



The Shofar

Congregation Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom Newsletter

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

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BA Shabbat Services

TBA

Watch for date and time of next service in a BA@RS email.

Yahrzeits



June 4th
David Jason Finn
Beloved kin of
Larry Finn

June 8th
Paul Ehrlich
Beloved father of
Phyllis Ehrlich

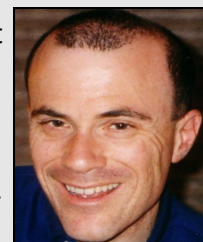
June 18th
26 Sivan 5718
Maurice Grabin
Beloved father of
Minna Davis

June 21st
29 Sivan 5738
Hannah Hollander
Beloved grandmother of
Gloria Becker

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Member,

Those of you who made the annual meeting to elect new board members heard me say how grateful I am for everyone's contributions over these last two years as president. A quick story to illustrate my point: a few days ago a member wrote that this member is considering discontinuation of an administrative task that this member has done for several years. I wrote back that whatever the final decision is that I and the rest of the Board deeply appreciate the work this member has done for the synagogue this past year and in years before. The member wrote back with surprise at my reaction because the task wasn't such a "big deal" (or so the member thought.) The way I see it everything that anyone does for the synagogue is a big deal. That's because it takes actions on everyone's part to keep the synagogue alive and well.



May 22 was the celebration of Yom Yerushalayim, the 42nd anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem as a result of the Six-Day War in 1967. Clearly the peoples of West and East Jerusalem (as well as the rest of the Middle East) still see spiritual reunification as only a dream. One of my main tasks in a post -Letitia Street Beth Ahavah was to ensure and facilitate our warm welcome into Congregation Rodeph Shalom in an environment that encourages us to be ourselves. This too is a process of spiritual reunification as we acknowledge that Rodeph Shalom as well as many parts of mainstream Judaism are at various points along the path to being warm, welcoming environments for LGBT people. The need for the LGBT synagogue is beginning to disappear but the desire to hold onto our history and identity as LGBT Jews and members of Congregation Beth Ahavah remains. So too many of us are individually on a path of spiritual reunification with mainstream Judaism that heretofore rejected us. The measure of our success has changed from how many people join Beth Ahavah as a place of refuge to keeping in sacred trust that history and identity while being "united in spirit and sharing a sacred home" with Congregation Rodeph Shalom. This new goal I believe is a much harder task.

We've nevertheless made tremendous progress during these last two years but there is still more work to be done. We've felt left out of Rodeph Shalom at times and warmly welcomed at others. BA and RS are continuing to work together towards that day when all of us

BA Board Meeting

1st meeting of our newly elected Board!



Wednesday
June 24th ☆ 6:30 PM
All BA members welcome

DONATIONS



Jerry Silverman

In honor of Jeff Strauss being named President of BA@RS.

OOPS!



MAY 2009 SHOFAR

- Malcolm's last name is Lazin.
- Ned Hanover and Rich Pardys helped staff the table at the Equality Forum along with Jerry Silverman and Jeff Strauss.



PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

will feel not only warmly welcomed but spiritually reunited and connected as we take our place at the table of the wonderful feast of traditions that God has given us known collectively as Judaism.

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as your president these last two years. My very best wishes to Jeffrey Strauss as your new president, Minna Davis as your administrative vice president, Joan Levin as your programming vice president, and Eve Miller as your secretary/treasurer. My best wishes also go out to our newly elected board members Melanie Birger-Bray, Nurit Levi Shein, and Evan Weiner; and to Jocelyn Block with whom I now share the title of "past president." A huge thank you also goes out to Jerry Silverman (one of the founders of the congregation), Donald Friedman and Shelly Komito who have worked so hard on this board and boards before for the congregation. Your years of service are deeply appreciated.

I'm looking forward to continuing to serve on the board under Jeffrey's leadership. He is well-prepared, including invaluable experience serving on the Board of Trustees of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in an ex-officio capacity for Beth Ahavah for the last year. Jeffrey, you have all my love and support as you begin your presidency.

