AIDS at 30 Years
Back to the Beginning: A Reflection

It had only been a little more than a decade since the Stonewall riots announced “gay liberation.” After years of swirling on dance floors (not all of us, but some for sure!) to songs with titles only the future would be able to deem prophetic (“Stayin’ Alive,” “I Will Survive”), the community that was just finding its place in the world was forced to confront the challenge of its lifetime.

The first cases of gay men dying from immune system disorders were published on June 5, 1981—the day considered the onset of the epidemic. 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. In early 1985, when I moved to Los Angeles from Wisconsin, I had never met a person with AIDS. (That was soon to change…)

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.

Where did the support come from in those early, dire days? 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. (It was corny to many, but do you remember singing, “That’s What Friends Are For”?)

The health community—including physicians who themselves had AIDS, and who became activists to propel research and treatments—went from relative ignorance to acquire an awe-inspiring body of knowledge. And since this epidemic occurred at the cusp of the digital age, we could share what we knew more easily than ever.

Mark Katz, MD

Continued on Page 2
The spiritual community, through clergy and through other healing modalities, offered hope and support to those who were failing the few treatments we had. ASOs (AIDS service organizations) were created throughout the world, but I have often boasted that in Los Angeles, by our combination of huge population and the way we looked at the world collaboratively, locally we created the most extensive network of services anywhere. Free psychotherapy? A support group for every day of the week (if one so desired)? Food pantries? Bilingual or hearing-impaired services? We had it all here.

The government, assailed for having been a deterrent to progress in the early years of the epidemic under President Reagan, ultimately created funding programs and helped people move, along with all of the other support systems, toward life rather than towards death.

As we look back 30 years, where are we now?

We do not yet have a vaccine, nor a medication that can actually boost the injured immune system. Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). The government has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill). Our best weapon has been to slow down the virus (which in itself can and does kill).

We still have major work to do in equality of distribution of medications and treatments—developing nations have progressed in their abilities to offer meds to all who need them, but a majority of HIV-positive persons who should be on treatment still are not.

Within our own communities, the issue of prevention has resurfaced in the past years. Youth, not having in its collective unconscious what we who lived through the 80s and early 90s endured, are taking risks with sexual and other behaviors that have resulted in (too) many new infections. But here is some of the good news: First, we have potent, durable antiviral regimens—with more than two dozen FDA-approved antiretrovirals. And the most commonly prescribed regimen in the U.S. is one pill once daily.

Also, in the U.S., we have succeeded in raising the life expectancy of someone newly diagnosed with HIV, who has access to health care and to medications, to the same as someone without HIV! While early hopes for a cure have not been realized, HIV truly has achieved the status of “a chronic and manageable disease.”

In the spirit of remembering what we have done, the bridges we have traversed, and to honor those who are no longer with us, please join us this World AIDS Day at The One Archives.

Editor’s Note: Sadly, on October 12, BCC lost one of our few remaining survivors from the early years of AIDS, Avram Chill. Please see Rabbi Edwards’ moving eulogy on pages 3 and 4.

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Excerpted from the hesped (eulogy) given at Avram’s funeral on October 17, 2011:

In his recent application to rabbinical school, BCC member Avram Chill reminisced about growing up with family members ranging from ultra-Orthodox Satmar Hasidim to Conservative to barely observant. Many were involved in social justice and labor issues, all four grandparents were Zionists, some also Communist or Socialist. He wrote that “the strongest impression I have of the many extended family gatherings we had was that no matter how heated the arguments about either religion or the events of the day, there was always respect shown for each other and a recognition of everyone’s value as a human being.”

So now we know it was “in his DNA” – that respect he would show for others, that recognition of everyone’s value as a human being. That sums up a lot of what any of us might say today about Avram Chill.

Avram died the day after National Coming Out Day and just hours before the start of the Jewish holy day of Sukkot. He was not one to hide who he was, putting off rabbinical school all those years ago because he was not about to step back into the closet. Starting in college in the late 1960s, Avram came out early and often – and helped others do the same by working, for example, for one of the first telephone hotlines, as well as for a journal called “Chutzpah,” while still an undergrad at the University of Chicago. Years later, using his training as a social worker, he served as the first director of Nechama, a Jewish Response to AIDS, an agency of the LA Jewish Federation that began at BCC and continues to serve our local community as Project Chicken Soup.

Over the past 20 years or so, Avram himself struggled with the vagaries of HIV/AIDS, and perhaps even more so with the drugs intended to assist him in that struggle. As our friend Ray Eelsing put it: “Avram and others bore the brunt of the disabling effects of early AIDS medications that tended to hurt more than help in their fight against HIV… Much of the medical advances that were made in HIV research were done on the backs of those who contracted the disease early.”

Nonetheless, as Avram and Wesley Joe (his partner and husband of 29 years) said in deciding to marry in 2008, we “don’t know what’s going to happen so let’s grab the opportunity while it presents itself.”

In just the past year and a half or so, Avram has been enrolled in the Aleph Institute – the Jewish Renewal program — working toward his long time dream of rabbinic ordination. In his application to the program, Avram wrote:

“I have a need, like the need for food of a hungry person, for more knowledge and insight that I can bring to the ways I have effect in the world. Too often it seems like I must choose between study, meditation and social action. I long to integrate them more fully into my life and my actions in the world.”

