



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Beth Chai's Annual Meeting & Potluck Is on Sunday, May 21 at 5:30 PM

All members of Beth Chai are invited to the annual membership meeting. It will be a pot luck dinner at the home of David and Julie Zalkind in North Arlington. Although this is mostly a social event, and very kid-friendly, we have some serious business to attend to. Many of our board members, who have provided tremendous leadership over the years, will be retiring from the board. Please come to help us thank them for all the work they have done. On this night, we will also elect the new board (see page 4 for the list of candidates) and welcome them. Please RSVP to Julie Zalkind (for contact information, see Directory, next page) to get directions and let her know what you will bring. Thanks — and hope to see you there!



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Report from Auction 2006: Success Beyond Our Dreams

by Ron Leve

THANK YOU . . . THANK YOU . . . THANK YOU, ONE AND ALL!
We are flabbergasted, dumbfounded, overwhelmed . . . and so happy that there's a bit of purring that can be heard.

This Congregation of barely 110 family units raised over FIFTEEN thousand dollars at the Beth Chai Auction on March 26. We can all be proud of ourselves for this accomplishment — plus, a good time was had by all. The music was great, the food helped keep us going, and Auctioneer Art and Robin Graine made the live auction a hoot.

We are indebted to all of you who made donations that helped raise these funds. In fact, it appears that most of our members made a donation. We're also appreciative of those who solicited their local merchants for merchandise or gift certificates.

And, of course, this all could not have been pulled off without the help of dozens of volunteers. Miriam Meyer led the crew that obtained food, set up and ran the Beth Chai Cafe. A whole mob of folks came early and/or stayed late to set up and clean up the whole *megillah*. They were led by Rachel Feldman who had completely mapped out the location of the tables and their
(Article continued on page 4.)



Shabbat Service & Program Holocaust Commemoration: Method, Meaning & Motive



Friday, May 19:

That we would observe Yom HaShoah seems a given, but behind the impulse and the practice lurk many important

questions: What do we need to remember? How can we give our remembrance meaning? Whose needs does it serve? Which needs should it serve? What questions might it address?

Guiding us through an examination of these issues will be Holocaust scholar Pascale Bos, a Dutch Jew and child of a survivor, who currently teaches literature at the University of Texas. She will talk about some of the ways in which the Holocaust is remembered and taught in the US today, about what is learned, and about what might be missing, or missed. Along the way, she will point out how memorials in American-Jewish communities often differ, in both intent and content, from those in Western Europe.

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.

(For the evening's schedule, dinner option, location, and other details, see page 2.)

Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
Suzanne Greenfield	Co-President	202-537-0142	greenfieldshapiro@msn.com
Deborah Signer Balaschak	Co-President	301-897-4909	balasig@verizon.net
Bob Rosenblatt	Vice President	703-698-9647	bobblatt@aol.com
Ilene Sokolsky	Treasurer	301-587-1309	i.sokolsky@verizon.net
Diane Page	Bookkeeper/Accts. Payable	703-534-5839	dmpage1@comcast.net
Diane Sonnenberg	Secretary	703-573-4474	dianesonnenberg@mac.com
Dr. Arthur Blecher	Rabbi	202-462-5448	ablecher@starpower.net
Rain Zohav	Education Director	301-294-8849	rainzohav@earthlink.net
Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator	301-215-6445	crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Julie Zalkind	Membership/Past Pres.	703-522-1023	Juliehz@erols.com
Ken Jacobson	Program Chair	301-920-2094	kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Sheldon Hofferman	Liturgy Ctte./Past Pres.	703-323-1885	ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
Mary Ellen Petrisko	Past President	301-920-2094	mpetrisko@tai.edu
Gail Gertner	Events Coordinator	703-323-1959	ggertner6@hotmail.com
Ron Leve	Fundraising	202-496-9292	theron@comcast.net
Peggy Robin	Newsletter Editor	202-686-9132	probin@adlerrobin.com
David Elfin	Publicity Committee	301-320-5646	elfind@verizon.net
Josh Lubell	Social Action Committee	301-774-6182	JoshLubell@yahoo.com
Marji Ross	Music Committee	703-917-0590	mross@eaglepub.com
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Beth Chai Web Site	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.

b Community News a

Bar Mitzvah of Michael Kameron

Beth and David Kameron cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bar Mitzvah service for their son Michael on **Saturday, June 3 at 10:00 AM** at the Garrett Park Town Hall, 10814 Kenilworth Avenue, Garrett Park, Maryland. A bread and wine kiddush will follow the service. If you need directions, please contact David Kameron, dkameron1@verizon.net.

Bat Mitzvah of Mariyama Zohav Scott

Walter Scott and Rain Zohav cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bat Mitzvah service of their daughter Mariyama Zohav Scott on **Saturday, June 10 at 10:30 AM** at Paint Branch Unitarian Church, 3215 Powder Mill Road, Adelphi, Maryland. You are also invited to a Kiddush and festive luncheon following the service. Please RSVP to 301-294-8849 if you plan to attend the Kiddush and luncheon so that we can plan for the right number of attendees.

