

HCRJ

MAY 2019

HOUSTON CONGREGATION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

Counting the Blessings of Melissa Wolfson



Many Jews around the world are currently observing a sacred period of the Jewish calendar year called, "*The Counting of the Omer*." This observance is based on the biblical mandate to count bundles of grain (the omer) every day for seven weeks from the second day of Passover through the festival of Shavuot.

Traditionally, this seven-week period is considered to be a minor mourning period. Throughout these forty-nine days (with a few exceptions), observant Jews treat these days like any other period of mourning. Weddings and other major celebrations are prohibited during this time, and grooming of nails, shaving and haircuts are not done.

While it is not clear why these seven weeks are set aside as a mourning period, a Talmudic legend claims that thousands of disciples of Rabbi Akiva died in the early 1st century from a plague, which supposedly transpired during the weeks between Passover and Shavuot. Oddly, there is not much more that can be found regarding the historical backdrop for these forty-nine days of ritual counting and communal mourning. Thus, with very little historical meaning connected to the omer and the customs of mourning and counting, observance of the rituals associated with these seven weeks ebbed.

Additionally, as the Jewish world evolved beyond the rituals of the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, the concept of counting bundles of grain lost its significance for most Jews of the modern era. In recent years, however, this ritual period of counting has experienced a spiritual revival. For Jews seeking to find meaning beyond the ancient agricultural rituals, the forty-nine days of "*The Counting of the Omer*" has been redefined as a period to cultivate the human spirit rather than the land. One modern interpretation of the "*The Counting of the Omer*" suggests that this ancient ritual encourages us to count our blessings and make each and every day of our lives count.

Counting our blessings will play a central role at our Annual Meeting on May 19, as we honor and celebrate the many blessings brought to us by our Executive Director, Melissa Wolfson. Melissa has been with HCRJ for ten years, and her service to our community has been exemplary. Throughout her decade of dedication, Melissa has committed herself to growing and evolving with our community.

Melissa started as part time office manager with basic secretarial responsibilities, but as our congregation rapidly expanded, so too did the demands on Melissa. With an eye for detail and a boundless desire to meet our constantly changing needs, Melissa devoted herself to developing the skills and mastering the technologies which were central to the management and development of the business side of HCRJ.

May Calendar

- | | | |
|----|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jongg |
| | 12:00 PM | Senior Chai Watercolors |
| 3 | 6:00 PM | Tot Shabbat |
| | 6:15 PM | Family Dinner |
| | 7:15 PM | Family Shabbat |
| 4 | 6:30 PM | Boomers and Friends Potluck Dinner |
| 5 | 9:00 AM | Religious School Family Breakfast |
| | 2:30 PM | Book Discussion with Joel Goza |
| 6 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Yoga |
| 7 | 12:00 PM | Men's Group Lunch |
| 8 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Senior Chai Watercolors |
| 10 | 7:15 PM | Got Shabbat: Israel Independence Day |
| 11 | 10:00 AM | Women's Home Social Action Project |
| 12 | 9:30 AM | Religious School |
| | 10:00 AM | Torah Tots |
| 13 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Yoga |
| 14 | 7:00 PM | Board Meeting |
| 15 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Senior Chai Watercolors |
| 17 | 7:15 PM | Shabbat Services |
| 19 | 9:00 AM | Pancake Breakfast |
| | 9:30 AM | Religious School |
| | 10:00 AM | Annual Meeting |
| 21 | 10:15 AM | Senior Chai Israeli Dancing |
| 22 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Senior Chai Watercolors |
| 23 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Bridge |
| 24 | 7:15 PM | Shabbat Services/Confirmation |
| 25 | 10:30 AM | Bar Mitzvah of Samuel McGuire |
| 29 | 10:00 AM | Senior Chai Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 ON | Senior Chai Watercolors |
| 31 | 7:15 PM | Shabbat Services |

Religious School Registration

Religious School registration for the 2019-20 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. Register online at home or come visit us at the registration table at Religious School. Early registration ends June 7. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact Justin Deutsch at justin@hcrj.org.

Family Shabbat and Teacher Appreciation/ Senior Send-Off: May 3

Tot Shabbat: 6:00PM
Dinner: 6:15PM
Family Services: 7:15PM

Menu: Tacos, salad, rice, beans, chips, mac-n-cheese and chicken nuggets.

