



BETH
CHAIM
CONGREGATION

Celebrating
Spiritual
Community
Since 1978

THE STAR

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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://bethchaim.com/news/>.

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:



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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 and 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 4	Sisterhood Monthly Walking Group	Thursday	9:30 AM	Lunardi's Parking Lot
JAN 6	Sisterhood Kickoff Luncheon	Saturday	11:30 AM	BCC
JAN 8	Genealogy Club	Monday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 9	Sisterhood Rosh Chodesh Gathering	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 10	Brotherhood Lunch	Wednesday	12:00 PM	Firehouse 37
JAN 12	Community Shabbat Dinner	Friday	5:30 PM	Pleasant Hill Senior Ctr
JAN 16	Sisterhood Book Club	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Home of Sandi Morris
JAN 19	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
JAN 21	Torah Tots	Sunday	10:00 AM	BCC
JAN 25	TU B'SHEVAT			
JAN 25	Adult B'not Mitzvah Information Meeting	Thursday	7:00 PM	BCC
JAN 26	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 1	Brotherhood Winter Getaway Through Feb 4	Thursday		
FEB 1	Sisterhood Monthly Walking Group	Thursday	9:30 AM	Lunardi's Parking Lot
FEB 9	Tot Shabbat	Friday	5:30 PM	BCC
FEB 9	Sharing Shabbat Together Ruach Service	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 12	Genealogy Club	Monday	7:00 PM	BCC
FEB 13	Sisterhood Rosh Chodesh Gathering	Tuesday	7:00 PM	BCC
FEB 16	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 20	Sisterhood Book Club	Tuesday	7:00 PM	TBD
FEB 23	Sharing Shabbat Together	Friday	6:00 PM	BCC
FEB 25	Torah Tots	Sunday	10:00 AM	BCC

Ongoing Weekly Activities

Religious School (beginning Jan. 21)	Sundays	9:15 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



Community Shabbat Dinner

Join our Contra Costa Jewish Community for a Shabbat Dinner in Solidarity with Israel

Friday, January 12, 2024
6:30 PM
\$15 per person
Children \$10

Vegetarian Kosher Dinner by Abba's Hummus
BYO wine
An Egalitarian Shabbat Service will be held at 5:30 PM

Pleasant Hill Senior Center
233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill

RSVP at
bit.ly/Shabbat-Dinner
by January 8



SAVE THE DATE
CONTRA COSTA MIDRASHA ANNUAL GALA

MARCH 2, 2024 **SAN RAMON**

Join us for CCM's Annual Community Gathering.
The safe space Midrasha provides our community's teens is more important than ever.
Being together is more important than ever.

Editor's Note

by Deborah Wechsler

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.

President's Message

by Arie (AJ) Cohen, President



Members should have received this letter in your mail in December. We include the information again here to emphasize our message.

Thank you for your continued support of our Beth Chaim community in 2023. Here we share with you some of our accomplishments this past year as

well as our goals for 2024.

Since we finalized our transition into the Reform Movement earlier this year we have been blessed with a strong surge in membership. We have 21 new families and 19 additional children in our Beit Midrash classes!

We rebuilt our website into something incredible. We revamped our marketing and advertising and created new and refreshed events built around and for our members with great success.

We have been working directly with the URJ and the Central Conference of American Rabbis and are well into our interim rabbi search. We have narrowed to two highly qualified and passionate Rabbis who we will be meeting this quarter for their final interviews. We are confident that we will have the right candidate in place to start on July 1st, 2024.

2023 was a strong year financially, that included a major push from the board to confront our current financial situation. The most important item on our 2024 board's agenda is bolstering our reserves and optimizing our mortgage on the building.

For way too long we have only survived; we need to thrive! In 2023 we committed to not repeating ending the year in the red and with your help we succeeded.

- At the beginning of the year we applied for an Employee Retention Tax Credit that was approved and granted to Beth Chaim for over \$80,000.
- We successfully applied for and were granted a \$150,000 security grant through the California Office of Emergency Services to increase our security.
- In December we held our most successful fundraiser ever with overwhelming support from everyone and a deep love for Rabbi Dan and our community.

Through these efforts and increased membership, we reached our goal of starting the year in the black. We must continue to make further and more aggressive strides in the coming year.

In 2024 we will continue to work with our lender to consolidate our mortgages into one note, which will facilitate our long-term goal to pay off our mortgage. Our finance team is in direct negotiations with the bank; they are enthused by what we have accomplished and our plans for 2024.

We are working with the Town of Danville on the possible land split of the sloped hill facing Camino Tassajara. If we can successfully split off this underused land, we can potentially sell it and pay down a portion of our loan.

As we develop our long-term plan for financial independence, we need to look at where we are consistently short each year. We found that within our current loan structure each family has an average carrying cost of \$1800 per year just to cover our mortgage. Even our full current dues of \$3300 are not enough to cover our mortgage, maintenance, rabbi, staff, teachers and so much more.

We need funds specifically directed to paying down our debt and maintaining our building. Therefore, in addition to our dues, we are reintroducing an annual Building Fund commitment. At our December board meeting we voted unanimously to approve a Building Fund minimum annual contribution of \$360 per member. Donations to the Building Fund are included as contributions to the Builders' Plaque in our foyer. Presenting the annual Building Fund to the bank shows strength, intent and builds trust to ultimately leverage a better interest rate.

This is how we write our future. This is how we guarantee our legacy. This is how we promise and deliver a home for our children and their children's children. We hope that everyone is as supportive of and passionate about this needed change as we are.

I want to share a sign of passion and support from one of our members. **To build further motivation for this much needed change and to strengthen this next important chapter in our story, a member has offered to donate \$25,000 if over 80% of our members make the minimum requested Building Fund donation of \$360 in 2024.**

We believe we can achieve 100%. Please help us all to reach this goal. As our membership continues to grow, now is the time to lay down the foundation of financial stability and growth for the future.

We thank you all for your trust and support and are looking forward to an incredible 2024. Happy New Year!

Arie Cohen and your Board of Directors

Exciting News! Introducing the New Beth Chaim Website

By Ellen Waltrip, Director of Communications & Marketing



We are thrilled to announce the launch of our brand-new synagogue website! This digital platform has been carefully designed to enhance your connection with our synagogue, keep you updated on upcoming events, and provide valuable resources for our community.

Here are some of the exciting features you can find on our new website:

- 1. Upcoming Events:** Stay informed about all the upcoming synagogue events, including Shabbat services, special holiday celebrations, educational programs, and more. Access our comprehensive calendar that includes synagogue events, our school calendar and Jewish holiday information.
- 2. Learning:** Get information about our preschool, youth and adult programs and the wide variety of offerings for all age groups.
- 3. Spiritual:** Get informed about our special Sharing Shabbat Together services as well as traditional, tot and family Ruach services. View past High Holy Day services and access our Facebook and YouTube channels for live and previous online content.
- 4. About Us:** Get to know the special stories of synagogue's history, building and sacred objects. Explore our mission and values. Learn about our dedicated staff, board members, and volunteers who make it all possible. Easily reach out to our office, board members and community members using the provided contact info and Members Only area.

