory of Ryan Ferris Mendeloff and Donna Cameron

From **Miriam and Allan Graber**

In memory of Sherman Robinson

From **Charlotte and Kathy Robinson**

From **Frances and Stephen Perel**

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In honor of Jayden Androphy

From **Susan and Milton Altschuler**

In honor of Jayden Androphy's baby naming

From **Sheryl and Joel Androphy**

In honor of Alexa Tabin's Bat Mitzvah

From **Tabin Family**

In honor of Rabbi Gross' 10-year anniversary

From **Amy and Michael Lawch**

In honor of Pearl Goldman's birthday

From **Debbie and Stuart Goldman**

In memory of John and Katherine Scattiglio

From **Luisa Dossi**

In memory of Esther Shelby

From **Bruce and Harriet Spain**

From **Schencker Family**

In memory of Dottie Swann

From **Danek Family**

In memory of and for the unveiling of Lou Marks on

April 17 and in memory of Allen Abramson and I.J. Shapiro

From **Paula Marks**

Special Music Fund

In honor of Jane Becker's 30 years at HCRJ

From **Amy and Michael Lawch**

In honor of Jane Becker and in memory of Donna Cameron

From **Bob and Johnita Lebow**

Arrangements Fund

In honor of Rabbi Gross

From **Gary Dante**

General Operating Fund

From **Ted and Maria Johnson**

Family Shabbat Dinner Sponsorship

From **Melinda Neumann**

Purim Carnival Sponsorship

From **Greene Family Camp**

From **Robby Markman**

From **Mike and Bobbie Tucker**

Thank You

to everyone who helped make the
2016 HCRJ Passover Seder a great success!

Becky Gross

Julie Barry

Sylvia Brauer

Fran Brochstein

Carol Danek

Lisa Danek

Rebeka Dunsmore

Harriet Faden

Jean Fefer

Frances Feinberg

Laura Frank

Morna Friedberg

Teri Goldfield

Laura Rosenfield

Bru James

Jeffrey Markman

Robby Markman

Hannah Melcer

Ricky Mikelman

Melinda Neumann

Alyssa Peppmuller

Michelle Renfrow

Mark Rosenfield

Donna Siegel

Bobbie Tucker

Our heartfelt condolences...

On the death of Lynne Herzberg Smith, aunt of our Religious School teacher, Jill Morgenstern, who passed away on April 18, 2016.

On the death of Rose Appelbaum, mother of Bruce Appelbaum and his wife, Carol, grandmother of Michael Appelbaum and great grandmother of Brooke, Grant, and Shane, who passed away on April 21, 2016.

On the death of Betty Mae Cohen Stekin, wife of Selwyn Dante, mother of Susan and Ed Septimus and Kathy and Perry Zieben, who passed away on April 22, 2016.

May the memory of our beloved ones always remain a blessing to those who were graced by their presence.

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

A wonderful mitzvah opportunity awaits you!

Celebrate a life cycle event or honor a loved one by sponsoring a Friday Night Oneg (Sabbath reception), a Family Sabbath Dinner or a Religious School Breakfast. These events represent just some of the ways our community gathers in fellowship, and your sponsorship enables us to frame these occasions with additional beauty and joy. If you wish to sponsor a meal or a Sabbath reception, please let us know by filling out the form below and mailing it to the temple or by contacting the office at 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org.

Sabbath Oneg —\$100.00

Religious School Breakfast—\$100.00

Family Shabbat Dinner —\$150.00

Contribution to Arrangements Fund—\$_____

In honor/memory of:

Date of event:_____

Your name:_____

May Oneg Sponsorships

All May Shabbat Services are available for
Oneg sponsorships - May 6, 13, 20 and 27.

