



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation



Celebrate Chanukah with Beth Chai & RRUC

Sunday, December 17 from 6 to 8:30 PM. This year's Chanukah Party will be a particularly festive one. For starters, we are resuming our joint celebration of the holiday with River Road Unitarian Church, and as in the past we ask all Beth Chai members to bring their menorahs from home so that we can enjoy a truly resplendent Festival of Lights. Then, we're dedicating this year's celebration to all former members of the congregation's Board, whom we'll honor in the essential Jewish manner, by making the party a catered affair. Finally, in addition to games and songs for the kids, we're adding some specifically adult entertainment: a Debate on the Cultural Importance, Symbolic Value, and/or Inherent Goodness of the Latke vs. Those of the Hamantash, which will doubtless yield great merriment.

What to bring:

- A menorah and candles, to make our Table of Chanukiyot shine with diversity

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Adult Education for December:

The Arab in Israel; The Rabbi in America

December 10: The Changing Image of the Arab in Modern Hebrew Literature. Rabbi Max Ticktin, the associate director of George Washington University's Program in Judaic Studies, will discuss how Hebrew-language writers have portrayed the Arab "other" from the 1890s to the present.

The spotlight will be on the quarter-century following Israeli independence in 1948, when Jews exercised temporal power for the first time in nearly two millennia, and the current period, beginning with the 1973 October War and marked by Israel's occupation of Arab territories. Works by Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, and David Grossman will be among those considered in exploring how the Israeli artist/intellectual has confronted the treatment of minorities by the Jewish state.

December 17: The Rabbi in America – Part I. In the first of a three-part series on the evolving role of the American rabbi, Beth Chai's own rabbi, Art Blecher, will lead a discussion of how rabbis are trained by the various Jewish movements in this country today and of how their training is thought to prepare them for the job they are expected to do. To put the present into perspective, he will describe rabbis' traditional training and functions in the Old World, and how these changed abruptly as Jews began arriving en masse in America.



Rabbi Solomon Schechter, founder of the Conservative movement, in Cairo, c. 1898.

In Part II, scheduled for January 7, Rabbi Blecher will offer reminiscences of his years at the Jewish Theological Seminary, focusing on tensions around the issues of belief and observance and of sexuality confronted by rabbinical students in the 1970s, a decade of reawakening of Jewish interest. He will outline in Part III the current challenges for rabbis arising from innovations ushered in during the '70s.

Due to the newsletter deadline, it wasn't possible to get a report on the results of our wonderful November 19 Book & Media Sale. But the January issue will have all the details. For now – just a note of thanks to all our hard-working volunteers!

Beth Chai Directory

Position	Name (* = Board Member)	Telephone	Email
Rabbi	Dr. Arthur Blecher	202-462-5448	ablecher@starpower.net
Education Director	Rain Zohav	301-294-8849	rainzohav@earthlink.net
President	Deborah Signer Balaschak*	301-897-4909	balasig@verizon.net
Vice President	Mike Wexler*	202-237-1216	ela.mike@verizon.net
Secretary/Past President	Suzanne Greenfield*	202-537-0142	greenfieldshapiro@msn.com
Treasurer	Ilene Sokolsky*	301-587-1309	i.sokolsky@verizon.net
Fundraising Chair	Ron Leve*	202-496-9292	theron@comcast.net
Liturgy Co-Chair	Sheldon Hoffermand.	703-323-1885	ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
Liturgy Co-Chair	Rob Weinstein*	301-215-6445	crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Membership Co-Chair	Reed Dewey	301-718-0262	reed-dewey@verizon.net
Membership Co-Chair	Julie Zalkind	703-522-1023	juliehz@erols.com
Music Chair	Marji Ross	703-917-0590	mross@eaglepub.com
Program Co-Chair	Ken Jacobson	301-920-2094	kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Program Co-Chair	Andrew Strongin*	301-585-4428	astrongin@starpower.net
Publicity	Vacant		
Social Action Chair	Howie Feinstein*	301-564-9482	khfeinstein@us.net
Bookkeeper/Accounts Payable	Diane Page	703-534-5839	dmpage1@comcast.net
Correspondent	Elizabeth Mumford	301-656-6124	kgitchel@pinneyassociates.com
Email Announcements	Julie Vigdor	202-537-1001	julievigdor@yahoo.com
Newsletter Editor (Text)	Gail Greenberg	301-593-1247	gailjgreenberg@comcast.net
Newsletter Editor (Layout)	Walter Scott	301-294-8849	walter_scott@mindspring.com
Parent Council Coordinator	Lisa Spain	240-632-9239	pansi1213@yahoo.com
Sunday School Volunteer Coordinator	Lynn Weinstein	301-215-6445	crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Webmaster	Jules Aronson	301-229-9239	jparonson@speakeasy.net
Beth Chai Web Site	Beth Chai Answering Service/ Email	301-229-7400	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.

