



Rabbi Jack Segal

April 18, 1929 - July 7, 2023

Jack Segal, beloved husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, community leader, and Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Beth Yeshurun passed away peacefully on July 7th at the age of 94.

Born in Brooklyn to Bertha and Henry Segal, he was a prolific student, earning 7 degrees over the years, including a rabbinic degree, two bachelor's degrees (physics and mathematics), two master's degrees (counseling and psychology), and two doctorate degrees (Talmud and counseling and psychology).

He met the love of his life, Toby, while serving in his first position as a rabbi in Pennsylvania. They soon married and recently celebrated their 65th anniversary.

Rabbi Segal then took a position as rabbi at a congregation in Portland, Oregon. There, they had their two oldest children, Jeffrey and Michael.

Rabbi Segal then moved back to New York to help in the family vest business. Their daughter, Lisa, was born there.

In 1965 Rabbi Segal interviewed for a position as associate rabbi at Congregation Beth Yeshurun in Houston, Texas. It was professional love at

first sight. The local community was vibrant, warm, and welcoming. Jack Segal found his professional home – for life. He later became Senior Rabbi, and ultimately Rabbi Emeritus. In Houston, their third son, Scott, was born.

The family gave birth to a new child each time he received a new educational degree. After Scott was born Toby said there would be no more degrees. The family was set with four children.

Jack Segal did the work of four people. He was a teacher, educator, and counselor. He was a spiritual advisor and officiated at thousands of life-cycle events including baby namings, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, weddings, and funerals. He provided comfort to thousands of congregants, consoling patients in the hospital and at home, as well as to those who lost loved ones.

Two events shook his natural optimism.

His son, Michael, walked into an Austin convenience store while it was being robbed, and was shot in the head while paying for two dollars' worth of gas. It wasn't clear if Michael would survive. And if he did survive, what would his prognosis be? Over several months, Michael was nursed back to health and productivity. The community, the congregation, and Toby gave Jack the strength to tend to Michael, assisting in his rehabilitation while continuing to serve. Michael now works with patients and families affected by trauma at Ben Taub Hospital. He also works as a motivational speaker, using his experience to "Keep Hope Alive."

Next, like many Houstonians, Jack lost his house from flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey. And like many Houstonians, he rebuilt his life.

Rabbi Segal retired from his position as Senior Rabbi in 1996 and passed the torch to Rabbi David Rosen. Segal never slowed down, and continued to

impact the lives of thousands.

One prominent rabbi wrote, "He was a Godol (giant) in his generation, and touched so many people's lives, way beyond Houston."

While Judaism formed the foundation of his core beliefs, Rabbi Segal's interests were much broader. He was active in the civil rights movement, and he served as a Board Member for the Foundation for Interfaith Research and Ministry for AIDS. He was a member of the Texas Head Injury Foundation and the group, Parents of Murdered Children.

Not only did Rabbi Segal engage in serious endeavors, he had a fantastic sense of humor and was an active athlete. He enjoyed biking, swimming, and was even able to walk on his hands.

Although Jack was a rabbi for so many, and dedicated to every member of the community, his greatest love was his family. While he loved the title rabbi, he especially loved being "Husband", "Dad" and "Poppy."

The family wants to extend a special thanks to his excellent team of doctors, caregivers, and athletic trainer. They left no stone unturned in working to extend his final days with as much quality of life as possible.

A funeral service was held on Monday, July 10, 2023 at Congregation Beth Yeshurun, followed by a private burial at Beth Yeshurun Post Oak Cemetery.

May Rabbi Segal's memory be for a blessing.

Cemetery Details

Beth Yeshurun Post Oak Cemetery

7445 Awty School Ln.
Houston, TX 77055

Previous Events

Funeral Service

JUL 10. 11:00 AM (CT)

Congregation Beth Yeshurun
4525 Beechnut St.
Houston, TX 77096

Tribute Wall

DG

“ Sorry to learn of the passing of Rabbi Segal. I remember him very fondly from my days as a graduate student at Rice University. Hard to believe that I was at Rice over 40 years ago but my memory of Rabbi Segal remain vivid and strong. May his memory be an inspiration for the Segal always and especially during this difficult time.

David Goldblum - December 15, 2023 at 01:25 AM

OW

“ As a 9 year old in 1954 in Homestead Pa., Rabbi Jack was inspirational to this then young boy. With caring and understanding, he gave me advice that I still follow almost 70 years later. RIP Oscar W.