**Confirmation Services - Friday, May 27, 7:15PM
Mazel Tov to the Confirmation Class of 2016**

Allison Bernstein
Son of Terri and Scott Bernstein

Asa Forman
Son of Abbe and Adam Forman

Sam Frank
Son of Laura and Brad Frank

Sara Frank
Daughter of Laura and Brad Frank

Sarah Helfand
Daughter of Kristin and Bill Helfand

Lisa Hoff
Daughter of Robert Hoff

Max Hoffman
Son of Rabbi Laura Sheinkopf and Waju Syed
and Amber and Lonny Hoffman

Dashiell Jacobs
Son of Lharissa and Mitchell Jacobs

Franz O'Hanna
Son of Wendy and Meir O'Hanna

Riley Shaper
Daughter of Amy and Peter Shaper

Joshua Sucec
Son of Debra Hurwitz and Dennis Sucec

Jacqueline Touchet
Daughter of Jennifer and Sam Touchet

Zoe Weinstein
Daughter of Emily and Adam Weinstein

Justin Williams
Son of Rita and Jeff Williams

Youth Activities



Spend a night with 6th-8th grade friends at Dave and Busters before the start of summer. \$30 per Person (includes snacks, sodas and a power card). To register, please go here: <https://greene.org/event/houston-dave-and-busters/>

Saturday, May 21

JYG Study Break 2-4PM

Come to HCRJ for brain food snacks and help studying for finals. Havdalah to follow. Please let Michelle know if you are coming so we can bring in volunteers to help in the desired courses.

Senior Sleepover in Galveston

Graduating from High School? Join us for a one-night, smore-making, lack of sleeping event in Galveston. For the events above, please RSVP to Michelle at hcrjyouth@hcrj.org.

Bread and Counting the Omer continued from page 1

Another bread-related sacrifice which is rarely practiced today is called the “*Counting of the Omer*.” The Torah commands us to count bundles of grain (the *omer*) every day for seven weeks from the second day of Passover to the festival of Shavuot. It is a custom which, once again, connects spiritual sustenance to physical sustenance. Today, *Counting of the Omer* has more to do with cultivating the human spirit than it does with cultivating the barley harvest, and Jews who observe it use this period as a formal way to count their blessings on a daily basis.

We are currently in this period of ritual counting, and among the many blessings we count, bread should be included. After all, our week-long abstention from bread during Passover serves to remind us how much we miss bread when we cannot have it. Yet, our abstinence each year is voluntary. There are countless people in the world and millions in our own country for whom a single serving of bread is a blessing which is never taken for granted.

At this season, where ritual sacrifice and food are so central to our holiday observances, we need to consider ways to translate the mandates of our faith into changes in the world. Perhaps these archaic rituals can help us renew our ancient covenantal relationship between the consumption of bread and personal sacrifice. Perhaps our age old traditions can provide us with a way of addressing the pains of human starvation in the world.

There are countless organizations and causes which strive to alleviate hunger. During this period of the *Counting of the Omer*, please consider supporting at least one. Thus, as we count our blessings, we can be a blessing to those who are literally living on bread alone.

Join us for a month FULL of Shabbat joy!

May 6: Family, Teacher Appreciation and 6th Grade Shabbat

Join us for Tot Shabbat, a special Cinco de Mayo Family Dinner followed by our Family Services led by our 6th Grade students. We are truly grateful for the time and energy that our teachers commit to providing a Jewish education for our children. We will take the time to thank them and honor them on this Shabbat. Family Game Night will follow Shabbat Services.

May 13: Shabbat services in our warm and welcoming HCRJ style.

May 20: A Shabbat of Unity

Across the political spectrum, we are all Jews. Beyond our denominations, we are all Jews. Transcending our differences is our unified and unwavering bond with the people of Israel. Our connection is emotional, moral and deeply spiritual, because we are all Jews. With our diversity, we uphold Israel's strength, hope and future. With our many voices, we are ONE Israel. Come together at the Jewish Federation's 'A Shabbat of Unity' and express your belief in Israel. Over 15 Houston congregations are participating in this special Shabbat.



May 27: Confirmation

Confirmation is a sacred rite through which our students publicly declare their commitments to our faith. We invite you to join us for this very special ceremony in the life of our students and our congregation.

