

## A Groundbreaking Celebration For BCC's New Home

Larry Nathenson

On Sunday, August 15, 2010, about 200 BCC members and friends gathered at our new building at 6090 W. Pico Blvd. (two blocks from our current home) for a ceremonial groundbreaking. The demolition of the interior of the building is complete, and construction of the new interior will begin soon. We eagerly anticipate moving into our new space next year.

Los Angeles City Councilman Herb Wesson, representing the 10th District in which BCC is located, expressed his admiration for the long hard fight the GLBT community has fought, and offered his continuing support for our full equality. He asked to be invited back for a ribbon cutting and for the first service in our new home. Rabbi Linda Bertenthal of the Union for Reform Judaism, Western Region, also offered her congratulations to BCC.

Marc Schoeplein, our architect and a partner in Lewis/Schoeplein



PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

Symbolic groundbreaking, left to right: BCC Building Committee chair Ira Dankberg, Karl Kreutziger of Howard CDM, City Councilman Herb Wesson, Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Cantor Juval Porat, BCC President Bruce Maxwell, architects Marc Schoeplein and Toni Lewis



PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

BCC's future sanctuary

Architects, gave us some appreciation for the many design details that have gone into our new building, as well as his enthusiastic support of our vision for a new home. He explained that BCC's new building will be the first synagogue in Southern California to be certified by LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), a national designation for "green" buildings with stringent requirements. Of course, we must also meet local and state codes – our unisex restrooms will include the first women's restroom with a urinal because the City requires gender distinction! Our general contractor, Howard CDM, was represented by executive vice president Karl Kreutziger, who also expressed his admiration for our vision and his determination to see it through.

Our own Rabbi Lisa Edwards and President Bruce Maxwell offered some remarks for the occasion, along with past President and current Treasurer Brett Trueman, who nearly came to tears. Brett's vision and tireless efforts during the past four years are the single greatest reason we have come this far. As president, he spearheaded the inauguration of our capital

*Continued on Page 2*

## High Holidays 5771 with BCC

### Saturday, Sept. 4

Selichot Program and Service  
at BCC, 10:00 pm

### Wednesday, Sept. 8

Erev Rosh Hashanah  
Temple Isaiah, 8:00 pm  
Oneg following services

### Thursday, Sept. 9

Rosh Hashanah Morning  
Temple Isaiah, 9:30 am  
Family service, 10:30 am  
Catered lunch following services  
Telephone Minyan 4:00 pm

### Friday, Sept. 10

Second Day Rosh Hashanah  
at BCC, 10:00 am  
  
Tashlich Service and Kabbalat  
Shabbat Shuvah  
at Venice Beach 4:00 pm  
followed by dinner at  
Allison Diamant's home

### Friday, Sept. 17

Kol Nidre  
Temple Isaiah, 7:00 pm

### Saturday, Sept. 18

Yom Kippur Services  
Temple Isaiah, 10:00 am  
Family service, 11:00 am  
Afternoon Breakout  
Sessions 2:30 pm  
Telephone Minyan 2:30 pm  
Yizkor Service, 4:30 pm  
Afternoon and Neilah  
Service 5:30 pm  
Community Break-fast  
7:30 pm

campaign, which has raised \$3.5 million for our new building, as well as the formation of committees to search for a suitable building and to develop plans for the interior of our new space. Ira Dankberg, an architect and chair of our Building Committee, has also put in countless volunteer hours to make our longtime dream a reality.

Cantor Juval Porat helped us get into a celebratory mood with his rendition of the Indigo Girls song "Hammer and Nail" (see Rabbi Edwards's column in this issue). This mood continued as a number of participants picked up shovels and donned hard hats emblazoned with the BCC logo, symbolically turning over some earth in the parking lot for the cameras. Everyone then had a chance to see the interior of the building, now one large room with signs indicating where the various new rooms will be. Upon departure, most of us received souvenirs consisting of small dissolvable



*BCC members Maggie Parkhurst, Neal Wiener, Gordon Blitz, and Glen Chester at the site of the future bimah in the new building*

seed paper shovels with flower seeds in them, which can be planted to grow flowers (thanks to Steve Sass).

In addition to those mentioned above and all the members of the capital campaign, real estate search, and building committees, we thank our executive director Felicia Park-Rogers, vice president Lauren Schlau, and board member Kadin Henningsen for organizing this groundbreaking celebration. For anyone who didn't know already, this event certainly made clear the vibrant spirit of our congregation. Our goal is 100% participation in the capital campaign so that everyone will feel invested in our new building. Anyone who has not yet had a chance to participate in making our new home a reality is encouraged to contact Brett Trueman through the BCC office.



*Rabbi Linda Bertenthal, BCC President Bruce Maxwell, BCC Secretary Allison Diamant, Rabbi Lisa Edwards, BCC Treasurer Brett Trueman, Councilman Herb Wesson, BCC Vice President Lauren Schlau*

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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](mailto:Larrynath@aol.com), by the 15th of the month before publication. To subscribe to G'vanim, send name and address and a check or money order for \$18 per year, attention: Subscriptions. Free to members.

