

גורנים



G'VANIM

VOLUME 41, NO. 3

January/February 2013

## "Voices" Concert Completes BCC's 40th Anniversary Year

On Sunday evening, December 2, 2012, the BCC sanctuary was filled to capacity for a concert entitled "Voices: Celebrating Four Decades of Musical Artistry in the House of New Life." As Rabbi Lisa Edwards told us in her words of welcome, this concert was Cantor Juval Porat's idea for a fitting conclusion to our 40th anniversary year. Coming almost exactly a year after his blockbuster concert "Love in US," Cantor Porat outdid himself in assembling a group of outstanding performers, in putting together a program representative of BCC's musical past and present, and in his own energetic and enthusiastic performance.

The program began with Cantor Porat's original song "House of New Life" (co-written with Tamara Kline), which he also performed at the gala 40th anniversary party in July. Next came "Lech L'cha," Cantor Porat's adaptation of the song "Lechi Lach" by Debbie Friedman, z'l, which premiered at BCC in 1986 for the 60th birthday celebration of Savina Teubal, z'l. Another BCC original was "Matay," in which Cantor Porat put to music a Hebrew poem written by BCC member Henry Wudl. And "Shalem" is the title song of Cantor Porat's new CD, which was available at the concert and includes several other pieces performed during the evening.

The remainder of the program included some familiar

songs from the liturgy ("L'cha Dodi," "V'al Kulam," "Ma'ariv Aravim," "Oseh Shalom") as well as some less familiar liturgical or scriptural pieces (Ned Rorem's "Psalm 150," Jonathan Comisar's "Modim Anachnu Lach," Josh Nelson's "L'Dor V'Dor"). We were also treated to some secular songs, including "Falling Slowly," by Glen Hansard and Marketa Irglova, "You've Shown Me," by Matti Caspi and Yakov Rotblit, and "Oh, What a Circus," from Evita, by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice.

Performing with Cantor Porat were Cantors David Berger, Jennifer Bern-Vogel, and Yonah Kliger, future cantorial student Tamara Wolfson, and HUC rabbinic student Jaclyn Fromer. The musicians included Tali Tadmor on piano, TJ Troy on drums and percussion, Ricky Katz on guitar, and David Tranchina on upright bass. Several pieces also featured BCC choir members Davi Cheng, Albert Epstein, Ted Greenberg, Eleanor Herscher, Jeanelle LaMance, David Parkhurst, and Marjorie Rothman.

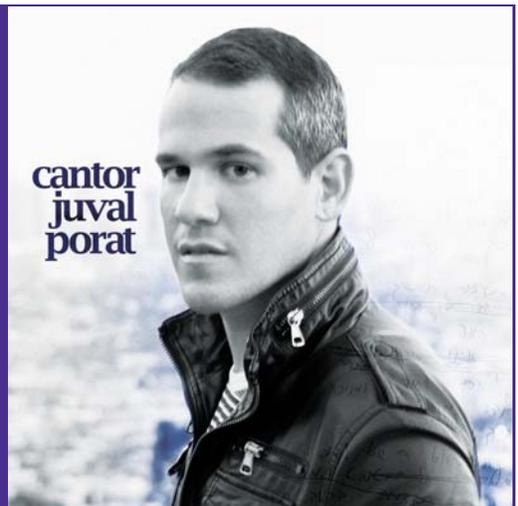
Thanks also to BCC staff Felicia Park-Rogers, Victoria Delgadillo, and Tim Goad, and volunteers Vince Cerundolo, Bryan Cooper, Yanir Dekel, Jessica Donath, Tracy Moore, Maggie Parkhurst, Angela Stubbs, and Neal Weisenberg and any others whose diligent efforts helped to make this concert a resounding success.

### BUY Cantor Porat's New Album "SHALEM"!

Proceeds Benefit BCC.

**\$15** for a physical copy —  
place your orders at [juval@bcc-online.org](mailto:juval@bcc-online.org)

**\$10** for a digital copy —  
go to [cdbaby.com/artist/cantorjuvalporat](http://cdbaby.com/artist/cantorjuvalporat)  
or search for Cantor Juval on iTunes!



# We Asked... and YOU Responded

In mid-November all individual BCC members were sent a survey to obtain their opinions on a range of BCC topics. The survey focused on religious services, social activities, other programs, and internal communications. As of this writing, just a few weeks after the survey was sent, 90 members have responded and completed the survey! This response rate of nearly 40% is considered extraordinary by market research standards, and reflects strong loyalty and caring for BCC by its members.

In January the Executive Committee and Board will be considering two aspects of the survey: reviewing the key findings, and determining the most effective ways to communicate the results to our members.

It is hoped that the survey results can be publicized sometime in February. Ways to reach out can include printing key results in G'vanim and discussing the findings and getting member feedback – including suggestions

to make further improvements - in large and small in-person groups.

The implementation of this member survey was a direct outgrowth of the Board's strategic planning session held in October 2011. Those involved in the survey's development included Jerry Nodiff, who spearheaded the initial effort, along with Joanne Laipson, Sylvia Sukop, Gwen Walden, Marsha Epstein and David Mozes. In addition Mark Miller, Felicia Park-Rogers and Lauren Schlau, in concert with the BCC Board, gave time to bring the survey to fruition by revising, programming and sending it out and reviewing the results.

Each and every BCC member who responded is greatly thanked for the time and thoughtful responses that will make this survey a valuable planning tool for BCC's future growth. More information about the survey will be forthcoming within a few weeks.

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<b>1 issue</b>	<b>3 issues: 10% disc.</b>	<b>6 issues: 20% disc.</b>
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<b>\$40</b>	<b>\$108</b>	<b>\$192</b>
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website: [www.bcc-la.org](http://www.bcc-la.org)

Rabbi Lisa Edwards is available for private appointments. Please call at least a week in advance, if possible, to schedule.

### STAFF

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### G'VANIM

G'vanim "Hues (of the rainbow)" is the monthly newsletter of

#### BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM

6090 West Pico Blvd., L.A. CA 90035

Founded in 1972 as the world's first gay and lesbian synagogue, today BCC is an inclusive community of progressive lesbian, gay, bi, trans, and heterosexual Jews, our families, and friends. Everyone is welcome to attend weekly Friday evening services at 8:00 p.m.

