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CELEBRATING TEN YEARS AT 6090 W. PICO

By LARRY NATHENSON



SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 2011 WAS one of the most joyous days in the history of BCC – the day we officially moved into our new spiritual home at 6090 W. Pico Blvd. With the Covid-19 pandemic and preparations for our 50th anniversary occupying much of our attention this year, we have not yet given the tenth anniversary of this milestone the celebration it deserves.

An overflow crowd estimated at 220 BCC members, friends, and honored guests marked the occasion that Sunday afternoon. The festivities began in our previous home at 6000 W. Pico with a brief farewell and the singing of the *Te-filat HaDerech* (“Blessing of the Road” by Debbie Friedman z”l), led by Cantor Juval Porat and Cantorialist Emerita Fran Chalin. We took our three Torah scrolls from the ark at 6000 for the last time. A chuppah adorned with tzitzit recently made by BCC members under the guidance of Naomi Katz sheltered our Torah scrolls as we marched them two blocks west on Pico to our new home.

Arriving at 6090, we entered through the back park-

Above: BCC’s Torah scrolls are carried out of 6000 W. Pico for the last time.

Opposite: Rabbi Lisa Edwards and Cantor Juval Porat dedicate the new building at 6090 W. Pico with the hanging of a mezuzah. Photos: Drew Faber

ing lot to the sounding of the shofarot and the song *Lechi Lach*, also by Debbie Friedman and first sung at BCC in 1986 for the 60th birthday of BCC member Savina Teubal z”l. The song tells of God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah of a new home and blessings for a good life there. Led by Rabbi Lisa Edwards, we blessed and affixed one mezuzah at the main entrance and dedicated our new spiritual home.

As we entered our beautiful new sanctuary, we saw that the stained glass windows from our prior building, lovingly constructed by Davi Cheng, Jerry Hanson, Victoria Delgadillo and Haim Ainsworth, had already been installed. Our new ark was surrounded by the wall containing the “Story Lines” that many of us had written on copper strips earlier in the year to express our hopes for our new home. As the ark opened to receive our Torahs, we saw the exquisite solar-powered *ner tamid* (eternal light) created by Davi and Jerry for our new home.

BCC President Bruce Maxwell introduced several dignitaries. Prominent among them was Max Webb z'l, the 94-year-old Holocaust survivor from Lodz, Poland who sold us the building. Mr. Webb carried one of the Torahs for a portion of our march down Pico and brought some of us to tears as he described how this sale helped fulfill his wartime pledge to work for the continued survival and flourishing of the Jewish people.

As always, Cantor Porat selected music appropriate for the occasion. He introduced his original composition, with pianist Tamara Kline, entitled "House of New Life." The afternoon concluded with tours of the building including our new full kitchen, library/classroom, social hall, and private offices for clergy and staff, none of which we had in our previous building.

BCC is extremely proud that our new home was the first synagogue in Southern California to qualify for certification under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). We have solar panels on the roof (thanks to BCC member Will Korthof z'l), insulation made from recycled blue jeans, carpeting from recycled tires, reclaimed wood and doors, and low water native plants around our parking lot and back entrance (planted by BCC members over the two weeks preceding the dedication) – quite a transformation for a building dating from 1928 that sat vacant for several years before BCC bought it.

The move into our new building was the culmination of years of visionary planning and hard work. Our annual awards brunch, held on May 22, 2011, recognized several of those individuals and firms with special "HaBonim" (Builders) awards – our extraordinary architects Toni Lewis and Marc Schoepflein, our general contractor Howard CDM, our capital campaign consultant Mark Randall, and our real estate broker for both the purchase of 6090 and the sale of 6000 W. Pico, Glenn Melnick. Among the many BCC members and staff who contributed to the years-long project, three stand out for their exceptional vision, dedication, and perseverance – capital campaign chair Brett Trueman, project manager Ira Dankberg, and executive director Felicia Park-Rogers.

Brett Trueman, BCC's current president, previously served in that role from 2005 to 2009 when the planning and fundraising for the new building began. BCC had dreamed of purchasing a new building for years but had always doubted that it was financially feasible. When Brett expressed this doubt in a conversation with lezbtzn Tracy Moore, wife of then Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Tracy responded, "how do you know?" Intrigued by her challenge, and based on a recommendation from the Union for Reform Judaism, Brett engaged fundraising consultant Mark Randall in 2006 for a feasibility study on a capital campaign. By the beginning of 2007, under Brett's leadership as capital campaign chair, BCC exceeded all expectations by rais-

ing over \$2 million in pledges from 36 individuals and couples. The total amount pledged was eventually about \$3.5 million.

Brett attributes the success of the capital campaign to several factors. The first few people solicited pledged large amounts, which provided an incentive for others to do likewise. Rabbi Lisa and Tracy made the largest pledge Mr. Randall had ever seen from a rabbi and spouse, and several lay leaders also pledged significant amounts. Their examples enabled Brett to approach other potential donors by citing the generosity already displayed. Solicitations were also planned strategically so that potential donors were approached by people they knew and respected.

Brett and Mr. Randall were also amazed at how connected and committed BCC members were because of the special nature of our congregation. A few even gave more than what was asked of them. Even those who couldn't afford to pledge money were motivated to participate in whatever way they could. One member pledged to collect bottles for recycling and donate the proceeds to the capital campaign! Brett believes the entire process strengthened the bond the congregants felt with BCC and with each other because of their investment in BCC's future.

In March 2007 Brett and Real Estate Committee chair Donna Groman initiated a series of focus groups to solicit input on a shared vision for our new home. These discussions, which probed such questions as where it should be located, how many rooms it should contain, and what artistic designs it should reflect, also helped BCC members feel invested in the project. Soon thereafter, BCC engaged realtor Glenn Melnick to begin the search for a suitable building.



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BCC member Ira Dankberg, now retired from his career as a professional architect, received the Presidents Award in 2011 for his invaluable contributions to BCC's new spiritual home. Ira's involvement began with the search for a new

building location. By the end of August 2008, BCC had entered escrow to purchase 6090 W. Pico Blvd., then a vacant commercial building that would require substantial renovations.

The collapse of the real estate market following the 2008 financial crisis fortuitously (for BCC) gave Ira the time to take on the virtually full-time but unpaid job of project manager, supervising the design and construction of our new facility. For Ira, the most challenging part was "ensuring that we had incorporated all the requirements and requests from the BCC community into the design within the space and budget limitations of our new building."

The close of escrow was delayed primarily because of the challenge of obtaining a variance from the Los Angeles Planning Department for offsite parking over the objections of one of our prospective neighbors. The variance was finally granted and escrow closed in December 2009. This enabled us to authorize our architects and contractor to move forward with the plans to obtain our building permit. Demolition of interior walls began in the spring of 2010.