Oscar W. - August 07, 2023 at 04:09 PM

MR

“ I was never a Member of Congregation Beth Yeshuran, although I lived in Houston for a very long while and remain friends with the his son Michael. We knew each other from my seeking his advice as a Conservative Rabbi from time to time, as was my original Jewish background.



We would also discuss Civil Rights matters, as I co-conceived: “The Americans with Disabilities Act” together with USAG Ramsey Clark on 01/02/1968. Though I left Texas seven years ago, none of you have ever fully left me. May his memory be a blessing

Mitchell J. Rappaport - August 06, 2023 at 02:32 AM

NI

“ Rabbi Jack Segal was *THE Rabbi among Rabbis, THE Man among MEN*. There will never be another Jack Segal! His compassion, his knowledge and love for people will never be forgotten. We wish only a good life and good health to all of the Segal family. Joyce and Gary Nimetz

Nimetz - July 15, 2023 at 11:15 AM

RK

“ As my parents have already commented below, when I was bat mitzvah at Beth Yeshurun in 1980, I requested to receive a tallit and tefillin for my bat mitzvah -- as far as I know the first young woman to make such a request at Beth Yeshurun. Rabbi Segal might have easily just said no -- this was long before the Conservative movement began ordaining women and was still very much in a process about women's involvement -- but instead he did what any good rabbi should do. He turned to traditional Jewish texts and discovered good precedence for my request. In doing so, he helped keep me in the Jewish world.

The result of that act was that today I am an ordained rabbi, leading the only non-Orthodox rabbinic training seminary in the UK, and a feminist Bible scholar. Rabbi Segal wrote my reference to rabbinical school, too. He is a shining example of what small acts of chesed can achieve.

Although I haven't lived in Houston for more than 30 years, Rabbi Segal's legacy has always loomed large in my mind. He was my first and best exemplar for how to be a rabbi.

I know that his memory already serves as a blessing for me and clearly for so many people who have already written on this page. May the Eternal One grant comfort to all who mourn for Rabbi Jack Segal.

Rabbi Dr Deborah Kahn-Harris - July 12, 2023 at 09:44 AM

FS

“ Rabbi Segal was and always will be my rabbi as he was for thousands. He was the true meaning of mensch! When I moved to Cleveland, Ohio over 25 years ago, my husband left it up to me to find a shul to join of the many available. Of course, the bar was set very high as Rabbi Segal was my idea of a rabbi. Therefore, we joined the largest conservative synagogue in Cleveland as we heard Rabbi Skoff (our rabbi) eulogize a partner at my husband's law firm. Like Rabbi Segal our rabbi is very personable and knowledgeable among many other positive characteristics. Thank you for sharing your wonderful father & grandfather with my family and I. We were very luck to have gone through many milestones with him including my wedding and Bat Mitzvah. I give you all my deepest condolences and will truly miss his big greeting of me whenever I would see him while visiting Houston. The fact that he remembered who I was after all these years was astonishing to me and when he greeted me with his usual "Hello Sweetie pie" always made me feel welcomed home!

Fredell Magids Schnee - July 10, 2023 at 04:53 PM

FS

Fredell Magids Schnee

Fredell Magids Schnee - July 10, 2023 at 04:54 PM

AM

“ Rabbi Jack Segal was a spiritual guide, leader and friend to my parents Hugh and Louise.
I would see Rabbi as he would be visiting all the people at the hospital. My parents revered this man. He was the man.
His visits made a difference.
Our thoughts and prayers go out to Toby, Lisa and the family.
Aaron and Joelle Miller and family

Aaron Miller - July 10, 2023 at 04:16 PM

“ I was born in Brooklyn, New York (Maimonides Hospital), in 1955, lived there and went to college at the old Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn where I received my BS in physics. I came to Houston in 1979, attended the U of H and received masters and doctoral degrees in biomedical engineering before being appointed a professor at the UTHealth in the Texas Medical Center in 1990.

I met Rabbi Segal through my wife's cousin's family who have been members of CBY for some 57 years. Although my family are members of another congregation (plug to Temple Sinai, West Houston) I would periodically “randomly” cross paths with Rabbi Segal as so many in Houston have. One of my roles was co-faculty advisor to the Hillel for the UT Medical School. Following his retirement, Rabbi Segal came and gave talks about the ‘Bible Codes’ to the medical students of our chapter.

