



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Two Big Events in March: Purim Celebration on March 12 Beth Chai Auction on March 26



Purim at Beth Chai is always a big *megillah* with parades, prizes, grogger-shaking, hamentashen-eating, Haman-booing fun! For complete details, see the box on page 4.

Beth Chai Auction — See You There!

The fun begins at 10 AM and goes on until noon at Burning Tree School, 7900 Beech Tree Road in Bethesda. There won't be a music assembly but there will be an hour of class time for students from 10 to 11 AM.

Adults and teens who are helping to set up should arrive at 8:30 AM. Beth Chai supporters, bidders, friends, and guests (yes, bring guests!) should come bearing checkbooks, as we can't take credit cards. We have some terrific items, events, and activities to offer this year. (For partial list, see page 7.)

Please Join Us for the Beth Chai/ River Road Community Seder



As is our tradition, we will be celebrating a community Passover Seder with our friends at River Road Unitarian Church. The joint Seder will be held **Friday, April 14 at 6:00 PM** at River Road. In order to make this event work we need two things from all of you: First, please tell us if you will be coming. There is an RSVP form on page 6 of this newsletter. Please return it as soon as possible, but no later than

April 11. RSVPs can be mailed to Gail Gertner at P.O. Box 113, Clifton, VA 20124. Second, please let us know if you can come early (5:00 PM) to help with set-up or stay late (whenever) for clean-up duty. We need help from one and all to make this event happen!

This year you can also pay for your reservations online: Visit the newsletter page of the web site, www.bethchai.org/newsletter.html, and scroll down to the credit card payment button and follow the instructions you'll find there. Remember, you still need to fill out an RSVP form — you can also find the form on the web site — so we know what you will be bringing. Thank you!

Shabbat Service & Program 12:20 Kosher Wine Tasting in MD; Israeli Folk Dance in VA

This month, by popular demand, we offer *two* Shabbat programs, one at our usual location at River Road, the other convenient to our Virginia members across the Potomac at the Lakevale Community Center in Vienna.

Kosher Wine Tasting — Just in Time for Pesach



Friday, March 10: Want to learn what actually constitutes a "Kosher" wine — and to get some expert guidance picking out a bottle that will please your palate and perfectly complement your Seder menu? Jon Genderson, the owner of the renowned Schneider's of Capitol Hill (www.cellar.com), will provide us with a special treat: He'll give us a background in Jewish law as it pertains to wine, as he leads an informative tasting of between four and six Kosher wines. Jon will come prepared with order sheets so that those attending can make sure their favorite wine(s) will be delivered by Passover. (Schedule for the evening and other details on page 5.)

Israeli Folk Dancing For Beginners (and Others)

Friday, March 24: Beth Chai's Shabbat evenings have been growing in attendance and enthusiasm over the last 18 months — but, understandably, not many of our Virginia members have braved the awful Friday night traffic on the Beltway to join in at River Road. (Program notes and schedule continue on page 5.)

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 Hofferan	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 of their son Sam on Saturday, April 1 at 10:30 AM at River Road Unitarian Church. Sam's Bar Mitzvah presentation is on the history of Jews in Spain and the role of anti-Semitic rumors then and now. A Kiddush will follow the service.

Edict of Expulsion, 1492

An Invitation to Join Beth Chai Member's Sci Fi Book Club

For those of you who enjoyed the reading and discussion of Marge Piercy's *He, She and It* last month, new member Daniel Korn invites you to join a Science Fiction and Fantasy book discussion group that he coordinates.

The group has been meeting for about six years and is always looking for new members. Meetings are the third Sunday of every month at 1 PM at the Borders bookstore in Germantown: perfect timing for leaving school, grabbing a quick lunch, and making it to the meeting.

The group is very active, very friendly, and reads a wide variety of novels in the science fiction/fantasy field. Selections are a mix of newer authors the group tries to discover and old classics that have either slipped under the collective radar or have particular resonance for current events. You do not have to be a long time reader of the genre to participate — you need just a desire to read and discuss books in the field.



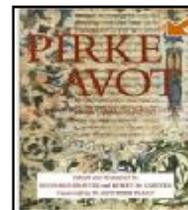
If you are interested, please email Daniel at dkorn@comcast.net for more details, corner him at Sunday school, or just show up for a meeting! The March book (meeting on **March 19**) is the forgotten classic *World of Null-A*, by A.E. Van Vogt.

