



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation



Some young Beth Chai members check out the offerings at the book sale.
Photo courtesy of Alan Kotok.

Beth Chai Book Sale a Rousing Success

Whoever thought there would be a line of forty people waiting to get into a Beth Chai event or that some of them would attempt to sneak in before its actual start?

Well, that was the situation on the morning of 19 November at Burning Tree Elementary School as our Book and Media Sale got underway. These folks were about to experience not only the thousands of books spread across the all-purpose room, but more significantly the warmth and pleasure of participating in a Beth Chai function.

They could not have missed the buzz of the Beth Chai'ers roaming the aisles listening to the music provided by Celia Feldman, Howie Feinstein and Alan Feldenkris. They were benefiting from, and partaking in, the results of the hard work of Miriam Meyer who organized the food table and made the tempting fruit cups. And an almost final note on these visitors that was fascinating: Did you notice them fiddling around with their hand held computers/PDAs? They were checking their inventory, stored on those devices, against what they were finding on our tables. Amazing!!! Separately, a long conversation with one of the shoppers produced a potential member.

Many of you may not know this, but Loretta Garcia and David Elfin have played an absolutely essential role in our recent book sales.

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Martin Luther King Day Program: **The Long Road to Justice**

We have a special guest speaker lined up for our annual Martin Luther King Day program at Burning Tree E.S. at Adult Education, on Sunday Jan. 14, 2007. We are very fortunate to welcome **Juanita Evangeline Moore**, whose parents were killed in a Ku Klux Klan bombing in Mims, Florida in 1951. Harry Moore was the state NAACP president, extremely active in early voter registration and school desegregation efforts. When he and his wife Harriette were killed on Christmas Day (also their 25th wedding anniversary), they became the first martyrs of the Civil Rights movement.

Ms. Moore will recount her 55-year struggle to identify her parents' killers, which finally culminated in official findings this summer. Ms. Moore has previously spoken at the Holocaust Memorial Center in Maitland, Florida -- her parents' murders were part of a statewide Klan bombing campaign which also targeted synagogues. She will also discuss and take questions and comments on the current state of the movement for equality for all Americans.

In addition to the Martin Luther King Day program, we have a full schedule of Adult Education topics throughout the month of January. (See Page 5 for more information)

January 7: Rabbi Art Blecher continues his series on **The Rabbi in America**.

January 21: Dr. David Ilan of Hebrew Union College speaks on **The Bible and Archeology—Where They Meet, Where They Don't, and Why**.

January 28: Rabbi Max Ticktin returns to Beth Chai to discuss **East European Jewry's Passage into Modern Times** as seen in the works of Sholem Aleichem.

Beth Chai Directory

Position	Name (* = Board Member)	Telephone	Email
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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 to New Baby!

Yevgeniya Nusinovich and Aaron Ucko announce the arrival of a daughter, **Hadassah**, born November 20 at 8:45 AM, weighting 9 pounds, 4 ounces. Congratulations Yevgeniya, Aaron and Solly.



Welcome, New Member!

☆ **Vanessa Robin** of Washington D.C.

Library Additions

Thanks to a wonderful donation by Dr. Sid Brown – a friend of Rain Zohav's – Beth Chai's library has now been enriched by the addition of our own set of the **Encyclopaedia Judaica**, to be found on our library shelves at River Road. Many thanks to Dr. Brown for his kind generosity!

Thanks also to Sheldon Hofferan for his contribution of a beautifully produced translation of the **Qur'an**. "The Message of the Qur'an" is a large hardbound volume, similar to a *chumash*, containing the original Arabic text, plus a transliteration, English translation, extensive commentary, and introduction to each surah, written by Muhammad Asad.

Image sources: Chai Baby logo: San Francisco Jewish Community Federation. Back cover Tot Shabbat illustration: Temple Sholom, Vancouver, BC.

Rabbi's Message



The Twentieth Century and the Jewish People, Part II

The first half of the twentieth century was the most transforming period in the entire history of the Jewish people. The migration of Eastern European Jewry to the New World and the integration of the Jewish people into America society are phases of a metamorphosis that rapidly unfolded within two generations. Yet a generation later these same Eastern European Jewish immigrants and their American born children would see the Old World they left behind in a new and painful light amidst a metamorphosis that is still unfolding.

