



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Come One, Come All to the Beth Chai Book & Media Sale!

November 20 from 10 AM to Noon at Burning Tree School
by Ron Leve



In last month's issue of this newsletter I wrote about my nervousness in undertaking my first event as your new fundraising chairman. Now that the sale is almost here, it's time to talk about YOU. My concern is that unless you clear out the books and media that are clogging your abode, there won't be room for the new items you're sure to purchase at our coming sale. I've seen the stock coming in, and there's a marvelous selection, perhaps just the ones you wanted most but never got around to buying this past year.

And for you parents of grade school kids, I can give you an advance tip: Through the generosity of one of our new members, we have a huge stock of NEW hardcover educational books, including many in the form of sets in topic areas such as science.

Here's what *you* can do:

- ◆ Scour your house and check with your friends, relatives, and neighbors for material for us to sell. Books, CDs, DVDs, game media, and even VHS and audio cassettes are welcome. Toys and similar material in good condition will be welcomed by another family.
- ◆ Invite all those same friends, neighbors, and relatives to attend the sale. They'll eat well and have a good time and maybe even be interested in a return visit.
- ◆ Volunteer, before we come out and tap you on the shoulder to do so! And if you'd like to entertain us with your song and dance, give me a call or send me an email so that we can set things up.
- ◆ You'd be a *mensch* if you brought a stack of bags to the sale to help cart off the purchases.

All leftover children's books will be donated to a needy elementary school in Washington, DC. (Article continues on page 6.)

Shabbat Service & Program: "Family and Communal Life in the Hebrews' Early Days"

Friday, November 18: The weekly Torah portion for this Shabbat, from Genesis 18-21, contains very interesting descriptions of family and communal life in the world of our ancestors. Among the characters found in them are Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac; Hagar and Ishmael; Lot, his wife, and their daughters; and Abimelech. We will read the text together, Rabbi Blecher will provide some classic rabbinic interpretations, and as a group we will discuss the contemporary relevance of the issues discovered in the text.



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.

(More information about the Shabbat schedule can be found on page 3.)

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 Hofferman	Liturgy Ctte./Past Pres.		ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
Flora Wolf	Friendship Committee		florakw@starpower.net
Mary Ellen Petrisko	Past President		mpetrisko@tai.edu
Gail Gertner Shapkin	Events Coordinator		ggertner6@hotmail.com
Ron Leve	Fundraising		theron@comcast.net
Peggy Robin	Newsletter Editor		probin@adlerrobin.com
Alan Kotok	Assistant Newsletter Editor		AlanKotok@cs.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

Congratulations

Congratulations to Beth Chai graduates who have gone off to college this fall:

Aaron Siegel and Miriam Doyle have reconnected at St. Mary’s College of Maryland five years after their Mitzvah year.

Alex Hartzman, a long-time aide in the Beth Chai Family School, is at the University of Wisconsin.

David Feinstein has just begun his freshman year at the University of Pittsburgh.

Alex Goldstrom is at the John Jay College of Law and Criminology.

Zahra Hirji is at Brown University.



Welcome, New Members!

- { Ivy Brown and Tom Kevorkian and William of Washington
- { Julie Goss and Haley and Jillian of Potomac
- { Daniel Korn and Rachel Silber and Zachary and Rebecca of Potomac
- { Jill Newburger and Alex of Potomac
- { Stacey Pearl of Washington
- { Betsy Reinstein-Dewey and Reed Dewey and Gabriel of Chevy Chase
- { Jim Ritter and Andrea Calem and Alexa and Joshua of Bethesda
- { Matthew Schneer and Sara Duke and Sasha and Sylvia of Takoma Park
- { Jean Simons and Steven Solow and Lena, Kate and Marla of Washington
- { Julie and Billy Vigdor and Kyla and Michael of Washington
- { Jenny Silverman of Rockville, soon to be the wife of Josh Lubell
- { Richard Lewis and Doris Bega Toolanen and Simon and Adam of Bethesda
- { Stuart Wolpoff and Lee Rosner and Zachary and Max of Potomac

Rabbi's Message



There is a passage in the Torah that describes an arduous battle the Israelites fought against enemies who attacked them in the desert. According to the story, as long as Moses stood on a hilltop with his arms outstretched, the people prevailed. But when Moses dropped his arms, the enemy prevailed. The battle lasted all day, and Moses no longer had the strength to raise his arms. So the people around him propped his arms up, and eventually the Israelites defeated their attackers.