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

# From the Rabbi's Study

## Thoughts for the New Year on the Conference and Groundbreaking

Rabbi Lisa Edwards



PHOTO: KENNA LOVE

Two years in the making, the 20th International Congress of LGBT Jews that took place in Los Angeles last month brought together a terrific blend of Jews from all over the world – right into our back yard. I know you'll have the opportunity to read about it elsewhere in this issue of G'vanim, but I want to thank the hardworking committee that created such a splendid event. I

couldn't have been prouder of the many BCCers who helped create such a comfortable atmosphere, stimulating and entertaining program, all under the leadership of Jonathan Falk, who has been Secretary of the World Congress for many years, and was certainly the driving force behind this year's conference. Ever so many thanks to the whole Conference planning committee, but especially to the BCC folks including Glen Chester, Ted Greenberg, Lee Alhadeff, Jeff Bernhardt, Susan McKibben, Evelyn Poplawski, Sylvia Weisenberg, Robert Zabb, and Jeffrey Janis.

No sooner did the conference end than 30 or so participants climbed aboard a tour bus for a tour of LGBT Jewish LA led by our own Steve Sass and Estaire Press -- With a stop at a bit of history in the making: the groundbreaking of BCC's new building at 6090 W. Pico Blvd.

At that event, on the heels of the World Congress, and Judge Vaughn Walker's overturning of Prop. 8, I couldn't help but cry as I realized how far we have come. At the World Congress I attended a session called "The World Congress through 35 years: Challenges Then and Now" at which former presidents of the Congress spoke about times past when among things, in their roles as leaders and spokespersons for the LGBT Jewish communities worldwide, they had more than once risked personal injury – physical and psychic.

At the groundbreaking, so many BCCers of all ages and our friends gathered to take note of what we were doing, what we were able to accomplish. We knew when we scheduled the groundbreaking that we were doing so during the month of Elul, the Hebrew month of self-reflection and assessment leading up the Days of Awe. Cantor Porat took advantage of that in the Indigo Girls' song, "Hammer and Nail" that he chose for the occasion:

*Now I know a refuge never grows  
From a chin in a hand in a thoughtful pose  
Gotta tend the earth if you want a rose.*

*I had a lot of good intentions  
Sit around for fifty years and then collect a pension,  
Started seeing the road to hell and just where it starts.  
But my life is more than a vision  
The sweetest part is acting after making a decision  
I started seeing the whole as a sum of its parts.  
My life is part of the global life*

On the heels of the World Congress sessions, and as I thought about the whole history of our congregation, from its founding as a safe haven for Jews turned away by other Jews, I couldn't help but think that perhaps the prophet Isaiah wrote the words I shared at the groundbreaking just for this moment:

*Enlarge the size of your tent Har-chi-vi makom ah-ha-leich  
Extend the size of your dwelling,  
Do not hold back!  
Lengthen the ropes, drive the pegs firm.  
For you shall spread out to the right and the left  
...al tir' ki lo teivoshi Fear not, you shall not be ashamed;  
do not cringe: your disgrace is at an end.  
You will forget the shame of your youth....  
My love shall never depart from you,  
And MY covenant of peace [u-vrit shlomij] shall not be  
removed  
Says the Eternal, the One who loves you.  
[Isaiah 54:2,4,10]*

When we gather this month at Temple Isaiah and 6000 W. Pico Blvd and Venice Beach for the holy days, I think the term Days of Awe may take on new meaning, even though we'll be doing there pretty much what we always do: considering where we've come from, who we are, and where we are going.

I wish us all a sweet new year, filled with the joy of gathering together in our new House of Life.



PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

*Rabbi Lisa Edwards  
and LA City Councilman  
Herb Wesson at the  
groundbreaking for  
our new building*

# The Eloquence of the Heart

Cantor Juval Porat

PHOTO: KENNA LOVE



Jeanelle and I are rehearsing. We're trying out new tunes for the High Holiday services. We find ourselves going over the words

again and again, trying to make them our own.

When Jeanelle and I meet (a number of times a week) to go over music that is instructed to be sung "in a davening style" and "with supplication," when we get excited about new music for the choir, when I go through the day looking for inspiration for the next High Holidays preparation class, when the beginning of the month of Elul causes a change in my mindset, and when the deadline for submitting a column for G'vanim approaches with a disquieting speed – that's when I know that I'm a little less than three weeks away from the beginning of the new Jewish year, which is marked by the

High Holidays.

Jeanelle and I go over a melody for "Hineni", which means "Here I am" - a prayer in which the service leaders ask God to accept their prayers on behalf of the congregation. The service leaders do this despite the fact that their human failings make the enormous task of praying on behalf of so many people feel overwhelming. That enormous task, though, is not on my mind right now. As I'm trying to learn the melodic lines for "Hineni" I find myself trying to train my brain to enable me to sing the notes as they're written, not as my mind would like to sing them. It's a tricky process that potentially gets you hooked on a detail without seeing the larger picture. Patience and compassion are required. I sing my lines and, in the back of my mind, I think about the column that still waits to be written. In this time of year the column should serve as an introduction of the clergy to those who are new to BCC, maybe even new to Judaism.

I still can't get that note.

Before I am able to say anything

Jeanelle lifts her head from the sheet music next to the piano. She says to me: "You know, the idea is for the congregation to connect to the words and to the music. If you can be free enough not to be worried, then you and the

congregation will experience the emotion you want to convey. Strive for perfection – but be yourself. Then people will be uplifted."

