



# December

## Congregation Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom Newsletter

*A GLBT synagogue welcoming people of all gender and sexual identities since 1975*

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### BA Shabbat Services Friday 8:00 PM



Join us for a rabbi or lay led BA style service each month preceded by dinner and followed by an oneg & shmoozing

**December 18**

led by

**Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell**

**Dinner - 6:00 PM**

Sazon Restaurant & Cafe  
941 Spring Garden St,  
Philadelphia  
(215) 763-2500,

[www.sazonrestaurant.com](http://www.sazonrestaurant.com)

Call Jeff Strauss to let him know you are coming, (215) 880-5251.



### BA Board Meeting

**Wednesday**

**December 23rd @ 6:30 PM**

All BA members welcome



### ANNIVERSARIES

December 14

**Cindy Balzar &  
Darie Aigen**

December 14

**Gloria Becker &  
Ruth Schachter**

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The Biennial in Toronto was an awesome experience! Truly there was electricity in the air praying on Shabbat with 3500 other Jews from all around North America. It is evident from the quality of the conference that these gatherings every other year are very well planned. The workshops were participatory and engaging. I attended some workshops geared toward small synagogues (those with 250 members and less) but also met many folks at other workshops like the one about how synagogues welcome GLBT Jews which had our own member Nurit Shein served as a very qualified and interesting panelist. (I thought the most interesting of the three panelists even though that may be a bit biased.) Please read Nurit's article in this Shofar. By far, I thought the sermon by Rabbi Eric Yoffie, President of the North American URJ (Union of Reform Judaism, was so inspiring and educational. He spoke of our work to be done in reducing our carbon footprint in the world. This reduction can be achieved by reducing our intake of red meat. If you calculate all of the steps from raising cattle to bringing fresh meat to the grocery store meat cases, it would be clear that the factories producing the meat and delivery of these goods is producing a huge amount of carbon and pollution to our society. He stressed that his sermon was not so much about Kashrut as it was eating healthy and being mindful of our environment. The food choices for our Shabbat weekend meals were limited to chicken and fish. While chicken and fish is the staple of so much of my diet, I will share with you that I could not resist a meat meal upon my return to the states. This was not about cutting out meat totally from our diet, it was more of a watchword to reduce meat from our diet and like anything else, have it in moderation.

Our BA delegation was Jerry Silverman, Nurit Shein, and myself. Several staff and members of RS also attended. We were delighted to be side by side at the posters displaying information about our respective award winning programs. RS received a Belin award for Michael Hauptman's membership committees work on it's open tent initiative. BA won the Epstein Communicate award for it's unique affiliation agreement with RS and how a "small congregation affiliates with a large congregation and keeps its identity". This certainly was a highlight to our representation and several attendees did remember seeing the poster when I would meet them at workshops and I mentioned the synagogue I was from. It made me feel very proud. We have a wonderful photo of the award acceptance and we also received a \$1000.00 check along with the award. My thanks to all whom worked on this program idea and saw it through from conception to actual document. My thanks to Jerry Silverman for being a great roommate and friend.

The weather in Toronto was not as cold as I had expected it to be with daily temperatures in the mid 40's. While most of my time was spent at the conference I did make it to the gayborhood one evening for dinner and did visit the CN Tower which is this tower that shoots up 1400 feet into the sky. The view was magnificent however I did face a tremendous fear of

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED**

heights. I got to share this unprecedented moment with RS member Michael Hauptman and RS President Fred Strober. Let us just say that it served as quite a bonding moment!

I encourage everyone to think about attending a Biennial. In 2011, it will be in close proximity to Philadelphia because it will be held in Washington DC. One quick mention also is that every night there was a GLBT affinity group. I met folks young and old, and those who have been attending Biennials for twenty years, and folks like myself who were there for the first time. My hats off to the URJ for hosting a truly meaningful and fulfilling well planned Biennial.

