



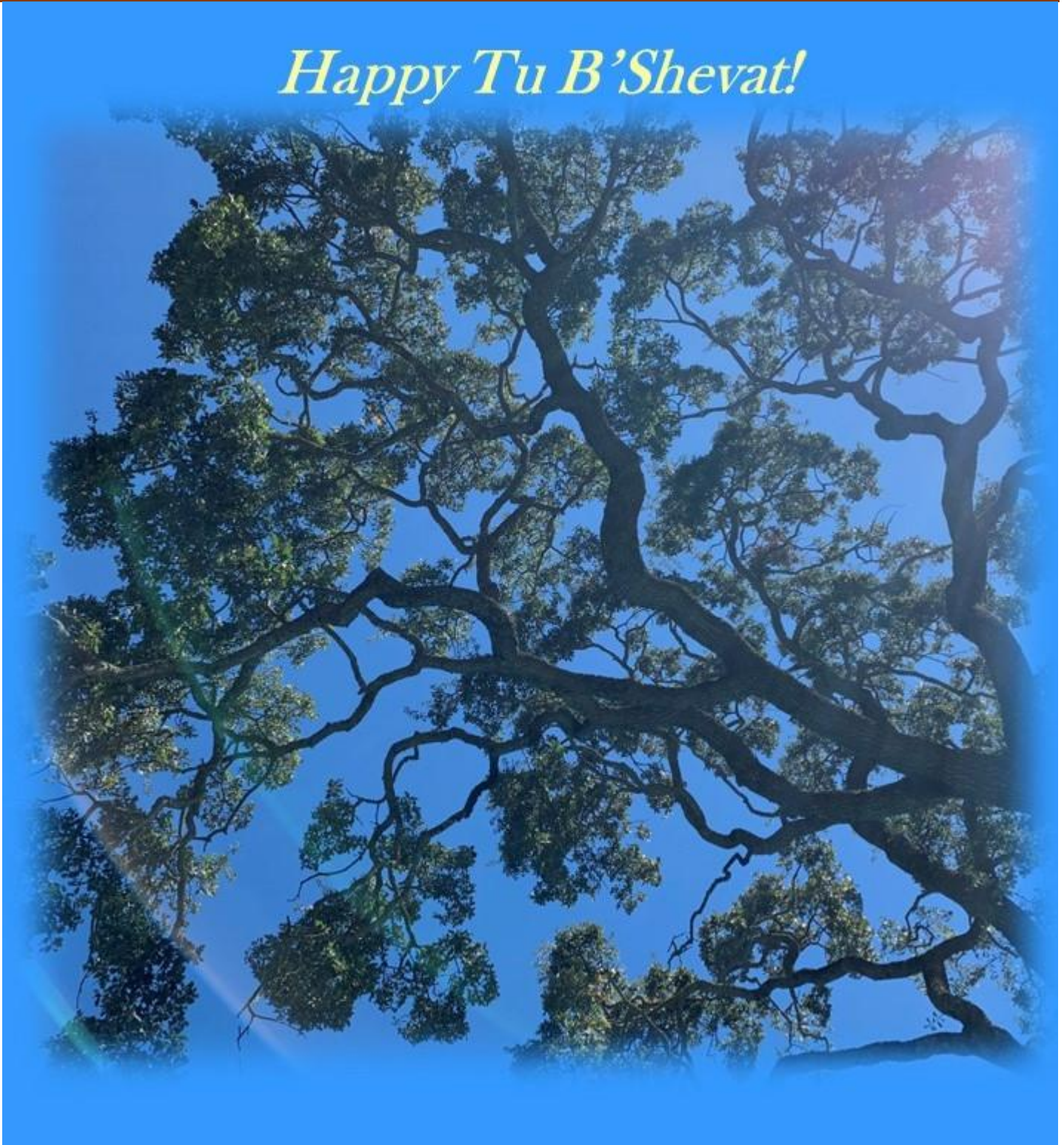
BETH
CHAIM
CONGREGATION

Celebrating
Spiritual
Community
Since 1978

THE STAR

VOLUME 45 | ISSUE 1 | JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023 | TEVET/SHEVAT/ADAR 5783

Happy Tu B'Shevat!



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NOTE: The STAR is currently only available in digital format.

The Digital Color Edition of The Star is available online. To view/download The Star and enjoy the benefits of hyperlinks, go to the Beth Chaim website: <https://www.bethchaim.com/news/beth-chaim-star>.

You can also find the link to the Digital Color edition on our Members Only Facebook page and in the weekly Happenings.

Follow us on Social Media:



STAFF

ADMINISTRATIVE MAIN NUMBER: 925-736-7146

Rabbi | Rabbi Dan Goldblatt | rabbidan@bethchaim.com

Principal of Religious School | Shelby Margolin |

educator@bethchaim.com

Religious School Admin | Alex Lofrese |

schooladmin@bethchaim.com

Executive Administrator & Bookkeeper |

Neela Arumugham | admin@bethchaim.com

EDITORIAL

Director of Marketing & Communications | Ellen Waltrip |

ellen@divmg.com

Editor-in-Chief | Deborah Wechsler |

debwex52@yahoo.com

Copy Editor | Rae Corr |

raecorr@sbcglobal.net

Advertising | Neela Arumugham |

bookkeeper@bethchaim.com

Our Mission

At Beth Chaim Congregation, we are reimagining how we experience and celebrate Judaism, and how we are a source of belonging that enriches and uplifts the lives of our members. Our approachable, flexible worship, grounded in tradition yet modernized, embraces spirituality and soulful Jewish practice.

- We welcome with warmth all who seek a connection to Jewish life regardless of their religious beliefs and experiences. We **embrace Jews of all backgrounds** as well as those new to Judaism **and interfaith relationships** and meet our congregants wherever they are on their **Jewish journey**.
- We are your Jewish **community** in the East Bay. We celebrate your simchas, and we are there with chesed in your times of need. We are your people, your community, a place to belong.
- Our **Sisterhood, Brotherhood, youth opportunities, and events** for all can fill your Jewish soul.
- **We learn.** Our Tree of Life preschool, Beit Midrash, B'Nei Mitzvah program and adult education opportunities provide lifelong enrichment of your Jewish experience.
- We are a **tranquil place of togetherness** and Jewish spirituality in the beautiful Danville hills.

Are you, or someone you know, being abused?

If you need help, please contact:

SHALOM BAYIT HELP HOTLINE AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Helpline: (866) 742-5667 (SHALOM-7)

Toll-Free within the Bay Area

(510) 845-7233 (SAFE) outside the Bay Area

(650) 574-7233 (SAFE) Peninsula office

For questions or support, contact:

Shalom Bayit

(510) 845-8874

communities@shalom-bayit.org



COMING SOON! Events not to miss in January & February

Mark your calendar for these upcoming events. **Check the weekly Happenings and [Beth Chaim website](#) for details, to RSVP, and for updates or changes.** Also visit our website for a full listing of [Worship Services](#).

Date	Event	Day	Time	Where
JAN 5	Sisterhood Monthly Walking Group	Thursday	9:30 AM	Lunardi's Parking Lot
JAN 9	Genealogy Club Meeting	Monday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 13	Sharing Shabbat Together - Dinner	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
JAN 13	Program: Living Jewish in Indonesia	Friday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 17	Sisterhood Book Club	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 18	Adult B'nei Mitzvah Information Mtg	Wednesday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 20	Shabbat Dinner Sponsored by Brotherhood	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
JAN 21	Sisterhood Luncheon	Saturday	12:00 PM	BCC
JAN 22	Torah Tots	Sunday	10:00 AM	BCC
JAN 24	Sisterhood Rosh Chodesh Shevat Gathering	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 26-28	Brotherhood Tahoe Getaway	Thursday - Saturday	9:00 AM	Tahoe
JAN 27	Tot Shabbat	Friday	5:30 PM	BCC
JAN 27	Sharing Shabbat Together - Dinner	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
JAN 27	Ruach Service	Friday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 30 – FEB 6	Winter Nights Shelter	Monday		St. Timothy's Church
FEB 2	Sisterhood Monthly Walking Group	Thursday	9:30 AM	Lunardi's Parking Lot
FEB 5	Torah Tots	Sunday	10:00 AM	BCC
FEB 5	Sisterhood Tallit-Making Workshop	Sunday	1:00 PM	BCC
FEB 10	Sharing Shabbat Together - Dinner	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 10	Program: Tikkun Olam, sponsored by Janet & Harold Freiman	Friday	7:00 PM	BCC
FEB 10	Sharing Shabbat Together - Dinner	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 17	Sharing Shabbat Together - Dinner	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 17	Program: Painting with Aritst Jessica Kolis	Friday	7:00 PM	BCC
FEB 21	Sisterhood Book Club	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
FEB 24	Sharing Shabbat Together - Dinner	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 24	Program: Maimonides with Rabbi Jamie	Friday	7:00 PM	BCC
FEB 25	Eli Cohen Bar Mitzvah	Saturday	10:00 AM	BCC
FEB 28	Sisterhood Rosh Chodesh Adar Gathering	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC

Ongoing Weekly Activities

Religious School	Sundays	9:15 AM	BCC
Bagels & Blocks	Mondays	9:00 AM	BCC
Brotherhood Hiking Group	Wednesdays	8:30 AM	
Mah Jongg	Fridays	1:00 PM	Virtual

Looking for more activities? [CCJCC Under One Tent](#) offers a calendar of offerings in the East Bay area. Click on the image for details.



