

H C R J

MAY 2018

HOUSTON CONGREGATION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

A Tale of Two Mitzvahs



At the end of every Jewish worship service, our concluding prayers include the Adoration or *Aleinu*, which contains a powerful statement regarding the human partnership with God in the establishment of a perfect world to come. This messianic hope states that it is our responsibility to "perfect the world under the sovereignty of God." In Hebrew, the phrase "to perfect the world" is "*tikkun olam*."

While there may be many ways to interpret this eternal mission and many pathways to its realization, this article entitled, *A Tale of Two Mitzvahs*, will focus on two specific commandments and two remarkable members of our congregation who have employed them to perfect the world in which we live. Each of these commandments is part of the *Holiness Codes* which are read from the Torah on Yom Kippur afternoon. They come from the Book of Leviticus and shape our understanding of morality.

You shall not insult the deaf nor place a stumbling block before the blind. (Lev. 19:14)

You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor. (Lev. 19:16)

The ethics embodied by the first of these commandments helps define human decency. The second of these commandments demands accountability. Both constitute the framework for my *Tale of Two Mitzvahs*.

When Mort Fefer started recording books for the blind, he did so because it combined his deep love of math and science, his innate passion for teaching and his boundless desire to help others. In his heart, he knew that blindness should not be an impediment to learning mathematics and chemistry. So he took it upon himself to remove that stumbling block by recording audio versions of math and chemistry books for blind students.

Mort's work was more than a labor of love. It was a mitzvah. Try to imagine how complicated it would be to describe the abstract concepts found in Geometry, Calculus or Chemistry without the use of visuals. How does one describe a shape to someone who has never seen a circle or a triangle? Yet, this is exactly what Mort did, and in doing so, he took to heart the Torah's commandment regarding placing a stumbling block before the blind.

Whenever we proactively involve ourselves in repairing the world (*tikun olam*), we embrace the spirit of the second commandment mentioned above as well, for whenever we actively address an injustice, we make a conscious decision to "*not stand idly by*." In Judaism, a bystander has a moral obligation to rescue someone who is in peril. This religious obligation has parameters, but it is understood to be an ethical and legal responsibility to extend ourselves, in whatever way we can, when a fellow human is in danger.

For years, Joel Androphy (a prominent Houston defense attorney) witnessed countless court cases where inadequate legal representation led to overly harsh and often unfair punishments to African American men who could not afford to pay for decent legal counsel. On Yom Kippur afternoon in 2016, Joel had an epiphany. During the afternoon service, Pastor Harvey Clemons Jr (a Baptist minister in Houston's Fifth Ward) delivered a profoundly moving sermon on the Prophet Isaiah. In it, Pastor Clemons challenged our community to find ways to move the prayers of our hearts into positive transformation in the world.

Upon hearing the Pastor's plea, Joel refused to stand on the sidelines. He could not stand idly by while economic injustices were unfolding around him, so he immediately set up a program in conjunction with Pastor Clemons to provide top quality, pro bono legal services to young men who needed it. This program came with one stipulation for those men who chose to work with Joel. This stipulation required these young men to give their time and energy to the church in exchange for legal counsel. In just two years, the program had become so successful that it was awarded the *2018 Harris County Bench Bar Pro Bono Award* by the Houston Bar Association and the Harris County judiciary.

The commandments against "standing idly by" and "placing a stumbling block before the blind" might be considered to be among Judaism's most important directives for human decency in the world. Each definitively states that it is an admonition to take advantage of others and calls upon us to take action demanding that society and people do everything possible to help the weak, the vulnerable and the helpless. May we find guidance in these commandments and inspiration from Mort and Joel who help us see how to translate them into our lives.

