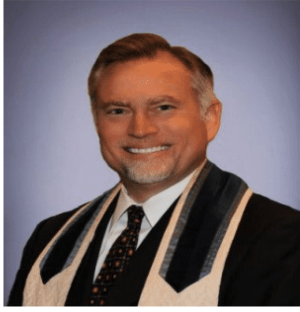


Lessons From a Small Mountain Village in Croatia



As I write these words, Israel's war against Hamas continues to unfold without an endgame in sight or a sense of what might be next. It is in the context of this unfolding violence that the story I am about to share might generate a glimmer of hope in our darkened world.

In 2010, I was asked to be a part of a multi-faith trip to the Balkans. The purpose of this trip was to use the complex history of this region as a lens through which we might better understand the strengths and weaknesses of Houston's diversity. The trip was designed to allow each of its participants (7 ministers, a rabbi, and a

Muslim community organizer) to interact with individuals who were dedicating their lives to helping their countries heal after one of the most brutal wars in modern history.

Through our interactions with community leaders, who for three years had been engaged in constant battle with their neighbors, we came to understand some of the essential components involved in building trust and understanding in a post-war society. The stories they shared challenged us, as clergy, to find ways to avoid the pitfalls of violence in the city of Houston by preemptively combating hatred together. These interactions also presented a kind of cultural and moral mirror reflecting common post-war challenges around the globe. The historical context of this moral mirror represents an important model for us as we seek to imagine a post-war reality in Israel and Gaza. Before WWI, Jews, Christians, and Muslims lived peacefully in the Balkan Peninsula. For generations, faith and ethnic diversity created a rich cultural tapestry rooted in respect and tolerance.

With the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of World War I, Yugoslavia was established as a new nation state which brought six ethnic groups together. They spoke a common language, Serbo-Croatian, but they had different histories, different beliefs, and distinct identities. These elements of diversity, which had not been an issue in the past, suddenly became divisive as each group sought power in a region riddled with the rise of nationalism.

After World War II, Yugoslavia was subdivided along ethnic lines into six republics. It was forcibly held together under the communist dictatorship of Tito. During these years, all ethnic and religious tensions were suppressed. When Tito died, communist Yugoslavia split violently as the republics fought to establish themselves as sovereign countries. This violent split led to three years of brutal wars, and neighbors who had been living side by side for generations, were now killing each other based on their religious and ethnic identities.

Our trip took place almost two decades after this war as the people in each of these newly formed nations were trying to find a way back to the peaceful coexistence of their past. It was against the backdrop of deliberate efforts to reestablish a shared society that we listened to powerful stories of forgiveness, compassion, and hope. The most impactful of these stories took place in Fuzine, a quaint mountain village in the northern end of the Dalmatian coast of Croatia.

There, our group listened to a former governor and a local radio producer share an extraordinary tale of resistance, which proved to be the foundation of a pocket of peace in a region consumed by hatred, suspicion, and violence.

February Calendar

2	6:15 PM	Shabbat B'yachad Dinner
	7:15 PM	Shabbat B'yachad Service
3	10:30 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Louis Hoffman
4	9:30 AM	Religious School
5	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
7	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
8	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
	6:00 PM	Holy Challah Bake Program at HCRJ
9	6:30 PM	Shabbat Service
11	9:30 AM	Religious School
12	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
14	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
15	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
	7:30 PM	"The Jazz Singer" on Zoom (PJP)
16	10:00 AM	Beginner Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Shabbat Service
17	4:30 PM	Bar Mitzvah of Michael Kabin
18		NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
19	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
21	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	10:00 AM	Undies for Everyone Social Action Project
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
22	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
	7:30 PM	"Those Were the Days" on Zoom (PJP)
23	6:30 PM	Shabbat Service
24	10:30 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Bryce Goldstein
25	9:30 AM	Religious School
	12:00 PM	"Jews of Portugal" on Zoom (PJP)
26	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
28	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
29	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg

On the next few pages you will find the HCRJ Calendar of Programs. As our programming schedule is ever changing and growing, please visit our website at www.hcrj.org for details and up to date information.



Questions regarding our programs? Please contact Beth Nelson at beth@hcrj.org or call 713-782-4162.

