The World Congress of GLBT Jews
כרשק גא'אה
Keshet Ga’avah

High Holidays 5781 / 2020

Shana tovah
Shanah tovah
President's Message

During these Days of Awe, Return to Yourself

Goldy Goldberg; President, The World Congress of GLBT Jews

Your commitment to community and justice has remained strong during this uncertain time, and for that I thank you. But, has your commitment to yourself received the same measure? Have you found joy in your life? Has your life brought joy to others? These are the two questions ancient Egyptians believed they had to answer when their souls transcended to heaven. They believed their answers would determine whether they were able to enter heaven.

As we leave Elul and enter into the Days of Awe, we focus our attention on forgiveness, repentance and return. Most often we focus our energy outward. We take stock of mistakes we've made, people we've wronged, promises broken and spiritual shortcomings. We ask those we've mistreated for forgiveness. We ask G-d for forgiveness. But, as we resolve to do better, do we remember ourselves?

This year, I challenge you to also reflect inward and think about how you have treated yourself? Have you chosen a life full of meaning and compassion, beauty and joy? Have you lived your authentic self? Have you asked yourself for forgiveness for the wrongs committed by you against you? Have you forgiven yourself?

As you resolve to do better, make a plan for yourself. Choose something specific. Something that's important to your life. Determine how you will measure success. Reach so that your expectations for yourself are attainable and high enough for you to truly savor the joy of success. Lastly, pick a timeframe in which to complete your objective. By setting smart goals you will be able to return to the path you seek.

Remember, you are an important and invaluable part of our community. We cannot move forward alone as the reality of the past six months continues. Together, we each can achieve more. As you leave Elul and enter the Days of Awe know we are with you. Know that together we can shelter in the shadow of each other’s wings.

Stay safe and be strong,

בראשון

goldy
A hallmark of the High Holiday season is the prayer *Avinu Malkenu,* “Our Father, Our King.” But the very chapter which describes God as “your Father” (Deuteronomy 32) also declares that this God “convulsed in labor for you,” “gave birth to you,” and “suckled you.”

In my new book “The Name: A History of the Dual-Gendered Hebrew Name for God” I tell the story of YHWH, the so-called “lost” name of God. In the past, some guessed this name might have been pronounced Jehovah or Yahweh. But I believe the evidence is overwhelming that the name was composed of the Hebrew pronouns “he” and “she,” spelled in reverse. In short, YHWH signifies a dual-gendered deity.

Dual-gendered deities were not uncommon in the ancient near east. But when the claim was first made that the God of the Hebrew Bible is a dual-gendered deity — the claim was made in the 16th century by the French scholar Guillaume Postel in a work entitled *Le Trésor des Propheties de l'Univers* — the Vatican made sure that the work did not see the light of day. When the claim was made again in the 19th century by the Italian scholar Michelangelo Lanci, Lanci’s work was banned immediately upon publication. That is its own interesting story, as Father Lanci was the Vatican Librarian.


And now, in my book *The Name,* I lay out my most comprehensive argument for the dual-gendered God. I hope you’ll read the book, about which more information is to be found on my website [https://www.rabbimarksameth.com/](https://www.rabbimarksameth.com/). Please let me know what you think.

To the leaders of the member organizations of “The World Congress of GLBT Jews: Keshet Ga’avah”: Please consider inviting me to address your group over Zoom — it would be my honor.

[Wonderful!–the Editor]

May the coming New Year be an increasingly good year — and an increasingly sweet year — for Jews and our allies of every denomination, for Blacks (Jewish and otherwise) of every jurisdiction, for all oppressed peoples in every city, state, and nation, of all ages, persuasions, circumstances. . . and genders.
The Transgender Day of Remembrance, TDOR, was set aside to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28th, 1998 kicked off the “Remembering Our Dead” web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester’s murder — like most anti-transgender murder cases — has yet to be solved.

Argentina—One percent of state jobs must be reserved for transgender people, according to a decree published in the Official Gazette.

"Every transvestite, transsexual or transgender person has the right to decent and productive employment in equal and satisfactory working conditions and protected against unemployment without discrimination for motives of gender identity or its expression," reads the text of the decree.

Apart from suffering discrimination and stigmatisation, members of the trans community has an average life expectancy of 36 years, according to studies.
Studies by the Asociación de Travestis, Transsexuales y Transgéneros de Argentina (ATTTA) also reveal that 90 percent of their community is outside the formal job market while almost 95 percent "find themselves in situations of prostitution on the extreme fringes of society."

The measure was presented as a "positive action to begin the reparation of the indignities committed historically."

The decree establishes a voluntary registry for job applicants who must show that they are "suitable." This registry certifying the job skills of the applicants will be placed at the disposal of state agencies to fill their vacancies.


