



Shelter of Peace Resource Packet

We are so glad that your congregation will be joining with faith communities across New York City on January 20-22nd for the Shelter of Peace Weekend of Prayer and Learning. This resource packet includes materials to educate and engage with your congregations, to integrate teachings on youth homelessness into your liturgy, prayer service, sermons or d'vars, and to take action.

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TAKE ACTION NOW!

Governor Cuomo's budget failed to include vital funding for homeless youth.

The Governor had an opportunity to take a leadership and show his commitment to the thousands of homeless youth on our streets, and instead he has shown us how little we can count on what he says. Governor, we needed your action not your words. You have failed us and failed the homeless youth.

TAKE ACTION FOR OUR HOMELESS YOUTH

1. Send him a letter and sign the petition!
<http://shelterofpeace.org/end-youth-homelessness-in-nyc/>
2. **Call Governor Cuomo:** 518-474-8390

Tell him: "I am a strong supporter of the Campaign for Youth Shelter. I am calling as a member of my faith congregation and a New Yorker to let you know how disappointed I am that your budget left out homeless youth. It is crucial that you commit to add an additional \$3 million to the Homeless Youth Services budget, every year, until all our youth have a safe place to sleep every night."

Facts & Figures on Youth Homelessness in NYC:

- At least 3,800 youth live on the streets of NYC every night, not counting youth who are couch surfing, having survival sex, or staying in unsafe situations to avoid the street.
- There are less than 250 beds for homeless youth in NYC.
- Governor Cuomo and the NYS legislature last year slashed state funding for homeless youth shelters by 50% and have failed to propose restored or sufficient funding.

Our Moral Obligation:

- Every young person deserves to be provided with safe shelter. Youth should not be thrown out of their homes, nor should they be left out on the street.

LGBTQ Youth Homelessness:

- 40% of homeless youth in NYC identify as LGBTQ. As many as 25% of LGBTQ youth are rejected by their families when they come out and end up on the street.
- LGBT youth are poorly served by the city's shelter system. They experience violence and harassment because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. Many find that it is safer to live on the street.
- 62% of homeless LGBT youth have considered or attempted suicide, and many are at high risk for HIV infection and hate violence.

Shelter of Peace Weekend of Prayer and Learning: January 20-22nd, 2012

Facts & Figures on Youth Homelessness in NYC:

- At least 3,800 youth live on the streets of NYC every night. This doesn't count youth who are couch surfing, bouncing around from apartment to apartment, having survival sex, or staying in other unstable or unsafe situations to avoid being on the street.
- There are less than 250 beds for homeless youth in NYC.
- Governor Cuomo and the NYS legislature last year slashed state funding for homeless youth shelters by 50% and have failed to propose restored or sufficient funding.
- Shelter beds are funded by a combination of city and state funding. Every year, Mayor Bloomberg has tried to cut funding substantially, so every year we have to fight back along with our allies in the City Council.

Our Moral Obligation:

- Every young person deserves to be provided with safe shelter. Youth should not be thrown out of their homes, nor should they be left out on the street.
- We need to add enough capacity so that every young person has a safe place to sleep. We cannot afford to lose a single bed -- we need more beds!

LBGTQ Youth Homelessness:

- 40% of homeless youth in NYC identify as LBGTQ.
- As many as 25% of LBGTQ teenagers are rejected by their families when they come out, and end up on the street.
- LBGT youth are poorly served by the city's shelter system. They experience violence and harassment because of their sexual orientation and gender expression. Many find that it is safer to live on the street.
- More than 1,000 LBGTQ youth are homeless in NYC on any given night. Over the course of a year, many more experience homelessness.
- 62% of homeless LBGT youth have considered or attempted suicide, and many are at high risk for HIV infection and hate violence.

How to take action!

The Governor's budget failed to include vital funding for homeless youth. **Take action:** send him a letter and sign the petition! <http://shelterofpeace.org/end-youth-homelessness-in-nyc/>

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Tell him: "I am a strong supporter of the Campaign for Youth Shelter. I am calling as a member of my faith congregation and a New Yorker to let you know how disappointed I am that your budget left out homeless youth. It is crucial that you commit to add an additional \$3 million to the Homeless Youth Services budget, every year, until all our youth have a safe place to sleep every night."