March Calendar

1	6:15 PM	Rodeo Shabbat Dinner
	7:15 PM	Shabbat B'Yachad Service
3	9:00 AM	Religious School Family Breakfast
	10:00 AM	Hamentashen Making
4	8:00 AM	HCRJ Open Golf Tournament
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
6	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
7	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
8	6:30 PM	Shabbat Service/Carol Wilson Oneg
10		NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
	12:00 PM	"Jews of Iran" on Zoom
11	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
13	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
14	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
15	6:30 PM	Shabbat Service
17		NO RELIGIOUS SCHOOL
18	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
20	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
21	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
22	6:30 PM	Purim and Karaoke Shabbat
24	9:30 AM	Religious School Purim Program
25	10:00 AM	Yoga
	6:30 PM	Learn & Play Mah Jongg
	6:30 PM	Landscape Watercolor Class
27	10:00 AM	Mah Jongg
	1:00 PM	Watercolor Wednesday Class
28	1:00 PM	Mah Jongg
	7:30 PM	"Schindler's List" on Zoom (PJP)
29	6:30 PM	Shabbat Service
30	10:30 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Max Mills

April Calendar

- | | | |
|----|----------|---|
| 1 | 10:00 AM | Yoga |
| | 6:30 PM | Learn & Play Mah Jongg Class |
| | 6:30 PM | Landscape Watercolor Class |
| 3 | 10:00 AM | Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Watercolor Wednesday |
| 4 | 1:00 PM | Mah Jongg |
| 5 | 6:15 PM | Shabbat B'Yachad Dinner |
| | 7:15 PM | Shabbat B'Yachad Service |
| 6 | 8:30 AM | Cars, Coffee & Conversation |
| | 4:30 PM | Bat Mitzvah of Riley Paul |
| 7 | 9:00 AM | Religious School Family Breakfast |
| 8 | 10:00 AM | Yoga |
| | 6:30 PM | Learn & Play Mah Jongg Class |
| | 6:30 PM | Landscape Watercolor Class |
| 10 | 10:00 AM | Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Watercolor Wednesday Painting Class |
| 11 | 1:00 PM | Mah Jongg |
| 12 | 6:30 PM | Autism Awareness Shabbat and Mesibat Siddur |
| 13 | 10:30 AM | Bar Mitzvah of Nico Gomar |
| 14 | 9:30 AM | Religious School |
| | 11:30 AM | "Bark" Mitzvah |
| 15 | 10:00 AM | Yoga |
| | 6:30 PM | Learn & Play Mah Jongg Class |
| | 6:30 PM | Landscape Painting Class |
| 17 | 10:00 AM | Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Watercolor Wednesday Class |
| 18 | 1:00 PM | Mah Jongg |
| 19 | 6:30 PM | Shabbat Service |
| 20 | 4:30 PM | Bar Mitzvah of Davis Rosen |
| 21 | 9:30 AM | Religious School |
| 22 | 6:00 PM | First Night Passover Seder |
| 24 | 10:00 AM | Mah Jongg |
| | 1:00 PM | Watercolor Wednesday Painting Class |
| 25 | 1:00 PM | Mah Jongg |
| 26 | 6:30 PM | Shabbat Service |
| 27 | 2:00 PM | Family Passover Seder |
| 28 | 9:30 AM | Religious School |

SOCIAL ACTION OPPORTUNITIES

⇒ As you know we are sponsoring the Granados Family from El Salvador. **We are in need of Spanish speakers** to help them with their English lessons. Currently, most of us use Google Translate to communicate with them and although it works, it's not very productive or helpful to their learning English. Please let me know if you are willing and able to help with this.

The coordinator for this is Wendy Suttin from Congregation Shema Koleinu (our partner in the Interfaith Ministries sponsorship). Her email is wendy5530@gmail.com

⇒ We are signed up to volunteer at **UFE (Undies for Everyone) on Wednesday, February 21 from 10 am-12 pm**. This is a great project as we meet at the warehouse to roll and pack undies for children.

For more information on UFE please visit www.undiesforeveryone.com

We will meet at the warehouse (3610 Willowbend Drive, #1000, Houston) please wear closed toed shoes. UFE requires registration in advance, this makes check-in much easier. **Please register** by clicking [HERE](#) or please see our weekly email for the direct link.

⇒ **Books Between Kids on Saturday, March 9 from 12:00 pm -2:00 pm**. Books Between Kids is a non-profit organization serving Houston's at-risk children by providing them with books to build their own home libraries. We will help sort, check, and ready the books for distribution.