That’s the Avram we all knew. Unlike many who have faced life-threatening illness, Avram stayed focused outward, always looking for ways to make a difference in his tikkun olam work. Although helping PWAs, and political action around AIDS services, and marriage equality are all on his social action agenda, you’re equally likely to find there work with JWW (Jewish World Watch) or committee work at our synagogue (ranging from tikkun olam to ritual and education committees to the board of directors) or in his neighborhood – even helping create the Silver Lake neighborhood council and write its constitution.

Avram appreciated both traditional liturgy and new ritual. In addition to encouraging us to reinstate the traditional versions of some prayers, he many years ago helped found (with Dean Desman) the more traditional service we have once a month on Shabbat morning. But Avram also loved to play with new language or point out the oddities in the tradition. His playful reflections on Lecha Dodi and the gender strangeness (especially within the context of an LGBT synagogue) of the Shabbos “queen” (or bride, for that matter) provoked amusement, thought, and self-reflection among the rest of us.

Continued on Page 4
Behind the Headlines:
Israel at a Crossroads – Still or Again?
Barbara Kroll

BCC is pleased to join with the New Israel Fund in bringing to our temple Gershom Gorenberg, an acclaimed Israeli historian and journalist, who will be discussing “The Crisis of Israeli Democracy – Positive Prospects for the Future.” Gorenberg will be with us on Tuesday, November 15, 2011, starting at 7:30 p.m.

Beleaguered Israel … always in the news, always controversial, always arousing conflicting passions. Israel was founded as a democratic state, but many have maintained that the ongoing conflict over the lands occupied by Israel since 1967 threatens the foundations of its democracy. And given the recent discussions at the UN about the possible recognition of a Palestinian state, Gorenberg’s talk couldn’t be more timely.

Drawing from ideas in his newest book, The Unmaking of Israel, Gorenberg’s discussion will provide a guided journey through lesser-known elements of Israel’s past, an insightful analysis of present realities, and a vision of hope for the future. While preparing his manuscript and following the best traditions of investigative journalism, Gorenberg successfully applied to the Israeli Supreme Court to gain access to military papers previously classified as secret. His book will be published in November and will be available for purchase and signing at his BCC talk.

Over the past several decades, Gorenberg has written extensively about Middle Eastern and Israeli politics and about the interaction of religion and politics. The American-born and educated Gorenberg has been living in Israel since 1977. He describes himself as “a left-wing, skeptical Orthodox Zionist Jew.” Those familiar with Israeli politics will find these terms somewhat self-contradictory and will be curious to learn how to unpack this description.

Currently, Gorenberg is a senior correspondent for The American Prospect, a political monthly magazine with liberal leanings. Previously he served for many years as associate editor of the Jerusalem Report, an Israeli biweekly news magazine published in English, and he was a frequent contributor in both English and Hebrew to numerous other publications. His previously published books include The Accidental Empire: Israel and the Birth of the Settlements, 1967-1977 (Holt Paperbacks, 2007). As reported by Jay Freeman in his review of that volume on Booklist, Gorenberg explains that the policy of establishing settlements was “the result of myriad small decisions and actions by both major and minor players on the Israeli political, military, and religious landscapes. At no time could one speak of a clear, coherent, and constant government policy.” Gorenberg’s new book is likely to be no less interesting, enlightening and controversial.

This is a free event being co-sponsored with Ikar, Temple Beth Am, the Shtible Minyan, and Rabbi Joshua Levine Grater. Mr. Gorenberg will sign copies of his book after the event. RSVP to ellen@nif.org or 310.566.5693.

(continued from page 3) From the Rabbi’s study…In Memoriam: Avram Chill

of us.

At BCC, as many of you know, we edited a prayer in our siddur back to its original traditional form because of Avram. In the Gevurot prayer of the Amidah we changed from the Reform version of Atah gibor l’olam Adonai mechayai hakol – “You are mighty, God, who gives life to all” back into mechayai hamelitim – “who restores the dead to life.” We restored the traditional version of our prayer because, Avram told us, he had experienced this miracle — “who restores the dead to life” — in his own life more than once, an experience that gave Avram to understand the prayer literally. Would that that prayer would be answered for us again today…that our beloved Avram be back among the living.

Toward the end of my letter of recommendation for Avram to the rabbinical program he was enrolled in until his death, I wrote:

“If quirky and terrifically smart, thoughtful and funny and dedicated to a Judaism embracing of diversity and change, and yet appreciative beyond measure of tradition, sounds like a good candidate for your program, then Avram Chill will be a wonderful new addition to your impressive cadre of learners. I hope you will accept him. I look forward to seeing the kind of rabbi he will become, and to welcoming him as an already beloved colleague.”

How sad for us all that we won’t get to see the kind of ordained rabbi he would become, but what a blessing that we got to see him all these years as teacher, learner, seeker of knowledge and justice and peace, friendship and love.

Rest in peace, Avram, knowing your body wore out long before your influence – for surely your influence will live on and on amongst those of us who knew you.

