

גוֹרְנִים



G'VANIM

From the Rabbi's Study...

A Hanukkah "Teaching" For County Supervisors

Rabbi Lisa Edwards



PHOTO: KENNA LOVE

Happy secular New Year to everyone! Even though Hanukkah ended more than a week ago, I wanted to share with you a brief "teaching" I gave on December 16, 2014, on the eve of the first day of Hanukkah, when I was invited to address the LA County Board of Supervisors meeting. Perhaps you already know that BCC's former, and still beloved, Executive Director, Felicia Park-Rogers, now works for newly elected LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl. Felicia's title is "senior field deputy" for Sheila's West Hollywood field office. Mazel tov to Felicia!

I don't know if it's part of her job description, but I'm pretty sure Felicia had something to do with my being the first clergyperson invited by Sheila Kuehl to give an invocation. I enjoy the opportunity to offer invocations in government and other secular settings, but as an advocate for the separation of religion and state, I am careful not to offer actual prayers in such settings. Instead, I offer a teaching related to Judaism, as well as to the work of the government body I am addressing. The fact that the meeting fell on the eve of Hanukkah gave me an opportunity to consider a special part of Hanukkah that often gets overlooked. Following my "teaching" below is the "bio" of me that Supervisor Kuehl read to the supervisors and all in attendance at the meeting.

...

The Jewish holiday of Hanukkah begins tonight and lasts for eight days. Hanukkah is often called the "festival of lights" because each night we add one more candle to a Hanukkah menorah.

I brought this Hanukkah lamp to show you. The eight candles go here, all in a row. But it's this ninth candle, the one that stands higher than the others, that I'm thinking about this morning. It's called the shamash candle, the "helper," "the attendant." Its purpose is to light the other lights, but like the other candles each night, we leave it burning. Should one of the other candles blow out accidentally, the shamash can be used to re-light it. If you need light to see by, the shamash is there.

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"Songs from the Road" Concert Fills Sanctuary

Larry Nathenson

Our highly talented Cantor Juval Porat has done it again! For the fourth year in a row, he has organized and performed in a December concert bringing an incredible range of talent to our sanctuary. Each of his concerts has drawn a large crowd, requiring extra chairs to accommodate those who buy tickets at the door, and shining a bright light on the darkest time of the year.

In 2011, after we moved into our beautiful new sanctuary in April, Cantor Porat organized and performed in a summer concert entitled "Home: Cantors in Concert Celebrating BCC's New Building." All of the songs had some connection to the theme of "home" from a variety of perspectives and (as Rabbi Lisa Edwards told us) in all four of BCC's sacred languages – Hebrew, Yiddish, English, and Broadway! As if that weren't enough to keep him busy, Cantor Porat sang solo a few months later in a December concert entitled "Love in US," accompanied by several talented musicians. The BCC sanctuary was transformed into a cabaret that evening, as Juval sang more than a dozen songs relating to the theme of "love" ranging from Cole Porter and Ira Gershwin to Annie Lennox and Katy Perry, plus monologues from John Bowe's "US – Americans Talk About Love" (on subjects including a male same-

Continued on Page 3

The shamash sits higher than the others — so you might think it's on a throne, to be worshipped; but its role would better be described as watching over the others, protecting them, "lighting a fire under them" — rather than ruling over them. The Shamash candle sits higher, but it's not a different kind of candle, it's just like all the others in the box.

I hope you know by now that my message this morning is that you, the Board of Supervisors, are like the shamash candles — the ones who bring light. Some people call the supervisors the "kings and queens," but like the best royalty, you are caretakers not absolute rulers. You set things in motion, you guard the others, you light fires, and re-light when a fire sputters or goes out too soon...and you allow others to shine, to burn brightly, to be part of the light that comes forth from the work you do — the work we all do together. And there is so much work to be done.

Thank you to Supervisor Sheila Kuehl for inviting me here today. And congratulations again to you and to Supervisor Solis as you begin your journeys on the Board of Supervisors. May all five of you working together indeed bring more light, not just at the darkest times, but every day you work together in the years to come.

Oh and Happy Hanukkah — I know

you're not supposed to accept gifts, but I brought a shamash candle for each of you.

Then the following was read by Supervisor Kuehl to all assembled:

Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Ph.D., has been a Jewish lesbian activist from the pulpit, on the page, on the Web, in the classroom, and in the streets of Los Angeles. She is in her 21st year as rabbi of Los Angeles congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim (BCC), "House of New Life," the first synagogue in the world founded by gays and lesbians [1972], and today an LGBTQs inclusive, progressive, diverse community celebrating Jewish faith and culture.

A frequent contributor to the Los Angeles Jewish Journal, she is widely published in books on queer and Jewish topics, as well as on websites where her scholarship on traditional Jewish texts combines with the personal and the contemporary. Rabbi Edwards and her wife, lesbian activist and archivist Tracy Moore, have been together 29 years, marrying in a Jewish ceremony in 1995 and a California civil ceremony in 2008. [Sheila inserted a "yay" after each mention of our wedding ceremonies.]