Editor: Larry Nathenson. Graphics & Layout: Lentini Design. Articles submitted should be typed, emailed or attached as Word documents to [Larrynath@aol.com](mailto:Larrynath@aol.com), by the 15th of the month before publication. To subscribe to G'vanim, send name and address and a check or money order for \$18 per year, attention: Subscriptions. Free to members.

**BCC is affiliated with the Union for Reform Judaism, World Congress of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Jews: Keshet Ga'avah and the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles.**

# From the Rabbi's Study Looking for Help

Rabbi Lisa Edwards

PHOTO: KEMNALOVE



I write this just a few days after the Sandy Hook Elementary School (Newtown, Connecticut) killings, and as I prepare to depart for three months of sabbatical. I'll be gone by the time you read this, but back in time for second night seder at BCC on Tuesday, March 26 - save the date.

One of my colleagues posted a blog today reflecting on the Sandy

Hook tragedy, and in it she said the most comforting thing she'd seen to date was someone quoting Mister Rogers of "won't you be my neighbor" fame - may his memory be for a blessing:

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many caring people in this world."

Unsung heroes, angels, friends, strangers — anyone can fall into the category of helper — unfortunately, too many of us forget to look for them when we need them. But how it can change the vision of an event — to turn from imagining the fingers on the trigger to imagining the arms embracing the grieving parents, siblings, and classmates.

Do what you can to be a helper. One way to begin right now is to sign the petition on the White House's We the People site, which calls on Congress to create tighter restrictions on gun ownership. You can sign that petition here:

<https://petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/immediately-address-issue-gun-control-through-introduction-legislation-congress/2tgcXzQC>

In a way it feels odd to invite BCC people to be helpers because so many of you already are. I was reminded of this when I looked at the invitation lists for our back-to-back Hanukkah gatherings intended to thank all of our volunteers and our capital campaign donors. So many people, and so much overlap between the two lists! Our Executive Director, Felicia Park-Rogers, tells me that one of the things she appreciates about so many BCC people is how gracefully they "wear" their sense of obligation to help support their/our community. I agree with her — you "wear" your obligation humbly, confidently, with a sense of humor and a sense of satisfaction, and those of us who work alongside you for the sake of the community notice and appreciate what you do and how you do it. Thank you so much.

Thank you again for the privilege of three months to replenish and refresh. And while I am gone — be sure to look for the helpers.

L'shalom,  
Rabbi Lisa Edwards

PHOTO BY SYLVIA SUKOP



Coyote Grace in concert at BCC, November 16, 2012, for Transgender Remembrance Day (l-r): Michael Connelly, Ingrid Elizabeth, Joe Stevens

## Purim is Coming!

Mark your calendar to be sure you won't miss BCC's always fabulous Purim celebration on Saturday evening, February 23, 2013.

Watch the weekly announcements for details.



Contact Davi Cheng at [davi18c@gmail.com](mailto:davi18c@gmail.com) if you want to help with planning the evening, or have an interest in reading a portion of the Megillah in a language of your choice.

# 70 Faces of Torah

Cantor Juval Porat



PHOTO: KENNA LOVIE

*In Rabbi Ishmael's School it was taught: "And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces: i.e., just as [the rock] is split into many splinters, so also may one Biblical verse convey many teachings." Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin 34a*

The principle reflected in this quote

from the Talmud is often used in the context of another quote well-cited in post-Talmudic Judaism, found in the Zohar and cited by Ibn Ezra, Ramban and others in their classic commentaries on the Torah: There are seventy faces to the Torah - הַרְוֵתָהּ מִיֵּנֶפּ מֵעֵבֶשׂ

It's an expression used to represent the variety of ways to interpret the Torah and its laws. It reminds us of the almost infinite ways of legitimately studying Torah and the danger of an exclusive ownership of one interpretation.

It was during my first meeting with the newly re-established Professional Liaison Committee in the final half of the month of December last year that I came to think about the 70 faces of Torah once more. It was when we talked about congregants' ideas of worship, their and my expectations of rituals and the flow of services and the pace and amount of music, the amount of sound versus the amount of silence, the amount of time given to communal worship versus the amount given to be with oneself.

Once more we realized that many, many paths can lead to the same end, but not all paths are compatible with all travelers.

What happens if a Broadway song (composed by a Jew and mentioning lights and miracles) is inserted into a Friday night service? What happens if on the day of a new Hebrew month there is no mention of it during the service? What happens if a ritual is implemented (like lighting the *Hanukkah*) without any explanation for those who are unfamiliar with it? What happens if the Hebrew of the liturgy is mispronounced and only a minority of worshippers notices the mistake? What happens to those who, for various reasons, do not have their own tradition and may be confused by the invitation to follow one?

The debate over how to tackle such situations, and how to make them comfortable for as many

congregants as possible, is as infinite as the ways to interpret Torah. It is not easy to try to accommodate each and every request and idea. However, whenever we prepare ourselves for the journey of questioning and challenging what we think we know to be "our" way of doing things, in the synagogue and outside of it, we need to develop the emotional resilience to face traditions and interpretations different from our own. Can we hush the initial fear or judgment that comes with being thrown into a place foreign to what we know?

On that note, please do not be shy to approach me or anyone else on the bimah with any questions and/or comments you might have. To take a deeper part in BCC's ritual life, feel free to ask me (or Rabbi Lisa when she's back from her well deserved Sabbatical in March) about joining the Ritual Committee. At least within BCC you can be certain that the intention behind the traditions and rituals comes from a good place.

To help start or continue the conversation about tradition at BCC, there will be a series of sessions on all things Shabbat and liturgy. Join Rabbi Heather Miller and me about 30 minutes before Friday night services start on selected dates.

Also, the young adults among you readers are invited to join us for our first event this year at BCC on Sunday, January 13th from 10:30-1:00.

Over a delicious brunch we'll have the chance to meet and greet with BCC staff and Board members as well as each other. I look forward to seeing you there!