Special Events and Workshops



The Beit Midrash at Beth Chaim

Rockin' Ruach

Shabbat Service

Friday, Jan. 27th

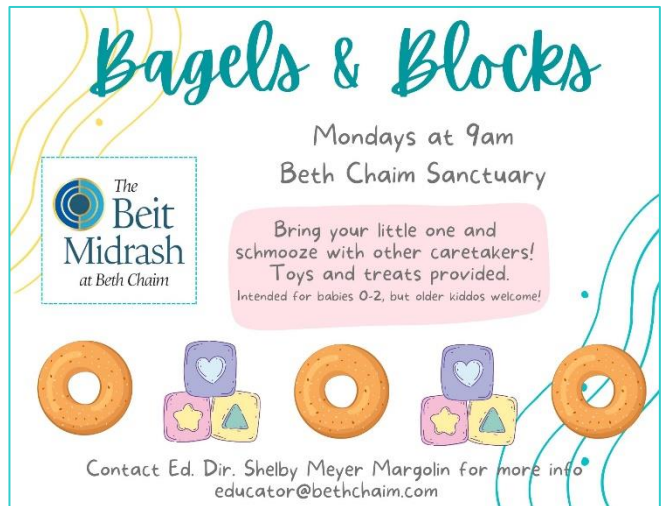
5:45pm Tot Shabbat
6:15pm Community Dinner
7:00-8:00pm Shabbat Service



YOU'RE INVITED TO CELEBRATE
36 YEARS OF CONTRA COSTA MIDRASHA

Midrasha 1950s Cocktail Gala

FEBRUARY 25, 2023
BOUNDARY OAKS COUNTRY CLUB IN WALNUT CREEK



Bagels & Blocks

Mondays at 9am
Beth Chaim Sanctuary

The Beit Midrash at Beth Chaim

Bring your little one and schmooze with other caretakers!
Toys and treats provided.
Intended for babies 0-2, but older kiddos welcome!

Contact Ed. Dir. Shelby Meyer Margolin for more info
educator@bethchaim.com

Editor's Note

by Deborah Wechsler

How do we spell...? You may notice in several articles in this edition that the spelling of the holiday of Tu B'Shevat varies quite a bit. There is no "correct" spelling for transliteration from Hebrew to English. Normally we attempt to be consistent, but sometimes we retain the spelling from an article.

Our community newsletter, the Beth Chaim Star, is published six times each year. Regular sections include:

What's Happening Next (Calendar)

President's Letter

Rabbi articles

Spiritual Life / Jewish Holidays / Lifelong Learning

Articles about recent activities pref. with photos

Membership

Sisterhood & Brotherhood

Gratitude Notes and Donations

PreK: PJ Library / Torah Tots / Tree of Life

Beit Midrash, Bnei Mitzvah, Contra Costa Midrasha
Yahrzeits

Wedding & Member Anniversaries; Kids' Birthdays

Simchas (Weddings, Births, etc)

The deadline for submitting articles is the 20th of the month preceding publication, as follows:

January (1st week) for Jan/Feb issue **due Dec 20**

March 1 for Mar/Apr issue **due Feb 20**

May 1 for May/June issue **due Apr 20**

July 1 for July/August issue **due June 20**

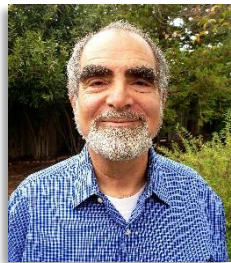
Sept 1 for Sept/Oct issue **due Aug 20**

Nov 1 for Nov/Dec issue **due Oct 20**

Please contact me (debwex52@yahoo.com) with your thoughts and ideas for regular sections or special articles.

Rabbi Dan's Reflection

By Rabbi Dan Goldblatt



Recently, at the Sisterhood retreat during Sukkot, Ellen Waltrip (our new BCC Board Director of Marketing and Communications) asked the question if there might be an opportunity for adult B'nei Mitzvah. A seemingly

innocuous question at the end of a session stirred several other women to express a similar desire for adult B'nei Mitzvah.

Rabbi Jamie Hyams was at the retreat and spoke to me about this interest. What a delight to hear the enthusiasm and desire for adult spiritual connection. Over the years we have done numerous Adult B'nei Mitzvah usually with cohorts of three or fewer people. When we let the community know that we were planning to offer a new adult B'nei Mitzvah program we received an incredible response. More than a dozen people expressed interest in participating in this program!

We scheduled two informational sessions to listen to what people had in mind and respond to questions about how we were going to proceed. At our first session in December, there was a great diversity of opinions expressed regarding what people wanted from their adult B'nei Mitzvah experience.



A number of people were concerned that they did not know any Hebrew and wondered if they could have a Bat Mitzvah without learning to read the language. They expressed that they had learned many of the prayers through attending services and had a meaningful connection to Jewish prayer; some loved to study Torah, and others simply wanted to affirm the importance of their Jewish identity and have an experience that wasn't available to them when they were younger. There were others who had learned to read Hebrew but hadn't practiced in a long time and wished to renew this ability as part of their adult B'nei Mitzvah. There were also a few who were fluent Hebrew readers, quite comfortable with prayer and really wanted to learn how to chant from the Torah as part of their Adult B'nei Mitzvah.

Rabbi Jamie and I were clear that we had no preconceived notions about "requirements" for an adult B'nei Mitzvah. We were clear that we wanted to create something within the Shabbat Morning Service – the traditional sacred container for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. We further asserted that within this service there was a wide range of possibilities for meaningful expressions of commitment to honoring and deepening one's Jewish identity. We are open to being as responsive as possible to each individual's needs during this process. Within one or more Shabbat Morning services we feel that we can accommodate the whole gamut of expressed desires for what should be a wonderful Adult B'nei Mitzvah journey.

For those who want to explore if an adult B'nei Mitzvah experience might be of interest to you, we have another informational session planned for Wednesday, January 18th at 7 pm in the Beth Chaim library. We look forward to seeing you then to continue to listen to expectations, aspirations, and any questions you might have.

President's Message

by Arie (AJ) Cohen, President



Thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve as your President for the next term. I look forward to working with such a passionate and incredible board put together by Kathie Bleier and her Nominating Committee. They have helped to shape a true dream team that is ready to go, and hungry to tackle some of the most important issues within our community.

I am grateful for the guidance of our current President Jonathan Corr and the 2022 Board of Directors. Through these last two years of COVID, many different congregations faltered and even collapsed in a difficult world filled with suffering, separation and isolation. Through the work of our Board, our community's strength and Rabbi Dan's spiritual leadership and love, Beth Chaim Congregation survived.

It is time to lean into our future. We need to work towards helping Rabbi Dan transition into his retirement and find our next incredible spiritual leader. We will continue plans to find ways to alleviate our financial burdens. We need to grow, by building a community that embraces and supports our current members, works to bring back past members and expands aggressively with our next generation of members. To accomplish these aspirations, we need our full congregation's energy and support. With your help, our board hopes to bring a new era to Beth Chaim in which our members' active participation creates a spiritual community full of friendship and deep and meaningful connection. I look forward to helping to cultivate this new era with all of you.

A Note from our Past President

by Jonathan Corr

Happy New Year! As we venture into this new year, I wish all of you a healthy and happy 2023!

I am using this opportunity to reiterate information that you received by mail last month and also was shared at our December Annual Meeting. Many members have asked about the strategic plan and the results of the focus groups, so I want to be sure that all members have access to this information.

Two years ago, when I first began my presidency for BCC, we embarked on an ambitious strategic planning process to ensure a successful future for Beth Chaim. We took a big-picture approach, looking to the future five years to learn what our top objectives and priorities should be moving forward.

As you recall we did multiple focus groups and surveys and were very enthused with and grateful for your willingness to participate and give input. We received feedback from over 100 members! The goal of this effort was not to "fix" any individual issue, but instead to look for overall patterns of feedback from our members and discern the top five priorities of our entire congregation. These top five came from YOU, our members, not from the Board of Directors.

After accumulating all the feedback and results, it became obvious where the congregation felt we needed to focus:

1. Financial Stability
2. Improved programming, and communication about programming
3. A stronger focus on attracting and engaging younger families.
4. A Rabbinical Succession Plan
5. An updated Mission Statement that reflects who we are today, and where we are headed into the future.

The 2022 Board was excited to have made significant progress supporting these five initiatives. Here is a recap of the information that was shared at the December Annual meeting.

1. Financial Stability

With our \$4.4 million in debt coming due early in 2024, Dave Messing, Lee Rosenblatt and I have led an exploration of a land sale and partnership with Habitat for Humanity to create affordable housing. We hope to raise up to \$2 million from this sale. We will also need to find other financial strategies to fill the gap on retiring the debt.

2. Improved programming, and communication about programming



Roberta Gabriel and Deborah Wechsler introduced an expanded set of programming based on membership input, and we invite other members to step-up to drive further programming that aligns with your interests. Upcoming events are found in the weekly Happenings emails, on our website calendar, and summarized in The Star newsletter.

Larry Candeub as head of religious affairs has created a wonderful set of new programming around our Jewish identity and bringing us closer together as a community, including our very successful *Sharing Shabbat Together*.

3. A stronger focus on attracting and engaging younger families.

We have wonderful momentum through efforts by Beit Midrash Principal Shelby Margolin and preschool owner Kelley Bleier to strengthen the ties between Tree of Life Preschool and our Beit Midrash. These efforts, along with our PJ Library connection led by Lara Groch, are critical for us to drive membership growth with young families to our Beth Chaim Community.

