The Stonewall Shabbat Seder

"I grew up being told all these stories about being Jewish. That's part of my tribal consciousness. But...I realize no one tells our gay stories except for ourselves."

-Andrew Ramer

June 27, 1997
23 Sivan, 5757
AN IMPORTANT NOTE ON LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND THE WORD “QUEER”

There are many words used in the history of our cultures as Jews and as Americans to describe those who express their love physically with same-gender partners. “Homosexual” is a clinical word coined in the 19th century and focuses only on sexual behavior. In use as slang since the 1920’s, “gay” was adopted by the activists of the 60’s to communicate that something over and above the choice of sex partner was important. “Lesbian” is a reference to the island Lesbos, home of the ancient Greek poet Sappho.

In recent years, younger members of our community have reclaimed the epithet “queer” for many reasons — among them pride in difference rather than a desire to assimilate; the desire to include both women and men with one word. Just as there were those in the 60s who didn’t like the word gay, and preferred what they felt was the more dignified word “homosexual,” today there are those who don’t like the word “queer,” remembering it as a hurtful taunt and preferring the more widely accepted word “gay.” In this Haggadah, we use all these words, though we use the word queer a great deal — and this is done consciously in the hope that we will all come to realize the ways in which we are all branded as queer, and in the hope that we see how we can all use this in our search for connection with the Divine and with our various communities.
Song: Hineh Ma Tov
Hineh mah tov umah na'ım, shevet ahím gam yahad

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together.

Contemplation of the Shabbat Candles

Reader:
As we bathe in the light of these candles, we remember all the candles we've lit as Jews and as Queers. Shabbat candles. Yahrtzeit candles. Candles at AIDS vigils. And at Take Back the Night Marches. As we share in the light of these candles, we rededicate the flame each of us carries within, that small reflection of the Creator's light that is ours to use as a beacon in our work of tikun olam. We rededicate this small spark that we can use as a match to give light to the hopes and dreams of all people.

Together we read:

Blessed is the Match

Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.
Blessed is the flame that burns
in the secret fastness of the heart.
Blessed is the heart with strength
  to stop beating for honor's sake.
Blessed is the match consumed in kindling flame.

-Hannah Senesh, Yugoslavia, May 1944

Opening Chant of Presence and Commitment to work of Tikun Olam.

Leader:
Hareini m'kabeil (m'kabelet) alei mitzvat haborei v'ahavta l'rei'akha kamokha

All Together:
Hareini m'kabeil (m'kabelet) alei mitzvat haborei v'ahavta l'rei'akha kamokha

I hereby accept the obligation of fulfilling my Creator's mitzvah in the Torah:
Love your neighbor as yourself.
Kavannah

Tonight we gather to fulfill a new mitzvah by making sacred the celebration of a Jewish Queer Pride Shabbat Seder. We are not only, as Jews, celebrating pride in being gay, lesbian, bisexual or in some other way Queer. Rather we are celebrating our pride in being specifically Jewish Queers, and specifically Queer Jews. That includes looking at our Jewish heritage through a Queer lens, and at our Queer heritage through a Jewish lens. It means remembering the Queers in the death camps, and the Jews at the Stonewall Inn. And it means remembering Magnus Hirschfeld and Harvey Milk. It means calling forth the words of Adrienne Rich and Rebecca Alpert. Tonight we honor our heritage as Queer Jews, by sharing stories from our predecessors, sharing stories of our lives, and sharing the stories we have yet to live.

This evening we are focusing on our history — and our future story — as Queer Jews (whether or not each person here is either Queer or Jewish). And so, as a way of focusing our individual and community intent, please take a moment for each of you to go around your table, introduce yourself, and then in one sentence — tell us how you are Queer (and you don’t have to be gay or lesbian to be queer — it can mean any way you see yourself as “other”) and Jewish (if you are Jewish). How are you Jewishly Queer? How are you Queerly Jewish? Or if you prefer, just tell everyone in one sentence why you came this evening.

Queer Family Blessing for the full Rainbow of Our Community

It is a custom of many families before the Kiddush at the Shabbat seder to offer a blessing for the children. And while there may be children here this evening, tonight we’d like to offer a blessing for everyone here tonight.

You’ll notice that on the table there is a selection of different colored threads. Please choose two threads — choose one color you like and are likely to wear, and then choose another color you might not feel comfortable wearing. Once you have done that, choose a partner at your table to share your blessing with. Wrap both your threads together around your right forefinger. Leave a long tail for your partner to hold. Face your partner as each of you take hold of the tail end of the other’s threads. Each of you will have a chance to bless the other.

Leader:

Who can look directly into the light? We can only behold a small portion — a fragment of the light. And when that One Light is fragmented, the colors of the rainbow result. So let us give thanks for all the colors that are ours. For those colors we love, and those with which we are not so comfortable. All of them are a part of the One Light we are all bathed in, the One Light that is the fountain of our life.

Each Partner Blesses The Other in Turn:

May God give you the blessings of the light of our ancestors, and may the Holy One help you find the courage to bring all the colors of your own light out into the world.

כְּעָמָה מַקַּוְרָה לְיִשָּׂרָא לְרֹאֲשָׁא לְוָאָר.

With You is the fountain of life, in Your light we are bathed in light.
1. Song: Shalom Aleichem

Now that we have revealed something of ourselves to each other, and welcomed the angels, let us sanctify this gathering, and the fact that we are a community of free people with our Kiddush. And tonight, because we reveal ourselves without shame or embarrassment, without comparison or criticism, we leave the challah uncovered as we say Kiddush. (The Shabbat custom is to cover the challah during the Kiddush.)

3. Kiddush

After six full waves of creation, the birthing of the heavens and earth was completed, including all the forces and elements which constitute the universe.

The creative energy released itself from the urge to create with the beginning of the seventh cycle. The creative force rested upon the seventh wave, basking in the array formed by its great surge of creativity.

The Creator blessed the rhythm of seven cycles, infusing the seventh complete cycle with sacred character.

For following labor, God rested and consolidated the creative acts which set the universe on the path of its destiny.

So listen Khevra: Blessed is that One whose essence guides the patterns of the universe, bearing fruit in this fruit of the vine.