Zekher tzadik livracha “May the memory of the righteous be for a blessing”
Reflections on Aleinu

Cantor Juval Porat

This introduction to the Aleinu prayer was given during the first day of Rosh Hashana:

The Aleinu, one of our oldest prayers, was composed to introduce the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashana, announcing God’s ultimate and universal rule. We praise the Sovereign of the Universe and proclaim the greatness of the creator who spread the heavens and established the earth. That’s quite an impressive creator we have here! Powerful and with a strong relationship to us. At times he’s a shepherd and we’re his flock, at times she’s an older mother who’s waiting for her children to come home and always – always do we carry within us the reminder that we’re created in her image. How amazing is it to realize that we are made in the exact image of that very creator. Our triumphs and our defeats. Our joy and our sadness. Our gentleness and our roughness mirror the image of God. For me, with all of the controversy surrounding the Aleinu prayer, it is a great reminder of our incredible abilities as human beings. The power we have to heal and destroy, accept and reject, forgive or bear a grudge.

Aleinu’s conclusion reads: “And it is said: God will be sovereign over all the land. On that day, there will be one God whose name will be one.” This implies a perfect sovereign, supplying us with the ultimate truth, the ultimate “rights” and “wrongs”, a sovereign with one name agreed upon all humanity. Yet we know, it’s tricky. Can all humanity be forced to come up with an all-satisfying template as a name for God? Do we want all humanity be forced to come up with an all-satisfying template as a name for God? And even more so, God is inextricably connected to us humans as we’re figuring out for ourselves what’s wrong and what’s right. What is God without us, who go through the journey of exploration? Can such a God, who is so dependent on us praising him or her, ever be so perfect?

There are no easy answers. However, there are thoughts written down and melodies sung to help us find our comfort zone with that prayer. On this birthday of the world, on this new beginning for all of us I’d like to share a thought by Jewish philosopher Henry Slonimsky: Maybe God and perfection are at the end and not at the beginning. Maybe it is a growing world and a growing humanity and a growing God, and perfection is to be achieved and not something to start with.

B’shalom
Juval

BCC to Host “Love in Us” Concert

Remember those BCC postcards that were distributed during BCC’s new home dedication back in April? Among the various programs listed to take place in our new home was a so-called “Cantor unplugged” event. Back then, the date and content had yet to be determined, but now, thanks to some inspirational encounters and conversations, the event has begun to take shape.

On Saturday, December 3rd, I’d like to invite you to an evening of music and spoken word, Broadway tunes, jazz standards, some original songs, real stories by real people – all evolving around the ever-inspiring various states of love. “Love in Us” will be a very special evening where BCC’s space will be turned (with the help of some magic spots and curtains) into a small theatre - or at least the closest it can be! Rehearsals have already begun and I’m very excited both to step out of my cantor comfort zone as well as to present you what we’ve been working hard to make an enjoyable night. Proceeds will benefit Project Chicken Soup and One National Gay & Lesbian Archives. More information can be found on BCC’s website: bcc-la.org/love-in-us. Tickets can also be purchased via phone: 323-931-7023 #205

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As we begin this new year of 5772, I would like to take a moment to thank each of our BCC members for renewing your membership in BCC, and for your commitment to maintaining our sacred community. Your membership contribution as well as the important one-year "One-for-BCC" donation will help us to maintain our financial health as we proceed through this year.

Additionally, so many of you responded so generously with pledges towards our High Holiday appeal and the donors match that we presented on Yom Kippur. The BCC community as a whole, and our members as individuals, never ceases to amaze me with your generosity. I would like to thank our four speakers, Bonnie Kaplan, Mark Miller, Bryan Cooper and Nate Looney who spoke so passionately about their BCC experience. Your extra efforts and your willingness to open up and share your personal experiences really moved us. Thank you again.

I truly enjoyed seeing so many of you at our High Holiday services over the past month. I hope each of you enjoyed these services and we need to show appreciation to our outstanding clergy team of Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Cantor Juval Porat, Student Rabbi and Scholar-In-Residence Dr. Rachel Adler and Student Rabbi D’or Chankin-Gould. You are a great team and work so well together providing deeply spiritual and moving services, thought-provoking drashot and beautiful, contemplative and uplifting music.

We need to give a big thank you also to our choir led by Cantor Porat with piano accompanist Jeanelle LaMance. You are certainly sounding better and better each time you sing and we are all so amazed at the many new songs presented to us this year.

As we move into the fall and winter months, come by and join in one of our many new programs and events that we can now offer in our new building. Check out the calendar of upcoming events and pick out something that works for you. And then come join us! I’ll see you there,

Bruce Maxwell

Adult Classes Explore Liturgy, Trans Issues, Intro to Judaism

Kadin Henningsen, Education Chair

BCC’s fall adult lineup continues with the following exciting courses:

**Liturgy & Talmud with Dr. Rachel Adler.** Tuesdays, November 1, 8, 22, and 29 at 7-9pm. (Members: Free / Non-Members: $18 per class or $54 for all 5 classes; materials included) Join Dr. Rachel Adler for in-depth study of our liturgy using original sources to trace structure and content. Don’t worry if you don’t know Hebrew. We will have translations. We’ll be dealing mainly with the structure and logic of the Sh’ma and the Amidah.

**Transgender 101 and How to be a Transgender Ally.** Thursday, November 17th, 7-9pm. (Free for members and non-members) Join us for a conversation with Kadin Henningsen, BCC’s first transgender member to serve on its Board of Directors, and Jeffrey Janis, trans ally extraordinaire. Learn about the history of gender construction, “trans” terminology, issues trans people face and how you can be an ally and activist for trans equality.