5. Membership Information: Interested in becoming a member? Find all the details you need to visit and join our congregation. Set up a preview day at our school and see what makes us special.

6. Explore testimonials from our members. Browse through a collection of photos and stories capturing our community's memorable moments, celebrations, and what members find special and unique about Beth Chaim.

7. Community and Support: Learn about our offerings, groups, social action and other activities and ways to get involved and provide or receive support.

8. Resources: Discover a variety of educational resources, links to important Jewish organizations, and recommended readings.

We encourage you to explore our new website and take advantage of these resources. We believe that this online platform will foster a stronger sense of community and help us stay connected, even when we can't all be together in person.

Please visit our new website at www.bethchaim.com.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Beth Kamoroff who handled all the technical development as well as invaluable assistance with the content in the new website. We so appreciate the hundreds of hours that you generously gave us to get this up and running; it absolutely could not have been done without you!

Thank you for your continued support and participation in our synagogue community. We look forward to seeing you online and in person as we continue to grow together.

Please contact me with your questions and ideas. Ellen at ellen@divmq.com.

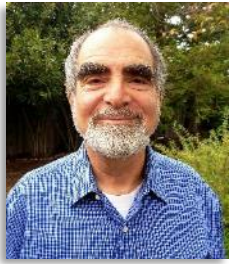
How do I get a Beth Chaim Membership Directory?

Did you know that Beth Chaim has a Membership Directory? You can find contact information for your Beth Chaim friends! Available only to members, take the following steps to access the directory:

1. Go to the Beth Chaim website home page <https://www.bethchaim.com/>
2. Scroll to the bottom and click on "MEMBERS ONLY"
3. Click on "Member access only" button. You will have View Only access to the Membership Directory and other information for members. The Directory is updated regularly.
4. Any member with a gmail-associated account will have access to materials on the Members Only Google folder. If you do not have a gmail-associated account please contact the office.

Rabbi Dan's Reflection – The Joy of Adult B'nei Mitzvah

An Opportunity to Join Our Next Cohort



Many of you were present, watched the recording or have heard about our most recent Adult B'nei Mitzvah celebration at the beginning of December. Eight women were a part of the wonderful spiritual adventure that culminated in a Shabbat Morning Service that lifted up our entire community and

honored the work they put in and the special bond that they formed during this process. I want to name the women here in case you might like to speak to them about their experience. They have all enthusiastically agreed to talk about it with anyone who might be considering being a part of the next cohort. The "Amazing Eight" are: Kathie Bleier, Roberta Gabriel, Zoe Goldblatt, Nadine Rosenzweig, Kim Thompson, Susan Volsky, Ellen Waltrip, Deborah Wechsler.

As with the last group, the new cohort is being led by myself and Rabbi Jamie Hyams. Please feel free to speak to either of us about this if you have questions or concerns. If you are interested in exploring being a part of this cohort, please contact our administrator, Neela, at the BCC Office (925-736-7146). In addition, we are holding an informational session on Thursday, January 25th at 7 PM in the Beth Chaim sanctuary. During this session we will introduce our approach to Adult B'nei Mitzvah and respond to any questions.

We have developed an approach that is extremely flexible and responsive to the needs and desires of the participants – whatever you might be looking for in an Adult B'nei Mitzvah experience. You do not have to be able to read Hebrew or know any Hebrew at all to engage this process. And, if learning to read, better understand or even begin to learn to speak Hebrew is your desire, we will support any of these as well.

In our previous group, some of the people 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 or were looking to explore Torah study as a spiritual practice; 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. Some of our participants had a Bat Mitzvah, but were seeking something more engaging for them as adults.

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 wanted to learn how to chant from the Torah as part of their Adult B'nei Mitzvah.

Rabbi Jamie and I have no preconceived notions about "requirements" for this Adult B'nei Mitzvah. Guided by the desires of the group, working collaboratively with the participants, we want to co-create a meaningful Jewish spiritual experience within the lovely confines of the Shabbat Morning Service – the traditional sacred container for Bar and Bat Mitzvah. This service has 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 a Shabbat Morning service we feel that we can accommodate the whole gamut of expressed desires for what should be a wonderful Adult B'nei Mitzvah journey.

We look forward to speaking with you and hopefully meeting with you to listen to expectations, aspirations, and any questions you might have. If you weren't able to be at last year's extraordinary Adult B'nei Mitzvah, you can still view the recording on our Beth Chaim YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwSEnk6weZ8>

Introducing our Beth Chaim Congregation 2024 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 19 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. 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 (17), Ethan (14) and Emerson (9). Hannah and Ethan have both gone through the Beth Chaim Beit Midrash and had their B'Nei Mitzvah at Beth Chaim. 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, bingeing 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. He is excited to continue working with a strong board to see the growth and success of the community.



David Swedlow, Secretary

David received his Aerospace Engineering degree at MIT, medical degree at Harvard, pediatric training at Johns Hopkins, and anesthesiology and critical care training at the University of Pennsylvania. He fully retired in late 2006 after having enjoyed four successful careers – first, an active tour of duty as Medical Staff Officer of the US Public Health Service at the National Institutes of Health; second, as a Director of Pediatric Intensive Care at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia; third, as the Senior VP of Medical Affairs and Technology at Nellcor Puritan Bennett here in California; and finally as a freelance technology consultant and venture capital investor.

As a result of his 30+ years of experience in government, academia, and industry, David has honed his skills at creative problem solving, “out-of-the-box” thinking, and consensus building. His approach to problem solving is to seek “win-win” solutions that meet the needs of multiple stakeholders with conflicting interests.



Larry Candeub, Officer Religious Affairs (Spiritual Life Director)

Larry and his wife Barbrea and children, Jake, Jessie and Josh, have been members of Beth Chaim for about 14 years. As Director of Religious Affairs/Spiritual Life for the past two years, 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. 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. 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 since 1998. He has two kids who have grown up at Beth Chaim — Jordan (25) has graduated college and Samantha (22) is a senior and will graduate in May 2024. Jeff was a member of the first Beth Chaim Adult B’nei Mitzvah class at age 42, was a Chesed Coordinator/Director for a number of years, trope-mentored several 7th-graders and sings with the Beth Chaim Chazanut Group. In addition to his duties on the BCC Board, Jeff is in charge of all A/V and streaming for the congregation.

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



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 26 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 retired 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 and Donald have plans for traveling and giving back to many organizations, reading, relaxing, exercising, having time to socialize/meet new people and cooking healthy meals.