I think this is an excellent metaphor that a community must provide support to its leader. Moses by himself could not get the job done. It is interesting to me that even though Moses was empowered by God to perform amazing miracles, here he relies on the most basic help from others. Maybe the Torah is teaching us that ultimately a community cannot rely on miracles; not only that, they don't need supernatural intervention if everyone does their part.

Now I can't compare myself to Moses, but I do understand that as a leader I cannot function without the help and support of members of the congregation. During the High Holidays I greatly appreciate having the assistance of members of the congregation to help me perform my basic functions as a rabbi.

I am especially grateful to Suzanne Greenfield, Deborah Signer Balaschak, Sheldon Hofferman, and Julie Zalkind for taking care of the much of the nuts and bolts of the rabbi's participation in services. Also, Phillip Resnik and Robert Zalkind supported me in different ways during the five separate services I led. Needless to say, many different members donated their time and talents to creating and administering the elaborate community service that Beth Chai provides both to our own members and to our guests.

Our three speakers, Russell Sturm, Joseph Shapiro, and Kenneth Jacobson, supported me in a very different sense. By sharing the preaching responsibility with me, they provided far greater depth and wider span of insight than any one person could offer alone.

My thanks to everyone at Beth Chai,

RABBI ARTHUR BLECHER

Shabbat Schedule and Location, continued from front page

7 to 8 PM: A buffet supper, costing \$10 per person and set out at 7 PM, 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, November 17, 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.

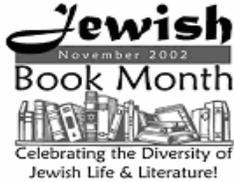
8:30 to 9:30-10 PM: The formal program, consisting of a presentation and discussion period, accompanied by light refreshments.

Location of all Beth Chai Shabbats (unless otherwise indicated):
Beth Chai Congregation at River Road U.C., Fireside Room (2nd floor)
6301 River Rd. (entrance on Whittier Blvd.), Bethesda

Letter from the Education Director — November 2005

Dear Congregants,

I hope all of you had meaningful and happy holidays. After all the intensity of October, you will probably be glad to have November 6 off. We close both Sunday school and adult education to enable our entire staff to attend the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning (PJLL) Professional Day. I will as usual will be teaching two sessions and attending a third. This is a great time for our teachers to learn and grow.



November is Jewish Book Month. So our mitzvah class kiosk will be featuring Jewish books and bookmarks for you to buy during snack on November 13. They will have in stock several selections of books that will be featured in adult ed. during the year, plus other books of interest. You will also be able to donate money for specific books that are needed for our curriculum and library. **Please bring your checkbooks on November 13.**

Then, not so coincidentally, on **November 20 we will have the Beth Chai Book and Media Sale.** Judging from the constant stream of donations flowing into Burning Tree School, I think there will be a huge selection this year. I highly recommend inviting your friends, family, and neighbors to the book sale. Several people have asked me where the unsold books will go. All the unsold children's books will be donated to the DC school where our preschool teacher, Susan Stewart, supervises teachers. This is a highly disadvantaged school. The teachers were delighted with the donations last year. Last year the unsold adult books were donated to a library in Virginia. This year, the event chair, Ron Leve, will try to sell them to a used bookstore first and then donate the rest. to a non-profit organization. (He's taking suggestions for the recipient organization — see page 7 for his contact information.) This was great fun and a great fundraiser last year. Some of the funds from last year were used to buy games and Hebrew materials for the classes. I hope all of you will plan on attending. *Please note that children will have class between 10 and 11 AM.* We will not have a music assembly before the start of class at 10 AM.