The Trans 101 class is the launch of a monthly “trans” text study. On the third Thursday of the month (starting December 15) our weekly Torah study will devote the first 30 minutes to exploring text relating to gender and trans issues in Torah and other sacred texts.

**Intro to Judaism & Adult B’Nai Mitzvah.** Tuesdays, December 6, 13, 20, and 27 at 7-9pm. (Members: Free / Non-Members: $12 each class or $36 for all 4; materials included) New to Judaism? Missed out on having a bar/bat mitzvah? Now’s your chance to stop wandering and starting wondering as we explore basic concepts, texts and rituals of Judaism with an optional B’Nai Mitzvah track focused on reading and chanting Torah.

The Adult Education Committee is also hard at work planning more classes around our favorite Jewish subject, food! Exciting things are happening with the committee and we can use your help! There are lots of ways to get involved – planning events, promoting events, or helping with greeting and registration at our many events. Our next committee meeting is Sunday, November 13th from 2-4 pm. If you have questions or ideas for classes, join in our meetings or email committee chair, Kadin Henningsen – kadinhenningsen@gmail.com.
Shabbat happens at BCC, and not only on Friday nights! This fall, we mark the 20th anniversary of another special BCC tradition, our monthly Shabbat morning service. Since 1991 (and some say, even before that), BCC members and friends have gathered every third Saturday of the month. Over that time, the Minyan (as this service is known) has developed a distinctive style, infused with BCC’s informal, welcoming spirit and the warmth of community.

Lay-led (and honored to have Rabbi Edwards and Cantor Porat among the regular minyanaires), the service features rousing melodies, readings in English and Hebrew, and beautiful Torah chanting using both Sephardi and Ashkenazi trope (cantillation). In fact, when members of the BCC Choir are present (which is usually the case), the singing, combined with the radiant morning light that fills our new sanctuary, has been described as “absolutely heavenly” (in the words of one Shabbat queen). Maggie Parkhurst leads an illuminating and insightful discussion of the week’s Torah portion, with Rashi’s commentary as a jumping-off point. Learners are welcome and no prior knowledge of Hebrew or the Shabbat morning service is required.

The Minyan currently uses the Sim Shalom prayer book, which is fully translated into English and includes some English transliteration, and a project is underway to transliterate the entire service.

Because of the intimate, but not intimidating, nature of the service, everyone has the opportunity to participate. And of course, each Minyan is followed by kiddush and a delicious dairy/vegetarian potluck lunch. While services are generally held each month in the BCC sanctuary, over the years we’ve also celebrated Shabbat and holidays in such locations as Coldwater Canyon Park, the Central Library downtown and in sukkot at members’ homes.

So if you’d like to be called to the Torah in honor of a special occasion (or just because), if you wish to recite healing prayers or kaddish for a loved one, or if you simply want to experience another taste of Shabbat, please join us at BCC’s Shabbat morning Minyan, whether from time to time or on an ongoing basis.

BCC’s Shabbat morning Minyan meets in the sanctuary every third Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Mark your calendar and plan to join us for one or more of the 2011-12 dates: Saturdays November 19, December 17, January 21, February 18, March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16, July 21.
At Ohr Chayim we encourage the children to ask questions because this is the way Jews study Torah. It’s from these questions that we develop new interpretations and new understandings. On Shabbat Breishit, we did a quick overview of the parshah, and the students had a lot of questions about Adam and Eve. Below are some of their questions and comments.

- How did God create everything?
- Are Eve and Adam going to die?
- Adam is going to lie [to God in answer to the question about eating the fruit so he doesn’t get in trouble]
- I wouldn’t have eaten the fruit.
- How do we know it was an apple?
- I wouldn’t have eaten the fruit.
- The breeze is the wind. Maybe God didn’t say anything and they interpreted the wind as God’s voice. [The Torah says that Adam and Eve heard God as a breeze in the garden.]
- I wouldn’t have eaten the fruit.
- When God says you will die does he mean that the fruit is poisoned or that God will kill them?
- Did they know that it was wrong to eat the fruit?
- Why are they hiding?
- Shouldn’t they have known not to eat it in the first place?
- It is a sad story, the ending.
- I wouldn’t have listened to the snake. God didn’t even have glue back then so he couldn’t have made it out of papier-mache.
- Why shouldn’t they eat the fruit?
- Why does she give [the fruit] to Adam if she knows it’s bad?
- Why is God in the garden?
- I wouldn’t have eaten the fruit.

You can see that there was a consensus that no one in this group would have eaten the fruit. So then we asked the students if they have ever done something they shouldn’t have done because someone suggested it to them. We heard lots of stories of the things they did because friends said they should and some examples of times they didn’t follow their friends’ suggestions. (But, clearly if they had been in the Garden of Eden, they would have known better.)

Last year when we studied this parsha, we focused a lot on Cain and Abel. So it was gratifying for me when I mentioned this part and the students responded, “oh isn’t that the story when...” and proceeded to retell the whole story. They remembered better than I which brother brought which type of offering to God!

I am very excited about the level of conversation and study that we are able to have with this class and how much of the Torah they remember. We will continue this year to struggle, challenge and question the Torah as we read and study it!