For more information on Books Between Kids please visit www.booksbetweenkids.org

Please register by clicking [HERE](#) or please see our weekly email for the direct link.



Save the Date

PASSOVER SEDERS AT HCRJ

ADULT SEDER: Monday, April 22 at 6:00PM
FAMILY SEDER: Saturday, April 27 at 4:00PM

In 1991, during the height of the war, the municipal leaders of all the villages (Serb and Croat alike) made a bold and daring calculation. They approached the base commanders of a Yugoslavian Army base and sought to establish a relationship with them. After several meetings, it became clear that none of them wanted to shoot at each other or to be shot. So they made a written agreement that articulated "terms" of coexistence. For example, when the army was required to fire on the villages, per orders from up the chain of command, they agreed to warn the citizens ahead of time and instruct them on how to survive the barrage. They even provided maps of the mines they laid.

The city leader's did the same. When they were forced, by public opinion and the radical fringe, to fire on the base, the local radio producer treated the army base as another "village" and reported critical information to ensure their safety. When radical elements in the villages broke the agreement by firing on the soldiers, city leader immediately called the families of wounded soldiers to apologize and did so publicly on the radio. Media reports stayed ahead of hateful propaganda and rumor mills, and they sought to report events in ways that would minimize the inflammatory impact of the angry rhetoric coming from other sources.

Because of the extraordinary bravery and commitment from people on both sides, no one from the district was killed and no one was taken captive. This story is a remarkable tale of resistance through compassion. It is an example of how shared concerns for human life and dignity can be driving forces behind morally grounded political solutions.

On a personal note, this story continues to be a major factor in the multi-faith work I have pursued as a rabbi in Houston, and it has had a major impact on how I understand the power of forgiveness, compassion, and empathy during times of duress.

As we consider the unfolding war against Hamas, this story from a small mountain village in Croatia can provide us with a guiding light in this time of extreme darkness. While the context of the war in Gaza may be different, the facts on the ground are the same. For when the war is over, two peoples will need to live side by side after violently killing each other for months. As we learn from the dedicated people from Fuzine, this is something that can be done. Let us all pray that this day comes soon.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A warm thank you to those who contributed to our various temple funds. Your generosity helps us continue to expand ways to learn, worship and celebrate inside and outside the walls of our temple.

Matching Fund Challenge

Leslie Alter
Fran Brochstein & James Jones
(In honor of the Rabbi & the wonderful staff at HCRJ)
Erin & Andrew Dickerman
Sheila & Roy Camberg
Alice & Earl Heckerroth
Julie & Paul Herman
Robert Kittinger
Libby Lieberman
(In honor of Kelly Berretta)
Marilyn & Lance Gorel
Jacki Harrison
Sarah Sandoval
Susan Gartner
Carole Lasof
Maureen Tiras
Suzy Shapiro
Karen Goins

Adult Education

Roy & Sheila Camberg

General Operating

Marlene Addlestone & Larry Burstein
Roz Fink
(in Honor of Kitty Kahn & Monday Yoga)
Cubey Glazer

Honors & Memorials

Lila Shain
(in Memory of Stephen Shain)
Kay Zeisman
(in Memory of Shari Linnick)

Oneg Sponsor

German Portorreal

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund

Carol Danek
(in Memory of Kelly Berretta)
Bettina Dooley
Claire & William Getschow
(in Honor of Evelyn Getschow's Bat Mitzvah)
Linda Gross
(in Memory of Barbara Rubinstein)
Nancy & Melvin Gross
(from Mel, Nancy, David, Priscila & Johnny Gross in memory of Harry Gross)
Andrew Klein & Sara Brill
(in Honor of Rabbi Steve Gross for his kindness and understanding)
Mitzie & Warren Krams
(in Memory of Fannie Roth)
Ilyssa Lerner
(in Honor of Marvin Lerner)
Chad & Laura Stephenson

Religious School Chanukah Store

Invitations Plus *(in Honor of the Vendor Fair)*

Shabbat B'yachad Dinner

German Portorreal

Temple Life

Theresa Velez



From the desk of the Education Director



R. Chanina remarked, **"I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and the most from my students"** (*Ta'anit 7a*).

והיינו דאמר ר' חנינא הרבה למדתי מרבתי ומחבירי יותר מרבתי ומתלמידי יותר מכולן

There is a tendency amongst educators and schools in general to believe that there are teachers with information and students who come to receive that information. R. Chanina suggests that this contractual relationship is based on the idea that the information flow is not one direction.

