



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Beth Chai/River Road Community Seder Features New Humanist Haggadah

Friday, April 14 at 6:00 PM. There is still time — until April 11 — to RSVP for this wonderful, Humanist celebration of Passover at River Road Unitarian Church, put on jointly by both congregations. If you haven't reserved your place already, you can send in the form on page 4 of this newsletter with your check, or visit us on the web at www.bethchai.org/newsletter.html and scroll down to the credit card payment button and follow the instructions you'll find there to pay for your reservations online. Please be sure to mail in the printed form as well, so that we know what you'll be bringing and whether you will be arriving early to help set up or stay late to help with the cleanup.

This year we will be using a recently revised and updated version of our Humanist Haggadah. We're looking forward to a warm and uplifting service and to seeing many old and new friends.



Two Adult Education Session in April: Grassroots Activism for Minority Rights; Kabbalah's Ancient Roots, Modern Appeal



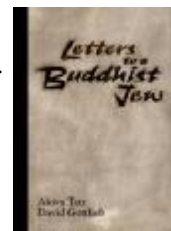
Because of spring break, we have two Sundays, **April 9 and 16**, with **no school**, and just two dates this month with Adult Education programs, **April 2 and 30**. **April 23** is our annual **Community Work Day**, an all-congregational event, described in the article on page 5.

April 2: Aiding Jews in the Ex-USSR — Let My People Be. The Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCSJ), unlike mainstream groups in its field, tries to improve people's lives where they reside, rather than encouraging them to leave for Israel. Focusing on human rights, this grassroots organization provides material and spiritual programs to Jews and other persecuted minorities in the Soviet successor states, while bringing instances of religious intolerance, xenophobia, and rights abuse there to the attention of government officials and the media worldwide. Filling us in on the UCSJ's history and activities will be its National Director, Micah Naftalin, who will discuss his experiences in that post, which he has held since 1987, and also as Acting Director of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council during the planning stages of the Holocaust Museum. (*For April 30 program notes, see page 2.*)

Shabbat Service & Program: *Letters to a Buddhist Jew* ~ Author Talk ~

Friday, April 28: "I am a Zen Jew struggling to resolve these two identities." So begins *Letters to a Buddhist Jew*, an exchange between David Gottlieb, a Chicago resident who has undergone lay ordination as a Zen Buddhist, and Rabbi Akiva Tatz, a London-based Orthodox rabbi and physician. Paying a visit to Beth Chai, Gottlieb will tell us about his book and lead a discussion of its themes following the Shabbat service.

Books will be available for purchase — and signing by the co-author — the evening of the event. Those who would like an advance look at *Letters to a Buddhist Jew* will find it on Amazon.com, in paperback for \$17.50 or hardcover for \$24.95. In ordering from Amazon, please enter its web site through the portal on the Beth Chai web site, by going to www.bethchai.org/books.html and then clicking on the "Search New and Used Amazon.com" logo that appears on a black background. A portion of the proceeds from all Amazon orders made via Beth Chai's web site benefits the congregation.



Beth Chai encourages families with children to attend Shabbat evenings and follows a format intended to make their participation easy and enjoyable. There is a clear break between the service and the program that follows. Those who wish to attend the service only should feel free to leave during the break. (*Continued on page 4.*)

Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
Suzanne Greenfield	Co-President		greenfieldshapiro@msn.com
Deborah Signer Balaschak	Co-President		balasig@verizon.net
Bob Rosenblatt	Vice President		boblatt@aol.com
Ilene Sokolsky	Treasurer		i.sokolsky@verizon.net
Diane Page	Bookkeeper/Accts. Payable		dmpage1@comcast.net
Diane Sonnenberg	Secretary		dianesonnenberg@mac.com
Dr. Arthur Blecher	Rabbi		ablecher@starpower.net
Rain Zohav	Education Director		rainzohav@earthlink.net
Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator		crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Julie Zalkind	Membership/Past Pres.		Juliehz@erols.com
Ken Jacobson	Program Chair		kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Sheldon Hofferma	Liturgy Ctte./Past Pres.		ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
Mary Ellen Petrisko	Past President		mpetrisko@tai.edu
Gail Gertner	Events Coordinator		ggertner6@hotmail.com
Ron Leve	Fundraising		theron@comcast.net
Peggy Robin	Newsletter Editor		probin@adlerrobin.com
David Elfin	Publicity Committee		elfind@verizon.net
Josh Lubell	Social Action Committee		JoshLubell@yahoo.com
Marji Ross	Music Committee		mross@eaglepub.com
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Beth Chai Web Site		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 Diane Page for assistance.

b Community News a

Bar Mitzvah of Sam Fine

Adam and Sharon Fine cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bar Mitzvah service for their son Sam on Saturday, April 1 at 10:30 AM at Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church. A bread and wine Kiddush will follow the service.