Matt Postrel Bar Mitzvah

Matt Postrel, son of Pam Postrel and Mindy Blum, and brother of Eve, will become Bar Mitzvah at BCC on Saturday, November 26 at 10am. The family is hosting a light lunch following the service, open to the BCC community. Please RSVP by November 17 to Mindy for an accurate food count, blummj@sbcglobal.net. The Friday night service on November 25 will also include a brief talk from Matt about growing up at BCC. In addition to Matt, Rabbi Edwards, Cantor Porat, and Cantorial Soloist Emerita Fran Chalin will be co-leading.

Matt is the third student of Ohr Chayim to become B’nai Mitzvah, and our first in our new building! Please join the family and our community for this joyous occasion! The next issue of G’vanim will include an interview with Matt, including his mitzvah project.
Changing the World in Minutes

Jerry Nodiff

No, I am not saying that you can make dramatic change in our troubled world all by yourself, or in a few minutes. But together with other caring people (and organizations such as One LA-IAF and the Courage Campaign) we can collectively work for and achieve significant improvement. Here are a couple of ways you can help:

With a Few Cans of Food

One out of every 10 Angelenos is coping with some level of “food insecurity” or hunger. Some are forced to choose between buying food and paying for rent or medication. They count on food pantries like Sova to help them, and need basics like canned tuna, beans, veggies, and rice. When you shop, please take a moment and pick up an extra can (or more). When you come to temple please add them to our Sova basket in the foyer.

With a Phone Call to Your State Senator

Call your State Senator to encourage his/her support of AB 52. This assembly bill would regulate the rates health insurers could charge for premiums in California, and limit rate increases to once a year. The bill, which was introduced by Assemblyman Mike Feuer, passed the Assembly on June 1, 2011. If the bill passes, California would join a list of over 30 states that directly regulate health insurance rate increases.

There are ten key Democratic Senators in or near LA County who were uncommitted as to their votes, and seven of these ten are needed to secure its passage. If you Google “California, AB 52” you can find additional information on the bill, and at “Daily KOS: CA’s AB 52 ... State of play, August 30, 2011” you will see a contact list of State Senators.

The One-LA-IAF health care summit on September 18th at Temple Beth Am was attended by some 200 concerned people, and was focused on the importance of AB 52. It featured a panel with Assemblyman Feuer, State Insurance Commissioner Dave Jones, and Herb Schultz, the Regional Director for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The next gathering will be at Temple Judea in Tarzana on November 13th, and its focuses will be Health Care, Education, and Mortgage Foreclosures.

It is no surprise to find hunger and a lack of affordable health care in a state where unemployment has reached 12% (vs. the national 9%). We can all do our small part to help alleviate these ongoing problems.

A New Home for BCC’s Memorial Plaques

Allison Diamant

Judaism has had a long history of honoring those loved ones who have left us. Our traditions include remembering people we knew and loved, as well as individuals and groups persecuted for their beliefs, way of life and actions. The new BCC Memorial Board provides an opportunity for all of us to connect with the past and the present, family and friends, members and non-members. The beautiful design provides a balance to our bimah and ark, a quiet space to sit and think. The new design also allows us to group family and friends together if desired, not in order of the dates people passed away. With the opening of our new building we have an opportunity for new beginnings. Please consider purchasing one or more memorial plaques to be placed on the beautiful new Memorial Board.

The Memorial Board in BCC’s new sanctuary

From now until February 15th individual plaques will be on sale for $450 (discounted from $500). If you purchase two or more plaques you will pay only $400 each. To further enhance community we will have all of the newly purchased and inscribed plaques installed at the Yizkor service during Pesach on Friday April 13th. Don’t miss this wonderful opportunity to remember family and friends with members of your community. Please contact the temple office for order forms and details or call Allison Diamant (310) 737-9641 or Robin Berkovitz (310) 633-3190 to discuss your plans.

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BCC’s Board Working for You

Lauren Schlau, Vice President

Much of what BCC’s Board of Directors does is behind the scenes, hidden from the view of members who attend Friday evening services and occasional other events. But your Board, along with your clergy and staff, are hard at work trying to make this synagogue a better community for all of us.

This describes the BCC Board retreat held October 22-23 to help build a positive interpersonal network for BCC leadership and the congregation. The weekend started at President Bruce Maxwell’s lovely hillside home with a delectable Middle Eastern dinner created by Chefs Peter and David. On Sunday morning the group reconvened in the Valley at the home of Board members Hannah and Kenna for a session focusing on two key areas, team building and creating a culture of volunteerism at BCC. The day wrapped up with attendees developing a list of key goals for 2012 (5772).

The team building session was led by Rabbi Linda Berthenthal of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) who has visited previously, each time bringing warmth, wisdom and expertise to the task. We discussed the key ingredients to working well together, essentially a balance of planning and doing, and of listening and decision-making. The group also explored core Jewish values upon which to continue building BCC. The list included inclusiveness and welcoming, tikkun olam (repair of the world), fair financial support, broadening leadership and responsibility at BCC, building from BCC’s strengths, Torah as the basis for innovative programming, and valuing the merits and contributions of each member.

Laurie Sobelman, past president of Leo Baeck Temple and consultant to URJ congregations, guided the board through creating an environment where BCC can better attract, engage, thank and recognize volunteers. Among the ideas discussed are communicating about volunteer activities at BCC, more opportunities to thank and recognize them, and learning more about the skills, talents and interests members have that BCC can tap into.