If you are not already please consider becoming an active member of the congregation. Start small, just come for an event or a service and see what happens. I think you'll be pleased. Each and every one of you is valuable and we are working to include each of you in our commitment to being a warm and welcoming congregation to everyone for years to come. May we continue to work together with happiness and good health to serve Congregation Beth Ahavah, Congregation Rodeph Shalom, and the greater Philadelphia Jewish and LGBT communities.

With my very best wishes for success,

Ned

Ned Hanover, Past President

PHILADELPHIA JUDAISM EXAMINER IS LAUNCHED by Joysa Winter

If interested in Judaism and the Philly Jewish community then check out this new online blog at www.examiner.com. The column covers upcoming community events, shares creative ideas on celebrating the holidays, and offers itineraries for Jewish road trips. The blog's author is a local writer and rabbinical student.

Some examples of recent postings include:

- The synagogue in Eastern State Penitentiary
- Israeli poet Lea Goldberg on Mother's Day
- Jews in the slave trade: fact or fiction?

Best of all, it's free! Visit www.examiner.com and type in "Philadelphia Judaism Examiner" in the search bar.



BA ANNOUNCES NEW MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom is pleased to announce a new membership category. An individual who identifies as Jewish and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning or intersex and is a member in good standing at another Jewish congregation in the Delaware Valley, can now also join Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom as an ASSOCIATE MEMBER for \$100 per person. Associate members, just like Beth Ahavah regular members, have full membership privileges at both Beth Ahavah and Rodeph Shalom.

A prospective associate member is required to submit a letter from their primary congregation, verifying the prospective associate member's membership in good standing along with their application and check. For further information and/or to join, contact Beth Ahavah at (215) 923-2003, or contact Catherine Fisher, Membership Director, or Roy Feinberg, Executive Director, at the Rodeph Shalom office, (215) 627-6747.

REJECT ANTI-ISRAELI APARTHEID MEETING, 'QUEERS' URGED

May 21, 2009 JTA

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- A Canadian Jewish human rights group is calling on the LGBT community to reject a "queers" anti-Israel apartheid program in Toronto. "Queers Against Israeli Apartheid" is being held Saturday to "reignite Toronto's queer community in the fight against apartheid," according to an announcement on the Ontario Public Interest Research Group Web site.

"Israel has now begun to frame itself as a tolerant, queer-positive democracy," the announcement read. "This can never be reality under occupation."

The keynote speaker is El-Farouk Khaki, co-founder of Salaam: Queer Muslim Community and Pride 2009 Grand Marshall.

B'nai Brith Canada called on members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community to reject the program.

"It is the height of irony to single out democratic Israel in this fashion when it is the only country in the Middle East that guarantees the fundamental freedoms of all its citizens without distinction," said Frank Dimant, the executive vice president of B'nai Brith Canada. "In stark contrast, the rights of the LGBT community in neighboring Arab countries are routinely trampled on.

"Members of Canada's LGBT community who are constantly battling discrimination should be mindful not to become part & parcel of the anti-Israel machinery that continues to churn out hateful & divisive propaganda."

Beth Ahavah @ Rodeph Shalom

presents

Folksbiene Yiddish

Theatre Troupe

Mama's Lokshn Kugel

Sunday • June 14th • 3:00 PM

Rodeph Shalom's Teller Auditorium



Join us for an afternoon of classic songs and sketches from the Yiddish theatre. The Folksbiene has performed in New York City for over 90 years and is the only professional Yiddish theatre in America. In 2004, Motl Didner, a young director and actor, assembled and organized a group of young people with a background in Yiddish into a troupe under the auspices of the Folksbiene. This group travels throughout the New York and New Jersey region bringing Yiddish theatre to an audience that knows little about it or has never attended a performance. The shows are done with supertitles so those with no Yiddish background can understand what is being said and taking place. The young actors of The Troupe have all studied Yiddish and even speak it amongst themselves when not performing.