I worked many long evenings in my lab in the UT Medical School then. Some evenings I would go next door to the Hermann Hospital cafeteria to have a bite. On a number of occasions Rabbi Segal would ‘appear’ there as he was making cholim visits. He would always say hello to me, sit with me at times and schmooze a bit with me. We had the math and physics in common. We had Brooklyn in common (and of course Judaism) and he would always talk with me as if I was a dear friend. Yet I wasn't a member of CBY nor did I have any actual association with him (other than through my wife's cousin). Really, he had no reason to even remember who I was! On those long evenings working and feeling very alone (missing time with my son before bed), just seeing Rabbi Segal's shiny punim and his loving eyes literally meant the world to me!

For me Rabbi Segal was a bonafide demonstration of the ability that G-d has granted each and every one of us: the tremendous power that just a simple recognition, an acknowledgment, a mere twinkle of the eye, let alone a kind word or two have to bring real healing to another. My prayer to all is (if I may have the chutzpah to make such on behalf of Rabbi Segal) that each of us honor him by

recognizing how powerful just a kind word to another can be; a smile; a hello-howdy, a hand on the shoulder, a knowing glance. I believe Rabbi Segal well knew that we are all in the same one boat called life on earth, interdependent on one another, rowing ourselves Home to Hashem.

May Rabbi Segal's work-play, his tremendous optimism and good humor in this world not only live on through all whom he touched, may it amplify through positive feedback Without Limit and may his memory and his neshamah be an Eternal blessing.

*With love,
Dr. Michael E. Brandt*

Dr. Michael E. Brandt - July 10, 2023 at 03:32 PM

LS

“As I graduated from high school, I got to fill in a full yearbook page-- photos and words. I chose my Rabbi's lectern and a quote from one of his sermons.

That Rabbi, Jack Segal, died last week and was buried today. I have drawn inspiration from many sources, but it would be difficult to find anyone outside of my family who inspired more of my identity than Rabbi Segal did. He made Judaism meaningful and interesting for me, so much so that I have made and now make it a part of my daily life. He also made learning and teaching seem like an adventure, and I have no doubt that my love of teaching at The University of Texas at Austin and elsewhere comes in large part from watching Rabbi Segal's work.

The eulogies at his funeral today reminded me that we should think twice before saying we are "too busy" for the people and the pursuits that really matter to us--our spouses, our children, our parents, and our community. Rabbi Segal never seemed too busy--for me, for my family, for his family, and for everyone who needed him.

We should reconsider whether something we hope to achieve is truly impossible, or whether additional effort and assistance would help us achieve the audacious goals. The efforts Rabbi Segal expended for his community and his family feel unmatched--particularly for his son, Michael, who was gravely wounded during his undergrad years and survived and thrived only with his family's (and dad's) tireless help.

So, to honor Rabbi Segal, I intend to recommit myself to my faith with renewed fervor; to rethink the ways I choose to spend my time and make sure I have given all that I can to what matters; and to utilize every opportunity to thank people who help me and to tell my loved ones I love them.

May the Rabbi's memory be for a blessing, and may he be an

everlasting inspiration.

Larry Schooler - July 10, 2023 at 03:15 PM



What a great tribute, my friend! No surprise that even after his passing, he's still teaching us.

Batya Boxt - July 10, 2023 at 11:49 PM

MT

“It is impossible to put into words how much Rabbi Jack Segal has meant to the Houston Jewish community. He's been there for so many of us through so many peaks and valleys. He was CBY's senior rabbi throughout my childhood and into adulthood. He bar-mitzvahed me. He presided over my consecration, wedding and my son's bris. He persevered through personal tragedies and inspired us with his strength and fortitude. When not in the synagogue, he was visiting congregants in the hospital, bringing them solace, prayers and companionship. He was wise, thoughtful, and passionate about Judaism and his joy was infectious. He will never be forgotten; his legacy is unparalleled. May his memory be a blessing to all who knew and loved him. We will miss you dearly, Rabbi Segal. And we will never forget your sage advice: "Focus on the bagel, not the hole" and "Mile by mile is a trial, yard by yard is hard, but inch by inch is a cinch.”

Mark Trachtenberg - July 09, 2023 at 05:19 PM

BS

“Brian Spack lit a candle in memory of Rabbi Jack Segal



Brian Spack - July 09, 2023 at 09:46 AM

AP

“ <https://aviva-26067.medium.com/in-memory-of-rabbi-jack-segal-c3e34e3ff558>

Please enjoy in memory of Rabbi Segal, by Aviva Amy Perlo

Aviva Amy Perlo - July 08, 2023 at 09:39 PM

BB

Beautiful words Aviva. You captured his essence perfectly.

Barbara Brounes - July 09, 2023 at 12:13 PM

MM

“ *What a loss to me personally as well as the Jewish community and all the community of Houston.*

Rabbi Jack Segal bar and bat mitzvah my five children as well as naming my last two born in Houston.

