

*A Few Words from Bruce...*

## New Building, New Cantor, New Members Bring Hanukkah Blessings to BCC



Bruce Maxwell

*Hanukkah brought great blessings and miracles to BCC this year, so many that I've had to make a list to be sure to include them all in my column. Each was made possible by the hard work and dedication of so many people that I need a list to thank them all as well.*

★ **1) Closing Escrow on 6090 Pico.** After being in escrow since September 1, 2008, we closed escrow on our soon-to-be-new-home on December 10th. We started our search almost 3 years prior, and looked at and rejected many properties in the process. Through all this time, we have been privileged to work with a phenomenal real estate broker. Glenn Melnick served BCC so well and helped us pull off several miracles along the way. Although not a BCC member, he is a member of the Jewish GLBT community. In addition, we have had a very dedicated Real Estate Committee and now Building Committee. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to all those who served on both of these committees.

★ **2) Granting of the City Parking Variance allowing us occupy our new building.** The appeals period for members of the local community to challenge our parking variance has passed with no further objection to the parking and operating plan that we have submitted to the City. We have been advised by Ben Fiss of Craig Lawson & Company throughout this process, and his work has been exemplary in helping to prepare us and get us through this arduous process.

★ **3) Approval of Cantor Juval Porat's visa to officially start work as BCC's new permanent cantor.** Within 20 minutes of our receiving the approval of our parking variance from the City of LA we received word from our immigration attorney, Lavi Soloway, that the visa which would allow Cantor Porat to return to Los Angeles and formally begin his tenure as our cantor had been approved by the U.S Immigration Service. We were thrilled to welcome Juval back to BCC on December 25th and to see him on the bimah leading services again. Watch for details about his installation and various welcoming receptions to follow in the weeks and

months ahead. Working tirelessly behind the scenes, Lavi has spent so many hours in response to numerous questions and requests for additional information from the Immigration Service. He has been a real jewel and never wavered from his initial premise that we would eventually obtain this visa. Many of you may know Lavi and his partner Sebastian and their daughter Lily, as they have become regulars at BCC services as well. When next you see Lavi, please thank him for all of his hard work and efforts toward obtaining this visa for Juval.

★ **4) Membership, Membership, Membership.** It is such a thrill to see each of our new members become better acquainted with BCC and to help them become integrated into our warm and embracing Congregation. We have had a significant number of new members join us these last couple of months. I urge each member to continue to reach out to your friends, contacts and associates who might also enjoy the benefit of membership in BCC. Bring them with you to Friday night services, introduce them to our monthly Ruach Chayim musical Shabbat service on the last Friday of each month (next upcoming on January 29th and February 26th), and come and greet any newcomers that you see at BCC each week. We need all of our members to continue to serve as ambassadors of good will and make our guests feel welcome.

★ **5) Hiring of our Contractor Howard CDM.** With the closing of escrow on our new building at 6090 Pico, your Building Committee has been hard at work on the plans for the design and renovation of the site. We have hired our general contractor: Howard CDM, an award-winning firm that has worked with other synagogues and institutions to construct quality and energy-efficient buildings. In addition, Ira Dankberg has agreed to function as our Project Manager coordinating with Howard CDM and our architects Marc Schoeplein and Toni Lewis of Lewis-Schoeplein & Associates as we begin the build-out of the plan.

★ **6) Obtaining of Financing from Wells Fargo Bank.** In order to accomplish all of the above items relating to our new building, we needed a dedicated financial partner willing to work with us to maximize our available credit

and help make our dream of owning 6090 Pico a reality. Through a very complicated process taking into account our funds on hand paid from our members toward the Capital Campaign, all of our remaining outstanding Capital Campaign pledges, additional short-term personal loans from a few key members, the value of our current building at 6000 Pico, the value of our new building at 6090 Pico, and the construction plan and projected budget to renovate 6090, our Treasurer Brett Trueman has worked tirelessly and has had more than a few sleepless nights wondering in the end how this will all piece together. Nonetheless he has found in Kim Mehlman at Wells Fargo Bank the dedicated financial partner to help us close the purchase of 6090 and fund the renovations moving forward. Kim cares deeply about our project and BCC and has been there for us every step of the way over these last months.

**★ 7) Donors to the Capital Campaign Come through Once Again.** In Mid-November, over brunch, many of the key donors to the Capital Campaign committed to accelerating the payments of their pledges and many individuals increased their overall pledges as well. The extra infusion of funds helped us to be able to close escrow in December on time and to

avoid costly penalties we might have incurred. Our Capital Campaign donors have come through when we needed them most! BCC members have proven once again that our membership truly stands out as a pillar of strength that cannot be compared to another. I won't go into detail naming any individuals at this time; in due course each will be honored appropriately and with dignity.

8) Finally, I would like to thank those hardworking BCC Members on the Building Committee who have been so intricately involved in making all of the above happen...Brett Trueman, Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Executive Director Felicia Park-Rogers, Building Committee Chairperson Ira Dankberg, and all the members of the Building (formerly Real Estate) Committee, with a particular thank you to Stephen Sass, Lauren Schlau, Julie Gertler, Adrian Koffka, Kadin Henningsen, Michael Belkin, Allison Diamant, Bill Resnick, Eldon Teper, Renee Lamkay, David Mozes and many others as well.

**6090 West Pico** — Get used to the address, you will hear a lot of about the construction that will take place and by the last months of 2010 we will be calling it home!

