



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

High Holidays Are a Time of Reflection and Celebration at Beth Chai



The Beth Chai congregation invites old friends and newcomers to join us in solemn and joyful celebration of the High Holidays for the year 5766.

Beth Chai's Rabbi, Art Blecher, will lead all services. Philip Resnik will serve as the cantor on Rosh Hashanah and will be assisted by Marji Ross, chair of the Beth Chai music committee. Rob Zalkind will serve as the cantor for Kol Nidre and Yom Kippur. Musical accompaniment will be provided by Yelena Arseniev, pianist. On Kol Nidre, Ms. Arseniev and Celia Feldman, cellist, will play Max Bruch's Kol Nidrei, Opus 47.

Beth Chai has a long tradition of active participation during the High Holiday services by members who help shape our understanding of the profound meaning of these holidays. At each service there is a sermon by Rabbi Blecher and an address by a member of the congregation. This year's speakers will be Russell Sturm, Ken Jacobson, and Joe Shapiro. Russell will talk on Rosh Hashanah about the quest for a spark in our spiritual lives. Joe, a reporter for National Public Radio, will talk at Kol Nidre about his experiences covering the evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. At the Yom Kippur service Ken will discuss how Beth Chai's Adult Education program expresses its unique humanistic traditions and approaches.

All visitors to High Holidays services are welcomed with respect and enthusiasm. We hope if you come to browse, you will stay to join. (Article continues on page 2; High Holiday schedule and other details — type of services, dates, times, locations, ticket information, food, and childcare arrangements — are in the box on that page.)

5 Sundays in October: 4 Adult Ed Sessions Plus Sukkot

Sundays at Beth Chai are certainly packed this month! We'll have four new and thought-provoking adult ed sessions at Beth Chai Family School. The article on page 7 has the program notes for each of those sessions. On the third Sunday of the month, we won't meet at our usual location, Burning Tree School, but will gather at beautiful Riverbend Park in Great Falls, Virginia, under a rope-and-fabric sukkah of our own construction to mark the harvest holiday of Sukkot. The article on page 3 provides details on what to bring and how to get there.



Shabbat Service & Program: Live Music! Shabbat Songs & Sing-a-long



Friday, October 21. Cantor Galit Pinsky Gottlieb, who lit up Beth Chai's April 2004 Shabbat with a mixture of classics and original compositions, returns with a program of traditional Jewish songs. To some beloved Shabbat melodies she'll add old favorites that will provide a perfect occasion to sing along. A recorded artist who sings in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Judeo-Espagnol, Galit was for 16 years a cantor in the Reform Movement. She currently teaches music and chairs the Fine Arts Department at Chicagoland Jewish High School, not far from her home in Northbrook, IL.

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 service and schedule can be found on page 7.)

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		bobbatt@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
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Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator		crobnlynn@earthlink.net
Julie Zalkind	Membership/Past Pres.		Juliehz@erols.com
Ken Jacobson	Program Chair		kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Sheldon Hofferma	Liturgy Cttee./Past Pres.		ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com
Flora Wolf	Friendship Committee		florakw@starpower.net
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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**

Wedding

Elana Firestone, daughter of long-time Beth Chai members Bonnie and David Firestone, was married on September 17 to Kelly Shea. Rabbi Blecher performed the ceremony. The couple resides in Toronto.



High Holidays, continued from front page.

Services are free for members of the Beth Chai congregation. For non-members, the regular price is \$75 per service, and tickets may be purchased for one, two, or all three services. If you've never attended a Beth Chai service before, you are welcome to try us out for the special introductory price of \$25 per ticket for one High Holiday service; subsequent services are priced at the usual non-member price of \$75 per ticket. If you have visiting friends and relatives from more than 50 miles away, they may be interested in our associate memberships, which include tickets for all three services, for \$150. The price of any tickets purchased for High Holiday services can be applied to the cost of regular membership in the congregation. (Additional information is available by clicking on "events" on our website, www.bethchai.org.)

