

## LA2010 to honor Senator Mark Leno and BCC member Elissa Barrett

*Jonathan Falk*



*Senator Mark Leno*

Planning is well underway for the 20th World Conference of GLBT Jews to be held on the campus of UCLA this summer. The conference committee for LA2010 is pleased to announce that we will be honoring California State Senator Mark Leno with the second World Congress Leadership Award for his long career advocating GLBT rights and inclusion. Senator Leno's path to public service included two years of rabbinic training at Hebrew Union College, which gave him a unique perspective on the role of gays and lesbians in the Jewish and larger world. Leno's work in Sacramento on issues of social justice is heavily influenced by his Judaic values, and it is this contribution that the World Congress of GLBT Jews wants to recognize. Senator Leno's support of public education, accessible post-secondary education, environmental and energy issues, and quality affordable healthcare, along with his leadership on same-gender marriage make him an excellent candidate for this esteemed award. Senator Leno will accept the World Congress Leadership Award at the gala dinner on Saturday night, August 14.

Presenting the keynote address at the Friday night dinner on August 13 will be BCC's own Elissa Barrett, who serves as Executive Director of Progressive Jewish Alliance. Barrett's melding of social justice work and a commitment to both the LGBT community and the Jewish community make her a perfect choice for keynote speaker, and we look forward to her inspirational words. Barrett has become a beacon of tikkun olam, and has spoken out on many issues around the world – from international human rights to local fair housing to LGBT rights in California. She has brought Progressive Jewish Alliance into the California fight for

marriage equality, including the PJA-sponsored Tu B'Av Summer Love In. For all these reasons, Elissa Barrett will be a terrific keynote speaker.



**Los Angeles 2010  
20th World Conference  
of GLBT Jews  
August 13-15, 2010**

The local hosts for this conference are: Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim, Congregation Kol Ami, JQ International, Mishpacha UCLA, the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College-JIR, and the latest addition to the family, the Workmen's Circle/Arbeiter Ring (So Cal district). We expect to welcome attendees of all ages and from all parts of the world.



*Elissa Barrett*

Seminar proposals have been coming in from around the country, and the program committee looks forward to putting together an exciting schedule of seminars and panels. It's not too late to submit a proposal – see the [la2010.org](http://la2010.org) website for full details. We are also working with the Jewish Historical Society to offer "The Los Angeles Jewish GLBT Experience" after the conference. This unique bus tour will depart from the UCLA Hillel at 2 pm Sunday and return there at 6 pm, at a cost of \$45 per person until June 30. After that date, as space allows,

*Continued on Page 2*

tickets will be available at \$50 per person.

For those looking to stay onsite for the weekend, you will want to book soon at the UCLA Guest House – our rooms there are limited and will fill up fast. When that fills up, we also have a block of rooms at the West Hollywood Ramada.

Conference registration is ongoing at the la2010.org website, and is

currently \$250 for members of our member organizations, including BCC. For those of you who have not yet paid, the deadline for early bird pricing is March 15, 2010.

We encourage everyone to donate to our scholarship fund in order to allow as many people as possible to participate in the conference, and we also encourage the donation of frequent flier miles, which could be used to help participants and presenters travel to LA for the conference.

For anyone who would like to get involved in planning the conference, please call Jonathan Falk at (562) 422-1861 or e-mail jonfalk@aol.com. Our next committee meeting will be Sun. March 7, 2010, 4 – 6 pm at the Workmen's Circle.



*Bonnie Kaplan and Bracha Yael Cheng are cured of their depression by Tal-MOOD-ica at Purim 5770, Feb. 27, 2010*

PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

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Friday 9:00 – 4:00 pm

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

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### G' VANIM

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

**BETH CHAYIM CHADASHIM**  
 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.**

# From the Rabbi's Study (or maybe kitchen...) Pesach as a Release from Multi-Tasking

Rabbi Lisa Edwards



PHOTO: KENNA LOVE

I'll spare you the details, but someone recently asked me why I couldn't just drop what I was doing and do something else

(i.e., something that person wanted me to do instead of the something someone else had wanted me to do). Of course, those weren't the exact words, but in essence it's exactly what was being asked of me.

It happens a lot actually in one form another. Rabbi, I know you're busy, but... And try as I might to fit it all in – I'm never successful.

Especially since multi-tasking is definitely not my strong suit. In fact, I still agree with an analysis I read years ago -- that there is no such thing as multi-tasking, only shorter and shorter bursts of concentrated effort on any given task. The consequences are noticeable everywhere – especially driving (please do not talk on the phone and drive) or working on the computer while your e-mail is open. Every time you hear that "you've got mail" sound, do you click on your mailbox and see what just came in? And if so, do you then reply to that e-mail, or click on the link included in that e-mail, instead of continuing with whatever work was at hand?

Even if we're of a generation prior to remote controls and computer distractions, too many of us are training ourselves into attention deficit disorder. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

So how do we get anything done? Or perhaps better to ask, get anything done well (except maybe the steak we overcook when our inbox distracts us from our chef duties)? I write about what I'm guilty of myself, of course, but I write

because I'm concerned for all of us. As the pace gets more frenetic, I wonder if the quality of our accomplishments and our satisfaction in accomplishing don't decline precipitously.