L'shalom,
Rabbi Lisa

For news, events and keeping in touch with the community: Like us on Facebook www.facebook.com/templebcc 

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

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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.

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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.

sex relationship after years of drug and alcohol addiction and a female same-sex relationship after a conservative Christian marriage).

In December 2012 Cantor Porat capped our 40th anniversary celebrations with "Voices: Celebrating Four Decades of Musical Artistry in the House of New Life." Once again he assembled an outstanding group of performers, both vocal and instrumental, to explore mostly liturgical music over the 40 years of BCC's existence. The numbers performed included Debbie Friedman and Savina Teubal's "Lechi Lach," first performed at BCC in 1986 and now well known around the world, and Cantor Porat's original song "House of New Life" with BCC member and pianist Tamara Kline.

Last year we were treated to a series of four concerts from October through December, under the banner of Club 6090, a new entertainment venue created by Kenna Love specially for BCC, with the generous assistance of Cantor Porat, Robert Levy, and others. The first two concerts featured other performers including a colorful jam band called "The Peculiar," Czech Jewish/Roma singer and violinist Iva Bittova, and Lawrence Juber, former lead guitarist for Paul McCartney's band "Wings." Cantor Porat performed in the remaining concerts, first with pianist, composer, and singer Jose Promis and then with the klezmer band "Mostly Kosher."

Which brings us to the evening of December 13, 2014, and "Songs from the Road," a flexible theme that allowed each of the performers to select a song related to life's journeys, physical or spiritual. Each of the cantors and singers performed a solo or duet along with several pieces performed by the full chorus, and almost all the numbers were expertly accompanied by Jeanelle LaMance on piano. Once again the songs were varied and evoked many different emotions, ranging from humorous to tear-jerking and everything in between.

Liturgical music was well represented. The chorus performed "Psalm 150" by 19th century composer Louis Lewandowski, "Kiddush" as arranged by Kurt Weill, and "Hashkiveinu" as arranged by Bob Remstein (a less "sweet" version than we are used to, evoking the dangers of nighttime). Cantor Rachel Goldman sang Meir Finkelstein's "Sim Shalom." The impending holiday of Hanukkah was also marked by the chorus with "I Have a Little Dreydel," both the familiar melody and a hilarious Doo-Wop version.

The concert featured Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer's early composition "Zamar Noded" (performed by Cantors Juval Porat and Aviva Rosenbloom) and her more famous "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav" sung by the full chorus. Other Hebrew songs included "Laila, Laila" (a rather sad lullaby performed by Cantor Sue Deutsch), "B'Osher Uv'oni" (for richer or poorer, performed by



PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

Performers at the "Songs from the Road" concert, left to right: Pianist Jeanelle LaMance, Education Director Leah Zimmerman, Cantor David Reinwald, Cantor Jennifer Bern-Vogel, Cantor Juval Porat, Cantor Paul Buch, Cantor Rachel Goodman, Cantor/Rabbi Alison Wissot, Cantorial Soloist Alan Scott, Cantor Sue Deutsch, Cantor Aviva Rosenbloom

Cantor David Reinwald), and "Yeffe Nof" with lyrics by medieval Spanish poet Yehuda Halevi (performed by Cantor Porat and Cantorial Soloist Alan Scott).

Yiddish and German songs included Cantor Jennifer Bern-Vogel's performance of "Vi Ahin Zol Ikh Geyn," and the chorus's performance of Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy's "Wie der Hirsch Schreit." In English, we heard Cantor Paul Buch sing Kurt Weill's "Lost in the Stars," and Rabbi Cantor Alison Wissot sang "Home," by Tim Rice and Alan Menkin.

BCC's own Education Director Leah Zimmerman, who revealed her acting talents last Purim in "Fiddler on the BCC Roof," now displayed her vocal expertise in "I Won't Mind," a beautiful but somewhat sad piece about loving children and having to give them back to their parents after teaching and caring for them.

Appearing by video was Matthew Cohen, who has performed at BCC on occasion, with his original piece "Tzillim" (sounds), consisting of a variety of sounds recorded on his recent trip to Israel with "A Wider Bridge," an organization that builds links between GLBT Jews in Israel and North America. The sounds ranged from the playing of matkot (a tennis-like game) and waves at the beach in Tel Aviv to bells at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Muslim call to prayer in Jerusalem.

Proceeds from the concert will go to BCC and to Project Chicken Soup, which provides kosher meals to people living with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other illnesses in the Los Angeles area. In addition to Cantor Porat and the other performers, we give thanks to the many volunteers who gave of their time to make this happen, including Robert Levy and Michael King for ticket sales, Richard Lesse and Everlyn Hunter for sound and video, Leigh Grode, Joan Spittler and Bruce Weil for refreshments, Yanir Dekel for program design, and other BCC officers, Board members, and staff whose hard work helped make this concert such a resounding success.