— The High Holidays at Beth Chai —

Rosh Hashanah

Tuesday, October 4

9:30 AM Family Service; 10:30 AM Adult Service
Kiddush following the service.



Please bring sliced honey cakes, sliced challahs and sliced apples (a bit of lemon juice will keep them fresh) on platters ready to be served.

Kol Nidre

Wednesday, October 12 at 7:30 PM

Yom Kippur

Thursday, October 13

9:30 AM Family Service; 10:30 AM Adult Service
6:30 PM Break-the-Fast Potluck Dinner
Please bring a meatless dish to serve 6-8 people.
Beth Chai will supply fish platters and beverages.

Remember! Canned foods & pharmacy gift cards are being collected at all 3 holiday services.

All services at Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC
6301 River Road, Bethesda, MD
(Entrance to parking lot on Whittier Blvd.)

Celebrate Sukkot With Us at Riverbend Park

Where and when: Sunday, October 16 from 10 AM to 1 PM. Beth Chai members and guests are invited to participate in a Sunday morning celebration of Sukkot at Riverbend Park in Great Falls, Virginia on the Potomac River. (If it rains the event will be cancelled.)

Enjoy: Sukkah building, music, munchies, stories, a picnic lunch (new this year!), and socializing. See the box, right, for things to bring.

Construct: We will use rope for a sukkah structure, and clothespins and string to attach cuttings, fabric, and other items.

Explore: Riverbend Park has a boat launch, hiking trails, woods, and riverfront areas. A nature center opens at noon with turtles, snakes and educational exhibits for kids.

Bring to Our Sukkah:

- { 2 to 3 cuttings/branches from your yard to decorate the sukkah
- { A bright colored sheet or piece of fabric to hang on the sukkah (and take home afterwards)
- { Other items to decorate the sukkah (e.g., Indian corn, gourds)
- { Snacks to share
- { A picnic lunch!



We have decided to add eating lunch under the sukkah this year.

Directions

From the Beltway/495, take the 193/Great Falls exit (the first exit on the Virginia side of the American Legion Bridge) going west toward Great Falls. Stay on 193 for approximately 5 miles. After passing the entrance to Great Falls Park and the intersection with Dominion, watch for brown park signs with directions to Riverbend Park. Follow these signs. You will make two right turns. After you enter the park, drive until you see the Nature Center building and park in the lot. We will be near the Nature Center building. The park has handicapped accessible facilities. It is approximately a 15 minute drive from the Beltway exit to the park. From the Reston/Herndon/Sterling area, take Route 7 to 193 (make a left) and watch for brown signs for the park (left at Jeffrey, then right into the park). For map, go to <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/nature.htm#30> and click on the "local map" link.

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Fall Social Action: High Holidays Food & Gift Card Drive; Mini-Walk to Help the Homeless

by Josh Lubell



During the **High Holidays** Beth Chai will be collecting non-perishable food items as well as supermarket and pharmacy gift cards for the Jewish Social Service Agency (JSSA) to distribute to needy families. The gift cards are especially desirable as they can be used to pay for medications. Also, volunteers are needed to assist with delivering items collected to JSSA's main office in Rockville. For more information, please contact Josh Lubell at joshlubell@yahoo.com.

On **Sunday, October 30** at the Beth Chai Family School, we will hold our "**Help the Homeless**" **Mini-Walk**. As in past years we will donate the proceeds of our annual fundraising walk to the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership, an agency that helps immigrant families transition from homelessness to home ownership. If you have already pre-registered, just show up, participate in the walk, and you will get a tee-shirt! If you have not pre-registered, the cost to participate is \$25 for adults and \$15 for children (tee-shirts will not be available to same-day registrants).

For more information, or to volunteer to help with registration, contact Josh Lubell at joshlubell@yahoo.com or Howie Feinstein at khfeinstein@us.net. Thanks in advance for your participation!