As we enter the season of freedom, the celebration of freedom known as Pesach, I've begun to think about some of its gifts. We sometimes joke that if we accept the rules of this holiday governing food and seder and dishes and cleaning, it can feel more like an enslavement than a liberation. For there is no fast and easy way to clean for Pesach, or change dishes, or sort the foods in your cabinet, or shop for kosher for Passover foods, or cook for a seder, or even conduct a seder – all of those many tasks require time and a certain amount of concentration.

While to some of us such preparation and performance may have felt burdensome in years past, perhaps this year we could put a different spin on it. Perhaps this year we could allow the demands of Pesach preparation to release us from some of the demands of our usual multi-tasking. Perhaps this year instead of adding the Pesach prep to the list of the tasks we attempt to do simultaneously, we could move the laptop out of the kitchen while we clean for Pesach. Perhaps this year we could take a day or two of vacation to do our shopping and change the dishes and kasher the sink. Perhaps this year we could invite a friend (or child or partner) to clean or shop or prepare the seder service with us – sweet companionship as we take the journey. Perhaps this year we could devise ways to linger over Pesach tasks, and appreciate how long each task takes if done well. Perhaps this year we could make the coming of Pesach, and then Pesach itself, a time of liberation

from the ordinary routines, and a time to appreciate ... time itself.

Here's a taste of what I've been doing recently:

*Taught a session for Conservative movement rabbinic students on counseling LGBT people*

Took part in two panels:  
*The LA celebration of the publication of Torah Queeries: Weekly Commentaries on the Hebrew Bible (NYU Press, 2009)*

*The Jewish Journal's "Out on the Bimah: An Open and Honest Conversation with Gay Clergy in Los Angeles"*

Served on several Betai Din welcoming new Jews into Judaism

Upcoming:  
"Talk Back" panel March 14, after the Sunday night performance of "Salam Shalom: Enemies... Another Love Story" at the Greenway Court Theater, 544 N. Fairfax Ave., Los Angeles. For tickets call 323-655-7679, ext. 100 or online: [www.salamshalomtheplay.com](http://www.salamshalomtheplay.com)



PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

*The Easter Rabbi(t), Purim 5770*

# Annual Brunch on May 23 Will Honor Three Accomplished BCC Members

*Lauren Schlau*

Get out your calendar, i-phone, outlook scheduler or whatever your favorite format is to save the date of **Sunday, May 23, 2010 for BCC's Annual Humanitarian Awards Brunch.** This year's event promises to be very special with stellar honorees, and the very exciting location...to be revealed shortly!

The 2010 brunch co-chairs are Lauren Schlau and Mark Farber, who both are "particularly pleased that this year both the Rabbi Erwin and Agnes Humanitarian Award and the BCC Presidents Award are being bestowed on very deserving BCC members!"



*Dr. Bill Resnick*

Dr. Bill Resnick has honored BCC with his acceptance of the Rabbi Erwin and Agnes Herman Humanitarian Award for all his charitable and humanitarian efforts in the Jewish, GLBT, and greater Los Angeles communities, including his

long-term and generous support of BCC. Bill has received numerous honors and awards over the years for these acts of "tikkun olam," repair of the world.

Accepting this year's Presidents award for dedicated service to BCC are beloved BCC members and life partners Dr. Hanna Theile and Kenna Love. Over the years Hannah has served on the BCC board of directors, on the capital campaign committee, and has contributed extraordinarily to BCC's betterment. Kenna has also given to BCC in many ways, most notably photographing at many BCC events and for that extra special portrait many members have sought from this consummate artist and professional.



*Dr. Hanna Theile and Kenna Love*

BCC's award events go back to the first annual dinner held in 1985 at the Sheraton Universal Hotel. Over 200 persons were present to see Dr. Joel Weisman of the UCLA

AIDS Research Center honored with the newly created Rabbi Erwin & Agnes Herman Humanitarian Award, which was established to

recognize and thank the Hermans for all their early and ongoing support of BCC in its admission into the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ, formerly UHAC). Over the years deserving honorees have included those who have made a difference in politics, public interest law, medicine and social service.

The spirit of festivity and the generosity of attendees, honorees and their well-wishers continues to grow each year, as does its importance to the congregation, now accounting for one-quarter of BCC's annual budget, and the second highest single source of BCC annual operating income.

**MORE INFORMATION AND INVITATIONS WILL BE COMING SOON. WE HOPE TO SEE YOU AT BRUNCH ON SUNDAY, MAY 23!**

## 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, March 21, at 10:00 a.m.,**

**The Garden of the Finzi-Continis, by Giorgio Bassani**

This novel set in Italy in the 1940s combines a love story with an account of the tragic fate of Italian Jews under Fascism and German occupation. It was the basis of the 1971 film by Vittorio De Sica.



**Sunday, May 2, at 10:00 a.m.,**

**Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, by Tony Kushner**

This Tony award and Pulitzer prize winning pair of plays ("Millennium Approaches" and "Perestroika") explores the AIDS crisis of the 1980s and the McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s with passion and compassion, combining gay and Jewish themes with highly personal and highly political social commentary.

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).

# New Building Update

Ira Dankberg



Thanks to the dedication and vision of all members of the New Building Committee, in concert with our architect and consultants we continue to make excellent progress toward realizing our new home at 6090 W. Pico Blvd. At the end of 2009 we received final, uncontested approval from the Los Angeles Planning Department to allow us to park at two nearby, off-site locations. This gave us the confidence to authorize our architects, Toni Lewis and Marc Schoepflein, to move forward with the design and construction drawings necessary to obtain a building permit. Simultaneously we reviewed construction estimates with our general contractor, Howard

CDM, and, where necessary, made design decisions to keep the project design within budget without sacrificing the design intent. We also made a commitment to have BCC's new home LEED certified through the U. S. Green Building Council which ensures that our construction and design represent high standards in environmental sustainability.

