

**“Transcend the Ordinary”**

Sivan - Elul 5783

June 2023 - August 2023

## WHO ARE YOUR QUEER ELDERS?

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND

*Blessed are the elders who parted the seas of ignorance and prejudice...*

*Blessed are the elders with namesakes or without  
Whose energy and courage created a legacy of hope  
Making space for the children of today and sweet justice for  
children yet unborn.*



This Pride month, I'm feeling gratitude for my elders, those who are living and those long gone. Those who came before me and made my life possible. The words above come from our community-penned Siddur Sha'ar Zahav (p.21). They ask me to remember what my queer ancestors did so that they, so that I, could live a safe, fulfilled, complete life. I count among my elders those who threw coffee at cops at Compton's, rioted at Stonewall, and pushed our government to acknowledge the AIDS crisis. In the Jewish community: Magnus Hirschfeld, the

gay, Jewish medical researcher whose books on gender and sexuality were burned by the Nazis; the visionaries who founded Jewish LGBTQI safe havens like Sha'ar Zahav; my colleagues who broke through as the first gay and lesbian rabbis, and those (not actually my elders!) who became the first transgender and nonbinary rabbis.

But the words above also inspire me to live my values so that future generations might look to me, to us, as people who “created a legacy of hope.” It might sound *chutzpadik* – nervy – but when you and I are both gone, I hope we'll be remembered as people who brought about “sweet justice for children yet unborn.”

When the next generation looks back, who will they remember as the ones who helped make their lives possible? Will it be you? Will it be me? Will it be the Sha'ar Zahav community and what we stand for: a safe haven to be exactly who we are? At a time when LGBTQI identities are under attack, what can you do this Pride month to make someone else's life possible and ensure that you, too, will be remembered as a blessed elder long after you're gone?

**Trans &  
Nonbinary  
Committee pg. 2**

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

By DEBORAH LEVY



The Torah brings humankind onto Earth's bountiful garden. It is up to us to sustain our garden.

Take a look at my photo – that's me with one of our regular post-Oneg trash bags. Yes, it's compostable, but much of it – especially the utensils – is

difficult to compost. And producing recyclable utensils still creates greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change: more than 75% of the greenhouse gas emissions related to our purchases is from their production. Knowing that, our SZ Oneg *mavens* (virtuosos) Kathleen and Ernest Friedlander have generously donated 70 settings of reusable utensils, meaning we can buy less stuff and create less pollution!

Global food systems cause about 40% of global greenhouse gas emissions. Limiting and composting our food waste helps. A thin layer of compost on agricultural lands lets the soil pull more carbon out of the atmosphere and retain more water. So yes, you're healing the planet by putting that banana peel where it goes. Our SZ efforts put us in step with San Francisco's Climate Action goals to reduce the carbon footprint of our food and reduce the amount of goods and materials we purchase.

*Photo credit (of Deborah Levy): Jonathan Williamson*

Our Climate Action Committee (CAC) and I want to challenge our congregation to significantly reduce our waste stream by Rosh HaShanah in September. We can all do our part – at Onegs and at all Sha'ar Zahav events (and at home). Please consider joining CAC meetings the second Monday of each month, 5-6:30pm, on Zoom, to discuss how to accelerate our community efforts and to support climate-positive legislation. Or volunteer just a few hours to help our work – info in the weekly email, or contact the office to get on our email list. Join us in sustaining our garden!

## SHA'AR ZAHAV / TRANS &amp; NONBINARY COMMITTEE

## TRANS &amp; NONBINARY COMMITTEE

By MARTIN RAWLINGS-FEIN

SZ's Trans and Nonbinary Committee is an affinity group where people on the trans and nonbinary spectrum can congregate and discuss the day's issues, plan events, and serve as a sounding board for clergy and committees.

We meet every fourth Tuesday evening and plan trans-focused events and services for our Sha'ar Zahav community. You might have come to our recent Trans Day of Visibility (TDOV) panel around trans legislation; guest speakers around

## Sha'ar Zahav

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"Siddur Davar Hadash," the prayerbook that uses nonbinary Hebrew and neopronouns for God; our Shabbat Picnic right before Trans March; or our Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) and Trans Remembrance Shabbat occurrences.