There have been massacres and exiles throughout Jewish history, but nothing like what the Jewish People experienced in the twentieth century. When much of the population of Judea was exiled to Babylonia in 586 BCE, they managed to keep their Jewish identity alive and even created new and enduring ways to practice Judaism. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492, they found refuge in Holland and the New World. Thousands of Jews were massacred in the Middle Ages, but the extermination of six million people during the World War II simply because they were Jews was unfathomable.

The horrifying photographs of the victims of the Holocaust -- those who were murdered and those who survived -- formed a new and indelible image of twentieth century Jews. These were not the faces of the grandparents in the old family photographs from Eastern Europe. These were not the faces of the patriarchs in the Hebrew School textbooks. These were Jewish faces no one had ever seen before. These were the Six Million. The sheer incomprehensibility of the numbers -- for what mind can grasp the systematic killing of millions of people -- and the depth of the psychological trauma such an atrocity carves into the souls of the survivors changed how the Jewish people would see themselves.

As much as the Holocaust altered how Jews viewed themselves during the generation following World War II, the founding of the State of Israel in 1947 also profoundly affected Jewish consciousness by reawakening the awareness of the Jews as a nation with an historical homeland. Although the evidence from ancient times is sparse, it is likely that the first Jewish State was established as a monarchy around 3000 years ago. It soon split into two kingdoms, Judea and Israel. Israel was eventually absorbed by the encroaching Babylonian Empire, but Judea survived for two centuries until it was conquered by Babylonia in 586 BCE. A second monarchy was formed fifty years later. Like the previous Jewish State, it lasted -- tenuously -- for another 500 years until it was finally destroyed by the Roman Empire.



The charismatic Moshe Dayan, Israel's Minister of Defense during the 1967 Six Day War.

The establishment in 1947 of a third Jewish State as a modern industrial democracy located in the ancestral homeland was an amazing event, barely imaginable during the 2000 years of Diaspora that preceded it. In the year 71, the Roman Emperor Vespasian commemorated the triumph by striking a bronze coin "Iudaea Capta." In 1958, the modern State of Israel struck a new coin with "Iudaea Capta" on one side and "Israel Liberata" on the other. The end of the Jewish State and the beginning of the Jewish State, the beginning of the Diaspora and the end of the Diaspora -- at the turn of a coin.

Twenty years after the founding of the new Jewish state, the Six Day War added a completely new dimension to the self-concept of the Jews around the world. Israel's stunning victory in 1967 created something the Jewish community had never experienced -- a Jewish State as a force to be reckoned with. Except for brief periods, the ancient Jewish State of Judea had been a small and militarily weak country surrounded by large, powerful and aggressive empires. Suddenly, in less than a week's time, the world became aware of Jewish muscle. The Jewish homeland had asserted itself into history as a world power. If the establishment of the Jewish State erased the image of the Jew as alien, the Six Day War erased the image of the Jew as victim.

RABBI ARTHUR BLECHER

Letter from the Education Director - January 2007



Dear Congregants,

Now that our first semester is over, I would like to share some class highlights that you might not know about. I hope this will give you an idea of how the school year is progressing.

After learning about the fall Jewish holidays, the preschoolers have had an opportunity to learn about famous Bible heroes. One lesson concerned the story of David and Goliath. They discovered that, on average, three children lying head to toe equaled the purported size of Goliath. The children also enjoyed building Goliath in the blocks center and knocking him down with a "soft" stone. Lastly, for their craft, the children took home hand made David and Goliath puppets and a sheep made out of cotton balls. They always love their music time with Mr. Philip.

For the first time, we had enough students to have separate kindergarten and first grade classes. Michele Sturm's class not only focused on the holidays, but also on some core Jewish values, such as kindness to animals. For that lesson they prepared goodie bags for cats and dogs.

Rella Kaplowitz's first grade enjoyed making edible sukkot and tying the idea of our temporary sukkot homes to the problems of people who have no homes. This is a very good example of integrating the teaching of Jewish values into our lessons.



K-3 students share their family collages that they created with their parents and our visiting artist Marilyn Banner at Sunday School on December 10th. Photo by Lisa Spain.

Israel program, are uniquely qualified to teach this subject. So far the students have learned about geographic locations in Israel by doing their own research in small groups and presenting their findings to their class members and started a unit on kibbutz life. For that unit, they had hands on experience baking cookies together where each child had an assigned disability to bring home the idea of the need for co-operation. From this, they will next explore the kibbutz ideal of basing society upon co-operation.