Program Notes for Adult Education - March 2006

The Jewish Ethical Tradition

March 5 and 19: *Pirke Avot, An Introduction to Jewish Ethics - Parts 2 and 3.* Many famed Jewish maxims — among them, the sage Hillel’s famed distillation of the Torah into a phrase short enough to be recited while standing on one foot, “What is hateful to you, do not unto your fellow” — are found in a slender yet rich tractate of the *Mishnah* called *Pirke Avot*, “Sayings of the Ancestors.” Assembled in the year 200, it became a venerated classic of Jewish ethical literature.

These two sessions, following on the February 26 initial discussion, will focus on a contemporary edition of *Pirke Avot* that combines an excellent English translation with both classical and contemporary commentaries. Those planning to attend are advised to pick up the edition of the work recommended by the discussion leader, Rabbi Art Blecher: *Pirke Avot: A Modern Commentary on Jewish Ethics*, edited and translated by Leonard Kravitz and Kerry M. Olitzky; ISBN 0-8074-0480-2; Amazon price: \$10.17.



Rabbi Blecher recommends that participants read the following chapters prior to the sessions:

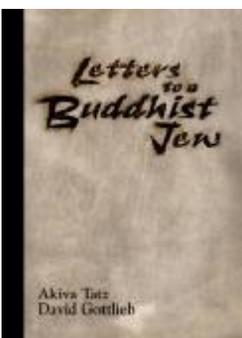
- March 5: Chapter 3 – Know Where You Came From; Know Where You are Going
Chapter 4 – Who Is Wise?
- March 19: Chapter 5 – The World Was Created by Ten Statements
Chapter 6 – Whoever Studies the Torah for Its Own Sake

Ordering books: If ordering from Amazon, please enter 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.

Shabbat Service and Program in April - A Preview

Letters to A Buddhist Jew: Author Talk

David Gottlieb, the co-author with Rabbi Akiva Tatz of *Letters to a Buddhist Jew*, will be talking about the book at Beth Chai’s Shabbat on **April 28**. Gottlieb, a Chicago resident who has undergone lay ordination as a Zen Buddhist, begins the correspondence by telling Tatz, a London-based Orthodox rabbi and physician: “I am a Zen Jew struggling to resolve these two identities.” For those who would like an advance look at the book, it is available from Amazon.com in paperback for \$17.50 or hardcover for \$24.95.



Ordering books: If ordering from Amazon.com, please follow the instructions in the article above. When you order through the Beth Chai portal to Amazon.com, as described above, a portion of your purchase will benefit Beth Chai.

7th Annual Celebration of the Arts

March 10 from 9 AM - 5:30 PM

March 12 from 10 AM - 6 PM

A Premier event at the JCCNV

Featuring International, National, and Local Artists

Beautiful, one-of-a-kind items available for purchase:
Ceramics, glass, metal, jewelry, Judaica and art to wear!

Crafty Kids Zone (Sunday only, ages 3-8) from 11 AM - 3 PM, one-hour supervised crafts & games while you shop

“A Ticket You Pick It” Raffle to win art work

No Admission Fee

Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia (JCCNV)
8900 Little River Turnpike
Fairfax, VA 22031
Telephone: 703.323.0880
www.jccnv.org

Co-sponsors: The Jewish Federation
of Greater Washington; The Embassy of Israel

Letter from the Education Director — March 2006

Dear Congregants,

Thanks to all those who participated so enthusiastically in our study session on *He, She and It*. It was a lot of fun to share this work with you.

A few highlight from recent classes: The 4th grade was enjoying learning Hebrew so much one week that they spent the entire time doing just that. They now have *machberrot* (Hebrew notebooks) to record the many words they are learning.

The K/1 class recently finished a unit of Jewish life cycles. On the day that they discussed mourning and remembrance customs they each went home with a Yartzheit (memorial) candle. It happened that one of the children's pets had died when they were at Sunday school. The child found solace in lighting the Yartzheit candle in memory of the pet.

March is the month of both **Purim** (see box below for all the details) and our wonderful **Beth Chai Auction** (see front page article). One of the highlights of a shetl Purim were the *purimshpiels* — little skits that the members put on, mostly making fun of the rich and famous. Any rich and famous folk you feel like making fun of? Please let me know.