Warmest regards,  
Bruce Maxwell, President

**In this Issue...**

- President's Column..... 1-2
- Rabbi's Column ..... 3
- Cantor's Column ..... 4
- Student Rabbi's Column..... 5
- Ohr Chayim ..... 6
- Executive Director ..... 7
- Men's Havurah, Theater Party .. 8
- Women's Havurah, Film Night ... 9
- One LA, Book Group ..... 10
- Mazel tov, Torah Queeries ..... 11
- Calendar..... 12

## G'vanim Advertising Rates

**Rates**  
(Rates in bold are discounted 20% for BCC members)

<b>1 issue</b>	<b>3 issues: 10% disc.</b>	<b>6 issues: 20% disc.</b>
<b>1/8 PG:</b>		
\$50	\$135	\$240
<b>\$40</b>	<b>\$108</b>	<b>\$192</b>
<b>1/4 PG:</b>		
\$100	\$270	\$480
<b>\$80</b>	<b>\$216</b>	<b>\$384</b>

**Specs**  
**1/8 PG or BUS. CARD:** 3.625" W x 2.218 H (live area and trim)  
**1/4 PG:** 3.625" W x 4.685" H (live area and trim)

Artwork specifications available upon request.

**OFFICE**

**Temple Office Hours:**  
 Monday–Thursday 9:00 – 5:00 pm  
 Friday 9:00 – 4:00 pm  
 Phone: (323) 931-7023 • Fax: (323) 931-1490  
 e-mail: bcc@bcc-la.org  
 website: www.bcc-la.org

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

**STAFF**

Rabbi	.....	Lisa A. Edwards, Ph.D.
Cantor	.....	Juval Porat
Student Rabbi	.....	Lindy Davidson
Executive Director	...	Felicia Park-Rogers
Office Manager	.....	Victoria Delgadillo
Education Director	..	Leah Zimmerman
Bookkeeper	.....	Ralph Cataldo
Custodian	.....	Tim Goad

**EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

President	.....	Bruce Maxwell, CPA/CPCU
Vice President	.....	Hon. Donna Quigley Groman
Vice President	.....	Lauren Schlau
Secretary	.....	Allison Diamant, M.D
Treasurer	.....	Brett Trueman, Ph.D.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Robin Berkovitz	David Mozes
Julie Gertler	Jerry Nodiff
Kadin Henningsen	Maggie Parkhurst
Eric Kamm	Hannah Theile

**STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

Capital Campaign	.....	Brett Trueman, Bill Resnick
Education	.....	Kadin Henningsen
Fundraising	.....	Lauren Schlau
Klezmer Band	.....	Davi Cheng
L'chayim Legacy Circle	..	Ray Eelsing
Membership	.....	Debby Chanan, Carol Saragossi
Men's Havurah	.....	Richard Lesse, Mark Miller
Newsletter	.....	Larry Nathenson
PR/Outreach	.....	Lana Soroko, Hannah Theile
Real Estate	.....	Ira Dankberg
Ritual	.....	Davi Cheng, Cara Hanes
Tikkun Olam	.....	Avram Chill
Tzedakah Council	.....	Robin Baltic
Women's Havurah	.....	Donna Quigley Groman
Yahrzeit Notices	.....	Sue Terry
20s/30s Havurah	.....	Michael Belkin

**G' VANIM**

G'vanim "Hues (of the rainbow)"  
 is the monthly newsletter of  
**BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM**  
 6000 West Pico Blvd., L.A. CA 90035

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

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

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

# The End of an Era: BCC and Project Caring

Rabbi Lisa Edwards

*You shall rise before the aged, and show deference to the old; You shall fear your God: I am Adonai.*

— **Leviticus 19:32**

*Do not cast me off in time of old age; Forsake me not when my strength is spent.*

— **Psalms 71:9**

*The test of a people is how it behaves toward the old.*

— **Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel**



PHOTO: KENNALDIE

As we begin a new decade, it feels appropriate to take a moment to look not only at what's new at BCC (so many exciting things

that you'll read about elsewhere in this issue of G'vanim), but also to bring to an end some of what's old at BCC. Last month saw the last of BCC's participation in Project Caring, an elder care program of Jewish Family Service. Monthly, for well over 30 years, BCCers have brought Torah and Shabbat prayers to residents of Country Villa Wilshire Convalescent Home on N. Fairfax. A mitzvah often unsung, but not unnoticed either by me or by the residents and staff of the home where a small, but devoted crew of BCC folks would take one of BCC's Torah scrolls every month, singing prayers and making sure each attendee had the opportunity to touch the Torah.

When I arrived at BCC as a student rabbi in 1991, Larry Nathenson had already been the leader of this mitzvah corps for 5 years, and he continued doing so for over 15 more. When he was finally ready to retire from that role a couple of years ago, Bonnie Leopold took it on, infusing it with new music and different energy.

In addition to Larry, Sue Terry, Barry Wendell, Richard Seltzer, David Fyffe, Arlan Wareham, and Ed Wolfe (of blessed memory) were among the regulars for many years, joined later by Joe Hample, and once a year at Hanukkah by our band, Gay Gezunt. But over the years the residents at Country Villa changed significantly, leaving fewer Jews, and fewer still who were really able to engage with what we had to offer.

Although I am so appreciative of the caring and dedicated group who made Project Caring a cornerstone of BCC's mitzvah work for so many years, when Bonnie approached me last month with the suggestion that it was time to "close shop," I had to agree. She will continue to visit Country Villa Wilshire once a month as a chaplain to visit with Jewish residents. But for BCC, it is time for us to find different communities with which to share our resources.