Brett Trueman negotiated very favorable lending terms with Wells Fargo that allow us to move forward with financial confidence. We will soon commence selective demolition of non-structural, interior partitions to expose hidden structure. This will allow us to see and mitigate any unanticipated conditions during the design process rather than waiting until construction commences. This will reduce the risk of potentially expensive change orders.

Several BCC members and Rabbi Lisa have formed a committee to create a unified vision for our new

sanctuary that expresses BCC's spirituality, functionality and artistry. The colors and forms portrayed in our stained glass windows will serve as a guide to the interior design of the new sanctuary. Our architect will submit the construction drawings to Los Angeles Building and Safety Department plan check in early March and, if all goes well, we expect to receive our building permit sometime in late spring. We will keep you posted on our progress.

We're looking for you if:

- You're on Twitter, Facebook, Digg or other social networking sites
- You have fans/followers in the LGBT community, the Jewish community, or any community
- You're willing to help us publicize the groundbreaking event for BCC's new building
- You have other media contacts

If you can help, please contact BCC Board member Julie Gertler at [juliegertler@yahoo.com](mailto:juliegertler@yahoo.com).

## Men's Havurah Continues Focus on Entertainment

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

BCC's Men's Havurah sponsored three very successful events during January and February 2010:

### Movie Night at BCC on January 23

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)

### An evening of theatre on January 30 at the NoHo Actor's Studio

About twenty BCC members in a full house enjoyed a wonderful production of BCC member Jeff Bernhardt's *Mixed Blessings*, a play with Jewish and gay themes.

### A Red Wine Tasting Party on February 21

Hosted by BCC's former First Family Brett Trueman and Mark Miller, we had about 18 people who sampled several types of red wines including Zinfandel, Pinot Noir, Cabernet, Petite Syrah, and a Port under the guidance of wine connoisseur and BCC member Mark Brown together with light refreshments prepared by BCC member chef Peter Bastien.

Upcoming events that the Men's Havurah Committee is planning include:

- Another outing to Gay Comedy Night on March 3 at the Improv Comedy Club in West Hollywood
- Double Feature Theme Movie Night at a BCC member's home in late March
- Another Game Night in April, back by popular demand

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

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

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.

# The Demands of Freedom



Jewish holidays can make strange demands on us. Just when we thought being commanded to be happy

(during Purim) was strange enough, the celebration of spring – variously known as the feast of the matzah, the holiday of Pesach, or the celebration of freedom – requires that we act as liberated persons (ben/bat khorin). We're not asked to pretend to be liberated, we're simply asked to be liberated. Is that easy to do? Are we ever really free? How much do we rely on others in achieving our freedom?

But as our tradition guides us during Purim as to how to be happy, our tradition offers specific tools to help us achieve this feeling of freedom during Pesach.

On the first night of Pesach, during the seder, we recline on pillows and drink exactly four cups of wine – tools to make us feel liberated. The explanations for why, of all things, four cups of wine are supposed to make us feel free are varied and very interesting (possible answers can be found in tractate Pesakhim of the

Jerusalem Talmud, as well as during BCC's poetry slam session on April 3).

Besides feeling free, it's the talking about it that makes Pesach so distinctive. In particular, passing the story of our liberation on to the next generation is something that our tradition is very passionate about ("And you shall tell your children on that day..." Exodus 13:8). The distinctiveness extends to the setting of the dining room table. It is different on the first night of Pesach so that the ones who are not familiar with the holiday customs will ask about it – and then will be told about the exodus story. Traditionally it's the children who ask:

On all other nights we eat either leavened bread or matzah. Why, on this night, do we eat only matzah?

On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs. Why, on this night, do we eat only bitter herbs?

On all other nights we do not dip herbs. Why, on this night, do we dip them twice?

On all other nights we eat sitting up or reclining. Why, on this night, only reclining?

The answers to all of these questions are that it's different on this night, so that you'll be curious, awake and interested in hearing the great story of our liberation from the oppression in Egypt that

Cantor Juval Porat

led to all the changes that you experience tonight. Every generation has its own interpretation of the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt and the many versions of Haggadot – the main text that is used during the seder night – are good proof of that.

Still, freedom, and the annual deconstruction of the idea behind it, is not just a generational thing. It's also very individual, as within all of us there's a little spot of freedom, a very unique reflection of that great exodus, that can only be found and determined by us as individuals. Right next to that spot of freedom we also carry our own little Egypt and our own little Pharaoh who tries hard not to let us be who we would like to be.

During the days of Pesach we hope not only to change the setting of our dining room table, but also to change the whole space of BCC by sharing our ideas on freedom with other BCC members. (For more information please read the text on the "Freedom Art" exhibit below). I hope for exciting and inspiring days of Pesach for all of us!

P.S. Feel free to join our choir! We're still looking for singers. For more information just drop me an email!