Blessed are You, Holy Presence, immanent in creation, who enables us to experience sacredness when we act with the consciousness to sanctify, who values us for our own sake, who transmits to us, with love and pleasure, the Holy Shabbat, reminder of the awesome acts of creation. This day foreshadows all sacred times of rest and release, reminding us of ongoing liberation. For we have been offered the Shabbat to let holiness enter our world, as a gateway to the sacred, and as an inheritance of love and pleasure.

Blessed is the us as we flow Presence who pours holiness into into the Shabbat.

Savri maranan v'rabbanan:
Barukh atah Adonai elohaynu melekh ha-olam, boray pri hagafen.
Barukh atah Adonai elohaynu melekh ha-olam, asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu, v'shabbat kadsho b'ahava uv'ratzon hinkhalanu, zikaron l'ma-asay

v'raysheet. Ki hu yom t'khila l'mikra-ay kodesh, zay-kher li'y'tzi-at mitzrayim. Ki vanu vakharta v'otanu kidasha mikol (im kol) ha-amim, v'shabbat kadshekha b'ahava uv'ratzon hinkhalanu. Barukh atah Adonai m'kadaysh hashabbat

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Shehechiyanu
And because this is the first time many of you have ever celebrated a Gay Pride Shabbat Seder, (and for those who are grateful to be alive in this moment) please join in singing Shehechiyanu.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ הַאֲלֹהִים שֶׁאָמַרְתָּنּוּ לֹא יִשָּׁרֵא לְךָ הָאָדָם לְבֵן הָאָדָם לְעָלָם.

B’rakha at Yah, rukhaynu khay ha-olamim, shehekhiyatnu v’kiyamtnu v’hiyaytnu lazman hazeh.

Blessed are you, Shekinah, Soul of All Creation, who has breathed life into us, who has provided us with the experiences that have made us who we are, and who has enabled us to reach this time in our lives.

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The Seder Symbols

Tonight, because we are celebrating the ongoing process of our still to be fully realized liberation, this seder is different from — and yet reminiscent of — other seders in our tradition. We will hear echoes from the weekly Shabbat seder as well as the Passover and Tu Bi Shevat seders. However, as we make our passage from shame and denigration to liberation and praise, the order of this seder will necessarily be different. We are forging a new tradition as we God-wrestle within the tradition of our ancestors.

On every table is a seder plate. The foods and objects you see on this plate represent both the hardships and the joys of Queer Jewish life. They include:

The Pink Triangle — Under the Nazis, homosexuals wore a pink triangle in the work camps, as Jews wore the yellow star. Today, gay men and lesbians wear this is a symbol of our commitment to justice, for ourselves, and for all others who are victimized by hatred. Rabbi Alexander Schindler has said: “A generation ago, many in this room would have been wearing the pink triangle as a badge of shame and a mark of death. Today, we wear it as a badge of honor and resistance and identity.”

A Variety of “Exotic” Fruit — because sometimes we are called the Fruit people. And while it is meant as an insult, tonight we take it as a blessing in disguise. A recognition of the breadth of God’s creation. And we take it as an opportunity to open up to the sweet, and the tart, in all of us.
The Bundle of Sticks — the Faggot — to remind us of the men, bound together and burned at the stake for their love — and to remind us of the burning of women, called witches, because they chose to live their lives outside the realm of the patriarchy.

Bricks & Stones — We remember the bricks of resistance thrown at the police the night of the Stonewall riot. We meditate on the lines from Psalm 118: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” and we ask what stones we have ourselves rejected. We consider the stones of remembrance we, as Jews, place on the graves of loved ones. We remember that great Stone Wall, the Western Wall of the Temple, which has stood throughout centuries of triumph and tears. And we ask ourselves: what walls must we build anew, what walls must we tear down?

Colored Threads — A symbol of the full Spectrum of our Jewish community, from Orthodox to Reconstructionist, from Ethiopian Jews to Burmese Jews. A reminder of the red ribbons and pink ribbons we wear in the hopes of finding a cure for AIDS and breast cancer. They evoke visions of the Names Project quilt, the tzitzit we wear, the common threads that bind all people together. Lastly they are a celebration of the queer love of flash and color.

Two Challot — The uncovered challot remind us of the sensuous sacredness of our own bodies; that the physical world, which includes our bodies, is holy and nothing to be ashamed of. We acknowledge the deep spiritual nourishment of physical contact.

An Empty Cup — We recall those who did not live to see this moment, and those who are unable to celebrate openly their identity and connection to God. We are angry with the spiritual emptiness that the overwhelming majority of Jewish institutions offer to Queer Jews. We reflect that our liberation is still incomplete — and know that we are part of a chain of generations who, while we will not complete the work, are still obligated to continue it for the generations of Queer Jews to come.

These are the symbols of our Queer Pride Shabbat Seder. Before we begin to enjoy the variety of fruits, those who wish may perform the ritual washing of hands.

Washing of Hands

Water flows.
And with its flow
we purify our hearts
as we wash ourselves
or hurts, of habits, and
clean of all the hindrances
to being clearly here,
present in this moment.
The water of this moment flows.
We cannot hold it.
We can only be open to the sacred flow
that surrounds us always.
Reader: Blessing over the Fruit
“People talk about Bible miracles because there are no miracles in their lives. Cease to know that crust. There is ripe fruit over your head.” - Thoreau

ALL TOGETHER:
Tonight we honor strange fruit that is ripe with the possibility of miracles.
Tonight we recognize there is more than just one way to be fruitful and multiply.
Tonight we begin to taste the sweet fruit from the seeds of liberation planted by our gay and lesbian forebears.

And before we taste this queer fruit, we hesitate and remember the fear many feel when faced with something they think is new and strange.
Before we taste, as we do at the Passover seder, we dip the fruit in salt water, in memory of bitter tears and suffering in silence, of the sweat and fighting in the streets.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam boray p’ri ha-eytz.
We thank the One, Creator of the Universe who has created the fruit of the earth by which we are nourished.

The First Cup
We dedicate this first cup to the courage of women everywhere, who, in the tradition of Miriam, learn to make a way where there is no way.

We acknowledge and give thanks for the blessings of the Divine Presence, the source of all life, which has created the fruit of the vine.

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The Stories...