There are many to choose from. And no doubt we'll take our time checking them out, seeing what BCCers might be able to offer next. Our president, Bruce Maxwell, also serves on the board of the GLEH, the Gay and Lesbian Elder Housing residence that opened in LA a couple of years ago. The past two Thanksgiving days have seen a number of BCC folks joining with members of other LGBT religious organizations to help feed and

entertain our elders on Thanksgiving. GLEH may well be a place we could be helpful other times of the year as well.

Then too our recent explorations of One LA continue. Over the next few months we'll try to decide whether to become a contributing member of this impressive operation that brings neighborhood organizing to a whole new level. At the beginning of this year a few BCC folks will probably be joining with One LA volunteers from Temple Isaiah to team up with some of our neighborhood public schools.

And of course many of our members continue to volunteer regularly for Project Chicken Soup, helping cook and/or deliver delicious kosher meals to people living with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones.

At BCC in 2010 and beyond, we have much to look forward to. But whatever mitzvot members of our congregation do next, let's also look back for a moment in tribute to, and to learn from, the devotion of Larry, Bonnie, Sue, Barry, Joe, Richard and others through the years to Project Caring, and the elders they served. Let them remain an important role model to the rest of us of commitment, respect and caring. Thank you to all who made Project Caring a part of your lives, and a blessing in the life of our congregation.

## Ruach Chayim (Living Spirit)

*"Shabbat is a palace in time."  
— ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL  
Enter the palace with us.*

*Heartbeat . . . drum beat  
Kol haneshamah tehalal Yah . . .  
Let every soul sing praise . . . [Psalm 150]*

**On January 29 and February 26, join us at BCC to welcome Shabbat with drum, with song, with open heart.**

**7:00 wine, cheese, schmooze**

**8:00 Kabbalat Shabbat service,**

**with Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Cantor Juval Porat, and guest musicians.**

# The Journey is the Destination: A Meditation for Tu B'Shevat

Cantor Juval Porat



As I write these lines I can see the city being covered by a thin layer of winter's first snow. Who knew it would be a white

Chanukah after all? The temperatures have dropped dramatically in the past few days and no, I'm not in Los Angeles. My journey brought me back to Berlin in October and now it seems as if my stay in this city is nearing an end. Soon I'll wave goodbye to Europe and will make my way back to California.

And when this article is published it will probably be a different season outside my window and another piece of my journey will be behind me. It will be closer to the 15th of Shevat (aka *Tu B'Shevat*), which marks the beginning of a new year for the trees. It is a date that relates to commandments that are valid only in the land of Israel and are mostly applied to agriculture.

A custom for the Tu B'Shevat Seder, which was introduced by the Kabbalists of Tsfat in the 16th

century, is to celebrate with the products of the trees, the fruits. Jewish communities get together to celebrate and honor the gifts of nature, by laying out different kinds of fruits, nuts and seeds and reading verses on nature. The holiday marks the point when the trees become ripe enough to produce the fruit. It marks the beginning of a process, the beginning of a journey if you like, that bears fruit at the end of it. The fruit is the result of that process.

This year the 15th of Shevat falls on the 30th of January, which isn't exactly the time when fruits are being reaped. If you think about it, isn't it funny that the products of the trees get so much attention on a holiday that is not about the fruit at all, but rather about the trees that create them? Why is it that we celebrate the beginning of a process with fruit that hasn't appeared yet? Shouldn't the fruit be used and celebrated at another time, a time that marks the glorious end of the process?

Celebrating the fruits on Tu B'Shevat, before they have actually been produced, has a personal significance for me. Since I left Berlin for Jerusalem in August 2008, I have been living more or less out of my suitcase –

in Jerusalem, back in Berlin and again in Los Angeles. Sometimes I tried really hard to connect my journey with the end result that I knew would be waiting for me, sometimes I wasn't sure what the final result would be. Sometimes I had a very clear vision and tried my hardest to connect the starting point of my journey with its endpoint. Sometimes the journey itself lacked clarity, or seemed unnecessary.

With that in mind, I love looking at *Tu B'Shevat* as an opportunity that allows us to establish a connection between a process of ripening that has just begun and the final result that embodies itself in the form of a beautiful fruit. We might use that connection to remind us to give meaning to every moment within our own personal journey, our own ripening process. Though I'm still in Berlin as I write, I'm very much looking forward to continuing my journey towards the next chapter of fruitful interactions in Los Angeles with whomever I'll meet on my way.

*Happy Tu B'Shevat!*

**Friday, February 26, 2010 at 7:00 PM**

## **New Member Shabbat Service**

Please join us on Friday evening February 26, 2010 to formally welcome our new members and their families. All new members that have joined BCC since January 2009 will be honored during our Ruach Chayim service and provided with a little welcoming gift. We will have an early smooze time prior to services at 7:00 pm. We will provide a light nosh to welcome the new members and their families to our BCC community.

Domestic Partnerships  
Adoption  
Family Law Mediation  
Separation Agreements

Fairness | Dignity | Respect

THE LAW FIRM OF  
**GOODMAN & METZ**

17043 Ventura Boulevard  
Encino, California 91316  
818-386-2889  
goodmanmetz@earthlink.net

### **WE ALSO HANDLE:**

#### **BUSINESS LITIGATION**

Business Disputes  
Corporate Collections  
Corporate Litigation

#### **PERSONAL INJURY**

Automobile Accidents  
Motorcycle Accidents  
Wrongful Death  
Medical Malpractice

Serving the gay community  
since 1984.

# Fear and Faith – A Personal Journey

*Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson*



Fear and Faith. Not only are these subjects the basis for my rabbinic thesis, but it also seems that I will be grappling with them the rest of my rabbinic career.