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Pride in the Livingroom: Jewmos Edition

Jarod Rhine-Davis is a 26 year old gay Jew from Melbourne, Australia, who recently had the opportunity to interview the World Congress' very own Steven Joachim as part of a project called Pride in the Livingroom Jewmos Edition. In 2020, Jarod has been guest speaker at Pride Shabbats hosted at Temple Beth Israel and Emanuel Synagogue, was featured on a TV special about 'Coming Out With Faith', and has hosted Zoom Pride Shabbats through his LGBT Jewish Facebook community Jewmos. Jarod found that Pride in the Livingroom offered a new way for him to connect to his global mishbocha of LGBT Jews.

There is an initiative founded by Israeli LGBT taskforce HaAgudah called Pride in the Livingroom, that encourages LGBT Jews to share their unique personal stories in memory of the 2009 "Tel Aviv Gay Center" shooting victims, and the Jerusalem Pride parade stabbing in 2015. The project aims to facilitate empathy and connection between communities, while spreading common values of love, acceptance, tolerance, and "Tikun Olam".

While previous events have been held face-to-face in Israel, with participants inviting guests into their actual living rooms, HaAgudah became a bit more creative during the Covid-19 era and opened up the project to participants all around the world to virtually welcome us into their living room over Zoom.

Jarod took part in this 2020 HaAgudah project, and was inspired to bring the concept back to Jewmos to expand the project by sharing even more stories. With HaAgudah’s blessing, Jarod had been able to interview guests from around the world, and offer a stage for them to share their truth with the world – their journey of discovery and making peace with every piece of themselves.

These stories are not foreign to Jarod, who has had his own journey upon realizing he was gay in a Jewish context. He talks about being consumed by the darkness when he was younger, but nowadays making a conscious choice to offer love and light into the world. He speaks about holding tight a flickering candle and spreading its warmth to help cast away the shadows of the past.

He feels that Jews and LGBT people have a lot in common – we both know what it’s like to have to fight for our right to exist. Our history are seeped in trauma – overcoming struggles and ultimately finding strength in our survival. He thinks this is a beautiful opportunity for our communities to come together and support each other and is grateful that Steven offered to be a part of this project.

Feel free to view Steven’s video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bgt3qztyVuU.
One Leaf, Every Day—by Dan Perlman

Taking on reading a long, intricate novel can be a daunting task, especially if you’re expected to not just read it, but study and discuss it. When it popped into my awareness that a new cycle of the *Daf Yomi* was starting at the beginning of 2020, an idea began to form. Like many Americans of my generation, I was brought up in a Jewish household that started off somewhat leaning Conservative, but moved more and more towards Reform as the years went on. I knew the Talmud existed, occasionally our rabbi would drop a pearl of wisdom into a sermon or conversation. But I never studied it.

It was enough to have learned the basics of the Torah, and a bit from other books of the bible. The Talmud was relegated to the world of yeshiva boys and *Yentl*. It was in ancient Hebrew and Aramaic. An English version didn't exist until 2012, just in time for the last *Daf Yomi* cycle, even that was just a “beta version”, and its 22 volumes rang in with a price tag in the thousands of dollars. But this time around, taking on studying “a page a day”, or to be pedantic, “a leaf a day”, since it’s two pages back to back, of the 2,711 leaves, had the advantage of the online treasure trove of Jewish texts, *Sefaria*, making the entire thing available for free. There’s even an app.

I’m not particularly religious. I have my moments. Upfront, I wanted to approach what I “knew” to be the rabbinic laws around the Torah from the perspective of a cultural observer. Assuming it to be dry reading, I figured a week or two into the project I’d probably abandon it, with a shrug, hey, gave it a try. Within a day or so, I was hooked. Imagine, if you will, a group of rabbis, sages, priests, and wise men, sitting around, day after day, for years, starting off with a discussion of a legal point, and going off on the tangents that any group of intimate friends might. And someone is writing it all down. All of it. Every digression, every one-off comment.

What starts with a point of law leads into tangents on topics as varied as food and cooking, construction, sorcery and demons, and sex. A lot of sex. They have provided fodder for a running daily twitter-ish commentary that I’ve been publishing that runs the gamut from recipes for fig cakes; whether Jesus’ (yes, that one) cooking skills are not up to par; bathhouse etiquette; appropriate gifts to the mothers of young boys you’ve molested; to how to cruise the marketplace and not look “too gay”. It’s been going on nine months now, twenty minutes or so over my morning coffee, and I’ve found myself fascinated with a look back at the culture of our ancestors from centuries, if not millennia, past. Only around seven more years to go.