New this year for our annual teacher appreciation service, we will highlight our high school seniors who will lead the Shabbat service and share words that highlight their mentors.



HCRJ at the Astros

Astros vs Milwaukee Brewers
Wednesday, June 12 at 7:10pm

Minute Maid Park



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

Arrive early – the first 10,000 fans receive a George Springer bobblehead! Sign up at <https://hcrj.org/event/astros2019>. The ticket purchase deadline is Wednesday, May 29. Go Astros! Contact Justin with any questions at 713-782-4162 or

Annual Pancake Breakfast

May 19, 9:00AM (meeting at 10:00AM)

Join us for our 4th Annual Pancake Breakfast followed by the Annual Meeting 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



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Honors and Memorials Fund

In honor of Bruce Shelby

From **Sarah Schencker and Family**

In honor of the birthdays of Ann Lerne, Justin Deutsch, Madeline Podorzer, Steve Gross, Karen Jameson, Bruce Shelby and Madeleine Appel

From **Larry and Kaki Buck**

In honor of the anniversaries of Bruce & Laura Shelby, Alan & Fran Brochstein and Don & Anne Graubart

From **Larry and Kaki Buck**

In memory of Shirley Marks

From **Larry and Kaki Buck**

In memory of Sherman Robinson

From **Frances and Stephen Perel**

In memory of Shirley Sirota

From **Bruce and Laura Shelby**

General Operating

From **David Aguilar**

From **Ted and Maria Johnson**

In honor of the B'nai Mitzvah of Scott and Brett Leben

From **Julie and Paul Herman**

Bark Mitzvah

From **Mark and Elena Zaltsberg**

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

From **Theresa Velez**

In honor of the naming of their granddaughter, Jenna Elyse Johnson

From **Dr. and Mrs. Lewis Fram**

In honor of the CCAR

From **Mike and Gary Nathanson**

In memory of Isadore Shapiro, Lou Marks and Allen Abramson

From **Paula Marks and Family**

In honor of the boundless dedication of Rabbi Gross to HCRJ

From **Julie and Paul Herman**

In honor of the recovery of Mike Nathanson

From **Tim and Kathy Knott**

Special Music Fund

In honor of Mike Kahn's birthday

From **Barbara Loeser**

Torah Tots

In honor of the birthdays of Rabbi Gross and Justin Deutsch

From **Mike and Gary Nathanson**

Prayer Book Fund

In honor of the Leben Family

From **Alan Freedman**

Welcome New Members

Michael and Mary Alice Parment
Abbey Gleichenhaus

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 3: Sponsored by Jonathan and Spring Baron

May 10: Open to sponsor

May 17: Open to sponsor

May 24: Open to sponsor

May 31: Open to sponsor

Brag and Boast



Mazel Tov to Samuel McGuire, son of Amy McGuire, who will become a Bar Mitzvah on May 25, 2019.



Mazel Tov to Bruce Shelby and Jay Kaplan who will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of their B'nai Mitzvah on

Our heartfelt condolences...

On the death of Shirley Marks, wife of Jay, mother of Lester Marks and his wife, Penelope, mother of Fran Lowe and her husband, Jerry, grandmother of Joshua Marks, Asher Marks, Alana Marks, Robin Lowe Clarkson, Alan Lowe and Matthew Greenwood, great-grandmother of Jack Clarkson and brother of Norman Glosserman. Shirley passed away on April 10, 2019.

On the death of Lich Dinh, brother of Chinh Van Dinh. Chinh oversees maintenance at HCRJ. Lich passed away on April 18, 2019.

On the death of Joan Lorentson who passed away March 25, 2019. Joan is survived by her three children and their spouses, Ann and J. Kent Friedman, Lisa Lorentson & Robert Corsini, and Karen Lorentson and Yann Bertaud.

On the death of Hollis Israel, mother of Lynne Gaudette, and her husband, Richard, who passed away April 24, 2019.