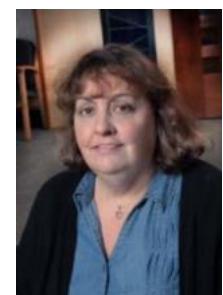
Debbie Roof, Director of Membership

Debbie has enjoyed being Membership Director at Beth Chaim for over six 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 19 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 three sons and a new daughter in law, Jordan and Gabrielle, Matthew, and Jacob and all three 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 16 years. Michael has been a lawyer practicing litigation for 29 years, the first 13 in Washington, DC for a major law firm and the last 16 in California, 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, 20, and Kalea, 16. The Thompsons have been members of BCC for 14 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 27 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 sixth 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 continue on the board this year after previously serving two years as Secretary 15 years ago. 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 28 and Rachel is 23 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!



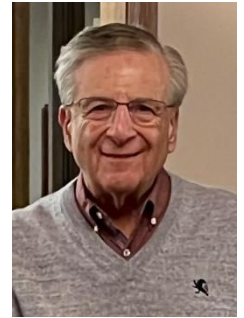
Jonathan Corr, Past President

Jonathan has been honored to have been President of Beth Chaim for 2021-22, and he looks forward to continuing to support 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 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.



Burt Feldstein, Brotherhood President

Burt took on the role of Brotherhood President six months ago. Burt also continues to serve as Brotherhood Treasurer. He was the Beth Chaim Treasurer for seven years serving under the presidencies of Martin Fishman, Deborah Wechsler, and Scott Ehrlich. He is glad to be back on the Beth Chaim Board and looks forward to having Brotherhood assist Beth Chaim and the Board wherever needed. Burt and Lynne Gross live in Danville and have been Beth Chaim members for 18 years. Lynne's son and daughter-in-law, Randy, and Lisa Gross, are Beth Chaim members and their 3 children Melina, Ethan and Elle were Bar/Bat Mitzvah at Beth Chaim. Both Lynne and Burt are active in Better Together, seniors interfacing with teenagers through Midrasha. Burt was born in Rochester, NY and lived in Overland Park, KS for 8 years until his corporation transferred him to the Bay Area. He has been retired for 14 years, which he considers is the best job he has ever had. He presently serves as a Volunteer in Policing for the Town of Danville Police Department.



Jackie Darvill, Sisterhood Co-President

Jackie Darvill, is happy to return to the Bay Area after living away for many years. In her adventurous youth, she moved to Oahu with her husband where she spent 12 years raising a family and teaching music. They moved to upstate New York, where she continued her career in music. She was active with the music teachers' association in New York and was president of the American String Teachers Association of New York., president of the Onondaga County Music Educators, and artistic director for the Oswego Community Youth Orchestra. She hopes that these skills will help her as co-president with her good friend Susie Homer.

Jackie moved to Danville in the middle of the pandemic and found support and friendship through Beth Chaim and the Sisterhood. She is very grateful for this important community and delighted to continue to be a part of it.

When she isn't playing or teaching music, or substituting in the schools, Jackie loves visiting her two boys, going to the theater, traveling the world, and enjoying a beautiful California day with friends and family.



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.



Martin Fishman, Trustee

Martin and Karyn Fishman and children Joshua and Sara have been Beth Chaim Congregant members since 1997. Martin has served on the Board of Directors since 2005. His early engagement was to capitalize and ensure the future of Beth Chaim’s land investment, in our Holbrook property, becoming a Jewish Home in Danville. After successfully leading a fundraising team, obtaining the largest single donor (Nathan Shappel) providing \$1 million + \$1.5 million from our members, we successfully raised \$2.5 million combined. Martin then facilitated and oversaw the Building Committee Construction and delivered our new HOME, 1800 Holbrook Drive, in 2007. Martin served as President (2007-2008), Past President and has served as a Trustee for 12 years. Martin is an accomplished global senior executive who has managed technology companies for over 30 years including PC’s, displays, software, peripherals, SaaS, IoT and, consumer electronics.



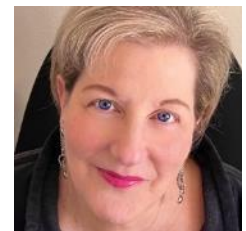
Evan Levy, Trustee

Evan and his wife Stacey have been members of Beth Chaim for 23 years. Their three children have all gone through the Beth Chaim religious school and B’nei Mitzvah program. Evan has served on the Beth Chaim board in previous years as Treasurer and Social Action Chair. Evan was the Finance Officer for the City of Livermore for 15 years before retiring. Currently, Evan volunteers as a fundraiser and advocate for Shalom Bayit and is a home chef for Community Kitchens. If you drive the Camino Tassajara corridor on any given day you will see Evan walking his two beloved goldendoodles.



Judith Markowitz, Trustee

A native of East Hampton, New York, where her parents were founders of the Jewish Center of the Hamptons, Judith began her life-long journey there to create a Jewish life for herself and her family. After graduating from Ithaca College, with a dual major in classical flute performance and business, Judith began an extensive career in Human Resources. She has held senior HR positions at American Express, Jordan Marsh and Macy’s. Judith’s desire to contribute beyond volunteering in her community led to new career opportunities as a Jewish communal professional. She has held director roles at The Reutlinger Community for Jewish Living, Beth Chaim Congregation, the Contra Costa JCC, The Jewish Federation of the East Bay, and currently works at Hebrew Free Loan Association of San Francisco. Judith has been an active volunteer in our Beth Chaim community serving for eight years on the board of directors, High Holy Days chairperson, and on a variety of committees and special initiatives. Judith is best known in our community for the spirituality and singing voice she brings as a lay leader for our religious services. Judith and her husband Glen Schabacker have been members of Beth Chaim for 28 years. Their daughter Shoshanah, who grew up in our community, now resides with her husband Leo in Seattle. Judith and Glen live in San Ramon and feel deeply blessed to be a part of the Beth Chaim community.



Solidarity with Israel: Contra Costa Community Shabbat Dinner

Gratitude for our Faith Community Friends

By Rabbi Dan Goldblatt

Friday, January 12th, Service at 5:30 pm; Shabbat Dinner at 6:30 pm
Pleasant Hill Senior Center, 233 Gregory Lane, Pleasant Hill

During this time when Israel is at war with Hamas in response to the October 7th attacks and atrocities against the people of Israel, we continue to look for ways to stand together as a Jewish community in support of our people.

The synagogues and Jewish organizations of our county have decided to join together on Friday, January 12th, for an Egalitarian Shabbat Service at 5:30 pm, followed by a communal Vegetarian Kosher Shabbat Dinner at 6:30 pm catered by Abba's Hummus. Please bring your own wine if you wish to make kiddush.

You may come for the service and/or the dinner to experience the warmth of being together in our wider Jewish community and expressing your support for Israel during this difficult time. If you intend to come for dinner, please RSVP at bit.ly/Shabbat-Dinner by January 8th.

If you are looking to carpool from Beth Chaim, please contact the Beth Chaim office at 925-736-7146.

Israel – Resources for Education and Action



JEWISH COMMUNITY RESOURCE COUNCIL RESOURCES:

Take action now using one of our [campaigns](#)!