Queer Jewish Clergy Retreat Offers New Spiritual Insights

Cantor Juval Porat

PHOTO: KENNA LOE



In 2009, as my studies at the Abraham Geiger College drew to a close and my ordination was approaching, I found myself sharing my story often with the German media. “First trained Reform cantor in Germany since World War II” was a title they seemed very curious about. I never thought of mentioning my sexual orientation,

as I never thought it mattered. I remember my irritation reading about my “soft features” in an article, which I assume was intended to describe my body language. Was “soft features” a way of suggesting I was effeminate and perhaps gay? I realize that beyond my sexual orientation being irrelevant to my ordination and my profession, its potential revelation stirred up a wound of shame and sorrow I wasn’t quite ready for.

I wrote an abbreviated form of this insight on a piece of butcher paper taped along a wall of Congregation Sha’ar Zahav in San Francisco in early December during Nehirim’s first LGBTQI Jewish clergy retreat. Rabbi Lisa Edwards and I were there among 64 rabbis, cantors, students and others. In the four days I spent there, I felt pushed out of my comfort zone, comforted by like-minded souls, amazed by queer text interpretations, and transported by original forms of liturgy. Mostly I felt in touch with seeming contradictions – the joy of living in a time and place of freedom, contrasted with the sadness of those who have been excluded as clergy because of their sexual preference.

Having grown up with traditional liturgy and often being nervous about modifications of the Hebrew, I felt a surprising connection to the queer *Amidah* (silent prayer), as formulated by the creative writers of Sha’ar Zahav’s own prayer book, acknowledging God as the one “in whom are united all separations...queer ourselves, made of heaven and earth, day and night, female and male.”

I experienced the wonder of living in a time and place in which our trans-brothers and sisters might consider our ancestors Abraham and Sarah as gender-fluid, transitioning towards their most authentic selves. You might raise an eyebrow or two (or not, and congratulations to you for that!) while trying to wrap your mind around the idea of Abraham and Sarah being in transition, but an actual *midrash* (exegesis of Torah texts) in the Talmud (tractate *Yevamot* 74:A-B) suggests just that!

I experienced the power of living in a time and place in which we can discuss BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadomasochism) as a possible spiritual practice, or the blessing for unexpected intimacy found in Sha’ar Zahav’s prayer book and originally a blessing for anonymous sex. The blessing suggests that, just like Jacob, “who has encountered a stranger with whom he grappled all night,” who “never knew the stranger’s name, yet their encounter was a blessing,” we too can find blessings in intimate times with another person, possibly a stranger, “turning strange places into holy ground and strangers into a source of blessing.” The attempt to elevate unexpected encounters into something spiritual and the process of integrating that into the prayer book, as told by Rabbi Camille Angel and Maggid Andrew Ramer, moved me immensely and I couldn’t help but feel awe for being part of a community that fosters a more compassionate humanity by offering such insights.

I haven’t yet processed music’s facilitative power in a gathering such as the LGBTQI retreat, but based on the closing song session, in which we chanted “*Hineh Ma Tov*” (How good it is) for *achim* (brothers), *achayot* (sisters), and *kulanu* (and all of us) to be in one space together, or my I-kissed-a-girl-and-I-liked-it-*niggun* (yes, that happened). I can’t wait to further utilize music for future retreats.

There’s so much more to share, but I’ll leave you with that. It’s Hanukkah, as I write these lines - another opportunity to look at our contrasts and contradictions. On the one hand we light candles in memory of a miracle and a victory over oppression, brought by the war of the Maccabees against the Syrians, and on the other hand we read the words of Zechariah in the Hanukkah haftarah that neither might, nor power, but spirit alone will lead to real peace.

I also wonder whether there’s a difference between a blessing and a miracle. Looking back at the retreat, having experienced the blessing of being in an open, safe and compassionate place and time, I’d like to believe that it’s up to us to nurture those blessings into miracles. And perhaps our inner contradictions - the sadness and the joy, the peace and the terror, the mundane and the religious — can serve us as a source of strength rather than tension as we reveal ourselves as LGBTQI Jews in our lives and communities.

B’shalom,
Juval

President's Message

BCC - A Place For All Reasons

Lauren Schlau



PHOTO: HILARY LENTINI

Recently I attended an LGBT community event for women. During the evening, I ran into a woman I thought looked familiar (I know we've all heard that one before!). After a bit of conversation, and with my *Jewdar* getting vibes, I asked, "you look familiar - have you ever been to BCC?" It turned out she is Jewish and had been friendly with BCC

members I know well. I mentioned my long term BCC affiliation and she immediately made sure to tell me that she strongly identifies as a cultural Jew, but in no uncertain terms has no interest or belief in Judaism as a religion.

She looked to be bracing for me to try to convince her otherwise, but I said simply "I get that." I agreed with her right to believe as she wants, as do I, and all of us should be able to do. Then I mentioned a range of non-religious things we do at BCC, and asked if she'd be interested in attending a BCC social event. She actually said she'd consider it, and gave me her e-mail address to receive our weekly e-bulletin.