Community News

Welcome, New Members!

- ☆ Phyllis Levinson and Mark Haas and Danielle and Ethan of Bethesda
- ☆ Jim Sydnor-Greenberg and Hannah of Bethesda

Condolences

We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to Scott Greenberg and his family on the death of his mother.

We would also like to extend our deepest sympathies to Merrill Meadows and his family on the death of his cousin.



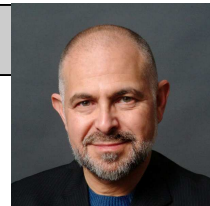
Congratulations

New member **Gayle Friedman**, who has studied jewelry-making at the Corcoran, has opened a studio together with other artists and craftspeople. Although her studio is mainly an artists' workspace, the artists will also show their work on a regular basis, starting with a December show. Congratulations to Gayle on her new endeavor!

Rachel Frank, the 17-year old daughter of members Richard and Janet Frank, was a winner in The Washington Post Music & Dance Scholarship Award program, which was held on Saturday, November 4, 2006. At this event, high school seniors from across the region performed at the Warner Theatre, competing for twelve scholarships worth \$1500 each. The Post's November 6 story about the event carried a beautiful photograph of Rachel, an aspiring professional ballerina, dancing "Black Swan Variations" at the competition.

We wish her continued success!

Rabbi's Message



The Twentieth Century and the Jewish People

Part I



Russian Jews arrive in Texas

Three of the most consequential events in all of Jewish history occurred during the first half of the twentieth century: the mass migration of half of European Jewry to America, the destruction of most of the remainder of Europe's Jews, and the establishment of the modern State of Israel. The impact of any one these episodes by itself would be powerful enough to permanently alter the self-concept of the people caught up in it. Yet all three took place within the span of a single lifetime.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Europe was the center of Judaism. Of the estimated seven-and-a-half million Jews in the world at that time, approximately seven million lived in Europe. Only a relative handful lived in North America. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the number of Jews living in Eastern Europe had risen to around nine million, but another million had immigrated to North America. Only about fifty thousand Jews lived in Palestine.

In response to both oppressive conditions in Eastern Europe and expanding opportunities in America around the early 1900s, a total of three to four million Jews moved to the United States and Canada, thereby creating a second major Jewish community. By numbers alone, the migration to America was much more extensive than the accounts in the Bible of the Exodus from Egypt or the Exile to Babylonia.

After the Holocaust destroyed two thirds of the Jews of Europe, America became the main homeland for Judaism. Although the birth of a second homeland soon followed when the modern State of Israel was founded in 1948, America remained the largest Jewish population center for the rest of the century. In 2000, six million Jews lived in America, compared with about five million in Israel and one-and-a-half million in Europe.

This was the most monumental transformation in the course of Jewish history, not only because of the magnitude of its numbers but also because of its rapidity. Judea had been the political and religious capital of the Jewish people for a thousand years, from the time of King David until the Roman destruction of the Jewish State in the year 70. Gradually, incrementally, over the next thousand years, the Jews became a Diaspora spreading across the countries of Europe. They remained a European people for another thousand years.

But at the beginning of the twentieth century, the world of Judaism very quickly began to shift from the old to the new when millions of European Jews settled in the United States. By the middle of the century, the Holocaust made the shift complete: America, not Europe, was the Jewish homeland. Even though there would be two centers of Jewish population by the end of the century, Israel and America, the fact remained that the Jews were no longer a European people.