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES:

K - 12:

- [JCRC Guidance for Jewish Parents Organizing](#)
- [Talking to Children About Violence in Israel](#)
- [How to Talk to Children About Israel Today \(video\)](#)
- [Support for Classroom Discussion on the Hamas-Israel War](#)

Higher Education:

- [Sample University Community Letter](#)
- [Campus Antisemitism Legal Line \(CALL\)](#)
- [14 facts about hamas every college student needs to know](#)
- [Facts every college student needs to know about Israel](#)

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 in the upcoming months ...it's all about serving our community.

Did you know that your BCC Membership includes a weekly "spa like" benefit?

Imagine a semi darkened room, very little ambient noise, a soothing, and a calming voice leads you to a place of tranquility. It's free for you here at BCC. No extra charges and included with your dues.

If you haven't figured it out by now, I'm talking about Shabbat. It's a time for you to leave the week behind, clear your mind, and give thanks. It's a chance to remember those who are in need of healing and to reflect on those in your life who have passed away. It's a time to let your mind wander, or focus on the important parts of your life. It is whatever you want it to be.

I hope you will take advantage of this membership benefit and join us to celebrate our most precious Holy Day.

Some Photos from Chanukah 2023 at BCC



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Eco-Judaism: Renewing Tu B'Shvat

A contemporary form of Judaism that focuses on our relationship with the environment and expands the focus of Tu Bishvat.

Reprinted from Trees, Earth, and Torah: A Tu B'Shvat Anthology, edited by Ari Elon, Naomi Mara Hyman, and Arthur Waskow (Jewish Publication Society).

Early in the 1970s, there began to emerge a special literature that explored what Judaism had to say about the *adam-adamah*, human-earth, relationship. Some of it sprang directly from increasing public concern that new forms of human technology were damaging the earth.

Some was a response to scientists who attacked Judaism and Christianity as the bearers of a destructive teaching that human beings alone of all creation bear the Image of God and that they should subdue the earth — a teaching that, the scientists argued, led philosophically to contempt for nature and practically to pollution and degradation of nature.

Two somewhat distinct Jewish approaches emerged, both interested in exploring Jewish responsibility for the whole of the planet, not only for the Land of Israel, where Jews had again become historically responsible. Both approaches led to another burst of energy in the celebration of Tu Bishvat.

Increasingly, the festival was seen to fuse the mystical with the eco-planetary, and so to include the trees of all countries as aspects of the Sacred Tree Above. One of these new approaches we might call “Rabbinic Stewardship.” Its proponents asserted that true Judaism was protective of the environment, bore no responsibility for the despoliation of nature that Western techno-industrialism was imposing, and should indeed be drawn on to protect the environment.

This approach emerged just about simultaneously with another kind of Jewish approach to the earth. It saw Rabbinic Judaism as an important source of Jewish concern for the earth, but one that was in itself insufficient to deal with the growing threats to the natural world posed by human technology.

In response to this sense of insufficiency, several Jewish philosophies were put before the public that bespoke a love of the earth that went beyond most rabbinic teachings, drawing deeply on Hasidic thought and on some kindred Western ideas. Martin Buber and Abraham Joshua Heschel, each in his own way, spoke out of these roots. Their work, along with some earth-focused elements of Zionism, fed into an emerging exploration of new approaches to Judaism as the *havurot* [small, informal Jewish prayer communities] and early Jewish renewal energies, including feminist Judaism, grew in the United States in the early 1970s.

The proponents of Rabbinic Stewardship and the proponents of Jewish renewal were both attracted to recovering and renewing Tu Bishvat, for somewhat different but overlapping reasons. Participants in the loose-knit Jewish renewal movement were drawn to the drama, the depth, the beauty, and the intellectual power of the kabbalistic [mystical] and Zionist ceremonial patterns embodied in Tu Bishvat ritual and ceremony as well as to its hints of celebrating an earth in danger. The Jews attracted to Rabbinic Stewardship also responded to the possibility of drawing on Tu Bishvat to focus on Jewish concerns for the earth.

The Power of Jewish Blessings

More than mere expressions of gratitude, blessings are portals to other spiritual realms

By Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein, the rabbi in residence at the Jewish environmental organization Hazon and the founder of the Union Street Sanctuary in Brooklyn. He is the co-author of Hazon's Tu B'shvat Haggadah.

Blessings are a portal to the Infinite. They are the utterances and sentiments shared by us and our ancestors for thousands of years.

In the Torah, blessings are seen as a conduit for spiritual and physical potential. God blesses Adam and Eve to fill the world, Abraham is called a blessing for all his descendants, Jacob steals the first-born blessing and alters his future, the high priests bless the nation with an ever-expanding relationship with peace. The list goes on and on.

Indeed, the Talmud (Ta'anit 8b) teaches: "A blessing is found only in an object that is hidden [*samui*] from the eye," suggesting that the power of blessings are found in that which is not seen, in meta-reality behind what is readily observable.

The Hebrew word for blessing, *bracha*, shares the same letters as the word for pool (*b'raycha*), hinting that when one offers a blessing, we are actually gathering energy and unlocking a life-source. It also shares a root with the word for kneel (*nivrachah*), intimating that blessings help us lean into that which we are blessing, focusing our gravity in one place so we can gather our energy for what has arrived and what has yet to come.

The melodies and rhythms of Jewish blessings have served as the cultural glue for Jewish daily practice for thousands of years. There are blessings over food and drink, upon leaving the bathroom, before going to sleep and during life cycle events. Jews who pray three times a day recite dozens of blessings.

The Talmud (Menachot 43b) states that each person is obligated to recite 100 blessings each day, suggesting that the way to live connected to the Divine is through living a life immersed in blessings, in gratitude. This is so important to the Jewish tradition that the sages wrote (Brachot 35a) that it is forbidden to benefit from the world without making a blessing. It could be said that the value placed on blessings is central to all of Jewish life.

And yet, with the human condition tending toward forgetfulness, it's easy for the recitation of blessings to become rote. How then can we make blessings transformative rather than transactional? One idea is to take three seconds before making a blessing to meditate on our own voice within the blessing, to find within it that which is meaningful to us — in essence, to become the blessing.

The holiday of [Tu B'shvat](#) is a time when this kind of spiritual consciousness around blessings becomes much more accessible. The [Tu B'shvat seder](#), a mystical practice still observed today, is replete with blessings for the Jewish new year of trees, a time when we make many blessings on the Divine creations of the world and connect to the destiny of trees, food and nature in our lives.

The seder originated in Tzfat, in northern Israel, on a mountain of mystics who pined to deepen and innovate the way we approach blessings and prayer. It makes sense that they would [compile a series of blessings](#) reflecting the unlocked spiritual potential of vines, trees, fruits and plants.

Given the holiday's emphasis on the power of blessings, it is apropos to close with a blessing:

May it be the will of the Universe that we are able to harness the opportunity to contemplate the power and purpose of Jewish blessings and the role our voice plays within the blessing itself, improving our ability to focus while unlocking the unknown potential of that which is within and around us.