New York City Youth Homelessness Budget Information

Preface: Gaining accuracy in the number of homeless youth on the streets is a difficult if not impossible task. There has been only one comprehensive attempt to place numbers on the issue. The Homeless Youth Survey of 2008 has become generally accepted as representative of the homeless youth population in New York City. Since 2008 the waiting lists at the Ali Forney center has increased by 40% indicating that there are more homeless youth today.

New York City Youth Homelessness Summary:

- Number of homeless youth in NYC every night - 3,800
- Number that identify as LGBTQ - 1,600 (42%)
- Number of shelter beds funded by the State and City – 250
- Number of LGBT specific shelter beds funded by the State and City - 42

New York City and State Budgets: While waiting lists at shelters have grown, funding for homeless youth services has decreased. Youth shelter services in New York City are funded by a combination of city and state budgets. While the NY State budget¹ has been slashed by 64% in the past 4 years, the NY City budget² has increased by only 1%, resulting in an overall loss of over \$240,000 of funding for beds and essential services.

Advocacy Agenda: Last year, homeless youth advocates successfully reinstated the proposed City budget cut through getting the City Council to plug the gap with discretionary funds. This year the Campaign for Youth Shelter is calling for an additional \$3 million in funding from the City and State budgets to create an additional 100 beds until there are no longer youth on the streets.

¹ NY State budget for homeless youth:

Fiscal Year	Budget	% Change
2008	\$2,089,000	
2009	\$1,654,000	- 21%
2010	\$1,431,000	- 13%
2011	\$1,488,000	+ 4%
2012	\$744,000	- 50%
2103	\$744,00	

² NY City budget for homeless youth:

Fiscal Year	Budget
2008	\$10,500,000
2009	\$11,100,000
2010	\$12,100,000
2011	\$12,700,000
2012	\$12,600,000



Weather Report

It's finally starting to feel like winter, and falling temperatures mean that living outside is even more dangerous for our homeless youth. Please join us in sharing the weather report with your congregation in your weekly service:

"Tonight the forecast is for mostly cloudy skies, with a low of 35 degrees, and 20% chance of rain. While we gather here, there are at least 3,800 youth without homes in NYC. Forty percent of these youth identify as LGBTQ, and there are less than 250 city- and state-funded shelter beds for youth. As a community, we continue to work and pray for a shelter of peace."

Shelter us, and may we be a shelter.

God of Abraham and Sarah,
Divine Spirit, Who blows open
the walls of our tents,
the doors of our homes,
and the fabric of our lives:

Open us to the world around us, as a blessing and not as a curse.
Let us encounter those who are strangers, as a blessing and not as a curse.
Take us in to Your presence, and may we make Your presence felt.
Shelter us, and may we be a shelter.

God of mercy!
You sustain all life with love,
You give life to those who are dead to the world.
Your compassion surrounds us like the womb.
You support those who stumble,
You heal those wounded whose shelter has become a prison.
You cover us when we sleep in the dust.
You wake us when our slumber threatens.

God of justice!
Wipe the dust from our eyes,
Shake the plugs from our ears,
Rip the gags from our mouths,
Break the armor from around our hearts.

Give our spines the strength to stand,
Give our legs the courage to lead,
Give our hands the power to create new and enduring shelters of peace.

And may every bone in our body cry out:
God, can we be anything like You? You rescue the poor from those who abuse
power, from those who steal what is theirs. You hear the plea of the humble, the
agony of the poor; You listen, and You grant them the power of redemption.

Hear us, and may we learn to listen.
Guide us, and may we learn to be guided.
Speak to us, and may we speak truth.
Shelter us, and may we be a shelter.

--Guy Austrian, Cooperberg-Rittmaster Rabbinial Intern
Congregation Beit Simchat Torah
November 8, 2011

Child Sacrifice: Playing Sarah, Jake Goodman

Sh'ma: A Journal of Jewish Ideas, Sh'ma Blog, September 22, 2011*

I understand the Akedah, the story of the binding of Isaac, in the context of a people beginning to break away from an age-old tradition of child sacrifice. Science played little role in the world in which they lived. What caused earthquakes? Gods. What caused storms? Gods. What caused famine? Disease? Pestilence? War? Gods. What could one do to gain any sense of control over the chaos of life? Appease the the gods. How? Offer up as a sacrifice the thing that you loved more than anything else: your child. Let the gods know: we understand how insignificant we truly are, how completely at your mercy we are, how much we desire to be in your favor. What could be more important than this? Our survival as a human race depends on it. (The stakes are Battlestar-Gallactica-high.)

