



BETH CHAI NEWS

The Greater Washington Jewish Humanist Congregation

Beth Chai Retreat Planned for Second Weekend in October

The Second (Annual?) Beth Chai Retreat will be held the second weekend of October, Friday the 12th through Sunday the 14th. This is a great chance to get to know each other in an informal setting – the feedback forms from last year's retreat were uniformly exceptional!

For anyone who likes a camp-like atmosphere, but with indoor plumbing, electricity, mattresses, no tents and great company – this is the experience for you. Most of the meals are potluck (bring from home or shop at nearby stores), but Sunday breakfast and lunch will be provided by Beth Chai. We will all pitch in with set up and clean up of the meals. We will have activities for all ages, including a Humanist Havdalah, nightly sing alongs, games, crafts,

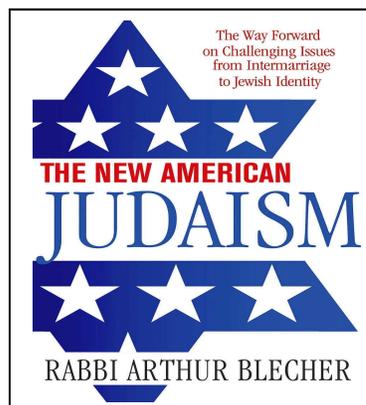
Adult Ed. You can come for either or both nights, and there is even an option of coming up only on Sunday for those of you who do not have fond memories of camp.

See the registration form included with this newsletter and posted on our website and in your email events lists. September 30 is the absolute deadline for turning in registration forms. (Earlier is better, as we may not start on Friday night unless there is enough interest.) You can bring completed forms with payment to Sunday school, give them to Robin Pollock or Daniel Korn, or mail them to Beth Chai.

Rabbi Blecher Invites Congregation To Discuss His Controversial New Book at Politics and Prose Bookstore

We are particularly excited to announce the impending release of our Rabbi's new book, *The New American Judaism*. The book is to be released on October 16.

Art promises that the book is controversial in its exploration of the social and psychological forces that formed American Judaism a century ago, and provides an optimistic view of intermarriage and the other challenging issues facing the Jewish community today.



Art has invited us to join him for a discussion of the book at Politics & Prose on Sunday, October 28 at 2 p.m.

Art welcomes our support at what is certain to be a lively discussion, and one that provides a rare and significant occasion to show the public the importance of independent congregations like Beth Chai.

October Shabbat: A Euphonious New Era to Begin at Beth Chai

Friday, October 5 — How do you get to Carnegie Hall? Practice, practice . . .

An accomplished song leader, Andrea Foster, will be with us on Shabbat evenings through the entire year; therefore, it seems smart to devote some time and attention at the very outset to polishing up a few old, familiar songs under her guidance and, perhaps, to taking on some new ones. This Shabbat's program will be put into Andrea's hands: She will stay on after the service to work

with us in an effort to get our enthusiastic yet melodically challenged members singing comfortably and competently enough to take real advantage of what she will have to offer us on a year's worth of Friday nights. This promises to be a program for young and old, flat and sharp, soprano, alto, baritone, and bass alike.

See page 3 for schedule

Beth Chai Directory

Position	Name (* = Board Member)	Telephone	Email
Rabbi	Dr. Arthur Blecher	202-462-5448	ablecher@starpower.net
Education Director	Rain Zohav	301-294-8849	rainzohav@earthlink.net
President	Andrew Strongin*	301-585-4428	astrongin@starpower.net
Vice President	David Elfin*	301-320-5646	ElfinD@verizon.net
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Family School Chair	Susan Stewart*	703-288-6533	ssstew@aol.com
Fundraising Chair	Ron Leve*	202-496-9292	theron@comcast.net
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Program Co-Chair	Ken Jacobson	301-920-2094	kenjacobson@hotmail.com
Program Co-Chair	Mike Wexler*	202-237-1216	ela.mike@verizon.net
Social Action Chair	Howie Feinstein*	301-564-9482	khfeinstein@verizon.net
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Sunday School Volunteer Coordinator	Phyllis Kristal	301-320-7086	Kristal@fr.com
Webmaster	Jules Aronson	301-229-9239	Jules.aronson@gmail.com
Beth Chai Web Site	Beth Chai Answering Service/ Email	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 Pat Lovenhart, Treasurer, for assistance.



