



# BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

## Martin Luther King Day Program: *Klan-Destine Relationships*

On Sunday, January 20, at 10 a.m. at Burning Tree E.S., Beth Chai's annual Martin Luther King Day program will present Daryl Davis, author, teacher, and lecturer. Daryl's unique perspective on civil rights and discrimination is exemplified in his book, *Klan-Destine Relationships*, which recounts the amazing story of how Daryl, an African-American, succeeded in getting hard-core Ku Klux Klan members to renounce their views, through intense personal dialogue. Daryl's approach, which has been characterized as classically Christian, or New Testament, in nature, relies on a "love-thy-neighbor" philosophy, in which prejudices are confronted, and ultimately overcome, through one-on-one relationships.



In keeping with our recent King Day format, for the first hour, Daryl will discuss his own approach to combating discrimination, which is in direct contrast to the strategy traditionally pursued by yours truly and others: the "crush-thy-adversary," vengeful, "Old Testament" approach. In the second hour, Daryl will submit himself to interview and questioning by Beth Chai members, on current issues in civil rights, discrimination, inclusiveness, and the appropriate role of a religious congregation such as ours in this area. All are welcome!

*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 3 for more information.*

## Fabulous Annual Beth Chai Auction Not Far Away

Yes, that time of year is quickly upon us. And, even more quickly than in the past. On March 2, 2008, we will be holding the Annual Beth Chai auction at Burning Tree Elementary from 10 a.m. until noon.

The auction raises significant funds for Beth Chai, enabling us to meet many of our needs. For example, many of you may not be aware we have pledged to keep our teachers salaries on par with other schools in the area. Last year, when we realized we needed to raise them, we were able to do so with the cushion provided by the auction. And, of course, the proceeds also help keep our dues and fees as low as possible.

Important as it may be as a fundraiser, the annual auction is one of our most enjoyable events of the year. As fundraising chairman, I have the somewhat "unpleasant" duty of reminding the attendees to break off the schmoozing and get down to the business of bidding. That burden is balanced by standing back and *kvelling* as I take in the marvelous scene of folks having a great time. And, did I mention food?



Miriam Meyer is again in charge of making sure the Beth Chai Café keeps folks contented while they make the rounds of the many tables of items on which to bid. And, of course, there will be live music.

You should be thinking of what you can donate for the silent and live auctions. As you'll recall we've had an amazing array of wonderful items donated for the auction, by both Beth Chai members and outside organizations. Here are some possibilities, but don't let this limit you.

Our Beth Chai gatherings not only raise funds, but more importantly they promote a sense of community by enabling folks to get together in smaller groups outside the regular schedule. Last year there were a variety of dinners, tours at the Library of Congress and games nights. Daniel Korn's special interest attracted lots of bidders for his Scottish Highlands Whiskey tasting. And, finally, those of you with young children might find creating events a great way to get together. *(Continued on page 4)*

## Beth Chai Directory

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Webmaster	Vacant		
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 Pat Lovenhart, Treasurer, for assistance.

### Shabbat Service and Program: When Moses Met Pharaoh --Negotiation, Torah-Style

**Friday, January 11.** Rabbi Blecher will lead an exploration of one of the most fascinating passages in the Torah, the famous "Let my people go" confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. Forever written into the memory of popular American culture as a duel between Charlton Heston and Yul Brynner, this ancient Hebrew story combines elements of sorcery, national destiny, and classical Jewish theology. This Torah portion of the week also touches on some acute current questions about national leadership and the uses of physical force in achieving societal goals.

#### Schedule

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

**7-8 pm:** A light supper costing \$10/adult (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, January 10, 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:** A rod, a serpent, and two handfuls of plagues.

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

## Letter from the Rabbi

### Scapegoats du Jour

Illegal immigrants are this season's gift from heaven for some political candidates. Better than gay marriage. You can revile them as criminals hiding in plain sight, sub-humans undermining American family values. But they're way easier to kick around than gays because illegal immigrants can't even vote.