On August 15, 2010, BCC held a ceremonial groundbreaking for the new building with the catchphrase "I dig BCC." The celebration

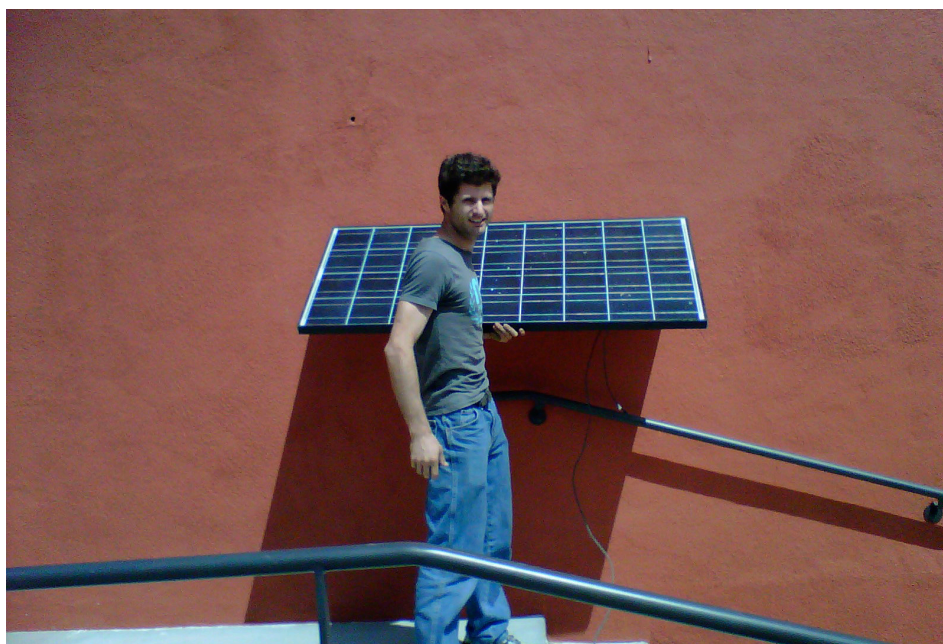


Above: Ira Dankberg, Felicia Park-Rogers, architects Toni Lewis and Marc Shoeplein, and BCC President Bruce Maxwell at the 6090 dedication. Photo: Drew Faber
 Bottom left: BCC member Will Korthof, z'l, with one of the solar panels he helped obtain for BCC. Photo: Felicia Park-Rogers

coincided with the 20th World Conference of GLBT Jews held at UCLA Hillel and co-hosted by BCC, enabling out-of-town visitors to see our new space. Ira joined Rabbi Edwards, Cantor Porat, then BCC president Bruce Maxwell, our architects and contractor, and then City Councilman Herb Wesson in donning hard hats emblazoned with the BCC logo. They all picked up shovels and symbolically turned 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 would be.

Between August 2010 and April 2011 the renovations proceeded apace. Structural work was necessary to remove a column that stood in the middle of our new sanctuary (requiring installation of a heavy support beam above the ceiling) and enable the south wall to bring natural light into the lobby with a glass door and window system. Electrical and plumbing work, as well as landscaping in the outdoor areas, continued simultaneously.

Also honored with one of the "HaBonim" awards was Felicia Park-Rogers, BCC's executive director from 2005 to 2014. Ten years after the completion of the new building, Felicia says that "it





remains one of the greatest honors and accomplishments of not just my career, but my life.” “Every piece of the process was so gratifying,” she says, from visioning, fundraising, and searching for a new property to hiring architects and contractors, participating in the design, overseeing construction, and shopping for fixtures and furniture. The project afforded her a unique opportunity to work on a new facility from start to finish and see it all come to fruition as BCC moved into and enjoyed its new spiritual home. She helped create something that would live on beyond her in the BCC community.

While others had discrete roles in the project, Felicia immersed herself in all aspects and in every detail. The most challenging part for her was shifting her attention from one piece of the project to another on a daily basis, as well as responding to emergencies when necessary. She chaired or served on virtually every committee associated with the project, bouncing from a meeting on the design of the memorial board to another on the selection of fixtures and then another on the

format of the Story Lines workshops. She did all this while also running the day-to-day operations of BCC and many of its other events and celebrations.

For Felicia, the most amazing part was that the entire community was invested financially and emotionally. “Everybody cared so much; it was like a quilt where everyone stitched a piece.”

As construction progressed, BCC members stepped forward to tackle specific aspects of the project. Ray Eelsing and Richard Lesse immersed themselves in the design and installation of our new technological systems. Eldon Teper devoted many hours to the interior furnishings and fixtures. Laurie Newman, Gwen Walden, and Robin Baltic played key roles in selecting kitchen equipment. Many other people, too numerous to list here, contributed to fulfilling the BCC dream of the new building that we have now called home for ten years.

Reflecting on the project, Ira recalls that he “was overwhelmed by the passion and support we received from all BCC members.” He adds that he is “thrilled how well the sanctuary functions, especially for concerts and performances. After services and events people tend to linger in the lobby and the courtyard because the space is so comfortable. I love when we can hold several events at the same time in different spaces. That is exactly how the building was envisioned.”

May we continue to enjoy it for many more years when the Covid-19 pandemic allows us once again to make full use of the practical versatility, artistic beauty, and spiritual quality that make it our own.

Above left: At our symbolic groundbreaking ceremony, left to right, Ira Dankberg, Karl Kreutzinger of contractor Howard CDM, Councilman Herb Wesson, Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Cantor Juval Porat, President Bruce Maxwell, architects Marc Schoeplein and Toni Lewis. Photo: Sylvia Sukop.

Below: A view of the interior of 6090 as it was during the groundbreaking ceremony. Photo: Sylvia Sukop



THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

BY RABBI JILLIAN CAMERON



*Drash delivered on
Erev Rosh Hasha-
nah 5782 (Septem-
ber 6, 2021)*

“The long and
winding road,
that leads to your
door. (1)”

Have you ever been
stuck in a tunnel?

Once when I was living in New York City, I made the colossal mistake of thinking that the Lincoln Tunnel would be the best route out of the city, rather than the George Washington Bridge, which was my go-to bridge or tunnel to New Jersey.

The traffic seemed better despite the maze of twists and turns through midtown Manhattan and then there I was, making my way into the Lincoln Tunnel.

My second mistake was feeling a sense of glee and traffic-related superiority, I had found the loophole, I had won! New York 0, Jillian 1.

This smugness was met fairly quickly with a wave of red brake lights, starting as far ahead as I could see, and quickly making their way to me.

And no, it wasn't just a simple tunnel slow down, it was a complete and total stop.

As I glanced to the cars around me, we all shared sympathetic nods and shoulder shrugs, one guy seemed to be yelling at no one, I lip read a word or two and it does not bear repeating.

After a few more silent communiques with my fellow travelers, I began to look around, the gray concrete ceiling, the tiled walls.

I don't think I had ever registered that the tunnel was tiled before.

And along the side of the roadway,
there was a little walkway just big enough for a single person

that was leading to a strange tiny door.

I wondered what it must be like to have a job where you have to walk on that tiny corridor inside the Lincoln Tunnel beside thousands of sometimes very fast-moving cars.

And to where did that door lead?

I noticed patterns in the randomness of the colors of the cars around me, two red cars followed by a black car and then two red cars! I gave myself a few extra points just for fun.