We are a people of stories. More than half of the Torah is story, the story of our people — Jewish people. But because we are also Queer people, we search for scraps of these stories in the tales of Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and the Maid of Ludomir. Because as Andrea Hairston wrote, “if no one tells your story, you die twice.” So tonight we choose life, by honoring the stories of queer Jews throughout the ages...
Midrash on Vayikra

Our ancestors were slaves and desert nomads. They were given the gift of a unique destiny. And a revelation that we are heirs to. Part of their revelation was Leviticus 20:13 —

אָנָה לָא-יִשָּׂרָאֵל יְשֵׁבָה יָכְרָא מַשָּׂכְּכָא אֶשְׂרַה חָטֵאתָה עַשְׂרַה שְׁנֵיהָמָא מָתָא נְקֵחַ דָּמָאָה בֹּמָא

"A man who lies with a man as one lies with a woman, they have both done an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon themselves."

We carry this as their revelation, and as part of the history of our people — both Jewish and Queer. But it is not our revelation.

What could be more profoundly alienating than to know that the most sacred text of your people, read aloud on the holiest day of the year, calls that which is central to your life an abomination? What could be more terrifying than to know that what for you is a sacred loving act was considered by your ancestors to be punishable by death?

- Rebecca Alpert

Standing at Sinai

The rabbis tell us that every Jew was standing at Mount Sinai when God spoke, that all of us down through time partook of that great revelation.

And here is a verse of my Torah. It is a small verse. For when I stood at Sinai I heard God call out, “Love your neighbor as yourself. Share your bed, your heart, your life with him, that your days may be long on the face of the earth.” But no one wrote those words down when I heard them, all those years ago.

And then God said, “There are as many kinds of love in My world as there are trees in my forests and fish in My seas. There is parent love, and child love, friend love, the love of a woman for a man, and of a man for a man, the love of a woman for a woman. And there is love of country, love of people, love of books, love of making things. And finally, there is the love of a human heart for Me, which is the seed of all the other different kinds of loving.” But I did not see anyone else write those words down either. So now I write them down. Now I write down what I heard at Sinai. I write them down for you and I write them down for me. I write them for your children also, who may not have heard. I write them down for those who come after me.

- Andrew Ramer
Yom Kippur Morning at Kehilla Community Synagogue

On the day of Yom Kippur we traditionally read the portion of Leviticus that includes the statement that a man lying with a man as with a woman is an abomination, which later goes on to pronounce the act as being punishable by death. I, like many of us, have spent years feeling furious about this portion and trying to either avoid it or dismiss it. It has always lent a bitter edge to Yom Kippur, because for many of us, part of what is especially powerful on this day is that we know that Jews all over the world and through the ages have gathered to chant the same prayers and share the same feeling of tribal angst. I am also sadly and angrily aware that on this day, Jews all over the world have received reinforcement and even blessing for their hatred of those of us who are not heterosexual.

In the past few years, though, I have come to a new point with this parsha. While I know its original intent and how it has historically been used to justify hatred and violence toward my people — one of my peoples — this is how I read it at this point: It says, “Do not lie with a man as with a woman.” In other words, if you are with a man, be with him, fully. If you are with a woman, be with her, fully. Do not pretend you are with someone else of another gender. Be present. As Audre Lourde said, do not look away as you come together. In this reading of the parsha, we are mandated to integrate our sexuality, however we define that for ourselves, with our spirituality and with the rest of our lives. And according to this parsha, to not do so is to’evah, usually translated in English as “abomination” but more accurately as “that which leads us astray.” So the parsha says that to not be our authentic selves, to not be fully present with one another, and to not bring our sexuality into the wholeness of our lives, leads us “astray,” away from our truest and most aligned selves.

I don’t necessarily expect that Jews all over the world are going to rush to embrace this new interpretation...but then, I never expected to see Rabin and Arafat shake hands on the White House Lawn. Anything is possible.

Meanwhile, I’d like to take a brief look at where the Jewish community... is in relation to lesbian and gay issues. It wasn’t that long ago that most of the community was dealing with the most basic issue of acknowledging our existence. [Now] most of the community has progressed along to “tolerance.”

...tolerance stops short of oppression, but it does nothing to build community...you are welcome here as long as you fit in with “Us,” but don’t challenge “Us” too much, don’t try to change too many things, don’t expect the dominant culture of “Our” institutions to shift. Most of it is not conscious...and very little of it applies to gays men, lesbians, bisexuals or transgendered people. Many of us feel Outside at one point or another — we’re too old, we’re too young, we have visible or invisible disabilities, we don’t know much about Judaism, we spent ten years practicing Buddhism, we didn’t grow up as Jews ... Few or none of us feel totally secure, and there are many important stories to be listened to fully and respectfully.

-Andy/Avi Rose
**At Least Four Questions**

1. **Why do you have to talk about this, can’t we keep it quiet -- just in the family?**
   
   “Hiding is very unhealthy for the soul. We don’t hide as Jews when we wear our Magen Davids, form an anti-defamation league, support Israel, fail to assimilate and remain proud to be Jews. We never stop ‘coming out’ as Jews every time we speak up and refuse to disappear. As Jews we know how important it is to have a voice, and to be openly visible. And when you are gay in a heterosexual society, it’s the same: you never stop ‘coming out.” -Rachel Wahba

2. **Why are we telling these stories tonight in a seder? Isn’t the Passover story the story of our people?**

   As Jews who are also gay men and lesbians, we are part of a people that appears mysteriously in all tribes and peoples. So while, as Jews, we tell the story of Passover, as Queer Jews we also have another story to tell. In order to fulfill the mitzvah found in the Book of Amos, which says “Tell your children of it” we tell these stories. We are doing what Hebrew essayist Asher Ginzberg described as *L’chadesh et ha-yashan u’l’kadesh et ha-chadash* — the task of renewing the old and sanctifying the new. With this seder we reaffirm and renew our connection to the Creator and to our Jewish community.

3. **What can I do to make a difference?**

   Break the silence. Notice when you hold back from speaking out for justice, and break the silence. Take action. Write letters to your legislators. Speak out in the Jewish community.

4. **Why do lesbians have “a thing” for cats? Why do gay men have a better taste and fashion sense than straight men?**

   Honey, all you’ve got to do is watch gay cable television to know that not all gay men have good taste. And listen, if that many lesbians owned cats, 9 Lives would have changed Morris for Marsha a long time ago. Maybe a better question to ask ourselves is why all of us, gay and straight, feel the need to stereotype each other?
Leader: Ha-Motzi
Tonight, before we say the traditional blessing over the bread, and begin our meal, we stop and note again that the bread has remained uncovered all evening — even as we said blessings over the wine. We do this as a reminder to ourselves not to hide any part of our light, any part of who we are — that we are all, every one of us, every part of us, holy — and there is no shame in this.