Our goal as parents and educators is to strengthen the idea that we are all created in God's image by providing them with the tools to stand on their own two feet, allowing them to question and encourage them to think freely, to dream, to make mistakes.

Throughout my years of being a parent and an educator, I could not agree more with this quote as I have learned the most from my children – all of them! Here are some lessons: It is truly a gift to be able to share values and form a connection with students as they hold up a mirror to us, as educators, thus reflecting on our own being as well.

Teachers often set the bar too low, and our students remind us that they can do much more than we give them credit for. The recent HCRJ Bar/Bat Mitzvah students have proven this to be true.

As most effective teachers know, students don't care what we teach if we don't teach that we care. Trusted relationships help build positive students and a better school climate. Little words and little deeds help build strong relationships, make big differences, and change lives.

There is so much more to learn. I can't wait!

Betti Buck





THE JUDY KATZ SCHOLARSHIP FUND AVAILABLE AND ACCEPTING REQUESTS

HCRJ has been blessed with the establishment of the Judy Katz Scholarship Fund. This fund is available to students throughout the year who are seeking financial assistance for Jewish educational programs including: Jewish overnight camp, Jewish day camp, Jewish day school, Jewish retreats, trips to Israel, and Jewish experiences around the globe.

This scholarship has been set up by Avi Katz, the owner of Katz Coffee, in memory of his mother, Judy Katz. Judy was passionate about Jewish education. She believed that Jewish learning and Jewish experiences were central to the survival of the Jewish people. The Judy Katz Scholarship Fund will ensure cost will never be an impediment to enabling our youth to access immersive learning experiences.

HCRJ is grateful to Avi and is truly blessed to be the guarantor of Judy's legacy to the Jewish people.

To access funding from this special fund, please contact Rabbi Gross at rabbigross@hcrj.org.



Mazel Tov to Paula and Geoff Hoffman on the Bar Mitzvah of their son Louis on February 3, 2024.

Mazel Tov to Karen and Jeff Kabin on the upcoming Bar Mitzvah of their son Michael on February 17, 2024.

Mazel Tov to Betsy and Gregg Goldstein on the upcoming Bar Mitzvah of their son Bryce on February 24, 2024.

Mazel Tov to Daniela and Michael Mills on the upcoming Bar Mitzvah of their son Max on March 30, 2024.

Mazel Tov to Amanda Garcia on the upcoming Bat Mitzvah of her daughter Riley Paul on April 6, 2024.

Mazel Tov to Stacy Soefer and Luis Gomar on the upcoming Bar Mitzvah of their son Nico on April 13, 2024.

Mazel Tov to Jessica and Mitch Rosen on the upcoming Bar Mitzvah of their son Davis on April 20, 2024.

HCRJ HAS RECEIVED A \$150,000 SECURITY GRANT FROM THE US DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY!

*We would like to thank **Bruce Shelby** for all of his efforts securing the grant for our temple. His hard work and follow through will increase the safety and security of our congregation with the following upgrades:*

- Installed 30 cloud based, high resolution cameras with local and remote monitoring.
- New access control systems at the administrative office door, main entry door and patio gate.
- Significantly enhanced exterior lighting along the entry drive, parking lot and main entry canopy.
- Installing wrought iron fencing along Bering and along the main entry drive from Bering to the eastern edge of the building.

The selection of the above upgrades is a result of a security assessment coordinated by the Jewish Federation.



Please join us in welcoming our newest HCRJ members:

Bayla Abrams
Benjamin Brochstein
Alan Martay
Dena Wilson



FRIDAY, MARCH 1ST

6:15 PM

Rodeo Shabbat Dinner

7:15 PM

Shabbat B'Yachad Service

***Oneg with Line Dancing Following the Service**

RODEO SHABBAT



Hamentashen Baking



March 3rd @ 10AM

**Carol Wilson's 25th Anniversary
at HCRJ Celebration!**

March 8th



Come Join Us!

Come Celebrate Carol Wilson on Friday, March 8, 2024.
Special Shabbat service and Oneg celebrating Carol's 25th
Anniversary as the HCRJ Kitchen Manager. If you would like
to donate a special treat for the Oneg please contact
Beth Nelson at beth@hcrj.org

**PURIM
Karaoke**



SHABBAT

FRIDAY, MARCH 22ND, 6:30PM



Questions regarding our programs?
Please contact Beth Nelson at
beth@hcrj.org or call 713-782-4162.

