

# Make the World a Better Place

# TBZ TIKKUN OLAM



"Justice, justice shall you pursue."

(Deuteronomy 16: 20)

Dear TBZ Community,

As another year starts, we have an opportunity to make new choices about how we show up in the world. During difficult times, we have the choice to actively get involved, knowing that we can do our part to begin the healing and build a better world. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel teaches: "...morally speaking, there is no limit to the concern one must feel for the suffering of human beings, that indifference to evil is worse than evil itself, that in a free society, some are guilty, but all are responsible." From a place of responsibility, each of us can contribute to the betterment of the world around us. We are all responsible, we have a role to play!

At TBZ, we believe that the active pursuit of justice and dignity for all is a core expression of our Jewish spiritual and religious values. For many of us, this is a central way to show up as Jews in the world. To help you on your journey, TBZ has different action groups focusing on different important issues of social justice and action.

The words **צֶדֶק צֶדֶק תִּרְדּוּף** (*Tzedek, tzedek, tirdof - Justice, justice, you shall pursue*) from Deuteronomy 16:20 urges people to seek justice. Many ask: why is the word "justice" repeated? With the doubling of the word "tzedek" we understand this not only to be a suggestion, but an imperative. As Jews we are commanded to strive to establish a just society with equal balances and measures, rights and protections. And that is what we are trying to do at TBZ, our small community through which we can heal this world, building a society that is based on values of love, justice, and dignity.

The Tikkun Olam Steering Committee (TOSC) is a committed group of TBZ members that works to help find paths for TBZ members to put into action their desire for and commitment to justice, especially in our local community. I am honored to present this booklet to you which includes myriad ways to fulfill this *mitzvah* in community.

I hope you can find ways to become involved. Be in touch with the leaders of the different groups and join us!

Rav Claudia Kreiman  
Senior Rabbi



TBZ

# Tikkun Olam Actions and Opportunities

If you are interested in becoming involved with any of the active groups listed in this booklet, please reach out to the contact(s) listed below the group description. Be sure to check out *Happenings* (our weekly events email) and the website calendar ([www.tbzbrookline.org/calendar](http://www.tbzbrookline.org/calendar)) regularly for information about upcoming events and meetings.

## ABORTION ACCESS ACTION GROUP



We work on multiple fronts to support legitimate abortion providers and to expose fraudulent crisis pregnancy centers (CPC). We take action with volunteer participation, with two primary ongoing projects. We also educate ourselves at every gathering so

that we are up-to-date on the swiftly changing landscape of reproductive rights since the fall of Roe. Please join us and add your power as we:

- Partner with a local abortion provider in Brookline to help support every individual who seeks care there as well as their dedicated workers by collecting and assembling hundreds of TLC kit bags. These contain wish-list items requested by clinic staff for their patients and include tea, socks, snacks, heating pads, and more, with each bag containing a hand-written, decorated card enclosure offering words of support and solidarity.
- Standout each month in front of “Your Options Medical,” the CPC in Brookline. A group of 5-6 volunteers stand for an hour, mainly silently, holding signs in front of the building and offering informative handouts to curious passers-by.

**Contact:** Fran Adams, Sara Smolover, Bobbi Katz, and Julia Freedson  
([aaag@tbzbrookline.org](mailto:aaag@tbzbrookline.org))

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

TBZ is committed to anti-racist work with the goal of becoming a welcoming, culturally competent, and inclusive anti-racist synagogue community. The TBZ community will provide forums for discussion and learning, and offer tools to become competent allies within TBZ and the wider community. All are welcome to join.

**Contact:** Jessie Stickgold-Sarah ([jstickgold@gmail.com](mailto:jstickgold@gmail.com))

## FAMILY TABLE



Run by Jewish Family & Children's Services ([JF&CS](#)), Family Table is the largest kosher food pantry in New England. It provides healthy food on a monthly and emergency basis to more than 1,000 individuals and families in need. TBZ, one of 65 Jewish organizations that keep Family Table

going, is responsible for providing 35 cans/boxes of vegetarian soup and 65 boxes of whole-wheat crackers every month. Members can contribute by bringing a can of soup or box of crackers every time we come to shul and placing them in one of the large wooden bins located on the first and second floors. This simple, anonymous action is a form of *tikkun olam* even the busiest among us can do. Other ways to volunteer include helping to bring our donations to JF&CS or packing and delivering food one Sunday morning a year.

## GBIO ACTION GROUP

TBZ is a proud founding member of GBIO. The Greater Boston Interfaith Organization, founded in 1998, works for the public good by coalescing, training, and organizing people across religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines. Our membership consists of about 60 diverse congregations and institutions in Greater Boston representing more than 100,000 individuals.



GBIO is dedicated to making our Commonwealth's cities and towns better places for all of us to live and thrive. For more than 20 years, GBIO has worked to improve housing and healthcare, reform our criminal justice system, address racial disparities, and rebuild schools and neighborhoods, among other issues. GBIO's most recent platform focused primarily on issues around housing. It also included issue teams focused on mental health/substance use disorders, and reentry for citizens returning from incarceration. There are many ways to get involved with GBIO through TBZ. It's a great place to work side by side with people of many faiths and backgrounds to make our Commonwealth a more just and equitable place for everyone. Learn more at [gbio.org](http://gbio.org).