Community News



Bat Mitzvah

Ilene Sokolsky and Dennis Wallick cordially invite the members of Beth Chai to attend the Bat Mitzvah service of their daughter, Rachel, on Saturday, October 27th at 10:30 a.m. at River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation. A lunch will follow the service. If you would like to attend the lunch, please RSVP to Ilene at i.sokolsky@verizon.net ASAP.

Get Well

We wish a speedy recovery to Sylvia, daughter of Sara Duke and Matthew Schneer, after her September 10th surgery.

Condolences

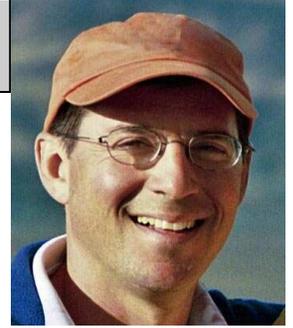
We are sad to report that Ken Jacobson's father, Norman, who was in his 80's, passed away on September 4th in California. The congregation sends its deepest sympathy to Ken and his family.

We are also sad to report that Tobi Colvin-Snyder's mother, Anne Spiegel Snyder, died peacefully on Saturday, September 15th, after a long illness. The congregation sends its deepest sympathy to Tobi and her family.

Congratulations

Mazel Tov to Rain Zohav, our education director, for officially being accepted into the Rabbinic program of Aleph, the Jewish Renewal Movement.

Letter from the President



As I write this letter to the congregation, I have the pleasure of both the resonance of the wonderful Rosh Hashanah services and anticipation of the impending Yom Kippur services which, of course, will have come and gone by the time you read this.

My own personal theology tends to the life-in-balance variety, and I'm not immune to musing over the relationship between coincidence and karma. Reflecting on the content of the Rosh Hashanah services in particular—all the hard work of the many committed volunteers, the beautiful talk by Shannon Rudisill, the beautiful singing of Shira Batalion, and the call to action/punch in the gut from Art—I suspect the best explanation is the simplest: Those who work really hard with the best intentions and building on a successful foundation ought not to be surprised when things come out so well!

In addition to providing a justifiably warm feeling of community and spirit of challenge, Shannon's talk and Art's commentary presage an exciting year for Beth Chai.

As RRUUC (nee RRUC) works to complete its new building, we're working hard to complete our own new virtual building with a redesigned website. Watch the newsletter and weekly email blast for updates on our progress. In the meantime, we will continue to update bethchai.org.

We also are working on revisions to our Yom Kippur service, and hope to have a draft ready for congregational discussion at one of our upcoming adult education sessions. I can't yet promise a date, but I can promise a lively discussion!

In the meantime, Art's new book, *The New American Judaism*, is set for release on October 16. He promises that it's controversial, and I hope you will join me in supporting him at his book talk at Politics & Prose on October 28.

Our Education Director, too, recently announced exciting news of her own: Rain has been accepted into the Rabbinic program of Aleph, of the Jewish Renewal Movement. We are especially pleased that she will continue to lead our Family School as she works towards her dream of becoming a rabbi.

The commitments of the Jewish New Year extend also to fostering and maintaining the excellence of what we already do, and are not limited to thinking about how we can improve our actions. In that spirit, many new faces have joined the Board and are working hard to maintain the excellence of our many programs. As you may have seen in last month's newsletter, there are too many to name here, but I hope you will join me in thanking them for their efforts.

I know others join me in celebrating the Beth Chai community, such a striking oasis in Washington. I look forward to another outstanding year at Beth Chai, and to spending it with the rest of you. Have a healthy, happy New Year.

*L'Shana Tovah,
Andrew Strongin*



Shabbat Schedule (from page 1)

6:30-7 p.m: Tot Shabbat

7-8 pm: A light supper costing \$10 per person will be set out buffet style at 7. Those wishing to join in are asked to sign up by contacting Ron Leve before noon on Thursday, October 4, either by email at TheRon@comcast.net or by phone at 202-496-9292.

8-8:30 p.m: Beth Chai's Shabbat service – featuring a humanistic Kiddush, thought-provoking readings, roles for children wishing to participate, and song leader Andrea Foster.