Jeanelle's words are not new to me, but once more I'm surprised how quickly I forget them. Just a few days ago I was singing "Hammer & Nail" by the Indigo Girls at BCC's groundbreaking ceremony. It wasn't perfect and with my "self-deprecating humor" (as noted by an attentive journalist of the Los Angeles Times in an article he wrote) I didn't miss a chance to mention that fact whenever I could. Nonetheless, the song was well received.

We continue to work on "Hineni" and I'm trying to find the balance between the precision of the notes and the authenticity of the moment. I sing and wonder if one can use this balance as a metaphor for life in general.

I sing and begin to recognize the enormous task ahead of me: to lift up the congregation through music. Especially during the High Holidays this task is a privilege and a responsibility. I am grateful for being given this privilege at BCC for the third year in a row.

Jeanelle and I finish working on "Hineni". Equipped with a forgotten insight and on a verge of an idea, I turn to write my column, realizing the almost certain eloquence of sounds and words - when they come from the heart.

May we all have an insightful year, filled with genuineness, goodness, and sweetness.

Shana Tova u'metuka.

ומתוקה טובה שנה



PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

Cantor Juval Porat performing "Hammer and Nail" at the groundbreaking for our new building

# BCC Family Education and Services for the New Year



Leah Zimmerman, Education Director

This is an exciting time for BCC as we renovate our new building and our vision for our future. I feel privileged to be a part of this time in BCC's history as BCC expands and grows in ways that involve more families. Since we started this program a number of you have become parents and more families have joined our community. This year we look forward to a fall bat mitzvah (Shoshanah Weinreich, see below) and two more students beginning to prepare for this important lifecycle event.

Below is an outline of our family programs for those of you who are new, who need a refresher, or want to stay updated with all the new possibilities for families at BCC. Feel free to drop by, visit or join us regularly. We look forward to seeing you!

## Parent and Me Shabbat

**9:15am, 2nd Shabbat of the month  
Ages 0-5 and their parents**

Once again Ilene Cohen will be share her talents with us and bring her puppets and instruments to tell stories and sing songs with the children. Shari Charalambous (aka Ms. Purple) will partner with Ilene creating a dynamic team that will keep young ones engaged and excited!

## Ohr Chayim (Family Education)

**10am – 12:45pm**

**Every Shabbat that isn't the 3rd Shabbat of the month or a holiday weekend  
Ages 5-13 and their parents**

We begin with a family opening circle, sharing news and singing songs. Then while the children learn to read prayer Hebrew, the parents have schmooze time. Both groups study Torah, the parents with a clergy or staff member and the students with the teachers. Students use art, drama, storytelling and music to learn about Jewish text and ritual. We reconvene as a group for a family Shabbat service.

## Plans for Holiday Services

**Wednesday, September 29th**

**Simchat Torah**

**6pm Dinner, 7pm Service**

**Friday, December 3rd**

**Chanukah**

**Saturday, March 19**

**Purim**

**Friday, May 20th**

**Ohr Chayim Shabbat**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at [leahzimm@gmail.com](mailto:leahzimm@gmail.com).



## Shoshanah Weinreich to Become Bat Mitzvah October 16

**Shoshanah Weinreich, daughter of Rebecca and Tara Rose Weinreich, will become a bat mitzvah on Saturday, October 16, 2010.**

**She is the second student of BCC's family religious education program, Ohr Chayim, to become bat mitzvah,**

**following Eve Postrel in June, 2009. Larry Nathenson interviewed Shoshanah for G'vanim.**

*How long have you been studying for your bat mitzvah, and what do you plan to do on that day?*

I've been training for my bat mitzvah with [BCC member] Jeff Bernhardt since about March. I also studied Hebrew and prayers with [BCC member] Zeva Renan. I am learning trope and will chant both the Torah and Haftarah in Hebrew. I also want to have a party with a DJ.

*What does being Jewish mean to you?*

I believe Jews are a very welcoming people. You don't have to celebrate all the holidays or even believe in God to live a happy Jewish life and do good.

*You've been coming to BCC all your life. What are your earliest memories of BCC?*

I remember going up on the bimah with Rabbi Lisa at the end of Friday evening services to sing oseh shalom with her. I also remember bouncing on my mom's shoulders with a stuffed bunny, when I was about four.

*Have you made friends with other kids at BCC?*

Yes, we're really close. We spend New Year's Eve together every year, and also seders on Pesach and breaking the fast after Yom Kippur.

*How do you like school? Have you had any problems at school because you have two mothers?*

I like all my subjects, but math and science are my favorites because I'm best at those. All the kids at school are really understanding and think it's cool that I have two moms. The teachers too. I've heard no offensive comments about it.

*Anything else to add?*

My moms didn't make me have a bat mitzvah, it was my idea. And I'm the first one on either side of the family to have one.