B'shalom  
Juval



## Shabbat 101

Ever felt slightly lost during Friday night services? Not familiar with a certain melody? Want to know about various traditions involving the Shabbat evening service?

Starting **Friday, January 11, at 7:15 at BCC** we want to invite you to a first of a series of short and sweet 30-minute study and singing sessions preceding our Friday night services at BCC. Please check the calendar for further dates. Everybody is welcome.

# Legacy Circle Lunch Honors Bequests to BCC



On Sunday, December 9, the BCC sanctuary was transformed into an elegant dining room for a luncheon honoring members and prospective members of the L'Chayim Legacy Circle. With the motto "Honoring our Past, Caring for our Future," the Legacy Circle includes members who have demonstrated their commitment to BCC's future by remembering the temple as a beneficiary in their will or trust. Some 40 BCC members are currently within the Circle.

The lunch was generously sponsored by Wells Fargo and deliciously catered by La Conversation bakery and café in West Hollywood, which has catered other BCC events in the past. The menu included vegan pumpkin soup, a salad of grilled vegetables with vegan, goat cheese, and chicken options, and assorted fruits and desserts.

After a blessing over bread by Rabbi Edwards and Cantor Porat, and welcome by BCC president Bruce Maxwell, Rabbi Edwards spoke of BCC as a "hidden treasure" by analogy to the week's Torah portion about Joseph and his multi-colored coat. Ray Eelsing then recounted the founding of the L'Chayim Legacy Circle in 2006 and its role in bringing estate planning and other practical information to the BCC

community. He then introduced Steven Schmitt, an LGBT financial planner with Wells Fargo, who described his work in tailoring financial plans to LGBT individuals and couples and the upcoming seminars he plans to bring to BCC in 2013 (see below).

Following a musical interlude featuring Cantor Porat accompanied by Jeanelle LaMance, Tracy Moore introduced BCC's oldest member Harriet Perl, who had recently celebrated her 92nd birthday and had been discharged from the hospital the previous day. In a moving talk entitled "I'm Being Sensible," delivered from her wheelchair, Harriet described how BCC brought together all the parts of her life (Jewish, lesbian, feminist, progressive) and became her family as she grew older with no blood relatives nearby. Though she never made much money as a teacher, Harriet has carefully saved and planned over the years so that she will be able to give back to BCC some measure of what she has received from it. Her dedication and commitment are an inspiration to us all.

We hope those prospective members of the Legacy Circle who attended the luncheon will soon join, and that more BCC members will consider this important and fulfilling way to help ensure our community's future. For more information or to become a member of the L'Chayim Legacy Circle, please call Ray Eelsing at 310-895-5116 or Hannah Theile at 818-905-7442.

## Financial Planning for the LGBT Community

BCC's L'Chayim Legacy Circle will sponsor an LGBT Financial Planning Seminar on **Sunday, February 17 from 2:00 – 4:00 pm at BCC**. The seminar will be led by Wells Fargo's Steven Schmitt CFP®, ADPA®, MBA, who is uniquely qualified to address the significant challenges facing these LGBT community.

- Marriage Equality - Repeal of DOMA does matter!
- Retirement Planning – Critical to Rollover IRAs now
- Estate and Inheritance taxes – Upcoming changes
- Income Tax planning for married couples and domestic partners
- Life Insurance: Unique considerations for LGBT couples
- Beneficiary Designation/Titling of Assets In-Depth: Assure assets pass properly to those you love
- Health Savings Accounts/Flexible Savings Accounts
- Imputed Income for Health Insurance coverage

The seminar is highly recommended, and open to all who are interested. To RSVP please contact Hannah Theile at 818-905-7442 or email her at [hannahtheile@gmail.com](mailto:hannahtheile@gmail.com). Please RSVP by Feb 12th.



BCC member Harriet Perl, age 92, addresses the L'Chayim Legacy Circle on December 9, 2012.



BCC president Bruce Maxwell addresses the volunteer appreciation event on December 16, 2012. Note the light coming through the skylight over the ark.

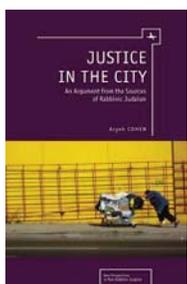
# Adult Education Committee Presents

## Social Ethics Book Reading and a new course by Rabbi Rachel Adler

*Jessica Donath and Adam Barron*

BCC'S Adult Education Committee is happy to announce two special events for the winter:

### January 17, Thursday, 7:30 pm Justice in the City, a book presentation



Rabbi Aryeh Cohen will teach from his newly released book, *Justice in the City: An Argument from the Sources of Rabbinic Judaism*. The text argues, based on the Babylonian Talmud, that a just city should be a community of obligation towards those who are not always visible: workers, the poor, and the homeless. Following Rabbi Cohen's teaching, rabbinical student Robin Podolsky will interview him. Copies of the book will be available for purchase. Admission is free. Please RSVP to [Education@bcc-la.org](mailto:Education@bcc-la.org) if you plan to attend, but a reservation is not necessary.

Aryeh Cohen teaches all things Rabbinic Literature



(Mishnah, Talmud, midrash) and social justice at the Ziegler School for Rabbinic Studies of the American Jewish University. Prof. Cohen is a board member of Rabbis for Human Rights-North America, Progressive Jewish Alliance-Jewish Funds for Justice and is active with CLUE-LA.

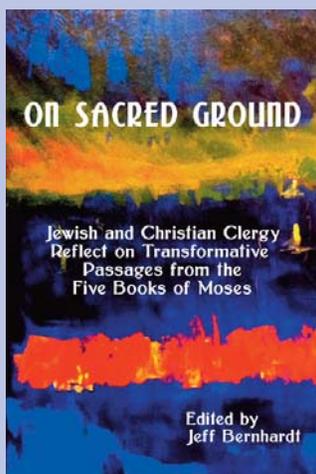
### January 22 through March 19, Tuesdays, 7:30-9pm First Book of Samuel

While Rabbi Lisa Edwards enjoys her well-deserved time off, world-renowned scholar, Rabbi Rachel Adler, will lead us in the study of the First Book of Samuel, a court history that deals, among other things, with the kingships of Saul and David and the possible love affair between David and Jonathan. Rabbi Adler promises "intrigue, blood and gore." Nine sessions. Drop-ins welcome. Free for members, \$10 for nonmembers. Please RSVP to [Education@bcc-la.org](mailto:Education@bcc-la.org) if you plan to attend most sessions.