Letter from the Education Director

Dear Congregants,

October is a busy month! Please note that we will have Sunday School every Sunday in October, including the Sunday between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The calendar this year allows us to get in some teaching about the holidays before the holidays, and that is all to the good.



We will have our traditional **Sukkot in the Park on Sunday, October 16** (see article, page 3) and celebrate **Simchat Torah** the last few minutes of Sunday school on **Sunday, October 23**. At Beth Chai, we like to celebrate Simchat Torah with the broadest possible interpretation of Torah as being the accumulated teachings of the Jewish people over time. We therefore encourage all students and adults to bring a favorite Jewish book to carry in our joyous procession of Jewish learning.

On **Sunday, October 30**, we will have a very special **intergenerational day of learning**. This will be a day dedicated to Yiddish culture and *tzedakah* (righteous giving). With a grant from the Jewish Federation of Jewish Washington, we were able to put together this program in conjunction with Bethesda Chevy Chase Community Group — an independent Jewish Sunday school, similar in many respects to Beth Chai. The day will feature professional storyteller, Noah Baum; we'll also have our **Mini-Walk for the Homeless** (see article, page 3). Rabbi Art Blecher will bring his usual unique, insightful and often provocative perspective to bear on the topic of "Yiddish culture: an important part of Jewish civilization." There will be learning centers for parents and students to do activities together. All students from K – 4th grade must be accompanied by an adult. The older students can participate by themselves if their parents wish to attend the adult education session.

Our Mini-Walk for the Homeless will once again benefit the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership, one of Beth Chai's ongoing *tzedakah* projects. This organization is amazingly effective in bringing Latino immigrants, who may be homeless due to overcrowding and other factors that impact immigrant populations, to home ownership within 18 months to 2 years. The agency provides transitional housing for which the immigrants pay a reasonable monthly amount. That money is deposited in an escrow account, which at the end of the program is used to pay for the small down payment on a modest house. During the intervening time, job assistance, English classes, and many other services are provided.

By participating in the Mini-Walk we raise much-needed funds for this worthy organization. The Fannie Mae Foundation more than matches any money we raise. Adult registration is \$25 and youth registration is \$15. This year we expect to have representatives from the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership here for the whole session. They will be available to speak about their experiences at one of our learning centers.



They will learn about our culture throughout the morning and then we will all share a potluck lunch with food from our respective cultures. We have limited refrigerator space and limited ability to heat food, so foods that do well at room temperature are best. Our ancestors similarly did not have refrigeration — so get out those recipes for your favorite noodles kugels, bring some gefilte fish, or rugelach. If you can bring a microwave, please let me know.

(continued at the top of next page)

We had a wonderful first day of Sunday school on September 11. Many new and visiting families were in attendance, as well as many returning members. The families who were new last year now realize that they are veteran members. Welcome to all our new families! It was great to see all the happy faces of the students at the end of the day, especially those of our visiting students, all of whom said they will be enrolling.

We also have quite a few new teachers on our staff. Team-teaching the 2nd/3rd grade are **Josh Fine** and **Rachael Brekke**. Josh, a senior at American University has taught 2nd grade Sunday school before and also organized and ran a small day camp for his home synagogue on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Rachael Brekke is a sophomore at American University and comes to us with a background that includes a Reform Jewish education through 12th grade and completion of a Sunday school teacher training program from her synagogue. They got off to a great start on Sunday.

We found Rachael Brekke through **Allie Friedman**, who is also a sophomore at American University. Allie assisted last year in the K/1 class, and we thought her sweet manner would be perfect for our small and sweet 4th grade class. Allie has a Hebrew Day School background, has spent time in Israel, taught tennis, and is a Women and Gender Studies major. She is very enthusiastic about our immigrant experience curriculum and is looking for her participation in Beth Chai to give her a different and rewarding way of being involved in Jewish life. I was gratified to hear from her students how much they had already learned the first day.