## Make Art, Not War!

BCC members, Make Art, not War! Join us Friday, March 26, 8:00 pm, for the opening of "Freedom Art" for and by BCC members! Liberation and freedom in our lives is a value most of us strive for. Life fills us with challenges, patterns and experiences from which we would like to release ourselves, but also inspiration, prayers and loved ones that help us pave our way towards our personal liberation. Every year, during

Passover we're commanded to see ourselves as if we were newly liberated from slavery in Egypt. As we approach this year's Pesach, also known as the Festival of Freedom, BCC invites members to celebrate freedom in a new way and to contribute your thoughts, ideas and creations about freedom to be presented during Pesach week at BCC. All skill levels and ages are 'just right' for our freedom week of art (think: paintings, drawings,

*Continued on Page 6*

doodles, videos, photographs, collage, fabric art, poetry, performance, dance, power point presentation, skit, play, reading, etc.). Free your mind and the art will follow!

The Freedom exhibit will begin on Friday March 26 and run through April 8. On Saturday evening, April 3 Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Cantor Juval Porat will host a Poetry Slam featuring the BCC Freedom poets, performers, filmmakers, singers and word slammers. Share your concepts, dreams, visions, wish list, history/herstory on the theme of Freedom this Pesach and let us explore together the meaning and inspiration of this holiday.

Art for the exhibit should be delivered to Victoria in the

BCC office by Monday, March

22, 5:00 pm. Email Victoria at [bcc@bcc-la.org](mailto:bcc@bcc-la.org) if you have

questions. Poets, performers, presenters, filmmakers for the

Freedom Poetry Slam

should contact Rabbi Lisa at [Lisa@bcc-la.org](mailto:Lisa@bcc-la.org)

"I always try to balance the light with the heavy - a few tears of human spirit in with the sequins and the fringes." –Bette Midler.

**Make Art,  
Not War!**

## Freedom from Negative Self-Image

Student Rabbi Lindy Davidson



Passover, a celebration of freedom, leads me to wonder in what ways are we free? Many of us would immediately answer by citing the blessings of being Americans and having political freedom...of course we are free. At a time when we are more aware than ever of our freedom of expression and freedom of religion, we are grateful for our status. There are many war-torn countries where people are fighting just to survive for a day. So how can I possibly even ask such a question?

Yet there may be other freedoms that we deny ourselves daily. Maybe you repeat the words of your worst enemy, telling yourself

that you are stupid, or fat, or you just can't do it. In doing this we keep ourselves wedged in the narrow spaces. We enslave ourselves in mitzrayim (Egypt), when we repeat these negative messages again and again.

One of my teachers recently challenged my classmates to take note of the different messages that we affirm for ourselves throughout the day. She broke us up into pairs and asked us to share one of our strengths with our partner. Then we were told to repeat this strength aloud affirmatively for each other. It felt great to hear someone else assert our positive traits back to us. Then we did the same exercise with a negative trait. Hearing these words repeated to us felt awful. Afterwards we discussed how we each repeat this exercise daily. Often multiple times a day, we tell ourselves these negative messages. She challenged our class to take note of how many times a day we might do this, and to try to free ourselves of this negative self talk.

Rav Kook, the first Ashkenazi rabbi for the British Mandate of

Palestine, taught that *"the difference between a slave and a free person is not merely a matter of social position. We can find an enlightened slave whose spirit is free, and a free man with the mentality of a slave."*

True freedom is that uplifted spirit by which the individual - as well as the nation as a whole - is inspired to remain faithful to his inner essence, to the spiritual attribute of the Divine image within her. It is that quality that enables us to feel that our life has value and meaning.

This Passover I invite all of us to take some time to nourish our Divine image from within. Let's free ourselves from all the labels and name calling that we internalized from previous interactions. Let us walk into Passover with souls renewed by the positive messages we recite. Perhaps then we can (as Rav Kook teaches) remain faithful to our inner essence and experience the freedom of a satisfied soul, allowing our divine light to shine forth as we beckon others to join us in the light of freedom. Won't you come along?

## A Few Words from Bruce...



Bruce Maxwell

BCC's members are the Greatest... It comes as no surprise to any BCC member that BCC is different from any other shul. Our sense of belonging to an extended family, through our membership in BCC is probably our strongest asset. And our members have come through again and again over the years, with the current year being no exception. Rising to over 240 individual members strong, and having grown by almost 30 new members in the past year alone, BCC members continue to prove that their love and commitment to BCC does not rest.

In recent years, we've run the single most successful small congregation capital campaign ever witnessed by experienced consultant Marc Randall. BCC members were not surprised. When it came time to close escrow on our new building at 6090, BCC members came through once again with additional financial commitments and pledges, and some accelerated their contributions so as to enable us to close escrow successfully. BCC members responded, again not unexpectedly so, but oh so welcome.

During the current year, with general and other contributions lower than expected due to the economic downturn, many BCC members have responded by increasing their membership contributions to the next mitzvah circle level and/or by making additional one-time contributions. For so many of you, we understand that the economy has limited your ability to give to BCC and to help us weather this downturn. And for those BCC members who are fortunate to be able to do so, your additional contributions to BCC are so much appreciated. And I want to say Thank You to each of you accordingly.

There is yet another reason that BCC members are so wonderful -- in one word, "involvement." So many of you serve on committees and on our Board of Directors, and help out when needed. For a small congregation, we probably have a larger number of members involved and actively serving the congregation than most other shuls. We have members working tirelessly on our Building Committee, headed by Ira Dankberg, and the Sanctuary Design Committee in conjunction with our architects to come up with a final design for our new building that will be nothing short of fabulous. Our Education Committee, chaired by Board member Kadin Henningsen, has come up with program after program, one more interesting than the last. Our recent Purim celebration, planned by our Ritual Committee Chair Davi Cheng, was again so wonderful and fun.