A highlight of my adult Jewish life was the first Beth Yeshurun trip to Israel with Rabbi Segal as our spiritual and secular leader. His enthusiasm, caring and kindness on that trip was an example of his enthusiasm that he displayed in all he undertook throughout his life. One word describes my friend Jack was he was a MENCH. He will always be remembered for a job well done.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Toby, Jeff, Michael, Lisa, Scott and all the family.

May he rest in peace

Malcolm Mazow

Malcolm Mazow - July 08, 2023 at 05:57 PM

RS

I was blessed to be an assistant rabbi at Beth Yeshurun when Rabbi Segal was the active emeritus- and more productive than many senior rabbis at the height of their career! He was never too busy to answer any halachic question I had, even long after my Beth Yeshurun days. Often he would mail me the appropriate commentary with a plethora of notes in his unique handwriting.

How could there not be multiple Jack clones? I'm in awe of how he graciously made himself available to me and countless others whenever we reached out to him. Jack was always larger than life yet simultaneously humble, a unique juxtaposition that so few achieve. I'd say rest in peace Jack but I know you won't be resting much in the spiritual realm. With heartfelt condolences and love to Toby and Toby and Jack's family 💔

Rabbi Deborah Schloss - July 10, 2023 at 08:18 PM

JW

“ For the 20 years we lived in Houston Rabbi Segal was an active part of our lives. He married us, he named our daughter Rebekka when she was born, he performed the Bris of our son Aaron, he was the guide for the B'nai Mitzvot of our children Deborah, Dana, & Taff. We were the consistent followers of his Sunday morning TNT - SOS - VIP family.

When our daughter, Rabbi Dr. Deborah Kahn-Harris, was preparing for her Bat Mitzvah she told Rabbi Segal that she wished to wear a kipah and Tallit. He spent time with her exploring her motives. She told him of her honest feelings and desires and after many conversations and much consideration he agreed with her.. I feel he knew her future path. He was such a huge influence in her life and her deep devotion to her Jewish heritage and Jewish life.

Rabbi Segal was a Rabbi's Rabbi. Always living by example. Never asking anyone to be a part of something that he would not volunteer to do himself. Our family will always be grateful our paths crossed and that he was such an important part of our lives.

May His memory always be a blessing. Our condolences to the family

Joy & Herb Weinstein, Dallas

Joy & Herb Weinstein - July 08, 2023 at 02:15 PM

MM

“ What a great loss!!! Our Hazzan at Beth El in Omaha informed us of Rabbi's passing.

B'shalom,

Michael E. Marks

Michael Eugene Marks - July 08, 2023 at 01:39 PM

HM

“ In 1968 when my mother died during the grieving period we ran into a lot of disagreements in the family especially between me and my fathers. Rabbi Segal was right there in the middle of the battle resolving all the disagreements and calming everybody. He was the smartest and nicest person I ever knew. Always new the correct answer for any question. We have been friends since that time. Always enjoyed seeing him from time to time in the chappel or on other occations. Will miss him greatly. My condolence to his family.
HARRY MELNICK

Harry Melnick - July 08, 2023 at 12:18 PM

YG

“ Such a wonderful Rabbi, Gentleman & Family Patriarch. I have such fond memories of Rabbi Segal from my youth in Houston, college visits in Austin & the sweet years my mom worked in the Rabbi(s)' offices & how he made the most difficult days (my parents' funerals) bearable.

One unforgettable time: Rabbi always brought both humor & Yiddish in his many sermons & celebrations. 1 year he was Moses and with a huge staff he led & coaxed us on a hot & very humid Houston day from BY all the way to the JCC. Just when I felt like I was in the 26th mile, I hear this disembodied voice with a Pennsylvania accent say.

"It's just a little further. Then, we will have an ice cold Coke-a-Cola waiting for you." True to his word.

Rabbi always made things fun, warm & happy. I don't have the words for how much I will miss him. It's like losing a favorite Uncle. He will be so missed.

To Mrs. Toby Segal, Jeff, Michael, Lisa, Scott & the rest of his "beloved top 10" I am beyond sorry for your loss.

May his memory continue to be a blessing the same as it was in life & may it bring you peace.

This was from my comments posted in the BY announcement of the Rabbi's passing:

In case you missed it: on YouTube you can view the "Jack & Toby Segal story" (recorded in 2022).

On BY's YouTube site, you can watch Rabbi's blessing from the pulpit of his grandson & his fiancée as given back in June 2023.