Not all of our new teachers hail from American University. **Matt Krouner**, a recent graduate of George Washington University, came to us through his interest in pursuing the idea of becoming a Rabbi or other Jewish communal worker. He substituted last year in the then 4th /5th grade and had such a nice rapport with the students that we asked him to teach that class (now the 5th/6th grade) this year. He is definitely one of the reasons some of our visiting students decided to enroll.

We are so lucky to have a Rabbi who has a special touch with adolescents. **Art Blecher** will be teaching half of the Mitzvah classes this year on the topic of “What does it mean to be part of the Jewish people?” The students will be exploring the concepts of culture, history, values, and belief through the lens of the Jewish experience. We are equally blessed to have **Jessica Rabinow** return to teach the other half of the Mitzvah curriculum on *tikkun olam*. Jessica is back by popular demand from the students, whom she taught last year in the 6th grade. Jessica brings a wealth of Jewish background to her teaching.



I really was the kind of child who ate the cake inside of the icing and saved the best for last. Of course we are all thrilled that **Susan Stewart** returns to teach pre-school for the 5th year in a row, and that **Michele Sturm** returns to teach K/1, also for the 5th year. Susan and Michele met with me during the summer to put in some extra work on our curriculum, helping to draft goals and “Enduring Understandings for Holidays” throughout the curriculum. Susan Stewart also has generously written procedural lesson plans for the 2nd/3rd grade for the month of September (as we weren’t sure who the teachers would be). After our first faculty meeting of the year, one of our new teachers remarked, “It was so good to soak up all the wisdom and experience of Susan and Michele.”

Shana tovah,

Rain Zohav

Rabbi's Message

As I write this column the tragic story of the flooding of New Orleans is still developing. I cannot know now what impression America will have of itself by the time these words are published. As a rabbi I instinctively struggle to find a place within the context of Judaism to where I can understand the significance of this tragedy. Perhaps some day I will find a philosophical or sociological package that can contain the meaning of what has happened, but right now all I have is a swirl of thoughts and feelings.

The Torah's story of the Exodus comes to my mind just now because of its imagery and its themes. The destruction that befell New Orleans followed on Hurricane Katrina, but it was more the result of the breaking of the levees. The Book of Exodus describes how the waters that had been held back like a wall swept over Pharaoh's armies as they pursued the Israelite slaves. The Torah tells us that both horse and rider were drowned, and the ancient Rabbis interpreted this to mean that innocent lives were lost.

The story of the Exodus emphasizes two social themes. This first theme is class differentiation: master and slave, rich and poor, the privileged and the deprived. The second theme is the plight of refugees. True, the Israelites had walked away from oppression so that the future generation would live in freedom. Yet those who fled found no safety and no resting place. They were relentlessly attacked by hostile tribes as they looked for homes in strange and barren lands.

The first images in our papers and on our screens were the faces of poverty, reminders of America's vast underclass. The images that I see today are the faces of refugees — tired, poor and huddled masses, the homeless tempest-tossed of our country. America's history will change because half a million people have been displaced, probably forever. It is possible that thousands will live out their lives in refugee camps.



I hope that during this coming New Year 5766, we will be able lift a lamp beside the golden door of America's future.

With all my heartfelt wishes for a year of peace and hope,

Rabbi Arthur C. Blecher

Support the Beth Chai Book & Media Sale NOW

by Ron Leve

Your new fundraising chairman is undertaking his first event for Beth Chai and he's getting nervous. We want to have a bodacious event, but without your support, it can't be that.

This is what you can do:

- s Scour your house and check with your friends, relatives, and neighbors for material for us to sell. We are the People of the Book, so there's no doubt you've got them socked away all over your house. And your 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.
- s 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.
- s Volunteer, before we come out and tap you on the shoulder to do so! In addition to those directly involved with the sale itself, we need people to support the Beth Chai Cafe. And if you'd like to entertain us with your song and dance, we'd love to hear and see you.