All students from K – 6th grade are learning some simple vocabulary through the use of games, pictures and props from our very talented Hebrew teacher, Ophra Paul. Ophra is very dedicated and has high expectation for all her students. Some of our mitzvah class students are studying more Hebrew in individual tutorials with various teachers.

The 2nd/3rd grade team, ably taught by Josh Fine and Matt Kornberg, focused on how the Jewish holidays fit into the Jewish calendar. They are trying out a new curriculum that I have written using classic Jewish stories from Tanach (Hebrew scriptures), Talmud, Jewish folklore and contemporary sources to learn about the lives of our ancestors and key Jewish values. Each child got a chance to be either King Solomon or the Queen of Sheba and to inscribe a bit of wisdom they know on the inside of their crowns.

Rene Beil, the 4th grade teacher, is teaching about life in the shtetl and the immigrant experience. The class worked on a mural comparing and contrasting shtetl life with New York Tenement life. Source material for these lessons included Fiddler on the Roof and the novel Call Me Ruth, which features a protagonist about the age of our students.

The curriculum for this year's 5th/6th grade is Israel. Their teachers, Lonny Moses and Katie Beran, both graduates of Habonim's year in

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January Brings a Wealth of Adult Education Topics

January 7: The Rabbi in America – Part II.

In the second of a three-part series on the evolving role of the American rabbi, Beth Chai's own rabbi, Art Blecher, will offer reminiscences of his years studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary, an institution of the Conservative Movement. He will focus on tensions surrounding the issues of belief and observance and of sexuality that confronted rabbinical students in the 1970s, a decade of re-awakening of Jewish interest, while also commenting on Conservative Judaism's December actions regarding the ordination of gays and same-sex commitment ceremonies. In the final meeting of this series, to take place in February, Rabbi Blecher will outline the current challenges for rabbis that stem from innovations ushered in during the '70s.

January 14: Special Martin Luther King Day presentation: **The Long Road to Justice in the South.** See feature article on the front page.

January 21: The Bible and Archaeology – Where They Meet, Where They Don't, and Why.

Until two decades ago, archaeologists working in Israel, the Occupied Territories, and Jordan regarded the Bible as an historical text in the modern sense, a view that prejudiced their interpretations of the archaeological data.

Today's researchers take a far more circumspect attitude when relating to Biblical texts.

Dr. David Ilan, who directs the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology at Jerusalem's Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, will explain the shift in outlook that has taken place, in the process evaluating the historical and theological implications of several Biblical stories against the background of archaeological data.

January 28: East European Jewry's Passage into Modern Times.

Rabbi Max Ticktin, the associate director of George Washington University's Jewish Studies Program, will return to lead us in a discussion of the Jews' confrontation with modernity as depicted in works of the great Yiddish writer Sholem Aleichem.

Copies of the three stories we will consider – "On Account of a Hat," "The Yom Kippur Scandal," and "If I Were a Rothschild" – will be available at Adult Ed on Jan. 7, 14, and 21. Those attending on Jan. 28 are asked to make every effort to read these brief works in advance of the session.

Sunday School Mid-Year Class Highlights

(continued from previous page)

The Mitzvah class and several very helpful dads, David Elfin, Fred Mittelman, and Dennis Wallick, began the year by exemplifying their name. They rose to the challenge of building a sukkah for a Jewish Group Home. The dads put the structure together and the students worked with the residents of the home to make decorations. I was very impressed with the level of maturity and thoughtfulness the students exhibited in our orientation meeting. They have already chosen and advocated for a class tzedakah project – the Heifer Project, which provides livestock to poor families so that they can become self sufficient. Taught by Danielle Lipman, Dave Trachtenberg and Art Blecher, this class is learning about Tikkun Olam and what it means to be part of the Jewish People.

Dave Trachtenberg also teaches our first ever Post – Mitzvah class. These students have been investigating such age old and essential questions as: what makes us human? What is human nature? What is the nature of good and evil? Using both contemporary and traditional texts to inform their discussions and writing assignments, the students have surpassed our wildest expectations.

Lastly, I have been saying that I had too many good ideas this year. Thankfully for me being able to catch my breath, there are no special all-school programs in January. Please note that we **WILL** meet on MLK weekend. Class time will be devoted to themes that tie in with tolerance, building the beloved community, the Jewish contribution to the civil rights movement, etc.

