



# BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

## Celebrate Sukkot!

Picnic October 8 and Camping October 7-9



Beth Chai will celebrate Sukkot this year by camping and picnicking at the Marsden Tract Group Campsite on the C&O Canal National Park. For directions and more information, visit [www.nps.gov/archive/choh/Recreation/Marsden.html](http://www.nps.gov/archive/choh/Recreation/Marsden.html).

Come to camp, one night or two, or just come for the day on Sunday!

First there will be an overnight camp-out for a group of up to 30 campers (if we get more we have an option to expand, so please let us know ASAP). Bring your own tent and gear and set up camp on Saturday Oct. 7 (noon or later). Then we will all gather at the campsite on Sunday, Oct. 8 at 10 AM for our usual sukkah building and decorating, and celebrations through lunch time. The second night provides another night of camping (sleeping in the sukkah, if you choose) before we break camp on Monday Oct. 9 by 10 AM.

Marsden Tract Campsite is located at mile 11.5 just off the C&O Canal tow-path. It is a primitive group site with picnic tables, port-a-potties, a large fire ring, drinking water, plenty of trees, and fresh air. *(Continued on page 5)*

## Get Ready for the Beth Chai Book Sale November 19th at Burning Tree School by Ron Leve

Last month there was a small notice in the newsletter to alert you to planning for the Beth Chai Book & Media Sale; this month it's front page news. For those who have never attended this event before, let me say that this is not only a great opportunity to raise funds for Beth Chai by grabbing fantastic bargains in books, DVDs, CDs and video games but it is one of our premier social and community events. While you're surveying the inventory, you will have time aplenty to schmooze to your heart's content — though we don't want you to forget the shopping.

So, if you want to help make sure that we can offer as wide a selection as possible to all who attend, please start culling your collections of all those books and other forms of media for donations. In the year since the last sale, most of you have accumulated all sorts of stuff that it's time to clear out *(Article continued on page 7)*



## Shabbat Service & Program: What Makes Klezmer Klezmer?

**Friday, October 27.** What distinguishes klezmer as a musical form? And what about klezmer is distinctly Jewish? Tackling those questions with the help of one or more of the instruments he plays will be Seth Kibel, who played clarinet in leading the Alexandria Klezmet at Beth Chai's Purim party earlier this year. In endeavoring to derive a definition for klezmer—a task fraught with historical pitfalls—Seth will provide a brief history of this music from its origins in the Jewish shtetls of Eastern Europe to its heyday in the immigrant community of New York City and on to its current status as part of the broader American musical landscape. Besides live performance, excerpts from various recordings will highlight points of the talk.



The Alexandria Klezmet

### Schedule

**7-8 PM:** A light supper consisting of Middle Eastern fare and costing \$10 per person will be set out buffet style at 7. Those wishing to join in are asked to sign up by contacting Ken Jacobson before noon on Thursday, October 26, either by email at *(Article continued on page 6)*

Beth Chai Directory	Position	Telephone	Email
Deborah Signer Balaschak	President		<a href="mailto:balasig@verizon.net">balasig@verizon.net</a>
Mike Wexler	Vice President		<a href="mailto:ela.mike@verizon.net">ela.mike@verizon.net</a>
Ilene Sokolsky	Treasurer		<a href="mailto:i.sokolsky@verizon.net">i.sokolsky@verizon.net</a>
Diane Page	Bookkeeper/Accts. Payable		<a href="mailto:dmpage1@comcast.net">dmpage1@comcast.net</a>
Suzanne Greenfield	Secretary/Past President		<a href="mailto:greenfieldshapiro@msn.com">greenfieldshapiro@msn.com</a>
Dr. Arthur Blecher	Rabbi		<a href="mailto:ablecher@starpower.net">ablecher@starpower.net</a>
Rain Zohav	Education Director		<a href="mailto:rainzohav@earthlink.net">rainzohav@earthlink.net</a>
Lynn Weinstein	Parent Coordinator		<a href="mailto:crobnlynn@earthlink.net">crobnlynn@earthlink.net</a>
Julie Zalkind	Membership Chair		<a href="mailto:juliehz@erols.com">juliehz@erols.com</a>
Ken Jacobson	Program Co-chair		<a href="mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com">kenjacobson@hotmail.com</a>
Andrew Strongin	Program Co-chair		<a href="mailto:astrongin@starpower.net">astrongin@starpower.net</a>
Sheldon Hofferma	Liturgy Co-chair		<a href="mailto:ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com">ibkoolpaw@yahoo.com</a>
Rob Weinstein	Liturgy Co-chair		<a href="mailto:crobnlynn@earthlink.net">crobnlynn@earthlink.net</a>
Ron Leve	Fundraising Chair		<a href="mailto:theron@comcast.net">theron@comcast.net</a>
Howie Feinstein	Social Action/Publicity		<a href="mailto:khfeinstein@us.net">khfeinstein@us.net</a>
Marji Ross	Music Committee		<a href="mailto:mross@eaglepub.com">mross@eaglepub.com</a>
Gail J. Greenberg	Newsletter Editor (articles)		<a href="mailto:gailjgreenberg@comcast.net">gailjgreenberg@comcast.net</a>
Walter Scott	Newsletter Editor (layout)		<a href="mailto:walter_scott@mindspring.com">walter_scott@mindspring.com</a>
Julie Vigdor	Email Announcements		<a href="mailto:julievigdor@yahoo.com">julievigdor@yahoo.com</a>
Jules Aronson	Beth Chai Webmaster		<a href="mailto:jparonson@speakeasy.net">jparonson@speakeasy.net</a>
Beth Chai Answering Service/Email	Messages for Beth Chai		<a href="mailto:info@bethchai.org">info@bethchai.org</a>