Bat Mitzvah of Claire Adler

Bill Adler and Peggy Robin cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bat Mitzvah service for their daughter Claire on Saturday, April 29 at 10:30 AM at Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church. A bread and wine Kiddush will follow the service.

April 30: Jewish Mysticism, from Bygone Ages through Current Rages. There's plenty that's obscure about Jewish Mysticism, from the very meaning of its fundamental texts to the widespread popularity they've enjoyed in recent years. So Matt Krouner, Beth Chai's Jewish Leadership Intern, has taken it upon himself to guide us on a journey through these perplexing questions, during which we'll discover and discuss such topics as influential Jewish mystics, practices and rituals associated with Jewish Mysticism, and the content of the texts themselves. Special attention will go to the large impact of Modern Jewish Mysticism and to the reasons this school of thought has proved so appealing in today's society.

All Adult Education sessions take place from 10 AM to noon at Burning Tree School, 7900 Beech Tree Road, Bethesda, Programs are free. Coffee and bagels provided.

The Beth Chai Auction — Report on the Way

As this issue goes to press before March 26, the Auction hasn't happened yet — but it will have taken place by the time you're reading this note. A preliminary report will make its way to you through the Beth Chai Email Announcements List, and the May issue of this newsletter will have the full report, as well as our thanks to all the hardworking volunteers.

Letter from the Education Director — April 2006

Dear Congregants,

It is so good that spring is finally here! We have school on **April 2**, **spring break on April 9** and **April 16**, and then we meet again on **April 23** and **April 30**. **April 23** is our annual **Community Work Day**. This is a day for the entire congregation to get involved in several exciting projects. There are no formal classes on this day but many opportunities to learn by doing. Please see Josh Lubell's article (page 5) about this important part of our program. This is considered a school day, no matter which site you choose to go to. We timed our Work Day to be around Earth Day this year, as caring for the environment is an important part of our Jewish value system. At the Burning Tree site, we will also be fulfilling the *mitzvot* of *bikkur cholim* (literally visiting the sick), respecting the elderly, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Both sites are appropriate for kindergartners through seniors. We need parents to be with their children, whichever site they choose, and to participate and supervise them fully.

As the spring arrives, so do many competing activities. Please make an effort to attend Sunday School whenever possible, as there is no way we can educate your children if they are not here.

I encourage everyone to attend the joint Beth Chai/River Road Seder. Many people have been working hard to update and revise the Haggadah we will be using. It should be a very enriching event for all.



Several of our wonderful college students who have been teaching this year are moving on — either to graduate school, Europe for a semester abroad, or other opportunities. Please consider teaching in the school yourself, or suggest it to anyone you know who might be interested. Often, word of mouth is our best source of new teachers. We are finding that college students can do very well with our students. And I have now taken a graduate level class on mentoring and supervision, so I am in a better position to aid either college students or congregants who have never taught but would like to give it a try. Please speak to me if this is even vaguely interesting to you.

Have a very joyous and meaningful Passover.

*B'Shalom,
Rain Zohav*

Purim Party Was Great, Thanks to All Who Helped

by Rain Zohav

I would like to thank the many people who made this year's Purim such a wonderful success. The set-up and cleanup crews were fantastic. Thanks to the folks who went out to buy more fruit to fill the great baskets donated by Lee Rosner and Family, a special thanks to the Zalkind and Herman families for donating the money for the wonderful Klezmer band, to Ilene Sokolsky for taking the baskets for LTHP at the last minute when their social worker couldn't pick them up due to a death in her family, to Flora Wolf for getting the prizes for me while I was sick this week, and to Loretta Garcia and her daughters Amy and Julie Elfin for delivering the baskets to Revitz House — all of which went to Holocaust survivors.