And I would be remiss in not pointing out the tireless

efforts of every person on BCC's Executive Committee. Our Immediate Past-President and current Treasurer Brett Trueman can be single-handedly credited with so many of the successes we have achieved recently including most importantly securing financing from Wells Fargo Bank to begin renovations on our new building. This task alone took many dedicated hours of work, and preparing of schedules and documents supporting our application. Brett also works very hard to run keep our financial picture in focus, including leading the efforts to reach out to so many members. Our Secretary Allison Diamant does so much for BCC above and beyond a Secretary's responsibilities. Vice Presidents Donna Groman and Lauren Schlauf are also so giving of their time and take on task after task at BCC most of the time without even being asked. Lauren and member Mark Farber will be chairing the Awards Brunch this year (Mark's third year of co-chairing this event)...mark your calendar's for May 23 with what should be yet another really terrific event.

I'd like to ask of each of you who may not yet be involved in something at BCC to consider volunteering on a committee. Become involved with our Brunch event...we do need all the help we can get both in advance and at the event. Help us to solicit contributions for the silent auction. Help us to sell ads in the tribute book. Alternatively, join our Education Committee, or our Ritual Committee. If you are not sure how to help, or if you need some ideas, please come talk with me, or with our Executive Director Felicia Park-Rogers, or with Rabbi Lisa and we will be happy to give you some ideas. Getting involved is fun and you will get to know your fellow BCC members so much better.

My Grandfather Jack, Z'l'v once told my Dad, who has since taught me the following: "In life if you want to meet good people, volunteer your time to do good things. And the people you meet also volunteering their time doing good things are good people too." I promise you this...for every hour you give to BCC, you will get something back far greater. Come talk with me about how you can help.

Kol Tov,  
Bruce Maxwell

President "Moses"  
Maxwell, Purim 5770



PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

About six weeks ago I ran into a friend at Trader Joe's. In the course of talking, she remarked, "I don't know how anyone can believe in God in times like these". For me this raises the questions: Do we blame God for



the disasters in Haiti and Chile, the recession, the Toyota car malfunctions, and so on?

What do we credit God with... and what challenges do we accept for ourselves? In short, we ask: What can WE do?

For one thing, we can help alleviate hunger in our own city. BCC has recently resumed its weekly food drive to assist the Sova food pantry. How great is the need? Roughly, 900,000 people in Los Angeles County - 1 in every 10 - are in need of food. People are choosing between buying food and paying rent or other basics. What foods are needed? Canned tuna, canned veggies, pasta or rice. BCC's weekly e-bulletin will give you

further details. SOVA is the "Two Minute Mitzvah" ... one minute to pick up a can of food at the supermarket, and another to bring it to temple.

We had a chance to learn more about community organizing with One LA on Sunday, March 7 from 3:00 to 4:30 pm with Temple Isaiah's One LA team hosting an assembly focused on improving public education on the Westside. This event offered insight into the skills and vision One LA is able to promote in its member groups. Isaiah's interest in public education started when they realized that many of their parents were shunning putting their children in the neighborhood Emerson Middle School, a LAUSD public school. After making significant changes in parent attitudes towards Emerson, Isaiah has more recently focused on bringing together engaged parents and principals with ones that are not at the seven feeder schools for Emerson: Brockton, Castle Heights, Fairburn, Westwood, Overland,

Roscomare, and Saturn which is within BCC's larger neighborhood. Invited guests from LAUSD were: Superintendent Ramon Cortines; Board representatives Steve Zimmer and Nury Ramirez; and District 3 Superintendent Michelle King. Also participating were City Councilmember Paul Koretz and local principals.

Please circle Sunday, April 25, on your calendar for an insightful event at BCC with Robert Hoo, BCC's One LA organizer. BCCers have met in house meetings and a Yom Kippur breakout session to voice their concerns. Among them were health care coverage, mortgage foreclosures/homelessness, hunger, unemployment, and public education. Robert will discuss with us how we move these concerns forward into action, and what One LA has to offer us. I look forward to sharing this event with you!

Please contact us with your questions and for more information: Robert Hoo (Rhoo@metroiaf.org) and Jerry Nodiff (jerdn2@gmail.com).

## Mazon Fights Hunger at Passover

Twenty-five years ago during Passover, visionary Leonard Fein founded Mazon (a Jewish response to hunger) by asking a profound question: "Is there not more we can do to feed the hungry?"

We at Mazon have never stopped asking this question. This Passover, we'd like to encourage Jews everywhere to ask and answer a fifth question at their Passover Seders:

"Why on this night are millions of people going hungry?"

The answer is simple and frightening, "Because on this night, like every other night, millions of people living in poverty have no other choice."

This Passover, as we celebrate our people's freedom from bondage, we can also take the opportunity to raise awareness about hunger and make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. We are asking your congregants to help Mazon help the millions of men, women and children who face hunger every night. Envelopes will be available at BCC services, or you can contact Mazon at [mazon.org](http://mazon.org).