My foot grew tired on the brake and I watched the sea of red brake lights fade, not because we were moving again, oh no, rather because car after car, including mine, had shifted into park, a small sign of giving up, giving in to the wait, to that which we could not control.

The guy who was yelling in his car hadn't quite given in yet, as I watched him craning his neck in any number of directions, as if he could see something we couldn't, the cause of this stop, a way out not immediately apparent.

Every so often, I'd see a glimmer of red brake lights ahead, only to realize that someone had just turned their car on again.

But most of my fellow travelers seemed resigned to our temporary fate, of waiting, of being late to wherever we were each heading,

of sharing this strange, creepy, somewhat dark tunnel with complete strangers,
frozen in place,
as if time stopped.

Quite obviously, I did eventually make it out of that tunnel, when the accident had been cleared,
and we all slowly but surely moved once again,
like the connected cars of a train, chugging forward,
eyes adjusting painfully to the light at the end of the tunnel,
as it came beautifully into view.

I grew up in New Jersey, so I can say this:
In that moment, I was never happier in my life to be in New Jersey!

I have thought back to this particular hour of my life many times in the past few months as we have all been waiting to see the light at the end of the COVID tunnel we are stuck in together.

At times that light grew brighter, the early summer perhaps, when we all stuck our heads out of our burrows, like that groundhog in February, and discovered that vaccines work and tentatively stepped out into the light.

We started to see each other again, go out to restaurants, travel, and we, here at BCC began the detailed work of planning to welcome all of you back into our space, and for a few short weeks, we did
...and it was incredible.

And then the as the Delta strain grew stronger,
and spread faster and faster,
and we were back in the tunnel,
just like seeing the false flag of the brake lights of a still unmoving car.

I assure you, the light at the end of our COVID tunnel still shines brightly, but the tunnel has gotten a little longer.

And perhaps, like I did, we have begun to notice a few things while we wait.

We have noticed the inherent injustices in our systems – healthcare, judicial, correctional, immigration, blue and red, democracy itself.

We have noticed the systemic inequality in our systems of education, housing, inequalities in pay and benefits, rampant racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia.

We have noticed that truth and science have become battlegrounds, diminishing our ability to trust each other, to keep ourselves and our families safe, even to have conversations with one another.

We have noticed new things about ourselves:
We have learned about how we each deal with trauma, with fear, with deep global uncertainty.

We have learned the true power and possibility of community that doesn't just reside in one time and in one place.

We have experienced ourselves and our loved ones in new ways, crawling the walls, hopeful and hopeless, resilient and exhausted.

We've noticed our increased anger, irritability, defensiveness because we all feel so much more out of control, because we can't do the things we want to do, because we can't see the people we want to see, because so much has changed.

And we've noticed that we can't reverse on this road, that we are moving forward, even though we sometimes so desperately want the comfort, the blissful ignorance, the safety of "before."

We've still grown another year older, sent children off to new school years, retired from significant tenures, made new friends, began and ended relationships, voted in a new president,
we move forward,
no matter the circumstances.

And we can never go back to before⁽²⁾,
not just because it is a scientific impossibility,
but because we are different now,
we have changed,
both purposefully
and because of what we have experienced.
And time marches on, even though it hasn't always felt like
it.

Rosh Hashanah is both an ending and a beginning,
Rosh Hashanah is a mid-tunnel holiday,
yet this liminal twilight is our gift
because we are afforded the opportunity, nay,
we are forced into perspective,
forced to look around and truly notice what's going on
inside,
and outside.

And this kind of work,
this year especially,
the work of reaching through our circumstance
of not just reacting but being proactive,
of settling our weary souls
takes certain courage.

And here we are
at the start of our new year,
perhaps a bit more wounded than in years past,
a bit more impatient to get out of the tunnel,
confronted with the same melodies and familiar liturgy,
the same hope,
brimming with possibility.

We are never quite sure when we will reach the light at the
end of the tunnel,
but let us see this Holy Season,
this New Year,
as one light in the dark,
illuminating where we are now,
who we are now,
recharging the light within each of us,
as we slowly make our way forward.

We courageously step,
one foot in our past,
one ready for our future
and it's hard.
This year, this journey is hard.

"The Long and Winding Road
that leads to your door
will never disappear
I've seen that road before
It always leads me here
Lead me to your door."

The strength we need to undergo this monumental yearly
task
comes from our ability to not just look inward,
but also to allow ourselves to let others in.
This is a special vulnerability,
that requires confidence and purpose,
self-awareness and hope.
Confidence without arrogance,
purpose without coercion,
awareness without selfishness,
and unabashed hope.

A true desire to make space for other people,
other ideas, opposing philosophies,
an understanding that each of us is not the center of the
universe
but rather a unique member of this great magical ecosys-
tem.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l (former Chief Rabbi of the Unit-
ed Kingdom) told the story of how, as a young philosophy
student at Cambridge University, he traveled the world
visiting great leaders. When he came to see the Lubavitch-
er Rebbe, the Rebbe asked him what he was doing for the
Jewish students at Cambridge. He began by saying, "In
the circumstances I currently find myself . . ." whereupon
the Rebbe interrupted him and said, "No one 'finds them-
selves' in circumstances. We create our own circumstanc-
es."

I think after these last 18 months,
we all might have a respectful bone to pick with the
Lubavitcher Rebbe, for these still unprecedented times in
which we find ourselves.

And yet, the Rebbe is right,
we can still create,
we can still change,
we can still better ourselves,
we can still celebrate and mourn,
we can still decide who we want to be.

And let's do it now,
before the cars in the tunnel start up again,
while we have the time to take stock,
to notice.

"Many times I've been alone
And many times I've cried
Anyway, you'll never know
The many ways I've tried
And still they lead me back
To the long winding road."

So in this season of *t'shuva*, of return,
if we can't go back to before,
if we can only move forward,
to what can we return?

As one Jewish sage put it, A rope that is cut and retied is
doubly strong at the point where it was severed.... All forms
of *teshuvah*, however diverse and complex, have a common
core: the belief that human beings have it in their power to
effect inward change.

We can return to ourselves,
shedding the tortured skin of our COVID selves,
dominated by anger and fear, disappointment and
loss.

We can return to kindness and compassion,
gently recognizing our own fragility
as well as seeing it in others.

We can return to justice,
standing up for our values,
in Texas, where the "return to what was,"
threatens the lives and rights of so many people,
pregnant and not,
in Afghanistan, where the violent "return to what
was,"
leaves countless people scared and unsure of their
future,
and here in Los Angeles, where too many still need
food, housing, care and love.

We can return to our community,
perhaps not fully physically yet,
but with our warmth of spirit,
with our vow to volunteer,
with our commitment to offer the same safe and
brave queer Jewish space we each were gifted with
when we walked through BCC's doors.

We can't go back, but we can return
to ourselves,
our best selves,
renewed, rejuvenated, replenished,
ready to move forward.

We can't go back,
but we can renew, rejuvenate and replenish this sacred
space for all of us now, and for the generations who will
follow us into our beloved community of BCC and beyond.

"Don't keep me waiting here
Lead me to your door."

Shana Tovah!