I couldn't have done it without the help of the teachers, especially Susan Stewart and Michele Sturm, who also donated costumes, stories, and other supplies, or the mitzvah class, who ran stations and gave out the prizes. Rachel Feldman was an invaluable help in assembling the baskets, and Celia Feldman lent a hand in the Queen Esther's Nail Salon. We were glad to see our friend Megilla Gorilla back, and the Purimspielers were a hoot. Of course, without the wonderful participation of all our Beth Chai members, Purim just wouldn't be Purim.

(Shabbat Schedule, continued from front page)

7 - 8 PM: A buffet supper, costing \$10 per person and set out at 7, is an occasion for members and potential members to get better acquainted or caught up. Those wishing to join in for the meal are asked to sign up by contacting Ken Jacobson before noon on Thursday, April 27, either by email at kenjacobson@hotmail.com or by phone at 202-462-2472.

8 - 8:30 PM: Beth Chai's Shabbat service, featuring a Humanistic Kiddush, thought-provoking readings, and opportunities to participate for children wishing to do so.

8:30 - 10 PM: David Gottlieb on *Letters to a Buddhist Jew*.

Location of all Beth Chai Shabbat programs (unless otherwise indicated): Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church, Fireside Room, 2nd Floor 6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.), Bethesda.

You Are Cordially Invited To
**The Beth Chai/River Road U.C.
 Community Passover Seder
 on Friday, April 14 at 6:00 PM**

The service uses our own humanist and inclusive Haggadah.

The meal is potluck. Please bring a dish that serves 8 people, contents labeled for the benefit of those with various dietary restrictions, e.g., Kosher, vegetarian, allergen-avoidance.

Space is limited, so please send in your reservation form as soon as possible. April 11 is the last day for RSVPs.

PASSOVER SEDER RESERVATION FORM

**Friday, April 14 at 6:00 PM
Beth Chai Congregation at R.R.U.C.
6301 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817**

Please reserve the following places for the Beth Chai Community Seder:

_____ Member Family for \$20 =	\$ _____
_____ Member Individual/Guest @ \$10 each =	\$ _____
_____ Non-member Adults @ \$20 each =	\$ _____
_____ Non-member Children @ \$5 each =	\$ _____
TOTAL DUE =	\$ _____

I will bring: Main Dish Salad Vegetable Dish
 Dessert

I will (choose one): Arrive at 5:00 PM to help set up
 Stay afterwards to help clean up

Name _____
Phone (day) _____
Phone (eve.) _____
Email _____

Please make your check out to Beth Chai
or use the online payment button and mail this form to:
Gail Gertner, P. O. Box 113, Clifton, VA 20124

For more information, email Gail at ggertner6@hotmail.com,
or check the "Events" page of the Beth Chai web site at
www.bethchai.com. You can also print more reservation forms
directly from the web site.

PayPal Option: Mail this reservation form to the address
above but send in your total payment due via the PayPal credit
card button on the "events" page of the Beth Chai web site,
www.bethchai.org/newsletter.html.



Check enclosed for \$ _____
Credit card payment of \$ _____
submitted via web site on
date _____

**RALLY FOR DARFUR
ON APRIL 30**
by Sheldon Hofferan

As most of you know, Beth Chai members and High Holiday Services attendees were very generous last fall in donating several thousand dollars to help the Sudanese refugees in Darfur and other camps in Africa. Some also contacted the White House and their representatives in Congress to urge our government to do more to stop the genocide in Sudan. Now, I am asking you to join me and thousands of others from all over the country on Sunday afternoon, April 30, in the **Rally for Darfur on the Mall** in Washington. There is also a need for hosting out-of-town visitors that weekend. The rally is still in the planning stages, but you can learn more by watching the weekly Beth Chai email announcements and/or contacting www.MillionVoicesforDarfur.org.



I will be at Beth Chai events asking people to fill out postcards urging President Bush to support a stronger multinational force to protect the people in Darfur. We hope to be able to deliver a million postcards to the White House after the rally; I hope yours will be one of them.

Please feel free to contact me at ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com or 703-323-1885 if you would like to help in organizing a strong Beth Chai showing at the rally.



Rabbi's Message

The Rabbinate is a twenty-five-hundred-year-old profession. Historically, the essential role of a rabbi is to serve as both a repository and a transmitter of Jewish heritage. Of course, rabbis today are much more than scholars and teachers. We are also preachers and ceremony performers. We are community leaders, and we are administrators. We are sometimes counselors, and occasionally we are first-responders during a crisis.

