

**“Transcend the Ordinary”**

Iyar - Sivan - Tamuz - Av 5784  
June - August 2024

## WANDERING THE WILDERNESS THIS PRIDE

By RABBI MYCHAL COPELAND



I recently watched two mini-series, *A League of Their Own* and *Fellow Travelers*, about lesbian and gay life in the 1940s and '50's, respectively. In both eras, characters lived completely closeted lives, fearful that if found out, their entire world would crumble. That was the reality for many of our earliest Sha'ar Zahav members and for some, it still is.

I'm sure I am not alone in being grateful that I was born into the present time period. But I worry that we are taking too big a sigh of relief. We have seen great strides for our LGBTQI community, especially here in our state. But our rights are threatened all over our country. Just this year, 544 anti-LGBT bills have been introduced and 21 have passed. Trans people are fleeing their homes for states like ours in search of gender affirming healthcare, education, and safety. We are witnessing an onslaught on our community, a well-coordinated campaign that has even seen some success in corners of our golden state: proposed book bans, at least one city banning Pride flags on government buildings, and a shop owner murdered for flying the flag.

This has been a painful year for our community on many fronts. In our Torah reading this Pride month, we enter *Bamidbar*, the wilderness, as the Israelites in our saga wander through liminal, uncertain time and space. How will we come through this wilderness?

Pride started as a protest. Amidst the Pride parties and glitter, I hope we can take stock of where we are and where we hope to be in the future. I want people in 80 years to say, “Wow, we have it so good now! Look what they had to endure back in 2024.” How will we, as a community committed to LGBTQI justice, ensure that we keep moving forward? To get involved in our queer activism group at SZ, please reach out to me.

**DISABILITY &  
ACCESSIBILITY  
COMMITTEE**

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## KADIMAH! ONWARDS!

By DEBORAH LEVY



This is my last JGF column as President. It has been an honor – and, yes, a challenge – to serve the community in this role. I'm proud of what I have accomplished, in close collaboration and with the support of many. I end my term with new skilled professional

staff in place to manage our operations (ED Danny Shapiro) and children's education programming (Educator Rabbi Q), and with a new pilot program – the Welcome Home Project supporting our TGNC community and Journey to Judaism program – funded for 30 months and staffed by the wonderful Rabbi Reuben Zellman. I am deeply appreciative of the opportunity to serve, and of all I have learned.

Considering the diverse voices, needs, and desires of our wide-reaching congregation is both the blessing and the challenge of this service. The diversity we value so deeply

requires us to spend time hearing each other, so that we can meet the community's needs, maintain a connected and loving community, and reap the benefits that come with diverse input.

Clear policies and procedures are important guides in an organization such as ours, and we've passed a number of new policies and revisions (including two sets of Bylaws) in my term as president. Still, new situations often arise that don't fit neatly into frameworks we've used in the past. This has certainly been the case recently – from the ever-changing territory of the post-pandemic world to the tragic events in Israel and Palestine on and since October 7. I love that, as a community, Sha'ar Zahavniks are willing and eager to parse through complex issues, seeking nuance and paths forward that best serve us all. And I am grateful for the policies, practices, and traditions thoughtfully developed over time that help us move forward when consensus isn't possible. The cycle of grappling with and clarifying the who, what, when, and how of Sha'ar Zahav decision-making and practice will

### Sha'ar Zahav

290 Dolores Street  
San Francisco CA 94103

**VOICE** 415-861-6932

**WEB** <https://www.shaarzahav.org>

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Our Journey to Judaism program is supported by grants from the National Center to Encourage Judaism

### Sha'ar Zahav Staff

#### SENIOR CLERGY

Rabbi Mychal Copeland (she/her)

[rabbi@shaarzahav.org](mailto:rabbi@shaarzahav.org)

Cantor Sharon Bernstein (she/her)

[cantorbernstein@gmail.com](mailto:cantorbernstein@gmail.com)

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Danny Shapiro (he/him)

[danny@shaarzahav.org](mailto:danny@shaarzahav.org)

#### DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Rabbi Q (Lisa Levenberg, she/her)

[educator@shaarzahav.org](mailto:educator@shaarzahav.org)

#### ASSISTANT DIR. OF ADMINISTRATION

Kerasa Tsokas (she/her)

[kerasa@shaarzahav.org](mailto:kerasa@shaarzahav.org)

#### WELCOME HOME PROJECT

Rabbi Reuben Zellman (he/they)

[rabbireuben@shaarzahav.org](mailto:rabbireuben@shaarzahav.org)

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continue, as our next President and Va'ad take office in July. It is a cherry-on-top moment for me to turn over leadership to the wonderful and talented Mike Shriver and the team he has built.

