

# CBST

קהלה קדושה בית שמחת תורה

July 24, 2006

## A MESSAGE THE CBST COMMUNITY FROM ERIC ROSENBAUM, CBST PRESIDENT

On the last Sunday in June I marched with CBST in New York's annual Gay Pride Parade. Pierre and I held hands in the middle of Fifth Avenue as the crowd cheered us on, responding to Yolanda Potasinski and Mickie Trester's encouragements with shouts of "Shalom" and "Oy". We felt great - for about a week, until the New York Court of Appeals issued its ruling denying our community the right to marry. Yet New York City remains the heart of both the Jewish and glbt worlds, and back-to-back appearances by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer and City Council Speaker Christine Quinn at our Family and Friends, and Pride services were an important reminder of our growing power and influence in this amazing city.

But we must not forget that for much of the world's glbt population, daily life is still fraught with the most basic of fears - harassment, imprisonment, torture, and even execution - simply for being who we are. And in the Middle East, the cycle of Arab-Israeli warfare is again causing death and destruction in Lebanon, northern Israel, and Gaza. It sometimes feels like a discussion of glbt rights is trivial in the face of such actual and potential danger.

Yet just a couple of weeks from now, I plan to travel with CBST to WorldPride in Israel. The Jerusalem Open House is cognizant of the many new challenges now facing WorldPride. They are progressing with their program and will make the necessary adjustments to the tone and content of the events. The theme of WorldPride 2006 is "Love Without Borders" and it's a multi-cultural and multi-faith celebration of our global community's pride. Check out the website at [www.worldpride.net](http://www.worldpride.net) for complete information. The events will take place August 6-12 in Jerusalem, a city that is holy to three major religions - Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The location is a powerful symbol of the best of religion - when it focuses on helping people fulfill their deepest and most significant dreams - and the worst, when religious bigotry replaces God's will with that of human arrogance.

CBST's support is critical because mainstream media, churches, mosques, and synagogues are filled with the virtually unchallenged assertion that God rejects us simply for existing. Religious voices speaking of love, acceptance, and diversity are drowned out by the chorus of "Abomination!" One of the most strident voices against us comes from our own religion, in our own backyard. Rabbi Yehuda Levin of Flatbush leads an organization called "Jews For Morality". Here is some of the bigotry they are spreading:

"The Jerusalem Open House is an entity which, under the pretense of helping existing gays and lesbians, has been mercilessly promoting its subversive, anti-family agenda, primarily targeting underage youth, while actively encouraging bestiality."

*From the Common Declaration, Israel-USA Holy Land Coalition*

“Take a disgusting, perverted activity that is morally despicable, and present it to the public as something dignified and noble - a source of 'Pride.'

“Josef Goebbels, Hitler's talented minister of propaganda, would have heartily concurred –repeat the lie over and over again, and people will soon come to accept it.”

*Rabbi Yehuda Levin*

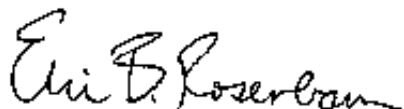
This vitriol is why it is so important that CBST is a major, and visible, supporter of WorldPride. We are the world's largest synagogue for glbt people, our families and our friends. There is no organization in the world in a better position to offer the Jerusalem Open House religious, logistical, and moral support for this event. I am thrilled - PROUD - that we are able to offer this deep support.

Rabbi Kleinbaum is the North American Chair of WorldPride, and in that capacity she has been the lead organizer of one of the highlights of the week - a multifaith religious conference titled "**Reclaiming Our Faith and Our Heritage.**" The speakers will include our rabbis as well as other leading glbt clergy, theologians and academics from around the world. There will be two plenary sessions: one on changing ritual and liturgy to include glbt people and a series of 10-15 smaller workshops (including one I will facilitate for lay leaders of the congregations in attendance). Our Cantorial Intern David Berger is organizing opening and closing ceremonies and will help lead the musical elements. Cathy Renna of Renna Communications has been managing public relations for WorldPride and CBST. I hope you have noticed the flurry of recent press featuring CBST and Rabbi Kleinbaum which is the result of Cathy's work (look at “in the news” on the CBST website). I'm including a list of recent press and copies of some of it with this letter.

Much of the financial support for this work has come from a special grant to CBST of \$80,000. This funding is a sign of how seriously CBST is taken by philanthropists who care about a liberal religious voice to counterbalance the hatred of the religious right.

More than 25 CBST members are taking part in a joint glbt synagogue trip to WorldPride with congregations Beit Chayim Chadashim of Los Angeles and Sha'ar Zahav of San Francisco. And several other CBST members will be going on their own. Please let the office know if you will be in Israel so that you can join us for the events there - and make sure to attend WorldPride Friday night services led by our rabbis and David Berger.

I wish all of CBST's members and friends a good and safe summer. If you are not joining us in Israel, I hope you'll follow our progress closely by looking at our website at [www.cbst.org](http://www.cbst.org). We will have regular blog entries written by members of our trip so you will be able to read about our experiences in Jerusalem. And as always, I look forward to reading your comments at [erosenbaum@cbst.org](mailto:erosenbaum@cbst.org).



Eric B. Rosenbaum  
President