The 75 minute show is billed as a travelling Yiddish Revue. There are six actors who draw on the rhythms of Yiddish literature, humor, and music. The show has a vaudeville style that is entertaining, humorous, and educational about Yiddish culture. The performers all have a sense of pride about the language and love to speak it. They regard performing Yiddish as an important cultural mission.

There is a citywide interest in this event. The Folksbiene Troupe has agreed to do a talkback after the show to answer audience questions.

Tickets cost \$10 per person, payable at the door.

*The Troupe has requested that no children under 10 years old attend.**

Reservations are required.

Please call Congregation Beth Ahavah at 215-923-2003 and leave your name, phone number and email address.



This event has been generously funded in part by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia through the Kehillah Center City.

MEET YOUR NEW BA BOARD MEMBERS-AT-LARGE



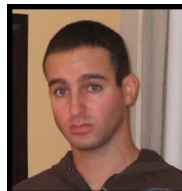
Jocelyn Block, joined BA in 1997. She has served as a member of the Long Range Planning Committee and was then elected to the Board of Directors in 2000. Since then she has held the offices of Secretary, Vice President of Programming, and President during the transition and move from Lititia Street to Rodeph Shalom. She has also served as chair of publicity from 2002 until May of 2009. Along with Shelly Komito, she is presently hoping to revive the Women's Chavurah, and hopes to continue to appear in every Purim spiel, as she has thus far, considering herself a lifetime member of the BA Players. In 2008, she was honored with the Pennsylvania Region of URJ's Megillat Kavod Award which through her hard work, passion and commitment to BA she had undoubtedly earned.

Melanie Birger-Bray has been a member of BA since 2006 and represented BA at the annual wine tasting event to help recruit new members. She is an assistant for the American Technion Society Eastern Seaboard Region, a religious school teacher, and was co-chair of last years CA-JE33. Mel is married to Hadar Birger-Bray and is currently living in the states, currently in Blue Bell, after 3 years in Israel.



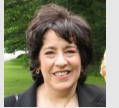
Nurit Shein has been a member of BA since her arrival in Philadelphia and is involved in the city's Jewish life through synagogue, federation, and grassroots work. She has a long history of activism on behalf of the Jewish and LGBT communities which she hopes to bring to her board work at BA. Nurit, a native of Israel, served with distinction in the Israel Defense Forces, retiring as a Lt. Colonel. She came to the US as the West Coast Education and Culture Director of the World Zionist Organization, where she worked to advance Israel studies, teachers' training and Hebrew Ulpans. In 1994 Nurit moved to Philadelphia with her partner, Rabbi Sue Levi Elwell, where she is the executive director of Mazzoni Center — the region's only LGBT specific health organization, since 1995.

Evan Weiner first began coming to BA in college 10 or so years ago and was immediately impressed by the congregation's warmth and fervor. Since that time, he has been proud to call himself a BA member and honored to be a member of its board. Evan spends his work days (and nights) as a pediatric emergency medicine physician at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and as an assistant professor at Drexel University College of Medicine. In his "spare" time, he enjoys travel, history, tennis, film, piano, and nightlife.



PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Effective June 1st, I'll relinquish the title I've held for two years—that of immediate past president—to our new immediate past president, Ned Hanover. This is as it should be, and I couldn't be more pleased that when the new Board of Directors convenes in June, there will be no fewer than three—three!—brand new Board members. Two of the four members of the Executive Committee will be serving as officers for the first time.



We will also be ushering in a newly-constituted Presidents Council. Anyone who has ever been a president of BA and is currently a member in good standing is automatically a member of the Presidents Council. This will enable those who are new to the Board and new to leadership to benefit not only from the guidance of the immediate past president and continuing Board members, but also from the experience of those who have led our congregation for the past thirty-four years.

All of this makes me *kvell*. More about why in a bit.

Let's talk about coming out and gay pride.