May the memory of our beloved ones always remain a blessing to

Confirmation Services
Friday, May 24, 7:15PM
Mazel Tov to the Confirmation Class of 2019

Erandy Alvarez

Daughter of Monica Alvarez and Steve Levine

Drew Beckelman

Daughter of Jennifer and Michael Beckelman

Logan Belcher

Daughter of Alison and George Belcher

Hobie Bernosky

Son of Missy and Ron Bernosky

Mackenzie Cashion

Daughter of Lisa and Hade Cashion

Pierce Cohen

Son of Sheryl and Ken Cohen

Levi Fox

Son of Lesley and Gordon Fox

Simon Gross

Son of Beckye and Rabbi Steve Gross

Trudy Jacobs

Daughter of Lharissa and Mitchell Jacobs

Elliot Lazar

Son of Victoria and Alex Lazar

Alex Renfrow

Son of Michelle Renfrow and Darryl Renfrow

Jake Schnur

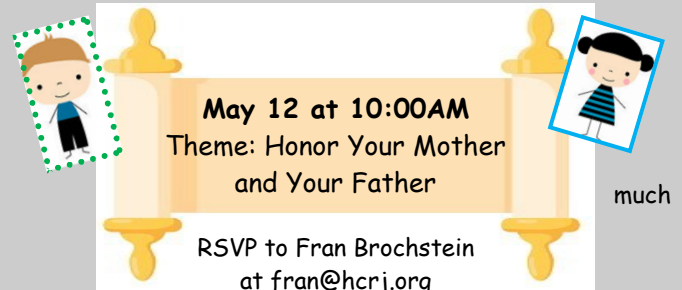
Son of Takako and Alan Schnur

Ginger Silverman

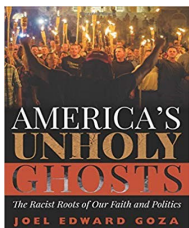
Daughter of Georgiann and Rick Silverman

Torah Tots

Have a tot 18 months - 4 years old? Parents and tots are invited to join in to learn about the Jewish holidays through stories, songs, movement, crafts, community and so



Pictured below is The Interfaith Youth Group Houston. In April they experienced an outstanding day of volunteering at the Houston Food Bank! It was a great morning filled with different service-projects and lots of fun memories of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim teens and adults working together to fight hunger, building interfaith friendships, and giving



Book Discussion

America's Unholy Ghosts: The Racist Roots of Our Faith and Politics By Joel Goza
 Sunday, May 5 at 2:30pm

Join us for our next book discussion in May at HCRJ! Writer, preacher and activist, the Reverend Joel Goza, will be with us to discuss his recently-released book, *America's Unholy Ghosts: The Racist Roots of Our Faith and Politics*. This book examines the DNA of the ideologies that shape our nation, ideologies that are as American as apple pie but that too often justify and perpetuate racist ideas and racial inequalities. MLK challenged us to investigate the "ideational roots of race hate" and *Ghosts* does just that. This book explores a philosophical "trinity"—Thomas

Hobbes, John Locke, and Adam Smith—whose works collectively helped to institutionalize, imagine, and ingrain racist ideologies into the hearts and minds of the American people.

Join us for an inspiring afternoon with Rev. Goza as we explore ways to nurture our hopes and desires for a faith and politics marked by mercy, justice, and equity. In addition to being an inspiring speaker and brilliant thinker, Rev. Goza is a very dear friend of Rabbi Gross. Copies of the book are \$25 and will be available for purchase from the temple office starting on Wednesday, April 3. Refreshments will be provided. To sign up, please contact Justin at 713-782-4162 or Justin@hcrj.org.

Senior Chai

Living Life over 60

The Senior Chai program is dedicated to enriching the lives of those 60 and above. 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. This program is underwritten by the Barg and Shelby families in memory of David & Mozelle Barg and Robert & Esther Shelby. Please RSVP for all Senior Chai programs to Melissa Wolfson at hcrj@hcrj.org.

Yoga Class

Mondays, 10:00AM to 11:15AM, No cost to attend. No class May 20 or 27.

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.

Mah Jongg

Wednesdays, 10:00AM to 12:00PM, No cost to attend

Join us for a weekly game of mah jongg! Coffee and light snacks are served. Instruction provided on request.

60+ Men's Group

May 7 at 12:00, Lunch will be served, no cost to attend

Men 60+ are invited for lunch and conversation. A significant volume of recent literature has made us aware that close friendships often contribute to a happier more fulfilling life. Led by Jay Schaffer, the hope of this group is to create an environment where men can freely express themselves and close friendships are formed. As in Vegas, our credo will be "*what's said in the men's group, stays in the men's group*"!