4. A Rabbinical Succession Plan

A Rabbinic Transition team headed by Evan Levy and Marc Feder will be leading an effort to be discussed at the first board meeting of the 2023 to help find the next religious leader to fill the shoes of our beloved Rabbi Dan.

5. An updated Mission Statement for BCC which reflects who we are today, and where we are headed into the future.

We have a renewed mission and vision statement led by the efforts of Rae Corr and Jim Mizes, with assistance from Michael Kolis, Aurelia Lubinsky, and Ogie Strogatz. They leveraged the work from the focus groups and surveys as well as further validation from small discussion groups to deliver a common identity and vision on which we can align into the future. Click [here](#) to read the Mission Statement.

I am excited to pass the baton and work with our new incoming President, and plan to remain on the Board as Past President to help where needed and to see the partnership with Habitat for Humanity through to completion.

Will You Join Us in Combatting Antisemitism?

By Michael Kolis, Director at Large, Advocacy

It is an unfortunate testament to our times that, when our 12th-grade son was recently selecting colleges to apply to, among the important considerations was whether he would have to cover his Jewishness to be comfortable and not marginalized on campus. Also, would school leaders appropriately address the overt antisemitism that has emerged at some colleges and universities? Evidently, not always. If your family is similarly situated, you may have the same concerns, in addition to frustration that our kids' local schools are at best indifferent to the Jewish High Holy Days and other issues affecting Jewish students.

Those problems pale in comparison to the many violent and sometimes deadly attacks on Jews in the United States and elsewhere in recent times. And we are all familiar with the alarming proliferation of antisemitism in the United States and abroad, from left- and right-wing politicians; from celebrities and other influencers spreading monstrous ideas of Jewish conspiracy, Holocaust denial and the like; and from legions of hate mongers and benighted nudniks on social media. This simmering stew of Jew hate is becoming more rancid, and more and more people are feeling comfortable and empowered in joining in.

So, what do we do about it? As Rabbi Dan rightly asserted at the BCC annual meeting, one approach that won't work is sitting quietly with our hands folded, ignoring the problem and hoping it will go away. History tells us that Jews tend not to fare well when they rely on hope and inaction in the face of hatred and violence. As Menachem Begin famously proclaimed, "I am not a Jew with trembling knees." And we shouldn't be either.



What we need is a commitment from each of you to participate in support of the Beth Chaim community and the broader Jewish community and to act in the interest of our children and our children's future. You will hear more in coming weeks about opportunities to participate in Beth Chaim's efforts to combat antisemitism. I don't pretend to have all the ideas or answers. No doubt you all have ideas about how to address these matters. Together, we can accomplish a lot more than each of us can do alone.

Will you join us? Contact me at <mailto:mlkolis1218@gmail.com>.

Introducing our Beth Chaim Congregation 2023 Board of Directors

Arie Cohen, President

Arie and his wife Kelley and children Kyla, Noah and Eli are longtime members of BCC. They were married by Rabbi Dan in 2005. Arie has a deep love for Judaism that dates back to living in Israel as a teen.

Arie has been a Beit Midrash teacher and also has served on the Board of Directors as the Fundraising Chair and Building Director. He also has worked alongside Brotherhood President Paul Yamshon as the Brotherhood Vice President for the last couple of years.

Arie is honored to be given this opportunity to take the next step as BCC President. He recognizes that this is a huge responsibility but looks forward to the challenge and following along in his father-in-law Ralph Bleier's footsteps.

Arie's other passions include his real estate career, collecting comic books, antique cars, bowling and most of all, spending time with Kelley, Kyla, Noah, Eli and their three pups.



Scott Ehrlich, Vice President

Scott and his wife Naomi have been members of Beth Chaim for over 18 years. A native of North Hollywood, Scott attended San Francisco State University where he met Naomi. Scott has served on the BCC Board as the Membership Director, Brotherhood President, President and Trustee. He looks forward to supporting AJ in any way he can.



Marc Feder, Vice President

Marc is honored to re-join the board of directors for his second sojourn working to help the Beth Chaim Community thrive. Marc is a full-nester with his wife, Anne, and teens Aviva (in the 7th grade "Jew Crew"), and Talia (a Madricha in the Religious School). They have been members of Beth Chaim since shortly after their move from San Francisco to Danville in 2009. Marc is a mediator by profession and demeanor....at least outside the home. He loves to ski, collect and drink wine and spirits, and take lots and lots and lots of pictures.



Elliot Binder, Treasurer

Elliot was born and raised in Canada and lived in Vancouver, Toronto, Irvine, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco before finally settling in Danville. He and his wife Cameron have three children, Hannah (16), Ethan (13) and Emerson (8). Hannah and Ethan have both gone through the Beth Chaim Beit Midrash and had their B'Nei Mitzvah at Beth Chaim. Hannah is currently a Madricha for the 7th grade class and Emerson is in second grade. Cameron currently serves on the Beit Midrash Education Committee. If you are looking for Elliot after work hours, you will find him watching soccer games, participating in carpools to Midrasha in Walnut Creek, I Can Do That Theatre, jogging the streets of Danville with their family dog, or sitting on the couch, binging one of many shows.

Elliot is a licensed CPA in the state of California and is a partner in a global accounting firm. His current role is the office leader of the San Jose tax practice. His experience includes serving on the Greenbrook Eagle Board Fund as Treasurer for four years and director for an additional six years. In this role as Treasurer, he was responsible for managing the banking, approving and overseeing budgets, and reporting monthly on the financial state of the organization. He is excited about the opportunity to learn about Beth Chaim's financial position and working with a strong board to see the growth and success of the community.



Boris Kogan, Secretary

Last year Boris completed his second term as Secretary on the Board of Beth Chaim. He lives in Danville, California with his wife Christina and three kids. His eight-year-old twins Amelia and Alexis are in third grade at the Beit Midrash and his youngest Eli recently completed preschool at Tree of Life. His family have been members of the congregation for four years and serving on the board has allowed him to give back to the congregation and the community. Boris' professional training and experience is that of a corporate attorney with experience serving as corporate secretary for both for-profit and non-profit companies.

**Larry Candeub, Officer Religious Affairs (Spiritual Life Director)**

Larry and his wife Barbra and children, Jake, Jessie and Josh, have been members of Beth Chaim for about 13 years. Although not very active in BCC activities for many years, they viewed BCC as a Sanctuary for Shabbat, High Holidays, and annual Yahrzeits. Shabbat Services always help to relax, unwind and offer a chance to reflect on the past week, giving time to stop and appreciate all of life's blessings.

As Director of Religious Affairs/Spiritual Life for the past year, Larry has enjoyed interacting with and meeting new friends. He is looking forward to helping our members connect more to the Beth Chaim Community. He is aware that many people have many different needs. He encourages you to contact him and share any thoughts, ideas or provide feedback that will help us help you get more out of your Beth Chaim experience.

The Beth Chaim Community, our home, is critical to the Jewish presence in the Tri Valley area. Larry would encourage you to explore some, or all, of what Beth Chaim has to offer. A Shabbat Service, perhaps the Chanukah Party, or even swing by a Torah Tots or Tot Shabbat activity. Meet other people, or just sit back and take it all in. He looks forward to meeting you and hearing your thoughts and ideas as to how we can create an even more amazing community.

**Keith Brors, Director of Building**

Keith and his wife Bonnie and family have been active members of Beth Chaim for over a decade. Their daughter Violet went through religious school from first grade all the way to her Bat Mitzvah. For the past several years Keith has served on the Education Committee for Beth Chaim and he is an active member of Beth Chaim's Brotherhood. In his spare time, he enjoys reading, games of all sorts, and doing activities with his family.

Keith is a software engineer lead at his current company and works with many people in different job disciplines daily. His duties range from dealing with issues requiring immediate attention to projects that take planning and several months to execute and finish. In addition he has owned homes for decades and has had to work with various contractors to maintain these homes. He will bring this background and knowledge, to the position of Director of Building and oversee the maintenance of Beth Chaim facilities. He is thrilled to have the opportunity to serve on our Board of Directors and put his knowledge to use.

**Jeff Reitzes, Director of Education**

Jeff has been a member of Beth Chaim for over 24 years. He has two kids, Jordan and Samantha, who have grown up at Beth Chaim and are now in college. Jeff was a member of the first Beth Chaim Adult B'nei Mitzvah class at age 42, was a Chesed coordinator for several years, trope-mentored several 7th-graders, sings with the Beth Chaim Chazzanut Group, and currently teaches the 7th Grade Jew Crew at Sunday School.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Jeff moved to the Bay Area in 1992 and started a career in Telecom and call centers – successfully avoiding an occupation that had anything to do with the two BAs (Radio-TV-Film and History), Teaching Credential (Secondary Social Studies) and master's degree (History) he earned before fleeing Southern California. He happily resides as an empty-nester in Pleasant Hill with 'Lucky', his faithful corgi.



Tanya James, Director of Fundraising

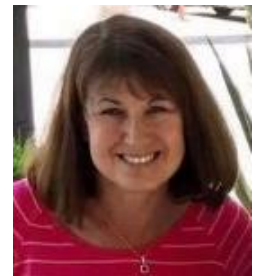
Tanya is delighted to again serve on the BCC Board of Directors. Among her past board positions are Sisterhood Co-President, Director of the Education Committee, and Director of Administration. Last year Tanya led the team to put on the annual fundraiser.