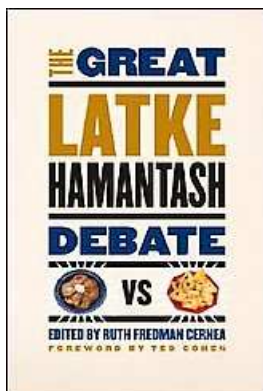
(To Be Continued...)

RABBI ARTHUR BLECHER

Chanukah Party, continued from front page

- A salad or a fruit or vegetable dish, to complement the latkes and other goodies that will be provided
- A presentation for the Latke/Hamantash debate, to inspire, provoke, and titillate the multitudes (prospective participants should contact Ken Jacobson at 202-462-2472 or at kenjacobson@hotmail.com)
- Your family, friends, and guests, to create and enjoy the camaraderie

Location: River Road Unitarian Church, Fellowship Room, 6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whit-tier Blvd.), Bethesda



Letter from the Education Director



Dear Congregants,

We will be meeting **Sunday, Dec. 3** at the JCC of Greater Washington, (6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 29852), at 10:00 – 12:00, for **Jewish Culture Day**. We are thrilled and very grateful that once again we have received a special “cluster grant” from the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington to do another joint program with Bethesda Chevy Chase Community Group. These programs are more costly than either school could do alone and without outside help.



This year’s program focuses on the various ways that Jewish culture has been influenced by the surrounding cultures where Jews have lived. It will feature a dance performance by Yesodot, a wonderful High School Israeli Dance troupe. The performance will highlight several cultural influences on Israeli dance, including Sephardic, Eastern European, and Middle – Eastern. During the second hour, there will be workshops that teach about

both Chinese and Sephardic Jewish culture. The workshops will be geared for different ages of students, from 5 years old and up, their parents and other adults. All the workshops will be hands on, engaging and informative. I highly recommend making the extra effort to come to the JCC for this extraordinary opportunity.

On **Dec. 10** you don’t even have to travel any extra miles to benefit from another Federation subsidized program. Part of our I. C. E. grant (Initiatives in Congregational Education) is for integrating the arts into the curriculum. Families with children in grades K – 3 will be making **family collages** under the guidance of local artist Marilyn Banner. Ms. Banner will share some of her own mixed media family/ ancestor art work with us and then help us to make our own original creations using photocopies of our family members and ancestors.

Adults whose last names start with A – H are invited to participate. The older classes and rest of the adults will have an opportunity later in the year to engage in a similar project. Families with children in both the younger and the upper grades may decide ahead of time that each collage will be for one side of the family. Alternately, the collage with the younger children might be for the current generations and the one with the older child might include ancestors they may



St. Louis Summer, acrylic/mixed media on canvas, by local artist Marilyn Banner

never have met. These collages will make wonderful holiday gifts and/or something you will want to keep in your own family.

Dec. 17 is a regular Sunday School Day. We will be collecting new books for the National Library Initiative on this day. This is a project of Jewish Women International to create libraries for children staying in battered women’s shelters. During the holiday season, when our children receive so much, it would be very good for them to be thinking of others.

We have NO Sunday School Dec. 24 or Dec. 31 due to Winter break. Have a great holiday with your friends and family. We will resume school on Jan. 7. Happy Chanukah!

*B'Shalom,
Raiin Zohav*

Report from Beth Chai’s Help the Homeless Mini-Walk

Beth Chai’s Help-The-Homeless Mini-Walk was held at Burning Tree Elementary School on October 29. Tatum Byfield of Latino Transitional Housing Partnership, our beneficiary organization, was on hand to speak and to lead the march.

We raised \$2660, including Fannie Mae’s matching fund, to benefit LTHP’s programs, and we are working with LTHP toward continuing to assist them on a regular basis. Thanks to all contributors for a worthy cause.