Somehow, a shift occurred. For some reason—it seems incomprehensible—some people decided that they were no longer willing to sacrifice their children to the gods – not even if it was to the one true God. Perhaps too many famines failed to end. Perhaps they had lost too many children. Perhaps too many lost their own brothers and sisters, and refused to visit the sins of their parents upon their own children.

Eventually, the tribal leaders faced a crossroads: insist upon child sacrifice and face losing support of the people, or re-frame the narrative away from child sacrifice to keep the people, but do it in a way that is sure to please the one true God. We know which road they took.

Today, we continue to sacrifice our children. For many of us, it is more shameful to have gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT, or queer) kids than it is to reject them completely and throw them on the street like trash. According to a report³ by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, between 20-40% of all homeless youth identify as LGBT. (Given the fact that only 3-5% of the general population identifies as LGB, this is especially alarming.) Upon coming out, 50% of gay teens experienced a negative reaction and a full 26% were kicked out of home. The Center for American Progress reports⁴:

“Family rejection of gay and transgender youth often leads to attempted suicide. According to a 2009 study, gay youth who reported higher levels of family rejection in adolescence were 8.4 times more likely to have attempted suicide than their gay peers who did not experience family rejection. They were also 5.9 times as likely to have experienced depression, 3.4 times as likely to have used illicit drugs, and 3.4 times as likely to have had unprotected sex.

³ Ray, Nicholas. (2006). *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth: An Epidemic of Homelessness*. New York: National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and the National Coalition for the Homeless. <http://www.thetaskforce.org/downloads/HomelessYouth.pdf>

⁴ Sifra Quintana, Nico, Josh Rosenthal, and Jeff Krehely. (2010). *On the Streets: The Federal Response to Gay and Transgender Homeless Youth*. Washington D.C.: Center for American Progress. http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2010/06/on_the_streets.html

“Suicide becomes more of a danger when a gay and/or transgender youth becomes homeless. Sixty-two percent of gay and transgender homeless youth attempt suicide compared to 29 percent of their heterosexual homeless peers.”

This is child sacrifice. It is being practiced today. But to what end? To appease the gods. Scientific advancements do not stop people from believing, or hoping, that they can do something, anything, to help tame the chaos of life. Some still believe that homosexuality and, by extension, bisexuality and gender non-conformity are abominations because the Torah tells them so. God tells them so. Just as God told Abraham to sacrifice his one son — and to reject the other.

When will we reach our crossroads? When will we have seen too many families ripped apart? Lost too many children? Too many brothers, sisters, cousins, friends? When will we finally stop visiting the sins of our parents on our own children? When will we finally, once and for all, reframe the sacred narrative away from child sacrifice, away from the rejection of our youth, and toward a healthier, fuller, more empathic life for all?

Until that time, we are all still living out the Akedah — and most of us are playing the role of Sarah: unaware, excluded from the decision-making process, faultless. Dying from grief. Over and over again. Until we can no longer pretend to be unaware. Until we insert ourselves into others’ decision-making processes, no matter how uncomfortable. Until we no longer believe that we are faultless doing nothing.

--**Jake Goodman** is a champion of human rights, with a particular emphasis on LGBTQ activism and Jewish education. He is an outspoken voice for tolerance and open communication and understanding between people of different ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs, political persuasions, and sexual identities. He is a founding member of Queer Rising, a grassroots organization that demands queer rights through direct action, and his related writing can be found on The Daily Kos & Alef: The NEXT Generation.

<http://www.shma.com/2011/09/shma-blog-child-sacrifice-playing-sarah/>. **This blog was published on September 22nd, 2011, the one year anniversary of the day Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi committed suicide after he learned that his roommate used a webcam to spy on him as he kissed another man in their dorm room.*

**Erev Rosh Hashanah 5772 –
September 29, 2011
Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum**

Many years ago, I gave a drash about the *Akidah*, the binding of Isaac, which we read on Rosh Hashanah and I talked about the Wilfred Owen poem which talked about the *Akidah*, the binding of Isaac, as a metaphor for old men sending young men to die in war. It's a very powerful poem by Wilfred Owen, a British poet who died a week before Armistice during World War I. Benjamin Britten then wrote his famous *War Requiem* which was performed in the 1960s, and he used this poem in particular to talk about the relationship between an older generation and a younger generation. He used it very clearly as an image of horror, that in the story of Abraham and Isaac, we have a story of a father, the older generation which is suppose to take care of, and love and nurture – sending the younger generation to die in war. This story that Wilfred Owen wrote which Benjamin Britten then made very famous in the *War Requiem*, really speaks a lot about these days of Rosh Hashanah.