Tanya and her husband Donald joined the synagogue 25 years ago. They are grateful for all the friends they have made, and the support Rabbi Dan and the community has given them. Both their kids, Brandon and Shawna, attended the BCC Beit Midrash, had their B'nei Mitzvahs and were Madrichim. Their kids are appreciative for having these Jewish learning opportunities and the connection to their Jewish community. Tanya is retiring in March 2023 after working for Fremont Bank for 21.5 years, being a stay-at-home mom for nine years, and working for Nabisco Foods for 13 years. She is looking forward to joining Donald in retirement, with plans for traveling and giving back to many organizations, reading, relaxing, exercising, having time to socialize/meet new people and cooking healthy meals.



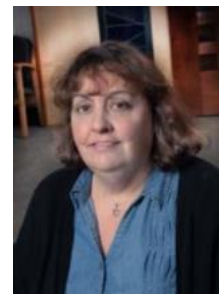
Debbie Roof, Director of Membership

Debbie has enjoyed being Membership Director at Beth Chaim for over five years. During that time, she signed up many new members at Beth Chaim who have become very active in Sisterhood, Brotherhood, religious school, and on the board. She has started new Chavurah groups, providing fun, meaningful connections with over 100 members! Debbie and her husband Rich have enjoyed living in Danville since 1984. Their children, Katie and Alan, both live in the LA area. Debbie received her master's degree in Psychoeducational Studies in 1980 at the University of Colorado in Boulder, where she met Rich. She worked for 37 years as a school psychologist. Debbie was a project coordinator and grant writer in the San Ramon Valley Unified School District for an early intervention program and is currently writing grants for Beth Chaim. She enjoys attending many Sisterhood events, including the monthly luncheons, Rosh Chodesh. Book Group, and special events. Her favorite hobby is making challah, in all different shapes and flavors, and sharing it with others!



Naomi Ehrlich, Director of Social Action (Tikkun Olam)

Naomi and her husband Scott have been members of Beth Chaim for over 18 years. A native of New Jersey, Naomi grew up in Marin County and graduated from San Francisco State University where she met Scott. They have 3 sons and a new daughter in law, Jordan and Gabrielle, Matthew, and Jacob and all 3 celebrated their bar mitzvahs at Beth Chaim. Naomi has been involved in social work her entire adult life with a passion for helping those who are less fortunate. As the Director of Tikkun Olam, she has especially enjoyed the BCC community's support for the many social action programs throughout the year and is looking forward to the winter season with the upcoming Adopt a Family and Winter Nights Shelter. She also serves on the Contra Costa Interfaith Council.



Deborah Wechsler, Director at Large (Administration)

Deborah is originally from New Mexico. After receiving her MS in geophysics, she worked for the Los Alamos National Lab and then Chevron for 26 years in a variety of scientific and managerial positions. Members of Beth Chaim since 2001, she and her husband Bruce Bilodeau and their two daughters lived and worked in Indonesia from 2003-2007, returning to Danville and Beth Chaim two months after our new building was opened. Deborah has held various board and volunteer positions for Beth Chaim, including President, Treasurer, Religious Affairs Officer, editor of The Star Newsletter, and buildings, fundraising and recognition committees. She has also been the leader of the BCC Rosh Chodesh women's gathering for many years. Outside of Beth Chaim she volunteers with several local organizations. Deborah has a passion for removing barriers for others' talents to shine and believes that we can always improve our practices and policies for our wonderful clergy, educators and office staff.



Michael Kolis, Director at Large (Advocacy)

Michael and his family, wife Jessica and sons Dorian and Gibby (and boxers Ezekiel and Mordechai), have lived in Danville and been Beth Chaim members for close to 15 years. Michael has been a lawyer practicing litigation for 28 years, the first 13 in Washington, DC for a major law firm and the last 15 out here, leading a team of lawyers managing litigation worldwide for Chevron’s Downstream and Midstream businesses. Michael has a particular interest in the wellbeing of the Jewish community. Given the proliferation of antisemitism in the United States and abroad, from left- and right-wing politicians and others, from celebrities and other influencers, and particularly on high-school and college campuses, Michael is anxious to work with other Beth Chaim members to ensure that our community is informed and prepared and can live in peace, and to help prepare our children so that they can attend school and go off to college and be proud to be Jews.



Kim Thompson, Director at Large (Chesed)

Kim lives in San Ramon with her husband Michael and daughters, Jaiden, 19, and Kalea, 15. The Thompsons have been members of BCC for 13 years. Kim was raised in Scottsdale, Arizona and graduated with her BA from Vassar College in Child Psychology and Special Education and received her Master of Education from ASU. Kim has spent the past 26 years in the field of education with jobs ranging from a reading specialist to a special education teacher, to an elementary school principal. Kim has a passion for equity and activism and loves dance, yoga, hiking, travel and works at Athleta in her spare time. This will be the fifth year Kim has served as Director of Chesed, a position she cherishes as an opportunity to help ensure BCC is a caring and warm community that values and supports all of its members.



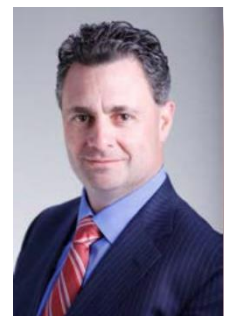
Ellen Waltrip, Director at Large (Marketing and Communication)

Ellen is excited to join the board again after previously serving two years as Secretary 15 years ago. This time she will use her platform to share the great news about the Beth Chaim community and all it has to offer. Her last stint on the board was during the planning phase for the Tree of Life Preschool. What a blessing it was when that vision became a reality! Ellen also organized several Family Camp weekends when her kids were young. Ellen, Mat and their children Stephen and Rachel have been members of Beth Chaim since 2001. Both kids had the privilege of becoming a B’nai Mitzvah with Rabbi Dan. Stephen is now 27 and Rachel is 22 and are launched into adulthood. Ellen loves helping people with their home financing and enjoys travel, hiking, skiing at Palisades and spending time with friends and family. Beth Chaim’s superpower is the special, nurturing community of people we have that celebrate joyous times and support each other during challenging ones. She looks forward to helping make a difference!



Jonathan Corr, Past President

Jonathan has been honored to have been President of Beth Chaim for the last two years, and he looks forward to supporting AJ Cohen and the entire board as Past President. He also served on the BCC Board in 2007-2009 as VP Finance. Jonathan grew up outside Boston in a conservative Jewish family, and after attending Columbia University in NYC, he moved to the Bay Area in August 1989. He and his wife Rae will have been married for 30 years this coming July and have been members of Beth Chaim since 1998. Their three children, Rosie, Zackary, and Liza, have all had B’nei Mitzvahs at Beth Chaim. Jonathan retired as CEO from Ellie Mae in March 2021. In early 2022, following a long-time passion, Jonathan and Rae formed Omniscient Owl Productions LLC to produce commercial theatrical productions. They are currently co-producers of six shows in different stages of development. Jonathan is a public board director for Paycor (PYCR) and Independence Holdings (ACQRU), and is also an investor, board member and advisor to several private technology companies.



Paul Yamshon, Brotherhood President

Paul has been a member of Beth Chaim for 24 years. He is a retired call center manager. Paul has been married 39 years to Patricia Yamshon, and they have two daughters and one adorable grandchild. Paul likes to hike, bike and fish; he loves baseball and American made muscle cars. He misses LA deli and American democracy.



Lois Kamoroff, Sisterhood Co-President

Lois has been an active resident of the San Ramon Valley. As Co-President of our Beth Chaim Sisterhood she is looking forward to both spiritual and social participation with our members and adding new programs to the already established excellent ones. Lois enjoys living in our vibrant community and her goal is to support more Jewish identity and social activities for our members.



Suzie Homer, Sisterhood Co-President

Suzie has been a member of Beth Chaim for four years and has found a home within the Sisterhood. Even though she lives in Castro Valley, Suzie finds herself in the Tri-Valley area every day, visiting the new friends she has made through Sisterhood. Suzie believes it is important to support organizations that give back as much as Sisterhood does. It is her pleasure to continue as Co-President.



“One who is appointed over a community becomes a servant of the community.”

Talmud (*Horayot 10a*)



Tu B'Shevat - Honoring the Tree of Life for the Sake of Life

Note: Barak Gale was a co-founder along with Rabbi Dan of Bay COEJL, the Bay Area Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life
By Barak Gale

What is the "Tree of Life" that the seventeenth century Kabbalists spoke of during their mystical celebration of *Tu B'Shevat*, our New Year of the Trees? Their original *Tu B'Shevat* seder, *Pri Ayts Hadar*, contained these words: "And may all the sparks that were scattered by Your hands, or by the hands of our ancestors . . . be returned to sustain in might and majesty the Tree of Life." What is the "Tree of Life" when we sing, "It is a Tree of Life to those who hold fast to it," as we return the Torah to the ark?

The Kabbalists' "Tree of Life" was a mystical construct representing various attributes of the Divine (the 10 *Sephirot*). The "*Eitz Chaim Hee*" that we sing refers to the Torah. What is it about trees that lend themselves to such exalting metaphors in our tradition? Is it the sustenance fruit trees provide? Is it the habitat that they offer to numerous species in the forest? Is it the oxygen that they provide to the air we breathe?