Dr. Rachel Adler is Professor of Modern Jewish Thought and Judaism and Gender at HUC-JIR in Los Angeles. She was one of the first theologians to integrate feminist perspectives and concerns into the interpretation of Jewish texts and the renewal of Jewish law and ethics.

The Adult Education Committee always seeks your input. Please email comments, questions or ideas on these or other events to [Education@bcc-la.org](mailto:Education@bcc-la.org).



## Book Reading and Signing

**Sunday, January 27, 2013  
3-5 PM @ BCC**

**A unique opportunity to hear a diverse panel of local interfaith contributors read from their reflections and answer questions. The editor and publishers will be present as well. Light refreshments to be served.**

**Books available for purchase.**

# New Year Plans for the Men's Havurah

BCC Men's Havurah Chair: Mark Miller

BCC's Men's Havurah sponsored the following very successful events during November and December 2012:

## Game Night on November 10th

At the home of BCC members Brett Trueman and Mark Miller, we reprised one of our more popular events that we haven't had in a year. Before the games began we feasted on a catered vegetarian/dairy dinner.

## Hanukkah Party on December 9th

At the home of BCC



President Bruce Maxwell, more than 25 men enjoyed a great celebration of Hanukkah. We lit several menorahs and feasted on an absolutely fantastic dinner, including traditional Hanukkah favorites of latkes and sufganiyot catered by executive

chef (and BCC member) Peter Bastien. Afterwards, we played the White Elephant Gift Exchange game, which was a lot of fun.

The Men's Havurah Planning Committee is planning great events for the next several months. Announcements via e-mail, the BCC Weekly, and Friday evening's seat bulletin will be made as soon as details are finalized. A sneak peak for January's event is that we're planning to see the **Stanley Kubrick Retrospective Exhibit at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art preceded by brunch on Sunday, January 20th**. We'll meet at Caffe Latte for brunch at 11:00, then go to LACMA to see the exhibit at 1:00. You'll need to purchase timed tickets in advance.

Other event ideas we're thinking about include having a coffee-tasting party for lovers of caffeine, a visit to the Watts Towers and Arts Center,

volunteering at Project Chicken Soup (cooking, packing and/or delivering), seeing the *Light and Shadows* exhibit about Iranian Jews at UCLA's Fowler Museum, a Purim party, and maybe a reprise of our very popular chocolate-tasting party that we had earlier this past year.

There are two ways you can stay in touch with us:

- Through e-mail: [bcc.menshavurah@gmail.com](mailto:bcc.menshavurah@gmail.com).
- Through our Facebook page ("BCC Men's Havurah") where we post event details and share pictures from events

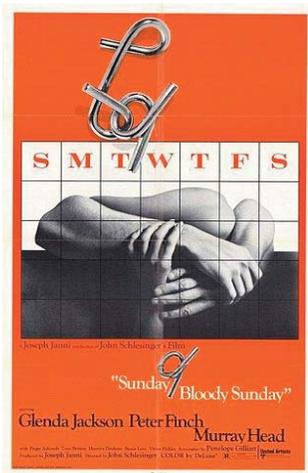
We can use everyone's help and very much encourage

- Your ideas for additional types of events that would be of interest to the Men's Havurah, and
- Volunteers to plan and host events naturally tailored to the size of your home.

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## BCC Film Club to Begin Soon

Bracha Yael



BCC will introduce a new Film Club this Spring! If you love landmark, classic or art house films, this is the group for you. Before each film, BCC member and cinephile extraordinaire Gordon Blitz will give a brief introduction. There will be a lively discussion after the movie. Feel free to bring your

favorite nosh. Film club events will be at BCC and will be free to BCC members.

We'll kick off with the groundbreaking movie *Sunday Bloody Sunday*, a 1971 British drama that featured a who's who of movie titans. It starred actors Glenda Jackson (Best Actress Oscar winner for *Women in Love*), Peter Finch, (Best Actor Oscar winner for *Network*) and British pop star Murray Head (*Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Chess*). John Schlesinger (Best Director Oscar winner for *Midnight Cowboy*) directed, and Penelope Gilliat

(infamous critic for the New Yorker-second only to Pauline Kael) received an Oscar nomination for the screenplay. Schlesinger was London born, Jewish and openly gay.

Here's Wikipedia's quick overview of *Sunday Bloody Sunday*:

"It tells the story of a free-spirited young bisexual artist (played by Head) and his simultaneous relationships with a female recruitment consultant (Jackson) and a male Jewish doctor (Finch). The film is significant for its time in that Finch's homosexual character is depicted as successful and relatively well-adjusted, and not particularly upset by his sexuality. In this sense, *Sunday Bloody Sunday* was a considerable departure from Schlesinger's previous film *Midnight Cowboy*, which had portrayed its gay characters as alienated and self-loathing."

If you are interested, please contact Bracha Yael at [bracha18@ca.rr.com](mailto:bracha18@ca.rr.com). She'll be sure to keep you current on upcoming events. Also, follow BCC's online calendar for further details.

# BCC Partners with PJ Library

Leah Zimmerman, Education Director



At BCC we strive to provide quality family programming. Recently, we developed a strategy of partnering with other organizations with a wider reach. By doing so, we engage a larger audience and build a critical mass for programs we want to provide to our BCC families. Last year we began collaboration with

the Shalom Institute's JCA Camp Shalom in Malibu. Together we created an LGBT Family Camp for Southern California families.

This year we are beginning collaboration with PJ Library in order to provide early childhood programming to our BCC families. PJ Library is "a Jewish family program implemented on a local level throughout North America. We mail free, high-quality Jewish children's literature and music to families across the continent on a monthly basis." To learn more about the program or register for free books, go to [pjlibrary.org](http://pjlibrary.org).