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# Shabbat as a Time to "Be"

Leah Zimmerman



Every weekday morning we wake to the fully scheduled and structured day of work, school,

appointments etc. For so many of us the day doesn't wind down until we put our heads on our pillows and turn off the light. When I was a full time teacher, married without children, I looked forward to the Saturday mornings that I could wake up, stay in my pajamas, have a cup of coffee and watch old movies on television. The day was mine to plan and schedule as I pleased. Now, every day morning to night is packed with work and family commitments. My recent surgery and subsequent recovery has reminded me of the importance of having days to just "be." The enforced days off and physical fatigue required me to take a break from many things and to spend time "doing nothing." Taking time away from the work and scheduled world to attend to my physical needs gave me a kind of a break from the usual routine. While I don't

recommend needing gall bladder surgery as a way to discover this, I now realize how the break from the routine enabled me to return to some of the work and scheduled aspect of my life refreshed and with a renewed spirit.

This recent experience has reminded me of the essence of Shabbat and the purpose for having Shabbat – a day to stop the schedule, to take a break and to just "be." A day to take time to turn off the many narratives and drives that shape the way we act in the world, and have a day to reflect, appreciate. And then to return to the regular and routine world with a renewed spirit.

How do we find a way to do this when the rest of the world keeps going? When working five days a week means that the weekend is when you can get chores done? When children need to be driven to and from sports, birthday parties, and other activities that can't happen when they are in school?

From 10 am -12:45 pm on most Saturday mornings, BCC offers families and other communities who wish to join us, a place to come together and "be" - an opportunity to find Shabbat.

We sing together, eat together, learn together, but most of all just enjoy being together. I am recommitted to finding a way to have our time and space together feel like sacred time for stopping the usual running around, taking a deep breath, reflecting on our worlds, and renewing our spirit for the coming weeks.

## Life Transitions Group

The BCC Life Transitions Group has been in existence for the last seven years. This unique and successful group is committed to helping people dealing with changes and/or challenges in relationships, family, bereavement, health, career and economic issues in a safe and confidential environment. We meet the first and third Wednesday of each month 7:00 to 9:00 pm at BCC. It is led by Shirley Hirschberg, social worker and life style and bereavement counselor. We welcome BCC members and non-members. There is a fee associated with participating in this group. To get more information and see if this group is for you, please call the BCC office.

Domestic Partnerships Adoption Family Law Mediation Separation Agreements	<b>WE ALSO HANDLE:</b>  <b>BUSINESS LITIGATION</b> Business Disputes Corporate Collections Corporate Litigation  <b>PERSONAL INJURY</b> Automobile Accidents Motorcycle Accidents Wrongful Death Medical Malpractice
Fairness   Dignity   Respect <b>THE LAW FIRM OF GOODMAN &amp; METZ</b> 17043 Ventura Boulevard Encino, California 91316 818-386-2889 goodmanmetz@earthlink.net	Serving the gay community since 1984.

# Women's Havurah Plans Springtime Games, Comedy, and Flowers

Donna Quigley Groman

Khavershaft, everyone! I am k'velling over the success of our Women's Havurah programs. Our winter events were well attended. The most fabulous of all was the visit to the Skirball Museum for the guided tours of the Road to Freedom and Breach of Peace photography exhibitions - photographs of the civil rights movement, my favorite chapter of US history. It was the day before Martin Luther King Day, and I spent some time listening to the recorded speeches by Dr. King. What a fabulous orator he was, with an unparalleled ability to connect with audiences, even 40 years after his assassination.

What is the Women's Havurah up to in March and April, you ask? On **March 13, 7 pm at BCC**, we are having a repeat of our very successful game night. Since I end up doing this each time, I am going to publicize my offer to teach American mah jongg to anyone who wants to learn. Everyone brings snacks and a board game to share. Do you have a new game you want to try out? Bring it to game night on March 13. This is a "women only" event.

On **Saturday, March 27**, many of us will visit Temple Akiba in Culver City to watch a performance by Jewish comic Deb Filler, who hails from New Zealand. The producers of the show guarantee that "Deb's comedic genius should leave no fan of Tracy Ullman or Lily Tomlin disappointed." Deb is recommended by Barbara Kroll and Ruth Spielman, who saw her perform a few years ago. Tickets are \$20 with a possibility of a group rate of \$15 per ticket. This event is open to all.

**Monday, March 29** is first night seder. If anyone has room at their seder table, or is in need of a place at a seder table, please let Rabbi Lisa know - no BCC'er should be without a seder to attend!

On **Sunday April 18**, we are off to the Lancaster Poppy Reserve. With all the rain we have had, it is almost certain that there will be lots of blooms, certainly enough to make the shlep worthwhile. This will be an all day event given the approximately 90 minute travel time each way. Last year we took a side trip to Saddleback Butte Park and Wildflower Sanctuary, which is a much less visited area,

and in some respects equal to or even more beautiful than the Poppy Reserve. We will make our best efforts to carpool - it is a long drive and the parking fee is \$8 per car at the Poppy Reserve.

I will also be checking out the wildflower hotlines to see where the wildflowers are blooming each weekend. I will keep everyone informed if I plan to venture off on a hike somewhere. This is my favorite time of the year to hike in Southern California and I can probably use some company while my wife is studying! Happy trails to you, until we meet again.



Donna Quigley Groman and friend Amy at Purim 5770

PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

## Spring Education at BCC

**Introduction to Judaism with the BCC Clergy**, Tuesdays, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm through June 15.