Another custom of Purim is to give gifts of food to the poor. We will be assembling fruit baskets for both the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership (LTHP) and the Hebrew Home of Greater Washington. **Please bring a variety of fruits and nuts with you on March 12.** Remember that older folk cannot always eat the hard-to-bite-into kinds of fruit.



PURIM AT BETH CHAI IS SUNDAY, MARCH 12

10 AM to Noon

Burning Tree School
7900 Beech Tree Road, Bethesda

For Purim this year, we will be traveling back in time to visit with our ancestors in the Eastern European shetl (village). Of course, back then, they still ate hamen-tashen, got dressed up in costumes, drowned out the name of Haman with groggers, and had great parties. They enjoyed klezmer music — and so will we: **The Alexandria Klezmet** has agreed to perform for our Purim festival from 11 AM to 12 noon.



Please come dressed either as one of the traditional characters of the Purim story, or perhaps as one of your ancestors or someone who lived in a shetl.

PRIZES for ALL ADULTS and CHILDREN WHO COME IN COSTUME!

We need volunteers to bake hamantashen and to deliver the baskets to Revitz House, the retirement apartments of the Jewish Community Center. Please let me know if you can help out in this way.

On **March 19** we have Sunday school as usual.

On **March 26** everyone is invited and encouraged to attend the fantastic **Beth Chai Auction!** Sunday School will meet from 10:00 – 11:00 AM only. No morning assembly. At 11:00 the students will join their parents for the live auction, raffle, and Beth Chai café. Classes will be offering themed baskets again this year. As of this newsletter going to print, it looks like the preschool class will have a basket full of items for a new baby, and the fourth grade will have a basket of products from Israel. Stay tuned to hear of the other great items. This has been one of the most fun events of the Beth Chai year and a great fundraiser for us. Please encourage grandparents to attend or offer to bid for them on some items they select from the online catalog.

I look forward to seeing you all at both Purim and the Beth Chai auction in March.

B'Shalom,

Rain Zohav

(Two Shabbat Programs in March - *Continued from front page*)

(March 10 Shabbat & Program in Maryland, continued)

Since Beth Chai encourages families with children to attend Shabbat evenings — although perhaps not to take part in wine tastings! — we follow 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.

Schedule (please note special times for this event)

6:40 to 7:30 PM: A buffet supper, costing \$10 per person, 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, March 9, either by email at kenjacobson@hotmail.com or by phone at 202-462-2472.

7:30 to 8 PM: Beth Chai's Shabbat service, which features a Humanistic Kiddush, thought-provoking readings, and opportunities to participate for children wishing to do so.

8 PM: Tasting begins.

Location of all Beth Chai Shabbat Programs in Maryland: Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Church, Fireside Room (second floor), 6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.), Bethesda.

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(March 24 Shabbat & Program in Virginia, continued)

So, this month, we're bringing Shabbat to them! Beth Chai member Robin Graine, a group exercise instructor/ personal trainer — and a Virginia resident — has offered to reprise her wonderful program of instruction in Israeli folk dancing from January's Shabbat. In the spirit of our Mitzvah students, who learn in order to teach, Robin has been educating herself in Israeli folk dancing so that she can pass the knowledge on to the rest of us. Adults and kids alike are invited to take a whirl ... and if there are experienced folk dancers in attendance, Robin would be delighted if they pitched in with the instruction.

Since Beth Chai encourages families with children to attend Shabbat evenings, we ordinarily follow a format intended to make their participation easy and enjoyable. We provide a clear break between the service and the program that follows, so that those who wish to leave after the service only don't feel they're disrupting things. And we'll keep up the practice on this occasion even though, given the informal character of this month's activities, we doubt anyone is likely to feel inhibited about coming and going as desired.

Schedule

7 to 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, March 23, either by email at kenjacobson@hotmail.com or by phone at 202-462-2472.

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

8:30 to 9:30-10 PM: Kicking up of heels.



Lakevale Community Center, 2554 Oak Valley Drive, Vienna, VA 22181
Directions posted on www.bethchai.org — click on "events"

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, with its 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 \$20.00	= \$ _____
___ Member Individual/Guest @ \$10.00 each	= \$ _____
___ Non-member Adults @ \$20 each	= \$ _____
___ Non-member Children @ \$5 each	= \$ _____
	= \$ _____ TOTAL DUE

I will bring: Main Dish Salad Vegetable Dish Dessert

I will: 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 this date _____.