Thank you for the trust you have put in me over the past two years.

## SHA'AR ZAHAV EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By DANNY SHAPIRO



It's only been a few months since I began as the Executive Director, and Sha'ar Zahav is already starting to feel like home. I'm getting to know many of our amazing members through my participation in Va'ad meetings and committees, and by attending Shabbat services, holidays, and educational events. Sha'ar Zahav has exemplified hospitality, starting from my interview weekend through today. I'm so impressed by the dedication and generosity of so many of our members.

I'm often asked why I, as a rabbi, came to serve Sha'ar Zahav as the Executive Director. I've always been drawn to build supportive, inclusive, and welcoming

communities, and Sha'ar Zahav provided me with a fantastic opportunity to do so. In my past roles I've found joy in providing for the material needs of the Jewish community, and am happy to leave the spirituality, pastoral counseling, and observances to our amazing clergy team. I have found my own path to serve the Jewish people in the Executive Director role at Sha'ar Zahav.

With all that being said, there's a lot that needs to get done to run our beautiful Sha'ar Zahav community. I've jumped right into administration with my first major focus being on fundraising, accounting, and budgeting. I began working at SZ as the main phase of Welcome Home Project fundraising was wrapping up, with 77% of the 30-month funding secured. If you haven't yet had the chance to be part of this amazing project in memory of Paul Cohen and Ray

*(continued on page 4)*

## Va'ad Members

Claudia Bernard, Barbara Cymrot, Meagan Fox, Brad Friedman, Franco Martinez, Josh Muller, Tirtza Pearl, Ruth Schoenbach, Alyss Weissglass

## Membership

Danny Shapiro  
[danny@shaarzahav.org](mailto:danny@shaarzahav.org)

## Hineni Caring Community

If you need help or can volunteer to help other Sha'ar Zahav members in need:  
[webmarla@me.com](mailto:webmarla@me.com)

## Jewish Gaily Forward

Read the JGF online:  
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### EDITORIAL TEAM

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To reach the JGF editorial team:  
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### DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Hien Nguyen: [hien.h.nguyen@hotmail.com](mailto:hien.h.nguyen@hotmail.com)

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Bernstein, please be in touch. Almost immediately after, I began planning for our Rainbow Campaign with our hard-working Resource Development Committee. As of this writing we are at 94% of our goal, thanks to everyone who contributed so generously! Now we're in the process of finalizing next year's budget, and very soon our annual membership drive will begin.

Of course, finances are just one aspect of the executive director's role. You'll have the chance to read more details in my report for our upcoming annual meeting. I hope to see you there, and if we haven't had a chance to meet, please reach out and introduce yourself!

## SHA'AR ZAHAV EDUCATION

By RABBI Q



Looking for a Baby Chavurah? We've got you! Over the past few years, a number of Sha'ar Zahav members have become parents; and many Jewish families who live nearby have discovered Sha'ar Zahav's strong culture of activism,

inclusion, and celebration of diversity and said, "This is the kind of community I want for my children." These folks then attract other folks, and then, before you know it, a mailing list has been created. (That's how you know you're really official!) Some of these people are now SZ members, and others are part of the wider circle that often move toward official membership over time.

During the pandemic, while buildings were closed, a few families started meeting for Shabbat play days at local parks, a tradition that has continued even now that structured programs at various Jewish organizations have resumed. Occasionally, Sha'ar Zahav has offered age-specific events such as a "Three Stars" Havdalah group and Tot

Shabbat, but we also try to incorporate or add on child-friendly activities to larger Sha'ar Zahav celebrations and events. For example, dozens of families joined us on Purim Night, and Liz Jaroslow also organized a side room of activities during the Congregational Seder.

While some of this growth is a result of our programs, most of it is truly an organic response to initiatives begun by the parents themselves. In addition to the park days mentioned above, this year the Baby Chavurah has begun sharing Shabbat dinners! About once a month, a different family opens their home, and folks sign up to bring a dish to share. The community that is emerging among this cluster of toddlers and their parents is so beautiful. They are seeking a "village" in which to raise their kids. It's an opportunity for Sha'ar Zahav to both nurture this group and be nurtured by it! If you know of a family who would like to be added to the list, or if you are a volunteer who likes organizing holiday activities for little ones, email [educator@shaarzahav.org](mailto:educator@shaarzahav.org).



## DISABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

By ANN DANIELS

Did you know that over a quarter of those who answered SZ's congregational survey identified as disabled or having functional impairments? Or that access means so much more than elevators or ramps? SZ's Disability and Accessibility Committee (D&A) is committed to advancing access within the SZ community, and in the broader Jewish community, through education, dialogue, and action. We're one of SZ's newest committees, but we're proud of our accomplishments - and our plans. Some of our highlights:

- Leadership Advances on disability rights, disability justice, and inclusivity at SZ - fully interactive events modeling thoughtful use of technology bringing together in person and online attendees
- Zoom events, including a panel discussion on the Academy Award-nominated film *Crip Camp* featuring individuals from the film, and two speaker events with Rabbi Julia Watts Belser
- Our hostx (short for "Hostx with the Mostx") program at services and events, with a Zoom attendee welcoming others and serving as a resource for those on Zoom
- An accessibility survey, identifying SZ members' diverse access needs for both online and in-person participation

Future plans include:

- Continuing with "next steps" from the Leadership Advances
- Organizing speakers, panel events, and creating a training on disability rights and justice for the wider Jewish community
- Creating accessibility information for the

SZ website

- Working with staff to create accessibility criteria as part of a new SZ event planning form, and to optimize access for kids and families
- Working with staff, clergy, and other community leaders to improve the hybrid experience. D&A's long-term goal envisions a single community, with participation by and interaction between those on zoom and those who attend in person
- Working to improve in-person access, to allow anyone to receive the accommodations that they need, when reasonably possible

We believe that we are one sacred community, no matter where we are or how we show up. We are deeply grateful to leadership, staff, the tech crew, and the Social Action and Climate Action Committees, among others, for collaborating to create accessible events and make SZ a more welcoming and accessible community for all. We welcome you to join this work! You can contact us at [DisabilityAndAccessibility@gmail.com](mailto:DisabilityAndAccessibility@gmail.com).

### *Read the JGF Online!*

The JGF can be found online.

Read current and previous issues at:

<https://www.shaarzahav.org/newsletter>

We are grateful to all our donors! Your generosity supports everything that Sha'ar Zahav does. This issue lists donations through April 20. Later donations will be acknowledged in the next issue.

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in memory of their dear friend Judy  
Woo

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in celebration of Malkam and Apurva's wedding

in memory of William S. (Bill) Goldstein z"l

**Ruth Schoenbach and Lynn Eden**

in honor of Martin Tannenbaum for his tireless work to keep Sha'ar Zahav solvent!

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in honor of Deborah Levy and her dedication as our president

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in honor of Rabbi Copeland, Cantor Bernstein and our amazing lay leadership

**Robert Katz**

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in honor of her wife, Sharyn Saslafsky

**Bonnie Kates**

### **The Welcome Home Project**

*in memory of Paul Cohen z"l and Ray Bernstein z"l:*

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**Donald Fischer**

in memory of Harvey Chertok, beloved father of Michael Chertok

**Benny Lunine**

**Larry Wexler**

**Ron Lezell**

**Sharyn Saslafsky**

**Allan Gold and Alan Ferrara**

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*in memory of Ray Bernstein z"l:*

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Howard Hahn**

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**Jonathan Pannor**

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in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Jo Ellen Kaiser**

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in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Gina Roccanova**

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in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Sharyn Saslafsky**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Richard Meyerson**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Philip Charney**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Karen Schiller**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Joshua Muller**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Alyss Weissglass**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Martin Tilzer**

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Deborah Pollak Levy**

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in memory of Harvey Chertok

**Michael Gitt**

in honor of his husband, Steve Anderson

**Judith Wolfe and Jennifer Hughes**

in memory of Harvey Chertok

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in honor of his mother, Dr. Julia Adele Medin

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**Got something to celebrate? Send your Mazel Tov Announcements to [office@shaarzahav.org](mailto:office@shaarzahav.org) to be included in future newsletters.**

**APRIL****Jordan Francis (he/him) and Madeline Hermann (she/her)**

on their wedding

**Daniel Redman and Olaf Mathe**

on the birth of Torbjörn Isaac Redman-Mathé

**Savta Deborah Levy, long-ago BSPM graduate Josh Levy, and his wife Joanne Agus**

on the birth of Noah S Levy

**Hilary Zaid**

on being awarded the Publishing Triangle's Betty Berzon Emerging Writer Award

**Rabbi Copeland**

on being invited to give the opening blessing at the annual California State Senate Yom Hashoah commemoration. She spoke about our broken world and the imperative for each of us to mend it.