I'd like her to experience our events and of course at some point become a member even as a Jewish non-believer. Aren't we more than a synagogue, a house of worship? BCC does and should offer a warm, comfortable, engaging, and sociable place whatever one's position on the Jewish spectrum. And we have been doing a great job of making sure that our offerings are high quality, provide memorable experiences, help attendees connect to one another and to BCC, and make people want to return.

An excellent example is our recent cantors' concert produced by and "starring" our own Cantor Juval. From the theme, Songs from the Road, the organization, planning, and staging, to the numerous little details, this event really reached in and tugged at the hearts, minds and souls of all who attended. Each cantor brought and sang with caring and ruach a personally meaningful selection, ranging from secular to liturgical. It was a class-A event all the way!

In looking through our BCC events calendar, almost each day of each month one can see a film, discuss a book, hear a lecture, attend a class, study Torah or Talmud, go bowling, eat brunch, lunch or dinner with BCC havurot, learn to cook in our professional kitchen, or attend a comedy night with other BCCers! And that's only two months' worth, not counting our regular Shabbat services and holiday celebrations!

So to my new friend and others who want something other than our outstanding clergy led services - though we welcome you to attend those as well - try us out! You will find a menu of delicious activities, meet fascinating people, have fun, and be enthralled. Who knows, you may even come back, again and again!

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BCC Book Group Celebrates 20th Anniversary

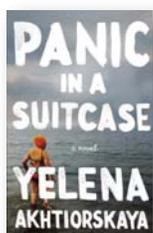
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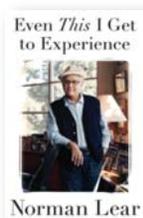
BCC's Book Group (Books and Bagels) has been meeting continuously since January 1995 and will celebrate its 20th anniversary this month. On Friday, January 23, we will mark the occasion with a group candle lighting and a drash by Ginger Jacobs, a current BCC vice president and a founding member of the group. Bob Adels, Ahavah Brooks, and I were also present at that first meeting in January 1995 when we discussed Milton Steinberg's *As A Driven Leaf*. The group meets monthly in members' homes for a bagel brunch and discussion of a book selected by the group. We read a variety of books: fiction and non-fiction, American and Israeli, historical and contemporary. The only requirement is some Jewish content (LGBT content is a plus, but not required).

Book group members at the October 26 brunch; Top row, left to right: Adam Barron, Ilene Cohen, Robin Gurse, Larry Nathenson, Mike Halstater; Bottom row: Cheri Gurse, Richard Seltzer

Our next two meetings are as follows.



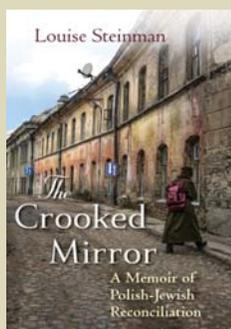
Sunday, January 25, 2015, at 10:00 am
Panic in a Suitcase, by Yelena Akhtiorskaya
A novel about a Ukrainian Jewish family in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, over a period of two decades in the late 20th century, exploring the difficulties of adjusting to a new life in America after leaving the Soviet Union.



Sunday, February 22, at 10:00 am
Even This I Get to Experience, by Norman Lear
A memoir by the famous creator of such iconic television programs as *All in the Family* and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*, spanning the decades of his life from childhood during the Great Depression to his early years in LA, his triumphs as a comedy writer, his political advocacy work, and his reflections on how to manage one's private life while being a well-known public figure.

The group is open to BCC members and non-members, and you are welcome to join us for a particular book that may interest you. For more information, contact Larry Nathenson at Larrynath@aol.com.

The Crooked Mirror A Reading with Louise Steinman



On Sunday, February 8, from 3:00 to 5:00 pm, Louise Steinman will read from and sign her profound and hopeful book, *The Crooked Mirror: A Memoir of Polish-Jewish Reconciliation*. Steinman is curator for the Los Angeles Public Library's distinguished ALOUD series.

Over the past decade, she has traveled in Poland, re-establishing a relationship with the town where her mother's family lived for centuries. She writes of memory projects throughout the country, stewarded by Poles, where they seek to honor the memory of lost Jewish neighbors. What happens when we look at our entwined history together? Contact education@bcc-la.org with any questions.

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Photograph by Kenna Love

The End of an Era: Telephone Minyan Signs Off

Bracha Yael

After more than a decade, the Telephone Minyan of BCC is hanging up the phone to clear the way for innovative programs that will continue serve the current needs of our ever-changing community.

The Telephone Minyan was founded in 2005 by five BCC members who were homebound at that time: Ray Eelsing, Bob Adels, Evelyn Poplawski, Sarah Trutt and me. Feeling isolated from our Jewish spirituality and BCC community inspired us to study the weekly Torah portion via conference phone. Soon after, we were joined by others who sought connection and community for varied reasons — distance, travel, and recuperation from temporary illness or surgery. Quickly, Telephone Minyan events broadened as we added High Holy Day and *Yom HaShoah* services, along with classes-by-phone led by scholars throughout the United States.