Once we have finished our main course, we will continue telling the story...

A Prayer for the End of Hiding
All Together:
As Queer Jews, we are aware of the loss of integrity we suffer due to our fears of being cast out of the wider society. We often feel forced into a dishonest presentation of ourselves, to ourselves and others. Those of us, the Queers, who feel we must pretend to be something that we are not; those of us, the Jews, who feel we must alienate ourselves from our tradition and community to win wider acceptance. In our fear, we become victims of a theft of identity and integrity committed by the sexual or religious majority. Holy One, we ask that our hiding draw to an end, that we no longer feel we have to pretend, to promise falsely, to renounce ourselves, and that our fullest creative expression as Jews and as Queer people be among the blessings You bestow upon us.

Blessing over the bread.
ברוך אתה ה' אלוהינו מלך העולם המחבר לחם מארץ
Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam ha-motzi lekhem min ha-aretz.
Blessed is the One, our God, Source of Creation who brings forth bread from the earth.

Enjoy Your Meal. We Will Resume The Seder After the Main Course.
At the end of the meal, we will share in a niggun before we continue reading...
The Middle Ages:
In Spain, Judah Ha-Levi, Moses Ibn Ezra, Solomon Ibn Gabirol and others wrote poetry, that like the poetry of the Sufi mystic Rumi, uses homoerotic imagery to describe the relationship with God.

Excerpted from a poem by Moses Ibn Ezra:

...Many denounce me for loving.
      But I pay no heed.
Come to me, young stag, and I will vanquish them.
      Time will consume them and death
Will shepherd them away.
Oh come to me, young stag, let me feast
      On the nectar of your lips
           Until I am satisfied.

The Beginnings of a Modern Movement, 1897 - 1945

Exactly 100 years ago, in May 1897, the world’s first homosexual rights organization was formed in Berlin with the goal of repealing the laws that criminalized homosexual relations in Germany. One of its founders was Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, a prominent Jewish doctor.

By the start of World War I, the Committee had amassed and presented to the Reichstag the signatures of more than 3000 doctors urging the repeal of these laws.

On July 1, 1919, Hirschfeld realized one of his goals by opening the Institute of Sexual Science. The Institute housed both clinical and research facilities which were open to the public and visited by scientists from around the world. In addition to offering marriage counseling, VD testing and treatment, family planning and sex education programs, the Institute had a library with an unparalleled collection of biological, sociological and ethnological materials.

Hirschfeld was assaulted by anti-Semites for the first time in October of 1920, in Munich. A Nazi commentator gleefully noted: “It is not without charm to know that...Hirschfeld was so beaten that his eloquent mouth could never again be kissed by one of his disciples.” In 1923, a youth at a lecture in Vienna opened fire on Hirschfeld, wounding several people in the audience.

As the Nazis gained influence, their position on Hirschfeld’s organization was expressed in no uncertain terms. In 1928, the party position on the repeal of the criminalization laws read: “Anyone who even thinks of homosexual love is our enemy.”
Among their early acts after the Nazis came to power was the announcement on May 6, 1933 that Berlin was to be purged of un-German spirit by the destruction of objectionable books. The first target was Hirschfeld’s Institute.

At 9:30 the next morning, a number of trucks drove up filled with students and a brass band. The band played while the students looted the Institute. Later in the afternoon, several more trucks arrived with storm troopers to continue the work.

More than 12,000 books were removed, and burned in a public ceremony on May 10th. The photographs of Nazi book burnings that most people are familiar with are the photos of the burning of the Institute’s library.

Hirschfeld was traveling on a lecture tour in France the day the Institute was sacked. He never returned to Germany. In 1938, he died a broken man.

The government established the Reich-Center for the Fight Against Homosexuality and Abortion — reproduction was the goal at any cost.

In 1937, official SS newspaper announced that there were two million German homosexuals and called for their internment. The actual number of those arrested, while disputed, seems to be less than 100,000. In the work camps, just as the Jews were forced to wear the yellow star, homosexuals were forced to wear a pink triangle.

According to one “pink triangle” survivor:

“With a unit of other 300 pink triangles I was sent to Klinker factory. Along the march we were forced to drag along any who died, so that eventually we dragged along twenty corpses, the rest of us were crusted with blood from being whipped. One evening, a young and healthy man was added to our company. When he arrived he was seized and ridiculed, then beaten and kicked and finally spat on by the guards. He suffered alone and in silence. Then they put him under a cold shower. It was a frosty winter evening, and he stood outside the barracks all through that long, bitterly cold night. When morning came, his breathing had become audible rattle. Bronchial pneumonia was later given as the cause of his death. But before it came to that, he was beaten and kicked again. Then he was tied to a post and placed under an arc lamp until he began to sweat, again put under a cold shower, and so on. He died toward evening.”

—from Der Massenmord an Homosexuellen im Dritten Reich by Wolfgang Harthauer

In the fall of 1944...the Danish SS-Sturmbannführer Dr. Vaernet...appeared in the Buchenwald concentration camp. There he started a series of experiments aimed at the elimination of homosexuality. The implantation of synthetic hormones into the right lower abdomen was meant to lead to a sex drive reversal. Of the 15 test subjects (including two previously castrated men) ...two died as a result of the operation.

When the war ended, homosexuality remained a crime in both East and West Germany as well as in Britain, the U.S., and USSR. Thus, the homosexual inmates of the camps were not considered to have been unjustly imprisoned — they remained uncompensated for their suffering. Not only that, many were subject to reimprisonment by their newly divided country.
1950s - The U.S.

[Today] I am a seventy-nine-year-old great grandmother who also happens to be a lesbian. [In the 1950's] I was a person who felt like such an outcast - because remember, in those days we [lesbians and gays] carried guilt, we carried embarrassment, we carried shame, we carried isolation, and all the ugliness that society heaped on my kind of people - gay people - and we internalized it all to such a degree that it made us sneaky.... And my life was lived that way for a long time until I realized...that I am a person, I am a wonderful person. I'm a very unique woman.