Our committee comprises multiple gender expressions and ways of moving throughout the world. We have almost 30 members, several service leaders, *drash* deliverers (*darshe*), and members who widen our congregational diversity through numerous paths. I have chaired the committee since its inception in mid-2020 and have seen it grow beyond measure and lose precious members like Ray

Bernstein (z"l). If you are new to Sha'ar Zahav, you might not recognize Ray's name, but he was one of the early members of our group and a *drash* mentor to my daughter, who is attending college this fall. Ray helped breathe life into the religious lives of trans-Jews both directly and through his influence on other trans and Jewish leaders.

If you are trans, enby, or gender-nonconforming, I hope you will join our group and help create space for us within Sha'ar Zahav and the larger Jewish community. Contact me at [mrawlings-fein@ses.gtu.edu](mailto:mrawlings-fein@ses.gtu.edu) to join the listserv. And however you identify, please come to our events and learn about the critical issues that affect us all.

## AN INVITATION TO JUMP IN

By SUSIE IDZIK



We are often asked to give and give – sometimes to give financial gifts and sometimes gifts of time and effort. Sha'ar Zahav is held together by amazing lay leadership taking the lead on everything from serving on the Va'ad to serving

up tasty treats. And, those who give the gift of time and effort often speak of how it lifts them up and feeds them. As we know, it takes

a village to do amazing things – and this is a beautiful village. Maybe you're feeling like it'd be a good time to build your connections to Sha'ar Zahav – we welcome you to come volunteer! We're currently looking for folks to prepare our wonderful Onegs, to greet people as they come to Shabbat, to help with our Zoom support during meetings, classes and Shabbat services. Interested in hearing more? Please email [volunteer@shaarzahav.org](mailto:volunteer@shaarzahav.org)

## Membership

Susie Idzik  
[membership@shaarzahav.org](mailto:membership@shaarzahav.org)

## Hineni Caring Community

If you need help or can volunteer to help other Sha'ar Zahav members in need:  
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Read the JGF online:  
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## ADULT B'MITZVAHS

*SZ has a vibrant adult b'mitzvah program. This is the first of a series of articles featuring people who have celebrated their adult b'mitzvahs in recent years. Note: SZ honors each person's choice to use "bar mitzvah," "bat mitzvah," or the nongendered term "b'mitzvah."*

### Joseph Feiner



I had my group B'Mitzvah with Echad Leah (M Eifler) and Yuridia Ruhama on Saturday, January 24, 2023. The process of learning Hebrew and the prayers for the service was very meaningful. Since we worked as a team, the responsibilities were divided among us. I saw the Torah scrolls for the first time, wore my first tallis, and joined in prayers with my B'Mitzvah celebrants. I was joined by my family and friends. The process was very satisfying and I highly recommend it for wherever you are in your Jewish learning on your Jewish spiritual path.

### M Eifler

The twin desires to honor my late Grandmother and formally connect to my chosen synagogue community drove my decision to have a B'mitzvah as an adult. It gave me the opportunity to choose a Hebrew name – Echad Leah – to drash a topic that was deeply meaningful to me, and to challenge myself to fully learn prayers I had only grasped pieces of before. The best part was doing it as a group in a "tri-mitzvah," in which each of the 3 participants took responsibility for the aspects of the ritual that were most meaningful to them.



### Phil Charney



My Bar Mitzvah, 70 years ago, was daunting. I was intimidated by having to perform in front of a large congregation, and very happy when it was over and I could enjoy the party that followed at home. The reprise, at age 83, was another story. It was a rare and joyful experience to co-lead a service and deliver a d'var torah that enabled me to express my love for my family in front of some who honored me with their presence, others who watched on Zoom, and the rest of my beloved congregation. I was left with a glow that sustained me for some time afterwards.

### Yuridia Ruhama Yisraeli

Being able to celebrate my Bat Mitzvah was amazing. I am a trans woman from an Orthodox and Sephardic background, and always wanted to get my Bat Mitzvah. As a teenager in the 90's, I underwent conversion therapy and was prohibited from anything perceived as feminine. It was terrible. I refused to do a Bar Mitzvah, because I was pretending a masculine identity but I could not lie to G-d. At age 33 I began to live as a woman. Here in Sha'ar Zahav I fulfilled my dreams. I am very happy to have opened my heart up to HaShem and to have had my Bat Mitzvah in this community. I chose my Hebrew name, Ruhama, because I hope HaShem has mercy on me.