If we are to appreciate the tree as metaphor, then we must also appreciate the real trees of our world. Our Sages understood that trees were essential to human life. "If not for the trees, human life could not exist." (*Midrash Sifre* to Deut.20:19) Yet our trees are dying, and not just in redwood country. Entire species of trees are dying throughout our country - on the ridges of the Appalachian chain, in the sugar bush of Vermont, in the mixed forests of the mid-South border states, in the thick forests of central Michigan, on the mountainsides of Colorado and California. Charles Little, author of *The Dying of the Trees*, tells how this phenomenon has come about from 150 years of industrial expansion and pollution. Not only trees are dying. The World Resources Institute estimates that one half of all the world's species will be driven to extinction by the end of this century. Another ominous threat from this massive deforestation is global warming. Some scientists have even measured a depletion of life-giving oxygen in the atmosphere.

When we desecrate *adamah* -- the earth, we endanger *adam* -- the human. Paul Hawkin, in his book *The Ecology of Commerce* tells of the despair of one epidemiologist who, after convening a conference to examine the effects of chlorinated compounds on embryonic development, went into a quiet mourning for six months. The implications of that conference were astonishing. The immune system of every unborn child in the world may soon be irrevocably affected by the persistent toxins in our food, air and water.

How do we explain to our children that we knew they would be born with compromised immune systems, but we did nothing? From this perspective, the ceremonial planting of a tree or the celebration of a seder on *Tu B'Shevat* is about as effective as building Noah's ark with toothpicks. So what do we do? The blessing of faith is knowing that miracles can happen, but they need our coaxing.

Nothing in our tradition is more sacred than the preservation of life. What then is the meaning of *Tu B'Shevat*? Like Passover, its message is not confined to the seder, but rather is repeated throughout our liturgy and calendar. This way we keep in our hearts the memory of what God did for us when planting the seeds of life everywhere upon the earth.

May our prayers, meditations, and rituals throughout the year include the trees and the earth which sustain us, and may they go hand in hand with our many daily actions and choices, as we choose how we travel - by car or by foot, bicycle, or mass transit, as we choose how to heat our homes -- with conventional power or green power, as we choose what we eat -- more meat or more vegetables, grown with pesticides or organic, as we choose how to communicate -- with or without paper, made of trees or sustainable fibers, and as we choose how we conduct our business, for bottom line profit or as an important service to humankind.

This is the meaning of *Tu B'Shevat*. This is the way we honor the Tree of Life.

Tu Bishvat 2023

Excerpted from My Jewish Learning

Tu Bishvat or the “birthday” of all fruit trees, is a festival that has grown in importance in a climate of environmental crisis. The name is Hebrew for the 15th of the Hebrew month of Shevat.

In ancient times, Tu Bishvat was merely a date on the calendar that helped Jewish farmers establish exactly when they should bring their fourth-year produce of fruit from recently planted trees to the Temple as first-fruit offerings

The Tu Bishvat Seder

In the 16th century, the Kabbalists (mystics) of Tzfat (the city of Safed) in the Land of Israel created a new ritual to celebrate Tu Bishvat called the Feast of Fruits. Modeled on the Passover seder, participants would read selections from the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic literature and would eat fruits and nuts traditionally associated with the land of Israel. The Kabbalists also gave a prominent place to almonds in the Tu Bishvat seder, since the almond trees were believed to be the first of all trees in Israel to blossom. Carob, also known as bokser or St. John’s bread, became another popular fruit to eat on Tu Bishvat, since it could survive the long trip from Israel to Jewish communities in Europe. Participants in the kabbalistic seder would also drink four cups of wine: white wine (to symbolize winter), white with some red (a harbinger of the coming of spring); red with some white (early spring) and finally all red (spring and summer). Complete with biblical and rabbinic readings, these kabbalists produced a Tu Bishvat Haggadah in 1753 called “Pri Etz Hadar” or “Fruit of the Goodly Tree.”

Zionism and Tree Planting

The early Zionists seized upon Tu Bishvat as an opportunity to celebrate their tree-planting efforts to restore the ecology of ancient Israel and as a symbol of renewed growth and flowering of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland.

In modern times, Tu Bishvat continues to be an opportunity for planting trees — in Israel and elsewhere, wherever Jews live. Many American and European Jews observe Tu Bishvat by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund, an organization devoted to reforesting Israel (the purchase of trees in JNF forests is also customary to commemorate a celebration such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah).

Environmentalism and Tu Bishvat

For environmentalists, Tu Bishvat is an ancient and authentic Jewish connection to contemporary ecological issues. The holiday is viewed as an appropriate occasion to educate Jews about their tradition’s advocacy of responsible stewardship of God’s creation, manifested in ecological activism. Tu Bishvat is an opportunity to raise awareness about and to care for the environment through the teaching of Jewish sources celebrating nature. It is also a day to focus on the environmental sensitivity of the Jewish tradition by planting trees wherever Jews may live.

The Tu Bishvat seder has increased in popularity in recent years. Celebrated as a congregational event, the modern Tu Bishvat seder is multi-purpose. While retaining some kabbalistic elements – and still very much a ritual that connects participant to the land of Israel – the seder today is often imbued with an ecological message as well.



Chanukah at Blackhawk – Bringing Light to Our Community



Community members joined the fun on December 23rd at Blackhawk Plaza to celebrate the sixth night of Chanukah. We are so grateful to Larry Candeub for organizing this fun event. We are blessed that Bruce Bierman with his partner Gilberto was there once again to lead the Israeli dancing. There was cookie decorating and mini challah treats baked by Debbie Roof, Leslie Diamond & Fran Birnbaum. Rabbi Dan & Zoe led the menorah candle lighting. Our Beit Midrash song leader Rana Rines and her husband Spencer sang and played guitar. Thanks also to Paul Yamshon & the Brotherhood, Lois Kamoroff, Suzie Homer & the Sisterhood, Naomi & Jake Ehrlich, AJ Cohen, Mark Garetz, Lara Groch with PJ Library, and Judith Markowitz with Hebrew Free Loan.



Spiritual Life

by Larry Candeub, Director Religious Affairs/Spiritual Life



Please feel free to contact me,
Larry Candeub,
Bccreligiousaffairs@gmail.com
with ANY thoughts you have
about this, or things you
would like to see for next
year...it's all about serving our
community.

Sharing Shabbat Together

Since we last spoke, 17 members of our community have been discussing various ways to reinvigorate our Shabbat Celebrations. There were over 60 people who provided input to our Shabbat Committee and enabled us to plan some fun and creative ways to celebrate Shabbat as a Community.

Each Shabbat begins with lighting the Shabbat candles and the Blessing for the challah and wine. Then we schmooze, eat and truly enjoy each other's company. We do the Prayer for Healing, the Mourners Kaddish and then usually have some type of community engagement. It is a very sweet time.

We have several fun events scheduled during the next few months. We have plans for a Paint Night, Wine Tasting evening, some Tikkun Olam activities, Israeli dancing, guest speakers, as well as a dinner that celebrates the life and time of Maimonides. Each event is truly something that we will enjoy as a community and share together with our friends.

We will share more details as things become finalized. Until then, have a joyous New Year and if you have any thoughts or ideas as to how we can better serve your needs, please let me know!

Modeh Ani – “I Am Grateful”

“Appreciation is a wonderful thing: It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.”- Voltaire

In this section of The Star we call attention to people in our community who have gone above and beyond to help us thrive. Nominate someone using the link below!

TODAH RABAH

to the **Erlick Family**

for making possible our “Pizza and Shabbat-zza!” for Sharing Shabbat Together on Friday, December 2.

Mark Garetz

For his skills and willingness to make our audio, visual and livestreaming happen.

Express your Gratitude!

We would like to recognize Beth Chaim members who have “stepped up”, or “given back” to our Beth Chaim community. As this is a community recognition, we would like the community to recommend members that are deserving of this honor.

Please take a moment to let us know who we should recognize. It's easy. Just use the link below to nominate someone you think deserves to be noticed for their contribution to our community.

I AM GRATEFUL FOR [LINK](#)

Simchas

"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

In November and December several Beth Chaim members enjoyed amazing trips to Israel! Suzie Homer, Jackie Darvill and Harry & Susie Kulwin enjoyed a two-and one-half week combination land tour and cruise, traveling to Jordan, Egypt and Israel. Debbie Roof joined a group of 65 women on a ten-day spiritual trip all around Israel, organized by the oldest and largest reform temple in Denver, Temple Emanuel.



Simple ways to support Beth Chaim Congregation

Effortless and cost-free ways to support our community!



Do you shop at Draeger's or Lunardi's? A new year is here again, and with it comes fundraising opportunities to keep Beth Chaim Congregation going strong!

It's easy to help our Beit Midrash! Simply visit escrip.com/wheretoearn and get signed up with any of our participating merchants, including local stores Draeger's and Lunardi's.



Use smile.amazon.com when you shop online at Amazon as so many of us do. Simply set Congregation Beth Chaim in Danville as your charity. (They list more than one Beth Chaim, so be sure to choose our congregation – **Beth Chaim Congregation of Contra Costa County.**)

Automatically, Amazon will donate half-a-percent of every purchase thereafter to BCC. No fees or extra costs. You'll make a big difference with this one-time small step!

Generosity

"It's not how much or how little you have that makes you great or small, but how much or how little you accomplish with what you have." - Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch

[GIVING FUNDS](#) | [Building Fund](#) | [Community Fund](#) | [Religious School Fund](#) | [Rabbi's Discretionary Fund](#) | [Torah Restoration & Sacred Objects](#)

If you would like to make a donation you now can do so online at <http://www.bethchaim.com/donations>. Every effort is made to individually acknowledge each donation by letter. If a donation is made in memory of someone the family is notified and if a donation is made to honor someone he or she is notified as well. The generous support of the synagogue made by member and non-member contributions is very much appreciated. Donations are listed by the donor's name followed by the honoree's name.