# Women's Havurah Kicks Off New Year with Five Events

Donna Quigley Groman

BCC is a spiritual home for many, but it also serves as a place for women to meet other women and to build stronger friendships. I never envisioned myself as a social director, but planning social events for the Women's Havurah has been fun for me. Basically, I organize activities that I enjoy and then invite 250 women to join me! If you haven't yet attended a Women's Havurah activity, give us a try this next year. In addition to the events listed below for September and October, you can look forward to our annual trip to the Poppy Preserve in Lancaster, our annual summer pool party at Rabbi Lisa and Tracy's home, bi-monthly game nights, breakfast walks, trips to museums and gardens, our annual bowling event (I hate bowling so I never go), Chinese food and movies on Christmas Day, and many more. If you are not on the Women's Havurah e-mail list, please send me an e-mail [dlgroman@hotmail.com](mailto:dlgroman@hotmail.com) and I will

gladly add you to the list. You do not have to be a member of BCC to join us. I look forward to seeing you over the coming year.

## Coming events for September and October:

**1** On Labor Day, Monday, September 6, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., join the Women's Havurah at the Annenberg Community Beach House in Santa Monica (women only).

**2** On Saturday, September 11 at 7:00 p.m. at the Laemmle Music Hall in Beverly Hills, the Women's Havurah will be viewing the new documentary, **Neshoba: The Price of Freedom** which tells the story of three civil rights workers who went to Neshoba County in Mississippi in 1964 to register black voters. Immediately following the movie will be a reception for filmmaker Micki Dickoff at BCC with light refreshments. Everyone is welcome at this event.

**3** Saturday, September 25, 7:00 to 10:30 p.m., is Women's Havurah Game Night at BCC. This event is for women only.

**4** On Sunday, October 10, 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., there will be a wine tasting event with 5-7 red wine tastings and food at BCC friend Jeanie Cohen's home in Westlake Village. This is for women only.

**5** On Sunday, October 24, 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., we will visit One: National Gay and Lesbian Archives Museum and Gallery for the "Out of the Closet and Into the Street" poster exhibit. Everyone is welcome to join us for this event.



Women's Havurah bowling event July 18, 2010

## After High Holidays, More Celebrations

Following High Holidays, please join us for these additional celebrations and observances:

### Ruach Chayim Shabbat and Sukkot Service Friday, September 24, 8:00 pm at BCC

We will combine our monthly musical Ruach Chayim service with our observance of Sukkot this year. Ruach Chayim has become a BCC tradition on the last Shabbat of each month, with extra music and guest musicians accompanying our cantor, Juval Porat. This service is especially warm and welcoming with a wine and cheese reception beginning at 7:00 pm as well as the usual oneg afterward. For Sukkot, we'll have our BCC sukkah behind the building, in which members and guests can perform the mitzvot of lulav and etrog in observance of this joyous holiday following the serious Days of Awe.

### Sukkot Receptions at Rabbi Edwards's home Sunday, September 26, 2:00 and 3:30 pm

Our celebrations continue with our annual receptions at the home of Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Tracy Moore. At 2:00 we welcome new members and prospective members, and at 3:30 we honor the many volunteers who make all of BCC's programs and services happen.

### Simchat Torah Dinner and Services Wednesday, September 29, 6:00 and 7:00 pm

Our holiday season concludes with Simchat Torah, the celebration of the completion of our yearly cycle of Torah readings. We begin with a family dinner at 6:00, then our service at 7:00 including much dancing and merriment as we roll out our Torah scrolls to read the last and first passages, and finally our Yizkor service at about 9:00 pm.

# BCC Men's Havurah: Summer Sizzle and Fall Plans

Mark Brown, Richard Lesse, and Mark Miller, BCC Men's Havurah Planning Committee

The BCC Men's Havurah sponsored the following very successful events during July and August 2010:

## Movie Outing to see *Eyes Wide Open* on July 5th

One of our most popular Men's Havurah-sponsored events open to everyone had about 40 people attending the Israeli movie *Eyes Wide Open*. The movie is about two men who are members of Jerusalem's ultra-Orthodox Jewish community – in which being gay is so taboo that it simply does not even exist – who discover their mutual attraction to each other. Prior to the movie, about half of us also met for lunch at a deli near the theater.

## Pool Party on August 1st

Hosted by BCC members Steven Hochstadt and Stephen Sass; we had a wonderful time swimming and lounging poolside and in the hot tub with about 20 people on a moderately warm (low 80s) Sunday afternoon in Studio City; we enjoyed delicious snacks and drinks and raised \$180 for BCC's Tzedakah Council.

## BBQ Dinner with Havdalah Service on August 28th

Hosted by BCC's president Bruce Maxwell; we had a scrumptious BBQ dinner that was very well attended in a relaxed outdoor social setting. Our moving men's community Havdalah service was followed by delectable desserts.

Upcoming events for September and October that the Men's Havurah Planning Committee is working on include:

- Visiting the Huntington Library, Gardens, and Art Collections in San Marino
- Hike-and-Brunch outing

Event dates and information will be e-mailed out as soon as details are finalized.

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

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

We can use everyone's help and very much encourage

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

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## BCC Book Group

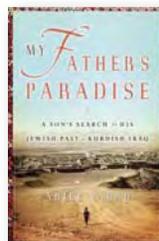
Larry Nathenson

For over 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, September 26, 10:00 a.m. **Pictures at an Exhibition, by Sara Houghteling**

This is a novel about a Jewish French art dealer before and after World War II, also focusing on a father-son relationship. Weather permitting, we can eat and discuss in a sukkah to observe the holiday of Sukkot.