Our Introduction to Judaism course with BCC's "on the front-line" clergy will be your personal transformative resource on Reform sacred texts and spirituality. Study will include the basics, plus essays, insightful writings, reflective text sources, alternative liturgies, history and the "whys" of life-cycle celebrations. This is part of a course of study for those thinking of conversion. While each person's path into Jewish life is unique, there are shared questions and experiences

that are common to many. This class will help you find answers to some of your basic queries and point the way to additional and unique-perspective sources. Free to BCC members, Tuition is \$136 for non-members for the entire series; non-member drop-ins can pay \$10 per session. Please contact Victoria at the BCC office to register or for questions [Victoria@bcc-la.org](mailto:Victoria@bcc-la.org).

The course begins March 2 at "Out on the Bimah" (a panel of GLBT clergy), and a suggested book list that students are strongly encouraged to purchase will be

given out at the second meeting, March 9. In addition to all her numerous contributions to important LGBT Jewish literature, Rabbi Lisa Edwards is a co-editor of the revised editions (1999) of the Reform Movement textbook, Introduction to Judaism: a Sourcebook, and its companion Instructor's Guide and Curriculum. Since 1983, this book has been the standard teaching tool for beginning "Introduction to Judaism" classes in Reform synagogues and institutions throughout North America.

**Advanced Beginner Hebrew Reading class** taught by Todd

*Continued on Page 12*

Shotz, co-sponsored with IKAR, Sundays, March 14 and 21, 6:30 pm at BCC. Just in time for Passover! If you can read Hebrew, but want to read more fluently and want to begin to understand what you are saying, this is the class for you. Join the fabulous teacher Todd Shotz to learn the basics in how to break down Hebrew words, from three-letter roots to some key vocabulary. In the class, we will practice reading and gain

comprehension by looking at prayers like the Shema and the Torah Blessings as well as some modern poems, songs and stories. Those of you who took the Intro to Hebrew Reading class in the fall — this is the perfect next step for you. \$50 for members of BCC and IKAR participants; \$72 for nonmembers. Contact Todd to RSVP and for questions, including about prorated prices: [todd.shotz@gmail.com](mailto:todd.shotz@gmail.com).

## Yom HaShoah Movie Screening, *The Rape of Europa*, Sunday, April 11, 3:00 pm at BCC.

After the horrors of the Holocaust, Jews wanted a day to memorialize this tragedy-- it is called Yom HaShoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day). Since Yom HaShoah is a relatively new holiday, there are no set rules or rituals as to how to observe it. The day has been observed with candle lighting, speakers, poems, prayers, and singing. The whole BCC family will come together to remember these injustices by viewing a screening of "The Rape of Europa," the epic story of the systematic theft, deliberate destruction and miraculous survival of Europe's art treasures during the Third Reich and the Second World War. We will reflect on film's important socio-political message and how the legacy of this tragic history continues to play out on victim-families.

## Mazel Tov

Please join the whole BCC community in wishing the following members a big "Mazel Tov" on their recent good news.

**Sylvia Sukop** had a photo she took during the Boulevard Without Borders project featured on the homepage of LA Magazine as part of its 50th anniversary celebration.

<http://www.lamag.com/article.aspx?id=22818>

**Elissa Barrett** was among the progressive Jewish leaders who participated in a response to President Obama's State of the Union speech on January 27. The video response could be seen on the website of Jewish Funds for Justice.

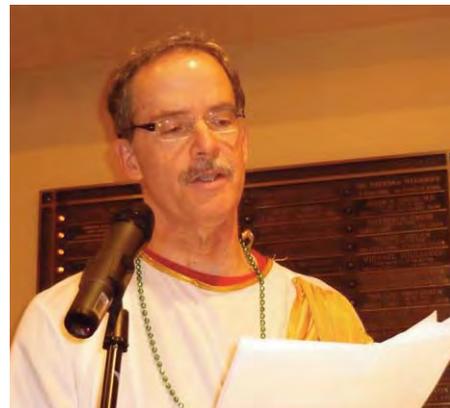
**David Mozes** was the featured guest speaker at the Metro Arts Council of Southern Nevada on February 2. He discussed The Mission Las Vegas, his new arts-related, transit-oriented mixed-use development project in the 18b Arts District of downtown Las Vegas which aims to nurture, cultivate, and promote art, music, culture, sustainability, community, and non-profit

organizations in Southern Nevada. Its campus will include boutique retail, specialty dining, creative offices, art studios and galleries, penthouse-level banquet event space, and nightly live music in LEED-Gold certified buildings.

**Kenna Love**, BCC member and official advertising photographer for the City of Rancho Mirage, has been given the opportunity to play in the Pro Am, with the professional tournament golfers. The Pro Am is a celebratory event and runs for four days before the Dinah Shore Nabisco Tournament opens on April 1, 2010.

**Arlan Wareham**, former BCC member now residing in Tsfat, Israel with partner **David Fyffe**, delivered a drash in Hebrew at Shabbat services on February 19 at their liberal congregation in Nahariya. Arlan will also lead services on March 5 while the rabbi is traveling in South America.

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



Chris Marshall butchers the megillah in Latin, Purim 5770

PHOTO: TRACY MOORE



Gary Hoggatt and son Benjamin Parkhurst Hoggatt at Purim 5770

PHOTO: TRACY MOORE

# Multiple Identities

*Davi Cheng*



*Davi Cheng*

*Excerpted from a drash given at BCC on January 8, 2010 on Parashat Shemot (Exodus)*

Shabbat Shalom.