In addition to mailing free books to families around the country, PJ Library sponsors programming for member families. In the next few months, BCC is partnering with PJ library to sponsor two events. As a partner with PJ library, we will publicize these events in our community. PJ library will provide programs, books and will list these events in their publicity materials as well. This partnership helps PJ library publicize their books and program and enables BCC to build a critical mass for early childhood programs.

## Snack and Story - Sunday, January 27th at 10am at the home of BCC members Josh Wayser and Richard Schulte.

Preschool age children and their parents are invited to join us for stories and crafts provided by the PJ Library, snacks and socializing. In addition to being listed as a BCC event, this event will be publicized by PJ Library as an LGBT family event for 2-4 year olds.

## Pizza and Pajamas - Saturday, March 16th at 5pm at BCC

Preschool age children and their parents are invited to come in their pajamas with pillows and blankets for snuggling, stories, pizza and more.

Other Upcoming BCC Family Events:

## Family Service and Parent and Me - Jan. 12, Feb. 9, Mar. 9, Apr 13, May 11

Families with children of all ages are invited to join Cantor Porat and the Ohr Chayim families for a Shabbat morning service. Following the service, preschool children and their parents do some singing, storytelling, and crafts together. Elementary school age children are invited to join the Ohr Chayim students for some learning and activities.

## Purim Family Service - Saturday, February 23rd

Stay tuned for details!!

## Volunteer Appreciation event



Jonathan Falk, George Garcia, and James Falk-Garcia proudly display their volunteer appreciation certificates, December 16, 2012.

PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

Cantor Yuval Porat sings with accompanist Jeanelle LaMance at volunteer appreciation event, December 16, 2012.



PHOTO: JAY JACOBS

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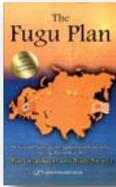
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# BCC Book Group

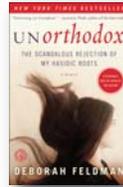
Larry Nathenson

For more than fifteen years, BCC members and friends have gathered in private homes for monthly potluck brunches and discussion of books selected by the group. Our only criterion is that the book has some Jewish content (it may also have GLBT content). We have read fiction and non-fiction, classics and contemporary works, American and Israeli books, something for everyone's tastes and interests. We welcome new members to the group, as well as occasional visitors who may be interested in discussing a particular book. Our next two meetings are:



**Sunday, January 27, at 10:00 am**  
**The Fugu Plan, by Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz**

The largely untold story of how Japan, despite its alliance with Nazi Germany, played a key role in saving Jews during the Holocaust.



**Sunday, February 24, at 10:00 am**  
**Unorthodox: the Scandalous Rejection of my Hasidic Roots, by Deborah Feldman**

A memoir of the author's escape from the restrictive life of her Satmar Hasidic community and the struggles she faced in adjusting to the modern world.

BCC members and non-members alike are invited to attend. Because the discussions are held in members' homes, space is limited. Please RSVP to the BCC office early to guarantee your seat at the table, or contact Larry Nathenson at [Larrynath@aol.com](mailto:Larrynath@aol.com).



Beat the Winter Blahs with the  
BCC Women's Havurah's

## ANNUAL BOWL OF FUN!

A bowling party for all skill levels

Sunday, Jan. 20, 2:00-4:00 pm

Everyone is Welcome

Location: Midtown Lanes,  
4645 Venice Blvd, LA CA 90019

\$16/person, including two games  
plus shoe rental.

Payable that day at the bowling alley.

Directions:  
[http://www.amf.com/midtownlanes/  
centerHomepage.htm](http://www.amf.com/midtownlanes/centerHomepage.htm)

RSVP to Bonnie by Jan. 10:

[bonkaplan@yahoo.com](mailto:bonkaplan@yahoo.com)

## BCC Live Offers Multiple Connections

Bracha Yael

BCC Live continues to broaden and deepen our outreach to the LGBT and Jewish communities. The BCC YouTube channel has nearly 40 videos and 27,000 views! Here are links to a few of the most popular: BCC Wedding Montage/No on 8 by BCC member Pam Postrel (13,202 views) <http://bit.ly/Yczpk5>; Rabbi Rachel Adler's Sermon 'Texts that Don't Let People Live' (1,011 views) <http://bit.ly/LUIUOU>; Rabbi Lisa Edwards' Shabbat Shira Sermon 'Remembering Debbie Friedman' (444 views) <http://bit.ly/uztLR>.

We live broadcast all our wonderful Friday night services and some special events at [www.bcc-la.org/bcc-live](http://www.bcc-la.org/bcc-live) and at <http://www.ustream.tv/channel/bcc-live>. Also, on our Ustream channel you can find previous recordings (Note: live broadcasts can be seen on an iPad but not archived ones since they require flash). Our Ustream and YouTube channels make it possible for you to enjoy BCC at your leisure.

You can capture the BCC experience in other alternative ways including a lay led weekly tele-Torah study every Thursday at 4:00 – 5:00 pm; and, tele-participate with on-site study sessions such as Rabbi Rachel Adler's upcoming classes on The First Book of Samuel beginning January 22nd at 7:30pm. Check the BCC online calendar for additional information.

All these offerings are available via conference phone, which is free—excluding any long distance charges from your personal carrier. Please dial 702-851-4044, when prompted punch in 2, then our pass code, 22252#.

If you have questions on BCC Live programming, instructions or problems please email Bracha Yael at [bracha18@ca.r.com](mailto:bracha18@ca.r.com).

"Wherever you go, BCC goes with you!"



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# OUR HISTORY

## PART THREE: A MATURING CONGREGATION (1983-1992)

Larry Nathenson

At the end of its first decade, BCC had many accomplishments under its belt. The fledgling temple had become a pioneer in egalitarian liturgy, had been admitted to the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, helped found the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations, and bought the building at 6000 W. Pico Blvd. that would serve as its home until 2011. In its second decade BCC matured as a congregation in a number of ways, some by choice (paid clergy, annual awards), and some forced upon it (the need to respond to the AIDS epidemic).