**Contacts:** Jane Daniels (*[janedaniels36@gmail.com](mailto:janedaniels36@gmail.com)*) or Rachel Goodman (*[rachgood@verizon.net](mailto:rachgood@verizon.net)*)

## GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION ACTION GROUP

We are committed to working closely with key allies and legislators to end gun violence in Massachusetts. Through education, legislation, and active organizing, we work to hold Massachusetts accountable in addressing gun violence. We strive to partner with local and national leaders to identify root causes and create systemic changes. We work to shift away from fear and violence to healing, peace, and hope. We work to create safer communities, to change the narratives about gun violence, and to offer pathways to safety and prosperity across our commonwealth.

Our primary partners are:

- The Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence – Top priorities include crime gun data analysis legislation, juvenile justice reform, and the intersection of trauma and gun violence. Advocacy priorities aim to address the root causes of gun violence.
- The Louis D. Brown Peace Institute – The Institute meets a critical need by providing state of the art services for gun violence survivors (victims and perpetrators).

**Contact:** Judy Schechtman (*[j\\_schecht@hotmail.com](mailto:j_schecht@hotmail.com)*)

## HOUSING JUSTICE ACTION GROUP

Affordable housing has been a challenge for decades, and the situation is only becoming more dire. This is true in Greater Boston and throughout the country. We work in coalition with GBIO and others, to reform restrictive zoning, support new affordable housing developments in our neighborhoods, and increase funding for public housing.

**Contact:** Jonathan Klein (*jklein728@gmail.com*) or Rosalind Joffe (*rosalind@cicoach.com*)

## IMMIGRATION/REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT ACTION GROUP

We work to engage with and support immigration initiatives in the greater Boston area. TBZ is leading the Newton-Brookline Asylum Resettlement Coalition (NBARC), an inter-faith group of congregants from Boston-area synagogues and churches that helps resettle local asylum seekers and refugees. Our volunteers focus on activities that include cultural navigation, immigration support, connection to services for English language instruction, school placement, job training skills, child care, and health and governmental benefits.

Two TBZ members serve as co-chairs of the coalition, and many TBZ members serve as volunteers. If you are interested in volunteering, we can train you to participate in resettlement work. We also help plan and facilitate TBZ's annual HIAS Refugee Shabbat. Please contact us if you would like to help with planning or programming for the next one in February.

**Contact:** Jenny Berz and Fiona Epstein (co-chairs)  
(*NBARC@tbzbrookline.org*)



## LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

Help a child learn to read and help repair the world! Students at Brighton's Winship School need help with their reading. Will you help teach them? Join the TBZ volunteers who have been tutoring kindergarten through 4th grade for 25 years and have helped hundreds of students improve their reading skills. You can help a child learn to love reading. We provide training and support, you provide enthusiasm! All it takes is one hour per week. We begin again in October. The students are eager to meet you!



**Contact:** Kim Meyers ([kmeyers1@gmail.com](mailto:kmeyers1@gmail.com))

## LOUIS D. BROWN PEACE INSTITUTE ANNUAL MOTHER'S DAY WALK FOR PEACE

This important organization provides a wealth of services to victims of gun violence and their families. For the past five years, TBZ members and clergy have joined in their efforts both through raising money and participating in the annual Mother's Day Walk. Join us!



**Contact:** Judy Schectman ([j\\_schecht@hotmail.com](mailto:j_schecht@hotmail.com)); Barrie Keller ([barrie.keller@gmail.com](mailto:barrie.keller@gmail.com)); Sara Smolover ([smoloverkraus@gmail.com](mailto:smoloverkraus@gmail.com)); Jane Daniels ([janedaniels36@gmail.com](mailto:janedaniels36@gmail.com))

## PARTAKERS

We're a local organization making life-changing impacts on the lives of individuals who are incarcerated and are returning citizens (aka formerly incarcerated). Volunteers play a critical part by serving as mentors in two programs:

- College Behind Bars (CBB) Program: TBZ is one of many religious communities involved in mentoring individuals who are enrolled in college degree programs while serving their prison sentences. Through monthly in-person meetings at the prison, mentors provide support and guidance for those who

are incarcerated, ranging from a focus on their coursework to deep conversations about their lives.

- Partakers Empowerment Program (PEP): This is a re-entry initiative in which formerly incarcerated people are involved in a 12-week virtual workshop to support their transition, led by the Brandeis Education Justice Initiative. TBZers who volunteer for this program are mentors to these individuals during the 12-week workshop period. The goal is to enable formerly incarcerated individuals to integrate themselves more fully into society in the most beneficial way.

**Contact:** Steve Lewis ([steveelliotlewis3@gmail.com](mailto:steveelliotlewis3@gmail.com)) or Sara Smolover ([smoloverkraus@gmail.com](mailto:smoloverkraus@gmail.com))

TBZ Tikkun Olam provides our community with opportunities to follow Rabbi Tarfon's injunction: "You are not expected to complete the task, but neither are you free to desist from it." (*Pirkei Avot 2:21*).

**ACT, ENGAGE, LEARN, SHARE, IMPACT** alongside your fellow TBZ community members.