## **NOVEMBER**

Josephine Williams (she/her)

## **DECEMBER**

Sarah Dizio (she/her)

## **JANUARY**

Madeline Hermann (she/her) and Jordan Francis (he/him)

## **FEBRUARY**

Beth Berenson (she/her)

Jordan Francis (he/him) and Madeline Hermann (she/her)

Sarah DiZio (she/her)

Hadar Aviram (she/her)

Neil Grungras (he/him)

Demir Barak (he/him)

## **MARCH**

Joshua Selesnick (he/him) and Dvorah Lewis (she/her)

Kimberly Balsam (she/they)

Lorraine Weir (she/her)

## **APRIL**

Mary Crawford (she/her)

Mitch (he/him) and Lauren Spierer (she/her)

Carlos Zamora Hernandez (he/him)

Michael Argenyi (he/him)

## **In Memoriam**

The congregation notes with sorrow the deaths of:

## **MARCH**

**Bonnie Faye Magid**  
mother of Cheryl Magid

**Harvey Chertok**  
father of Michael Chertok

**Iris Malakoff**  
mother of Merle Malakoff, mother-in-law of Gina Surber and grandmother of Max and Ben Malakoff

**Ruth Tyler**  
mother of Michael Tyler and mother-in-law of Amy Schustack

**Bob deTulio**  
friend of James Carlson

## **APRIL**

**Wayne Hamilton**  
cousin of Donna Fein and Shelli Rawlings-Fein

**Fred Wolinsky**  
cousin of Deborah Levy

**Ruth Brenner**  
friend of Martin Tannenbaum and Alex Ingersoll

**Joan B. Carlin**  
aunt of Ina Turpen Fried

**Rae Ann Wirth**  
friend of Anthony Harris

**Harold Raphael**  
uncle of Martin Tannenbaum

**JUNE**

Mark B. Feldman  
 Janet Gaby  
 Robert Nehemiah Mackey  
 Duff Kreitzberg  
 Brian Ellis  
 Albert Stern  
 Barry Siegel  
 Richard Rath  
 Joe Zygielbaum  
 David Shaber

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 Edwin Gabay  
 Matthew Rostoker  
 David Roy Custead  
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### *Thank you for your donations!*

Your contributions help us realize our commitment to building and maintaining a vibrant, living community for Sha'ar Zahav. A donation can be a meaningful way to honor friends or family, engagements, anniversaries, graduations, for special thanks, or to memorialize a loved one. Collectively, with your financial support, we continue to prosper, grow, and celebrate our future.

## SHA'AR ZAHAV MEET THE B'MITZVAH

**Adam Solomon-Carmel**

Adam Solomon-Carmel will be called to the bimah as a bar mitzvah on August 24. Adam lives in the Inner Sunset with his parents, his sister Noa, and their two cats. He is a 7th grader at San Francisco Schoolhouse. He enjoys geography, history, video games, sports, and baking.



## OUR BEAUTIFUL SZ GARDEN

By KAREN SCHILLER

If you've walked by 290 Dolores, you must have noticed the beautiful garden in front of our building and surrounding one of the trees in front. Thanks to Juan Patiño and his partner, SZ member Bob Gordon, the garden is filled with bright, colorful flowers and greenery and is a delight to behold.

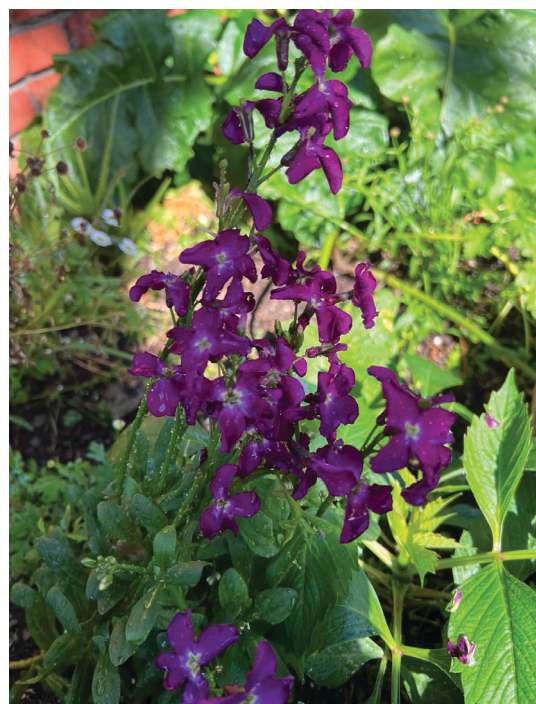
Juan, a retired chef, grew up in a small village in Mexico and began working in the sugar cane fields when he was seven, dropping out of school when he was eight to work fulltime. He came to the US in 1989, and he and Bob met in a local dance club 28 years ago. Juan has been creating gardens since he was 17 and built his own house in his village in Jalisco, Mexico; over time he planted 100 rose bushes there. Unfortunately, the studio apartment that he and Bob share a few blocks from SZ doesn't have a garden, so when Juan saw the garden area in front of our building, he and Bob asked Rabbi Copeland if Juan could garden there. Of course, she said yes! (The garden area was originally cultivated by our former educator Sue Bojdak and students from BSPM.)