Over time, people called in to the Telephone Minyan from remote places like Brazil, Germany, North Dakota, and the San Fernando Valley. We even made forays into providing remote access to BCC's regular Shabbat services—remember those days at 6000 Pico when we balanced the conference phone on the bimah while

the clergy led services?

Most proudly, the Telephone Minyan was the kickstarter to the highly successful BCC Live and its motto, "wherever you go, BCC goes with you!" Since 2011 when we moved to our new building, BCC has been able to live-stream its weekly Shabbat services, members' simchas, classes, guest speakers and special events to a worldwide audience—and archives the videos for those who missed them or want to forward the link to friends. The humble telephone may have been replaced by state-of-the-art technology, but the original aim remains the same—to provide connection and community to all who seek it.

I feel honored to have been given the opportunity to chair and facilitate the Telephone Minyan these many years. I thank all those who helped make it a trailblazer in re-envisioning community for BCC and the larger Jewish and LGBT communities. Check *G'vanim* and the BCC website for more to come in the secular New Year 2015.



Life Transitions Support Group Shirley Hirschberg

The goal of the BCC Life Transitions Group is to enhance participants' spiritual and emotional growth. It deals with issues in areas of concern such as relationships, careers, economics, social life, family, health and bereavement.

Participants will have the opportunity to share their experiences, give and receive mutual support, and exchange coping skills with one another in a confidential atmosphere. Everyone is welcome - members and non-members. The group meets twice a month on the first and third Wednesdays from 7:00 - 9:00 pm.

This support group is facilitated by Shirley Hirschberg, Social Worker. For more information, please call the BCC office at (323) 931-7023, ext. 205.

BCC Launches Lunchtime Learning Program

In response to our community's ongoing thirst for knowing "all things queer and Jewish," BCC is launching Lunchtime Learning, a series of conference phone conversations covering a wide range of LGBT and Jewish topics. All you need is a phone, one hour of free time, and interest in the subject!

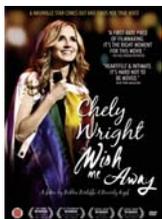
The first topic will be 'Make a Difference in 2015,' based on the teaching in Pirkei Avot: "It is not what one says, but what one does, that makes all the difference in the world." You can join us at noon on February 5th and 12th (Thursdays). Discussion is open to all, and will be led by Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Bracha Yael. It's simple to chime in, just dial 702-851-4044, then when prompted punch 2 and our pass code 22252#.

So mark your calendar to participate in our inaugural gathering. For additional information, please contact Bracha via the BCC office.

A graphic for Jeanelle La Mance, BCC Accompanist since 2002, Piano Teacher for ages 5 & up. The background features musical notation and the word 'MUSIC' with sub-headers: tempo, rhythm, melody, harmony, chords, notes. The text is overlaid on a background of musical notes and staff lines. The text includes: 'MUSIC: tempo rhythm melody harmony chords notes', 'JEANELLE LA MANCE, BCC ACCOMPANIST SINCE 2002', 'PIANO TEACHER LESSONS FOR AGES 5 & UP', and '(323) 819-9258 jtilamance@yahoo.com'.

BCC Film Club Explores Historic Queer Cinema

Gordon Blitz and Bracha Yael



The BCC Film Club will screen three movies at BCC in the first few months of this new year.

Saturday January 17th, *Wish Me Away* is a documentary about Chely Wright, the first country music singer to come out as gay or lesbian. Over three years, the filmmakers were given extraordinary access to Chely's struggle and her unfolding plan to come out publicly. Using interviews with Chely, her family, her pastor, and other key players in Nashville interwoven with Chely's intimate private video diaries, the film goes deep into her back story as an established country music star and then forward as she steps into the national spotlight to reveal her secret. Chronicling the aftermath in her hometown of Nashville and within the larger LGBT community, *Wish Me Away* reveals both the devastation of her own internalized homophobia and the transformational power of living an authentic life. (from Rotten Tomatoes).

Saturday, February 28th, *Some Like It Hot* is not only one of the greatest comedies of all time, but also an important contribution to Queer Jewish cinema. Before we screen the film, Rabbi Lisa Edwards will provide insights into its place in cinematic history. Afterwards, she'll facilitate a group discussion on reactions to the film.

Saturday, April 18th, *Deserts Hearts* in honor of its 30th anniversary. The Advocate ranks it in its top 10 LGBT films of all time because it's "the first 'real' lesbian film (an out lesbian, nobody dies, two women have sex)."

All BCC film events are free and open to the public. Bring your favorite snacks to share! Havdalah and schmooze at 7:00 pm; movie screens at 7:30 pm.

BCC HAVURAH EVENTS: ZUMBA, BOWLING, SHABBAT DINNER

Fernando Torres McCray

The BCC havurot (men's, women's, and 20s/30s) plan the following joint events for January and February.