While you're considering whether or not that was the worst segue in *Shofar* history, consider this as well: over the course of the past several months, I've used my status as immediate past president to speak on a subject which is very close to my heart: our affiliation with RS and the continuing need for a LGBT synagogue. Since this is an issue I faced as the actual president, it seems appropriate that it should be an issue for my past presidency as well. Last fall, Jerry Silverman and I spoke at the World Congress of

PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

LGBT Jews Eastern Conference on that very subject. The particular focus of our discussion was our affiliation with RS and how, for us, the need to preserve BA's identity as a LGBT congregation was paramount. In February, Jerry and I had a conference call with some of the members of Bet Tikvah, the LGBT synagogue in Pittsburgh, where they're considering affiliating with their host synagogue, coincidentally named Rodef Shalom, as we have with our RS, or, alternatively, remaining an independent entity with tenant status.

While we settled this issue for ourselves in 2007, when we signed our affiliation agreement with RS, our mission is ongoing, albeit slightly different. Both the Reform and Reconstructionist movements have gone beyond being merely welcoming and have embraced marriage equality and the ordination of LGBT clergy, so the necessity of having to create a safe space in which we can worship without fear of rejection by mainstream Judaism is gone. What remains, however, is the continuing need to stay visible, and this is a need which shouldn't be underestimated, because no matter how far we've come and how integrated we are in mainstream society, the law doesn't regard us as fully equal to our straight fellow congregants, and the lack of equality doesn't pertain only to marriage. Gay men and lesbians still can't serve openly in the military, and even with a gay-friendly president in the White House, the military discharges based on homosexual conduct—which can consist of saying that one is gay—continue at an alarming rate.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

MEET YOUR NEW BA@RS BOARD OFFICERS

Jeffrey Strauss, President, has been a long standing member of BA and has served in various board positions and on a variety of committees, including the ritual committee, real estate committee, high holiday committee, and nominating committee. Jeff has been committed to BA synagogue life for the past twenty years and wants to insure that it is a place for all LGBT Jews to call home and make life long friends as he has. He is a banker by trade and lives in Roxborough.



Minna Davis, Vice President of Administration, has been coming to BA since 2000. She has served the Jewish community in a number of ways—various positions with JCCs in Scranton and Chicago, and on the board of her previous congregation in Scranton. Currently she works as the Director of Counseling for Laurel House, a domestic violence program in Montgomery County. Minna lives with her partner of eight years, Janie Storman, in Plymouth Meeting.



Joan Levin, Vice President of Programming, is a native Philadelphian. Until BA, Joan found zero in Judaism for a LGB person, let alone a T. BA made a significant contribution to Joan by its very existence. Upon joining BA, Joan was a wounded individual, seeking spiritual renewal. It was at BA that she began to heal. Over time she learned what a Jewish community could mean to her, and all LGBTs. Slowly, she gained new friends and a new sense of belonging to something Jewish *and* gay. Four years ago she studied again and had a Bat Mitzvah along with a fellow congregant. Joan joined the "infamous" BA Players and she says, "Purim became more fun than ever before." In her position as Programming VP, she hopes to effectively provide the congregation with interesting and creative events. This is a position she is well suited for given her extensive experience planning events in the past.



Eve Miller, Secretary/Treasurer, is a veteran board member. This is her third two-year term and her first as an officer. Previously she edited the Shofar and has supported many a BA event. Her most prized position has been as a regular BA Player for the annual Purim Shpiel. Bookkeeper by day, Eve will serve BA well in her new role.



Ned Hanover, Immediate Past President, continues on the Board, although not as an officer. Ned has been a member of Beth Ahavah since 1993, serving on the Board for a total of 6 years. He has served as VP for Programming, VP for Administration, and President. He has also chaired the BA Men's Club, organizing fabulous monthly brunches at local restaurants. In 1998 Ned also founded the Men's Social Group of KOP, an independent social group for gay men in the Western Suburbs. In 1994 BA was an especially important source of support when he returned to graduate school at U of P. While at Penn Ned volunteered for the Gay & Lesbian Peer Counseling Services at Penguin Place (now the William Way Community Center.) Ned, who lives in Mount Laurel, NJ, currently works as a licensed clinical social worker in PA and NJ providing in-home and in-school psychotherapy to at-risk children and adolescents.