Zoom Film Presentations

This program is co-sponsored by participating members of a national consortium of Jewish organizations.



Thursday, February 15 @ 7:30 PM - *"The Jazz Singer" with John Kendrick*

The Jazz Singer: "You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet!" - Al Jolson's charismatic performance ended the silent movie era and made film "talk". How this landmark film gave millions their first look at the culture and faith of American Jews.

Thursday, February 22nd @ 7:30 PM - *"Those Were the Days" with Irv Slifkin & Laurence Lerman*

From Barry Levinson's Diner, Tin Men and Avalon and Woody Allen's Radio Days and Bullets Over Broadway to the much beloved My Favorite Year, The Chosen, Brighton Beach Memoirs and An American Tail, we present a collection of nostalgic Jewish films that affectionately look back on the 'good old days of yesteryear'.

Sunday, February 25 @ 12:00 PM - *"Jewish Portugal" with Gloria Ribeiro*

The Jewish heritage of Lisbon started in Roman times (if not before). This visit will allow you to understand the living Jewish community in Lisbon and learn about their history, their traditions & their everyday life.

Sunday, March 10 @ 12:00 PM - *"Jewish Iran" with Alan Niku*

Travel with us as we visit Iran with our tour guide Alan Nikul. Iran's Jewish community is one of the oldest diaspora communities in the world. But is there more to those 2700 years than Queen Esther and the Islamic Revolution? This talk examines the lesser-known parts of Iran's Jewish History, a vast story of prophets, autonomous nations, divergent sects, epic poetry, and political intrigue.

Thursday, March 28 @ 7:30 PM - *"Schindler's List" with John Kendrick*

Schindler's List: "Whoever saves one life saves the world entire" - How a broken briefcase led to the world learning about a philandering Nazi who saved more than a thousand Jews from extermination during World War II.

To RSVP and receive the Zoom link, please email Beth at beth@hcrj.org

CARS, COFFEE & CONVERSATION APRIL 6TH, 9AM - NOON

Mitch's Motors is excited to once again be sponsoring "Cars, Coffee & Conversation" at HCRJ, 801 Bering Drive on April 6th (9-12).

Admission is free! There will be raffle prizes and lots of coffee and conversation.

To get your car "show ready," contact Mitch at info@mitchsmotors.com to schedule your pre-show detail! See you on April 6th!



BARK MITZVAH

Sunday, April 14th @ 11:30AM



Come to HCRJ's "Bark Mitzvah" on April 14th!

Groomers, trainers, vets, treat shops, pet adoptions, music and more will help shape an afternoon of joy.

Rabbi Gross will lead a Bark Mitzvah service for all canines. Food and fun for all.

Free and open to the community!



Registration is now open for the 6th Annual HCRJ Open!
Monday, March 4th at Westwood Golf Club
8888 Country Creek Street
Houston, TX 77036
8am - Registration and Breakfast
9:30am - Shotgun Start (18-Hole Scramble)

This tournament will serve as Houston Congregation for Reform Judaism's major fundraiser this year. We hope you will participate! Sponsorships start as low as \$500. The cost for an individual player is \$200 and a foursome is \$700.

Help us continue to grow our congregational programming! Proceeds from the HCRJ Open will benefit the variety of religious, social, educational and youth programs offered at HCRJ! Open to HCRJ members and the community.

To golf, sponsor or volunteer, please visit hcrj.org/event/2024hcrjopen or contact Justin at 713-782-4162 or Justin@hcrj.org





HCRJ HAPPENINGS! It's been a busy few months at HCRJ. We hosted Adult Bingo, Hanukkah Shabbat, Young Adult Drinks and Dreidels, Schmooze at The Snooze, Book Talk with Andrew Laszlo, Jr., Mitzvah Day, Social Action project at Undies for Everyone, Gospel Shabbat and more!





801 BERING DRIVE HOUSTON, TX 77057

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

Justin Deutsch, Executive Director
Justin@hcrj.org

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Betti Buck, Religious School Director
Betti@hcrj.org

JoAnn Innerarity, President

Ed Hurwitz, Vice President

Laura Rosenfield, Secretary

Bruce Shelby, Treasurer

Adam Forman, Past President