Not surprisingly, as one who feels called to the rabbinate, faith plays an important role in my life. At age sixteen after a serious seizure I woke up in a Hadassah hospital room in Jerusalem with a stranger sitting

at my bedside. I had experienced some traumatic health conditions while on a hike at Masada and was incredibly blessed to be alive and well after the long ordeal. My parents oddly were advised not to come to Israel to see me. I had been enjoying my first Israel trip on a California NFTY pre-college adventure. To make a long story shorter, despite all the threats to my physical and mental health, I quickly recovered and finished out my first Israel experience. Upon returning home I had a newfound faith, and a deeper commitment to Judaism. I view this experience as a Jewish re-birth. It was an opportunity to re-affirm my Jewish identity and faith, a big push forward into my Jewish adulthood.

It turns out I was on this path even earlier than I realized. My mother confirms that even though I don't have a beautiful singing voice, I was the child who sang the loudest in shul. I loved singing V'shamru on Friday nights and clapping together with the congregation. Even from the young age of five I felt the ruach that was created by Jewish community during prayer and song. To this day I love expressing my faith through joyous song.

Like many of us, I like to live an adventurous life, which also means I am continually confronted with fears that I must face in order to fulfill a wish or a dream. For example, I moved an entire hemisphere away from my family in order to experience life in South America, and I lived in Israel for long enough that my parents had to threaten me with their fear that I wouldn't return. We all have met issues of fear and faith in our lives. Each one is unique, and from each situation we have learned. Our Jewish ancestors also had fears and moments of faith. Luckily, Jewish tradition also has tons of liturgy, stories, and texts that highlight these issues and help teach us how to deal with our fear and faith.

I was a born performer, my mother tells me, when she recalls the shows I would put on as a pretentious three-year-old for my entire family. I continued to explore my love of the performing arts through my many theatrical debuts, from my role in a ballet and jazz company as a

young girl, through college where I studied theater and dance. My love of the arts has often brought me back to questions of faith. My thesis for my undergraduate studies was a movement and spoken word piece that explored issues of Jewish spirituality. For me the linking of the world of arts and Judaism is innate and one that I will continue to explore throughout my career. If you too are interested in exploring the intersection between Judaism and the arts, between fear and faith, let us explore together. Join me in my last two workshops on fear and faith for my rabbinic thesis at BCC on January 10th and January 31st from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.



## Fear and Faith Workshop

**Sundays Jan. 10 and 31, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.  
at BCC**

**Taught by Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson**

Have you been drawn into Judaism because of the rich imagery and imaginative tales that are woven throughout our tradition? Whether you are artistically inclined or simply open and interested in exploring new ways to understand Jewish texts, this class is for you. Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson brings us texts on fear and faith to explore through movement and other artistic avenues. Come prepared to engage in traditional text study and then take that to a new level, with creative and user friendly approaches. As Lindy is working in this material as part of her rabbinic thesis, there may be an optional response process following the workshop, in which you are encouraged to participate.

# Ohr Chayim Inaugurates Parent and Me Shabbat, Family Havurah

Leah Zimmerman



This has been a busy fall, full of learning and celebrating together. In addition to our regular Ohr Chayim program we have been working on some new projects. Below are some descriptions of the many ways that we are working to create a dynamic and inviting home for families at BCC.

We launched a Parent and Me Shabbat class in November. The class is led by Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson and BCC member Ilene Cohen. Ilene is well known to children in our community from her visits with her puppet Herschel. For our youngest members Ilene is sharing her repertoire of children's songs and finger plays and sharing an array of plush puppets who captivated our children's attention. Lindy's energy, warmth and theatricality reaches out to children and Ilene's quiet focused presence holds their attention. Together they created a fun, inviting, and warm Shabbat environment.

We had our first Family Havurah event at Noah's Ark at the Skirball. While there were only a couple of us, it was great to be deepening connections and having experiences outside our usual structures. The idea behind creating this Havurah is that we will have opportunities for families with children of all ages to gather, connect and meet each other, and to provide an opportunity for our children to develop relationships with other BCC children. Our next event will be in February. Please be in touch if you are interested in being a part of the planning.

Several BCC members who are parents, along with Felicia and I, have been busy communicating with the Building Committee and with the architects about the

needs of our families and children so that our new building can be properly prepared. We are excited that there will be a more compatible space for our Ohr Chayim program than what we currently have, storage for our materials, and a display area for student work. Thank you to everyone working involved in this process for being proactive and planning suitable spaces for children and learning.

Last, I am sad and yet happy to report a change to our teaching staff. Shari Charalambous, better known as Ms. Purple, has had to leave our Ohr Chayim teaching team for health reasons, but will stay connected to our community. We extend a hearty welcome to Elana Architzel who is taking her place. Elana is an actress with a strong Jewish background and experience blending the two areas. She will be presenting a workshop on using drama to interpret Bible at the BJE's annual Jewish Educator's Conference in January.

To learn more about Ohr Chayim or any of our other family programs, contact Leah Zimmerman at [leahzimm@gmail.com](mailto:leahzimm@gmail.com) or 917-748-9668.

## Parent and Me Shabbat

Do you have children under the age of five who love to dance, wiggle, play and sing? If so, bring the kids and please join student rabbi Lindy Davidson and puppeteer extraordinaire Ilene Cohen for Parent and Me, a jolly good time filled with Jewish songs, stories and movement games on Saturday January 9 from 3:30 to 5:00 p.m.

## On Learning Hebrew as a Fifty-something

Adam Barron

I grew up the child of eclectic New Age Jewish parents. Though my grandparents were firmly observant, my parents told me they wanted me to find my own religion. So I felt like the lucky, cool kid who didn't have to go to Hebrew School. Only years later, attending some Jewish services, did I wish I knew the language.