**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

### Bat Mitzvah of Roberta Foster

Evan and Sandi Foster cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bat Mitzvah service of their daughter, Roberta, on **Saturday, October 14th at 10:30 AM** at River Road Unitarian Church. Her presentation is a discussion of the history and meaning of Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremonies. A wine and challah kiddush will follow the service.



### Bar Mitzvah of Alexander Halstead

Lauro and Jessica Halstead cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bar Mitzvah service of their son, Alexander, on **Saturday, October 21st at 10:30 AM** in the small chapel of Cedar Lane Unitarian Church, 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, Maryland. A wine and challah kiddush will follow the service. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to [hcsjxs@gwumc.edu](mailto:hcsjxs@gwumc.edu) or call 202-363-5476.

### Bat Mitzvah of Emma Israel

Tom Israel and Leigh Dingserson cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bat Mitzvah service of their daughter, Emma, on **Saturday, November 4th at 10:30 AM** at River Road Unitarian Church. A wine and challah kiddush will follow the service.

### Condolences

We are sad to report that Scott Greenberg's father, Jules, passed away on September 19 in California at age 90. The congregation sends its deepest sympathies to Scott and his family.

### Thanks

A big thank you to Stuart Wolpoff and Lee Rosner, who donated this year's supply of Sunday bagels and coffee. You have the gratitude of all Family School participants.



# Adult Education Sundays in October

**October 1: Debate in Israel As Seen Through Its Press** (rescheduled from September 17). At times, events in the Middle East have produced a rigid unanimity in the US Jewish community that has sharply contrasted with a multi-sided — and impassioned — debate in Israel. Is this one of those times? To help us find out, we'll hear a number of brief reports from Beth Chai members, each of whom has followed an Israeli publication over the Internet in the preceding weeks. Then, of course, we'll discuss what we've heard.



**October 8: Sukkot in the Park.** See front page article, as well as Rain Zohav's school letter (page 4), for complete details.

**October 15: A Humanistic View of Simchat Torah – Plus a Potluck Brunch.** Traditionally, Simchat Torah is the joyous holiday accompanying the completion, and resumption, of the annual cycle of Torah reading. What significance can it hold for Humanistic Jews? Beth Chai Education Director Rain Zohav will talk about the history of Simchat Torah and the practices that have been associated with it, while at the same time putting forward a Humanist perspective on the holiday. To get the ball rolling, we'll adapt one custom — that of calling all children, from babes in arms to pre-Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, to recite a blessing from the Torah — to the reality of Beth Chai today. As there have been quite a number of additions to the congregation's families of late, we'll join together in a potluck brunch to honor the new babies and their parents. The discussion will take place from 10 to 10:45 AM, with the brunch starting immediately afterwards and lasting until noon. All families except those with new babies are asked to bring an item for the brunch.

**Also on October 15: Register for the Help the Homeless Mini-Walk.** See article, page 6, for details.

**October 22: Humanism and Judaism — When Parallel Lines Meet.** Inherent in much of what we do at Beth Chai is the idea that Humanism and Judaism are compatible, even complementary — that Judaism can contribute to our lives as individuals, that humanism can throw light on the Jewish tradition. But from time to time it's good to take on such matters explicitly. Rabbi Art Blecher will lead a discussion of the following questions (and whatever others come up): What is Humanism? How do it and Judaism relate? Where do the two overlap, where not? Where might they complement each other, where might they conflict? Can we locate Jewish roots in Humanism? Can we integrate Humanism into Judaism? What do they impart, alone and together, to our identities, our values, our aspirations — to the way we live?