HCRJ Happenings



Purim Shabbat Group Photo



Matzah Ball Making



Religious School children help lead the Seder



Marc Levinson and Keith Rosen



Frances Feinberg and Paul Herman work on the walls, while Julie Herman takes the lead with carrying the roof frames at the Interfaith Habitat for Humanity Build sponsored by the Edward and Helen Oppenheimer Foundation.



Through a variety of social, educational and recreational activities, the Senior Chai program is dedicated to enriching the lives of those 60 and above. This program is generously underwritten in memory of Mozelle and David Barg and Esther and Robert Shelby. All programs are open to the community. Please RSVP for events by calling the HCRJ office at 713-782-4162 or emailing admin@hcrj.org.

Watercolor Class

Wednesdays, May 11-June 22, 1-3PM No Class May 25

FREE

A new 6-week Senior Chai art class will begin on Wednesday, May 11. Noelle Shawa, who has taught numerous classes for the Senior Chai program including pastels and drawing, will continue her work teaching watercolors. This class is suitable for those who have never painted before and for those who have some experience. No cost to attend! Only 6 spots left!

Glass Blowing Experience

Wednesday, May 25, 9AM-1PM

\$25 Per Person

Join us for this hands-on experience at Three Dimensional Visions glass blowing studio. The day will start with a live glass blowing demonstration and tour of the hot shot, show room and gallery space. Next, all participants will have the opportunity to create their own beautiful piece of blown glass. Space is limited for this unique experience. Only 4 spots left!

Religious School News



On Sunday, April 17, HCRJ's 6th grade class took a trip to Seven Acres. 6th Grade teacher, David Wizig, provides a recap:

Each year, the highlight of our study of the Holocaust is studying poems written by children murdered during the Holocaust. Then, the students do a double mitzvah. They honor those children that perished by learning the poems and reciting them in



their honor. The second mitzvah is their reciting of the poems while visiting the residents of Seven Acres. It is a very moving experience. The children give their hearts and souls. This year, I witnessed both students and residents of Seven Acres shedding tears during this event.

Like always, I am so proud of our children!

GFC Kick-Off Event at HCRJ

Saturday, May 14, 3-5PM

Going to Greene Family Camp this summer? Join all our Houston friends at HCRJ for an afternoon



of fun with GFC staff and campers for a summer kick off party! First time campers and family as well as seasoned veterans will be participating in some fun games and activities as well as enjoying snacks!

Last Day of Religious School and Senior Send-Off: Sunday, May 15, 11:30AM Parents Welcome!

At the Religious School closing assembly, we will acknowledge our high school senior Ozrim and wish them well as they transition to a new stage of life. As they head off to new destinations, they will always have a spiritual home here at HCRJ. Join us in honoring these young adults.

BIRTHDAYS

5/1 Tobi Kronick
5/2 Jean Fefer
5/3 Megan Hersh
5/3 Charles Hurwitz
5/3 Caren Rosenthal
5/4 Fran Lowe
5/5 Marilyn Nathan
5/6 John Biro
5/6 Fran Brochstein
5/6 Laura Rosenfield
5/7 Wayne Dorris
5/7 Lori Siegel
5/7 Adam Weinstein
5/8 Leonard Goldfield
5/10 Craig Berko
5/10 Harriet Faden
5/10 Coby McElroy
5/11 Leonard Rosenberg
5/12 Annette Novominsky
5/13 Karen Plager
5/14 Shelley Weathers
5/15 Deborah Brochstein
5/15 Eleanor Chaikind
5/15 Gail Stalarow
5/16 Mark Kariel
5/16 Elizabeth Schreiber
5/16 Armando Vazquez
5/17 Maria Gross
5/17 Rhona Schneider
5/19 Lisa Berman
5/19 Elizabeth Berry
5/20 Martin Debrovner
5/20 Alan Faden
5/20 Sandra Rosenberg
5/21 Robyn Campbell
5/23 Robert Turk
5/24 Sheryl Androphy
5/25 Cynthia Anhalt
5/25 Mark Rosenfield
5/28 Amy McGuire
5/29 Donald Graubart
5/29 Lonny Hoffman
5/29 Georgiann Silverman
5/30 Sel Dante
5/30 Lauren Harrison