Everyone finally gets a break on Sunday, November 27, of the Thanksgiving weekend. Have a joyous holiday and we will see you back in December.

B'Shalom,

Rain Zohav

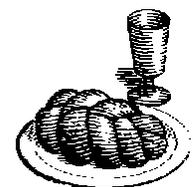
An Invitation to the New Members' Reception

All new Beth Chai members and their families are cordially invited to a reception and Shabbat service at the home of David and Julie Zalkind in Arlington
Friday, November 11 at 7:30 PM

All members who would like to help us greet our new members or who could not attend the reception held when they were new to the Congregation are also welcome. The Zalkind home is kid-friendly, so skip the babysitter and join us!

Snacks and dessert will be served.

RSVP to Julie Zalkind by email at juliez@erols.com to get the address & directions.



Our Thanks to All....

A Special Thank You

The High Holidays are a time for reflection, and as I reflect on this year's services I want to say thank you to so many people. If it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to provide meaningful, warm, and satisfying services. And I believe that is what we had – so to all of those people who made phone calls, organized activities, wrote ads, articles and flyers, brought food, manned tables, greeted families, read, sang, played or performed music, and especially those that spoke from the heart – I thank you.

I also would like to welcome both our new members and those who have been with us one year, five years, or twenty years. I hope everyone will take the time to get to know us better and get involved. Think about joining the board, getting involved with a committee, or taking on a project. We are a small congregation and we rely on our members for so many things – but I think you will find that if you get involved you will really enjoy your Beth Chai experience.

~ Suzanne Greenfield

Our Thanks to the Survey Committee



Often at Beth Chai, a member comes up with a great idea. The trick is to get somebody, or a few somebodies, to make it happen. Last spring Diane Page mentioned that we might want to do a membership survey, and she had a draft version of one. She posted the draft on the Beth Chai listserv (if you would like to join please contact Julie Zalkind), and there was a great deal of interest. Four members of the congregation came forward and took on the job of writing, rewriting, and revising the survey. So thank you, Robin Pollock, Ron Leve, Rachel Feldman, and Warren Milberg for your hard work and quick turnaround.

We then received a wonderful surprise: Member Lisa Dropkin read about the survey in the newsletter and offered her professional expertise to make the survey available online (<http://surveys.edgeresearch.com/nine/chailogn.htm>). We will use the survey to better understand what we, as a community, care about, what brings us to Beth Chai, and what keeps us coming back. It will be a great help as we plan for the future. Please take the time to fill out a survey online or by mail.

~ Suzanne Greenfield & Deborah Balaschak
Co-presidents

High Holidays Thanks

Thank you to everyone who made the High Holidays run so smoothly this year by reading, speaking, working behind the scenes, and organizing events.

- Y **Speakers:** Ken Jacobson, Joe Shapiro, Russell Sturm
- Y **Readers:** Amanda Buxbaum, Howard Feinstein, Sandi Foster, Allison Gordon, Byron Hulcher, Ron Leve, Julia Pernick, Izzy Rosen, Trina Ross
- Y **Flowers:** Rachel Feldman and Suzie Massey
- Y **Music:** Yelena Arseniev, Celia Feldman, Phillip Resnik, Robert Zalkind
- Y **Kiddush:** Robin Graine and Miriam Meyer
- Y **Break-the-Fast:** Harriet Hirsch, Ela Koniuszkow, Ron Leve, Robin Pollock, Nancy Scherer, Mike Wexler
- Y **Babysitting:** Laurie Hulcher
- Y **Greeters and Table Workers:** Deborah Balaschak, Rita Bank, Harry Feldman, Evan Foster, Gail Gertner, Tracey Goldman, Suzanne Greenfield, Mike Herman, Phyllis Herman, Sheldon Hofferan, Ken Jacobson, Alan Kotok, Ron Leve, Nancy Lopez, Fred Mittelman, Diane Page, Mary Ellen Petrisko, Bob Rosenblatt, Dee Rubin, Paula Rubinoff, Ilene Sokolsky, Diane Sonnenberg, Flora Wolf, Julie Zalkind



... And Thanks for the Mugs

Many thanks to new members Stuart Wolpoff and Lee Rosner for their generous donation of stylish new coffee mugs bearing the Beth Chai logo!