**October 29: Mitzvah Day — Looking at Disability Through a Jewish Lens.** Complementing a Sunday School program devoted to *k'vod habriot*, the mitzvah of honoring all creation (see Rain Zohav's School Letter, page 4, for details), Adult Ed will feature a two-part presentation by Lenore Layman, the Special Needs Chair of the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning. For the first hour, she will lead study and discussion of Jewish texts — some troubling or problematic, others exemplary or even inspiring — that deal with disabilities issues. The second hour will be given over to a discussion of what Jewish congregations have been doing to ensure that they are welcoming and inclusive, with some suggestions for what Beth Chai might do in this regard.

During the final ten minutes of the morning, Beth Chai members will have a chance to take part in the annual **Mini-Walk for the Homeless**, whose route will be around the outside of Burning Tree School. Those who do not wish to walk themselves may sponsor one of our teachers.

## Showings in October: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Beth Chai will host one or more showings of Al Gore's new film on global warming, *An Inconvenient Truth*, during October. We are one of many congregations that will be lent a DVD of the movie free of charge this month through Interfaith Power and Light, a San Francisco-based organization that is attempting to mobilize a religious response to global warming. Please watch the weekly Beth Chai email for announcements of time and place.



## Letter from the Education Director - October 2006

*Dear Congregants,*

Although the secular calendar says it is October, which should be a less hectic month than September, in Jewish time we are still in the month of Tishrei. This means that Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Simchat Torah all happen this month.

We will be holding Sunday School and Adult Education on **October 1**, which is the day of Kol Nidre. Our teachers are very dedicated and wanted this opportunity to teach about Yom Kippur and Sukkot before these events occurred. Don't forget that we have a Family Service on the day of Yom Kippur that is geared for elementary school age children. During the adult service, we do provide childcare for pre-school age children as young as two, with advance registration. Please contact Sandi Foster, [fostersa@comcast.net](mailto:fostersa@comcast.net), to make arrangements. And we encourage our older children, mitzvah age and up, to participate in the adult Yom Kippur service.

For **Sukkot** we are trying out a wonderful innovation this year — a camp-out with the option of sleeping in the sukkah. Please see the front page article for details and contact Lisa Spain if you will be pitching a tent.

On **October 15** we will celebrate **Simchat Torah** and welcome families with new babies into our community. Any families with babies, from newborn to two-year-olds, are invited to come for our Simchat Torah procession and brunch. The rest of the congregation will provide a potluck brunch. The schedule for the day will be:

9: 30 – 10:00 AM:	Morning assembly for parents and children
10:00 – 10:45 AM:	Classes and adult education;
10:45 – 11:00 AM	Simchat Torah procession
11:00 – 11:15 AM	Snack for students
11:15 – 12:00 Noon	Students back in classrooms
11:15 – 12:00 Noon	Brunch for adults and families

Everyone who is not bringing a new baby to the event is requested to bring a dish for eight to share. The congregation will provide our usual bagels, coffee, and juice.

At Beth Chai we celebrate Simchat Torah in a Humanist manner, with the broadest possible understanding of “Torah” to mean all of Jewish learning. So we encourage everyone to bring a favorite Jewish book to carry in our joyous procession in celebration of Jewish learning. We will also have some symbolic miniature and stuffed Torahs for the children to carry.

As if that wasn't enough for the month of October, we also have our **Mitzvah Day** on **October 29**. The mitzvah we will be investigating this year is *k'vod habriot*, or “respect for all creation” — with a special emphasis on disability awareness. This is a **Family Education Day**. The way these special days work is that parents accompany their children through various learning centers run by our teachers. This year the learning centers will be designed to raise awareness of some of the challenges faced by people with hearing impairments, visual disabilities, learning disabilities, etc. Any adults without children in the school, who wish to participate in these experiential exercises, are also invited to do so. Extremely memorable and important education happens in the conversations between parents and children as they experience these learning activities together. Parents who want to attend the adult education session with Lenore Layman can arrange to have their children go with another family.



*(Continued at the top of the next page)*

(Continued from the previous page)

All other adults are invited to join our guest speaker, Lenore Layman, Director, Special Needs and Disabilities Services at the PJLL (Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning) in a study session and discussion. The first hour will be devoted to study of Jewish texts that deal with the issue of disabilities, both troubling or problematic texts, and inspiring or exemplary texts. The second hour will be devoted to a discussion of what other congregations are doing to ensure that their communities are welcoming and inclusive to all, and what we at Beth Chai can do to move forward on this issue.