*B'Shalom,
Rain Zohav*

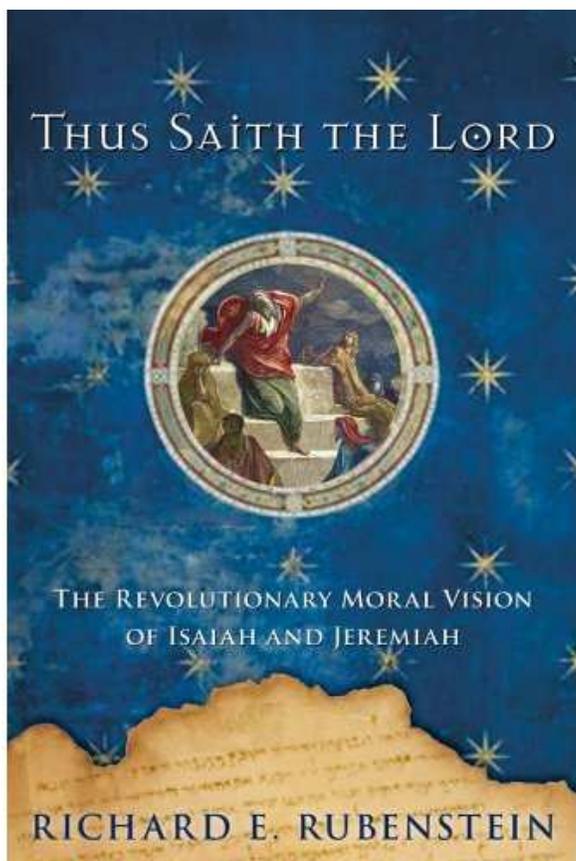
January 2007 Shabbat Services and Programs

January 19th Shabbat Program

Isaiah and Jeremiah: Timeless Lessons for Recurring Crises

Friday, January 19. The teachings of the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah on empire, ethics, and political violence are as relevant now as they were in ancient days. Richard Rubenstein, author of the newly published *Thus Saith the Lord: The Revolutionary Moral Vision of Isaiah and Jeremiah*, will discuss the prophets' new vision of human potential and social organization – their response to living in a world dominated by war-loving great powers. While sketching his book's re-creation of Isaiah and Jeremiah as personalities and as thinkers rooted in their times, he will highlight the links between the crises they faced and those confronting us today.

Rubenstein, who in early 2005 spoke at Beth Chai on Jewish-Muslim Coexistence in Medieval Spain, is Professor of Conflict Resolution and Public Affairs at George Mason University.



The Return of Beth Chai Tot Shabbat!

Friday, January 19. Beth Chai is holding a special short **Tot Shabbat** service that focuses primarily on children under the age of 7 on January 19 at 6:30 p.m. It will be followed by supper and main Shabbat service. Family members of all ages are welcome to attend the current monthly Shabbat meals and celebrations.

Since timing can be a challenge for some families with younger children and earlier bedtimes, members who wish to join a celebration of Shabbat (which is sure to be a bit raucous!) that will be completed before 7 p.m., should come to the short Tot Shabbat service. Please e-mail Joe Gitchell at jgitchel@pinneyassociates.com). If you would like to stay for the buffet supper, please e-mail Ron Leve (theron@comcast.net).

The January 19 Tot Shabbat service, our first in several years, is an experiment to meet the needs of the growing Beth Chai membership. Beth Chai would like to assess interest and participation in holding a regular Tot Shabbat. If you are interested in a monthly Tot Shabbat service but cannot attend on January 19, please email Joe Gitchell.

Schedule:

6:30-7 pm: Tot Shabbat Service (see box).

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 Ron Leve before noon on Thursday, January 18, either by email at theron@comcast.net or by phone at 202-496-9292 .

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: Isaiah and Jeremiah, presentation and discussion.

Location of all Beth Chai Shabbats (unless otherwise indicated):

Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church,
Fireside Room (2nd floor)
6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.), Bethesda

Beth Chai Book Sale a Rousing Success

(continued from front page)

They have graciously allowed their garage to be the repository for the books collected prior to the sales and the site for our daylong gatherings to sort these books. Their generosity extends beyond the weekend of the sale until we are able to arrange for the disposition of the leftovers.