### Sunday, October 31, 10:00 a.m. **My Father's Paradise, by Ariel Sabar**

This book documents a U.S. journalist's search for his Jewish heritage in Iraqi Kurdistan, where the once thriving Jewish community is now largely gone.

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).

# News from the Tzedakah Council

Robin Baltic

Wondering what's become of the BCC pushkes? Think China and you would be correct. More specifically, as you are reading this article, our newly redesigned custom produced BCC pushkes are winding their way to us by boat, train, truck and airplane.

Once the pushkes reach our shores they will first pass over or through Los Angeles to New York City then back again to LA to be delivered to BCC. The latter portion of the journey seems odd? Couldn't agree with you more. Oy, don't ask. This is a story for another time.

Why new pushkes now and then schlepping halfway round the world to get them? Our once and former BCC pushkes are now all gone. You know the one, cute little cylinder with a purple background. A recognizable feature of the most recent pushke model was particularly memorable for a bottom cap never fitting quite right. Inevitably the loose lid led to loose change all over the floor. And why pushkes made in China? Best price anywhere we could find.

Since Purim of 1998, when the first purple pushkes were made available to the congregation, our BCC community has used, recycled and used again well over 2000 pushkes. Our purple pushke has served us well, functioning as the conduit for transporting the

equivalent of 2,634,632 pennies or \$26,346.32 in spare change from our homes to BCC then distributed to an array of charities worldwide.

From the beginning 100% of all our collective tzedakah coin donations have been distributed to charities whose programs reach out to people, often when they are experiencing considerable vulnerability, and through a variety of programs and services offer some form of help and hope.

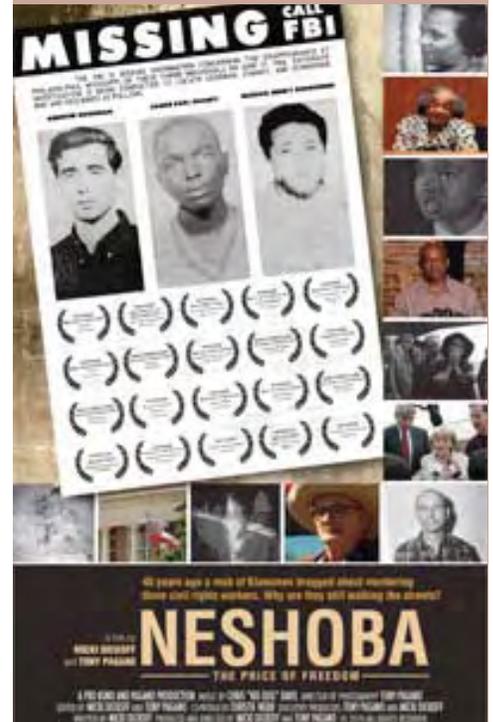
New pushkes will be available at BCC around Sukkot. In the meantime if you currently have a purple pushke, with whatever change is inside, please return it when attending BCC High Holiday services at Temple Isaiah.

No pushke? No problem. Here are alternative ways you may participate in making a contribution to BCC's community giving of tzedakah: put your loose change in a sack, jar or whatever and drop it off in the shul office, make a contribution with a credit card, or write a check payable to BCC designating your donation be allocated for the tzedakah fund.

Thank you for your continued generosity. Together we can make a difference somewhere, somehow for someone in need of encouragement and a helping hand.

Le-shanah tovah u-metukah tikateivu.

## Film for Thought During the Days of Awe



5771 will provide ample opportunity to engage in works of social justice. As the Days of Awe remind us, though, we can often find ways to create change by reflecting on the past. On September 11 – the Saturday night between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – we are invited to view together an important new documentary: “Neshoba: The Price of Freedom.”

Neshoba tells the compelling story of a county in Mississippi still torn apart by the murders 40 years ago of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner. The viewing will take place at Laemmle's Music Hall at 7:00 pm. Afterwards we are invited back to BCC for a conversation with its creator, Jewish lesbian filmmaker Micki Dickoff.

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# Membership, from the Heart

*Felicia Park-Rogers, Executive Director*

PHOTO: KENNA LOVE



In parashat Terumah we read that Moses calls upon the Israelites to give donations to help build the Tabernacle, the sacred sanctuary for God's presence on

earth. Each person is asked to give from their heart, to give as they feel moved. Following this request, there is such an outpouring of giving that Moses actually has to tell the people to stop because they've given more than enough.

Nobody likes to talk about synagogue dues. It sounds like homework or taxes or something impolite. And yet, it is through the process of making our membership contribution that each of us has the opportunity to bring forth our symbolic offerings of the heart, to be moved to create together a sacred community, a *kehilla kedosha*.

*Kehilla Kedosha*. Sacred community. Beth Chayim Chadashim. House of New Life. This congregation is indeed a sacred a community, a house of new life.

Even when we find ourselves filled with despair, discouraged about the possibility of change, whether personal or political, this sacred community, this house of new life, is here to remind us of the world's potential for good, of our individual potential for change. Here, in this place, we come together to collectively pray for peace, for justice, to acknowledge grief and mourning, to state out loud our commitment to the tradition of *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation. Here, at BCC, we find a Judaism that honors the ways of the generations before us while also prodding us to blaze paths our Jewish ancestors never could have imagined.