B'Shalom,  
Jeff Strauss



**Annual Chanukah Party**

**WHEN?** Saturday, December 12<sup>th</sup>,  
7:00 pm

**WHERE?** BA @ RS, 615 N Broad St

We're having a **Latke Cook-Off**.

So bring your pre-cooked latkes and we'll warm them up, eat them (of course) and see who wins the title of **Latke Chef of 5770!**



We'll have a variety of toppings. Bring your own if it is really something only you can make.

Please email [bethahavah@rodephshalom.org](mailto:bethahavah@rodephshalom.org) or call 215-923-2003 to RSVP by December

 **YAHREZITS**

Miriam Butler  
December 7, 1997  
5 Kislev/November 22  
Beloved mother of  
**Jack Butler**

Benjamin Butler  
December 7, 2007  
27 Kislev/December 14  
Beloved father of  
**Jack Butler**

Yetta Richman  
December 20, 1989  
22 Kislev/December 9  
Beloved mother of  
**Ken Richman**

Jay Goodis  
December 19, 1998  
10 Tevet/December 29  
Beloved husband of  
**Brenda Goodis**

Martin A. Miller  
December 31, 1978  
10 Tevet/December 18  
Beloved grandfather of  
**Eve Miller**

 **BIRTHDAYS**

- December 1  
**Jay Segal**
- December 5  
**Malcolm Lazin**
- December 11  
**Howard Rosen**
- December 18  
**Ned Hanover**
- December 25**  
Steven Rosenberg
- December 31**  
Abbe Forman

**Annual Erev Christmas Food Fress**



**Thursday, December 24<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 PM**

Charles Plaza

234-236 N 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia  
(SW corner of 10<sup>th</sup> and Vine Sts)

Where are all the Jews on Christmas Eve? In Chinatown of course. Let's get together once again for one of BA's most popular community events. This year we will again be at **Charles Plaza**, known for Charles' personal attention and his *naturally healthy Chinese cuisine*. We are having a wide variety of appetizers and entrees, including chicken, fish, beef and vegetarian dishes. All food is *Kosher Style and freshly prepared*.

Cost is \$30.00 per person, including tax and gratuity.

Free Parking at the NW corner of 10th & Vine Sts in the orange painted area.

Please email [bethahavah@rodephshalom.org](mailto:bethahavah@rodephshalom.org) or call 215-923-2003 to RSVP by December 16th. Payments made payable to "Congregation Rodeph Shalom" are due by December 21<sup>st</sup>.

**Annual Christmas Food Fress December 24, 2009**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number and/or email: \_\_\_\_\_

No. attending: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30.00/per person = \_\_\_\_\_ (total enclosed)

Please return with your payment (check or money order only) to:  
Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom, Attn: Erev Christmas Food Fress, 615 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123



# Joey & His Girls

One performance only!

**Saturday, January 16th 8:00 PM**

**Teller Auditorium**

hosted by

**Congregation Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom**

**615 North Broad Street, Philadelphia**

Tickets: \$20 per person

Refreshments Served

Join us for a night of song and laughs, the closest we could get to bringing you your favorite headliners – among them Connie Francis and Judy Garland (aka Joey Josephs, Les Harrison and Precious Calente).

RSVP by January 9th

For reservations, call BA@RS, (215) 923-2003,  
or email [bethahavah@rodephshalom.org](mailto:bethahavah@rodephshalom.org)

This production of “Joey & His Girls” will benefit the Bikur Holim Committee of Congregation Beth Ahavah@Rodeph Shalom. *Bikur holim* means “visiting the sick,” and an act of *bikur holim* is considered a mitzvah. At BA, we have always been mindful that our responsibility to an LGBT congregation may, at times, include caring for members who, because they are LGBT, don’t have the same kind of family ties as are found in most mainstream congregations and who consequently depend on BA to fulfill needs which might otherwise be met by a family of origin. The Bikur Holim Committee at BA@RS proudly accepts this responsibility and will always try to perform this mitzvah with dignity and compassion for all of our members.

