



# BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

## Adult Education for March

**March 9: Taking Stock of Israel at 60 – Part I.** In a series of programs honoring the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Israel's statehood, we will look at some aspects of its history and culture that tend to be obscured by the headlines – but that may well help put the headlines into sharper focus. The first of these sessions, which are to run through April, will be led by Israeli anthropologist Naomi Gale, this year's Schusterman visiting professor at American University's Center for Israeli Studies. Among the topics to be considered during the series are: the recent reappraisal of Israel's early history and its impact on the current political debate; the evolution of the definition of diversity in the Israeli context and of Israelis' attitudes toward the Jewish "other"; and the history of American Jews' bonds with, attitudes toward, and support for Israel. For a description of the topic



**March 16: Purim Special: Jewish Ideas of Misconduct.** Secular American Jews are likely to have assimilated taboos surrounding such things as cursing, scatology, and sexuality that are current in the majority (Christian) culture. But where does Jewish tradition, influenced by the unique vision and priorities of Jewish law, place the limits of acceptable behavior? And how have these limits changed with the times?

In our abbreviated Purim session of Adult Ed (11:15 – noon), Rabbi Art Blecher will lead a discussion of these questions, topping it off with some examples of latter-day risqué Jewish humor from *Heeb* magazine, [www.Jewey.com](http://www.Jewey.com), and other sources. In the holiday's spirit of misbehavior, **this session will be ADULTS ONLY.**

## March Shabbat Program: Features of Israeli Life — The Material Culture of Ancient Israel: Visualizing the Scene at the Tabernacle

**Friday, March 7.** Beth Chai's education director and resident rabbinical student, Rain Zohav, will conduct a visual and literary tour of Israel's first sanctuary as she takes up the Torah portion for the week, which describes the building of the Tabernacle (Mishkan) and the sacred attire of the priests. Rain will provide illustrations to intrigue and delight students of architecture and couture – and perhaps to inspire some costumes for the Purim party on March 16 – while discussing selected passages of the text from traditional, historical, and analytical points of view. For those who'd like to sneak a preview, the parsha, known as Pekuda, runs from Exodus 38:21 through the end of the book (Exodus 40:38).

### Schedule

**6:30-7 pm:** Tot Shabbat.

**7-8 pm:** A light supper costing \$10 per person (post-mitzvah and older) and \$5/child (ages 6 to 12) will be set out buffet style at 7. Those wishing to join in are asked to sign up by contacting Ron Leve before noon on Thursday, March 6, either by email at [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net) or by phone at 202-496-9292.

**8-8:30 pm:** Beth Chai's Shabbat service, which features a humanistic Kiddush, singing, thought-provoking readings, and roles for children wishing to participate, begins at around 8.

**8:30-9:45 pm:** Baubles, bangles, and beads.

**Location of all Beth Chai Shabbats** (unless otherwise indicated): Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Fireside Room (second floor), 6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.), Bethesda.



## Beth Chai Directory

Position	Name (* = Board Member)	Email
Rabbi	Dr. Arthur Blecher	ablecher@starpower.net
Education Director	Rain Zohav	rainzohav@earthlink.net
President	Andrew Strongin*	astrongin@starpower.net
Vice President	David Elfin*	ElfinD@verizon.net
Secretary/Past President	Deborah Signer Balaschak*	balasig@verizon.net
Treasurer	Pat Lovenhart*	pat@lovenhart.com
Communications Chair	Julie Vigdor*	julievigdor@yahoo.com
Community Building Chair	Shannon Rudisill*	JMG_SLR@hotmail.com
Family School Chair	Susan Stewart*	ssstew@aol.com
Fundraising Chair	Ron Leve*	theron@comcast.net
Liturgy Chair	Rob Weinstein*	crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Membership Co-Chair	Reed Dewey*	reed-dewey@verizon.net
Membership Co-Chair	Julie Zalkind	juliehz@erols.com
Music Chair	Marji Ross*	mross@eaglepub.com
Program Co-Chair	Ken Jacobson	kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Program Co-Chair	Mike Wexler*	ela.mike@verizon.net
Social Action Chair	Howie Feinstein*	khfeinstein@verizon.net
Tot Shabbat Coordinator	Joe Gitchell	jgitchel@pinneyassociates.com
Bookkeeper/Accounts Payable	Diane Page	dmpage1@comcast.net
Correspondent	Elizabeth Mumford	eam222@verizon.net
Newsletter Editor (text)	Julie Vigdor	julievigdor@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor (layout)	Judy Gordon	justplus3@comcast.net
Parent Council Coordinator	Susan Stewart	ssstew@aol.com
Sunday School Volunteer Coordinator	Phyllis Kristal	Kristal@fr.com
Website Content Manager	Mary Jo Shapiro	Mjshap-bethchai@yahoo.com
Beth Chai Web Site	Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	www.bethchai.org; info@bethchai.org

**Financial Need Policy:** Beth Chai welcomes anyone to attend services, become a member, or have their children attend our Jewish Family School, regardless of ability to pay. Considerations available include extended payment plans, service exchange, and fee reduction. Financial aid determination will be made on a case by case basis. Please contact Pat Lovenhart, Treasurer, for assistance.

### Beth Chai Chooses the Best Bagels

A panel of 13 discerning Beth Chai bagel-lovers sampled the goodies from six area bagel stores after our Shabbat service on February 8 at River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation.

Bethesda Bagels, our longtime supplier for Sunday morning bagel bites, was judged the winner with 11 of 13 munchers rating it among their top three choices. The runner-up was Georgetown Bagels, which actually had more first-place votes. Columbia Bagels and Capitol Hill's Bagels and Baguettes tied for third place, edging out Rockville's Bagel City, which oddly received the most first-place votes and the most last-place votes. Talk about, love'em or hate'em! Bringing up the rear was Izzy's, which received only one top three vote with nine of 13 tasters rating it the worst or second-worst bagel.