There will be collections at all Beth Chai functions. And, if necessary, we'll rent a truck to come pick up your big loads. Contact Ron Leve for further information (202-496-9292, TheRon@comcast.net).

Adult Education - October Sessions

October 2: What's a Jewish Humanist Like You Doing in a Society Like This? Are you feeling your minority status — as a Jew, an agnostic/atheist, or both — in a majority Christian country that is placing ever more emphasis on “religion”? Are there social or professional contexts in which you refrain from expressing what you do or don't believe? Do your kids find themselves under pressure in school or outside activities — and are you able to explain to them what they're dealing with and to support them in their difference? Beth Chai is fortunate to have members with a wide variety of backgrounds and beliefs, and we will draw on each others' perceptions and experiences in discussing these and like themes.



October 9: A Naturalist Interpretation of Sukkot. What relevance does the “Feast of Tabernacles,” one of the most ancient of Jewish holidays, have to the lives of Humanistic Jews today? Can its symbols be more than just reminders of the joy of past celebrations? Beth Chai Education Director Rain Zohav, who last year led Adult Education programs that examined the meanings of Kashrut and Shabbat in a humanistic light, will help us interpret Sukkot and other fall holidays in a naturalist light, as we look forward to building the congregation's sukkah on October 16 (*see article, page 3 for details*).

October 23: Jewish Life-Cycle Practices — Birth and Coming of Age. 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.

In this session, the first of a multi-part series, Rabbi Blecher will facilitate a discussion of the way in which Jewish life-cycle rituals connected with birth and coming of age convey meaning on both individual and communal levels. Later sessions will review the rites that accompany marriage and divorce, illness, and death.

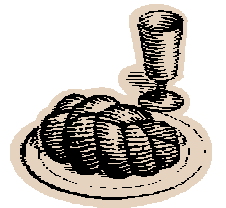
October 30: Yiddish Culture in the Context of Jewish Civilization. Rabbi Art Blecher will describe various aspects of Yiddish culture and discuss how they fit into the broader sweep of Jewish civilization. This abbreviated, one-hour session of Adult Ed will be part of a larger, intergenerational day of learning dedicated in part to Yiddish culture and featuring a performance by the professional storyteller Noah Baum (*see Education Director's letter on page 4*).

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.

October Shabbat - Live Music and Sing-a-long, continued from front page.

Schedule for Friday evening, October 21:

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, October 20, 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

Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., Oct. 2 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "What's a Jewish Humanist Like You Doing in a Society Like This?"	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Tues., Oct. 4, 9:30 AM (family svc.) and 10:30 AM (adult svc)	Rosh Hashanah services — more details in box on p. 2.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Oct. 9 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: A Naturalist Interpretation of Sukkot, led by Rain Zohav.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Wed., Oct. 12 at 7:30 PM Thu., Oct. 13 at 9:30 (family svc.) & 10:30 AM (adult svc.) 6:30 PM (Break-the-Fast)	Kol Nidre services. Yom Kippur services in the morning; Break-the-Fast Potluck in the evening. See box, page 2, for what to bring.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Oct 16, 10 PM—1 PM	Sukkot in the Park. See article, p. 3, for details	Riverbend Park, Great Falls, VA (directions, p. 3)
Fri., Oct. 21 at 8 PM; light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat service & live music program, featuring Cantor Galit Pinsky Gottlieb. 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., Oct. 23 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: Jewish Life-Cycle Practices (Part 1) - Birth and Coming of Age, led by Rabbi Blecher.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Oct. 30 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: Yiddish Culture in the Context of Jewish Civilization. Also, Intergenerational Day of Learning, with Noah Baum, storyteller. Mini-Walk for the Homeless, followed by potluck lunch.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
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.



Beth Chai Congregation

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