May Calendar

- | | | |
|----|----------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1 | 10:30 AM | Senior Chai Mindfulness Lessons |
| 2 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jong |
| | 10:30 AM | Interest Group: Religion & State in Israel |
| 3 | 2:00 PM | Audubon Society Presentation |
| 4 | 6:00 PM | Tot Shabbat |
| | 6:15 PM | Family Dinner |
| | 7:15 PM | Family Shabbat Services |
| 6 | 9:00 AM | Pancake Breakfast |
| | 9:30 AM | Religious School (last day) |
| | 10:00 AM | Annual Meeting |
| 7 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Yoga |
| 8 | 10:30 AM | Senior Chai Mindfulness Lessons |
| | 11:30 AM | Knitzvah Group |
| | 7:00 PM | Board Meeting |
| 9 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jong |
| 11 | 7:15 PM | Shabbat Services |
| 12 | 10:00 AM | Social Action Project: The Women's Home |
| 14 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Yoga |
| 16 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jong |
| 18 | 7:15 PM | Shabbat Services (Confirmation) |
| 19 | | Shavuot |
| 20 | 12:00 PM | Book Club Event |
| 21 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Yoga |
| 22 | 11:30 AM | Knitzvah Group |
| 23 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jong |
| 25 | 7:15 PM | Shabbat Services |
| 28 | | Memorial Day (temple office closed) |
| 30 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jong |

Religious School Registration

Religious School registration for the 2018-19 school year has begun. We are once again using the online registration process. Instructions on how to register for Religious School were emailed to families in April. Register online at home or come visit us at the registration table at Religious School.

Family Shabbat May 4 at 6:15PM



Menu: Fajitas, rice, beans chicken nuggets, mac n cheese

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



For Our Tots:

Tot Shabbat Services on May 4 at 6:00PM. Join us for Shabbat fun.

Jewish Federation
OF GREATER HOUSTON



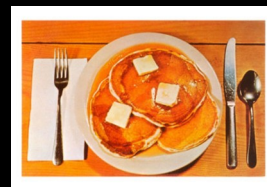
Come learn about Israel from an Israeli!
Join Herut Gez, Houston Community Shlichah (emissary)

Religion & State in Israel
Wednesday, May 2, 10:30 am

Presented for
Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism

Please RSVP to Justin at 713-782-4162
or admin@hcrj.org

3rd Annual Pancake Breakfast Sunday, May 6, 9:00AM



Join us for our 3rd Annual Pancake Breakfast followed by the Annual Meeting on May 6. 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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Honors and Memorials Fund

In memory of Sherman Robinson

From **Charlotte and Kathy Robinson**

From **Frances and Stephen Perel**

In honor of Mort Fefer's 90th Birthday

From **Charlotte and Kathy Robinson**

From **Madeleine and Michael Appel**

In honor of Lori Siegel's Birthday

From **Donna Siegel**

Good Works Fund

From **Sylvia Brauer**

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

In honor of the birthdays of Justin Deutsch, Rabbi Gross, Pearl Goldman, Bruce Shelby, Johnita Lebow and Barbara Brownstein

From **Madeleine and Michael Appel**

In memory of Louis Marks, IJ Shapiro and Allen Abramson

From **Paula Marks and Family**

General Operating

From **Evelyn Cohen**

From **Eva Breston**

Senior Chai

From **Edith Jucker**

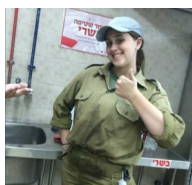
Brag and Boasts



Mazel Tov to Zoey Weinstein who was elected as Religious and Cultural Vice President for the NFTY TOR. This is the first time ever HCRJ has had a member sit on the regional board.



Mazel Tov to Judge Andrew Edison who was appointed to serve in the Galveston Division of the Southern District of Texas on February 20, 2018.



Pictured to the left is Eleanor Spain, daughter of Harriet and Bruce Spain who spent time "training" with the IDF on a 4 month trip to Israel.

Welcome to our New Members

Allan and Marlene Zoloto

Sabbath Oneg Sponsorships - 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 contact the temple at least two weeks prior to the event. Thank you for your ongoing support of HCRJ.

- ☐ Sabbath Oneg —\$100.00
- ☐ Religious School Breakfast—\$100.00
- ☐ Family Shabbat Dinner —\$150.00
- ☐ Contribution to Arrangements Fund

May Oneg Sponsorships

May 4: Available to sponsor

May 11: Available to sponsor

May 18: Sponsored by the Confirmation Families

May 25: Available to sponsor

Sponsorship donations can be made online at www.hcrj.org/donations or by calling the temple office at 713-782-4162.

Our heartfelt condolences...

On the death of Donna Propri, wife of Jerry Propri, who passed away on April 10, 2018. Jerry is HCRJ's beloved former maintenance employee.

On the death of Florence Selber, mother of Kay Zeidman and her husband, Fred, who passed away April 23, 2018.