Thanks to all of those who participated and ate for the good of Beth Chai and mankind's quest for knowledge. :)



### Help Wanted: Beth Chai Newsletter Editor

Beth Chai's newsletter needs a layout editor for the 2008-2009 school year. This is a great volunteer opportunity for anyone with an interest in communicating through print media – regardless of their experience in this area. The time commitment is about 6 hours per month.

If you're interested, please contact Julie Vigdor at 202-537-1001 (julievigdor@yahoo.com) or Judy Gordon at 301-415-5913 (justplus3@comcast.net).

## Letter from the Education Director - March 2008



Dear Congregants,

We have two wonderful fun community building days planned for March. The first as you might guess is our auction. Come find out what your fellow Beth Chai members like to do in their spare time, or what hidden skills they may have. As you probably know by now, there is also a huge array of concert tickets to be had, and many enticing baskets donated by classes and members of Beth Chai. If you are not a regular attendee of music assembly or adult education you may not know that our auction proceeds support our regular operating budget – allowing us to keep our dues the lowest in the region.

The other great Beth Chai event is Purim, which we will celebrate on Sunday, March 16, from 10:00 – 12:00. We always need donations of hamantaschen. If you can help in this way, please let Phyllis Krystal (Kristal@fr.com) know. Our theme this year is: Channeling our Ancestors – What Would Happen if our Biblical Ancestors showed up at King Ahasuerus's Court? This gives all of us lots of room to express our alter egos. Are you a Queen Ester or Vashti? Or do you relate better to Moses, Sarah, Jacob or perhaps Essau? I will be leading a Friday evening program on March 7 dealing with the building of the Tabernacles and the sacred attire of the high priest – perhaps you would like to try your hand at high ceremonial costume! If you are new to Beth Chai, please know that we really like to do Purim up big time. There will be prizes for all children and ADULTS who come in costume. There will also be lots of extra costumes for those who do not have these kinds of things at home.

Jackie Hess' 4<sup>th</sup> grade class will be presenting two delightful plays that Jackie has written. There will be games for the children run by the teachers. All students through 4<sup>th</sup> grade need to be accompanied by an adult during this part of the day. For all other adults, Art will do an adult presentation that sounds like it will fit in perfectly with the spirit of Purim — Jewish Ideas of Misconduct (see adult education article on page 1).

We follow MCPS in our spring break, which will be from March 23 – March 30. We will resume classes on April 6. Please let your student's teachers know if they will not be at school any given day. Our teachers spend lots of time preparing materials ahead of time and making plans based on having the majority of the students there. I know that in the spring there are many different spring breaks that can really wreak havoc with schedules. Teachers' contact information is in your Beth Chai directory.

Last, but not least – Be Happy – It's Adar! *Rain Zohav*

### **Save the Date! Celebrate Rabbi Blecher's 25 Years with Beth Chai —Evening of Sunday, May 18, 2008**

For 25 years, Rabbi Art Blecher has led Beth Chai with his unique style. Hallmarks of his leadership include thought-provoking teaching for students of all ages, nurturing support for Beth Chai congregants, and a commitment to fostering each member's connections to Judaism. This spring, we'll gather to honor these achievements and offer our thanks.

A small committee is forming to plan the celebration. If you would like to help, please contact Shannon Rudisill at [slrudisill@cox.net](mailto:slrudisill@cox.net); 703-752-5809.

### **Stand Up and Stand In For Darfur**

The local Darfur Advocacy Committee is sponsoring a weekly vigil at the Embassy of Sudan to protest the genocide in Darfur. This takes place each Wednesday from 12 to 1 PM in front of the Embassy at 2210 Massachusetts Avenue, just three blocks from the Dupont Circle Metro stop.

We who live in the Washington area are both privileged to be able to personally participate in these protests and have a responsibility to stand-in for the thousands elsewhere in the country who, but for distance, would be grateful for the opportunity that we have. Please show your support by dedicating an hour for this purpose. For further information contact Ron Leve (202-496-9292, [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net)).

# Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., March 2; No Music Assembly 10 - 11 AM classes for students 10 AM- Noon Auction	<b>Annual Beth Chai Auction</b>  No Adult Education	Burning Tree Elementary School 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Fri., March 7, 6:30 PM Tot Shabbat 7 PM Light supper 8-8:30 PM Shabbat service	Monthly Tot Shabbat and Shabbat service, featuring Andrea Foster as regular song leader.  Program: The Material Culture of Ancient Israel – Visualizing the Scene at the Tabernacle	Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Universalist Church (RRUUC), Fireside Room on second floor, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., March 9, 9:30 AM Assembly 10AM - Noon Classes	Sunday School, Post-Mitzvah Class; Pre-School Class;  Adult Ed: Taking Stock of Israel at 60 – Part I	Burning Tree Elementary School 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., March 9 7:00 PM	Board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Howie and Karen Feinstein, 6009 Conway Road, Bethesda
Sun., March 16 No Music Assembly 10AM Purim Celebration 11:15 – Noon Adult Ed	Congregational Purim Celebration  Adult Ed: Jewish Ideas of Misconduct (11:15 – noon only)	Burning Tree Elementary School 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., March 23 & 30	No Sunday School – Spring Break	



## Beth Chai Congregation

River Road U.U.C.  
6301 River Road  
Bethesda, MD 20817

Address Correction Requested

Answering service: 301-229-7400

Email: [info@bethchai.org](mailto:info@bethchai.org)

Website: [www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org)