Zumba Master Class, Sunday January 11, 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. Kick off the new year with some HEAT! Based on the overwhelming response to our first master class, we are doing it again! Come show your love for Zumba® and join us for our second master class. Enjoy 90 minutes of nonstop club style Zumba® fun with Licensed Zumba® Instructors Fergie Torres, Tania Villalbazo, and Gabriela Rodriguez in a nice and friendly environment. A guaranteed party with fresh routines, two DJs playing hot music, and a fun time for all! Tickets are \$3 early bird and \$5 at the door. Email: BCCHavurah@gmail.com for more information.

Bowling at the Lucky Strike: Men's vs. Women's Havurah, Sunday, January 18, 2:00 to 5:00 pm. Let's bowl! BCC men and women will battle each other at Hollywood's Lucky Strike. RSVP is required. \$6 for admission, \$5 for shoes. Please contact BCC's Havurot Chair, Fergie, for more information. Email: BCCHavurah@gmail.com

Pre-Purim Havurot Shabbat Dinner, Friday, February 27, 6:45pm. Please join the whole BCC family for Shabbat Dinner and community. Dinner will begin at 6:45pm and end at 8:00pm, followed by the Ruach Chayim Shabbat service. Reservations and prepayments are required. Please contact the BCC office to reserve and pay. For details on the dinner, contact Fergie at bcchavurah@gmail.com. The early-bird price is \$15 per person and the cost is \$20 per person if paid after Wednesday, February 25.



BCC Havurot chair Fernando Torres McCray with his homemade pizza at the Shabbat dinner on November 21, 2014



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Being Part of the Gang

Sue Katz

Every couple of years I visit Los Angeles from my home in Boston. While it's true that I'm an atheist anarchist activist who identifies as a gastronomical Jew, I never miss a visit to BCC. The atmosphere of community and support is something I haven't felt since the heady days of feminist collectives in the 1970s. The mix of ages, genders, and levels of religious observance is a gift of heterogeneity that is precious in our segmented lives. There's a joy – and that's not a word I often use – in hanging out at this very special building where every inch of real estate has a meaning and every participant has an interpretation.

On Sunday morning, November 9, Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Tracy Moore celebrated my book of short stories about the love lives of older people, *Lillian's Last Affair*, with what they called a "bodacious brunch and book party!" What an honor and delight! Thanks to Lisa and Tracy for



PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

giving me this chance to be part of the BCC world and thanks to everyone who came. Special thanks to Joanie and Leigh, BCC members and caterers extraordinaire, for the scrumptious spread. (Find them here: <http://joanieandleighscakes.com/>). And if you want to know more about *Lillian's Last Affair*, check out the Amazon page here: <http://www.amazon.com/dp/099131221X/?tag=lillianslastaffair-20>.

Sue Katz
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"Hana Luv" Soiree and Art Show Raises Funds for BCC

On Sunday, November 2, Hannah Theille and Kenna Love hosted a very successful art show event at their home to raise money for the William Korthof Building Fund at BCC. There were 15 extraordinary artists who sold their art and crafts and donated 25% to BCC, raising a total of about \$2,300. These included paintings and photographs, jewelry, ceramics,



PHOTO: SILVIA SUKOP

Robin Berkovitz, Pam Postrel, Larry Nathenson, and Kenna Love in front of some of Kenna's photos.

clothing, and other beautiful items.

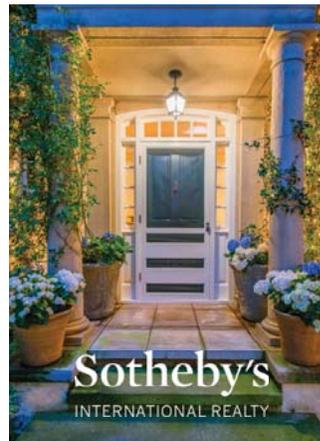
All three "high tea" lunches in their Japanese teahouse were sold out. For those who didn't attend one, Richard Lesse baked his famous brownies and cookies, Leigh Grode and Joanie Spittle baked their famous petit fours, and Lana Soroko and Laurie Newman made their delicious cakes. 17 enthusiastic volunteers helped make this a high quality event, and all who participated commented on how much they enjoyed it.

Hannah and Kenna have graciously opened their beautiful home and yard for events of this type before, and they are always a lot of fun and a feast for the eyes and the palate.



PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

Lunch seating in Hannah and Kenna's teahouse



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A Jewish Outpost in Kobe, Japan

Larry Nathenson

On my recent vacation in Japan (November 10 to 24, 2014), I paid a visit to a very special and historic synagogue in the city of Kobe. Known as Ohel Shelomo (Tent of Solomon) or Kansai Jewish Community Center (Kansai is the region that includes Osaka, Kobe, and Kyoto), the synagogue is the only functioning one in the country outside Tokyo.

The community dates to the early decades of the 20th century when Jewish merchants from Europe and the Middle East settled in Kobe, a major Japanese port. In those early years there were separate Ashkenazi and Sephardi communities, meeting in congregants' homes. By the 1930s there were two synagogues with fluid memberships, in close contact with other Far Eastern Jewish communities in Shanghai and Harbin, Manchuria. As described in the book *The Fugu Plan*, by Rabbi Marvin Tokayer (a former rabbi in Tokyo), the Japanese government at this time encouraged limited Jewish settlement in territory under its control because of the economic expertise and international connections the Jews could offer.