The session concluded with goal setting. After brainstorming different ideas, the list was consolidated and ranked. The top vote getters were: developing a database of members’ skills talents and interests, enhanced internal and external communications/publicity/outreach, growing membership, congregation development/strategic planning, and reviewing, restructuring, and activating BCC committees. It also was agreed to develop special events to celebrate BCC’s 40th anniversary during 2012.

At the conclusion of the day, we agreed that while it was a lot of work, the retreat was highly rewarding and energizing, and that stronger bonds developed, all in the interest of ensuring BCC’s future and its importance to its members.

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. Fiction and non-fiction, historical and contemporary, American and Israeli, the books read by the group include 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 will be:

Sunday, November 20, 10:00 a.m.
The Finkler Question, by Howard Jacobson

This is a “comic novel” about two old friends reuniting in London, with reminiscences and an incident perceived as anti-Semitic. It won the Man Booker Prize last year

Sunday, December 11, 10:00 a.m.
David and Solomon: In Search of the Bible’s Sacred Kings and the Roots of Western Tradition, by Israel Finkelstein and Neil Silberman

A non-fiction book by two prominent archeologists about the search for evidence of the ancient Israelite kingdom of David and Solomon and possible explanations for the lack of concrete evidence for the kingdom as described in the Bible.

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.
BCC’s Men’s Havurah sponsored the following very successful events during September and at the beginning of November:

**Elvira on Alvira Movie Event at BCC on September 10th**
About 20 people attended and thoroughly enjoyed seeing *Elvira – Mistress of the Dark*, a hilarious and campy movie – Elvira’s first and possibly her best movie. Before the movie we all enjoyed a delicious catered vegetarian/dairy dinner and scrumptious desserts.

**Game Night on November 5th**
At the home of BCC members Mark Miller & Brett Trueman, we reprised one of our more popular events that we haven’t had in over a year. Before the games began we feasted on a catered vegetarian/dairy dinner followed by a brief havdalah service.

The Men’s Havurah Planning Committee is planning more events in the next several months.

**Chanukah Celebration on December 18th**
Join us for our annual Chanukah party hosted this year at the home of BCC member Cole Ettman in West Hollywood. Starting at 5pm, we’ll enjoy light refreshments, naturally including latkes and sufganiyot. The highlight of this year’s party will be collecting gift donations from attendees for Jewish Family Services’ Adopt-a-Family Program for Chanukah – a great mitzvah. Full details including cost and RSVP date will be forthcoming to all Men’s Havurah members.

Volunteering at Project Chicken Soup in January 2012
Join us and perform a wonderful mitzvah by cooking, packing, and delivering nourishing, nutritious, and kosher meals at Project Chicken Soup for people living with HIV/AIDS. As soon as details are finalized for this event, announcements will be sent out via e-mail, the BCC Weekly (formerly the e-bulletin), and Friday evening’s seat bulletin.

**One Archives Gallery & Museum in February 2012**
Join us for a visit to the One Archives Gallery & Museum in West Hollywood to see the exhibit “Cruising the Archive: Queer Art and Culture in Los Angeles, 1945 – 1980: Wink Wink”. As soon as details are finalized for this event, announcements will be sent out via e-mail, the BCC Weekly (formerly the e-bulletin), and Friday evening’s seat bulletin.

There are two ways you can stay in touch with us:
- Through e-mail: 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.

Mark Miller and Neal Weisenberg
BCC Men’s Havurah Co-Chairs

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**BCC Live on the Web**
*Bracha Yael*

Over the past few months, from the Valley to Tahoe to Chicago and even Frankfurt, BCC members watched or listened to live BCC services and events.

**BCC Live** is a new and exciting program partially funded by our highly prized $5,000 URJ Incubator Grant. It allows you to use your computer, iPad, smartphone or good old-fashioned telephone to enjoy our Friday night services and other events. Mark your calendars for these special broadcasts:

- **Professor Rachel Adler’s lecture series on Liturgy and Talmud:**
  (all Tuesdays) November 1st, 8th and 29th, 7pm.
- **Ruach Chayim musical Shabbat services:**
  Last Friday of every month, 8pm.

Missed a service or event? No problem. Visit our video and audio archives. Just go to our website, www.bcc-la.org, for instructions to enjoy live or archived BCC services or events.

Also, if you’re a cool cat with some techie skills join the BCC Live crew. Whether you’d like a leadership role or a “one-and-done” task, we want you!

Help keep the BCC community close. Simply contact the BCC office or Bracha Yael at bracha18@ca.rr.com.

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**BCC Professionals Series Continues**

Join us for the next installment of the BCC Professionals Series on November 6, from 3:00 - 5:00 pm. BCC member Gary Braitman will be speaking on the uses of social media (such as Facebook and Twitter) within companies and non-profits. As part of his talk, Gary will give live examples of the way these applications work. Past speakers were BCC members Brett Trueman, a professor at UCLA’s School of Management, who discussed the state of the U.S. economy and stock markets, and West Hollywood psychotherapist, Meiram Bendat, who spoke about psychoanalysis for the treatment of neuroses across American and Israeli cultures.

The event will feature delectable Middle Eastern foods catered by BCC members Peter Bastien and David Mozes of Bronze Fine Foods & Catering. Admission is free to members and nonmembers.
A Busy Year End for the Women’s Havurah

Donna Quigley Groman

The Women’s Havurah has a full calendar of events for the last two months of 2011, three of which are open to everyone.