(1) The Beatles
(2) Ragtime

THE BEAUTIFUL MESSINESS OF DIVERSITY

BY JESSICA DONATH



BETWEEN FEBRUARY 1692 AND MAY 1693, 30 people were found guilty of witchcraft in a series of hearings and prosecutions in colonial Massachusetts that came to be known as the Salem Witch Trials. Nineteen people were executed, 14 of them

women.

Among the factors that contributed to this gruesome outcome were tightly held religious beliefs, an atmosphere in which dissent seemed impossible, feelings of moral superiority, and stressful living conditions - the winter was particularly harsh, and a smallpox epidemic raged.

All this makes the Salem Witch Trials a prime example of groupthink. According to Psychology Today, groupthink is a phenomenon that occurs when a group of well-intentioned people makes irrational or non-optimal decisions spurred by the urge to conform and or fear of change and differences.

Psychologist Irving Janis introduced the term in 1971 to frame his research on group decision-making under conditions of stress. One of the pitfalls of groupthink is that group members may ignore the moral consequences of their decisions and actions to maintain conformity. Highly cohesive groups are more prone to fall victim to groupthink.

In Noah, the second Torah portion in Genesis, the first book of Torah, tucked in between long lists of Noah's descendants who repopulated the earth after the flood, we learn about the events commonly referred to as the Tower of Babel story in Genesis 11, verses 1 to 9.

At the outset, the text mentions that all the people speak one language. This post-flood (possibly traumatized) generation also has a common goal, articulated in verse 4: "Come, let us build a city with a tower that reaches the sky so that we can make a name for our-

selves and not be scattered all over the earth!"

Aided by the newly developed technology of brick burning, the people decide to build a city and a tower that can reach heaven. God disapproves and confuses their speech so that they can't communicate with one another anymore. A popular interpretation of these events is that God saw the need to punish the people for their lack of humility.

The Babylonian tower builders speak one language; they have a common goal; dissenting voices are not mentioned; they don't seem to consider the moral consequences of their actions; they are afraid and hunker down; they feel stressed - all hallmarks of groupthink as defined by psychologists today.

Therefore, I think it is possible that God wasn't primarily concerned with the people trying to take matters of creation into their own hands, but rather with the type of society that gave birth to such lofty ideas. Displeased as God was, then, God acted out of concern for the people we don't hear about, the silent dissenters who didn't want to build a tower but didn't dare to speak up.

Dr. Kerstin Söderblom, a queer Lutheran minister in Mainz, Germany, goes even further. She argues that we should think of God confusing the tower builders' language as God doing the people a great service. She even calls the act of scattering their languages a blessing as it introduced diversity in language, culture, and thought - something that was lacking.

"A single language and a single culture are not heavenly conditions for those who disagree, who don't fit in. They result in coercion and control for anyone who doesn't speak the language, thinks the same way, or lives differently," says Söderblom.

For those people, she argues, God's actions must have felt liberating. God saw their plight and alleviated the pressure of having to conform, of trying to fit in. God sends the message that differences are enriching and even necessary preconditions to move societies and humankind as a whole forward.

Exposure to different languages and perspectives, and people of different backgrounds, offers us the

chance to learn about others and ourselves. Uniformity can be dangerous in that it silences parts of our communities and often silences parts of our own identities.

God responds to this threat by introducing different languages and cultures. God teaches the people a valuable lesson by confronting them with their fears: groupthink is bad, diversity is good.

As a society, we have come a long way since Babylonian times. And at BCC, in particular, we have a lot going for us. In general, we don't fear dissent and dialogue; we seek them out. We don't fear people who think, look or love differently; we celebrate them in all that they are. We do our best to see each other and provide a brave space for everyone to bring their whole selves.

But even for the most well-meaning and educated among us, it can be challenging to grapple with concepts such as privilege, and we may feel scared of change or scared of not knowing how to interact with someone we perceive as different.

In the Harvard Business Review, Daisy Auger Dominguez, an expert on workplace diversity, equity, and inclusion, suggests that the first step to creating a welcoming and inclusive space for everyone may be to ask better questions.

We could ask, "Do you feel safe enough to take risks, to contribute?" or "When you are here,



how much time do you have to spend explaining parts of your identity?" Or "Whose voice and perspective is missing from this discussion?" and "What can we do to hold space and lift up marginalized voices?"

If we do this work and continue to celebrate diversity in all its beautiful messiness, we have a chance to make a name for ourselves in all the right ways and for all the right reasons.

Adapted from the sermon "Noach, groupthink and diversity" delivered at Beth Chayim Chadashim on October 8th, 2021.

SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

We welcome you to contribute to this magazine! Here are some ideas to get your creative juices flowing. Have you recently attended an amazing (virtual) event or art exhibit? Did you read a book or watch a TV show that everyone should know about? Do you have an idea for a new column? Do you think your bubbe has the best rugelach recipe? Please be in touch, we can't wait to hear from you!

Please follow these submission guidelines:

- Articles should be more than 500 words, letters to the editor can be shorter
- Please do not write about officeholders, candidates, or general international, national, state, or local political issues.
- Be respectful of anyone you reference, directly or indirectly, by name or anonymously.
- Please do not advertise any product or service in an article or letter.
- Submissions should be sent by email to the editorial team at gvanim@bcc-la.org as a Word attachment, in the body of the email, or as a Google doc.
- Include your name and phone number.
- All submissions will be proofread and edited for length, clarity, style, and tone.
- Note: Late submissions may not be considered for publication.
- Deadlines will be published in the BCC Weekly News and Updates.



Above: Holocaust survivor and previous building owner Max Webb addresses the dedication ceremony on April 10, 2011
Photo: Drew Faber



Right: Jerry Hanson and Davi Cheng in front of the ark at 6090 W. Pico and the beautiful ner tamid they created for BCC.
Photo: Sylvia Sukop

BCC's TIME CAPSULE: REMEMBERING OUR FIRST FIFTY YEARS

BY MARK MILLER



MEMORY IS A CENTRAL CONCEPT IN JUDAISM. University of Connecticut Professor Avinoam Patt states in *Zachor: Why Jewish Memory Matters* that “Judaism is a religion that is built on a foundation of memory,”⁽¹⁾ consistent with the commandment to remember: *zachor*. In his classic book, *Zachor: Jewish*

History and Jewish Memory, Yosef Haim Yerushalmi writes that *zachor* appears approximately 200 times in the Hebrew Bible. Israel is commanded to remember, for example, the Sabbath, the Covenant with Abraham, and the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, Judaism is a religion of remembering and, indirectly, of not forgetting, in its sacred texts, rituals and liturgy. Yerushalmi suggests that the ability to remember has been central to Jewish survival in the Diaspora over millennia. As Professor Patt writes, “how else can we explain the continuity of the Jewish people through millennia of migration, relocation, persecution, destruction, and renewal?”