(Shabbat Schedule, continued from front page)

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, May 18, 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 10 PM: Presentation by Pascale Bos and discussion.

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

Letter from the Education Director — May 2006

Dear Congregants,

There are only three more days of Sunday school left this year. I hope that this has been a good year for you and your family. I have been especially impressed with all the new families that have joined and thankful to the more veteran members for being so welcoming.

On the first Sunday in May, the seventh, we will celebrate Israel Independence Day. We'll be placing stickers on a map of Israel to indicate the places where we have family or friends or have visited or would like to visit. I think it will be interesting to see what connections we have with Israel and what connections we would like to have.

Mitzvah Class Parents, please note: On **May 7** I would like to have a brief meeting during snack with this year's Mitzvah Class parents to discuss the possibility of starting a once a month post-mitzvah program* next year.

There is **no school** on **Mother's Day, May 14**, to allow our teachers to celebrate with their families. This might be a good weekend to schedule a class get-together if you have not already had one, since we won't see each other on Sunday morning.

Please invite friends and family to our **Open House and End-of-Year Performances on May 21**. There will be time for prospective families to hear about the school and visit classrooms from 10 to 11 AM. Snack will be at the usual time, from 11 to 11:15 AM. The end of year performances will be from 11:15 to 12:00. We especially encourage grandparents to come to the end of year performances. And of course – everyone is welcome to come to the morning assembly at 9:30 to get a taste of how our days begin.

There is **no school** on **May 28** due to **Memorial Day**.

Our last school day is **June 4** and will include an **End of the Year Picnic** immediately after Sunday school, from 12:00 to 1:00 PM. We will reserve the all-purpose room in case of rain, so rain or shine we can end the year with informal time together. This is a potluck, so please bring enough for about eight people.



* I would like to suggest that next year's Mitzvah Class parents plan on sitting together at the picnic to begin to build a sense of community for the upcoming year. The process of seeing one's child enter the next stage of life can be a stressful one and Beth Chai has always had the goal of creating a supportive framework for this metamorphosis.

It has been gratifying this year to see many of our new teachers rise to the challenge of teaching in a classroom situation for the first time. The enthusiasm they have brought to the project and rapport that they have established with the students have been inspirational.

Both Michele Sturm and Susan Stewart, our experienced teachers, have been of enormous help this year, especially in the area of my professional growth during the time I was taking the course in mentoring and supervision. They both graciously allowed me to practice new observation techniques in their classrooms and participated in pre- and post-observation conversations.

As I move into the planning stage for next year stage of the year, I would greatly appreciate it if all of you who plan to return to the Beth Chai Family School would fill out registration forms in May or June. We will have forms available at Sunday School for your convenience. You can't imagine how much easier it is to plan when I know the size of the classes. Also, if you can print very clearly on those forms, we may be able to avoid some of the mistakes in the school roster that we had this year.

*B'Shalom,
Rain Zohav*

Adult Education for May 2006



Sunday, May 7. "Honoring Yom Ha'atzmaut — A Diverse Congregation Reflects on Israel."

For most Beth Chai members, Israel has always been a fact of life, but some remember when a Jewish state was still a long-unrealized dream. Many of us grew up in homes where Israel was a focus of attention, but others of us did not. Some are familiar with the land and its people, some are not. Taking advantage of our differences in age, Jewish background or lack thereof, and degree of involvement with the country itself, we will share our individual perspectives on Israel: the various meanings it has for us, the nature and degree of our connections to it. Rabbi Art Blecher will moderate.

(Note: This is the only adult education session in May. See Rain Zohav's School Letter, page 3, for program information for the other Sundays in May.)

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.

Beth Chai Board Candidates for Election at Annual Meeting

New board members:

Vice President Mike Wexler,
Chair, Social Action Howie Feinstein
Co-Chair, Programs Andrew Strongin
Co-Chair, Liturgy Rob Weinstein

Continuing 2-Year Terms:

Co-President Deborah Signer
Treasurer Ilene Sokolsky
Fundraising Ron Leve

Continuing 1-Year Position:

Past President/Secretary
 Suzanne Greenfield

We would like to acknowledge and offer a deep bow to those board members who have served with distinction and are now stepping down from their official positions, but who we hope will remain actively engaged in Board and Beth Chai activities as our wise elders:

David Elfin, Publicity
 Sheldon Hoffermand, Liturgy
 Josh Lubell, Social Action
 Mary Ellen Petrisko, Past President

Bob Rosenblatt, Vice President
 Gail Gertner Shapkin, Events Coordinator
 Diane Sonnenberg, Secretary
 Julie Zalkind, Membership

(Auction 2006 Report continued from front page)

contents. Celia Feldman, Howie Feinstein, and Alan Feldenkris kept us entertained with wonderful music. Walter Scott and Dennis Wallick even established a test bed of all the computer equipment the night before to ensure that there would be no glitches in that smooth running operation.

Ela Koniuszkow and Hilda Gitchell were great vendors of Diane Page's tasty (we know this through observation) homemade baked dog biscuits. Also patrolling the room were our subtle but super raffle ticket sellers. Karen Feinstein, Pat Lovenhart and Josh Lubell were at the very end of the process, making sure that folks got the items that they purchased. And finally, assisting Ron and Julie was an able group of writers and "contacters" who helped create the capacious catalog.