**Our First Ordained Clergy.** In 1983 the Board of Directors decided to engage BCC's first ordained rabbi, though only on a part-time basis. This choice was not welcomed by all of the members. In its first decade BCC had maintained an ethos of close-knit community and "do it yourself" Judaism, with mostly lay-led services and no paid clergy or staff. Several rabbinic students at Hebrew Union College had served BCC as rabbinic interns, including Scott Sperling, Mark Hurvitz, Keith Stern, Leah Kroll, and Margaret Holub. But some members felt that professional clergy would detract from the spirit of the congregation and encourage members to become a passive audience during services. The hiring of a part-time office assistant gave rise to similar reservations.

Despite these doubts, the Board made an inspired choice in Rabbi Janet Ross Marder. A heterosexual woman, pregnant with her first child, Rabbi Marder had no particular interest in gay and lesbian issues when she applied for the position. But she soon became a highly effective ambassador for BCC. She organized meetings and dialogues with mainstream congregations, so that their rabbis and members could get to know GLBT Jews and learn to understand and respect our relationships and our spirituality. She became a strong advocate for LGBT rights in the wider Jewish community as well. Even after she left BCC, a "speakers bureau" continued dialogue and outreach to mainstream temples.

Within BCC, Rabbi Marder won the respect and admiration of BCC members for her quiet, self-effacing

manner combined with a strong intellect and a deep caring for both Jewish tradition and the needs of her congregants. She encouraged adult learning within BCC, teaching several courses during her five years as our rabbi. She also helped start the Cele Bernstein Library (named for an early BCC member who passed away in the late 1980s), which functioned for a time as a lending library in the same room that served as the rabbi's office.

Another highlight of Rabbi Marder's tenure was the "simchat chochmah" (celebration of wisdom) of Savina Teubal, z'l, in 1986. A noted Jewish feminist scholar and author of *Sarah the Priestess*, Savina created this new liturgy for her 60th birthday. The ceremony introduced the now well-known song "Lechi Lach," composed by Savina and Debbie Friedman, z'l, a talented composer and singer who helped to revitalize Jewish music in the last two decades of the 20th century.

Though she was warned that accepting the position with BCC would jeopardize her future, it was in fact a boost for Rabbi Marder's career. After leaving BCC in 1988 she became assistant director and then director of the Pacific Southwest Region of the UAHC, the first woman president of PARR (Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis) and of CCAR (Central Conference of American Rabbis), and has served since 1999 as senior rabbi of Beth Am, a major Reform temple in the San Francisco Bay Area.

In 1986 BCC engaged its first long-term invested cantor, Don Alan Croll, after several years of cantorial services by such talented individuals as Elliott Pilshaw, Lorin Sklamberg, Mark Saltzman, and Robin Taback Ariel, z'l. Cantor Croll introduced new music to BCC, adding many classical Reform melodies as well as more traditional ones, and founded BCC's first choir. Cantor Croll served BCC until 1992, after which he too went on to a successful career. He has served

Temple Shalom in Dallas since 1995.

**The Herman Humanitarian Award.** In 1985 BCC established its first major annual award, named in honor of Rabbi Erwin Herman and his wife Agnes, to recognize individuals and organizations for their outstanding contributions to the LGBT and Jewish communities. The choice of name was obvious, as Rabbi Herman had

Wednesday, September 26, 1984

Los Angeles Herald Examiner

### A sanctuary for Jews who are 'gay and proud'

L.A. synagogue makes history at Rosh Hashana

By John Crust

With arms linked together, we form a living chain, proud to be Jewish and gay," the synagogue congregation chanted in between singing traditional Hebrew prayers.

Indeed, not only pride, but an element of defiance was in the air at a routine Friday night Sabbath service at Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim on Pico Boulevard, credited as the first gay synagogue in Jewish history.

For many of the lesbians and gays of the 230-member congregation, the synagogue is one of the few places where they are comfortable religiously and sexually. "Many people are alienated by their own families," said Janet Marder, the temple's rabbi.

Some Jewish leaders, she added, have interpreted the Torah and the Talmud, which outline Jewish law, as saying homosexuality is a capital crime. Marder said that interpretation continues to be controversial.

"It's very painful," she said. "There's still a segment of the Jewish community that looks at these people with abhorrence. The orthodox Jews regard this congregation as a handful of adulterers and the only thing that saves them is their willful sin."

Reform Jews, Marder said, believe God did not dictate the Torah word by word to Moses. "Human beings had a part in its composition," she said. "The Torah reflects human fears, human frailty and human ignorance. Calling homosex-



Tom Johnson is the president and Janet Marder the rabbi of Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim, founded in 1972 by Jewish homosexuals.

Los Angeles Herald Examiner article of September 26, 1984 about BCC, with photo of President Tom Johnson and Rabbi Janet Marder

been a stalwart champion and dear friend of BCC in its early years and especially in its application to join the UAHC. He had also helped BCC secure student rabbis from HUC and assisted in developing its liturgy. Agnes Herman was also a strong advocate for BCC in the Jewish community, and has since become a tireless educator and advocate on LGBT and HIV/AIDS issues.

Shortly before his death in 2008, Rabbi Herman said "If in my rabbinate, which now numbers 58 years, I have accomplished nothing else, the experience of being part of Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim, in its birth and its constantly maturing development, is my 'dayenu'."

**The Onset of the AIDS Epidemic.** BCC was also forced to mature in the 1980s by other less fortunate circumstances. The euphoria of the first decade of gay liberation after Stonewall, and after the founding of BCC, came crashing to a halt. As BCC member Dr. Mark Katz reminded us last November (2011) on the occasion of 30 years of the AIDS epidemic, "the first cases of gay men dying from immune system disorders were published on June 5, 1981. In cities such as Los Angeles, however, health care providers had already seen, in the prior one to two years, some cases of gay men becoming ill with unusual infections.

"The medical community did not know why these cases of *Pneumocystis pneumonia* or Kaposi's sarcoma were cropping up, but as they were ascribed to the gay community, the acronym GRID (Gay-Related Immunodeficiency) was born. It wasn't until more than a year later, on September 24, 1982, that the term Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome was coined by the Centers for Disease Control. Los Angeles, one of the three major epicenters in the U.S., was thrown into a maelstrom, first by not knowing what caused it (poppers? stress? parasites?), and ultimately, by the lack of effective treatments ... Funerals and memorial services became as commonplace as parties used to be; most of us who were alive at the time recall the unbelievable experience of leaving one memorial service early so as to attend another one."