From what I've been hearing in the media recently, the discourse takes place on three levels. First, there is the straight-forward and reasonable issue of enforcing the nation's laws. Just below that is the fear that destitute multitudes will swamp the national boat by draining economic resources. And of course lurking beneath it all is the unease about foreigners: some callers-in to talk radio shows seem positively outraged that there actually are people living in the United States who don't speak English.

It goes without saying that Jewish values call upon us to care for the "strangers" in our midst, especially those who are poor and desperate. But Jewish history informs us about this issue as well. My grandparents were immigrants who never lost their foreign accents. The way they entered the United States – sketchy documents, altered

names, made-up birth dates – certainly would make them illegal by current standards.

And like millions of people who came to America in the early 1900s, Jews were the targets of political demagogues who railed against the "hordes" of foreigners. American newspapers ran editorial cartoons that portrayed immigrants in the most revolting ethnic stereotypes imaginable.

Then as now, the fear was that the impoverished masses would ruin the nation's economy and destroy decent family values with their barbarous ways. Of course we all know that those barbarous hordes helped make America the wealthy society it is today.

Illegal immigrants have been entering the United States forever. There's no evidence that issuing them driver's licenses or giving schoolbooks to their children will ruin the country.

Share your opinion on my blog at [www.TheUnorthodoxRabbi.com](http://www.TheUnorthodoxRabbi.com).




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## Adult Ed: Compromise and Jewish Tradition; A Unique Saga of Jewish Identity

**January 13: Modernizing Jewish Ritual Practices – Adaptation, Reform, or Cheating? (Part I)** There are observant Jews who pin their handkerchiefs to their sleeves – ostensibly turning the handkerchiefs into “apparel” that they “wear” – in order to get around the Shabbat prohibition on carrying objects outside the home. In a similar vein, some who keep kosher kitchens will eat in non-kosher restaurants, although they may leave pork and shellfish aside. Whereas our recent discussions have focused on whether Beth Chai members' individually chosen paths have implications for our identity as Jews, we haven't looked at our own actions and beliefs along a continuum spanning the wider Jewish world. In this multi-part series, Rabbi Art Blecher will situate our discussion within the broader context of Jewish history and practice, raising questions that include: Do all branches of Judaism modify tradition in some way? Deviations in practice vs. deviations in belief: which trump which? How do communities and individuals validate their systems of belief and practice? Is there a tipping point where authenticity is compromised?

**January 20:** Special Martin Luther King Day presentation: *Klan-Destine Relationships*. See feature article on the front page.

**January 27: Reclaiming Jewish Identity Across Centuries, Continents, and Civilizations.** As a girl of nine, Carolivia Herron learned from the mouth of her 103-year-old great-grandmother of their Sephardic ancestor: Kidnapped from Italy by Barbary pirates and rescued by Libyan Jews, Sarah Shulamit ultimately escaped with the help of U.S. Marines to Georgia's Sea Islands, where she settled among the Gullah-speaking Geechees. This story is one thread on the award-winning African American Jewish author's path to Judaism that was to weave in later years through Jewish responses to her controversial 1997 book *Nappy Hair*. Carolivia will recount her remarkable family history, the subject of her newly published children's book *Always an Olivia*, and lead a discussion on such themes as identity, multiculturalism, and race. Copies of *Always an Olivia* and her other books will be available for sale and signing.

## Letter from the Education Director - January 2008



*Dear Congregants,*

Due to the many college students we have teaching this year and their different winter breaks, the board has agreed that it is best if we cancel school on Sunday, January 6. I will be attending a Rabbinic conference the week of January 6 – a very exciting prospect!

We are reserving President's Day Weekend for a snow makeup day if we get snowed out another date in January or early February.