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO OUR KIDS

5/2 Sam Berman
5/3 Grant Appelbaum
5/4 Ryan Alexander
5/4 Hobie Bernosky
5/5 Michael Rubinstein
5/8 Jules Weinstein
5/10 Matthew Sanborn
5/10 Jake Schnur
5/12 Lielle Morgenstern
5/12 Andrew Speer
5/15 Justin Williams
5/16 Layla Harrison
5/16 Maggie Sternberg
5/19 Laine Brunton
5/21 Mari Hershkowitz
5/22 Asa Forman
5/22 Matthew Pappas
5/23 Rachel Tabin
5/26 Scott Leben
5/28 Alessandra Davis
5/28 Shana Davis
5/28 Isabella Ferguson
5/29 Braden Eagle

ANNIVERSARIES

5/3 Mitch & Michelle Leben
5/4 Stuart & Debbie Goldman
5/4 Paul & Julie Herman
5/8 Robert & Florence Lait
5/9 Adam & Karen Plager
5/11 Peter & Amy Shaper
5/16 Larry & Sherry Davis
5/19 Ryan & Stephanie Harrington
5/20 Tim & Jill Ferguson
5/21 Hade & Lisa Cashion
5/22 Lee & Lisa Herman
5/25 Ed & Betsy Schreiber
5/26 Lynne & Richard Gaudette
5/28 Michael & Dana Hammerman
5/28 Geoff & Lauren Harrison
5/28 Jorge & Daphna Zuniga

YARZEITS

5/1 David Flesh
5/1 Steven Novominsky
5/2 Anne Buck
5/2 Brad Soifer
5/3 Henrietta Grad
5/3 Mack Motley
5/4 Allen Abramson
5/4 Milton Abramson
5/4 Maria Pintar
5/4 Corinne Sartorius
5/5 Harry Greenfeld
5/5 David Ritzwoller
5/5 Louis Schlanger
5/5 Norman Steinberg
5/6 Donald Pleason
5/7 Sol Klaus
5/8 Rebecca Kaplan
5/8 Leah Schneider
5/10 Regina Kenler
5/10 Doris Lascher
5/10 Lawrence Miller
5/14 Julian Mayerhofer
5/15 Harry Markoss
5/17 Gary Muslin
5/18 Bernard Charon
5/18 Rose Saul
5/20 Mark Mowery
5/20 Marvin Stalarow
5/21 Richard Marks
5/24 Harry Golden
5/24 David Rosenfeld
5/25 Uri Kelman
5/27 Louis Marks
5/27 Abe Susman
5/28 Daniel Sheer
5/29 Phillip Frost
5/29 G. John Veta
5/30 Harold Falik
5/30 Louise Robbins

You are invited to join HCRJ
for our monthly



May 6, 2016

Dinner 6:15 pm
Sabbath Services 7:15 pm

\$5.00 per person

Please feel free to bring a side dish to show off your culinary talents.

May Family Dinner

Cinco de Mayo Cuisine:

Chicken and beef fajitas, flour tortillas, rice, beans,
chicken nuggets and macaroni and cheese

Steven M. Gross, Senior Rabbi
rabbigross@hcrj.org

Rochelle Sinderbrand, Bookkeeper
RochelleS@hcrj.org

Michael P. LeBurkien, Rabbi Emeritus
rabbileburkien@sbcglobal.net (private email)

Julie Barry, President

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hcrj@hcrj.org

Bruce Shelby, Vice President

Hilary Kamin, Director of Education
hilaryk@hcrj.org

Debby Jones, Secretary

Justin Deutsch, Administrative Assistant
admin@hcrj.org

Sandy Kantor, Treasurer

Michelle Renfrow, Director of Youth Engagement
hcrjyouth@hcrj.org

Madeleine Appel, Past President

Darlene Medford, Membership Chair

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