-Gerry Faier

1969 - An Account of Stonewall

Judy Garland was buried on Friday, June 27th, 1969.

That night, Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine and 7 police officers from the Public Morals section of the New York City Police set out to close the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar just across from Sheridan Square.

The police had a long-standing arrangement with the criminal gangs that ran the gay bars. Because it was illegal under New York State law to serve alcohol to known homosexuals, gay bars were in fact, illegal. The police however, were happy to let them thrive under the management of the gangs, as long as the gangs paid them off regularly. Several times a year though, and often around election time, the bars were raided, and patrons were arrested so that politicians could say they were doing something to clean up New York.

In gay bars in those days there was no same sex dancing. No one touched, much less kissed. These rules were strictly enforced by the homophobic mob management.

The Stonewall was a place where things were a little different. Many of the patrons of this bar were on the outside of gay society — they couldn’t or didn’t want to pass as straight. There were transvestites, the effeminate. There were young runaways who were underage, those who supported themselves the only way they knew how — as hustlers. And there were those who just didn’t care anymore what anyone thought of them.

These were the people the police felt they could beat with impunity.
Who knows why the riot started that night. Some say it was Judy’s death. Some say it was the full moon. Others say that a decade of civil rights and anti-war activism had made its way into the consciousness of a new generation of gay people. Maybe the people there that night were just sick and tired of it all, and felt like they had nothing left to lose. But something snapped. And as the queens were being led out to the waiting police wagons a crowd gathered outside to boo the police.

The queens struck poses and the crowd applauded. A policeman struck one of the queens with his night stick and all hell broke loose. The crowd threw beer cans and bottles at the police, rocks and even cobbles stones from Sheridan Square park. The police quickly retreated into the Stonewall bar and barricaded themselves in.

The crowd, amazed, took the offensive. Someone uprooted a parking meter and used it as a battering ram. A trash can was thrown through the window of the bar.

It looked dangerous. The police inside the bar were angry and scared. This wasn’t the way fags were supposed to respond. One cop ventured outside for a moment and grabbed a bystander, pulling him into the bar. They beat him senseless, thinking he was one of the crowd. It was Dave Van Ronk, the folk singer, who had been down the street at the Lion’s Head bar. A straight man, he had come out to see what was going on. The cops didn’t ask questions though. He was someone they could take their rage and fear out on.

The crowd was also full of rage. From years of repression — sick of the vile bars run by the mob, police busts, kids victimized and exploited by both the mob and police. Someone squirted lighter fluid into the bar and then a match. At this point the crowd had grown to about 2000 people as the other bars in the neighborhood emptied out to join the scene.

The cops called for help. And soon the TPF: the Tactical Police Force, used at political demonstrations in the 60s showed up, marching in Roman formation with their shields up, creating a moving wall.

The crowd simply ran around the block, and stoned the TPF from behind.
The police turned, and kept tight formation. And headed towards the angry mob.

Then the crowd parted. Behind the crowd was a chorus line of drag queens and fey boys who stood facing the TPF. And Rockettes style they kicked their legs high in the air and mocked the cops, as they sang a bawdy anthem to our new found defiance and freedom.

Honey, that was really the start of gay liberation in our time.

43. Ani ve-ata neshane et ha’olam,
aní ve-ata az yavo-u kvar kulam.

Amru et ze kodem lefanai, lo meshane
Ani ve-ata neshane et ha’olam.

Ani ve-ata nenease mehatbala
yihye lanu ra ein davar ze lo nora.

You and I will change the world and then all will follow.
Others have said it before me, but it doesn’t matter, you and I will change the world.
You and I will try from the beginning; we will have a hard time. No matter! It’s not too bad!

The Second Cup — Martyrs and Prophets
In memory and honor of those who lost their reputations, lost their friends, family ties or even their lives in the courageous effort to live and speak their truth. To those who were lonely pioneers in the struggle for our liberation and healing. To these, we dedicate the second cup.

ברוך אתהיהוה אלוהינו מלך העולמן בורא פרי הגלן.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melek ha-olam borei p’ri ha-gafen.
Holy One of blessing, your presence fills creation and is the source of all life, creating the fruit of the vine. Amen.

The 1970s - Decade of Ferment
This decade saw, among other things, the establishment of the first lesbian and gay synagogues in the U.S., including Cong. Beth Simchat Torah in New York City.

In the 70’s the Gay Activists Alliance in New York held the first demonstrations — zaps — demanding marriage licenses at the City Clerks office, calling for an end to discrimination at the Board of Examiners, where gay men and lesbians were declared unfit to teach.
Adapted from “Dachau in America”

At Atascadero State Hospital “patients” were tortured and used for savage medical experiments similar to those at Dachau and Buchenwald. Victims of sadistic doctors are being turned into vegetables with brain surgeries, castration, torture to the point of death with pain-causing drugs and electric shocks. [Under California law at this time, any sex that was not between a married heterosexual couple and “traditional” was illegal, and punishable by sentencing at Atascadero.]

The “doctors” experimented on prisoners with acute anxiety producing drugs -- the purpose of these experiments was exploratory study in behavior modification. Dr. Grant Morris, professor of law at Wayne State University, wrote of Atascadero: “The experiments conducted were in violation of the Nuremberg code, the Declaration of Helsinki and the AMA’s 1966 ethical guidelines for clinical investigations.”

California State law at the time provided for indeterminate sentences — a person given such a sentence remains incarcerated until the State Parole Board feels the prisoner is rehabilitated. Moralistic judges could and did use the threat of permanent imprisonment in a mental hospital as a means of forcing homosexuals ... to sign papers to have themselves emasculated. The State Department of Mental Hygiene reports that 19,042 involuntary sterilizations were ordered by judges — what percent were castrations is not revealed.

1974: Homosexuality is removed from the American Psychiatric Association’s official diagnostic manual of mental disorders.

Harvey Milk is elected to the San Francisco Board of Supervisors.

Harvey Milk, a self-described “Jew from New York,” was one of the first openly gay elected officials in the U.S. He served on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. He was assassinated in 1978, along with George Moscone, the mayor, by a former member of the Board of Supervisors, Dan White. White received only a few years prison sentence for the murders. Shortly before he was killed, Milk had a premonition of violent death. He wrote: “If a bullet should enter my brain, let that bullet destroy every closet door.”
Dear Harvey:

You had to go get yourself killed for being a faygeleh? You couldn’t let somebody else have such a great honor? Alright, alright, so you liked the boys. I wasn’t wild about the idea. But I got used to it. I never said you wasn’t welcome in my house, did I?