Wednesday, November 2, 6 p.m.:
Come celebrate Dia de los Muertos with BCC Office Manager, Victoria Delgadillo, and her friends at Self-Help Graphics, 1300 E. 1st Street, Boyle Heights. Take the Metro Gold Line, as parking is very limited. Enjoy live music, buy food and crafts. We will meet at Self-Help Graphics at 6 pm in time to see the traditional procession arrive from Mariachi Plaza. For more details, see www.selfhelpgraphics.com. Everyone is Welcome. Please RSVP to Donna Groman at dlgroman@hotmail.com.

Saturday, November 12, 8 p.m.:
Vox Femina Women’s Choir presents “And Justice for All.” The music will explore issues of equality and immigration. Tickets are $35 at the door, $30 in advance, and $25 for seniors and students. Purchase your tickets from www.voxfeminala.org. There will be an optional dinner prior to the performance at a nearby restaurant. Everyone is Welcome. Please RSVP to Donna Groman at dlgroman@hotmail.com.

Sunday, December 11, 10 a.m.:
Walking tour through historic Downtown L.A. We will embark on a self-guided tour through downtown LA, stopping on the way to have lunch. This event is for women only. Please RSVP to Donna Groman at dlgroman@hotmail.com.

Sunday, December 25, 12 p.m.
Movies and Thai food!! Celebrate the 25th of December with fellow BCC’ers! Movies at the Westside Pavilion, followed by a 6 pm dinner at a nearby Thai restaurant. We will see if we can beat the crowds by visiting a Thai restaurant instead of a Chinese restaurant. Everyone is Welcome. Please RSVP to Donna Groman at dlgroman@hotmail.com.

Virtual Minyan Connections
Bracha Yael

Primarily lay led, the Virtual Minyan is a unique BCC ‘meet-up’ that provides support and connectedness for people who are isolated, ill, homebound, out of town, living elsewhere including abroad, unaffiliated or just looking for a small, welcoming community no farther away than their phone.

Virtual activities are via conference call, which is free—excluding any long distance charges from your personal carrier. To join in just dial 702-851-4044, when prompted punch in 2, then our pass code, 22252#. We also hang out in person at our Coffee n Schmooze every other month.

Upcoming events:
Lechi Lach: The BCC story behind Debbie Friedman’s iconic song, Thursday, November 3rd, 4-5pm
Coffee n Schmooze: Our bi-monthly kibitz at the Colony Café, Monday, December 19th, 10:30-Noon
Hanukkah discussion led by Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Thursday, December 22nd, 4-5pm
A musical twist to Torah study, led by Cantor Juval Porat, Thursday, January 19th, 4-5pm
Ongoing:
Weekly Torah study on Thursday afternoons from 4-5pm

For additional information contact Bracha Yael at bracha18@ca.rr.com.

Mazel Tov

Please join the entire BCC community in wishing a hearty mazel tov to the following members:

Les Zendle, M.D. has been appointed Medical Director for the Coachella Valley Volunteers in Medicine, which provides no-cost primary health care services, both medical and dental, to medically underserved, uninsured residents in the Coachella Valley (Palm Springs to Thermal, CA). Its clinic is located in Indio, CA. Les recently retired from Kaiser Permanente Southern California, where he practiced for over 30 years as an internist/geriatrician and served as its Medical Director for Clinical Services from 1993-2003.

Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Tracy Moore, whose home was profiled in the “Home” section of the Los Angeles Times on October 15 as a fine example of blended architectural styles and artistic motifs.

Cecilia Quigley Groman, on the acceptance of her dissertation proposal at Antioch University. She expects to start collecting data before the end of the year.

Please share your accomplishments and good news with the BCC office or G’vanim editor. We want to celebrate with you!
BCC's first full-size Sukkah

Construction starts on the new sukkah, October 9

BCC's sukkah builders relax after work, left to right: Everlyn, Will, Yael, Davi, Ted, Marc, Nate, Lana, Lauren

Matt Postrel, age 12, helps build the sukkah

Allison Diamant's dog appears to have a palm tree growing out of its head

The sukkah frame takes shape, with palm fronds ready to be added

The completed sukkah with decorations
Enjoying BCC’s new Sukkah with Art and Learning

A close up of some of the art on display

Art show in the sukkah on Saturday, October 15

Dr. Rachel Adler, BCC scholar-in-residence, waves the lulav in the sukkah before teaching a class, October 12

Rabbi Lisa Edwards leads Torah study in the sukkah, October 13

PHOTO: DAVI CHENG

ARCHITECTURALLY ELEGANT & MODERN

Rent BCC for your special events or business meetings.