Dan is an author, sommelier, chef, and restaurateur living in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Hopefully his highly rated "closed-door" restaurant Casa Saltshaker will open again soon, post pandemic.
GIN–Not a Martini, Global Interfaith Network

GIN is an organization that "promotes safety and inclusion for all people of faith and spirituality, especially for people that often are discriminated against on the basis of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression. GIN advocates for safe spaces, policy inclusion and for the support and acceptance of all sexual and gender minorities for whom their faith is an important life-giving source."

GIN, https://gin-ssogie.org/about-us/, hosts religious symbols from about three dozen religions on the website.

Lior's intro on the site says: Jacq Carver has been a queer rights activist since they came out in the late 1970's and has participated in numerous protest and equal rights movements in the US, the UK and Europe. They believe passionately in equal rights for people all sexes, genders, gender identities, and expressions and have, in one way or another, worked toward achieving equality and acceptance for several decades. They also believe that creating and maintaining Jewish spaces that welcome and embrace LGBTIQ+ people is tikkun olam - repairing the world.


Is it Kosher?

First funeral held using ‘living coffin’ made of mushroom fibre

Nomadic Boys, [http://nomadicboys.com](http://nomadicboys.com), said in their September 2020, newsletter that Tel Aviv has the world's 7th best pride (beach party), and is the world's 9th most gay friendly city. Here's a video from 2018. And while there is no Eurovision Song Contest in 2020, the first out, transgender contestant in Eurovision history, 43rd edition—and the first and only trans winner—is from Israel, Dana International in 1998.

The World Congress: *Keshet Ga’avah - Rainbow Pride*

**Our Vision**

Our vision is a world where Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other Jews of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQIA+) worldwide can enjoy free and fulfilling lives.

**An Organization for Organizations**

We strive to be a worldwide voice for LGBTQIA+ Jews, to support, inspire, and strength local groups, to foster a sense of community among diverse individuals and organizations.

Join or donate at our [website](http://nomadicboys.com) (preferred). *World Congress (WCGLBTJ), P.O. Box 23379, Washington, DC 20026-3379, U.S.A.* If by check or money order, make your payment payable to the World Congress (WCGLBTJ) in US dollars, please.
Here are some organizations, links, or events that may be of interest to you:

- **The World Congress**: Keshet Ga’avah [rainbow pride]  
  [http://glbtjews.org](http://glbtjews.org) and [https://www.facebook.com/glbtjews/](https://www.facebook.com/glbtjews/)
- **Multiple dates and locations**: [https://limmud.org](https://limmud.org). (A Queer Limmud may be coming soon.)
- **OutRight Action International**: [https://outrightinternational.org](https://outrightinternational.org)
- **International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association**: [https://ilga.org](https://ilga.org)
- **Not Free to Desist**: [https://www.notfreetodesist.org/](https://www.notfreetodesist.org/)
- **Transgender Day of Remembrance**: [https://tdor.info](https://tdor.info)

Upcoming Events hosted by Member Organizations (let us add yours)

- **Congregation Bet Haverim in Atlanta, Georgia, USA**: Join us for High Holy Day services and programs, which will all be online. More information is available on our website at [congregationbethaverim.org/](http://congregationbethaverim.org/)
- **Beit Haverim in Paris, France**: We will host a seder for the holiday for a limited number of people who are alone. Learn more about us at [beit-haverim.com/](http://beit-haverim.com/)
- **Bet Mishpachah in Washington, DC, USA**: Visit [betmish.org](http://betmish.org) for more information.
- **Congregation Beit Simchat Torah (NYC)**: [https://cbst.org](https://cbst.org)

My name is Steven Joachim. I'm a Texan living in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I volunteer as the Communications Coordinator and Treasurer for the World Congress: *Keshet Ga’avah* [rainbow pride.]

We have a bi-monthly newsletter, a website, and a Facebook page.

The Steering Committee

**Goldy Goldberg** (she/her/ours), **President**, USA  
**Gustavo Michanie** (he/him/his), **Vice President**, Argentina  
**Steven Joachim** (he/him/his), **Treasurer & Communications**, Argentina  
**Vacant—great volunteer opportunity**, **Secretary**  
**Lior (Jacq) Carver** (they/them/their), **At Large - Eastern Hemisphere**, Netherlands  
**Marco Fiammelli** (he/him/his), **At Large - Eastern Hemisphere**, Italy  
**Ian Brown** (he/him/his), **At Large, Western Hemisphere**, USA  
**Laura Weinstein** (she/her/hers), **At Large, Western Hemisphere**, Columbia  
**Shep Wahnon** (he/him/his), **Advisor, Cultural Inclusion and Diversity**, USA