BCC's membership contribution structure is intended to draw on the teachings of parashat Terumah. We ask that each person do their best to cover the basic expenses of maintaining this great community. Yet, none are turned away due to limited means. We invite those with greater financial resources to contribute as generously as possible. For all, membership contributions, no matter the size, are an opportunity

to give from your heart to help care for and support our sacred sanctuary, our sacred community, our house of new life.

When you pay your pledge this year, remember that BCC is a synagogue like no other and your contribution ensures that this community will endure for the next generation. Remember that your contribution honors the people who helped dream up and create BCC. Your contribution makes it possible for our rabbi and cantor and our whole congregation, just by our very existence, to touch and teach people every single day.

May each of us take a moment as we renew our membership with BCC to see this as an opportunity to renew our commitment to the *kehilla kedosha* that is BCC, to give to our sacred community not only because it is our obligation and our tradition, but because we are deeply moved from our hearts to do so.

I thank you for your outpourings, and I wish you a sweet, happy, and healthy new year filled with the blessings of *kehilla kedosha* and new life.

Shanah Tovah!

## Mazel Tov

to Fran Chalin and Neal Wiener

A hearty mazel tov to BCC's cantorial soloist emerita Fran Chalin, who has just completed a year long residency program and course work in clinical pastoral education. She will soon start a new job as a hospice chaplain in Orange County. After a year she will be eligible to apply for full certification as a chaplain. We wish Fran all the best for success in her new career!

And congratulations to Neal Wiener, who won a record seven gold medals in swimming at the recent Gay Games in Cologne, Germany! Watch out, Michael Phelps!

## Ruach Chayim (Living Spirit)

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

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

**On September 24 (for Sukkot) and October 29,  
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.**



## LA2010 World Conference of GLBT Jews: Celebrating our Past, Envisioning our Future

Larry Nathenson

During the weekend of August 13-15, 2010, the 20th World Conference of GLBT Jews took place at the beautiful facilities of UCLA Hillel, just east of the UCLA campus. More than 175 people participated in this conference, to which some traveled from 17 states in the U.S. and Washington, D.C., three Canadian provinces, and other countries including Mexico, Britain, Israel, and South Africa. It was a wonderful opportunity to take stock of all that our umbrella organization, the World Congress of GLBT Jews: Keshet Ga'avah, has accomplished since its founding in 1980 (after previous informal conferences starting in 1976), and to consider where we wish to go in the future.

BCC clergy and members were heavily involved in the planning of this conference and well represented during the weekend. BCC member Jonathan Falk was the conference chair, and the conference would not have taken place without his dedication and countless hours of volunteer work to make sure every



World Congress president Howard Solomon and conference chair Jonathan Falk at the closing lunch

detail was just right. Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Cantor Juval Porat led the Friday evening Shabbat service, along with BCC friend Cantor Ron Galperin. The BCC choir, conducted by Cantor Porat, entertained at the Saturday evening dinner, and were followed by the klezmer band Gay Gezunt, which began at BCC and is led by our former cantorial soloist Fran Chalin. BCC member Elissa Barrett, executive director of Progressive Jewish Alliance, delivered the keynote address at the Friday dinner, highlighting the recent progress of our community in working toward marriage equality and emphasizing our collaboration with other progressive activists of all ethnicities and faith traditions. Please see Rabbi Edwards's column for names of additional BCC members who served on the conference committee.

The conference featured more than 20 different workshops on topics ranging from World Congress history, LGBT inclusion in Jewish institutions, and GLBT life in Israel to gay rights activism, marriage equality, the science of sexual orientation, documentary films, LGBT aging, and reclaiming Torah from our unique perspective. BCC members were prominent as workshop leaders, including Maggie Anton Parkhurst ("playing the game" about medieval Jewish homoeroticism), Gerald Gerash ("gay revolt at Denver"), Tara Rose Weinreich and Robin Berkovitz ("advocating for my kids"), Davi Cheng ("funny, you don't look



World Congress president Howard Solomon and State Senator Mark Leno with his award

Jewish, about multicultural Jews), and Jeff Shevlowitz (transgender issues).

The fight for marriage equality played a major role in the conference, particularly in light of the recent decision by U.S. District Court Judge Vaughn Walker that California's infamous Proposition 8, the same-sex marriage ban added to the California Constitution in 2008, is unconstitutional under the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. California State Senator Mark Leno, a leader in the fight for marriage equality, was presented with the World Congress Leadership Award at the Saturday dinner. Senator Leno authored marriage equality bills that were vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger and two other GLBT related bills that passed, establishing an official Harvey Milk Day and recognizing out-of-state marriages that predated Proposition 8. His accomplishments also include many other bills on issues ranging from the rights of tenants and seniors to renewable energy and state park preservation.

Continued on Page 11

Entertainers during the conference included, in addition to the BCC choir and Gay Gezunt, the comedian Robin Tyler, one of the first people legally married in California and a lead plaintiff in the case in which the California Supreme Court granted marriage equality in 2008. We were also treated to a performance by Sara Felder, a San Francisco based lesbian Jewish comedian and juggler, who read from a children's book she wrote for her son entitled "One Dyke, Two Dyke, Red Dyke, Jew Dyke."

At the conclusion of the conference, many participants took a bus tour of highlights of the Jewish and GLBT history of Los Angeles, led by BCC members Steve Sass and

Estaire Press, which included a stop at the groundbreaking ceremony for BCC's new building (see page 1 of this issue).