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

2 Social Action Projects

The Cottage Shop at The Women's Home

Saturday, May 12, 10:00AM to 12:00PM



Join us as we volunteer at The Cottage Shop at The Women's Home. The Cottage Shop is a resale clothing and home goods boutique. Our volunteer responsibilities will include receiving, sorting and processing donations to get them ready for the sales floor. The mission of The Women's Home is to help women— many who are homeless and lack job skills or education due to substance abuse and mental illness – regain their self-esteem and dignity, empowering them to return to society as productive, self-sufficient individuals. This project is appropriate for ages 16+.

Interfaith Ministries Operation IMpact

June 2 at 11:00AM



Do you want to make an *impact*? Then, volunteer with us at Operation IMpact! This is a special project to help prepare homebound seniors across our community for Hurricane Season. We'll deliver five days' worth of shelf-stable meals and bottled water, as well as emergency information and supplies, to Meals on Wheels clients, some of the most vulnerable members of our community. This will ensure they are prepared in case IM's regular deliveries are interrupted by a storm. This is a project for all ages.

To sign up for these activities, please contact Justin at 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org.



Pictured above are volunteers from the 2017 Operation IMpact social action day.



HARVEY ASSISTANCE FOR CAMP!

Thanks to the generosity of the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, need based camp scholarships are available for Jewish children who were affected by Harvey and make it possible for more children to experience the magic of summer camp. There are two types available.

DAY CAMP GRANTS are meant to assist Jewish families who endured a significant financial loss due to the storm. Each family who submits an application and qualifies for a Hurricane Harvey day camp grant will receive 30% off their weekly camp costs. To apply, complete this [survey or visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/daycampscholarships](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/daycampscholarships).

Questions? Contact Mia Brooks at mbrooks@houstonjewish.org or 713.729.7000.

OVERNIGHT CAMP assistance is available for all Jewish families flooded by Hurricane Harvey. Families may receive a campership of up to \$3,000 per child. Additional savings are possible from Jewish Federation need based scholarships and One Happy Camper Grants for first time camp attendees. To apply, visit www.houstonjewish.org/scholarships or contact Liz Garza at egarza@houstonjewish.org or 713.729.7000.

HCRJ at the Astros

Astros vs Seattle Mariners
Wednesday, June 6 at 7:10pm
Minute Maid Park



\$20 per person. Ticket package includes:
1 ticket in section 422, 1 hot dog, 1 soda,
1 popcorn

The ticket purchase deadline is Wednesday, May 23. Purchase your tickets at <https://hcrj.org/event/astros2018>. Contact Justin with any questions at 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org.





The Senior Chai program is dedicated to enriching the lives of those 60 and above. As Senior Chai enters its third year, we are excited to continue offering a variety of social, educational and recreational activities to the community. Through the generosity of the Shelby and Barg families all programs are offered at minimal or no cost. Keep your eyes open this year for concerts, a senior safety fair, movies, art classes, trips, speakers and more. Your input is valuable to us in shaping a calendar of events that meet your interests, so please send any programming ideas to hcrj@hcrj.org.

Yoga Class

Mondays, 10:00AM to 11:15AM No cost to attend.

Taught by Suzy Shapiro, a certified yoga instructor, this class will focus on strength and stamina, balance and flexibility, and a new sense of well-being. Please sign up with Melissa Wolfson at hcrj@hcrj.org if you would like to attend.

Mah Jong

Wednesdays from 10:00AM to 12:00PM No cost to attend.

Join us for a weekly game of mah jong! Coffee and light snacks are served. RSVP to Melissa Wolfson at 713-782-4162 or hcrj@hcrj.org.

Presentation from the Israel Ornithological Center

May 3, 2:00PM to 3:00PM

Join us as HCRJ partners with the Houston Audubon Society to welcome speaker Jonathan Meyrav. Jonathan is an Israeli citizen, conservationist and nature enthusiast who will present on a different side of Israel: a country of amazing landscapes, wildlife, bird diversity and efforts to protect it. RSVP requested to hcrj@hcrj.org.

Community-Wide Shabbat Dinner for Jewish Singles in their 50s and 60s Friday, May 11

Congregation Emanu El
1500 Sunset Blvd



HCRJ in tandem with Congregation Emanu El is spearheading a community-wide Houston Jewish singles' initiative for those in their 50s and 60s! The next event is a Shabbat Dinner at Congregation Emanu El on Friday, May 11. The evening will begin at 5:30pm with a pre-Shabbat schmooze and mixer before heading into services at 6:00PM. Following services, a dinner catered by Chef Smirnov will close the evening. Dinner is \$12 per person. To register visit <https://emanuelhouston.org/node/2692>.