The U.S. government under President Reagan (who famously did not utter the word "AIDS" until nearly the end of his term in 1987) did little to address the epidemic, leaving the gay community to fend for itself. As Dr. Katz recalled, "the gay community—female and male—rose to support each other, in a way I predict will forever be inscribed in the history books. Through our tragic losses, we created the richest, deepest sense of togetherness imaginable." The tensions between lesbians and gay men that had characterized the first decade of gay liberation (and of BCC) lessened dramatically. A number of physicians (including Dr. Katz) became activists to advocate for research and

treatment while desperately trying to save their patients' lives. The spiritual and social services communities also came through, offering everything from spiritual retreats, support groups, and free psychotherapy to food pantries and free health care.

In 1987 BCC rose to the occasion and inaugurated its monthly PWA dinners, bringing Persons with AIDS and their partners together with BCC members and clergy for a free meal with conversation and support. A number of BCC members also participated in SHALOM brunches (Synagogue Hospital AIDS Loving Outreach Meals). These programs continued for several years until new medications made AIDS a more manageable chronic disease. The spirit of connecting through meals also carried over into other social action programs, including monthly dinners that BCC sponsored and cooked for residents of Turning Point, a shelter for homeless individuals in Santa Monica.

**Nechama: A Jewish Response to AIDS.** BCC also sought to engage the wider Jewish community in responding to the crisis. With a \$13,800 grant from the Jewish Federation's Council on Jewish Life, Rabbi Marder and BCC member Dr. Les Zendle founded Nechama in 1986. Nechama ("Comfort") sought to educate the Jewish community about the AIDS epidemic by training volunteers to speak to synagogues and other Jewish groups about AIDS from a Jewish perspective. The speakers bureau was very active; an August 1987 report listed 38

completed and 29 upcoming presentations from January 1987 through April 1988. Presentations usually included a short film, discussion of why AIDS is a Jewish issue (the mitzvot of *pikuach nefesh* or saving life, compassion for the sick, and not allowing individuals

to be isolated from the community), up-to-date medical information, discussion of transmission and "safer sex" precautions, pros and cons of the new AIDS test, and ways to help infected persons. Training packets included the latest medical data, newspaper articles, safer sex guidelines, and lists of community resources to enable speakers to answer questions from their audiences.

A number of BCC members, including Dr. Katz, served on the advisory committee or the speakers bureau. Dr.



*Nechama brochure, 1987, courtesy of Dr. Mark Katz,*

Katz recalls that the most effective presentations included a person living with AIDS who could make the crisis personal and emotional, along with doctors who could give the medical updates. The most

common questions were about methods of transmission, such as whether you could get AIDS by kissing. The angriest response he recalls was from a group of Jewish camp teenagers, who were angry about being robbed of the carefree sex lives they would have had.

Nechama later became part of Jewish Family Service, where BCC members Jerry Small and later Avram Chill, z'l,

Support Group for BCC members. The BCC newsletter, *G'vanim*, ran a column during these years called "Maccabees," written by a different member of the HIV support group each month, about the challenges of living with HIV. By 1992 the column was no longer being written, and by the summer of 1994 all but two members of the original BCC HIV support group were deceased.

Some BCC members responded to the crisis with poetry. Yaffa Weisman's "My Future Iyovim" (Job) continues to appear in our annual Yizkor book. Here is part of another poem by then BCC member Ron Koff, entitled "Steadily They Go," that appeared in the November 1990 issue of *G'vanim*:

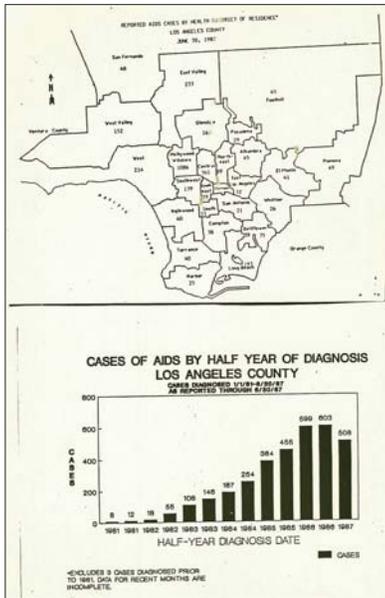
*Steadily they go, first one by one,  
Then by twos and threes,  
Yanked out of our world, now torn asunder,  
By the brawny arm of an uncaring, unyielding God.*

*We who remain learn to wall ourselves off from pain  
With words of dismay,  
Striving to convince ourselves as we retreat into the  
bright, familiar parts of our lives, that the nightmare  
isn't real.  
We huddle together for warmth and tell each other  
It's only a bad dream.*

Toward the end of BCC's second decade, two passings not from HIV/AIDS shocked the congregation. The first was Vicki Goldish, a highly intelligent and spiritual woman who energized BCC's community like few others, who died of cancer in her early 40s. The second was Ralph Stevens, also in his 40s, the only BCC president to die while in office. Many BCC members attended a Western Regional Conference of the World Congress in Malibu in March 1992, returning home to discover that Ralph had passed away during the weekend. The funerals of Vicki and Ralph reminded BCC that while you may learn to mourn, you never really get used to it.

*Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of six articles recounting the history of BCC on the occasion of its 40th anniversary. For this part I am particularly indebted to Dr. Mark Katz for access to his collection of materials from the early years of Nechama at BCC. As always, my thanks to BCC history maven Stephen Sass, Stan Notkin, Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Tracy Moore for their many helpful comments, suggestions, and corrections.*

*z'l = Zichronam livrachah, may their memories be for a blessing.*



Map of reported AIDS cases in Los Angeles County, and graph of AIDS diagnoses, from Nechama training materials, 1987, courtesy of Dr. Mark Katz

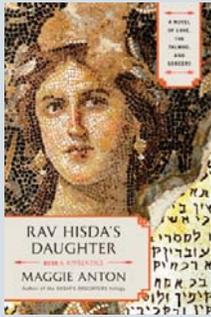
served as its director. Later renamed Los Angeles Jewish AIDS Services, it survives today in the form of Project Chicken Soup, which provides kosher meals twice monthly to persons with HIV/AIDS in the Greater Los Angeles area. Many BCC members have volunteered to cook and deliver food for PCS over the years.