Community / General Fund

Fuzzy Caterpillar Preschool	
Judith Markowitz & Glen Schabacker	
Rick Ferber	
Paul & Patricia Yamshon	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
Carlos & Grace Munoz	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
William & Lynn Katz	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
Fred & Audra Saul	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
Susan Friedman	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
Deborah Wechsler & Bruce Bilodeau	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
Mark & Cynthia Jordan	In memory of Lorraine Denenberg
Curtis Mentz	In memory of his father, Arnold Mentz
Deborah Wechsler & Bruce Bilodeau	In memory of Judy Ferber

High Holy Day Donations

Susan Friedman
Anonymous
Rhoda Messing
Yoel & Julie Cohen
Jonathan & Rae Corr



Building Fund

Joey & Sabrina Kaminsky In honor of Rabbi Dan & Zoe's wedding
Joey & Sabrina Kaminsky In memory of Sol & Helen Kaminsky

Rabbi Dan's Discretionary Fund

David & Melissa Mann In honor of Rabbi Dan mentoring Jacob Mann for his Bar Mitzvah

Locklear Family Trust

Larry & Barbara Candeub In memory of Lorraine Denenberg

Larry & Barbara Candeub In memory of Sandra Padilla

Larry & Barbara Candeub In memory of Michael Blackman

Larry & Barbara Candeub In memory of Judy Ferber

John & Delia Verber In Gratitude to Rabbi Dan for presiding over Sandra Verber's memorial service

Membership

"... Community - in the fullest sense: a place and all its creatures - is the smallest unit of health" – Wendell Berry

Welcome to New Members - the Levy Family!

by Debbie Roof, Director, Membership



Our Chavurah Program is growing! The Levy family is part of a new Chavurah for families with children in middle school. They have room to include more families, if you are interested in joining this Chavurah.

Beth Chaim: Tell us about your family:

Marla: There are four of us in our family – my husband Zach, our daughters Stella and Skye and me. We also have three little “Teddy Bear” dogs, who go everywhere with us. They are half shih tzu and half bichon. We moved to Danville about ten years ago from the peninsula, in San Mateo. We loved it there and our family lives there, but it’s more affordable here, and we moved here for the schools.

Stella is in sixth grade at Diablo Vista, and Skye is in fifth grade at Tassajara Hills. Stella is super social and does dance. Skye does anything athletic. Both are playing soccer. They have grown up here in Danville. Every day we pinch ourselves – we just love living here. The people are lovely, the schools are great. This is our forever home.

Beth Chaim: Where did you both grow up?

Marla: Zach grew up on the peninsula, in Hillsborough, and went to the University of Arizona. I grew up in West Covina LA, and then went to Cal State Fullerton where I studied kinesiology.

We each had a Bar and a Bat Mitzvah at reform temples. Coincidentally, both of our temples where we grew up were named Temple Sholom – mine was in West Covina, and Zach’s in Burlingame. We got married by Zach’s Rabbi from Temple Sholom in Burlingame. We are not super religious, but we love the Jewish traditions and feel super proud to identify as being Jewish and to know our heritage.

Beth Chaim: How did you two meet?

Marla: When I moved to San Francisco after college, I was living in the Marina District and Zach was a neighbor. It was a new city for me when I met him and his friends. We became good friends, and eventually we started dating. We have now been married for 14 years!



Beth Chaim: Tell us about your careers and hobbies:

Marla: I was doing medical sales in hospitals for 22 years, but I have not worked now for four years. I spent a lot of my career in operating rooms, specializing in women’s health and infection control. I also do portrait photography. It is my passion and my gift, and I would like to pursue that more, perhaps as a vocation. I do portraits of people, pets, head shots, events - anything.

Zach is the owner of American Grout Specialists. He has grown the company over 20 years, and it is now #1 in the Bay Area. It is all over Northern California. Zach is a great business owner and has had the same people working for him for 20 years now. Zach also likes to collect cars – not really old ones, but from the 1980’s. He keeps eight cars in a warehouse and likes to drive them on the weekends.

Beth Chaim: How did you choose Beth Chaim?

Marla: We were looking for a place for our daughters to have a Bat Mitzvah and had heard good things about Beth Chaim. It’s been great – we are so happy, and it’s been a wonderful experience. When we joined last summer, it wasn’t a “business transaction”. Especially you Debbie as Membership Director and Beit Midrash Principal Shelby Margolin, really the whole community have been so warm and welcoming. We are both so impressed with the social aspect of Beth Chaim. It’s not just about dropping off our daughters at religious school. It has been so easy to socialize and meet people. We love that Rabbi Dan is so inclusive, and not overly traditional. Beth Chaim fits with where we are at with Judaism.

Please also welcome the following new members:

Steve & Lisa Ruderman – they recently moved to Danville from San Diego, and are already active in Sisterhood, Brotherhood & our newest Chavurah!

Chavurah at Beth Chaim Congregation



Another new Chavurah is getting started with a combination of three new families who joined Beth Chaim in 2022, along with four long time member families. Our ongoing Chavurah groups met in December to plan out the 2023 calendar with monthly fun social events. We currently have well over 100 members connected through six active Chavurah groups. If you are looking to join a Chavurah group, please contact me at debbie.roof@yahoo.com.

**chavurah* - a small group of friends who get together to socialize, celebrate and have fun. Joining a *chavurah* enriches their experience as members at Beth Chaim, through meaningful relationships and positive connections.

Chesed

“On these three things the world exists: on Torah, on worship, and on doing deeds of loving kindness (Chesed) for others.” Pirkei Avot (Talmud, Ethics of Our Fathers)

By Kim Thompson, Director, Chesed



Hopes for Chesed at Beth Chaim

In reflection about my role as Director of Chesed, as I approach my fifth year on the Board of Directors at BCC, there are a few observations that I'd like to share. But before I share my thoughts, let's talk about the meaning of

“Chesed.” Chesed is the Hebrew word for kindness and is commonly translated as “acts of loving-kindness” or “love”. Chesed is a central Jewish value and leads to many particular commandments or mitzvot.

For me, this core value of chesed is one reason I love being Jewish. Having a strong sense of community at Beth Chaim is why I am here. The relationships I have built provide me with a sense of belonging, love, purpose and community. Not to get too deep or corny here, but life for me is ultimately about the quality of relationships we form and what we can give of ourselves to others while we are on this Earth. This is exactly why chesed speaks to me and our community so strongly.

One thing I have noticed over my time serving in this position is how incredibly hard it is for people to reach out for help, myself included. We feel like a burden, we may feel vulnerable, like we'll be judged or even viewed as weak or dependent. My work as Director of Chesed has been, in all honesty, very limited. People tend to not reach out for help in our community.

I want nothing more than to change this and to normalize asking for help. When we do something for others, we demonstrate, at our core, relationship and community. Most of us would agree, it feels so good to give and help others. By refusing help we can actually distance ourselves from others. While we all need to do what is best for us, we don't want anybody in our community to feel alone. By reaching out for help, it can even honor others who want to provide support - truly forming the authentic community that we all want at BCC.

So, in my fifth year as Director of Chesed, I hope, as a community, we can begin to change this narrative. I would love to see chesed develop more connections to the community with a network of loving teams to provide extended outreach to individuals. I want no member to feel alone or embarrassed to reach out. Personally, I have formed some of my closest friends through the gifts of kindness I have received and given. I look forward to this new chapter for each of us. I feel that we need this community now more than ever and I look forward to providing a space where we can grow and deepen our relationships of love and kindness in our community. If you need anything, please reach out or if you have ideas about how we can strengthen chesed and wish to join our chesed network, please don't hesitate to email me at hazelfast@yahoo.com. Peace, prayers and health, Kim.

Sisterhood

by Lois Kamoroff and Suzie Homer, Sisterhood Co-Presidents



Happy 2023!

Last year saw many new programs for Sisterhood. Our calendar was very full with our regular programs, Book Club, Ladies Who Lunch, Mah Jongg, Thursday Walking Group, and Rosh Chodesh Gatherings. These programs continued to be well attended. New programs last year were the Sisterhood Retreat at San Damiano, a Wellness evening with speaker Karen Rice, and introduction to prayers taught by Deborah Wechsler. Sisterhood co-hosted with Brotherhood a back-to-school brunch for returning students and their parents. And lastly, chaired by Kathie Bleier, we provided the food for the Onegs after many services. The annual Sisterhood Chanukah party was again a festive event, with our regular gift exchange, menorah-lighting, and delicious food. Thanks to Vikki Alpert and Jane Ware for organizing the food and decorations.



Sisterhood is thriving and we are excited to continue to support our membership with new and existing programs. We are always open to suggestions. Please check the monthly Sisterhood Newsletter for activities and RSVP information. We look forward to seeing you soon. Warmly, Lois & Suzie



Brotherhood

by Paul Yamshon, Brotherhood President



Beth Chaim
Brotherhood

What We Do Together Matters

Thanks to all who helped with our Chanukah events.

**PLEASE JOIN US for the
annual Brotherhood Tahoe Getaway
January 26 - 28!**



As always please feel free to reach out to me paul.yamshon@gmail.com or 925-487-9253.

Social Action | Tikkun Olam

"The greatest religious problem today is how to be both a mystic and a militant; in other words how to combine the search for an expansion of inner awareness with effective social action, and how to feel one's true identity in both."