Classes will resume on January 13. We also meet on January 20 for special programming for Martin Luther King Day. This day, which honors the entire civil rights movement and ongoing work for a just and peaceful world is an integral part of our Sunday School. Younger students will have age appropriate lessons in their classrooms. Grades 6 and up will be attending the adult ed. session this day. This year, we have African – American author Daryl Davis as our guest speaker. Please see Howie Feinstein's article on page 1 about Daryl for more details. Suffice it to say that I think his story of ongoing conversations with members of the Ku Klux Klan and subsequently some of those members renouncing their membership will be inspiring and eye-opening for our older students. Post Mitzvah students are highly encouraged to attend this session with their parents.

Please remember that beginning in January, parents will have a chance to meet with Mary Meyerson, our special needs consultant, regarding any concerns you might have about your students and how we can best reach each child in our school.

Tu B'Shevat is also in January this year –officially on January 22. Since this overlaps with Martin Luther King Day, we will be learning and teaching about this holiday more on January 27. This holiday honors the importance of trees and by extension – our whole natural world. In modern times it has served as a catalyst to learn about the Jewish wisdom tradition regarding the care and conservation of the environment. It also reminds us of our ancient and modern connections to the land of Israel.

Let's hope for snow days only during the week!

*L'Shalom, Rain Zohav*

*(Continued from Page 1)*

How about some of those skills that you have, related to either your job or a special interest: Could you help someone with their investments, taxes or provide legal consultation? Lots of folks could use help with specialized household chores or repairs. Others probably would be interested in learning some skill or hobby that you have, ranging from knitting to cooking.

You probably patronize local shops or restaurants that could donate an item or gift certificate. After all, that's how we got the Judean Black Glazed Juglet from the 1<sup>st</sup> Temple Period — the hit of last year's live auction.

There's probably something you own, make or could share with others — a piece of art, a vacation home or tickets for the performing arts.

Finally, there is the new category we added last year, entitled 'Needs.' We invite anyone who has something that they would like done to list and what you'd pay for it to be done. For example, if you'd like someone to help you figure how to use that super new software you purchased

but haven't gotten around to trying, you might offer \$35 for help.

And don't forget, many of your donations might be tax deductible.

Of course, the auction itself is a great social occasion for all who attend. You are encouraged to invite friends, family, and neighbors to join us.

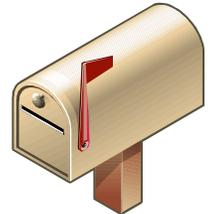
Your help is needed to make the auction a success. At least a couple of people are needed who can make follow-up telephone calls to outside donors during the day. We will also need folks to help write the descriptions of the items for the catalog, help set up on the day of the auction and work at the Café. For further information, contact Ron Leve (202-496-9292, [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net)) or Julie Zalkind (703-522-1023, [juliez@comcast.net](mailto:juliez@comcast.net)).

# Communicate!

Beyond the face-to-face encounters we have at Sunday School, monthly Shabbats, and our various holiday celebrations, communicating can be a challenge for a congregation without a physical building. As Communications Chair, I would like to make sure everyone - from new-comers to long-timers - knows about the various ways we have to communicate.

Technology has come a long way in the past 5-10 years allowing us a variety of ways to share information without always having to be in the same room. Not that technology should ever be seen as a replacement for the human contact so vital to the health and well-being of a community, but without a physical structure providing a common place for our membership to be and share, we need some other ways to share information and stay in touch. As a result, here's what we have:

- ✧ **Monthly hard-copy newsletter.** Articles detailing the month's events, community news, special interest articles, and regular columns written by our Rabbi and Education Director. Edited and laid out in a desktop publisher, printed, copied, and mailed to members' homes. Archived on our website.
- ✧ **Weekly email announcements.** Details of the current (and upcoming) week's events, any changes to programs, and various community events submitted by members. Compiled and emailed once a week.
- ✧ **Website ([www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org)).** Web pages describing who we are and what we're about for prospective members; and pages detailing Beth Chai events and gatherings (Sunday School calendar, shabbats, Adult Ed, etc.), forms to join the congregation and register for events, archived newsletters, etc. The website is currently being redesigned. Watch newsletter articles and email announcing the launch date (currently scheduled for late January 2008).
- ✧ **BethChaiBoard yahoo group.** A listserv dedicated to board of directors matters and governance of Beth Chai. Open to any Beth Chai member to join. To join contact Ron Leve at [theron@comcast.net](mailto:theron@comcast.net).
- ✧ **BethChai yahoo group.** An unmoderated listserv for general announcements and various discussions of Judaism or topics of interest to other members. To join contact Ron Leve at [theron@comcast.net](mailto:theron@comcast.net).



Our methods of communication have evolved and I'm sure will continue to evolve not only as technology matures and provides improved methods of communicating, but also as our membership changes. Because we're a volunteer-run organization, the members at any point in time determine what they value and make those things important to them happen, discarding those things they no longer have a need for. As a community we will always need to communicate, but how we communicate will grow and change as the members of our community change.

It takes many volunteer hours to provide our methods of communicating and sharing information. So I would like to extend an invitation to anyone interested in helping with this effort – from writing to editing to web content management – if you have some time and the desire, there's a way for you to help! Just give me a call (202-537-1001) or send me an email ([julievigdor@yahoo.com](mailto:julievigdor@yahoo.com)) and **communicate!**

*Julie Vigdor, Communications Chair*

## Request for Thoughts: Draft Revised Yom Kippur Service

As you may know, we have been working long and hard on revisions to our Yom Kippur service. We now have a working draft of the revised service. Any member who would like to review it can request a copy from Beth Chai President Andrew Strongin at [astrongin@starpower.net](mailto:astrongin@starpower.net) or telephone him at 301.585.4428.

Any comments on the draft revised service must be sent to Andrew no later than January 25.

# Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., January 6	No Sunday School	
Fri., January 11, See page 2 for schedule	Monthly Tot Shabbat and Shabbat service, featuring Andrea Foster as regular song leader. Rabbi Blecher will lead an exploration of the “ <b>Let my people go</b> ” confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. This Torah portion also addresses relevant questions about leadership and the uses of physical force in achieving societal goals.	Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Universalist Church, Fireside Room on second floor, 6301 River Rd.
Sun., January 13, 9:30 AM Assembly 10AM- Noon Classes	Sunday School, Pre-School Class; Adult Ed: <b>Modernizing Jewish Ritual Practices – Adaptation, Reform, or Cheating?</b> (Part I) Rabbi Blecher will lead a discussion of Jewish history and practice, raising questions concerning modification of traditions and authenticity.	Burning Tree Elementary School 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., January 20, 9:30 AM Assembly 10AM- Noon Classes	Sunday School, Pre-School babysitting; Adult Ed: Beth Chai’s annual <b>Martin Luther King Day program</b> presents Daryl Davis, author, teacher, and lecturer whose unique perspective on civil rights and discrimination is conveyed in his book, <i>Klan-Destine Relationships</i> , which recounts how Daryl, an African-American, succeeded in getting Klan members to renounce their views, through intense personal dialogue.	Burning Tree Elementary School 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Tues., Jan. 22, 7:30 PM	Board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Howie and Karen Feinstein, 6009 Conway Road, Bethesda
Sun., January 27, 9:30 AM Assembly 10AM- Noon Classes	Sunday School, Pre-School Class; Adult Ed: <b>Reclaiming Jewish Identity Across Centuries, Continents, and Civilizations.</b> Award-winning African American Jewish author Carolivia Herron relates her path to Judaism, including her controversial 1997 book <i>Nappy Hair</i> , and her remarkable family history, the subject of her newly published children’s book <i>Always an Olivia</i> , and lead a discussion on identity, race and multiculturalism.	Burning Tree Elementary School 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda



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