Because I am an independent rabbi, no movement or national body owns me today. I belong to Beth Chai. This means that I serve the congregation as a whole, and it also means that I serve each of its members. Every member of Beth Chai is welcome to call upon me — for information about Judaism; for individual, couples or family counseling; for assistance during a crisis; or just for a listening ear. Of course, all communication with me is considered confidential.

The best way for me to be of help is for you to call me on the phone (202-462-5448) either to speak for a few minutes or to set up an appointment for a meeting in my study. The best time to reach me is weekdays during regular hours. I always check for messages during the day. If you leave a message during evenings and weekends, I will return your call when I get back to my office.

Beth Chai members who need to reach me for *urgent* matters during evenings or weekends may call my home number: 202-364-6733. There is no voice mail at home, so keep trying if there is no answer.

— DR. ARTHUR C. BLECHER

Community Work Day Is April 23

by Josh Lubell

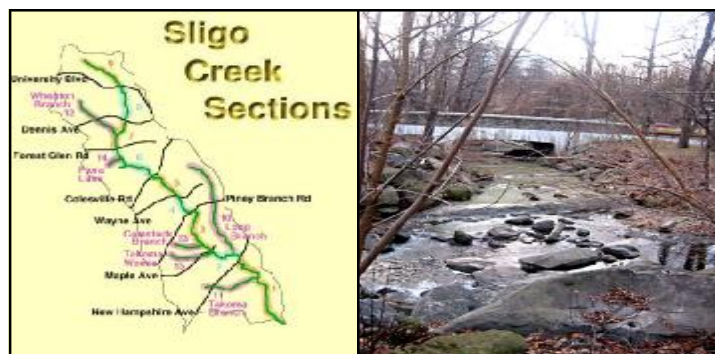
Every Spring, Beth Chai devotes a Sunday to thinking globally while acting locally — and getting our hands dirty while doing it.

This year's Work Day will take place on Sunday, April 23. Families will have the option of either joining projects at Burning Tree Elementary School or participating in an environmental cleanup project at Sligo Creek in Silver Spring, in an arrangement with the Friends of Sligo Creek.

Projects at Burning Tree will include making toys for the Children's Inn at NIH and making door wreaths for the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership.

Our Mitzvah class will work with the Behrend Builders of the DCJCC.

Save the date, and look for more details in an upcoming Beth Chai email.



Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sat., Apr. 1 at 10:30 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Sam Fine. All members of Beth Chai are invited to attend the service, which will be followed by a bread and wine Kiddush.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Apr. 2 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Adult Ed. Topic: Aiding Jews in the Ex-USSR - Let My People Be. National Director of the Union of Council for Jews, Micah Naftalin, will speak about life for Jews in the former Soviet republics. See front page for details.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sundays, Apr. 9 & 16	SPRING BREAK - NO SCHOOL	
Fri., Apr. 14 at 6:00 PM	Beth Chai/River Road Community Passover Seder. RSVPs need to be in by April 11. RSVP form on page 4.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Apr. 23 at 10 AM	Community Work Day, an all-congregational event. See article, page 5, for details.	Some projects at Burning Tree Elementary, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda; weekly Beth Chai email announcement list will have information about gathering for Sligo Creek project and Mitzvah class Behrend Builders project at DCJCC.
Sun., Apr. 23 from 7 to 9 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Julie & David Zalkind in N. Arlington. Call 703-522-1023 or email juliehz@erols.com to RSVP and get directions.
Fri., Apr. 28 at 8:00 PM; light supper begins at 7:00 PM	Shabbat service & program: <i>Letters to a Buddhist Jew</i> , an author talk with David Gottlieb.	Beth Chai congregation at RRUC, Fireside Room, 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sat., Apr. 29 at 10:30 AM	Bat Mitzvah of Claire Adler. All members of Beth Chai are invited to attend the service, which will be followed by a bread and wine Kiddush.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Apr. 2 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Adult Ed. Topic: Jewish Mysticism, from Bygone Ages through Current Rages, led by Matt Krouner, Beth Chai's Jewish Leadership Intern. See page 2 for details.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Apr. 30 from 2 to 4 PM (crowd assembly at 1:30)	Rally for Darfur. See article, page 4, for information about joining the Beth Chai contingent.	National Mall, between 3rd and 4th Streets in front of the US Capitol. Metro: Federal Center SW (blue & orange line)



Beth Chai Congregation

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Address Correction Requested