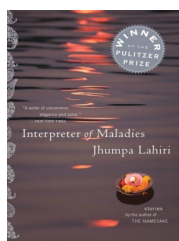
Questions? Please contact Justin at 713-782-4162 or admin@hcrj.org

Book Discussion & Museum of Fine Arts Book Club Tour

Sunday, May 20

12:00PM Pot Luck Lunch and Discussion at HCRJ

2:00PM Museum of Fine Arts, Houston Book Club Tour



Coming soon – our next book discussion! Join us on Sunday, May 20 as we discuss *Interpreter of Maladies* by Jhumpa Lahiri. This book won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 2000. Navigating between the Indian traditions they've inherited and the baffling new world, the characters in *Interpreter of Maladies*—a collection of touching, elegant stories—seek love beyond the barriers of culture and generations. In the title story, an interpreter guides an American family through the India

of their ancestors and hears an astonishing confession. "A Temporary Matter" follows a young Indian American couple who face the heartbreak of a stillborn birth while their Boston neighborhood copes with a nightly blackout.

We'll meet at HCRJ at 12pm for our discussion and a Pot Luck Brunch. Then, we'll visit the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston for a docent-led book club tour at 2pm. The docent will select several artworks on view at the Museum that they feel best connect with aspects of *Interpreter of Maladies*.

General admission tickets to the museum are \$15. To sign up, please contact Justin at 713-782-4162



Interfaith Iftar

Wednesday, May 30, 7:00PM

Istanbul Conference Center
9301 W. Belfort Ave.



For many years HCRJ has participated in The Islamic Institute & Houston Blue Mosque interfaith Ramadan iftar dinners. This year we would like to invite you and your family to the "Interfaith Ramadan Banquet" program on Wednesday, May 30th.

RSVP by May 18 to hcrj@hcrj.org.

Confirmation Services
Friday, May 18, 7:15PM
Mazel Tov to the Confirmation Class of 2018

Zachary Danek

Son of Lisa and Brian (Z"L) Danek

Asher Forman

Son of Abbe and Adam Forman

Drake Goldman

Son of Rachelle and Chris Goldman

Gabriella Rosenwasser

Daughter of David Rosenwasser and Jennifer Stern

Parker Santoscoy

Daughter of Jennifer and Augustin Santoscoy

Anna Sucec

Daughter of Debra Hurwitz and Dennis Sucec



Pictured above is the HOUSTY delegation at NFTY-TOR elections on April 21. Mazel Tov to Zoey Weinstein who was elected as Religious and Cultural Vice President for the NFTY TOR (North American Federation of Temple Youth, Texas- Oklahoma Region) 2018-2019. Zoey has served as president of HOUSTY and is also an active song leader at religious school on Sundays. HCRJ is very proud of Zoey and her accomplishments.

HCRJ Happenings

It's been a busy couple of months at HCRJ, from our Second Annual Bark Mitzvah (Muzzle Tov to all participants), to our Mah Jong Game Day, Cars Coffee & Conversation, 8th grade Shabbat, a young adult Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration at 8th Wonder Brewery, a dirty pour paint party and more. Pictured below are highlights from these fun programs!



BIRTHDAYS

5/1 Allan Zoloto
 5/1 Tobi Kronick
 5/2 Jean Fefer
 5/3 Megan Hersh
 5/3 Charles Hurwitz
 5/3 Caren Rosenthal
 5/4 Fran Lowe
 5/6 Fran Brochstein
 5/6 Laura Rosenfield
 5/7 Lori Siegel
 5/7 Wayne Dorris
 5/7 Adam Weinstein
 5/8 Leonard Goldfield
 5/10 Craig Berko
 5/10 Coby McElroy
 5/10 Harriet Faden
 5/12 Annette Novominsky
 5/14 Shelley Weathers
 5/14 Marlene Zoloto
 5/14 Christian Wendel
 5/15 Eleanor Chaikind
 5/15 Deborah Brochstein
 5/16 Mark Kariel
 5/16 Armando Vazquez
 5/16 Elizabeth Schreiber
 5/17 Maria Gross
 5/17 Rhona Schneider
 5/18 Shahzad Sadruddin
 5/19 Steven Levine
 5/19 Elizabeth Berry
 5/19 Lisa Berman
 5/20 Alan Faden
 5/20 Sandra Barrash
 5/21 Robyn Campbell
 5/23 Jill Weller
 5/24 Sheryl Androphy
 5/25 Mark Rosenfield
 5/25 Cynthia Anhalt
 5/28 Amy McGuire
 5/29 Lonny Hoffman
 5/29 Georgiann Silverman
 5/29 Donald Graubart
 5/30 Lauren Harrison