Contact Felicia Park-Rodgers  Executive Director  (323) 931 7023 ext. 203
November 2011

Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday

1. 7:00 pm Class
   Liturgy and Talmud
   Dr. Rachel Adler

1. 6:00 pm Women’s Havurah at Day of the Dead Festival

2. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
   Lichi Lach (BCC story of Debbie Friedman song)
   7:00 pm Torah Study
   Rabbi Edwards

3. 6:30 pm Pre-Shabbat Dinner
   8:00 pm Shabbat Service
   Cantor Porat
   Herb Toplan
   Druash by Dr. Rachel Adler

4. 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
   6:30 pm Men’s Havurah Game night,
   Dinner, Havdalah (private home)

5. 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver
   Project Chicken Soup
   3975 Landmark
   3:00 pm BCC Professionals Series
   Gary Braitman

6. 7:00 pm Class
   Liturgy and Talmud
   Dr. Rachel Adler

7. 7:00 pm Class
   Liturgy and Talmud
   Dr. Rachel Adler

8. 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting

9. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
   Torah Study
   7:00 pm Torah Study
   Rabbi Edwards

10. 8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Rabbi Edwards
    Elissa Barrett

11. 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
    8:00 pm Women’s Havurah at Vox
    Femina Concert

12. 2:00 pm Adult Education Committee meeting

13. 7:30 pm (see p. 4)
    Gershom Gorenberg
    “The Crisis of Israeli Democracy”

14. 8:00 am cook,
    11:30 deliver
    Project Chicken Soup
    3975 Landmark
    10:00 am Book Group
    The Finkler Question

15. 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

16. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
    Torah Study
    7:00 pm Trans 101, How to be Trans Ally

17. 6:30 pm Dinner (p. 7)
    8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Rabbi Edwards
    Cantor Porat
    Drash by Kadin Henningsen
    Trans Remembrance

18. 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy potluck

19. 8:00 am cook,
    11:30 deliver
    Project Chicken Soup
    3975 Landmark
    7:00 pm Hebrew Class
    Todd Shotz

20. 7:00 pm Class
    Liturgy and Talmud
    Dr. Rachel Adler

21. 7:00 pm Class
    Liturgy and Talmud
    Dr. Rachel Adler

22. 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting

23. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
    Torah Study
    7:00 pm Torah Study
    Rabbi Edwards

24. 6:00 pm Thanksgiving Day
    (BCC Closed)
    No Torah Study

25. 8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Rabbi Edwards
    Cantor Porat
    Matt Postrel
    Bar Mitzvah

26. 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service
    Matt Postrel
    Bar Mitzvah
    Rabbi Edwards
    Cantor Porat
    Fran Chalin

December 2011

Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday

1. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
   6:30 pm World AIDS Day at One Archive
   (see page 1)
   (No Torah Study)

2. 6:30 pm Pre-Shabbat Dinner
   8:00 pm Shabbat Service
   Lay leader Robin Berkovitz
   World AIDS Day

3. 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
   7:00 pm “Love in Us” Cabaret Concert

4. 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver
   Project Chicken Soup
   3975 Landmark
   7:00 pm Hebrew Reading
   Todd Shotz

5. 7:00 pm Class
   Intro to Judaism,
   Adult B’nai Mitzvah

6. 7:00 pm Class
   Intro to Judaism,
   Adult B’nai Mitzvah

7. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
   Torah Study
   7:00 pm Torah Study
   Rabbi Edwards

8. 8:00 pm Shabbat Service
   Rabbi Edwards
   Cantor Porat
   Drash by Rabbi Yossi Caron

9. 10:00 am Ohr Chayim

10. 10:00 am (private home)
    BCC Book Group
    10:00 am Women’s Havurah
    Downtown walking tour
    7:00 pm Hebrew
    Todd Shotz

11. 7:00 pm Class
    Intro to Judaism,
    Adult B’nai Mitzvah

12. 7:00 pm Class
    Intro to Judaism,
    Adult B’nai Mitzvah

13. 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting

14. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
    Torah Study
    7:00 pm Torah Study
    Rabbi Edwards

15. 7:00 pm Torah Study
    Trans & Gender Queer Text Study

16. 8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Cantor Porat
    Rabbi Edwards
    Drash by Rabbi Yoeli Caron

17. 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service
    David potluck

18. 8:00 am cook, 11:30 deliver
    Project Chicken Soup
    3975 Landmark
    5:00 pm (private home)
    Men’s Havurah Hanukkah Party

19. 10:30 am
    Coffee ‘n Schmooze
    Colony Cafe

20. FIRST NIGHT OF HANUKKAH
    7:00 pm Class
    Intro to Judaism,
    Adult B’nai Mitzvah

21. FIRST DAY OF HANUKKAH
    7:00 pm Torah Study
    Rabbi Edwards

22. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
    Torah Study
    7:00 pm Torah Study
    Rabbi Edwards

23. 6:00 pm Family Dinner
    7:00 pm Ohr Chayim
    8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Rabbi Edwards
    Cantor Porat
    Board installation

24. 10:00 am (private home)
    BCC Book Group
    10:00 am Women’s Havurah
    Downtown walking tour
    7:00 pm Hebrew
    Todd Shotz

25. 7:00 pm Class
    Intro to Judaism,
    Adult B’nai Mitzvah

26. 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting

27. 4:00 pm Virtual Minyan
    Torah Study
    7:00 pm Torah Study
    Rabbi Edwards

28. 6:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Rabbi Edwards
    Lay leader TBA

29. 8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Rabbi Edwards
    Cantor Porat
    Lay leader Robin Berkovitz

30. 6:30 pm Pre-Shabbat Dinner
    8:00 pm Shabbat Service
    Cantor Porat
    Herb Toplan
    Druash by Dr. Rachel Adler

31. 10:00 am Ohr Chayim
    7:00 pm “Love in Us” Cabaret Concert

All events at BCC unless otherwise noted

See BCC-LA.ORG for updates and changes.