The last 10 minutes of the day we will have our **Help the Homeless Mini-Walk** around the outside of the school to benefit our partner agency, the Latino Transitional Housing Partnership. (See article, page 6, for details.) All are invited to participate with us. Those who do not wish to walk themselves can sponsor one of our teachers.

Last, but certainly not least, I welcome all the new families and students to our Beth Chai Family School and congregation.

*B'Shalom,  
Rain Zohav*

.....

*(Sukkot Picnic and Camp-out, continued from front page)*

Parking is available at the park at Carderock. From the exit on 495 (on the Maryland side just before the bridge) follow the signs to Carderock. Follow the park road to the right all the way to the end to the last parking lot. At the very end of the last parking lot (to your right when facing the bathroom facility) there is a trail head which will lead in 2 minutes to the canal towpath. After that it is a half mile or 15 minutes stroll to the LEFT along the towpath (level surface with dirt and gravel). There is also a drop-off and temporary parking area on MacArthur Blvd between Brickyard and Canal Bridge Ct. A few rustic steps down from the road to a footbridge over the canal and a short way down the towpath will bring you to the camp site.

Please let me know by email ([pansi1213@yahoo.com](mailto:pansi1213@yahoo.com)) or phone (240-632-9239) right away if you want to camp. After that we will have a campers' meeting to talk about how we want to do meals, etc.

Looking forward to hearing from you!

—Lisa Spain

## 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!**



# Mini-Walk for the Homeless on Sunday, October 29

Beth Chai's annual Help-the-Homeless Mini-Walk will take place on Sunday, Oct. 29, at Burning Tree Elementary School. Pre-registration, also at Burning Tree, will be on Sunday, **October 15**. This year, everyone pre-registering or registering on the day of the walk, will receive a T-shirt. All contributions (\$25 for adults, \$15 for those 25 and under) are matched 100 percent by the Fannie Mae Foundation and are donated to the Latino Transitional Housing Program in DC. For any additional information, contact Social Action Chair Howard Feinstein, [khfeinstein@us.net](mailto:khfeinstein@us.net), 301-564-9482.




---

## Letter from the Outgoing Newsletter Editor



This issue is my last as editor of the Beth Chai newsletter. My first issue was back in September 2000 — just a bit over six years and 68 issues ago. When I took on this volunteer assignment, the congregation was smaller, there were far fewer events, and my children were both in the Sunday school, which meant that I was always there on Sunday and so got to know most of the people. Now that both my daughters have had their bat mitzvahs, I think it's time to hand over the job to someone more in the thick of things — or, as it turns out — two someones.

I am pleased to introduce our two new co-editors, Gail Greenberg and Walter Scott, who will be splitting up the work, with Gail editing the articles submitted to her in Word format, and Walter handling the layout in MS Publisher. The deadline for the next month's issue will remain the **10th of each month**, and articles should still be sent by email as a Word attachment, in Times New Roman font, 11 point font, in single spaced paragraphs, with a single line space between paragraphs, and without indents, embedded symbols, or any other formatting. Gail's email address is [gailjgreenberg@comcast.net](mailto:gailjgreenberg@comcast.net); please remember to send a CC to congregation president Deborah Signer Balaschak at [balasig@verizon.net](mailto:balasig@verizon.net).

I know I will continue to enjoy reading the newsletter as much as I've enjoyed working on it for the past six years (maybe more!). Let me also express my appreciation for all those who have sent in articles or helped out with production over the years — with my special thanks to the very hardworking Patti Simpson, who every month without fail, has printed, copied, assembled, labelled, and mailed out the newsletter to the members.

Hope to see you all at future Beth Chai events!

*Best wishes,*

*Peggy Robin*

---

*(Shabbat Service and Program Information, continued from front page)*

[kenjacobson@hotmail.com](mailto:kenjacobson@hotmail.com) or by phone at 202-462-2472.

**8-8:30 PM:** Beth Chai's Shabbat service, which features a humanistic Kiddush, thought-provoking readings, and roles for children wishing to participate, begins at around 8.

**8:30-9:45 PM:** Time for the college of musical knowledge.

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, MD

## Beth Chai Book & Media Sale, continued from front page

again. In fact, you're welcome to bring back what you purchased last year as an act of creative recycling!