Nu, Harvey, you couldn’t leave well enough alone? You had your own camera store, your own business, what’s bad? You couldn’t keep still about the boys, you weren’t satisfied until the whole world knew? Harvey Milk... had to go make himself... a big politician. I know, I know, I said, “Harvey, make something of yourself, don’t be an old shmeeggie like me, Harry the butcher.” So now I’m eating my words, and they stick like a chicken bone in my old throat.

It’s a rotten world Harvey, and rottener still without you in it. You know what happened to that momzer, Dan White? They let him out of jail, and he goes and kills himself so nobody else should have the pleasure. Now you know me, Harvey. I’m not a violent man, But this was too much, even for me. In the old country, I saw things you shouldn’t know from, things you couldn’t imagine one person could do to another. But here in America, a man climbs through the window, kills the Mayor of San Francisco, kills Harvey Milk, and a couple of years later he’s walking on the street? This I never thought I’d see in my whole life....

Harvey, you should be glad you weren’t around for the trial. The lawyer, that son of a bitch, said Dan White ate too many Twinkies the night before he killed you, so his brain wasn’t working right. My kids ate Twinkies when they were little, did they grow up to be murderers, God forbid?....

Harvey, now I’m gonna tell you something. The night you died the whole city...cried for you. 30,000 people marched in the street, I saw it on TV. Me, I didn’t go down, I’m an old man...they said there might be riots. But no, there were no riots. Just people walking in the street, quiet, each one with a candle, until the street looked like the sky lit up with a million stars. Old people, young people, black people, white people, Chinese people. You name it Harvey, there were there. I remember thinking, Harvey must be so proud, and then I remembered you were dead and such a lump rose in my throat, like a grapefruit it was, and then the tears rain down my face like rain. Can you imagine, Harvey, an old man like me, sitting alone in his apartment, crying and carrying on like a baby?....

Then they made speeches for you, Harvey. The same people who called you a shmuck when you were alive, now you were dead, they were calling you a mensh. Harvey, a mensh with a heart of gold. You were too good for this rotten world. They just weren’t ready for you.

— Eli, Eli, shelo yigamer le’olam,
Habag vehayam, rishrush shel hamayim
Berak hashamayim tfilot ha-adam.

O my God, may these never end: the sand and the sea, the rush of the waters, the thunder on high, and human prayer.
1980s

The advent of AIDS

In July of 1981, the New York Times noted that 12 gay men in the San Francisco area had all died of a mysterious illness, and that others were experiencing symptoms doctors couldn’t explain. Within months people were calling it GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency). Today, more than 360,000 Americans have died of the disease we call AIDS.

It is sad that it is no surprise that in those early years, and even today, there are Jewish religious groups that see in the HIV virus Divine judgement - a plague such as was visited on the Egyptians. What can one say is the face of such willful ignorance?

Excerpts from “Yom Kippur, 1984”
by Adrienne Rich

Leader:
What is a Jew is solitude?
What would it mean not to feel lonely or afraid
far from your own or those you have called your own?
What is a woman in solitude: a queer woman or man?
In the empty street, on the empty beach, in the desert
what in this world as it is can solitude mean?

All Together:
Find someone like yourself. Find others.
Agree you will never desert each other.
Understand that any rift among you
means power to those who want to do you in.
Close to the center, safety; toward the edges, danger.
But I have a nightmare to tell: I am trying to say
that to be with my own people is my dearest wish
but that I also crave strangers

Continue reading on next page
that I crave separateness

(*All Together, continued...*)

I hear myself stuttering these words
to my worst friends and my best enemies
who watch for my mistakes in grammar
my mistakes in love....

*Leader:*

Jew deluded that she's escaped the tribe....
....who has turned her back
on midrash and mitzvah (yet wears the chai on a thong between her
breasts) hiking alone
found with a swastika carved in her back at the foot of the cliffs
(did she die as queer or as Jew?)

*All Together:*

What is a Jew in solitude?
What is a woman in solitude, a queer woman or man?

*Leader:*

when we who refuse to be women or men as women and men are
chartered, tell our stories of solitude spent in
multitude
in that world as it may be, newborn and haunted, what will solitude mean?

*The Third Cup — Those Who Lived in Exile, Alone, in Silence.*

In memory of those who could not speak their truth, and thus lived in
internal exile — whose silence in the shtetls and suburbs, synagogues
and schools, is felt as a palpable absence here tonight, a dimming of
our collective light. To these, with a commitment to action and a com-
mitment to breaking the silence, we dedicate the third cup.

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ مֶלֶךְ הָעַלְוָלָמּוּ בּוֹרֵא פּוֹרֵי הָגָפֶּן.

*Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam borei p'ri ha-gafen.*

Holy One of blessing, your presence fills creation and is the source of all life,
creating the fruit of the vine. Amen.
The 1990s

We come, in our story, to the present time. Up to now, the story has been history, even if it is a history that some of us have lived through. Now, the story continues in the present tense. It is our story, happening as we speak. And because we're closer to it, it is sometimes harder to see. But one thing is clear — this very dinner — is a part of it.

In the last 7 years of our story as Queers, as Jews, and as Americans, much has happened. The religious right has responded with increasing virulence and violence as gay rights slowly advances.

The United States Supreme Court declared a Colorado law that invalidated the rights of lesbian and gay citizens unconstituional. But physical attacks against queer people increases: two lesbian activists killed in Oregon, the bombing of a bar in Atlanta.

The Israeli Supreme Court decided that the widowed gay partner of an Army veteran is entitled to the benefits that go to married couples. But right-wing and Orthodox demonstrators attack queer men and women at a wreath-laying ceremony at Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem.

While the Reform and Reconstructionist Movements in the United States have decided to ordain lesbian and gay rabbis, the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly decides that queer Jews are not welcome on the bimah in any capacity, or in leadership positions in the community — but we’re welcome to pay our dues and join the synagogues as long as we’re quiet.