Editor's Note: Links in this article lead to more information about Tu B'Shvat, including a seder and Haggadah for Tu B'Shvat, provided by [MyJewishLearning.com](#)

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. The following submissions are by Larry Candeub. Say *Toda Raba* to someone using the link below!

Martin Fishman - Martin is the face of our Greeters and Ushers Program for the High Holy Days. He literally spends weeks beforehand coordinating the teams to ensure that your High Holy Day experience is exceptional. He spends each Service, starting an hour before, walking, watching and helping members and guests with their needs. I was able to finally visit with Martin, once things had slowed down...this year it was after Yizkor. It was the first time during the High Holy Days that he had the chance to attend to his spiritual needs. Martin, your commitment to the Congregation is greatly appreciated!

Jeff Reitzes - Jeff is our all-around guy. Need a speaker set up, Jeff is the guy. Need a Torah lifted, call Jeff. Need anything streamed, any day, any time, Jeff is behind his av board. Need someone to sing with the Chazanut, again, Jeff is the man. Need all of the above at once...like for the High Holy Days, Jeff masters them all. Additionally, Jeff is a long time Board Member and oversees the Education Committee. He has also taught Sunday School (although now retired allegedly) for many years and many grades. Jeff, your contributions are so valuable to our success, THANK YOU!

Naomi Ehrlich, Debbie Roof, and Lois Kamoroff - Imagine making hundreds and hundreds of latkes. That's exactly what these ladies did for our Chanukah Party. They were quite the hit and it seemed like people were lined up for the whole party waiting for those hot, tasty morsels of potatoes. Additionally, Naomi and Debbie spent over 3 hours heating the latkes and making sure the ovens were always full and everyone had a hot latke (or three) to enjoy.

Elen Severson, Alice Tankel, Laura Wilson - our Chanukah crafters. These ladies spent hours designing and executing the crafts for our Chanukah Celebration. They coordinated all of the ideas, supplies and madrichim to flawlessly create an environment of joy for our youngest members, and the older ones who were willing to play along. Thank you so much for bringing JOY to our Chanukah Party.

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](#)

New Art Exhibit at Beth Chaim

Hiddur Mitzvah – Enhance our World Through Beauty

Be sure to check out the new art exhibit hanging in the Beth Chaim Sanctuary! Compelling creations by many artists in our Interfaith Community are on display, including some from The Reutlinger, Peace Lutheran Church, and by our own Beth Chaim member Joy Severin, among others.

SAVE THE DATE for the next [I-SRV Earthfest](#) on April 21, 2024!



**InterFaith
EarthFest**
See Hope - Seed Change

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 using this [link](#). 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

Steven & Claire Goldstein	In honor of Rabbi Dan
Brotherhood	
Herb & Elaine Lederman	In memory of David Messing
Fran & Mike Birnbaum	In memory of David Messing
William & Tanya Lombardi	In memory of David Messing
Barry & Laura Denenberg	In memory of David Messing
Ellen & Mark Rosenbluth/Garetz	In memory of David Messing
Michelle Ferber	In memory of David Messing
Lois Kamoroff	In memory of David Messing
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Israel Naslavsky, father of Leila Naslavsky
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Grace Francis Carland, mother of Keith Brors
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Alvin Aaron Hackel, father of Rabbi Jamie Hyams
Larry & Barbara Candeub	In memory of Richard Omar Lopez
Mat & Ellen Waltrip	In memory of David Messing
Michael Rutter	In memory of David Messing
Fred & Audra Saul	In memory of David Messing
Cheryl Koontz	In memory of David Messing
Sanford & Joy Severin	In memory of David Messing
Nadine Rosenzweig	In memory of David Messing
Scarlet Tam	In memory of David Messing
Christina Ludeman	In memory of David Messing
Jeff & Bruna Byrne	In memory of David Messing
Andrew & Jill Porter	
Club Nirvana	
Kirsten Weisser	In memory of David Messing
Elizabeth Jensen	In memory of David Messing
Dennis & Elizabeth Sheab	In memory of David Messing
Eric Fox	In memory of David Messing
Janet Bishop-Levesque	In memory of David Messing
David & Karen Gansberg	In memory of David Messing
Prudence Martin	In memory of David Messing
Hilary Pierce	In memory of David Messing
Jeff & Rhona Shulman	In memory of David Messing
Dave & Debbie Rosenberg	In memory of David Messing
David Pringle	In memory of David Messing
Carlos & Grace Munoz	In memory of David Messing
Alice & Chris Spahr	In memory of David Messing
Joseph & Michelle Gabriel	In memory of David Messing
Richard & Debbie Roof	In memory of David Messing
Sara Goldstein	In memory of Sara's parents Irvin & Daisy Goldstein

Sara Goldstein	In memory of David Messing
Judith Markowitz & Glen Schabacker	In memory of David Messing
Judith Markowitz & Glen Schabacker	In Honor of the women's B' not Mitzvah on Dec 2nd
Curtis Mentz	In memory of Arnold Mentz, father of Curtis
Barry & Linda Schwartz	In memory of David Messing
Rick Ferber	
Susan Friedman	in honor of the Amazing Eight B'not Mitzvah women
Susan Friedman	In memory of David Messing
Susan Rosenberg	In memory of David Messing
Joseph & Michelle Gabriel	In recognition and appreciation of: Kathie Bleier, Roberta Gabriel, Zoe Goldblatt, Nadine Rosenzweig, Kim Thompson, Susan Volsky, Ellen Waltrip & Deborah Wechsler, for their openness, honesty and spiritually inspiring B'not Mitzvah Service
Ashna & Lisa Clark Pincus	In memory of David Messing
John & Connie Rietz	In memory of David Messing
Scott & Naomi Ehrlich	In memory of David Messing
Lauri & Mark Hamilton Paul	In memory of David Messing
Jonathan & Rae Corr	In memory of David Messing
High Holy Days Donations	
Jonathan & Rae Corr	
Building Fund	
Arthur Zieky & William Witkowsky	
Rabbi Dan's Discretionary Fund	
Debra & Glassman	
William Katz	In memory of Tillie Katz, mother of Bill Katz
William Katz	In memory of Meyer Hyman, Father of Lynn Katz



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Do you shop at Draeger's or Lunardi's? Here is a fundraising opportunity to keep Beth Chaim Congregation going strong! It's easy to help our Beit Midrash! Simply visit escrip.com/wheretoeam and get signed up with any of our participating merchants, including local stores Draeger's and Lunardi's.

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Sisterhood

by Lois Kamoroff and Suzie Homer, Sisterhood Co-Presidents



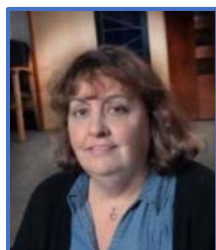
Remember to pay your Sisterhood dues, \$40, for our new year. Dues are used to support the Congregation with traditional Sisterhood sponsored programs, Bat/Bar Mitzvah Candlesticks and our new synagogue texting application.