## MEET THE B'MITZVAH

### Judy Elhauge-Roniger



Judy Elhauge-Roniger (she/her), child of Lori Rochelle Roniger and Eduardo Elhauge and younger sibling of Pita, was called to the Torah as a b'mitzvah on May 20 after many years of learning with Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer at Sha'ar Zahav. Judy lives in the Visitacion Valley and Dogpatch neighborhoods of San Francisco and attends Hoover Middle School, where she enjoys singing in the choir, attending math class, and being part of the Math Counts club. Inquisitive and enthusiastic about learning, Judy also avidly plays piano and composes music, takes part in musical theater, and attends circus and performing arts camp.

Judy would like to thank the many people who have supported her, including uncle Patrick Hostel; step-father Nathan Hays; mentor Laura Lowe; Hebrew tutor Gabriel Lampert; drash mentor Ina Turpen Fried; Cantor Sharon, with whom Judy learned trope; and Beit Sefer teachers, including Ila Cherney and Sue Bojdak.

### Terry Fletcher



Terry Fletcher will be called to the Torah as a Bat Mitzvah on July 8, 2023 at an outdoor ceremony in Berkeley. Raised by atheist Jewish parents, Terry began to connect with her Jewish heritage and Sha'ar Zahav in her 30s. (She is now 63.) She originally planned her Bat Mitzvah for summer 2020, but postponed it because of the Covid lockdown. A retired public elementary school teacher, Terry lives with her husband Glen Hauer in Berkeley. She likes bicycling, jogging, salsa dancing, nature photography, and learning new languages.

Terry wishes to thank her three Bat Mitzvah mentors Eli Ramer, Howard Steiermann, and Ron Edelman, as well as the Rabbi and the Cantor, for their support. For more information about the ceremony, please contact Terry at [gillianf19@gmail.com](mailto:gillianf19@gmail.com).

## FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK...

By LIZ JAROSLOW



To be a Jewish child is to learn how to ask questions. The youngest among us are taught to ask the four questions at Passover, and it is the “child who has not learned to ask” who is at the lowest stage of development.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

tells us “We are closer to God when we are asking questions than when we think we have the answers.” In fact, according to Maimonides, while the patriarch Abraham was still an infant, his “mind began to reflect. By day and night he was thinking and wondering, ‘How is it possible that this sphere should continuously be guiding the world and have no one to guide it?’” (Mishneh Torah). Thus, a child’s question was the impetus for the dawning of monotheism.

It follows that Jewish education be grounded in learner-led inquiry. This is a seemingly simple concept, but it is not often found in traditional religious school. Yet at Beit Sefer Phyllis Mintzer, they are the words we live by. What does the learner notice, what do they wonder about? At BSPM, this is the basis of our curriculum. We don’t tell the students what they will be learning, they tell us what they would like to learn.

Is your interest piqued? Do you have a child who is 5-12 years old and curious about the world and Judaism? Please inquire today: email Liz Jaroslow at [Education@shaarzahav.org](mailto:Education@shaarzahav.org). Learn more about our innovative Saturday learning community here <https://tinyurl.com/ya8bzps8>

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The congregation notes with sorrow the  
deaths of:

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grandmother of Judy and Pita Elhauge-  
Roniger

**Lolly Mondry**  
cousin of Eli Andrew Ramer

**Martin Harrow**  
uncle of Scott Kramer

**Gerald Zaid**  
father of Hilary Zaid

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aunt of Jonathan Zingman

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grandfather of Eliana Frank

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on the birth of Leonie May  
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on his conversion  
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on their conversion  
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on the birth of Alice Rose Flynn Solovay

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for being honored as the California Public  
Defenders 2023 Defender of the Year  
**Brittany Covert**  
on their conversion

## MAY

**Liz Jaroslow**  
for becoming Educator at SZ's Beit Sefer  
Phyllis Mintzer



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Please note: Advertising  
deadline for our next  
issue is July 20th!



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**PRIDE  
MONTH**

**SHA'AR  
ZAHAV**

## Pride Events

### June 23

6:00PM: Pride Shabbat Party  
7:30PM: Services at Sha'ar Zahav (in-person and Zoom)

### June 24

5:30PM: Trans March & Shabbat Picnic (Dolores Park, before the March)

## Special Events

Join our Community Retreat over Labor Day. Link: [bit.ly/SZRETREAT](http://bit.ly/SZRETREAT)

Sha'ar Zahav is going to Israel in October: Israel from Many Angles: [bit.ly/SZISRAEL](http://bit.ly/SZISRAEL)

Check the weekly email for details!