8:30-9:30 p.m: Sing, Sing, Sing.

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

Letter from the Education Director - October 2007



Dear Congregants,

October is a busy month at the Sunday school. On Sunday, October 7, we will have a short Simchat Torah celebration. At Beth Chai, we interpret Torah to mean all of Jewish learning, and therefore on Simchat Torah everyone will be invited to join a happy procession with our symbolic Torahs and our other favorite Jewish books. If you are a parent of a student in the school, please assist your child to choose a Jewish book to bring to Sunday School that day. And, please bring a favorite Jewish book for yourself also.

In last year's adult education session on Simchat Torah, it became clear that one piece of recent Jewish history around the celebration of Simchat Torah was not well known in our congregation. This was the spontaneous singing and dancing on Simchat Torah that took place in the former Soviet Union during the 1960's. Arthur Waskow writes in his book *Seasons of Our Joy*, "...young Jews in the Soviet Union began to use the public hakkafof (dancing processions of circling with the Torah) as an opportunity to affirm and celebrate their Jewishness in public- even if they defined it in secular rather than Torah centered ways. As the crowds dancing near the Moscow and Leningrad synagogues grew into tens of thousands, the western press and Western Jewish visitors began to attend the celebrations, and they became a symbol of the insistence of Soviet Jews on their desire and right to live Jewishly or to leave the Soviet Union" (p.84). Perhaps because I knew about these demonstrations at the time, it has always seemed to me that Simchat Torah was a celebration for all Jews, regardless of their level of observance, and did not necessarily need to be seen as an Orthodox kind of reverence for the scrolls.

Then on the weekend of October 12 – 14, we will have our second Beth Chai retreat. Please see Daniel Korn's article on page 1 about this lovely event. And please note that if there is enough interest, we will be able to spend the entire weekend in the beautiful country setting of Shepard's Spring. Also, please note that there is the possibility of coming up just for Sunday. There will be adult ed. on Sunday from 10 a.m.– noon and programming for the children as well. **The deadline for registering is Sept 30!**

October 21 is a regular Sunday School and Adult Ed day.

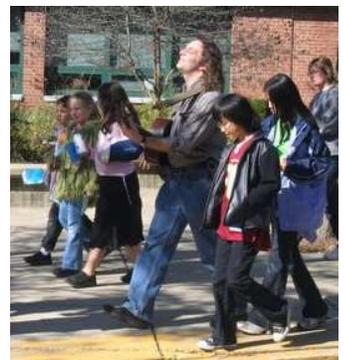
On Sunday, Oct. 28 we will once again have our mini-walk for the homeless to benefit LTHP (Latino Transitional Housing Partnership). This walk is for everyone - students, parents, Adult Ed participants - and folks can sponsor our teachers who are age 26 and younger. It will be the last 15 minutes of the day - 11:45 - 12 noon. We just circumnavigate the building. An easy way to help out a very good organization. Please see Howie's article, below, for details.

Looking ahead to Nov. – **There will be no Sunday School on November 4** so that our whole faculty can attend the Professional Day for Sunday School teachers that the Education Directors and the PJLL (Partnership of Jewish Life and Learning) organize. This year's theme is Israel@60, AmYisrael@6000: Excitement in Jewish Learning. The conference will feature Aaron Miller, former director of Seeds of Peace.

B'Shalom, Rain Zohav

Mini Walk for the Homeless

Our annual Help-the-Homeless Mini-Walk will take place on Sunday, October 28th at the conclusion of family school at Burning Tree E.S. Pre-register at any Sunday School session thru October 28th. Donation once again is \$25/adult and \$15/youth. Fannie Mae matches our contributions 100%, so we can again do some real good for the Latino Transitional Housing Program, an organization with great need and a very limited budget. Most important of all, everyone will once again receive a life-changing, highly fashionable t-shirt!!!! For any additional information, contact Social Action Chair Howard Feinstein, khfeinstein@verizon.net, 301-564-9482.



Adult Education for October — Perspectives on Jewish Continuity: Intermarriage and Genetic Diseases

October 7: Intermarriage Through the Ages – Part II, Modern Institutions and Attitudes. This second part of our series on intermarriage will focus on contemporary American Jewish institutions. Rabbi Blecher will discuss the similarities and differences among the major denominations and the independent communities. The session will cover changes in the community's outlook toward Jews who intermarry, comparing current attitudes with both earlier generations of American Jews and Old World Jewish Judaism.