Presenting the Nominees for the Beth Chai Board

The Beth Chai Board nominating committee is pleased to present the slate for our upcoming May election of new board members. (More details to come in next month's newsletter.)

Returning members serving two-year terms:

Deborah Signer Balaschak, President
Suzanne Greenfield, Immediate Past President
Ron Leve, Fundraising Chair
Ilene Sokolsky, Treasurer

New members:

Howie Feinstein, Social Action
Andrew Strongin, Programs
Mike Wexler, Vice President

We would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to those board members whose terms come to an end this May:

David Elfin
Gail Gertner
Sheldon Hoffermand
Josh Lubell

Mary Ellen Petrisko
Bob Rosenblatt
Diane Sonnenberg
Julie Zalkind

These board members have given tirelessly of their energies and their wisdom in governing Beth Chai. We owe them our thanks for all of the work that they have done to make Beth Chai the community that it is today, and we hope that they will remain active in the work of shaping the congregation in the future. A special thanks and acknowledgment to Gail Gertner, Sheldon Hoffermand, Bob Rosenblatt, and Julie Zalkind for their long and valued service!

(Beth Chai Auction article, continued from front page)

The Beth Chai Auction features:

- t Auctioneer — the man of many hats — Art Blecher, getting Pilates instruction from Robin Graine
- t The first joint appearance of our native jazz duo, Hurricane Howie Feinstein and Alan Feldenkris, who will set our feet tapping
- t Marvelous food from the Beth Chai Café
- t And for your furry friends, home-baked dog biscuits!

A fabulous variety of items, events, vacations, meals, services, performing arts, and gatherings, including:



- t 2000-year-old Roman glass
- t An idyllic week on an island in Lake Champlain in Vermont
- t a gourmet dinner by none other than Art Blecher and Jim Clay
- t A Sabbath dinner with Rain
- t Brunch for four at Dupont Circle's funky Tabard Inn
- t A day where Mary Ellen Petrisko and Ken Jacobson will squire you around town on a mystery tour
- t Everything you need to get started crocheting, including lessons by Julie Vigdor
- t A week for a child at Yoga camp
- t From the depths of the Library of Congress, a tour of its Judaica collection

So, come early and ready to have a great time and to raise funds for Beth Chai. Invite your family, friends and neighbors as well. Bring your checkbook or cash (sorry, no credit cards!) You should be receiving a catalog in the mail in the week before the auction to help whet your appetite for all the goodies.

Donors, please note: If you have not made your donation yet, we still have time to process it. So contact Ron Leve (202-496-9292, TheRon@comcast.net) or Julie Zalkind (703-522-1023, juliehz@erols.com) with your donation or if you have any questions.

Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., Mar. 5 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: <i>Pirke Avot</i> , an introduction to Jewish ethics, led by Rabbi Blecher (part 2 of 3 parts).	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Fri., Mar. 10 at 7:30 PM; light supper begins at 6:40 PM	Shabbat service & program: Kosher Wine Tasting with Jon Genderson, owner of Schneider's of Capitol Hill.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm., 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Mar. 12 from 10 AM to noon.	PURIM PARTY — an all-congregational event. Come in costume! Bring guests! Fun for all ages! Alexandria Klezmet performing from 11 AM noon.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Mar. 19 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: <i>Pirke Avot</i> , an introduction to Jewish ethics, led by Rabbi Blecher (part 3 of 3 parts).	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Mar. 19, 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., Mar. 24 at 8 PM; light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat service & program: Israeli Folk Dancing for Beginners (and Others) with Robin Graine.	Lakevale Community Center, 2554 Oak Valley Drive, Vienna, VA 22181. Directions posted on www.bethchai.org — click on "events"
Sun., Mar. 26 at 10:00 AM for students and bidders (8:30 AM for set-up volunteers)	Beth Chai's Big AUCTION! Students have Sunday School for the first hour. See front page for article.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
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)
Fri., Apr. 14 at 6:00 PM	Beth Chai/River Road Community Passover Seder	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)



Beth Chai Congregation

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

Voicemail: 301-229-7400
Email: info@bethchai.org
Website: www.bethchai.org

Address Correction Requested