In addition to those listed above, thanks are owed to many more individuals and organizations, including the seven hosting Los Angeles area groups: BCC, Congregation Kol Ami, Temple Israel of Hollywood, JQ International, the

Workmen's Circle, Mishpacha UCLA (LGBT Jews at UCLA), and the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation at Hebrew Union College.

If you missed this wonderful weekend filled with learning, spirit, and friendship, plan to attend one of the future conferences being planned in Paris (2011) or Tel Aviv (2012).



Comedian and juggler Sara Felder



BCC choir conducted by Cantor Juval Porat



Gay Gezunt klezmer band

All photos for this story: ©Drew Faber Photography

More of his pictures of the conference can be viewed at <http://albums.drewfaber.com/2010/la2010/a/>

## Weekly Sova Food Drive

Roughly 900,000 people, or 1 in every 10 in Los Angeles County, is in need of food, and count on food pantries like Sova.

Please bring a can of tuna, canned veggies, pasta or rice when you come to BCC.

**The need is great!**

# Life Transitions Group

Shirley Hirschberg

For the last 8 years BCC has been at the forefront in offering the Life Transitions Group to the LGBTQ community. This unique and successful program has been an integral part of BCC's caring spirit. It has become an extended family committed to helping people grow by sharing experiences, strength and hope in a safe and confidential environment.

This group is open to members and non-members of BCC. Anyone dealing with changes and/or challenges in relationships, family, health, career, economic or personal loss issues is welcome.

The following comments are from current members of the Life Transitions Group.

"For the past four years this group has been my rock. It has been a safe place for emotional intimacy and a place to learn acceptance of myself as a lesbian woman. Shirley, our facilitator, has always been at the helm leading and guiding us as a mentor, friend and counselor. The group has completely changed the way I think and feel. I no longer find it so difficult to cope..."

"The Life Transitions Group has gotten me through the loss of employment and several personal problems along the way. I feel we are an extended family. The group is full of kind, caring, warm and supportive people. This tone has been provided by our leader..."

"The most profound help the Life Transitions Group has given me was to help me deal with major health issues. Through extensive dialogue, support and practical help, it was instrumental in helping me make critical

decisions and provided me with emotional and physical support. The Life Transitions Group embodies BCC's caring spirit, and it's comforting to know it's here to help us in our most difficult times..."

"There are times in life when we're unable to depend on our own thoughts and feelings to navigate the uncharted waters of traumatic change. Mine came when my life partner of 22 years passed away. I was devastated, confused and hopelessly struggling to comprehend what had just occurred and how I'd be able to continue. I desperately needed to share my thoughts and feelings with others -- to try and find some form of hope and encouragement to move ahead."

"I found that invaluable resource in BCC's then 'Bereavement Group' facilitated by Shirley Hirschberg, a trained social worker and bereavement counselor. I can't begin to express the comfort and support I felt from those within the group and Shirley's deep compassion, understanding, wisdom and gentle advice and encouragement. It was a priceless lifeline that I'll be forever grateful for..."

Because this group is supported exclusively by the Alan Balsam Fund-Life Transitions Group, donations made out to BCC earmarked for the "Alan Balsam Fund/Life Transitions Group" would be greatly appreciated.

The group meets two evenings each month. For more information and to find out if this group is for you, please contact Victoria in the BCC office - (323) 931-7023, ext. 205.



PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

BCC Vice President  
Lauren Schlaw blows the  
shofar to celebrate the  
Aug. 15 groundbreaking



Kenna Love, Hannah Theile,  
and Renee Lamkay take  
their turns at the  
groundbreaking shovels

PHOTO: SYLVIA SUKOP

# The Prop. 8 Decision in Light of Torah

Kadin Henningsen

*Adapted from a drash given at BCC on Friday, August 6, 2010.*

Shabbat was extra sweet last week, thanks to Judge Vaughn Walker's beautifully penned decision concerning the constitutionality of Proposition 8. In case you missed the decision, Prop. 8 is unconstitutional. In the celebration of this momentous occasion I have to ask, "What does it mean?"

Last week's parashah "Re'eh" opens with, "See, I present before you this day a blessing and a curse." A blessing and a curse? Are they mutually exclusive, a sort of blessing/curse binary? Or perhaps like our queer understanding of Genesis and the creation of the first human as the Androgynous – both male and female - might we see this "blessing and curse" as intrinsically connected? I ask, is this ruling both a blessing and a curse within the queer community?

The right to marry for gays and lesbians has been a hard fought battle and one far from over. But what are the long reaching consequences of this victory? The battle for marriage equality has been fought in public. In order to gain ground, we stepped out onto a national stage and told our stories. We've put our relationships on display. By being so public about our relationships, are we elevating their stature? Are we pinning our hopes on the success of those first 18,000 marriages? Are our expectations for success within marriage making the normalcy lived within private lives less attainable? Does our community, and society at large, expect us as a result of this hard fought struggle to somehow be better at marriage than those in opposite-sex marriages? It seems to me the curse in this struggle is that as a result of such a public battle our successes, and our failures, are up for public judgment.