Juan, with help from Bob, planted fuchsias, calla lilies, gladioli, dahlias, poppies and other flowering plants, succulents, cucumbers, and even some corn and a banana tree (just to see if it would grow). He comes by weekly and spends a few hours; when Juan was back in Mexico for a few months, Bob stepped in to weed and water. Bob said, "The garden needed Juan's hands in there. He has the skills to grow anything. Whether cooking or gardening, he can do it all."

If you see Juan working in the garden or at Friday night services with Bob, please take a moment to appreciate the beauty he has brought to our building.



*Photo credit: Bob Gordon*



*Photo credit: Juan Patiño*



## LIMELIGHT ON LEGACY

By IRENE OGUS

I joined SZ in 1979 and paid \$18 in annual dues. I became Treasurer a couple of years later - our budget was about \$70,000. We had no building, office or financial reserves - just hoped that we could pay the monthly rent, the Rabbi and the bills. Forty-five years later, we have a staff of eight and \$4 million in assets, including a valuable piece of real estate and financial reserves in the form of our Endowment Fund, made up of SZ members' bequests of money, property, and other assets.

Our journey includes the migration of hundreds of LGBTQI Jews, people interested in Judaism, and others who simply found SZ a haven for spiritual renewal, comfort, and solace. We became a community, a chosen family. As we grew, we struggled with gender power issues, accommodating kids, expanding understanding about gender and sexual identities, a potpourri of religious observances, owning a building vs renting, Hebrew vs English, a Kosher kitchen (or not), security issues, even seating. As we respectfully worked through all these, we kept the spirit of *shalom bayit* (peace in the house). Trust in leadership grew, we embraced the "greater good" decision-making concept. We bought a house, we

aged, and we started looking for attorneys to set up our wills and trusts.

Early in 2011, the Jewish Community Federation recognized that SF synagogues had not planned for the future. They created a Legacy program and assigned us a fundraising coach, who helped us launch our Legacy campaign. As of this writing, almost 100 members have provided signed Letters of Intent to leave a bequest to Sha'ar Zahav - a simple document informing the trustee/executor that a member intends to leave a portion of their estate to SZ. Some are still around; some have died, and their legacy gifts are held in our Endowment Fund, giving us a level of financial security we could never have imagined 45 years ago.

Our Endowment has enriched programs and has allowed us to set up exciting new endeavors. I am now passing my leadership in this campaign on to others but I hope you will consider joining me and many of your fellow SZ-niks in leaving a bequest to SZ. Your legacy gift can support our beloved community now and into the future. For more information, please contact Alex Ingersoll, [ingersollax@earthlink.net](mailto:ingersollax@earthlink.net), 415-309-0237.

### *We Want Your Photographs!*

Do you have digital photographs or video of Sha'ar Zahav activities or events? The Archives Project would like to add copies to our growing photography and video library as we document the history of Sha'ar Zahav.

Please contact Lawrence Helman ([heytheresells@gmail.com](mailto:heytheresells@gmail.com)) or Robert Tat ([rob@roberttat.com](mailto:rob@roberttat.com)) for more information.

If you would like to join the team working on organizing our archival document materials, please contact Ron Lezell at [Lezell.ron@gmail.com](mailto:Lezell.ron@gmail.com)

## Advertise in the JGF!



Let the Sha'ar Zahav community – and all our friends – know about your business or services!

Contact: [office@shaarzahav.org](mailto:office@shaarzahav.org)

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1/2 page horiz	7 x 4.5	42p x 30p	\$170.00	\$220.00	20% discount for four issues: must be prepaid
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Please note: Advertising deadline for our next issue is July 20th!



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## Celebrate Pride with Sha'ar Zahav!

See all our events at [shaarzahav.org/pride](http://shaarzahav.org/pride) and watch the weekly email.



Sha'ar Zahav contingent in the 1992 Pride Parade. Photo from the Sha'ar Zahav archives project.

*Do you have digital photographs or video of Sha'ar Zahav activities or events? The Archives Project, documenting our history, would like to have copies. Contact Lawrence Helman ([heytheresells@gmail.com](mailto:heytheresells@gmail.com)) or Robert Tat ([rob@roberttat.com](mailto:rob@roberttat.com))*