**The Impact of AIDS Within BCC.** In the meantime, AIDS took a heavy toll on the membership of BCC. The scale of the loss can be seen in our annual Yizkor book, which lists all deceased BCC members on its first two pages in the order of their deaths. During the first decade, 1972-1982, only seven BCC members died. From 1983 to 1994, there were 40 members who died, about two-thirds of them from AIDS. In the 18 years since, only 32 members have died, a majority of them from other causes and at older ages. BCC's women members have suffered far fewer losses than men, only one during the first decade, seven during 1983-94, and nine since 1994.

Going to funerals of friends and congregants became a common BCC experience during the 1980s and early 1990s. The fact that so many of the deceased were young, in their 30s and 40s, made the tragedy all the more painful. Rabbi Denise Eger, who succeeded Rabbi Marder in 1988, founded an HIV

# Mazel Tov

Please join the BCC community in wishing the following individuals a hearty "mazel tov" on their recent accomplishments or good news.



**Maggie Parkhurst, aka Maggie Anton**, whose fourth historical novel, *Rav Hisda's Daughter, Book One: Apprentice, a Novel of Love, the Talmud and Sorcery*, was selected by Library Journal as Best Historical Fiction of 2012.



**Arlene Weinstock**, on the publication of her photography book, *I'd be Nice to Come Home to*, a collection of photos of discarded furniture.



**Donna Groman** was named Wilmont Sweeney Juvenile Court Judge of the Year for 2012 by the Juvenile Court Judges of California.



**The Parkhurst-Hoggatt Family**, on the birth of Emily and Gary's daughter Eleanor, November 9, 2012.

PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

Eleanor Parkhurst-Hoggatt at her brit bat with proud parents Emily and Gary, big brothers Benjamin and Nathan, and grandparents Maggie and Dave Parkhurst, Bill and Debbie Hoggatt

## CELEBRATING HANUKKAH



PHOTO: JAY JACOBS

Hanukkah menorahs at 20s/30s Hanukkah party, December 15, 2012



PHOTO: DAVI CHENG

Hanukkah lights at BCC Hanukkah Shabbat, December 14, 2012



PHOTO: DAVI CHENG

Family Hanukkah service, December 14, 2012



PHOTO: DAVI CHENG

Lighting menorahs in the BCC lobby, December 14, 2012

# January 2013

# Tevet/Shevat 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted</i>		<b>1</b> HAPPY (SECULAR) NEW YEAR! BCC Office closed	<b>2</b> 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	<b>3</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>4</b> 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Heather Miller Jeff Bernhardt Drash by Melissa de la Rama	<b>5</b> 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
<b>6</b> 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	<b>10</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>11</b> 7:15 pm Shabbat 101 Rabbi Heather Miller 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Cantor Porat Richard Seltzer Drash by Jay Jacobs	<b>12</b> 10:00 am Parent and Me Ohr Chayim
<b>13</b> 10:30 am 20s/30s Brunch Meet and Greet BCC staff and clergy	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	<b>17</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study 7:30 pm Book Reading <i>Justice in the City</i> Aryeh Cohen	<b>18</b> 7:15 pm Shabbat 101 Cantor Porat 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Cantor Porat Kadin Henningsen	<b>19</b> 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
<b>20</b> 11:00 am Men's Havurah Stanley Kubrick Retrospective at LACMA 2:00 pm Women's Havurah Bowling Midtown Lanes	<b>21</b> MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY BCC Office Closed	<b>22</b> 7:30 pm Torah Study Book of Samuel Rabbi Rachel Adler	<b>23</b> 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	<b>24</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>25</b> 6:30 pm Catered Dinner 7:15 pm Shabbat 101 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Tu B'Shevat Rabbi Heather Miller Cantor Porat	<b>26</b> TU B'SHEVAT 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
<b>27</b> 10:00 am (private homes) BCC Book Group <i>The Fugu Plan</i> Snack and Story PJ Library 3:00 pm Reading/Panel <i>On Sacred Ground</i> Jeff Bernhardt	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 7:30 pm Torah Study Book of Samuel Rabbi Rachel Adler	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study		

# February 2013

# Shevat/Adar 5773

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted</i>					<b>1</b> 8:00 Shabbat Service Bracha Yael Davi Cheng	<b>2</b> 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> 7:30 pm Torah Study Book of Samuel Rabbi Rachel Adler	<b>6</b> 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	<b>7</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>8</b> 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Cantor Porat Robin Berkovitz Drash by Adam Barron	<b>9</b> 10:00 am Parent and Me Ohr Chayim
<b>10</b> 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> 7:30 pm Torah Study Book of Samuel Rabbi Rachel Adler	<b>13</b> 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	<b>14</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>15</b> 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Cantor Porat Rabbinic Student D'ror Chankin-Gould	<b>16</b> 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy potluck
<b>17</b> 2:00 pm L'Chayim Legacy Circle LGBT Financial Planning Seminar	<b>18</b> PRESIDENTS' DAY BCC Office closed	<b>19</b> 7:30 pm Torah Study Book of Samuel Rabbi Rachel Adler	<b>20</b> 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	<b>21</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>22</b> 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Heather Miller Cantor Porat	<b>23</b> 10:00 am Ohr Chayim EREV PURIM 7:00 BCC Purim Spiel and Megillah reading
<b>24</b> 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark 10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group <i>Unorthodox</i>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> 7:30 pm Torah Study Book of Samuel Rabbi Rachel Adler	<b>27</b> 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	<b>28</b> 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan Torah Study	<b>Mar 1</b> 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbinic Student D'ror Chankin-Gould Herb Toplan Drash by Margie Rothman	<b>Mar 2</b> 10:00 am Ohr Chayim

SEE [BCC-LA.ORG](http://BCC-LA.ORG) FOR UPDATES AND CHANGES.