Yetta "Renee" Gardner

It has been a few years since I have seen you all.

I am Ruth Gardner's daughter.

2 of my 3 brothers are Ralph & Ed.

Yetta "Renee" Gardner - July 08, 2023 at 06:54 AM



“Mile by mile is a trial

Yard by yard is hard

Inch by inch is a cinch”

“Focus on the Bagel, Not the Hole”

Today is a very, very sad day. My favorite rabbi in the whole world, the biggest mensch I've ever met and by far, THE BEST RABBI, died this morning. If you look up the word “mensch” in the dictionary, Rabbi Jack Segal’s picture would be there.

He wasn't only a rabbi. He was a member of the family. Everyone’s family. There was no difference between Jack Segal the rabbi and Jack Segal, “regular Joe”.

When I was born, I was really, really sick. Sick to the point that my mom and grandma didn't think they'd be bringing me home. My mom hadn't given me my name yet...she didn't want to name me until she knew I was coming home.

Rabbi Segal told her he couldn't bless me or pray for me without a name. After speaking with my mom and grandma and getting to know our family better, my name, Batya Ellen, was chosen...BY HIM.

My grandma was his Executive Assistant (then called Secretary) from his first day at Congregation Beth Yeshurun. I spent Break Fasts at his home for almost my entire childhood. His kids felt like my “much” older siblings.

We all laughed and celebrated with him during the good times - my Bat Mitzvah and wedding.

We cried and prayed with him during the bad - when his son,

Michael Segal, was shot during a convenience store robbery and left for dead.

We rejoiced with him again when we realized Michael would survive...AND THRIVE!

Rabbi Jack Segal...the grandpa I never had...the man who ALWAYS knew the perfect thing to say.

I don't know the right words to say today.

King of the Acrostic (TNT, SOS, VIP)

Giver of the large Hershey bars for answering one of his questions correctly...

Lover of ketchup on EVERYTHING

Colleague, mentor and friend to thousands

Your memory will forever be a blessing. So many memories...some not so great, but all cherished.

He recently was honored by the synagogue after serving as their Rabbi/Rabbi Emeritus for 50 years. There could not be a video long enough to describe or show what kind of man he was.

Rest in peace, Rabbi. I will miss and love you forever and ever.

Batya Boxt - July 07, 2023 at 05:59 PM

ES

great tribute, Batya! Very moving. and so true for all of us!

ed schorr - July 09, 2023 at 04:33 PM

SW

“ Shortly after Rabbi Siegel arrived in Houston, he visited The Valley to visit my folks where my Mom baked him fresh challah He made sure that my sister, Rose Marie Huls was able to visit Israel while in a wheelchair on a Beth Yeshurun trip. He also married me May his memory always be a blessing

Sheldon Weisfeld - July 07, 2023 at 04:45 PM



It took my moving to Houston to meet my neighbor from Brooklyn. I did not meet Jack at the synagogue but at a new comers meeting. Both of us were new to this city. Rabbi Segal lived around the corner from me. The Rabbi who married my husband and me was the Rabbi who influenced Jack Segal to become a Rabbi. A very lucky thing for Houston.

When my oldest child was in kindergarten rabbi Segal dressed up as Queen Esther for the telling of the Purim story my child was so impressed by him that he told me when he got home that he loved Rabbi Segal. For me Rabbi Segal could walk on water.He was always there when he was needed , no matter how difficult it was for him personally.

Ruth Chodrow - July 09, 2023 at 10:32 AM

JO

Rabbi Segal was at every Jewish milestone in my life. He was my Rabbi, and while other Rabbis would come and go, it is Rabbi Segal who embodied what I loved best about Beth Yeshurun. I remember his Sunday TNT SOS Services with Cantor Wagner. I remember his lessons in Saturday School and Sunday School. He officiated my Bnai Mitzvah and my family's funerals. He was kind, thoughtful, wise, and open. He will be missed and his memory will forever be a blessing.

JoEllen - July 09, 2023 at 03:08 PM

RL

When Rabbi Segal came to McKeesport, I was young and my Mom could not rave, she had never seen such a handsome Rabbi. The members of the Tree of Life loved him from the start. He certainly left his mark on all of us from the short time he was there. My deepest sympathy to his family. Robby

ROBERTA L LEVY - July 17, 2023 at 02:11 PM

MM

Rabbi Segal and his family lived across the street from us in Houston when I was growing up. A wonderful man, leader and man of faith. My deepest sympathy.

Maria Fernanda Mejia - July 30, 2023 at 09:10 AM