What has changed this year is that we're making an effort to reduce the amount of effort required to put on the sale. Last year, a huge amount of work was required, much of it very physical, as literally thousands of books were gathered over a period of several months, sorted, priced, and schlepped to Burning Tree on the day of the sale.

Here's the general outline of the new process:

- There will be no advance collection of material for the sale. You are asked to hold onto your donations until the morning of the sale. When you arrive at Burning Tree, you will find tables labeled by category; you will take each item you're contributing to the appropriate location. We will provide you with a list of the categories ahead of time, so that you can pre-sort your items before you arrive. If you will not be attending the sale, arrangements will be made for a drop-off, most likely at another Beth Chai event. You are asked to contact Ron to ensure that someone will be able to receive the donations from you.
- The doors will open at 10:00 AM on the day of the sale with the sale itself starting at 11:00. Once you've completed depositing your material in the appropriate location, there will be our usual Sunday food available, with perhaps a *lagniappe* for the special occasion.
- Pricing will be simplified. With perhaps an exception or two here and there, all hardback books will be priced the same; all softbound books will also be at one price. This will apply to CDs and DVDs as well.
- The hours of the sale will be extended until 3:00 PM. This will enable folks in the neighborhood who might have other plans for the morning to have a chance to attend.

And here's what we're asking from you:

- Invite friends, neighbors, relatives, co-workers to attend the sale. Our fundraising capacity is enhanced by reaching beyond our membership.
- Enjoy what may be a bit of chaos as we work out the kinks of the process.
- Volunteers will be needed to set up and receive material, for the sale itself, and for packing up the leftovers.

Any suggestions for making the sale an even bigger success than we expect are welcome. Contact Ron Leve, 202-496-9292, [TheRon@comcast.net](mailto:TheRon@comcast.net).



# Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Sun., Oct. 1 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "Debate in Israel As Seen Through Its Press." See article, page 3, for program notes.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Oct. 1 at 7:30 PM Mon., Oct. 2 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. For complete event details, visit <a href="http://www.BethChai.org">www.BethChai.org</a>	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sat., Oct. 7, after 12pm Sun., Oct. 8, 10 AM to 12 noon, Sukkah-building/picnic Mon., Oct. 9, depart 10 AM	Sukkot events - See front page article for the schedule for the Sunday Sukkah building and picnic and for those who will be camping overnight.	Marsden Tract Group Campsite at C&O Canal National Park. Contact Lisa Spain, pans1213@yahoo.com or 240-632-9239 for camping info.
Sat., Oct. 14 at 10:30 AM	Bat Mitzvah of Roberta Foster. All Beth Chai members are invited to attend the service and bread & wine Kiddush.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier)
Sun., Oct. 15 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed. 11-12 noon brunch	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "A Humanistic View of Simchat Torah," led by Rain Zohav. Also, Simchat Torah procession; Families with New Babies Brunch. See Rain Zohav's letter, page 4, for schedule for these events.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sat., Oct. 21 at 10:30 AM	Bar Mitzvah of Alex Halstead. All Beth Chai members are invited to attend the service and bread & wine Kiddush.	Cedar Lane Unitarian, 9601 Cedar Lane, Bethesda, MD
Sun., Oct. 22 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Sunday School. Adult Ed. topic: "Humanism & Judaism — Where Parallel Lines Meet," led by Rabbi Art Blecher. See article, page 3, for details.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., Oct. 22 from 7 to 9 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Home of Suzanne Greenfield and Joe Shapiro in Washington. To RSVP and get directions call 202-537-0142 or email <a href="mailto:greenfieldshapiro@msn.com">greenfieldshapiro@msn.com</a> .
Fri., Oct. 27 at 8 PM; light supper begins at 7 PM	Shabbat Service & Program: "What Makes Klezmer Klezmer?" with Seth Kibel of the Alexandria Klezmet.	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUC, Fireside Rm., 2nd fl., 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD (entrance to parking lot on Whittier). See front page article for RSVP info.
Sun., Oct. 29 at 9:30 AM for students, 10 AM for Adult Ed.	Mitzvah Day - "Looking at Disability through a Jewish Lens," with Lenore Layman of the Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning. See article, page 3 for details.	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sat., Nov. 4 at 10:30 AM	Bat Mitzvah of Emma Israel. All Beth Chai members are invited to attend the service and bread & wine Kiddush.	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

Answering service: 301-229-7400

Email: [info@bethchai.org](mailto:info@bethchai.org)

Website: [www.bethchai.org](http://www.bethchai.org)

**Address Correction Requested**