Watercolor Wednesdays

Wednesdays, May 1—June 5, 1:00PM to 3:00PM

Artist Noelle Shawa will start teaching another series of our [watercolor](#) class on Wednesday, May 1. This 6-week class is suitable for those who have never painted before and for those who have some

experience.

Israeli Dancing

Tuesday, May 21 at 10:15AM, Lunch will be served, \$5 to attend

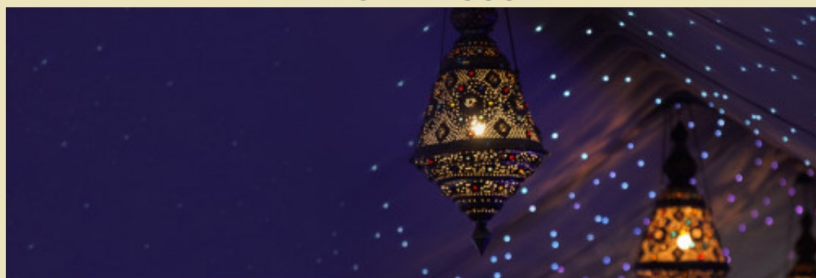
Music and dance bind Jews to their beloved country and elevate their spirits through meaningful movements. From Israel today, songs in Hebrew and beautiful choreographed dances continue to raise up hearts and unite lovers of Israel the world over. Come join us to experience a taste of this vibrant art form. Contact Melissa Wolfson at Melissa@hcrj.org to register.

Bridge

Thursdays starting May 23, 10:00AM to 12:00PM, no cost to attend

2 NIGHTS- 2 PROGRAMS- FREE- OPEN TO PUBLIC

SHARING RAMADAN: A MUSLIM-JEWISH IFTAR & DIALOGUE



**WEDNESDAY, MAY 15
6:30 PM TO 9 PM**

How do we deal with sacred texts that can be used to teach fear and prejudice against others?

TURQUOISE CENTER
9301 W BELLFORT BLVD.
HOUSTON, TX 77031

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 22
6:30 PM TO 9 PM**

What do our prayers/worship services teach us about making peace and understanding of others?

EVELYN RUBENSTEIN JEWISH
COMMUNITY CENTER
5601 S BRAESWOOD BLVD.
HOUSTON, TX 77096

RSVP at www.sharingramadantx.eventbrite.com

For more info contact AJ Durrani: ajdurrani@aol.com or Rabbi Steven Morgen: smorgen@bethyeshurun.org

Boomers and Friends Pot Luck

Saturday, May 4, 6:30PM

Our Boomers and Friends group is gathering for a potluck dinner at the home of Debby and Barney Jones on Saturday night, May 4! Sign up with Justin at 713-782-4162 or Justin@hcrj.org. The potluck address will be provided upon your RSVP.

Boomers and Friends is a group for HCRJ



Boomers and friends at a previous get together.

Upcoming Social Action Projects

RSVP to Justin at Justin@hcrj.org

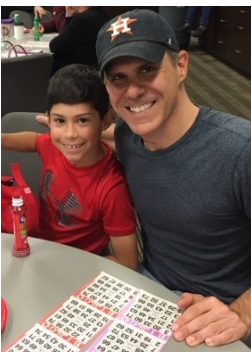
The Women's Home: Saturday, May 11, 10:00AM to 12:00PM

Join us as we volunteer for The Women's Home! 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. We will be at The Cottage Shop, a resale clothing and home goods boutique for The Women's Home. Our volunteer responsibilities will include receiving, sorting and processing donations to get them ready for the sales floor. The Cottage Shop generates approximately 13% of the operating income of The Women's Home. This project is appropriate for ages 16+.



The Beacon: Sunday, June 2, 10:45AM to 2:00PM

The Beacon is a non-profit organization that serves the Houston homeless community through daily services, civil legal aid, counseling and mentoring and access to housing. The mission of The Beacon is to provide essential and next-step services to restore hope and end homelessness in Houston. Last year alone, it served more than 8,500 homeless men and women in Houston. Our responsibilities volunteering at The Beacon Day Center will include serving on the lunch line, helping in the dining room, assisting in the washing, drying and folding clothes, handing out



It was another busy month at HCRJ! Our community came together for a golf tournament, Family BINGO, Havdallah in the Heights, a member thank you event and more.