A time capsule, also called a memory box, fulfills the commandment of remembrance that is so important in the Jewish faith. A time capsule offers an opportunity to remember and connect with significant events in a community's past. A BCC time capsule offers the chance to learn about and from our history as a community, including our origin story, our mission and values, our liturgy, our music, our struggles, and our victories. BCC documented its history in writing on its 40th anniversary (<https://www.bcc-la.org/welcome/history/>). However, a time capsule goes beyond a community's written history and brings it to life with actual objects and items selected to represent a particular place and time and concealed for future generations to uncover, examine, enjoy, and learn from. A time capsule's contents connect the past with the present and even with the future.

Ten years ago, when our current building at 6090 W. Pico was dedicated, we set aside space for a BCC time capsule. It is located outside the lobby, in the area between the glass doors and the parking lot; however, nothing has been placed in it so far. As part of the planning for BCC's 50th anniversary celebrations over the coming year, a Time Capsule Task Force was formed, consisting of Rabbi Emerita Lisa Edwards, Lezbtzn Emerita Tracy Moore, BCC members Larry Nathenson, Steve Sass, and James Sutherland, and chaired by me. Our mission is to decide what types of items to place in the time capsule, soliciting items from the congregation including current and former members and

clergy, determining the future date on which it will be opened, designing a dedication plaque, and scheduling and planning a dedication ceremony. The time capsule will be dedicated in memory of longtime BCC member Harriet Perl, z”l, who passed away eight years ago and, among other things, spearheaded BCC's first degendered prayerbook. The capsule's contents will cover the entire 50-year history of BCC since 1972/5732.

No decision has been made when the time capsule will be opened. One possible choice would be BCC's 100th anniversary in 2072/5832. Other more near-term dates such as 25 years from now or 13 (b'nai mitzvah) years from now are also being considered. The sooner the capsule is opened, the more people alive today would likely be present on the opening date. Moreover, a greater number of people around at the capsule's opening, of all ages, would help support BCC's continuity *l'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation.

The space for the time capsule is not large, so it's important to place in it items that represent the entire BCC community, including its many *havurot*, and major BCC milestones. Examples could include leftover fragments from the stained glass windows project, certain ritual objects, tzedakah boxes, different types of name tags used over the years, various issues of our G'vanim newsletter, sheet music from the BCC choir, LGBTQ Pride Parade pictures ('Gay, Jewish & Proud' flag), examples of our *siddurim* (prayerbooks) over time, remembrance of BCCers who died of AIDS, especially in the early days of the epidemic, pictures documenting *Nechama* ("Comfort"/A Jewish Response to AIDS) and Project Caring, and a sampling of *drashot* (sermons) from current and previous rabbis.

Together with the selected items representing the BCC community over the past 50 years, the Task Force will also consider including news accounts of major societal events to help provide the larger context in which BCC was founded and flourished through half a century.

The Task Force needs your suggestions for other types of items to include in our time capsule. Please send your ideas to me at markallan.miller@gmail.com.

(1) <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/zachor-why-jewish-memory-matters>



I CAME OUT ON MY 25TH BIRTHDAY

BY AVIYAH FARKAS

Excerpted from Aviyah's forthcoming book, *Overcoming Deepest Grief, A Woman's Journey*. © Aviyah Farkas 2010, 2021

I came out on my 25th birthday. It was the best birthday gift I could have ever had! I didn't "know" that I was a lesbian, a lover of women, despite the fact that at 14 I'd been in love with my best friend Laurie. I just thought that my attractions for women meant that I was a horny soul, capable of being turned on by both men and women. Little did I know that events on my 25th birthday would prove to be earth shattering for me and my then husband.

My family moved to the San Fernando Valley from the Big Apple, the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the summer I turned 14. I was distraught at this move away from multi-cultured and multi-colored people, fascinating summers and winters in Central Park, the Museum of Natural History, Coney Island, Greenwich Village, subway rides and always interesting places and things to do. We were now in the boring, mostly all white, WASP culture of the San Fernando Valley. Our new home was a low-income, three bedroom apartment in Canoga Park. The area offered miles and miles of sameness, no cultural diversity, kids who didn't know squat, and kids actually riding horses to school! They made fun of me riding my bike to school, so I switched to walking the two miles to Sutter Junior High. I quickly bonded with Laurie, the only kid in my 9th grade class who seemed to be hip and smart. Her parents were socialists, and I was eager to expand my budding political horizons.

Laurie and I became inseparable. We'd sleep over at each other's house as often as we could. Knowing her helped ease my pain of separation from Manhattan friends and my dream of going to the Julliard School of Music. I was quite adept at playing my alto sax, good enough for the All City Band and surely good enough for Julliard. Yet I wouldn't deign playing in the Sutter band because it was a marching band, rather than my Manhattan orchestral band where we played classical music, not marches! When not seeing Laurie after school, my sax consoled me. I musically wailed my heart out.

One hot summer night after we'd skinny dipped in her small backyard pool, we got into her bed, still nude and still wet, lying side by side. I had strong feelings for her, so I gently reached over and placed my hand on her breast. My heart was beating wildly. I didn't say a word. Just as gently, she removed my hand from her breast. She didn't say a word. We never spoke of this, ever.

I went on to play with boys; they were always willing to satisfy my seemingly insatiable sexual curiosity. I met Bob at 15, and found the boy pal I could freely play with. I even married Bob, at the tender age of 19. I wanted to leave the apartment, and I badly wanted to make babies. I'd been well schooled in the primary purpose of women.

It was expected of me, and it's what I wanted — babies and a family of my own. I never thought I was a lesbian; it was never in my consciousness. I always just assumed that I'd be married and have kids. Laurie moved away, and we didn't stay in touch.

As the early years of my 20's passed, the babies didn't come. Bob didn't want children. He believed we couldn't "afford" them; and I knew that one can never truly "afford" children; people just find a way. We'd never discussed having kids prior to marriage; I just assumed that it's what we would do, but we didn't. This major disappointment left me wondering about the wisdom of being with Bob. Also, I was finding myself more and more attracted to women. In college, I'd find myself in the library hour upon hour reading Gertrude Stein, fascinated by her relationship with Alice B. Toklas. Fascinated by this brave thinker's audacity letting the world know she loved a woman! I'd look at women's breasts, bodies, easy smiles, and get turned on. I didn't think there was anything truly strange about this; I just thought that I was a horny young thing, easily attracted to both sexes. I was still making love with Bob, and still hoped that he'd change his mind about having babies.

The New Year's Eve of my 24th year, we went to a party and I was in a group dance with dear friends, rocking out. Suddenly, the music and the group shifted and I found myself pressed full frontally against my friend Michelle, dancing very slowly. My body went wild. This was the first time in my life I'd felt a woman's body tightly pressed against mine and oh, it awakened something wonderful in me that I couldn't shake. I found myself thinking about the feel of a woman against me, craving a woman's body pressed against mine. Soon enough I was falling in love with Julie.

After Bob and I graduated from college we decided



we couldn't work for Big Brother, the government, because of heinous Vietnam crimes and mass murder, and we certainly couldn't work for Big Business, the bane of all true laborers! So we joined our friends Elaine and Ted in their hippy, organic, bakery venture we named Lammass Bakery. A mutual friend Julie joined us in this venture. We baked the most delicious organic whole grain bread, cookies, strudel, even cakes in Calabasas, CA. Over the next few months, I found myself falling in love with Julie, and slowly falling out of love with Bob. The long, hot, arduous bakery shifts, with Julie by my side, became sheer heaven for me. The physicality of our work together only heightened my ardor. Julie was in a committed relationship with her boyfriend Jacob, and I dared not speak of my growing passion for her.