Sisterhood ended 2023 with its Annual Chanukah potluck and gift exchange. We had almost 50 women participating in this event. We started with a potluck dinner with food enough to feed all of us and then some. In addition to the latkes, there was everything from soup to salads, main courses and desserts. Sisterhood members are good cooks! Our gift exchange was very intense since the gift you chose could be stolen by the next woman and some were. A good time was had by all. A big thank you goes to Jane Ware and Vikki Alpert who chaired the event. They did a fabulous job coordinating and MCing the festive gathering.

We say “thank you” to Lois Kamoroff, past president, Audra Saul, Treasurer, Janice Frankel, Ladies-Who-lunch Coordinator and Deb Blankfeld, our book club Chair, who are all stepping down this year. Sisterhood was very lucky and grateful to have you in leadership positions. Our new Treasurer will be Leslie Diamond and Sandi Morris is the new Book Club and Ladies-Who-Lunch Chair.

Sisterhood also welcomes Jackie Darvill as the new co-president working alongside me, Suzie Homer, for the next two years. We hope to bring new activities and events to engage our sisters. Of course, any suggestions are always accepted and encouraged.





Adopt A Family 2023

Beth Chaim just completed another very successful adopt-a-family project. A huge thank you to all of our generous donors! Our six families from Uplift Family Services/Pacific Clinics and Shalom Bayit greatly benefitted from our contributions of gift cards and presents for the holidays. A special thank you to Laura Raney and her family for once again sponsoring the 7th grade religious school family and to Ellen Severson for bravely shopping with her students!



Winter Nights Shelter 2024

Winter Nights Shelter is right around the corner! Beth Chaim Congregation and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church are co-hosts of the Winter Nights Shelter at St. Timothy's Parish Hall, **January 15, 2024-January 29, 2024**. We need many helping hands to provide a warm, safe haven for the shelter's guests: homeless families with children. Please sign up below to volunteer for this special once a year project! **We especially need meal teams this year** and donations for food. If it's any incentive, I will be at all of the meals at the shelter and can assist with any of the meals if you need help. Thank you in advance for helping support this great cause!

Food/Non-Food Donations

Meal Teams

Monetary Donations

Setup and Take-Down

Children's Activities & Weekend Help

Please contact me with any questions:

jomaja3@aol.com

or

925-890-3875

Help Manage Our Waste – Tikkun Olam Starts at Home!



Here are a few housekeeping tips for the next time you are here for an event:

1. Use the right disposal bins. We will have new signs for extra guidance.

2. Minimize usage of disposable items. Think before you reach for that paper or plastic item.
3. Try to stack your used plates and cups BEFORE throwing them in the trash. Stacked items occupy less space and we will save on waste overage costs.

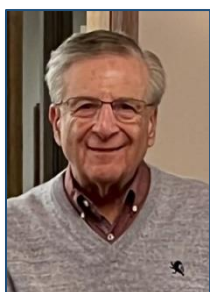
Brotherhood – 2023 – The Year in Review

by Burt Feldstein



Beth Chaim
Brotherhood

What We Do Together Matters



This past year has been full of many opportunities as well as our share of challenges. For me, the most difficult challenge was stepping in and trying to fill the shoes of our past president, Paul Yamshon, midway through year. Wasn't sure if I would be able to even come close to the excellent Brotherhood leadership Paul provided during his tenure. This while continuing in my role as Brotherhood Treasurer. But Brotherhood made it through this transition.

Brotherhood sponsored many different events this year, most involved all Beth Chaim members. Brotherhood sponsored two Friday night services, two evening Bocce Ball events, Octoberfest, Brotherhood's first ever Car Show (thanks to Paul Yamshon), shared sponsorships of Religious School breakfasts with Sisterhood and putting up and tearing down our fabulous Sukkah. In addition, Brotherhood continues to provide our gaming fundraisers such as our annual Super Bowl Pool, Fantasy Football and March Madness.

This past year was also one where Brotherhood's generosity also prevailed. Large contributions were made to Beth Chaim to celebrate Rabbi Dan's 30 years with Beth Chaim, to the Israel's Emergency Fund, Jewish Community Services in Hawaii, and the JDC Disaster Response in Turkey. Brotherhood and Sisterhood also agreed to share the expense of Beth Chaim using Clear Stream Texting for the Congregation.

Going into 2024, Brotherhood must start rebuilding its Treasury so it can continue to provide wonderful events for Beth Chaim and its community. This will also be required if Brotherhood continues to provide additional financial support for Beth Chaim and Jewish needs as they may arise in the USA or around the world. In addition, Brotherhood must bolster its membership by drawing in new and younger male Beth Chaim Members. Brotherhood will continue to support the Congregation and the 2024 Board of Directors through the new challenges that await during the upcoming year.

Wishing everyone a very happy and healthy 2024.

Chavurot at Beth Chaim Congregation

We currently have over 100 members connected through four active Chavurah groups. If you are looking to join a Chavurah group, please contact Debbie Roof at debbie.roof@yahoo.com



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

Membership

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

Welcome New Members! – The Langberg/Glover Families

by Debbie Roof, Director, Membership



In 2023, we had a record number of new members joining Beth Chaim – 21 new member families! We currently have 214 member families at Beth Chaim. Many factors, including our decision to become a Reform Congregation, have created

more interest and inquiries from local families about joining Beth Chaim.

Let's all continue to invite our friends and relatives who are not affiliated with a temple, to join us as a guest at one of our upcoming exciting events. If they have children who might be interested in our religious school, please contact me or Shelby about scheduling a Preview Day for them to try out our Sunday School program as a guest.

Here is some interesting information about some of our newest members - the Langberg family and Muffy (Mary) Glover, who joined Beth Chaim in November 2023.

Beth Chaim: Tell us about your family:



Haley: It's me, my husband Aaron, and our two children - Sierra and Miles. Sierra is 4 ½ and Miles turned two in September. Sierra attends Doris Eaton Preschool in Alamo. Miles is at Fountainhead Montessori Preschool in Danville. They both love school! Sierra is also enrolled in the Beth Chaim religious school, and she loves Sunday School!

Muffy: I am Aaron's mom, and I live in Walnut Creek. I babysit for Miles every Tuesday, and for my granddaughter Eliana (just turned one year old) in Davis every Wednesday. Eliana is the daughter of my other son, Jonathan.

Haley: My husband Aaron is from Moraga – he went to Campolindo High School. His Dad still lives in the house he grew up in. For college Aaron went to UC Santa Cruz and to Emory in Atlanta for Law School. After working at other law firms in San Francisco, focusing on employment litigation, Aaron has now been an attorney for Tesla for a little less than 3 years. **Beth Chaim:** Where did you all grow up?