In 2008, after a prolonged illness, my mother passed. It was my job to take her ashes to a Midwestern city for burial. I stayed with cousins I'd never seen, met their cousins, and we gave my mother a beautiful Jewish sending off. Something about the experience made me feel like a member of the "tribe" for the first time. On returning to L.A., I determined to nurture this fledgling Jewish identity. Having heard much good about BCC, I determined to start there. Saturday services work well for me, and I started attending.

Continued on Page 7

# Overcoming Obstacles

Felicia Park-Rogers, Executive Director



PHOTO: KENNA LOVE

This is a very exciting time in BCC's 37 year storied history. With the recent completion of the purchase of our future home, we are on the cusp of

embarking on a months-long and massive renovation of our new building. We have overcome many hurdles and have more ahead of us, yet I feel extremely confident in the leadership and expertise of the many congregants who are making this dream come true. There is no obstacle this community can't find a way past!

I am reminded every day of how desperately we need a new building:

- Recently our Rabbi had to conduct a phone meeting from her car in the parking lot because there was no private space in the synagogue!
- Nearly every night of the week I now have to turn away a committee or class from meeting on-site because one or two other groups are already meeting here and there is no sound barrier or room for multiple meetings to occur.
- The family education program on Saturdays is bursting at the seams. There is no dedicated work space for our Director of Education on-site.
- We are welcoming a new Cantor and I cannot so much as offer him a tabletop to work from let alone a private room to study in, practice his music, or meet with congregants.
- At our recent Hanukkah celebration the fuses blew twice as we tried to heat latkes on the electric skillets we use since we have no stove. Three people couldn't fit in the kitchen to help prepare food for the 110 people we had spilling into every aisle! In the coming months we will complete our intensive design

process with our excellent architects at Lewis-Schoeplein, & Assoc.; demolish the interior of the building; obtain permits from the city; and if all goes according to plan, launch construction in the early Spring. The Building Committee will continue to update you regularly. I look forward to a future together that includes a building which allows us to have multiple meetings, hot meals, a thriving religious education for our growing number of families, on-site offices for our outstanding clergy, and the ability to house the many activities of our busy and outstanding congregants. You should feel free to be in touch with anyone on the Board of Directors or Building Committee if you have any questions. As we know more about our timeline, we will plan a community-wide groundbreaking to celebrate the beginning of construction.

## *(continued from page 6), On Learning Hebrew as a Fifty-something*

One day, coming early to the Family Shabbat services, I walked in on the Ohr Chayim (Light of Our Lives) program. To my surprise and delight, they invited me to learn Hebrew with the children. I'd tried to learn Hebrew in the past, taking adult Hebrew classes, but for some reason it did not stick. I made great flashcards and lists, but I was in an intellectual vacuum. I needed to teach Hebrew to my soul—in a setting where I could associate people, feelings, and stories with the Hebrew words.

After a couple Saturdays, I know most of the alphabet. The kids share with me their sense of awe, and I bring my dogged desire to learn. When we work together, there is an excitement and fun that puts the spirituality into our education. This fun motivates me to study my alphabet for the following week. And I'm told that it helps the children to see an adult wanting to learn the language.

I enjoy discussing Jewish concepts through a child's eyes – it's like the Day School I never attended. Leah Zimmerman, our highly skilled teacher, has given me some extra help, for which I'm grateful. I'm also using the Behrman House language software. As a fifty-something person, I'll have to give that extra effort to learn the language. But for now, studying with the kids, having them quiz me and teach me, gives me that extra push. I believe this time I will get it!

## NEAL T. WIENER

*Three decades of experience in*

**CIVIL LITIGATION  
SERIOUS PERSONAL INJURIES**

*including*

- Auto Accidents • Slip & Fall • Trip & Fall •
- Wrongful Death • Malpractice •

*Also*

**BUSINESS LITIGATION and  
BUSINESS COLLECTIONS**

ATTORNEY AT LAW

8200 WILSHIRE BOULEVARD

SUITE 216

BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA 90211

(310) 276-2889 OR (310) 276-ATTY

# Men's Havurah Focuses on Winter Entertainment

Mark Miller and Richard Lesse, BCC Men's Havurah Co-Chairs

BCC's Men's Havurah held three very successful events during November and December 2009:

## Gay Comedy night on November 4 at the Improv Comedy Club in West Hollywood

About 10 of us from BCC laughed it up at the Improv with many different stand-up comics; can't repeat any of the jokes here as G'vanim is a family-friendly publication and a lot of the humor was of the R-rated variety...but you can guess what was said.

## An evening of dinner and nostalgia with our favorite Bewitched TV episodes on November 14

About a dozen people enjoyed a casual dinner followed by four of the best episodes of Bewitched dealing with daughter Tabitha's first signs of her witchcraft coming out, so to speak.

## A Chanukah party celebration on December 13

Hosted by BCC President Bruce Maxwell, we had about 25 people who feasted on a wonderful brunch-style dinner after lighting the Chanukah menorah candles. This was followed by Chanukah songs, a White Elephant Gift Exchange, and dessert, the highlight of which were delicious sufganiyot.

Upcoming events that the Men's

Havurah Committee is planning include:

- Movie Night at BCC on Saturday, January 23rd. Join us for a screening of *On These Shoulders We Stand*, a documentary about the LGBT community in the 60's and 70's by film maker/director Glenne McElhinney (co-sponsored by the Women's and 20s/30s Havurot).
- Night out at the NoHo Actor's Studio on Saturday, January 30. We will see a production of BCC Member Jeff Bernhardt's *Mixed Blessings*, a play with Jewish and gay themes.
- Another wine tasting party, likely in February or March. This time we will explore red wines.