In California, a law to protect gay and lesbian students from violence and discrimination in the the public schools is defeated. Assembly member Sheila Kuehl, speaking in response to the defeat of the bill, brought the large hearing room to absolute silence with these words:

"Let's agree with opponents today, just for the moment, and say that homosexuality is a choice. Well, one may also consider religion a choice. In the last millennium, Jews were told "Being Jewish is a choice. Become a Christian and we won't kill you. Go kneel - Go kiss the cross." But they would not. Why? Because the way we choose to love the divine is part of our very essence, part of who we are. Just as who we chose to love is part of our very essence, our humanness”.

Kuehl continued, “Today, we look back in horror at that time, at the treatment of people because of their religion. In this millennium, we are learning to look back in horror at racism and discrimination based on gender. And even though we lose this bill, today, I believe in my heart that in the next millennium we will
look back in horror at this smug failure to do what is right on behalf of all people."

Jewish Americans figure largely in the battles for civil and marital rights. In Georgia, Robin Shahar, who was to be hired as a lawyer in the office of the Attorney General of Georgia, was denied her job when she married her partner in a ceremony officiated by Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum. Last year, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit ruled in Ms. Shahar's favor, saying she had a fundamental right of intimate association with her partner and could not be fired.

But in March, the full court set aside that ruling. Last month, the court ruled against Shahar, saying it specifically was not ruling on Ms. Shahar's right of association, but was deciding whether Bowers had a right to withdraw the job offer.

"We do not decide today that the attorney general did or did not do the right thing," the court said, adding that was not a decision for it to make. Instead, the court said it found Bowers made a decision he was entitled to make.

In this country, 3 out of 4 Americans live in states where discrimination based on sexual orientation is not illegal. The battle rages on state by state.

Hawaii's Supreme Court moves towards the legalization of marriage for lesbian and gay couples. And state legislatures around the country, as well as Congress, pass laws to deny reciprocal recognition of these marriages. Cynical lawmakers on the right used the so-called Defense of Marriage Act as a wedge to create fear and divide their opponents.

This tactic was not lost on Orthodox Jews. In just this last month, as we recoiled in horror from the attack on men and women worshipping together at the Wall, a group of American rabbis, calling themselves the Bet Din Elyon, ran an announcement in the Jerusalem Post. It read: "Homosexuality is a capital crime in Judaism, a capital crime under the Noahidic Laws. [Anyone who commits these crimes or supports those who do] be he your own brother, son of your mother . . . or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend . . . is to be disposed of as a threat to the Convenantial Community. Such a person is not to be pitied, spared nor concealed but is to be killed." This text was filed as part of an amicus curiae brief with with Israeli Supreme Court, to deny recognition to other branches of Judaism, Conservatism included, for supporting gay rights in any form.
So the crumbs that the Conservative movement have thrown gays and lesbians are enough for the Chancellor of JTS, who is no friend of ours, to be sentenced to death by this radical group masquerading as Orthodox. This would be laughable if it weren't tragic.

Silence truly equals death. It's nice to have a dinner like this once a year, and feel good that we've found a home here in a corner of the Upper West Side of Manhattan. But it's not enough. We cannot let go unchallenged any injustice and prejudice within the Jewish community.

Only months before he died, Marshall Meyer (of blessed memory) came to one of our lesbian and gay pot luck dinners and announced: "It isn't that we're trying to prove how big or tolerant we are by letting you be a part of our community — it's simply that this community cannot be whole, Judaism cannot be whole without you."

And so to the Jewish mullahs who would murder us, and the ostriches in the Jewish community who would ignore us, we say with all the thunder we can muster: When you condemn Queer Jews you keep Judaism in exile. You cannot be whole without us. And we will not be silent.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

**All Together:**

We come together tonight, 100 years after Magnus Hirschfeld first stood up and told his truth. Some 3200 years after the revelation at Sinai. Celebrating our stories and our victories. Sanctifying the ongoing struggle. Secure in our connection with the Creator of All Life. Filled with both love and rage at our tradition. Saddened by loss. Strengthened by community. And living the next chapter of the story so that those who come after us can continue the telling.

**Honoring the Elders, Celebrating the Continuity of Queer Jewish Generations.**

Joining us this evening are two elders of the lesbian and gay Jewish community. Rolf Hirschberg, is a gay Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany, who arrived in the U.S. in 1937. In the picture below, taken in 1929, he is on the right with his companion of 68 years, Emil Kroner (at left). In the inset above, taken in 1981, positions are are reversed. Early in their relationship, Emil's sister-in-law sent them to see Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld to see if Emil could be "cured." In this way, Rolf Hirschberg met the man who was one of the founders of the modern gay movement.

Joan Nestle is the co-founder of the Lesbian Herstory Archive as well as a well known author, editor and activist whose voice has made important contributions to Judaism, Feminism, and the Lesbian and Gay movement.
The Fourth (Empty) Cup: Filling the Cup of The Generations

We ask the youngest people here this evening who identify themselves as queer to accept the responsibility of carrying on the celebration, the struggle, and the sanctification by taking the “empty cup” at their table, filling it with a few drops and coming forward. We also ask any of the the elders of our community, to join Rolf Hirschberg and Joan Nestle, and also come forward with their own full cups. The elders will pour a few drops from their cups into of the cups of our community’s youngest members as a way of reminding the next generation they are not alone, and that they come from a long line of queer Jews from whom they can draw strength, with whom they share history, men and women who are also their family.

The Blessing of the Elders:
May your breath be free from fear. May you be strong in the path of righteousness and justice. And may the cup of your heart be full to overflowing with love for God and all humanity.

The Youngest recite(s) the blessing:

ברוך אתה יהוה אלוהינו מפלי העולמים, בורא פורי תפנום.

Barukh atah Adonai eloheinu melekh ha-olam borei p'ri ha-gafen.
Blessed is the One, God of All Creation, who creates the fruit of the vine. Amen.

We All Join In Singing:

צריך נקמה פירסת, ברוח כלבנון נשגיה,
 שיהולמו ביכת היה, ברוך אתה אלהינו י萬יחו.
וער נבון בימים, ושם ותרבנום ויור.
להגור יפר בשר יהיה, וירר ולא עולמה בור.