The vacillating nature of this struggle will hopefully lead to a time when these questions no longer demand our attention. When people don't have to think about "coming out" to fight for equality in the public sphere, but instead live their lives in community and with community. Perhaps real equality comes when our marriages and relationships just exist, are able to succeed within the larger embrace of community. How do we strike a balance between living our lives on display and living our lives privately but openly within our own communities? While the battle for marriage equality has put our relationships under a national microscope, it is the ability to have our relationships supported by our own elected communities that ensures that our relationships will flourish. Relationships lived in the closet rarely succeed. When this kind of

open everyday living and loving arrives it will certainly be a blessing. I am, in fact, hopelessly optimistic. In the long run, marriage equality strikes me as a blessing. So if last week's ruling by Judge Walker is primarily a blessing, we must then ask ourselves, how?

In last week's parashah we read "only at the place that Adonai, your God, will choose from among all your tribes to place God's name there, shall you seek out God's presence and come here." I believe that the fight for marriage equality is captured in the philosophy of tikkun olam, which requires us to repair the world. Marriage equality, and more broadly equality in general, affords us a kind of freedom to repair the world through "seeking out God's presence." But what does that mean? The Sefat Emet tells us "A person should seek out those places, times, and souls in which holiness is revealed."

Perhaps God's presence resides in space, time, and humanity - in the work we do, the places we go, and our exchanges with the people we

meet. This seeking is deeply ingrained in us. The desire as humans to connect with others, not to feel alone. Perhaps it is in connections with others, and through conversations and acts of loving-kindness that we discover God's presence. To desire a connection with others is to actively seek out God's presence. If all of this is so, then to desire it – that very act – is the spark of God within each of us.

The poet Sappho once wrote in a simple fragment: "As long as you want." I read Sappho with an optimist's heart. Want is related to desire and desire is the act of seeking out. As God is infinite so too is the act of seeking God's presence. As long as you want—As long as you desire—As long as you seek—So then, you are with God. Seeking God's presence opens our eyes to experience the world anew. It's in small discoveries while seeking – in the discovery of seeking itself - that we find God's presence and meaningful connections with the world around us.

As long as we seek, the world is filled with infinite discoveries of God's presence and infinite blessings.

***The right to marry for gays and lesbians has been a hard fought battle and one far from over. But what are the long reaching consequences of this victory?***

September 2010

Elul/Tishri 5770/71

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<i>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted</i>		1	2 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	3 6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	4 10:00 pm Selichot Service
5	6 LABOR DAY BCC OFFICE CLOSED 9:00 am Women's Havurah Annenberg Beach House	7	8 8:00 pm Erev Rosh Hashanah Service Temple Isaiah	9 ROSH HASHANAH Temple Isaiah 9:30 am Morning Service 10:30 am Family Service Lunch after services 4:00 pm Telephone Minyan	10 ROSH HASHANAH 10:00 am Service at BCC 4:00 pm Tashlich and Kabbalat Shabbat at Venice Beach Dinner at private home No service at BCC	11 SHABBAT SHUVAH 7:00 pm Women's Havurah Movie Night, "Neshoba" (Music Hall Theater)
12 8:00 am cook 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark	13	14	15	16 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	17 7:00 pm KOL NIDRE Temple Isaiah Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	18 YOM KIPPUR 10:00 am Morning Service 11:00 am Family Service 2:30 pm Breakout Sessions 2:30 pm Telephone Minyan 4:30 pm Yizkor Service 7:30 pm Break Fast
19	20	21	22 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	23 FIRST DAY OF SUKKOT BCC OFFICE CLOSED 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	24 Ruach Chayim 7:00 pm Refreshments 8:00 pm Shabbat/Sukkot Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat Guest musicians	25 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Shabbat 7:00 pm Women's Havurah Game night
26 10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group Pictures at an Exhibition 2:00 pm (Rabbi's home) New/Prospective Members 3:30 pm (Rabbi's home) Volunteer Reception	27	28	29 SIMCHAT TORAH 6:00 pm Family Dinner 7:00 pm Service and Celebration 9:00 pm Yizkor	30 BCC OFFICE CLOSED 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	Oct 1 6:30 pm Thai House Dinner 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Maggie Parkhurst Cantor TBA	Oct 2 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Shabbat

October 2010

Tishri/Cheshvan 5771

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3	4	5	6	7 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	8 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Cantor Porat Lay leader	9 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Shabbat
10 8:00 am cook 11:30 am deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark 3:00 pm Women's Havurah Wine tasting (private home)	11	12	13 7:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting	14 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	15 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat	16 10:00 am Shabbat Morning Service and dairy potluck
17	18	19	20	21 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	22 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Jeff Bernhardt	23 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Shabbat
24 8:00 am cook 11:30 deliver Project Chicken Soup 3975 Landmark 12:00 pm Women's Havurah Lunch and One Archive Exhibit	25	26	27 7:00 pm Board of Directors Meeting	28 4:00 pm Telephone Torah Study 7:00 pm Torah Study Rabbi Edwards	29 Ruach Chayim 7:00 pm Refreshments 8:00 pm Shabbat Service Rabbi Edwards Cantor Porat Guest musicians	30 10:00 am Ohr Chayim 12:00 pm Family Shabbat
31 10:00 am (private home) BCC Book Group My Father's Paradise	<i>All events at BCC unless otherwise noted</i>					

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