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

- Through our Facebook page ("BCC Men's Havurah") where we post event details and share pictures from events
- Through e-mail:

[bcc.menshavurah@gmail.com](mailto:bcc.menshavurah@gmail.com).

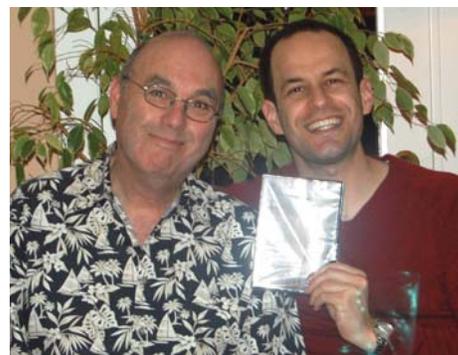
If you'd like to be part of our event planning team please let us know... we can use everyone's help, especially in hosting a Men's Havurah event. We will tailor the event to the size of your home.



David Mozes with delicious latkes at the Men's Havurah Chanukah party



Lee Alhadeff and Mark Brown at the Men's Havurah Chanukah party



Mark Miller and David Mozes at the Men's Havurah Chanukah party, with their gifts from the gift exchange.

## BCC Theater Party: Mixed Blessings by Jeff Bernhardt

BCC and the Men's and Women's Havurot are sponsoring a theater party on Saturday night, January 30, 2010 at 8:00 p.m. in North Hollywood. Join your fellow BCCers for the world premiere of "Mixed Blessings," written and directed by BCC member Jeff Bernhardt. A special Q & A with the cast will follow. For the special group rate enter discount code: BCC. A limited number of tickets are available.

"Mixed Blessings" is the story of two college roommates, one a straight Jew and the other his gay roommate of German descent. What happens when we can't come to terms with who we are? How do we come to truly count our blessings - and see them as blessings? Sometimes we need a little help from our friends, not to mention four parents, one Jewish grandmother, and a clueless dormmate riding out the recession in college. "Mixed Blessings" reminds us that sometimes we need a little help to count our blessings. A talented cast brings us into the lives of the characters and allows us to laugh along with them as they try to figure it all out.

"Mixed Blessings" was originally performed as a reading at BCC. If you cannot make it on January 30, the play runs from January 15-31 on weekends. For more information go to [www.mixedblessingstheplay.com](http://www.mixedblessingstheplay.com).

# Women's Havurah Goes to Skirball and Palm Springs

Donna Quigley Groman

A new decade, a new home, a new cantor. So many exciting things are happening at BCC. Equally exciting is the fact that the new Women's Havurah has been in existence for almost two years now and is building an even stronger foundation of an enduring and nurturing sisterhood. Not since playing competitive sports have I had the opportunity to be around a group of gal pals like the Havurah. We are an eclectic, eccentric, and charismatic bunch, always looking for new folks to join us in our sometimes intellectual, cultured, and even zany pursuits.

In November a group of us played croquet and board games on a very pleasant afternoon in the Sherman Oaks home of Sylvia Weisenberg and Irene Nunez. Also in November, some of us joined Helena Lipstadt for a "song circle." In December, we enjoyed a Vox Femina Chorale

performance, and a BCC favorite – movies and Chinese food on Christmas Day.

## Coming up in January/February:

A visit to the Skirball Museum on Sunday, January 17, 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. for a guided tour of two great photography exhibits depicting the Civil Rights Movement: Road to Freedom: Photographs of the Civil Rights Movement, 1956–1968, and Breach of Peace: Photographs of Freedom Riders by Eric Etheridge. Everyone is welcome!

Then join us on Sunday, January 31, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. for a women-only moderate hike in the Fern Dell section of Griffith Park led by Helena Lipstadt.

For February, I am excited to announce our first annual Women's Havurah Palm Springs Getaway. Being so envious of Ronni Sanlo's retirement to Palm Springs, I asked

her if we could share just a little bit of the Palm Springs life with her. She has agreed to be our adventure guide for Valentine's/Presidents' Day weekend, Saturday February 13 to Monday, February 15. I know many of us have homes in the Palm Springs area, or know someone who lives there, so that we can easily find lodging for a couple of nights. On the agenda – hiking, a visit to the Living Desert, golf, hot tubbing or swimming, and best of all, a group Valentine's dinner. For those who do not have a place to stay, I will do my best to place you with another Havurah member who may have an extra room. Or you might enjoy the privacy of a hotel room.

If anyone is interested in hosting an event, or has an idea for an event, please let me know. I am also looking for co-chairs of this committee. I look forward to seeing you at our events.

---

## Coming Soon: A BCC Double Feature Film Night

### “On These Shoulders We Stand” and “Door Prize”

Join the Men's and Women's Havurot, and the entire BCC community, for a double feature film night at BCC on Saturday, January 23, 2010, starting at 6:30 pm. We will show two films of interest to our community, one written and directed by a BCC member and the other featuring one as a subject.

**On These Shoulders We Stand** chronicles the lives of eleven Los Angeles GLBT elders (including BCC member Marsha Epstein), from their early years to their coming out to their groundbreaking activism for the rights of all LGBT people. Contrary to popular belief that the struggle for gay rights was confined to New York City and San Francisco, the film profiles several Los Angeles activists who helped change the course of both California and LGBT history. Viewers will learn how Los Angeles' gay community has had a national impact on issues as diverse as the First Amendment, the entertainment industry, and the civil rights movement. “On These Shoulders We Stand” brings the marginalized and under reported history of the Los Angeles LGBT community to a new generation of American audiences.