A Queer Pride Hallel


I shall behold You in the sanctuary, and see Your might and glory. My soul thirsts for you, my body yearns for you.

pg. 23
All Read Together:
The voice of my beloved!
Behold! He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.
My beloved is like a gazelle or a young hart:
Behold, he stands behind our wall, he looks in at the windows;
He peers through the lattice.
My beloved spoke, and said to me,
'Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.
For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone.
The flowers appear on the earth
The time of the singing bird is come
And the voice of the turtle dove is heard in our land.
The fig tree puts forth her green figs
And the vines in blossom give their scent.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

--Shir ha-Shirim (Song of Songs) 1: 8-13.

All Women Read Together:
We bless our bodies.
We bless the beauty, the intricacy, the softness and hardness, the creative,
life-sustaining powers of our bodies.
We bless the intricate design of the openings and channels of our bodies,
through which our life force is nourished.
We bless the beauty, the silkiness, the curly coarseness of the
hair on our heads
and on our bodies.
We bless the beauty, the round soft fullness, the muscular
hardness,
the simple lines of our bellies, our hips, our thighs.
We bless the beauty, the life-sustaining power of our breasts.
We bless the awesome potential of our wombs to create and nourish new life.
Blessed is the body, the house of the soul.

-Miriam Senturia

All Men Read Together:
Holy! Holy! Holy! ...
Holy! Holy! Holy! ...
Holy! Holy! Holy! ...
The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy! The nose
is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!
Everything is holy! everybody’s holy! everywhere is holy!
everyday is in eternity! Everyman’s an angel!
The bum's as holy as the seraphim! the madman is holy as you
my soul are holy!
The typewriter is holy the poem is holy the voice is holy the
hearers are holy the ecstasy is holy...

-from the Footnote to Howl, by Allen Ginsberg

I praise You for having answered me;
You have become my deliverance.
The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.
This is the doing of the [One]; it is marvelous in our sight.
This is the day the [Creator] has made; let us exult and rejoice in it.

Blessing After the Meal

Repeat twice
Brich Rachamana Malka D’alma
Maré D’hai Pita

Round enters
You are the Source of Life for all that is,
And Your blessings flow through me.
Birkat HaMazon
©1987 by Shefa Gold

Chant: Yai da di......

Blessing for Food:
You are the source of everything.
It is because of You we sing.
You nourish the world with goodness
and sustain it with grace,
We find you in the dust and in the vastness of space.
We taste you in the food we eat and see you in our friends,
You strengthen our rejoicing with a love that never ends.
Baruch Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Chay Ha’olamim
Yai da di.....HAZAN ET HAKOL.

Blessing for the Land:
You are the source of everything.
It is because of You we sing.
We thank you for the rain that falls upon the fertile ground,
And for all the plants and animals that in your world abound,
We fill our cups to overflow from the River of Your Love,
We dig our roots into your soil and grow our leaves above.
Baruch Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Chay Ha’olamim
Yai da di.....AL HA’ARETZ V’AL HAMAZON.

Blessing for Jerusalem:
You are the source of everything.
It is because of you we sing.
You fill our eyes with visions of a heaven here on earth,
Inspiring us to meet the challenge of our own rebirth,
We won’t sit around and wait for Moshiach-time to start,
Your compassion builds Jerusalem right here within our hearts.
Baruch Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Chay Ha’olamim.
Yai da da....BONAY V’RACHAMAV Y’RUSHALAYIM.

Blessing of Goodness:
You are the source of everything.
It is because of you we sing.
And even when it seems we’ve reached the end of our rope,
Your presence in our hearts reminds us not to lose all hope.
The knowledge of your goodness brings a light into our home,
Your presence gives us faith to wander into the unknown.
Baruch Atah, Adonai, Elohaynu Chay Ha’olamim
Yai da di....HATOV V’HAMATIV LAKOL.
All chant: HARACHAMAN, HARACHAMAN....

Leader chants: Bless this place, and all who’ve shared our meal,  
May the food we eat strengthen the love we feel.  
Bless the One, who blesses us with peace,  
May our will to do your work increase.  

Bless the child who searches for you in vain,  
May the suffering ones find respite from their pain.  
Bless our friends who have so much to bear,  
May the homeless folk find shelter in your care.  

All: Yai da di....

\[\text{SONGS}\]

8. Esa einai el hebarim me-ayin yavo ezri.  
Ezri me’im Adonai ose shamayim va-aretz.

\[I \text{ will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.} \]
\[My \text{ help cometh from Adonai who made heaven and earth.} \]

Somewhere Over the Rainbow  
Lyrics by E.Y. Harburg, Music by Harold Arlen

Somewhere over the rainbow, way up high  
There’s a land that I heard of, once in a lullaby.  
Somewhere over the rainbow skies are blue,  
And the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.  
Someday I’ll wish upon a star and wake up where the clouds are far behind me.  
Where troubles melt like lemon drops, away above the chimney tops,  
that’s where you’ll find me.  
Somewhere over the rainbow bluebirds fly.  
Birds fly over the rainbow, why then oh why can’t I?  
If happy little bluebirds fly, beyond the rainbow, why, oh why, can’t I?

SHABBAT SHALOM - HAPPY GAY PRIDE WEEKEND
Dedicated to the memory of
Allen Ginsberg.

Credits:
Written / edited / and adapted from other materials by Mark Horn, with assistance from: Cindy Cogdill, Rachel Segall, Harvey Israelton, Mark Jacobs and Rabbis R. Matalon and M. Bronstein. Sections are excerpted and adapted from The Queer Pride Seder created by Ray Schnitzler and Susie Kisber of the Queer Minyan, without which, this seder would be much poorer. As Alexander Pope (or was it Dryden?) once wrote: “I stand on the shoulders of giants.” Please feel free to adapt any original texts you find in this seder to create of your own service.

Sources include:
The work of Andrew Ramer
The Lesbian Haggadah, by Judith Stein
Like Bread on a Seder Plate by Rebecca Alpert
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Nice Jewish Girls: A Lesbian Anthology, ed: Evelyn Torton Beck
Howl, by Allen Ginsberg
Your Native Land, Your Life by Adrienne Rich
Is It A Choice, by Eric Marcus
The Gay Militants, by Don Teal
Hidden From History, by Martin Duberman
Out in All Directions, Eds. Lynn Witt, Sherry Thomas, Eric Marcus
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If you would like more information about the Lesbian & Gay Committee of Congregation B’nai Jeshurun, please call: 787-7600, ext 325