During World War II the Kobe community played an important role in helping to save European Jews fleeing the Nazis, especially those from Lithuania and Poland who made their way across Siberia by train and then by boat to Japan. Members of the Kobe community would meet them at the dock and house them temporarily while their Japanese visas remained in force. Many of these refugees went to Shanghai, and later to the US and Israel after the war. Among the refugees housed in Kobe were the rabbis and students of Mir Yeshiva, the only Eastern European yeshiva to survive the war intact.

The present synagogue building was originally a carpet warehouse owned by one of the members, and was converted into a synagogue in the 1960s and 1970s. It retains the Sephardi style of seating with the bimah in the middle and seats around it. The building is large enough to include a kitchen and dining room, as well as rooms upstairs for members to stay overnight on Shabbat and holidays, as most congregants do not live in the surrounding neighborhood.

The composition of the congregation has changed over the years, and a majority today are Israeli. When I attended the Shabbat morning service on November 15, the conversation during the service and at lunch was mostly in Hebrew. The Shabbat morning service was quite traditional, and when I arrived it took me a while to figure out where in the siddur they were. Before the Torah reading one of the members stood up and conducted an auction for aliyot, which I was able to follow even though it was in Hebrew. Obviously someone has to remember what everyone bid, since no one would pay or write the



PHOTO: LARRY NATHENSON

amounts on Shabbat. The amounts bid were quite small (usually "elef" or "alpayim," meaning 1,000 or 2,000 yen, about \$10 or \$20), so this is obviously not a major fundraiser.

I expected a mechitzah but was quite surprised that the women were behind a curtain in a small section in the back, which looked like a cage to me. Most congregants apparently come to synagogue without their wives, as there were at least 25 men and teenage boys but only two adult women at lunch and only a few small children.

The lunch was quite extensive, with two courses and a small dessert, all obviously prepared in advance. The mincha (afternoon) service began immediately after the birkat ha-mazon (blessing after the meal), presumably so that members could leave early. As a visitor, I was offered an aliyah during the mincha service (without payment). Everyone was friendly but a bit prickly if I didn't follow Orthodox customs. One congregant scolded me as I snapped this photo of the exterior as I was leaving, with the camera I had carefully concealed during the service and lunch.

My friend Jack, who taught English near Osaka for many years, was a pillar of this community. I had planned to visit him on this trip, and after his unexpected passing on second day Rosh Hashanah, I eventually decided I would still go. His Japanese partner Shuichi, who has become known to the congregation since Jack's passing, met me at the synagogue and then showed me around Kobe in the afternoon and around Kyoto the next day. Jack and Shuichi were together for nearly four decades but were largely closeted both at the synagogue and in their professional lives.

For more about my travels in Japan, please see my blog with photos at <http://larryschinaadventure.over-blog.com/article-larry-s-japan-adventure-125090288.html> and the post on BCC People: <http://bcc-la.org/people/larry-nathenson-impressions-of-japan/> which includes some notes on the gay rights situation in Japan.

Mazel Tov

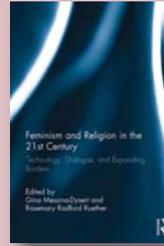
We wish the following BCC members a hearty "mazel tov" for their recent accomplishments and simchas:

Davi Cheng has contributed to the art project **Women of the Book: Jewish Women Recording, Reflecting, Revisioning**. Its website describes it as "a *midrashic* (interpretive) scroll based on the form and content of a traditional Torah scroll and created on 54 parchment panels (the number of Torah portions) by 54 Jewish women artists from around the world. It is an international, multi-denominational installation that acknowledges the centrality of women's voices in the texts of our lives." A traveling exhibit will be installed in museums and galleries with an accompanying art book with interviews and reflections by the artists. Davi's contribution is for the parasha Pekudei and can be found here:

<http://womenofthebook.org/artists/davi-cheng/>

Adam Barron is the new director, manager, and matchmaker of the Pat Abbey Regency Bridge Center in Glendale. He would love to teach you to play and have you join him for a game.

If you have a recent achievement or other good news to share, please contact the BCC office. We want to celebrate with you!



Bracha Yael has had an essay published in the new anthology *Feminism and Religion in the 21st Century: Technology, Dialogue, and Expanding Borders*, edited by Gina Messina-Dysert, Rosemary Radford Ruether. Bracha's essay is entitled "From Telephone to Live Broadcast: Becoming a Brick-and-Mortar Synagogue without Walls" and is based on her experience at BCC as a leader of our pioneering BCC Live and telephone minyan projects.

Felicia Park-Rogers, former BCC Executive Director, is now serving as senior field deputy to newly elected LA County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl in her West Hollywood field office.