**Door Prize** tells the story of a trans, two-spirit, butchboi lesbian for whom public restrooms are always an adventure. A restaurant. A necktie. A line at the ladies room. Peeing should never be so problematic. A Bluebonnet Production written and directed by BCC member Zsa Zsa Gershick and starring Beth Grant (“No Country for Old Men,” “Sordid Lives”). “Door Prize” premiered at Outfest this past summer and since has traveled to international gay & lesbian film festivals in Palm Springs, Chicago and Bologna, Italy.

As you have read in these pages in the last few issues, BCC is actively working to become involved in the community organization One LA. Our One LA "cluster" is the Central City Region and includes congregations on the Westside like Temples Emanuel, Isaiah, and Israel of Hollywood. In late October, our organizer Robert Hoo, along with



One LA organizer Robert Hoo and BCC members Dominique Bender and Jerry Nodiff at the "cluster" meeting of One LA

Rabbi Joe Hample and I met with Ashley Thompson, a member of the community group Rings of Saturn, which supports Saturn Elementary School not far from BCC. Rachel Joseph, a rabbinic intern at Temple Isaiah, also joined us. Ms. Thompson told us about the serious needs of Saturn for tutoring/mentoring its students, and the potential impact

that transforming its yard to park space could have for both the students and the community.

On November 3, Rabbi Hample, Dominique Bender, and I attended a cluster meeting hosted by Temple Emanuel. Near the beginning attendees were paired off with strangers, people from institutions they were not familiar with. I was paired with a woman from St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church



Jerry Nodiff and Rabbi Joe Hample in the Saturn school garden with a parent and student

near Pico and Normandie, a congregation with several thousand members serving largely Mexican and Central American immigrants – an insightful contrast with BCC. Much of the evening focused on

issue strategies. Rachel Joseph explained Temple Isaiah's Emerson Middle School Strategy. Many of Isaiah's parents shunned putting their children in Emerson, an LAUSD public school. Interested congregants worked with Emerson's principal to correct that situation. Having made significant changes in parent attitudes towards the school, Isaiah is currently focused on bringing together engaged parents and principals that are not at the seven feeder elementary schools for Emerson. Saturn is the easternmost of these schools. Please see the relevant article, "Healing the World, One School at a Time" in the November 27 issue of The Jewish Journal at jewishjournal.com.

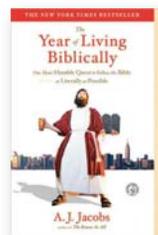
The second issue presented was on the workforce, and focused on research action with Work Source Centers. We are hearing that the recession is abating, but yet signs of it remain. I was shopping at a Macy's sale recently, and my clerk commented that after paying his rent he and his out-of-work mother were surviving on Ramin noodles. Here at BCC our One LA house meetings brought forth our own stories of how the recession has

*Continued on Page 11*

## BCC Book Group

Larry Nathenson

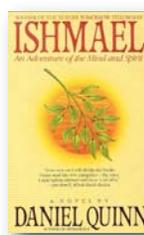
For nearly fifteen years, BCC members and friends have gathered in private homes for monthly potluck brunches and discussion of books selected by the group. Fiction and non-fiction, historical and contemporary, American and Israeli, the books read by the group include something for everyone's tastes and interests. We welcome new members to the group, as well as occasional visitors who may be interested in discussing a particular book.



Sunday, January 31, at 10:00 a.m.,

**The Year of Living Biblically: One Man's Humble Quest to Follow the Bible as Literally as Possible, by A.J. Jacobs**

This highly informative but humorous book discusses the author's attempt to spend a year following as many Bible laws literally as he can. Along the way, he meets with Christian Bible literalists and other groups concerned with Biblical issues, including Orthodox Jews, Samaritans, Amish, and a gay Evangelical group.



Sunday, February 28, at 10:00 a.m.,

**Ishmael: An Adventure of Mind and Spirit, by Daniel Quinn**

Not to be confused with the sequel My Ishmael by the same author, this novel (sort of) describes the narrator's encounter with a gorilla named Ishmael who engages him in dialogues on philosophical and theological issues in the manner of Plato. Together they explore the dilemmas at the heart of our civilization (including overpopulation and environmental damage) as well as the Book of Genesis and other Biblical sources of our common assumptions and ideas.

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

impacted people's lives. One member commented that his relatives in Florida were facing living out of their cars because of mortgage foreclosures. Several BCC members are facing unemployment presently or on the horizon; two of them have had to find work out of state. With health care costs, one member told us that if he had to pay the costs out-of-pocket for just two of his major medications it would come to \$25,000 a year. Like many LAUSD retirees, I am personally facing drastic increases in health care costs even with coverage, forcing me to shift from a PPO to HMO care.

BCC has a long history of involvement in caring community activities. We are involved in two

ongoing ones at this time: Project Chicken Soup and our High Holy Days drive for SOVA and AIDS needs. Where could we go from here? Becoming involved in One LA is an opportunity to expand and strengthen our work in Tikkun Olam. Your voices will guide those of us working on One LA here as to what issue or concern to focus on. We have heard from roughly 50 congregants and would like to hear from more. Please contact us with your questions and for more information: Robert Hoo ([Rhoo@metroiaf.org](mailto:Rhoo@metroiaf.org)) and Jerry Nodiff ([jerdn2@gmail.com](mailto:jerdn2@gmail.com)). With your involvement, we can make positive change happen!

## Rabbi Edwards Joins Reading from Torah Queeries on February 11

Join contributing authors including our own **Rabbi Lisa Edwards** on Thursday, February 11 (time and location to be announced) as they read from the new publication: *Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible*. Editor Gregg Drinkwater will also be present.