Howie Feinstein

Shabbat Service and Program

The Shtetl in Cyberspace: A Guide to Using Jewish Resources Online

Friday, December 8. Want to trace the history of your family in the Old World? Learn what distinguishes a Chasid from a Misnagid? See what Jewish groups are doing to fight poverty at home and abroad? Find the first night of Passover for every year between 2007 and 2020—or, rather, 5768 and 5781? Nowadays, you just have to boot up your computer and you'll be able to access everything from the complete text of the 1906 *Jewish Encyclopedia* to the information banks and newsletters of Jewish religious sects and social service agencies great and small.

"There's been a migration of Jewish life to the Internet," says Rabbi Art Blecher, who will join another experienced cyber traveler, Beth Chai member Byron Hulcher, to present a tour of the resources available and provide tips on navigating the online Jewish world.

Schedule

7-8 pm: A light supper consisting of Middle Eastern fare and costing \$10 per person will be set out buffet style at 7. Those wishing to join in are asked to sign up by contacting Ken Jacobson before noon on Thursday, December 7, either by email at kenjacobson@hotmail.com or by phone at 202-462-2472.

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

8:30-9:45 pm: Search Engine, Search Engine, do me a search...

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

Liturgy Committee Meeting

The liturgy committee would like to welcome all those interested in contributing to the ongoing effort to keep our services vital, meaningful and uniquely Beth Chai to come to our next meeting. If you have any ideas to share, this meeting is a great time to do so.

We will discuss goals and new initiatives over lunch at Panera Bread, 1780 East Jefferson St. in Rockville, immediately after Sunday school on **December 3rd** (which is at the JCC). For more information, please contact Sheldon Hofferman or Rob Weinstein (see contact info on page 2).

Washington Area's Largest Bazaar

The Washington area's largest bazaar will take place again this year at River Road Unitarian Church, Bethesda, on **Saturday, December 2**. Now nearly 40 years old, the **RRUC Bazaar** is essentially a giant estate sale with garage sale prices.

The sale fills the entire church at 6301 River Road and overflows outdoors with art, baby equipment, books, clothing for the entire family, china/glassware, computers, gifts, jewelry, kitchen wares, knick-knacks, linens, small appliances, sporting goods, miscellaneous white elephants and more. Doors open at 8:00 a.m. and general sales close at 2:45 p.m.

The RRUC Bazaar will again include a live auction of art, antiques, collectibles, select furniture, fur coats and other valuable treasures. Live auction viewing and registration begins at 11:00 a.m., with bidding starting at 3:30 p.m.



The annual bazaar transforms the sanctuary at RRUC.



Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun. Dec. 3 from 10AM – 12 noon	Sunday School - Jewish Culture Day: Joint program with BCCCG and a dance performance by Yesodot (See article on page 4)	JCC of Greater Washington, 6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, Maryland. Note location change!
Sun. Dec. 3 at 12:30 pm	Liturgy Committee meeting (see page 5)	Panera's on East Jefferson St., Rockville, MD
Fri. Dec 8 at 8PM, light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat service & program: "The Shtetl in Cyberspace: A Guide to using Jewish Resources Online." (See article on page 5 for details).	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm, 2 nd fl, 6301 River Rd, Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun. Dec. 10 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School arts program with artist Marilyn Banner. (See page 4) Adult Ed. Topic: Rabbi Max Ticktin of GWU on "The Changing Image of the Arab in Modern Hebrew Literature." (See front page)	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun. Dec. 10 from 7 to 9 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Howie and Karen Feinstein in Bethesda. To RSVP and get directions, call 301-564-9482 or email khfeinstein@us.net
Sun. Dec. 17 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed: Rabbi Art Blecher, on "The Rabbi in America – Part I." First of a three-part series. (See front page)	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun. Dec. 17 from 6-9 PM	Chanukah Party for All Beth Chai (See article on front page)	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm, 2 nd fl, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Dec. 24 and Dec. 31	No Sunday School or Adult Ed. – Winter Break	



Beth Chai Congregation

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

Answering service: 301-229-7400

Email: info@bethchai.org

Website: www.bethchai.org

Address Correction Requested



Inside this issue:
**Learn about Jewish
Resources Online!**
See page 5 for details