On the day of my 25th birthday, Julie gifted me with a trip to the Huntington Gardens, near Pasadena. I was excited at the prospect of spending time with her outside of the bakery and also about seeing the famed Gardens. It was going to be a great birthday. Little did I know how truly great it would be!

I walked into Julie's house; she was sitting on the sofa, smoking a joint. We'd often share a joint at the bakery, going outside to relax while waiting for bread to rise. It made the hard labor and extremely long bakery days go faster. Of course I joined her on the sofa, getting stoned before taking off on our nature adventure.

We never made it to the Huntington Gardens. After some stoned chitchat, we were in a fast embrace, kissing, touching, and passionately making out. And before I knew

what was happening, we were on her bed, making love. It was a surprise to both of us, two straight women. I was married to Bob; she was committed to Jacob. For me, it opened up a fountain of feelings I'd felt for years in my deepest heart. It felt as if I'd just taken a long delicious drink of water after years of wandering parched in the desert. That afternoon I knew that I'd found the answer to a question I didn't even know I wanted to ask. I knew right then, that I had to be with women. *Not wanted* to be with women; *had* to be with women.

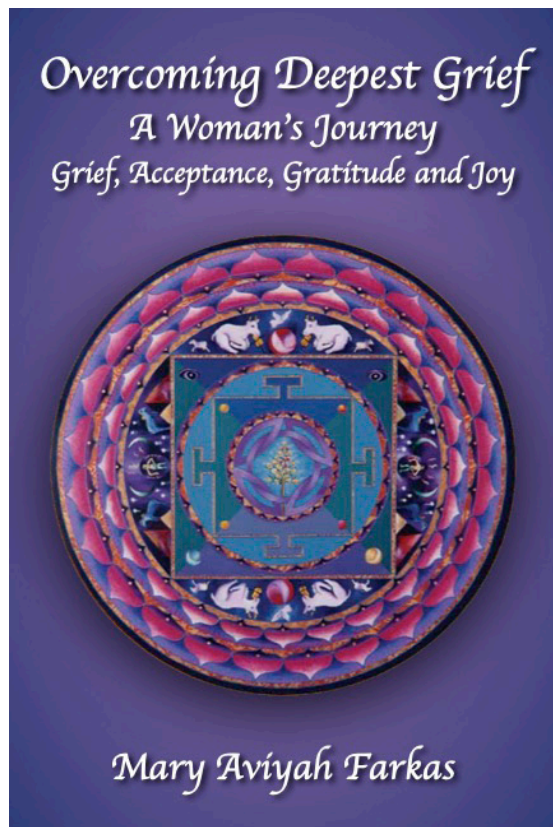
I was distraught about my new discovery. I still wanted the trappings of being married to a man, the subtle yet very strong societal perks, affirmation, acceptance, and respect given to a married woman. And I still wanted babies. I didn't want to give this up. But I knew, in the deepest part of my being, that I truly couldn't continue to be with Bob, or any man. I long ago realized the fundamental inequality of women in society and resented it. No matter how equal a marriage was in the home, once in public the male was always deferred to, given preference. This was 1973 America, a time when women couldn't obtain their own credit, couldn't make many legal decisions, and suffered sexual abuse and harassment in silence.

Making love with Bob became a chore, a physically painful chore, as I'd lost all desire for him and I was suddenly dry and unreceptive when he wanted to have sex. I struggled too with my betrayal of our marriage vows, which I took seriously. I sought help from a therapist, an older German woman who seemed to find nothing wrong with my desire for women. "Vell...you are just having an affair. That's all; and it is vith a woman! So have your affair!"

But this was more than an affair. It was the shattering of the life I'd grown accustomed to, a life of family and easy societal acceptance. It meant entering into a new world, an unknown world, a new way of being, doing, loving. A new secretiveness about my life, a new caution, a new identity. I knew I had to enter this world, and I did, with no regrets.

I am now many more years a lesbian than I ever was straight. Loving women is not easy; it involves an incredibly deep emotional commitment, typically never achieved with men. It involves clearing out our own demons and deepest doubts, societal abrogation, rejection, even ridicule. Loving another woman, being 'in love' with a woman, bedding with a woman, wedding a woman entails a lifetime journey of finding your own true value and self worth. A worth not bestowed by society or the fact of being with a man. For the brave women who choose to openly love other women, it becomes a path of amazing truth and joy. I still have no regrets.

[Note: all names, except my ex-husband Bob's, have been changed.]









Previous: Pianist Tamara Kline plays Cantor Porat's "House of New Life" to a packed sanctuary during the dedication ceremony on April 10, 2011
Photo: Sylvia Sukop

Above: Kenna Love, Hannah Theile, and Renee Lamkay, z'l, participate in the groundbreaking ceremony.
Photo: Sylvia Sukop

Right: Donna Quigley Groman, Steve Sass, and Steve Hochstadt carry the BCC Torah scrolls into the lobby of our new building
Photo: Sylvia Sukop

Below: Tracy Moore and Rabbi Lisa Edwards in the ark at 6090 W. Pico before the dedication. Note the Story Lines wall behind the ark and the light streaming through the as yet unfinished roof opening.
Photo: Felicia Park-Rogers



A POEM FOR OUR COMMUNITY IN THIS TIME

Editors' Note: 2021 marks the 40th anniversary of the emergence of the AIDS epidemic which, like Covid-19 today, profoundly changed how we lived our lives. Unlike Covid, AIDS affected BCC as a predominantly LGBTQIA+ community far more than the general population. As a BCC member recently commented to the poet, the following poem evokes the spirit of the Ashamnu, the collective confession we recite during Yom Kippur. It encourages us to regard the trajectory of our physical and emotional lives not only as individuals but also as a community that experiences them collectively.

WE GOT HERE

BY GORDON BLITZ



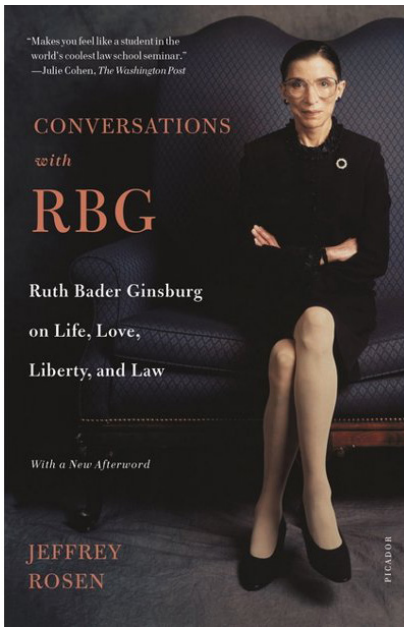
We were all baby boomers born in 1952
We survived bullying at Fairfax High School
We came out at the Gay and Lesbian Center
We were afraid to tell our alcoholic fathers we were gay
We let our fathers take us to a prostitute to convert us
We danced until we lost our hearing at Studio One
We met men at the Pussycat theater when it was gay
We put ads in Frontiers and met young hot boys
We didn't have anal intercourse
We stopped dating when AIDS was blowing up the community
We started going to memorial services
We cried when they played Taylor Dayne's "Love will Lead You Back"
We watched our lovers get an AIDS diagnosis
We attended APLA and Shanti support groups
We watched our lovers and friends die
We worried about turning positive from negative
We were scared about getting full blown AIDS
We stopped worrying and became numb
We started going to the gay and lesbian temple
We thought we were agnostic atheists
We found religion
We celebrated our birthdays at California Pizza Kitchen
We watched our friends get Crohn's disease
We watched our friends die from inoperable colon cancer
We had IBS
We were three and became two
We started forgetting words
We lost people to ALS, Dementia, Pancreatic Cancer
We had panic attacks and had to take anti-depressants
We had weddings
We saw Obama become president
We saw parents die
We suffered when Trump was elected
We took social security and Medicare
We retired
We were plagued by Corona
We rewrote our story
This is how we got here