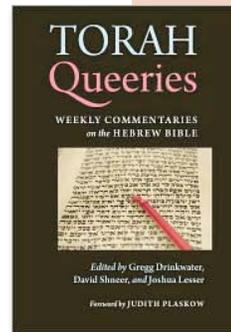
**Torah Queeries** brings together some of the world's leading rabbis, scholars, and writers to interpret the Torah through a "bent lens". With

commentaries on the 54 weekly Torah portions and six major Jewish holidays, the concise yet substantive writings collected here open up stimulating new insights and highlight previously neglected perspectives.

This incredibly rich collection unites the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and straight-allied writers, including some of the most central figures in contemporary American Judaism. All bring to the table unique methods of reading and interpreting that allow the Torah to speak to modern concerns of sexuality, identity, gender, and LGBT life.

**Torah Queeries** offers cultural critique, social commentary, and a vision of community transformation, all done through biblical interpretation. Written to engage readers, draw them in, and, at times, provoke them, *Torah Queeries* examines topics as divergent as the Levitical sexual prohibitions, the experience of the Exodus, the rape of Dinah, the life of Joseph, and the ritual practices of the ancient Israelites. Most powerfully, the commentaries here chart a future of inclusion and social justice deeply rooted in the Jewish textual tradition.

A labor of intellectual rigor, social justice, and personal passions, *Torah Queeries* is an exciting and important contribution to the project of democratizing Jewish communities, and an essential guide to understanding the intersection of queerness and Jewishness.



## Mazel Tov

*Please join the whole BCC community in wishing the following members a big "mazel tov" on their recent good news or upcoming naches.*

**Rabbi Joseph Hample**, formerly BCC's student rabbi, has accepted a position as a full-time chaplain at Pelican Bay state prison in Crescent City, California starting February 1. Joe and his husband, long-time BCC member **Barry Wendell**, will be moving to the far northwest corner of the state in January and will be missed by many in the BCC community. Joe says we should all come visit on our way to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in nearby Ashland, Oregon!

**Lia Lerner** recently received her Doctor of Education (EDD) from USC's Rossier School of Education.

**Emily Parkhurst** and **Gary Hoggatt** welcomed baby Benjamin William Parkhurst Hoggatt into their family on November 30, 2009. Mazel tov also to grandparents **Maggie** and **Dave Parkhurst** and big brother **Nathan Robert Parkhurst Hoggatt**.

**Erik Hyman** became a partner in the law firm of Loeb & Loeb.

Former BCC president **Josh Wayser** and his husband, **Richard Schulte**, welcomed their sixth child, **Joseph Riley**, on December 22.

**Michael Belkin** has been admitted to the MBA program at Harvard Business School starting in Fall 2010.

**Michelle Huneven** had her latest novel "Blame" selected by Entertainment Weekly Magazine as #5 in their top 10 best new fiction of 2009.

**Yael Maxwell**, daughter of BCC president **Bruce Maxwell**, was recently hired as Research Project Manager for the Lymphoma Research Foundation with offices in downtown New York City.

**Sam Maxwell**, son of BCC president **Bruce Maxwell** and a sophomore at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, is co-hosting a weekly sports talk radio show on WSUM in Madison called "Four Guys and a Mike." He has also called the live play-by-play for men's football and women's and men's basketball games on WSUM through the Fall, 2009. Sam is also a contributing sports writer to the Badger Herald, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's premier independent student newspaper.

*Please send your good news to the BCC office. We want to celebrate with you!*

January 2010

Tevet/Shevat 5770

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
All events at BCC unless otherwise noted*					6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	1 2
3	4	5	6	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	8:00 pm Shabbat Service Davi Cheng Cantor Porat	10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 3:30 pm Parent and Me Shabbat
8:00 am (cook) 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax 4:00 pm Fear and Faith Workshop Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson	11	12	7:00 pm Executive Committee meeting	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
12:00 pm (all welcome) Women's Havurah Photography exhibits at Skirball Museum	MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. BIRTHDAY BCC CLOSED	19	20	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	8:00 pm Shabbat Service Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson David Mozes	10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 6:30 pm Double Feature "On these Shoulders we Stand" "Door Prize"
8:00 am (cook) 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax	25	26	7:00 pm Board of Directors meeting	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	Ruach Chayim 29 7:00 pm Refreshments 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Juval Porat Guest Leah Lax	TU B'SHEVAT 30 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 8:00 pm Theater Party "Mixed Blessings" No. Hollywood
10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group <i>The Year of Living Biblically</i> 1:00 pm Women's Havurah Griffith Park hike 4:00 pm Fear and Faith Lindy Davidson	31					

February 2010

Shevat/Adar 5770

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson Lee Alhadeff	10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service
7	8	9	7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study Time and place TBA Book Reading: Torah Queeries Rabbi Edwards	8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service Women's Havurah Palm Springs Weekend
8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax	PRESIDENTS' DAY BCC CLOSED	16	17	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax	22	23	7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	Ruach Chayim 26 New Member Shabbat 7:00 pm Refreshments 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat Guest Musicians	EREV PURIM 6:00 Purim Festivities 7:00 Purim Service
10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group <i>Ishmael</i>	28	<p><b>Saturday February 27 at BCC</b></p> <p>Come help celebrate hilarity and diversity. Wear your favorite costume. Fun activities for families and children. Eat hamantaschen and make merry. Purim skits, multicultural readings of the Megilla and more!</p> <p>Bring your own dinner at 6 pm.   Program begins at 7 pm.</p>				

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