Many of you had suggestions for improvement concerning the auction. Even though you may have told them to us at the event, please send them in writing to ensure that they get recorded. And, we hope that anyone else with ideas for improvement will also let us know.

As usual, please contact Ron Leve, 202-496-9292, TheRon@comcast.net or Julie Zalkind, 703-522-1023, juliehz@erols.com for further information or to send in your comments.



Rabbi's Message

Beth Chai is an independent congregation. We are also a humanistic Jewish congregation. Finally, we are a blended congregation.

“Independent” describes our organizational nature. “Humanistic” refers to our approach to Judaism. “Blended” tells how we are put together as a congregation, and how our approach to Judaism is constructed. We have learned that taking a secular approach to Shabbat and Holiday services makes it possible for believers and nonbelievers to celebrate together. Moreover, we have learned not to be abstractly purist in how we choose material for services. So we are blended because our approach to Judaism was carefully built by the collaborative effort of an ideologically diverse membership. We are blended because our congregation is directed by the joint efforts of people with rich Jewish backgrounds and people with no prior Jewish backgrounds. We are blended because we respect a range of personalities and intellects.

And we are blended socially. Few groups are able to accommodate the wide generational range that Beth Chai so successfully houses. Our classes and services are populated by individuals and couples, seniors and parents, adults and children. We consciously organize our educational program to integrate adults and children. Parents and students prepare for Bar/Bat Mitzvah together. Parents help teach in the school, and students give lectures at services. Multiple generations learn together and celebrate together.

Being blended does not make us noncommittal or amorphous. “Blended” is how Beth Chai derives its special flavor.

— DR. ARTHUR C. BLECHER

Membership Survey Results Are Out

by Suzanne Greenfield



Questioning is a big part of the Beth Chai community. So when we set out last fall to question ourselves about Beth Chai, it is not surprising that many people (78 in all) took the time to answer our questionnaire.

To get a sense of what attracts people to Beth Chai and what keeps them active, we asked members to rank 25 activities and characteristics of Beth Chai. Of those who responded, 78.2% said it was “very important” that Beth Chai’s approach to Jewish humanism was consistent with their own personal beliefs. Also rated as “very important” were the High Holiday services for adults and teens (66.7%), Rabbi Art Blecher (65.4%), the congregation’s “sense of community, mix of people, friendships and social interaction” (64.1%), that interfaith families are welcomed (57.7%), the Family School program (55.1%) and that Beth Chai welcomes theists and non-theists (52.6%). Everyone wants our location to be convenient — for them. We were happy to find out many of you read the newsletter (74.4% almost always read most of it) and the emails (57.7% always read them) and that people feel connected and informed about events.

This is just our first step in listening, assessing, addressing and discussing who we are, what works, and what could use some attention. The survey will help to frame our discussions on the board for future plans, budget decisions, and ways to strengthen our services, programs, community events and classroom experiences. So thank you to everyone who took the time to tell us what you thought.

The survey team, Rachel Feldman, Ron Leve, Warren Milberg, and Robin Pollack, deserve our thanks and appreciation for their hard work and dedication to this project. And special thanks go to Lisa Dropkin. She offered her professional expertise and technical skills to compile the results and then helped analyze the information for us. It was wonderful to have a professional step up and help us through the process. If you would like to see how people responded, you can go to www.BethChai.org/newsletter.html and click on the survey report link to see the results for yourself.

Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., May 7 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Adult Ed. Topic: "Honoring Yom Ha'atzmaut: A Diverse Congregation Reflects on Israel." Discussion moderated by Rabbi Art Blecher	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sunday, May 14	Mother's Day - NO SCHOOL	
Fri., May 19 at 8:00 PM; light supper begins at 7:00 PM	Shabbat service & program: Holocaust Commemoration: Method, Meaning & Motive. See front page for details.	Beth Chai congregation at RRUC, Fireside Room, 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., May 21 - Music assembly starts at 9:30 AM	Beth Chai Family School Open House & End of Year Class Performances - See Rain's School Letter, p. 3.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., May 21 at 5:30 PM	Beth Chai's Annual Membership Meeting & Potluck. All members encouraged to attend.	Home of Julie & David Zalkind in N. Arlington. Call 703-522-1023 or email juliehz@erols.com to RSVP and get directions.
Sun., May 28	Memorial Day Weekend - NO SCHOOL	
Sat. June 3 at 10:00 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Michael Kameron. All members of Beth Chai are invited to attend the service, which will be followed by a bread and wine Kiddush.	Garrett Park Town Hall, 10814 Kenilworth Avenue, Garrett Park, Maryland.
Sat. June 10 at 10:30 AM	Bat Mitzvah of Mariyama Zohav Scott. All members of Beth Chai are invited to attend the service, which will be followed by a Kiddush and festive luncheon. Please RSVP to 301-294-8849 if you plan to attend the Kiddush and luncheon.	Paint Branch Unitarian Church, 3215 Powder Mill Road, Adelphi, Maryland.



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Address Correction Requested