Adult Education in November

Note: Due to the November 6 Jewish professional teachers' day, the book sale on November 20, and the Thanksgiving holiday the following weekend, there is only one adult education session this month.

November 13. Jewish Life Cycle Practices: Marriage and Divorce, Illness and Death. Most of the days of our lives are recurrence and sameness. But certain days are unique, occasions that are never repeated. The civilization of the Jewish People provides traditions that touch the special moments and critical junctures in our lives, conveying meaning on both individual and communal levels. In this session, the second of a series, Rabbi Blecher will speak about the traditional laws governing Jewish ceremonies surrounding marriage, divorce, illness, and death, while also considering modern approaches to these rites.

All programs begin at 10 am and end at noon, unless otherwise indicated. Location: Burning Tree School, 7900 Beech Tree Road, Bethesda, MD. Bagels and coffee provided.
Programs are free for members, guests, and prospective members.

Social Action Report by Josh Lubell

Thanks to everyone who pitched in to help with this year's High Holidays numerous social action activities. Not only did we do our usual collection of grocery items and gift cards for the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA), but we also collected school supplies for the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership (LTHP), collected furniture and household items for hurricane refugees, and issued a call to end genocide in the Sudan. In spite of the many worthy causes competing for people's attention, Beth Chai members were generous both with their donations and their time.

Special thanks are due to Sheldon Hoffer for leading the Sudan effort, Rachel Feldman for leading the hurricane collection, Julie Zalkind for managing the LTHP collection, Wendy Baber for delivering grocery items to JSSA, and David Elfin, Mark Shmueli, and Arlindo Da Silva for pitching in as needed.

Thanks also to everyone who pre-registered for the **October 30 Help The Homeless Mini-Walk**. We have raised over \$700 so far for LTHP! If you missed pre-registration, you can still sign up the day of the walk. The walk will take place at Burning Tree Elementary during Sunday school/adult ed. The Fannie Mae Foundation will add to what we collect. Howie Feinstein (khfeinstein@us.net) will have registration forms and will be leading the walk.



Two Events of Note in the Jewish Community at Large

The 36th Annual Jewish Book Festival

November 4 - 13

Jewish Community Center
of Greater Washington

6125 Montrose Road, Rockville, MD 301-881-0100

<http://www.jccgw.org/gsca/bookfestival.php>

Featured authors: Jack Klugman, Robert Klein, Senator Barbara Boxer, Judith Martin, Judith Viorst, Steve Roberts, and Art Buchwald. The festival this year offers more than 9,000 books and music of Jewish interest for sale, including all of the latest titles. In addition, there will be over 30 author events covering all aspects of Jewish life from Israel, culture, science, politics and women's issues to current events, music, cooking, family programs and more!



Jewish Folk Arts Festival

<http://www.jewishfolkartsfestival.org>

Sat., Nov. 19 at 8 PM at Tifereth Israel
7701 16th St., NW, Washington, DC

Special program with songs and stories of the Hassidic spirit. Tickets: \$25; Seniors \$20; Students \$10/\$15.

Sun., Nov. 20 from Noon to 6 PM
Shady Grove campus, University of Maryland
9630 Gudelsky Dr., Rockville, MD

Music, storytelling, folk dancing, kosher food, Judaic art show, and activities for all. FREE!