I grew up in Clifton, New Jersey. My senior year in high school, my parents retired. We moved to Greenville, South Carolina. I went to college at the University of South Carolina (USC), where I studied International Relations. My first job out of college led me to the East Bay. I was in sales for Michelin, selling commercial truck tires to trucking fleets. Later I switched into medical device sales, which is what I have been doing now for 7 years.

Muffy: I grew up in Erie, Pennsylvania. I went to the University of Pittsburg for Pharmacy School. I have worked as a pharmacist in many different places where I have lived. I am retired now, but most recently I was a Pharmacist at John Muir Hospital. At one point I was Assistant Director of Pharmacy at University Hospital in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



Beth Chaim: How did you meet?

Haley: Aaron and I met online 10 years ago on a dating website called OkCupid. We were both living in Walnut Creek at that time. We have been married since October 2017 – it's been six years now!

Muffy: I met Aaron's Dad at the University of Pittsburg, through friends of my sister. He was in grad school. Then we moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he got his doctorate at University of Michigan. Both my boys, Jonathan and Aaron, were born in Ann Arbor, 19 months apart. We moved to Moraga in 1986.

Cont'd next page

Beth Chaim: Tell us about your Jewish education, etc.:

Haley: I went to Sunday School, but I did not have a Bat Mitzvah. I always really enjoyed being involved in a Jewish community. I was VP of our New Jersey chapter of BBYO and participated in Hillel in college. Aaron grew up conservative. He went to B’Nai Sholom in Walnut Creek, where he had his Bar Mitzvah.

Muffy: I had been a member of B’Nai Sholom since 1987, but I am very happy to now be a member of Beth Chaim. Everyone is so friendly, and so nice and welcoming. I joined when Haley and Aaron’s family joined, so I can be with them at temple, and to get involved with Sisterhood, for myself. I have been coming to Beth Chaim with them for a few years now, to Torah Tots, High Holidays Tot Service, etc. While I was at B’Nai Sholom, I had a Bat Mitzvah as an adult.

Beth Chaim: What hobbies, sports or activities do you like to do?

Haley: Aaron and I both love skiing and hiking. We plan to start Sierra on skis this winter. We do a lot together with the kids, like going to parks. Recently, I played a lot of adult kickball. Sierra is enjoying both ballet and gymnastics. We love traveling and exploring new places. We love Cabo and being in Tahoe. Those are the two places we go to the most.

Muffy: I like to crochet, sew, read books, go on walks, and sing. I crochet toys for my grandkids, and also made an afghan. I am in a chorus at DVC and take voice lessons. I would be very interested in joining the Chazanut (choral) group at Beth Chaim, and the Book Group. I enjoy going on the walk on the Iron Horse Trail with the Sisterhood, and attending the Sisterhood Hanukah Party.

Beth Chaim: What are you looking forward to most at Beth Chaim?

Haley: We want to get very involved. Beth Chaim seems like such a warm place. We are really looking forward to meeting a lot of people, for me and Aaron, too. We are excited about all the social activities for the kids and meeting all the people in the Young Family Chavurah. So far, our favorite parts have been the Torah Tots program, and Sierra is loving Sunday School so far.

Muffy: I love Beth Chaim, especially the friendliness of all the people. I really like the Rabbi, and I get a lot out of the services. I like to be able to go with my kids and grandkids to Beth Chaim and want to continue to get more involved with Sisterhood.

Please Welcome New Members Joining in 2023

- ❖ Robin and Steve Rodman
- ❖ Mally & Bob Netter
- ❖ Tiffani & Joshua Doughtie, and their children Jaxson, Scarlett and Blakely
- ❖ Lindsay & Dave Van der Bokke, and their son Logan
- ❖ Todd & Cara Ostomel, and their sons Barton and Judah
- ❖ Dana & Jonathan Wikstrom, and their sons Benjamin and Dylan (grandchildren of Susan Volsky)
- ❖ Moe Arrayed and Deborah Brachman
- ❖ Julie & Dan Kozak, and their children Adam, Maxwell, Madelyn, and Rachelle
- ❖ Elliot Campbell & Lavanya Ramados, and their daughters Neela and Sahana
- ❖ Rachel & Kevin Guzman, and their children, Damien, Serena and Dominic

- ❖ Sarah Lappe & Tejas Sonavene, and their twin daughters Avani and Layana
- ❖ Melisa & Jason Levine, and their children Ari and Rhea
- ❖ Adriane & Adam Costa, and their children Nate, Hannah, and Cody
- ❖ Ben & Lily Hyman
- ❖ Harry & Sherry Bonn
- ❖ Rana Rines & Spencer Evans, and their son Keaton
- ❖ Andrea Stewart
- ❖ Amy & George Millington, and their daughters Emmie and Cora
- ❖ Haley & Aaron Langberg, and their children Sierra and Miles
- ❖ Muffy (Mary) Glover
- ❖ Dan & Evie Goldman, and their sons Ethan and Declan

Fun Facts: Among our 21 new member families who joined in 2023, we have two young married couples, eight empty nesters/grandparents, and 14 young families, with 19 children currently enrolled in our Beit Midrash and seven children five and under. Most of these new families live in Danville and San Ramon, but they also live all over – in Alamo, Walnut Creek, Pleasanton, Livermore, Alameda and Mountain House!

Children's Birthdays

Name	Birthday	Age
Chloe Leftik	Jan 3	10
Gabriel Yankilovich	Jan 7	10
Blakely Doughtie	Jan 9	1
Blake Azicri	Jan 11	11
Ronen Jain	Jan 11	16
Emmeline Millington	Jan 23	14
Dax Azicri	Jan 30	7
Isabella Kelleter	Jan 31	18
Cody Miller	Feb 2	5
Rochelle Abelmann	Feb 2	14
Abram Shuster	Feb 7	5
Dominic Guzman	Feb 11	6
Violet Brors	Feb 16	17
Amelia Kogan	Feb 20	10
Alexis Kogan	Feb 20	10
Neela Campbell	Feb 26	9

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Wedding Anniversaries


Names	Date	Years	Names	Date	Years
Eric & Eileen Kahn	Jan 3	42	Andrew & Nancy Orgel	Feb 10	45
Bob & Trish Slomowitz	Jan 5	44	Ruth & David Swedlow	Feb 11	56
Elliot & Cameron Binder	Jan 15	19	Steve & Melissa Hejtmanek	Feb 21	11
Brad & Janet Lieber	Jan 16	36	Paul & Patricia Yamshon	Feb 24	40
Lou Weckstein & Karin Denevi	Jan 23	36	Scott & Catherine Heller	Feb 26	35
Jonathan & Rachel Cohen	Feb 8	9			

Membership Anniversaries

Names	Years	Names	Years
Scott & Naomi Ehrlich	25	Kim & Michael Thompson	13
Harold & Janet Freiman	23	Sheila Kaplan	12
Craig & Debbie Hertz	22	Erin & Andy Sacks	11
Ted Mendelson	22	Jonathan & Rachel Cohen	8
Rick Oshay	22	Sam & Debbie Ferman	7
Jerry & Laura Raney	21	David & Leslie Diamond	5
John & Jody Dice	18	Lou Weckstein & Karin Denevi	4
Glenn & Julie Sulzberg	15	Jacqueline Darvill	3
Robert Michaud	14		


Education

T'lamed Ve'Tilamed (You shall teach and you shall learn)



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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@treeoflifelarningcenter.com

Torah Tots and Tot Shabbat



Join PJ Library Parent Connector **Ema Lara** and music leader Tkiya at Beth Chaim Congregation. For anyone with little ones ages 0-5!