PAST PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED

And this issue—visibility—brings me back to coming out and gay pride. Without coming out there can be no visibility, and without visibility there can be no pride, and pride, for LGBT folks, isn't just something we celebrate in June (and May and October, in Philadelphia), it's what we feel every time one of us does something which advances our whole community. As Jews, we grew up with "Jewish pride," that shared *kvelling* over finding out that certain people, usually celebrities, are or were Jewish. There's a flip side to that, of course, as those of us of a certain age remember how we felt when Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald, or when knowledge of Bernard Madoff's major league *gonif* status came to light.

As gay people, we also *kvell*. I will always remember the date Ellen DeGeneres' coming out episode aired on television (April 30, 1997), and how thrilled I was when Martina Navratilova won her ninth Wimbledon singles championship, a record that remains unbroken. Earlier this year, when Dustin Lance Black won his Oscar for writing the screenplay of *Milk*, I *kvelled*, and every night, when I watch Rachel Maddow on MSNBC, in all her matter-of-fact butch dykeyness, I *kvell*. This is gay pride, and unless we come out, unless we're visible, it can't exist.

And that brings me back, finally, to *kvelling* about the new faces on BA's Board of Directors and Executive Committee. At a time when the debate concerning LGBT synagogues revolves around their continuing vitality, we have demonstrated, in what I believe is a decisive way, that the need for a LGBT congregation is ongoing. The infusion of new blood on the Board and on the Executive Committee ensures that new voices will be heard and the mission of BA, as the LGBT synagogue of the Delaware Valley, will continue.

To our brand new Board members, Melanie, Evan and Nurit, I offer a heartfelt welcome. To our first-time officers, Minna and Joan, I offer my congratulations. To our returning secretary, Eve, I offer my thanks. To our new president, Jeff, I offer my encouragement and support. I look forward to serving with all of you this year.

And to our departing Board members Shelly, Jerry and Don—past presidents all—I say: not so fast...

B'shalom,

Jocie

COMING
SOON

Book Reading & Discussion By Israeli Author Evan Fallenberg, July 8, 2009

(Wednesday Evening at RS)



Mr. Fallenberg is the author of the novel *Light Fell*, a wonderful story of gay love in the Orthodox Israeli world.

Light Fell has won the American Library Association's Barbara Gittings Stonewall Book Award for Literature and has been shortlisted for the National Jewish Book Award in Fiction; the Edmund White Award for debut fiction; and the Lambda Literary Award for debut fiction. Interviews with Evan have appeared in Haaretz, Washington Blade, Israel 21C, Nextbook, La Bloga and on WEWS TV News (Cleveland) and now YouTube.

The Jewish Book Council has named *Light Fell* as its Weekly Recommendation for Fiction (February 2, 2008).



For more information about Evan Fallenberg, go to:

<http://www.evanfallenberg.com/home.html>).

Watch your mail for confirmation of further details regarding exact time. This one you won't want to miss!



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**BA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
& CONTACTS**

President	Jeffrey Strauss
Vice President Administration	Minna Davis
Vice President Programming	Joan Levin
Secretary/Treasurer	Eve Miller
Immediate Past President	Ned Hanover
Director	Jocelyn Block
Director	Melanie Birger-Bray
Director	Nurit Shein
Director	Evan Weiner

OTHER BETH AHAVAH CONTACTS

Center City Kehillah	Don Friedman
Education	
Membership	
Men's Club	
Newsletter	Minna Davis
Publicity	
Ritual	
URJ/WRJ Representative	Shelly Komito
Web Maven	Leslie Polss
Women's Chavurah	Shelly Komito Jocelyn Block

**RODEPH SHALOM CONTACTS
Office: (215) 627-6747**

President	Fred Strober
Rabbi	William I. Kuhn
Rabbi	Jill L. Maderer
Rabbi	Michael G. Holzman
Rabbi Emeritus	Alan D. Fuchs
Executive Director	Roy H. Feinberg
Membership Director	Catherine Fischer
Religious School Office	Elizabeth Glass
Rabbinic Assistant	Myrna Merback
Communications Director	Carol Perloff