**Joey & His Girls • January 16, 2010 • Payment deadline: January 6th**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

No. attending: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20.00/per person = \_\_\_\_\_ (total enclosed)

Please return with your payment (check or money order only) to:

Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom, Attn: Joey & His Girls, 615 N. Broad Street, Philadelphia, PA 19123

## LGBT EXPERIENCE AT URJ BIENNIAL

by Nurit Shein

Attending a URJ biennial is unlike any other conference I attend. There is an immediate sense of “belonging” and regardless of whether you know people or not, you always strike up a conversation on the escalator, in the hallway, waiting for a computer to check your e-mail, or coming out of a session. By the end of the five days, faces become familiar, I have shared an uplifting moment with someone, and I feel surrounded by community. At the same time, it is a community in which I always need to make my “otherness” visible. Whenever I meet another attendee, I stress the fact that I am on the board of BA – The LGBT synagogue, or that my partner is Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell.

This year I was presenting, and the word PRESENTER, which was on my nametag, often served as an opening for “So, what are you presenting on?” and an opportunity to talk about the LGBT Jewish experience. The session I was part of was called “Making your Congregation a Welcoming Place for LGBT Jews”. The other panelists were Rabbi Michael Dolgin of Temple Sinai, Toronto, and Dr. Joel Kushner, who served as one of the editors of *Kulanu*, and the Director for the Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation Center at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. The room was full and the conversation lively. Dr. Kushner presented the work done by the URJ over time to welcome LGBT individuals into synagogues – the steps that can lead to full inclusion and to the visibility of LGBT members in a congregation. Rabbi Dolgin talked about the process his congregation went through regarding performing gay marriages. I spoke about the personal experience of LGBT folks– of what would make me, and others, feel part of a community, visible, and accepted. I talked about how as LGBT individuals we have known rejection in many forms – be it our family, our friends, our employers, and strangers. Therefore, for many of us the possibility and fear of an emotional and spiritual rejection keeps us from even coming through the door. I spoke about how the process of “coming out” is life long, and how each of us needs a safe space, so that OUR Beth Ahava, will always be necessary. And I also spoke about the integration of our BA into RS and into the larger Jewish community.

In the Q&A part of the session we heard from people who are truly trying to open the hearts and

minds of their congregations to diversity, but we also heard the hurt and pain of LGBT individuals who are still on the outside, feeling unwelcome, invisible, and silenced.

In addition to this session, another high point was the poster display. In one of the hallways, through which biennial participants passed every day, were a series of posters describing a wide range of award winning programs of synagogues across the country. I was particularly proud that the process of welcoming BA into RS was celebrated by one of these posters. Our successful “experiment” is now providing a strong model for congregations across America and Canada. Another highlight for me was the opportunity to study with Rabbi Norman Cohen, who was recently a scholar in residence at RS.

Rabbi Yaakov ben Korshai (second century) said, “This world is like a foyer before the world to come. Prepare yourself in the foyer so that you will be able to enter the banquet hall.” (Pirke Avot 4:16). Attending the URJ Biennial with 3,500 other Jews gave me the clarity of the importance of the work we are doing here at BA @ RS. Let us help make this *prosdor*, our congregation, this foyer, a place where all images are reflected, where all can feel that they have found a safe and welcoming spiritual home.

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Front, L-R: BA members, Jerry Silverman, Jeff Strauss and Nurit Shein accept Epstein Communicate Award on behalf of BA @ RS, URJ Biennial, Toronto, Canada, November, 2009. Back: Dale Glasser Peter Weidhorn on the far left and Rabbi Yoffie on the far right

**CONGREGATION BETH AHAVAH  
@ RODEPH SHALOM**

615 North Broad Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19123-2495

Phone: **215.923.2003**  
Fax: 215.627.1313  
Email: [bethahavah@rodephshalom.org](mailto:bethahavah@rodephshalom.org)

A MEMBER OF...



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