ANNIVERSARIES

5/3 Mitch & Michelle Leben
 5/4 Stuart & Debbie Goldman
 5/4 Paul & Julie Herman
 5/8 Robert & Florence Lait
 5/11 Peter & Amy Shaper
 5/16 Larry & Sherry Davis
 5/20 Tim & Jill Ferguson
 5/21 Hade & Lisa Cashion
 5/22 Lee & Lisa Herman
 5/25 Ed & Betsy Schreiber
 5/25 Jack & Arden Burleigh
 5/26 Richard & Lynne Gaudette
 5/28 Geoff & Lauren Harrison
 5/28 Jorge & Daphna Zuniga
 5/28 Michael & Dana Hammerman
 5/29 Joshua & Jessica Solera
 5/29 Mike & Kitty Kahn
 5/29 Larry & Katherine Buck
 5/31 Buddy & Pat Susman
 5/31 Scott Wenderfer & Megan Hersh

KIDS' BIRTHDAYS

5/2 Sam Berman
 5/3 Grant Appelbaum
 5/4 Hobie Bernosky
 5/5 Michael Rubinstein
 5/7 Eliana Bain
 5/8 Jules Weinstein
 5/10 Jake Schnur
 5/11 Grace Rosen
 5/12 Andrew Speer
 5/12 Lielle Morgenstern
 5/14 Davis Rosen
 5/15 Justin Williams
 5/16 Layla Harrison
 5/16 Maggie Sternberg
 5/19 Laine Brunton
 5/21 Cooper Greenberg
 5/22 Matthew Pappas
 5/22 Asa Forman
 5/23 Rachel Tabin
 5/26 Scott Leben
 5/28 Isabella Ferguson
 5/29 Miriam Lieberman
 5/29 Braden Eagle

YARZEITS

5/1 Steven Novominsky
 5/1 David Flesh
 5/2 Anne Buck
 5/2 Brad Soifer
 5/3 Henrietta Grad
 5/3 Mack Motley
 5/4 Milton Abramson
 5/4 Maria Pintar
 5/4 Allen Abramson
 5/4 Corinne Sartorius
 5/5 Harry Greenfeld
 5/5 Louis Schlanger
 5/5 Norman Steinberg
 5/5 David Ritzwoller
 5/5 Harry Greenfeld
 5/6 Marilyn Kingore
 5/6 Harry Grad
 5/6 Donald Pleason
 5/6 Eleanor Slosburg
 5/7 Sol Klaus
 5/8 Rebecca Kaplan
 5/10 Regina Kenler
 5/10 Lawrence Miller
 5/10 Doris Lascher
 5/10 Ketty Furst
 5/14 Julian Mayerhofer
 5/15 Harry Markoss
 5/17 Gary Muslin
 5/18 Bernard Charon
 5/18 Rose Saul
 5/18 Sydney Rosenblum
 5/20 Mark Mowery
 5/21 Richard Marks
 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

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You are invited to join HCRJ
for our monthly



May 4, 2018
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 Shabbat Menu

Fajitas, rice, beans
chicken nuggets, mac n cheese

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

Bruce Shelby, President

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

Adam Weinstein, Vice President

Melissa Wolfson, Executive Director
hcrj@hcrj.org

Evelyn Lazear, Secretary

Hilary Kamin, Director of Education
hilaryk@hcrj.org

Dan Fleckman, Treasurer

Justin Deutsch, Program Coordinator
admin@hcrj.org

Julie Barry, Past President

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

Jaime Perkins, Membership Chair

Marna Meyer, High School Principal
marna@hcrj.org

Rochelle Sinderbrand, Bookkeeper
rochelles@hcrj.org

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Telephone: 713-782-4162 Fax: 713-782-4167
Website: www.HCRJ.org

Newsletter articles, suggestions for articles and corrections are welcome. Deadline for submission is the 15th of the month.