Ursula K. Le Guin

by Naomi Ehrlich, Director, Tikkun Olam



Beth Chaim Congregation's Adopt-A-Family was another success as we provided gifts to five families from Pacific Clinics/Uplift Family Services and one expectant mother from Shalom Bayit. A special thank you to **Laura Raney and her family** for sponsoring the 7th grade class and **Jeff Reitzes** who bravely spent a Sunday morning with the 7th grade Jew Crew at Target. Thank you to all who so generously participated in this special project. Wishing everyone a Happy Chanukah and a Happy New Year!



Food & Supply
Donations

Meal Teams

Overnight Stay

Monetary
Donations

Children's Activities
& Weekend Help

Setup and
Takedown

Winter Nights Shelter 2023

**BCC HOSTING
JAN 30 - FEB 6**

With our partnership with St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Danville, Beth Chaim Congregation will be hosting the Winter Nights Shelter once again.

Food drop-off on Jan. 22nd & Set-up on Jan. 23rd

Please refer to the buttons on left for the various sign ups available

Thank you for your continued support for BCC's Tikkun Olam!

Milestones

"In any given moment we have two options: to step forward into growth or step back into safety."

- Abraham Maslow

Wedding Anniversaries

<u>Names</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Years</u>
Eric & Eileen Kahn	January 3	41
Bob & Trish Slomowitz	January 5	43
Lori & Tom Comer	January 8	34
Elliot & Cameron Binder	January 15	18
Brad & Janet Lieber	January 16	35
Pamela & David Messing	January 21	29
Lou Weckstein & Karin Denevi	January 23	35
Jonathan & Rachel Cohen	February 8	8
Andrew & Nancy Orgel	February 10	44
Ruth & David Swedlow	February 11	55
Steve & Melissa Hejtmanek	February 21	10
Paul & Patricia Yamshon	February 24	39
Scott & Catherine Heller	February 26	34

Membership Anniversaries

<u>Names</u>	<u>Years</u>	<u>Names</u>	<u>Years</u>
Scott & Naomi Ehrlich	24	Kim & Michael Thompson	12
Harold & Janet Freiman	22	Sheila Kaplan	11
Craig & Debbie Hertz	21	Erin & Andy Sacks	10
Ted Mendelson	21	Jonathan & Rachel Cohen	7
Rick Oshay	21	Sam & Debbie Ferman	6
Jerry & Laura Raney	20	David & Leslie Diamond	4
John & Jody Dice	17	Lou Weckstein & Karin Denevi	3
Glenn & Julie Sulzberg	14	Jacqueline Darvill	2
Robert Michaud	13		

Milestones, cont'd

Children's Birthdays

Name	Birthday	Age
Chloe Leftik	Jan 3	9
Gabriel Yankilovich	Jan 7	9
Blake Azicri	Jan 11	10
Ronen Jain	Jan 11	15
Zachary Badain	Jan 27	18
Dax Azicri	Jan 30	6
Isabella Kelleter	Jan 31	17
Cody Miller	Feb 2	4
Rochelle Abelman	Feb 2	13
Leah Sulzberg	Feb 5	18
Abram Shuster	Feb 7	4
Violet Brors	Feb 16	16
Joshua Kronenberg	Feb 17	12
Maya Rajendran	Feb 18	18
Alexis Kogan	Feb 20	9
Amelia Kogan	Feb 20	9



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Education


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BETH CHAIM**



Tree of Life Learning Center welcomes and celebrates children from all backgrounds and works with families to ensure that all family traditions are respected and valued.




If you or someone you know has an interest in the wonderful opportunity the preschool offers to children, please contact Kelley Cohen at kelleycohen@treeoflifelearningcenter.com or 925-285-5005.


Tree of Life Learning Center is a private, family-owned, developmentally based Jewish preschool, offering full-day, part-day, and school-day programs for children ages 2 – 5 years-old.

Director: Kelley Cohen


[Kelleycohen@treeoflifelearningcenter.com](mailto:kelleycohen@treeoflifelearningcenter.com)



Join PJ Library Parent Connector **Ema Lara**, her monkey friend **Koofi Katan** and Beth Chaim Congregation for anyone with little ones ages 0-5!



BETH CHAIM CONGREGATION
Celebrating Spiritual Community Since 1978



Torah Tots

Sundays

10:00am

Jan. 22

Feb. 5



Tot Shabbat

Fridays

5:45pm

Jan. 27

Mar. 10



BCC is proud of its religious school program serving pre-school through high school. We offer Torah Tots, Sunday School for ages 5+, B'nei Mitzvah Program, Madrichim Program, and a robust teen program in partnership with Contra Costa Midrasha.

Grades K-7



Shelby Margolin
Principal, Beit Midrash

Chanukah—the holiday of lights. As a self-proclaimed pyro, I get giddy with excitement to have an excuse to light candles for 8 nights in a row! Watching the flames dance and light up the faces of those around our table warms my soul, especially during the dark winter months. Judaism so

often celebrates that multiple truths can occur at the same time – a teaching that has proved so important in my life.

While I do get unreasonably excited to light candles, my biggest smile came from seeing our Beit Midrash come together in so many ways over the last few months! Classes had social gatherings outside of Sunday School to continue building *kehilla* (community). Our Tot Shabbat, Torah Tots and Bagels and Blocks programs continue to welcome babies and young families into our community with song, dance and play. Our first two *Ruach* services were packed with 60 people for dinner and almost 100 people for the service. Every student had a part in the service, and everyone there got to sing and pray in community. Our fantastic Education Committee was ever present in helping set-up and clean-up, Larry Candeub brought his warm spirit and frozen ice cream, our Madrichim (teen leaders) helped serve our families, and Debbie Roof and Leslie Diamond spent hours baking their delicious and beautiful individual challahs for our first service. What an incredible community we have!

Our activities in the classroom continue to bring light to our community. *Mishpacha* groups (family groups) bonded through our madrichim-led Color Wars: a beloved Jewish Summer Camp tradition. Our song leader Rana went into classrooms to teach students new songs that we will sing at future Ruach Services. Classes “buddied up” to play dreidel, learn Hebrew, and participate in “You Be The Judge” - an activity that invites students to wrestle with their own values and morals through real-world situations. Our 5th graders continue to film the Jewish History Movie—it is going to be feature-film length soon!

Our most exciting event was our Chanukah Celebration on Sunday, December 18th. We hired a professional DJ to play party games, and Kelley Cohen put together incredible Chanukah-themed art projects for students. Grace Munoz, our beloved 5th grade teacher and Education Committee member, filled our sanctuary with beautiful twinkly lights and inflated our Chanukah Bear and Dreidel. Our Education Committee and many parents showed up to make latkes and hotdogs, and teens in our community served donut holes, chips and fruit. We welcomed a number of not-yet members into our celebration, and I have high hopes that they will become members after our celebration!

I have mentioned my gratitude for our Education Committee several times, however it cannot be overstated. Our events would not be possible without the dedicated work of our School Administrator Alex Lofrese and our Education Committee, Jeff Reitzes, Grace Munoz, Kelley Cohen, Kristen Heiden, Anne Feder, Cameron Binder, Cindy Watkin and Keith Brors. Keith will be leaving our committee to join the Beth Chaim Board – they are lucky to have him!

With gratitude and light,

Morah Shelby Meyer Margolin
Principal, Beth Chaim Beit Midrash



Contra Costa Midrasha functions as Beth Chaim's teen program, and Beth Chaim makes an annual per student contribution to augment the tuition and retreat fees of Midrasha.

Grades 8-12

By Devra C. Aarons, Executive Director, CCM

We have three amazing pieces of Winter 2023 news to share!

ONE: Our annual Gala is just around the corner! Join us on February 25, 2023 at Boundary Oak Clubhouse in Walnut Creek, dressed in your late 1950's "cocktail" best to celebrate Contra Costa Midrasha's 36th birthday. The evening will feature dinner, auctions, a dessert dash, Copper Cane wines, dancing and more! Visit ccmidrasha.com/gala2023 to buy tickets, sponsor or donate.

TWO: CCM just returned from an amazing 10 days in Israel with 7 of our teens! Our journey to Israel featured our partnership with the Holtz Academy in Tel Aviv and the Mosenzon Village in Hod HaSharon. We spent 2 days in the Judean desert, walked along the ancient paths of our ancestors in Jerusalem, shopped in Tel Aviv and watched planes take off from Palmachim - the IDF Air Force base. Check out [#mifgashnifim](https://www.instagram.com/mifgashnifim) on Instagram to see photos from our adventure!

THREE: January features two awesome opportunities for our teens to deeply engage Jewishly! MLK weekend our new "Impact Builder" digs into tikkun olam (repairing the world) at Winter Nights, making and serving dinner at the Trinity Center. And our Winter retreat at the end of January will focus on Tu B'Shevat, where we will sleep among the redwoods while learning about the Jewish connections with nature. Learn more at ccmidrasha.com.

What else is happening at Midrasha?

- **Wednesday nights continue on January 11th!** Teens are invited to sign up anytime for our weekly Wednesday wonderland. Click the "enroll" button at our website - ccmidrasha.com.
- **Hamsa Fund focuses their nonprofit mission this year helping Native American youth.** Look for their e-mails, texts and phone calls inviting you to make a gift towards their efforts.

Save the Date this summer from June 20 - 30, 2023 to help host at least 30 Israelis for our third year of Mifgash - where Israeli and American teens tour the Bay Area, learn about Jewish life in America and bound while in line at Six Flags. This has become one of CCM's signature programs. Even if you don't have a teen, consider hosting one of the visiting educators. For more information, contact the CCM office at 925/944-4701 or office@ccmidrasha.com



Devra Aarons,
CCM Director

As always, spread the love about Contra Costa Midrasha! Let the teens in your life know about Midrasha and our myriad of programs. Schedule a time to talk with our Director, [Devra Aarons](mailto:Devra.Aarons@ccmidrasha.com) or check out our website at ccmidrasha.com. There's something for every teen!