BIRTHDAYS

5/1 Allan Zoloto
5/1 Tobi Kronick
5/2 Jean Fefer
5/3 Caren Rosenthal
5/3 Charles Hurwitz
5/3 Megan Hersh
5/4 Fran Lowe
5/6 Fran Brochstein
5/6 Laura Rosenfield
5/7 Adam Weinstein
5/7 Wayne Dorris
5/7 Lori Siegel
5/8 Leonard Goldfield
5/9 Andrew Horn
5/10 Harriet Faden
5/10 Craig Berko
5/10 Coby McElroy
5/12 Annette Novominsky
5/14 Marlene Zoloto
5/15 Deborah Brochstein
5/15 Eleanor Chaikind
5/16 Elizabeth Schreiber
5/16 Mark Kariel
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 Debbie Lapin
5/21 Robyn Campbell
5/23 Jill Weller
5/24 Gary Kob
5/24 Sheryl Androphy
5/25 Cynthia Anhalt
5/25 Mark Rosenfield
5/28 Amy McGuire
5/28 Marilee Steiner
5/29 Georgiann Silverman
5/29 Donald Graubart

KIDS' BIRTHDAYS

5/2 Sam Berman
5/4 Hobie Bernosky
5/7 Eliana Bain
5/8 Jules Weinstein
5/10 Jake Schnur
5/11 Grace Rosen
5/12 Lielle Morgenstern
5/14 Davis Rosen
5/15 Justin Williams
5/16 Layla Harrison
5/19 Laine Brunton
5/21 Cooper Greenberg
5/22 Asa Forman
5/22 Matthew Pappas
5/23 Rachel Tabin
5/26 Scott Leben
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
5/11 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 Michael & Dana Hammerman
5/29 Joshua & Jessica Solera
5/29 Sheldon & Joan Camenson
5/29 Mike & Kitty Kahn
5/29 Larry & Katherine Buck
5/31 Buddy & Pat Susman

YARZEITS

5/1 Steven Novominsky
5/1 David Flesh
5/2 Brad Soifer
5/2 Anne Buck
5/3 Henrietta Grad
5/3 Mack Motley
5/4 Milton Abramson
5/4 Joe Wilk
5/4 Maria Pintar
5/4 Adelle Shaw
5/4 Corinne Sartorius
5/4 Allen Abramson
5/5 David Ritzwoller
5/5 Harry Greenfeld
5/5 Louis Schlanger
5/5 Norman Steinberg
5/6 Eleanor Slosburg
5/6 Marilyn Kingore
5/6 Harry Grad
5/6 Benjamin Pollack
5/7 Sol Klaus
5/8 Rebecca Kaplan
5/10 Regina Kenler
5/10 Don Forman
5/10 Lawrence Miller
5/10 Doris Lascher
5/14 Julian Mayerhofer
5/15 Harry Markoss
5/15 David Camenson
5/16 Ted Bernstein
5/17 Gary Muslin
5/18 Bernard Charon
5/18 Rose Saul
5/18 Sydney Rosenblum
5/20 Mark Mowery
5/21 Lillian Mikelman
5/21 Hoddee Freeman
5/21 Paul Brody
5/21 Richard Marks
5/21 Max Leaman
5/22 Norma Lewis
5/24 David Rosenfeld
5/25 Uri Kelman
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

Memorial Plaques and Bricks

Remember your loved ones with a plaque on the Memorial Wall or purchase a brick for the patio. Memorial Wall plaques can be purchased for \$500 and patio bricks for \$250.

To purchase a plaque or brick visit
www.hcrj.org/memorialplaques

You are invited to join HCRJ
for our monthly



May 3, 2019
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

Tacos, salad, rice, beans, chips,
mac-n-cheese and chicken nuggets.

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

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

Melissa Wolfson, Executive Director
hcrj@hcrj.org

Fran C. Brochstein, Interim Director of Education
fran@hcrj.org

Michael Mason, Director of Lifelong Learning
mike@hcrj.org

Justin Deutsch, Program Coordinator
admin@hcrj.org

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

Marna Meyer, High School Principal
marna@hcrj.org

Adam Weinstein, President

Adam Forman, Vice President

Jaime Perkins, Secretary

Debbie Barrash, Treasurer

Bruce Shelby, Past President

Rochelle Sinderbrand, Bookkeeper
rochelles@hcrj.org

Jaime Perkins, Membership Chair

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