BOOKS AND BAGELS

BOOK REVIEWS

BY LARRY NATHENSON

Conversations with RBG: Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Life, Love, Liberty, and Law by Jeffrey Rosen



over more than 20 years by legal scholar Jeffrey Rosen, Justice Ginsburg revealed the evolution of her thinking about American law and society as well as her personal relationships with some of her colleagues.

If you saw the 2018 movie “On the Basis of Sex,” you will recall that early in her career, Ginsburg advanced the cause of equality in part by representing men in sex discrimination cases. She argued successfully that a tax benefit designed for women who cared for dependents should also be available to men in similar situations. She believed an all-male panel of appellate judges could empathize with the male plaintiff and understand why such laws should be sex-neutral. Her work for the ACLU during the 1970s emphasized the need for equal application of the law to women and men. She believed that equality in marriage would be achieved only when men were

The late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg became something of a progressive and feminist hero in the last few years of her life. Known as the “notorious RBG,” she wrote strong dissents to the rulings of an increasingly conservative court. But she wasn’t always perceived that way, nor did she see herself as a political figure. In this compilation of excerpts from interviews conducted

as involved as women in the care of children and other dependents and were supported by the law in doing so.

As a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals in the 1980s, Ginsburg became known as a “minimalist,” a supporter of incremental change so that the law wouldn’t be too far ahead of public opinion. For this reason, she was critical of the decision in *Roe v. Wade* for having created a sweeping national standard that preempted the evolution in the law and in public opinion that was already underway. She argued that the backlash to *Roe* might have been less severe if it had been the result of incremental change over time. She also thought the right to choose abortion would have been more secure if it were based on equality (which is in the text of the Constitution) rather than privacy (which is not). These reservations caused some feminists to oppose her nomination to the Supreme Court by President Clinton in 1993.

Once she was on the Supreme Court, Ginsburg continued to be a strong liberal voice on the substance of the law and also an opponent of the judicial activism of her conservative colleagues. Her well-known close friendship with Justice Antonin Scalia was based on a mutual love of opera and fine dining (Ginsburg’s husband Marty was a gourmet cook who wouldn’t let her near the kitchen). Less familiar is her close relationship with Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman on the Court, who paved the way for Ginsburg and influenced her thinking despite their different political orientations. Ginsburg believed the Court took a sharp turn to the right when O’Connor retired in 2006 and was replaced by Justice Samuel Alito. When asked which decisions of the Court she would most like to overturn, all of the cases she cited were decided after 2006. They included *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* (on the right of corporations to make unrestricted political donations), *Shelby County v. Holder* (striking down the “preclearance” provision of the Voting Rights Act), and *Fisher v. University of Texas* (an affirmative action case). All were decisions that Ginsburg believed were too broad and insufficiently deferential to legislatures.

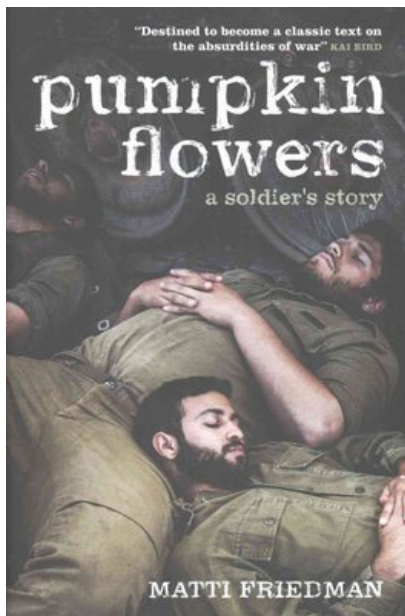
When asked about the “Me Too” movement that emerged during the Trump Administration, Ginsburg was generally supportive but also stressed the need for due process for the accused as well as the accuser. She considered it



a continuation of the feminist movement. She likened it to the gay rights movement that had built from the bottom up, with courts catching up with public opinion initially but later affirming rights against the remaining resistance. Ginsburg had been supportive of same-sex marriage as an extension of her views on equality in opposite-sex marriages. In 2013 she was the first Supreme Court justice to perform a same-sex marriage, a distinction in which she took great pride and pleasure.

This book was published in 2019, about a year before Justice Ginsburg's death. While it provides a good overview of her judicial philosophy and its evolution over the course of her career, it disappoints in its treatment of other influences on her life, including her Judaism. The interviewer, Jeffrey Rosen, focuses on subjects that also interest him (he shared Ginsburg's love of opera) and often gives away some of the best tidbits in his summaries before quoting Ginsburg herself. But if you are looking for something to help you appreciate the legacy of this Supreme Court rock star, through her own words and not just her published legal decisions, this book is a good place to find it.

Pumpkinflowers: A Soldier's Story by Matti Friedman



Don't let the title of this book discourage you from reading it. Yes, it is a war memoir in part, but it is so much more! Written by a Canadian-Israeli journalist who served in the Israeli army in the 1990s, it tells a story that is highly personal but also has broad social and historical resonance. Its crisp style is deceptively simple, well crafted to illuminate the author's life-changing experi-

ences without being overly emotional.

Friedman served in a war that wasn't really a war. The Israeli army occupied a strip of land in southern Lebanon from 1982 to 2000 as a buffer zone against attacks on northern Israel. The original enemy was the PLO, but by the 1990s it had been replaced by the local Shiite militia, Hezbollah. The "Pumpkin" was an isolated hilltop occupied by Israel as a look-out post, and "flowers" was military code for injuries. Amidst the grind of the constant danger but little actual fighting, Friedman contemplated the futility of battling an enemy on its home

turf. Looking down on the Lebanese town below, he began to see the humanity in his foes.

Friedman also tells the story of a group of brave Israeli mothers of soldiers in Lebanon who began to question the country's military ethos and contributed to the decision to withdraw. Their protests marked a turning point in Israel's shift from a defensive strategy of preemptive strike followed by occupation to one of border security. This shift has played out in the later withdrawal from Gaza, in the creation of the "Iron Dome" missile shield, and in the construction of the fence that now walls off much of the West Bank.