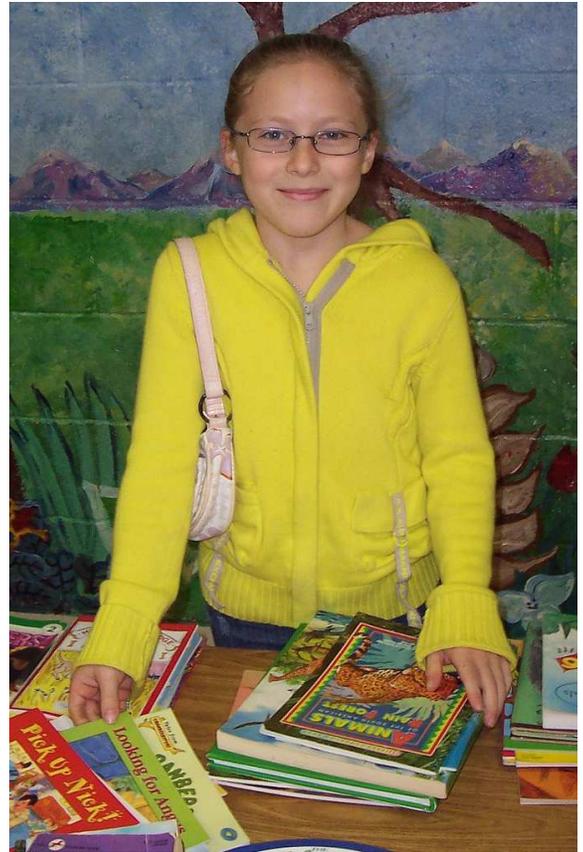
As an FYI for many who inquired about the latter, just before the deadline for this issue of the newsletter, arrangements were made for a hauler to transport the 80+ boxes to a used bookseller in Frederick from whom we will receive some payment.

To all of you who responded to the last minute appeal to help transport and sort an unexpected massive load of books, we send our thanks as we do to all those who put in many hours prior to the sale day transporting and sorting books. In addition, the following folks are owed special appreciation:

- ✧ Rachel Feldman for her amazing ability to organize and set up the spaces where the sale took place,
- ✧ Joyce Weinstein and Cheryl Meadow, two new members who put in many hours over the weekend.
- ✧ Shannon Rudisill and Jeff Gerber, along with their SUV, have diligently supported our efforts the last two years,
- ✧ Suzanne Greenfield and Joe Shapiro for donating the pizza we all enjoyed,
- ✧ Flora Wolf, Mike Wexler, Ela Koniuszkow and Joanna Joiner for manning the cashier station,
- ✧ Tom Israel, Aaron Ucko and Steven Glazerman for getting out early on a Saturday morning to help transport a huge load of books.

And, a gentle reminder: the bodacious Beth Chai Auction is in less than three months. More in next month's newsletter, but give some thought to what you might be able to offer.

- Ron Leve



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This page, top right: Jillian Goss-Holmes at the children's book table.

Bottom right: Yevgeniya Nusinovich introduces her son Solly to the classic Pat the Bunny.

Front page, left to right: Matt Balaschak, Alex Istaphanous, Justin Sturm, and David Balashchak.

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Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun. Jan. 7 at 9:30 AM for students, 10AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School – Adult Ed: Topic: “The Rabbi in America – Part II.” Second of a three-part series, led by Rabbi Art Blecher. See page 5.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun. Jan. 7 at 12:30 PM	Liturgy Committee Meeting	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm, 2 nd fl, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun. Jan. 14 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School —Martin Luther King Day. Adult Ed. Topic: “The Long Road to Justice in the South.” Guest Speaker: Juanita Evangeline Moore. See front page article.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Fri., Jan 19 at 6:30 PM	Tot Shabbat Service. Contact Joe Gitchell at jgitchel@pinneyassociates.com for more information. See article on Page 6.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm, 2 nd fl, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Fri., Jan. 19 at 8PM, light supper begins at 7PM	Shabbat Service – Richard Rubenstein will speak on “Isaiah and Jeremiah: Timeless Lessons for Recurring Crises,” based on his new book, <u>Thus Saith the Lord: The Revolutionary Moral Vision of Isaiah and Jeremiah</u> . See article on Page 6.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm, 2 nd fl, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun. Jan. 21 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. “The Bible and Archaeology – Where They Meet, Where They Don’t, and Why” with Dr. David Ilan of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. See page 5.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun. Jan. 28 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. Topic. Rabbi Max Ticktin will speak on “East European Jewry’s Passage into Modern Times.” See page 5.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun. Jan. 28 from 7-9 pm	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	7002 Poplar Avenue, Takoma Park, MD. Contact Andrew Strongin for more info: 301-585-4428, tgoldman@starpower.net



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