Torah Tots

Sundays
10:00am

January 21
Tu B'shvat

February 25

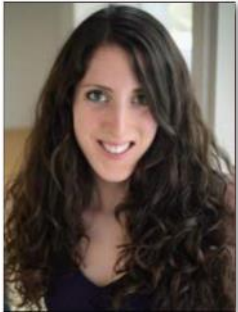


Tot Shabbat

Fridays
5:30pm

February 9





Shelby Margolin
Principal, Beit Midrash

As the first semester of our Beit Midrash year draws to a close, I have the space to pause and reflect on how our community has grown. In just 4 months, we welcomed 11 new families and 18 new students to our Beit Midrash.

These numbers are impressive, but the real story is *how* these families said “yes” to our community.

For the first time ever, we held a family High Holy Day service in addition to our Tot service and main community service. This menu of service options created a buzz around Beth Chaim that attracted many new families *and* inspired our current families to invite friends to join them. We had so much interest before and after these services, so Debbie Roof and I teamed up to talk to these families one-on-one to get to know them. I was so filled up by these conversations and finding connections between what these families were looking for, and ways that Beth Chaim could meet their needs. We then invited students to a “preview day” where they could attend Sunday School to see if students would want to attend on a regular basis.

This required a tremendous amount of flexibility from our teachers and current students, as on any given day there might be 1-3 new students in their classes! At the same time, teachers did not have to put on a show or do anything “special” on a day a new student was previewing. Teachers and current students would make the new student feel welcome simply by including the new student in what they were already doing. My favorite part of this story? Every single student that previewed our Sunday School decided to join. It speaks volumes that kids *wanted* to come back week after week because they connected with their teacher, classmates, and the activities. I feel so lucky that our Beit Midrash staff creates a safe, inclusive, and desirable space for new families to join!

We look forward to our next semester, full of meaningful Ruach services, Purim celebrations, and bonding with our ever-growing community. Please consider stopping by on a Sunday morning – the energy is electric!

Kol Tuv,

Morah Shelby Meyer Margolin (she/her/hers)

Principal, Beth Chaim Beit Midrash

Beth Chaim Beit Midrash

educator@bethchaim.com



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

Contra Costa Midrasha's 2024 Winter Update

I have REALLY big news to share with you, our beloved community. **Contra Costa Midrasha's enrollment now sits at 107 students!** This is the highest engagement we've seen since before the pandemic. Wednesday nights are super energetic, fun and the classrooms are full of teens enjoying themselves and thriving in Jewish teen community.

Join us to be part of this exciting community this Winter and early Spring with these opportunities:

ONE: Plant and build in honor of Tu B'Shevat and MLK Day on January 14th with us at Tiny Village Spirit. Our "Impact Builder" teens are spending the year helping to grow this garden and village for unhoused youth.

TWO: Teens (even those not currently enrolled in CCM) are invited for our Winter Retreat in the redwoods February 9 - 11, 2024. We've grown our partnerships it means more teens are showing up on these retreats. Sign up at https://www.flipcause.com/secure/cause_pdetails/MjAwMTIw.

THREE: CCM's annual Gala is March 2nd - we are planning on dancing the night away under a disco ball to celebrate our work with Jewish teens in our community. Sponsor, donate or buy a ticket at www.ccmidrasha.com/gala.

 **Contra Costa Midrasha**
25 Hillcroft Way
Walnut Creek
CA 94597

Buy your tickets, sponsor the gala,
or make an auction donation at
ccmidrasha.com/gala

SAVE THE DATE
CONTRA COSTA MIDRASHA
MARCH 2, 2024



Devra Aarons,
CCM Director

Finally, mark your calendars for March 20th, as CCM continues its "Teen Brain" series. That night we will welcome Claremont College professor Kendall Cotton Bronk to share about "The Science of Purpose." The event will be free, in person and for all adults who want to learn more about this burgeoning field.

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 or check out our website at ccmidrasha.com. There's something for every teen and enrollment is always open!


CCM'S NEWEST INITIATIVE!

THE TEEN BRAIN

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Yahrzeits

Zichronam L'vracha – May Their Memories be a Blessing

Name	Date	Observed By	Relationship
Bernice Wiener	Jan 1	Greg Wiener	Mother of Greg
Morris Krantz	Jan 1	Julie Samson	Father of Julie
Harriet Silver	Jan 1	Lisa Ruderman	Mother of Lisa
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
James Harley	Jan 7	Trish Slomowitz	Father of Trish
Mila Slomowitz	Jan 7	Bob Slomowitz	Mother of Bob
Herbert Gedacht	Jan 7	Rhona Shulman	Father of Rhona
Lawrence Murray Bowman	Jan 7	Stacey Levy	Father of Stacey
Carol Wechsler	Jan 7	Deborah Wechsler	Mother of Deborah
Pat Hejtmanek	Jan 7	Steve Hejtmanek	Mother of Steve
Betty Cohen	Jan 7	Sheryl Bonn	Mother of Sheryl
Ira Sarison	Jan 11	Lynn Chazin	Father of Lynn
Albert Mazer	Jan 12	Marc Mazer	Father of Marc
Reva Lee	Jan 13	Bobbi Bernstein	Sister of Bobbi
Barton Menzin	Jan 13	Jane Sondel	Father of Jane
Lucille Ware	Jan 13	Gary Ware	Mother of Gary
Shirley Gedacht	Jan 16	Rhona Shulman	Mother of Rhona
Nancy Lebowicz	Jan 17	Debbie Roof	Sister of Debbie
Ari Mazer	Jan 18	Marc & Susan Talon-Mazer	Son of Marc and Susan
Sidney Churgel	Jan 18	Ellen Waskey	Father of Ellen
Annette Norman	Jan 19	Shelley Norman	Mother of Shelley
LeRoy Golman	Jan 20	Janet Lieber	Father of Janet
Sol Leavitt	Jan 21	Debbie Roof	Father of Debbie
Anatol "Tony" Karatov	Jan 23	Michael Karatov	Father of Michael
Julius Bernstein	Jan 23	Neil Bernstein	Father of Neil
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
Natalie Brownstein	Jan 31	Lynne Gross	Mother of Lynne
Mollie Feldstein	Jan 31	Burt Feldstein	Mother of Burt
Beatrice Meyers	Feb 3	Fran Patterson	Mother of Fran

Yahrzeits, cont'd

Zichronam L'vracha – May Their Memories be a Blessing


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





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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.

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"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.

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