This September I will celebrate my 39th year living here in the United States. For those who do not know, I was born in Hong Kong and immigrated to the States with my family in 1971.

I couldn't even begin to imagine what kind of life I would be living now if my family had not made that move. But this I know for sure -- I would not have become Jewish, and I would not have been able to marry the woman I love. But growing up here was not easy either; at times I was too Chinese to fit in with my mostly Caucasian classmates in Santa Cruz, or I was too American to fit in with my Chinese friends in San Francisco. Now, I'm just too gay to the Chinese and too Chinese to the Jews.

This week's Torah portion Shemot begins with the naming of Jacob's family and a reminder of how Joseph moved the Children of Israel into Egypt. We also learn that Moses' mother, to save Moses from Pharaoh's order to kill all male infants born to Hebrew women, placed him in a basket and put him into the Nile when he was three months old. The daughter of Pharaoh discovered him, named him Moses, and raised him as her own son -- the first cross-cultural adoption!

Given all the circumstances, I always wonder how Moses would identify himself. I find it interesting that there are never any detailed descriptions of what people looked like in the Torah. Did Moses look different from the Egyptians? Different hair color? Maybe different skin tone? We'll never know. What we know from the Torah is that Pharaoh's daughter did identify Moses as a Hebrew; for when she opened the basket from the Nile and saw the crying boy, she said, "This must be a Hebrew child." [Exodus 2:6]

Moses apparently grew up in the Pharaoh's palace. He must have acquired some Egyptian lifestyle and identity, don't you think? However, the Torah says that

when Moses was out witnessing the labors of his "kinfolks" or "Hebrew brothers" [ish-ivri me'echav; Exodus 2:11], he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, so he killed the Egyptian and fled to Midian. But then in Midian, Moses was identified by the daughters of Midian's priest as an Egyptian, for they said to their father, "An Egyptian rescued us from the shepherds." [Exodus 2:19]

Moses then settled in Midian and married Zipporah, daughter of the Midian priest (here is a cross-cultural marriage) and they had a son. When Moses' son was born, Moses named him Gershom, which means "Sojourner There", and Moses said, "I have been a stranger (Hebrew word: ger) in a foreign land." [Exodus 2:22]

"I have been a stranger in a foreign land." That was exactly how I felt some years back; that could have been me saying it. Could it be that Moses felt like an outsider? And that he could not relate to being either a Hebrew or an Egyptian? Could it be that he didn't know where he belonged, so he stayed in Midian to avoid having to deal with his internal identity conflict? When God called on Moses from the burning bush to free the Israelites from Egypt, Moses answered, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and free the people from Egypt?" [Exodus 3:11] Maybe Moses was actually asking himself "Who am I? I don't even know who I am, how can I go and free the others?" Maybe God knew that Moses, having spent time with three separate people and cultures, the Israelites, Egyptians, and the Midianites, could see things in a way that others could not. Maybe this is why God enlisted Moses.

It is comforting for me to learn that Moses too struggled with identity issues. I think that all of us, at one time or another, struggle to find ourselves. Whether it is dealing with being Jewish, or being straight, or being queer; it doesn't matter what it is. Some identities we were born with, others we acquire later in life; some are forced upon us by society, or by uncontrollable circumstances, or we create them ourselves. In my case, first I was too Chinese, then I was too American, then I was too gay, and now I am too Jewish, but it's not too much for me anymore, because I am who I am.

May all of us be who we are in this New Year.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 7:30 pm "Out on the Bimah" GLBT rabbis panel Writer's Guild Theater	3 8:00 pm Men's Havurah Gay Comedy Night at Improv	4 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	5 6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	6 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 3:30 pm Parent and Me
7 8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax 3:00 pm One LA Meeting, Temple Isaiah	8	9 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	10 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	11 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	12 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Herb Toplan	13 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 7:00 pm Women's Havurah Game Night
14 6:30 pm Hebrew Reading Class Todd Shotz	15	16 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	17	18 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	19 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Cantor Porat Richard Seltzer	20 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
21 10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group Garden of Finzi-Continis 6:30 pm Hebrew Reading Class Todd Shotz	22	23 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	24 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	25 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	26 Ruach Chayim 7:00 pm Refreshments 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat "Freedom" Art Exhibit opens	27 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 8:00 pm Women's Havurah Comedy Night Temple Akiba
28 8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax	29 EREV PESACH First Seder in Evening	30 PASSOVER FIRST DAY BCC OFFICE CLOSED	31	<b>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted*</b>		

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted*</b>				1 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	2 6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	3 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service 7:00 pm Pesach Poetry Slam
4	5	6 6:30 pm Yizkor Memorial Service 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	7	8 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	9 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Kadin Henningsen Cantor Porat	10 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service
11 YOM HASHOAH 8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax 3:00 pm Movie "The Rape of Europa"	12	13 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	14 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	15 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	16 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Davi Cheng Bracha Yael Cheng	17 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and Dairy Potluck
18 Women's Havurah Lancaster Poppy Reserve	19 YOM HAZIKARON (Israel Remembrance)	20 YOM HAATZMAUT (Israel Independence) 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	21	22 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	23 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Seth Harrington	24 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Service
25 8:00 am (cook), 11:30 am (deliver) Project Chicken Soup 338 N. Fairfax Time TBA One LA Meeting	26	27 7:30 pm Introduction to Judaism class	28 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	29 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	30 Ruach Chayim 7:00 pm Refreshments 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	