October 21: Jewish Genetic Diseases – One Family's Story. In 1995 the first son of Laurie Strongin, sister of Beth Chai President Andrew Strongin, was born with a fatal Jewish genetic disease. The story of Laurie's son, Henry Strongin Goldberg, and her family is one in which science, love, genes, reproductive rights, ethics, and politics collide. Laurie, founder and co-president of the Hope for Henry Foundation, will tell this rich and affecting story while also providing information about the genetic diseases that primarily affect Jews.

October 28: Intermarriage Through the Ages – Part III, Non-Jews' Needs and Contributions. Our third session on intermarriage will be devoted to exploring the everyday dynamics of intermarriage households. Rabbi Blecher will lead a discussion of the specific needs and concerns of the Gentile members of Beth Chai. Finally the group will formulate ways that the Gentile members of Jewish households can make important contributions to the American Jewish community.

New Members' Reception

All new Beth Chai members and their families are cordially invited to a reception at the home of David and Julie Zalkind in Arlington, Virginia, on Saturday, October 20 from 6 to 8 p.m. Music will be provided by a live jazz trio featuring Beth Chai's own Alan Feldenkris.

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 with much to keep the kids busy during the evening. The Zalkinds live with two very friendly dogs who love all kids!

Hors d'oeuvres for the adults and pizza for the kids.

RSVP to Julie Zalkind by email at Julie@hzmgt.com to get directions.



5015 Connecticut Avenue NW
202-364-1919

**RABBI ARTHUR
BLECHER**

discusses his controversial new book,

**The New American
Judaism**

Sunday, October 28
2 p.m.

Calendar of Events

Date & Time	Event	Location
Fri., October 5, 6:30 PM Tot Shabbat, 7 PM Light supper, 8 PM Shabbat Service	Monthly Tot Shabbat and Shabbat service, featuring Andrea Foster as regular song leader, and a program focusing on Beth Chai music and songs	Beth Chai Congregation at River Road Unitarian Universalist Congregation (RRUUC), 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD
Sun., October 7; (Simchat Torah) 9:30 AM Assembly; 10AM – Noon Classes	Sunday School, Pre-School, and Post-Mitzvah Class. Adult Ed: Intermarriage Through the Ages – Part II, Modern Institutions and Attitudes. Rabbi Art Blecher will lead	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, October 12-14	Beth Chai Second Annual Retreat in Sharpsburg, Maryland	Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry Center
Sunday, October 14	No Adult Ed or Sunday School	
Saturday, October 20 6 – 8 PM	New member reception	Home of Julie & David Zalkind in Arlington, VA. Directions sent when you RSVP to: julie@hzmgt.com
Sun., October 21 9:30 AM Assembly; 10 AM – Noon Classes	Sunday School, Pre-School Adult Ed: Jewish Genetic Diseases -- One Family's Story. Led by Laurie Strongin, founder and co-president of the Hope for Henry Foundation	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda, MD
Tues., October 23 7:30 PM	Beth Chai board meeting. All interested members are welcome to attend.	Location TBD
Sat., October 27 10:30 AM	Bat Mitzvah of Rachel Wallick, daughter of Ilene Sokolsky and Dennis Wallick. Beth Chai members are invited to attend service and join the family for lunch. RSVP to Ilene at i.sokolsky@verizon.net	Beth Chai Congregation at RRUUC, 6301 River Rd., Bethesda, MD
Sun., October 28, 9:30 AM Assembly 10AM- 11:45 Classes 11:45 – noon miniwalk	Sunday School; babysitting for Pre-Schoolers Adult Ed: Intermarriage Through the Ages – Part III, Non-Jews' Needs and Contributions. Rabbi Art Blecher will lead. Also, Mini-walk for the Homeless	Burning Tree Elementary School, 7900 Beech Tree Rd., Bethesda
Sun., October 28 2:00 PM	Rabbi Blecher to discuss his new book, <i>The New American Judaism</i>	Politics & Prose Bookstore 5015 Connecticut Ave, DC



Beth Chai Congregation

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