B'nei Mitzvah

Siman Tov u'Mazal Tov!

Wishing our B'nei Mitzvah success, happiness, friendship, health, and adventure. We're very proud of their accomplishments and we look forward to celebrating many simchas as they grow into adulthood.




ELI COHEN – February 25

Eli is a 7th grader at The Athenian School. He loves learning, is curious by nature, and is always thinking in numbers. Eli can be heard singing and whistling all around the house, in the shower, in the car and at all hours of the day. He enjoys performing in musical theater productions with the I Can Do That Theatre Company. One of Eli's favorite things to do is take trips to our cabin where he skis and spends time with his cousins. He has enjoyed the process of becoming a bar mitzvah and is grateful to Rabbi Dan, Morah Sam, Moreh Jonathan, Moreh Jeff, and all his teachers who have helped with his Jewish education. Mazel tov Eli!

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Yahrzeits

Zichronam L'vracha – May Their Memories be a Blessing

Name	Date	Observed By	Relationship
Harriet Silver	Jan 1	Lisa Ruderman	Mother of Lisa
Morris Krantz	Jan 1	Julie Samson	Father of Julie
Bernice Wiener	Jan 1	Greg Wiener	Mother of Greg
Leonard Yamshon	Jan 3	Paul Yamshon	Father of Paul
Mel Eiges	Jan 4	Peter Eiges	Father of Peter
Michael Kamoroff	Jan 6	Lois Kamoroff	Husband of Lois
Pat Hejtmanek	Jan 7	Steve Hejtmanek	Mother of Steve
Carol Wechsler	Jan 7	Deborah Wechsler	Mother of Deborah
Meyer Hyman	Jan 7	Lynn Katz	Father of Lynn
Lawrence Murray Bowman	Jan 7	Stacey Levy	Father of Stacey
Herbert Gedacht	Jan 7	Rhona Shulman	Father of Rhona
Mila Slomowitz	Jan 7	Bob Slomowitz	Mother of Bob
James Harley	Jan 7	Trish Slomowitz	Father of Trish
Ira Sarison	Jan 11	Lynn Chazin	Father of Lynn
Albert Mazer	Jan 12	Marc Mazer	Father of Marc
Lucille Ware	Jan 13	Gary Ware	Father of Gary
Barton Menzin	Jan 13	Jane Sondel	Father of Jane
Reva Lee	Jan 13	Bobbi Bernstein	Sister of Bobbi
Robert Larabee	Jan 16	Molly, Samantha & Louis Larabee	Husband of Molly & Father of Samantha and Louis
Shirley Gedacht	Jan 16	Rhona Shulman	Mother of Rhona
Nancy Lebowicz	Jan 17	Debbie Roof	Sister of Debbie
Ari Mazer	Jan 18	Marc Mazer & Susan Talon-Mazer	Son of Marc and Susan
Sidney Churgel	Jan 18	Ellen Waskey	Father of Ellen
LeRoy Golman	Jan 20	Janet Lieber	Father of Janet
Sol Leavitt	Jan 21	Debbie Roof	Father of Debbie
Julius Bernstein	Jan 23	Neil Bernstein	Father of Neil
Anatol "Tony" Karatov	Jan 23	Michael Karatov	Father of Michael
Harry Hyams	Jan 24	Michael Hyams	Father of Michael
Nancy Cook	Jan 25	Glen Schabacker	Mother of Glen
Rosalind Isacson	Jan 26	Sally Klein	Mother of Sally
Bernice Kulwin	Jan 27	Harry Kulwin	Mother of Harry
Peter Kahn	Jan 29	Eric Kahn	Father of Eric
Sylvia Kahn	Jan 29	Eric Kahn	Mother of Eric
Mollie Feldstein	Jan 31	Burt Feldstein	Mother of Burt
Natalie Brownstein	Jan 31	Lynne Gross	Mother of Lynne
Beatrice Meyers	Feb 3	Fran Patterson	Mother of Fran
Allen Creighton	Feb 4	Robyn Mizes	Father of Robyn
Marilyn Ehrlich	Feb 5	Scott Ehrlich	Mother of Scott
Rosalie Lawrence	Feb 5	Brad Lawrence	Wife of Brad

Yahrzeits, cont'd


Name	Date	Observed By	Relationship
Evelyn Mendelson	Feb 6	Ted Mendelson	Mother of Ted
Elizabeth Kelley	Feb 9	Kathie Bleier	Mother of Kathie
Annabelle Rothman	Feb 10	Nadine Rosenzweig	Mother of Nadine
Richard Benveniste	Feb 10	Daniel Benveniste	Brother of Daniel
Rosalyn Bronstein	Feb 10	Jon Bronstein	Mother of Jon
David Goldberg	Feb 12	Martin Goldberg	Father of Martin
Brent Simpson	Feb 13	Gene Simpson	Father of Gene
Harriet Schnur	Feb 13	Mimi Torres	Mother of Mimi
Mahlon Bilodeau	Feb 14	Bruce Bilodeau	Father of Bruce
Jerome Stuhlbarg	Feb 14	Jody Dice	Father of Jody
Zoe Orgel	Feb 14	Andrew Orgel	Mother of Andy
Leo Boruchoff	Feb 16	Nancy Orgel	Father of Nancy
Robert Kelley	Feb 18	Kathie Bleier	Father of Kathie
Bebe Waltrip	Feb 18	Mat Waltrip	Mother of Mat
Annette Norman	Jan 19	Shelley Norman	Mother of Shelley
Michael Koumelis	Feb 19	Linda Carp	Father of Linda
Marvin Garetz	Feb 19	Mark Garetz	Father of Mark
Seymour Zimmerman	Feb 21	Leslie Diamond	Father of Leslie
Sharon Shapiro	Feb 22	Ben Shapiro	Mother of Ben
David Elvidge	Feb 22	Barbra Candeub	Brother of Barbara
Dolores DeNevi	Feb 23	Karin Denevi	Mother of Karin
Jean Birnbaum	Feb 24	Michael Birnbaum	Mother of Michael
Larry Israel	Feb 24	Richard Israel	Father of Richard
Bernard Denenberg	Feb 25	Barry Denenberg	Father of Barry
Mary Elizabeth Kelley	Feb 25	Kathie Bleier	Sister of Kathie
Robert Dorinson	Feb 25	Mary Day	Brother of Mary
Joseph Herlich	Feb 26	Rae Corr	Father of Rae
Daryl Homer	Feb 27	Susan Homer	Husband of Suzie Homer
Allen "Skip" Creighton	Feb 27	Robyn Mizes	Brother of Robyn



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Marketplace

Classified ads are free for Beth Chaim members. There is a nominal annual charge of \$30 for a seven-line insertion for non-members. If you would like to place an ad, call the Beth Chaim office at 925-736-7146, or send an email to admin@bethchaim.com.

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BAR/BAT MITZVAH VIDEOGRAPHER. Recent graduate of the Art Institute of San Francisco Brian Hanlon is partnering with his wife and longtime BCC member and Hebrew School teacher Samantha Waxman to record your service or party. Contact us at samanthabhanlon@gmail.com or hanlon86@yahoo.com.

ACTIVITY THERAPIST. Do you have a loved one living with MCI, or Alzheimer's or other dementia? Do you have a loved one living with a terminal diagnosis? We provide 1 to 1 ongoing support for people in need in Contra Costa County. 10+ years experience connecting with elders through music, art, spiritual care, emotional support and help with end-of-life planning. Contact Z*O*E Activity Therapies (510) 926-4329, zoe@activitytherapies.org; www.activitytherapies.org.

"SPECIAL FOR SHABBAT" is written by long time professional writer and Beth Chaim member, Michelle Gabriel. The book follows the story of a little girl who finds meaning in Shabbat and challah when she discovers the beauty of both, especially for the challah that was baked special for Shabbat. A sweet story with engaging illustrations for young children. mjgwrites@yahoo.com or mjgpress.com



"ARI'S JOURNEY" a novel by late Beth Chaim member Norman Binger, is now available on Amazon.com, including as a Kindle book. Ari Cohen, an Israeli Police officer, embarks on a perilous journey to save his son from terrorists. On his odyssey he meets friends and enemies, both Palestinian and Israeli, and encounters a long-lost love.

MEMORY ALBUMS. Do you need help organizing your photos? Would you like to preserve your family memories so they can be passed on to your children and their children? Whether it's baby's first year, B'nei Mitzvah, graduation, weddings, special vacations, and more, I can preserve these memories for you or teach you how to do it. Call Melinda Bandler on 829-0782, or e-mail mhandler@pacbell.net, for a free 1-hour consultation.

CUSTOM QUILTS. One-of-a kind gifts of Jewish art. Great for B'nei Mitzvah graduation, anniversary, and wedding gifts. A letter of the Aleph Bet or Star of David quilted wall hanging, blanket, or chuppah that will last from generation to generation. Examples of each can be seen at BCC or my art studio. Choose your favorite colors or I can help you decide. Letters are \$324 for 28" x 31." Stars are \$486 approx. 55" x 59". \$54 will be donated to BCC for each piece purchased. Contact Barb Carpenter via email: RenaZimmermanDesigns@gmail.com or 925-838-8371. <http://www.renazimmermandesigns.com>.

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