KC (Paperno) Wilsey and **Nick Wilsey** celebrated the birth of their daughter Charlotte Rose in November 2014.

JQ International Warmline Serves LGBTQ Jews, Our Families and Allies

Rabbi Rachel Bat-Or, Coordinator, JQ Warmline

- A gay man, threatened by his husband, needs a safe place to stay.
- An unemployed, disabled lesbian needs money to pay her rent.
- A trans man wants information about trans-friendly synagogues he can attend while he's traveling.
- A woman from an Orthodox family needs support to come out.
- A gay teen wants to meet other teens like himself.

All these LGBTQ Jews who made these requests needed resources that embraced both of their identities. Finding inclusive resources has been a long-term problem for us. Sometimes we can find them from an informal network of LGBTQ friends and allies. Sometimes, no matter how much research we did, we had to settle for a resource that served only one of our identities. When that happened, we were split at the root.

That's why the JQ International Warmline was created. It provides resources and social service referrals for LGBTQ Jews, our families and allies. Here are some categories of referrals we have provided.

- Mental, medical, and sexual health providers,
- Jewish schools for all age groups,
- Religious and spiritual institutions,
- Aging and elder care,
- Sexual orientation and gender identity,
- Political activism,
- Social connections.

This is not an exclusive list. Please let us know what you need and we will work to find it for you. Contact the JQ Warmline at 855.JQI.HLPS (855.574.4577) or warmline@JQInternational.org for resources that address all of who you are.

Hanukkah 2014



PHOTO: JONATHAN FALK

BCC children lighting candles at the Hanukkah service, December 19, 2014.



PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

Lisa Rosen, mother of BCC member William Korthof, z'l, pedals the human-powered "green" menorah created in William's memory at the Hanukkah service.

January 2015

Tevet/Shevat 5775

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
	<i>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted</i>				1 HAPPY (SECULAR) NEW YEAR BCC office closed	2 BCC office closed 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Bracha Yael Davi Cheng Guest rabbi Joel Alter	3 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
4 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark St.	5	6 7:00 pm Torah Study Davi Cheng	7 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	8 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study (final session)	9 8:00 pm Shabbat service Dr. Nancy Cohen Herb Toplan	10 10:00 am Ohr Chayim Baby and Me Parent and Me	
11 11:00 am Zumba Master Class All BCC Havurot	12	13 7:30 pm Torah Study Rabbi Miller	14 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	15	16 6:30 pm Early Shabbat service (Intergenerational) Rabbi Miller Cantor Porat	17 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Minyan and Dairy Potluck 7:00 pm BCC Film Club "Wish Me Away"	
18 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 2:00 pm Bowling Men's v. Women's Havurah at Lucky Strike in Hollywood	19 MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY BCC office closed	20 7:30 pm Torah Study Rabbi Miller	21 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	22	23 8:00 pm Shabbat service Cantor Porat Elissa Barrett-Gershick Drash by Ginger Jacobs BCC Book Group 20 th anniversary	24 10:00 am Ohr Chayim	
25 10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group <i>Panic in a Suitcase</i>	26	27 7:30 pm Torah Study Rabbi Miller	28 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	29	30 Ruach Chayim 8:00 am Shabbat service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat Guest Musicians Tu B'Shevat and Shabbat Shirah	31 10:00 am Ohr Chayim	

February 2015

Shevat/Adar 5775

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark St.	2	3 7:00 pm Torah study Rabbi Edwards	4 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	5 12:00 Noon Lunchtime Learning Rabbi Edwards Bracha Yael	6 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Lay songleader	7 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
8 3:00 pm Book Reading and Discussion <i>A Crooked Mirror</i> , by Louise Steinman	9	10 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	11 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	12 12:00 Noon Lunchtime Learning Rabbi Edwards Bracha Yael	13 8:00 pm Shabbat service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	14 10:00 am Ohr Chayim Baby and Me Parent and Me
15 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark	16 PRESIDENTS' DAY BCC office closed	17 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	18 7:00 pm Life Transitions Group Shirley Hirschberg	19	20 6:30 pm Early Shabbat Service Rabbi Miller Cantor Porat 8:00 pm After Shul Special for Jewish Disability Month	21 10:00 am Saturday Morning Minyan and Dairy Potluck
22 10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group <i>Even This I Get to Experience</i> , by Norman Lear	23	24 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	25 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	26	27 6:45 pm Pre-Purim Shabbat Dinner (RSVP) 8:00 pm Shabbat Service, Ruach Chayim Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat Guest Musicians	28 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 7:00 pm BCC Film Club "Some Like it Hot"

PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP



Rabbi Lisa Edwards pedals the human-powered "green" menorah created for the December 19, 2014 Hanukkah service in memory of William Korthof, z'l, and his passion for both renewable energy and cycling.

PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP



Rabbis Heather Miller and Lisa Edwards, Rebetzin Tracy Moore, and Cantor Juval Porat during the singing of Debbie Friedman's "Not by Might, Not by Power" at the Hanukkah service on December 19, 2014.