The final part of the book is not about the war at all. Using his Canadian passport, Friedman returned to Lebanon a few years later as a tourist, flying some 12,000 miles through Toronto to reach villages 20 minutes from his parents' home in Israel. He made some Lebanese friends, visited the town he had guarded with fresh eyes, and reached the Pumpkin to find it barren and deserted. His emotions are rawer in this part of the book than in the wartime narrative.

Friedman makes a case that this minor conflict was also the start of a new historical reality that has only grown since. It was the first war fought more in the media and on-line than on the battlefield. Defending its towns and families, Hezbollah became the master of the media war narrative and also bolstered its political position in Lebanon as the group that forced the Israelis out. This foreshadowed the unwinnable conflicts the U.S. would later fight in Afghanistan and Iraq, with no clear path to victory and enemies who could present themselves as national liberators. These lessons have yet to be learned by Western militaries.

This book is short and readable, but it will make you think — about the personal experiences of soldiers and their families back home, about the humanity of one's enemies, and about the global and historical implications of seemingly local and insignificant events.

BCC's Books and Bagels discussion group has met continuously since January 1995. The group met monthly in members' homes for a bagel brunch and discussion, although now we are meeting by Zoom until further notice. We read a variety of books: fiction and non-fiction, American and Israeli, historical and contemporary. The only requirement is some Jewish content (LGBT content is a plus, but not required). The group is open to BCC members and non-members, and you are welcome to join us for a particular book that may interest you. RSVP is required. For upcoming books, see the BCC Weekly News and Updates or check the [website calendar](#). To register for the Zoom link, contact Larry Nathenson at larrynath@aol.com.

BCC QUESTIONNAIRE:

RABBI JILLIAN CAMERON

Asking a set of questions to learn new things about old friends was a popular pastime in 19th century Europe. At 14, future French novelist Marcel Proust became one of the first to fill out a questionnaire in his friend Antoinette Faure's book Confessions; An Album to Record Thoughts, Feelings, & co. In modern times, Inside the Actor's Studio host James Lipton created a set of questions as a fun and not-too-serious way of getting to know his guests better. Vanity Fair published a Proust-inspired questionnaire on the last page of the magazine for more than 20 years that became one of its most successful and popular columns. Since its heyday, [Karl Marx](#), [Terry Gross](#), [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#), and [David Bowie](#) have all participated in a version of the classic question-and-answer parlor game. At G'vanim Magazine, we are pleased to introduce the BCC Questionnaire!

1. What is your idea of Perfect Happiness?

I don't believe in perfect anything but I think happiness includes the deep sense of peace that happens when you're able to let go of the need to control everything.

2. What is your greatest fear?

Hurting someone and not being able to fix it. I also don't love heights.

3. What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?

Not knowing who to trust, not trusting yourself.

4. Where would you most like to live?

I'd love a sweet bungalow in a nice neighborhood in LA with a lovely relaxing backyard, and if I'm dreaming, I'd also like a flat on the South Bank of London, a pied-à-terre in the West Village of New York City and the ability to be anywhere instantly.

5. What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

self-doubt

6. What is the trait you most deplore in others?

entitlement

7. What is the quality you most like in a person?

authenticity and self awareness

8. What do you consider the most overrated virtue?

virtue itself - when it is defined as chastity

9. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I would LOVE to be a morning person.

10. Which living person do you most admire?

I'm not sure I could pick just one single person. I admire all

those who have the courage to be themselves in the face of rejection and violence and terrible circumstances.

11. On what occasion do you lie?

When the truth would cause only pain.

12. Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

evolution - it's in almost every one of my sermons!

13. Which talent would you most like to have?

I wish I knew every single language that exists. Imagine the possibilities, the learning, the opportunities!

14. What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Becoming a rabbi.

15. What is your most treasured possession?

The sand dollars that my mom has found on the beach in her home town and given to me over the years - they remind me of the ocean, of the love of my family, to stay connected to nature, and from whence I came.

16. What is your greatest extravagance?

Shoes.

17. What is your favorite TV show?

The West Wing.

18. What is your favorite sound?

Crashing waves.

19. Which book do you wish you had written?

I've always wanted to write a book, so I would not wish to have written a book that already exists. I wish that I will eventually know the book I want to write.

20. Who is your hero of fiction or Torah?

I've always loved Jo March and always thought if she had lived in another time, she would have been (able to be) queer. Even in her own time, she was able to find a way to be herself.

21. Which historical figure would you most like to meet?

It's SO HARD TO PICK JUST ONE. Today, I'd like to meet Eleanor of Aquitaine.

22. Who are your heroes in real life?

The people who make a real difference in the lives of others without seeking credit, those whose names we don't necessarily know because they just offer help, support, go above and beyond because they can.

23. What are your favorite names?

Crosby and Yasha (My nephew and my dog)

24. What is your favorite age?

Whatever age I am. If we're talking "age" as in "era," I'm rather fond of any of the "golden ages" - Rome, Spain, Rock and Roll...

25. What is your favorite childhood memory?

When I was a kid, we used to drive to see my grandparents who lived in Ipswich, Massachusetts, where my Mom had grown up. When we would arrive, my grandfather would come up to me and ask if I'd like to take a walk. This was our not-so-secret code for taking a walk to the penny candy store down the street from their house where I was encouraged to fill my small white paper bag with as much candy as I could. I loved this special ritual that we had when I visited and it will always be a purely joyful memory of mine. When I was a teenager, I actually wrote a short story about this ritual and it was published in the local Ipswich newspaper. The owners of the store sent me a crisp white small paper bag and said I could come fill it up on the house anytime I wanted. Nothing else existed on those walks, no worries, no anxiety, nothing, just the small kid strides next to big grandpa ones as we walked to the candy store.

26. What turns you on (creatively, spiritually or emotionally)?

creativity and authenticity

27. What turns you off?

Insincerity and dishonesty

28. What is your favorite curse word?

I do appreciate a well placed curse word and I think, go big or go home, so my favorite curse word rhymes with duck.

29. What is your favorite language?

English because it is the one I know the best and there is little more satisfying to me than finding the perfect word or phrase to express exactly what I want. But I love all languages - I'm fascinated by language in general and all the different ways we humans express ourselves.

30. What profession other than your own would you like to attempt?

I've always longed to be on Broadway.

31. Who would you like to see on a new banknote?

I'm still waiting on Harriet Tubman.

32. Which invention do you admire most?

The printing press still seems pretty significant. But generally, I have incredible admiration for the fact that things are still being invented, big and small. In a world where it seems that there is nothing new under the sun, there are still people who are able to create something that no one has thought of before. Human ingenuity and creativity is something I am constantly in awe of and admire.

33. What is the first thing you do in the morning?

Look at the clock to see if I can go back to sleep for a few more minutes!

34. What is the last thing you do before going to bed?

A few deep breaths as I put lotion on my hands.

35. How would you like to die?

Without prolonged suffering, with as few regrets as possible, with the satisfaction that I made some small difference in the world.

36. If you were to die and come back as a person, an animal or a thing, who or what would it be?

Honestly, surprise me. I'd love to experience the world again and anew.