Report from Rachel Feldman on Evacuee Resettlement

Many folks in Beth Chai, friends of Beth Chai, and people networked with many of us have been contributing to setting up households for hurricane evacuees. HUD officials tell us that more than 150 people are in motels/hotels waiting for housing and that FEMA will only pay for another month or so (at the time you read this). More people are coming into the area, as help is slow to arrive in the Gulf, and they run out of resources. People in this community have donated money, furniture, computers, household accessories, linens, and time...lots of time! Those of us working on the project are energized by the generosity and enthusiasm of people who want to help.

We are finishing up furnishing the first 22 households. We learned a lot! Getting connected with social workers who would identify a way for us to help took over a hundred phone calls. DC government-provided moving services that were scheduled to move donated furniture into apartments repeatedly failed to show up, and then in the face of complaint, stopped providing any services at all.

On a more positive note, in the process of working to solve problems and maneuver through the bureaucracy, we have formed some wonderful partnerships. Upon hearing of our work, the Montgomery County Conflict Resolution Center's Executive Director authorized our coordinators to use their 501 (c) 3 to provide receipts for donations and linked us to a listing service of donated items. We were able to get a number of donations from this listing service, and several people we contacted wanted to know more about Beth Chai.



Some went all out to get things from their neighbors and friends and particularly wanted to see their things donated through a Jewish organization during the holidays. We are also using Beth Chai's 501(c)3 to acknowledge and document donations. Through a Beth Chai family's neighbors, the Seventh Day Adventist Church (World Headquarters) just offered to help fund trucks and provide volunteers to help move furniture, so that we are not so dependent on the DC Department of Transportation. We are about to ask social services for more families we can help.

If you want to help with this process, please contact Rachel Feldman (rachelfeldman@cox.net) or Harriet Hirsch (HarrietH2@aol.com). If you have an email network you think might provide donations, volunteers, energy, etc., let us know. We are hoping to get a system in place to work through social services to get help to poor families, not just hurricane evacuees.

Do you have ideas? Should we "adopt" one or more families and try to provide ongoing assistance? Social services people ask us what we want to do, so they can find people who need what we want to offer. They are overwhelmed by needs. We would like to know what you think.

(Beth Chai Book and Media Sale, continued from front page.)

We would appreciate suggestions for organizations that need the leftover adult books, so please contact me to make a recommendation along those lines.

There will be collections at all Beth Chai functions prior to the sale date. And, if necessary, we'll make home visits to pick up your big loads.

The sale is at Burning Tree Elementary School in Bethesda on Sunday, November 20, from 10 AM to noon — or earlier, if we sell out completely.

To volunteer or to get more information, contact Ron Leve by telephone or email: 202-496-9292; TheRon@comcast.net.



Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., Nov. 6	No school or adult ed. — professional day for teachers.	
Sun., Nov. 6 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., Nov. 11 at 7:30 PM	New Members' Reception. Details in the box on page 4.	Home of Julie & David Zalkind in N. Arlington. Call 703-522-1023 or email juliehz@erols.com to RSVP and get directions.
Sun., Nov. 13 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: Jewish Life-Cycle Practices (Part II), led by Rabbi Blecher.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Fri., Nov. 18 at 8 PM; light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat service & Torah study session led by Rabbi Art Blecher. See front page article for details.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm., 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Nov. 20 at 10 AM — but please come earlier to help us set up!	The Beth Chai Book & Media Sale & Café. See front page article for all the details. Children will have class from 10 to 11 AM.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda



Beth Chai Congregation

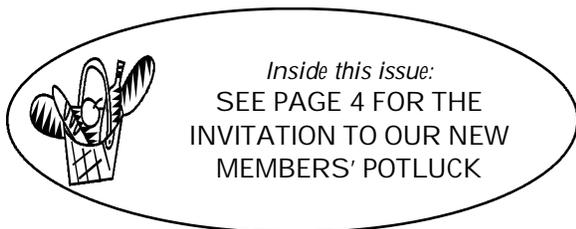
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Answering service: 301-229-7400

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Address Correction Requested



Inside this issue:
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INVITATION TO OUR NEW
MEMBERS' POTLUCK