Today we call these days of Rosh Hashanah the *hayom harat olam*. This is the birthday of the world and in fact the torah readings which we read tomorrow and on Friday are really about the births of children. They're about families in pain. It's interesting that on these days where we celebrate the biggest, the most incomprehensible act of the creation of the world, we read the stories of – though very small stories really – about the birth of children. But not just the birth of children – about how hard it is to bear children; how hard it is to become pregnant if you really want to be pregnant; how hard it is to have kids if you really want to have kids and you haven't been able to. It's about once you have kids – how hard it is to raise them and how difficult it is to know what to teach them; and how to teach it to them; how painful it is to be in a relationship of parent to children. So on these days we observe and celebrate and talk about the creation of the whole world – the torah readings that we actually focus on, are on how difficult it is to be a child and how difficult if is to be a parent.

I don't know of many other communities besides ours for whom children is as loaded a topic— an issue, a very profoundly complex subject. Rabbi Joan Friedman gave a sermon over two decades ago, before I was rabbi here, which has become famous in the lure of CBST. Joan said some day, we are going to have children in our midst and we have to figure out what we're going to do about it. That was a very controversial topic. The gay community of those days was a community really without children, or only with children that had been brought into community because they were from previous heterosexual relationships. What vast transformation we've had as a community.

In our text which we read earlier tonight, right after the *sh'ma*, it says, "*veshinantram levaneha.*" You should teach your children. Classically that is read as the responsibility of parents to their children. But Jewish tradition also says if you don't have your own children – if you teach young people; if you are in a position of supporting them grow up – it as if you are parents to them.

We at CBST have two categories of young people for whom I believe we are morally responsible. One is the kids of our families who have arrived in every possible way that is conceivable. We are the first community in the history of humanity for whom every

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child which arrives, is a child which is a wanted child. Now it's not very easy in our community for many of us to have children and people have gone through enormous struggles to get pregnant; to find a surrogate; to adopt. In any form, we welcome the children that come into the lives of our community.

Yet there are many in our community for whom it's painful to see children. That a choice of coming out or getting married and having children meant one or the other. It remains painful for some to look around and see what we will see tomorrow. We have 110 children, signed up – registered for our children's programming tomorrow on the first day of Rosh Hashanah – a hundred and ten.

Then we have a whole other population in our broader community of people who did have children in heterosexual marriages and came out later in life and for whom coming out was a complex and caused a difficult relationship with their children. Often the story is told, and of course has a classic journey and it's about coming out to parents. But we know in our community that some of the most difficult and fraught and painful relationships are between adults who came out later in life and struggle with their children from a heterosexual marriage about their new identities.

These are the children of our families for whom we are responsible. These are children for whom we are responsible. Not just those of us who are legal or biological parents, but as a community, to model the values that we believe are timeless. We want to reject those communities, whether they're Jewish or not, elsewhere, that are empty and void of really, of values. We understand what family values are. We live and model them every single day. Those who use religion in any way to say that our families are somehow against G-d's will, I believe are *makalleh Hashem*— are blaspheming G-d's name. These are people who are using religion to cloak themselves in bigotry.

Now do I believe they have the right to say what they do? I do, actually. I like having them out there saying what they say. But I don't believe they have the right to codify and of that in to civil law.

We have to model for our families, whether we have children or not, that we are a community that understands commitment to the next generation. What Wilfred Owen said in his poem was not about the biological fathers sending their biological children to war. He was talking about a generation who did not care if a younger generation was cast off in the name of whatever World War I was in the name of. He was talking about understanding that generations have responsibilities to other generations – that we have to believe that the moral obligation we have is to make sure whatever day it is we leave this earth – it's and iota better for the children who are going to inherit it from us whether or not we have children ourselves. We have to hope that the little kids we see running around, who can be so annoying and noisy – one of them is going to discover the cure to

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cancer; one of them is going to write a great symphony or a great novel from which we all benefit – even if there are not our own children.

Veshinantram levaneha, we have a moral obligation to another category of young people. And those are kids who come out as LGBTQ, those who are struggling to understand what gender identity is, and what sexual orientation is. We have an obligation to first and foremost create a religious community which says, “G-d thinks you are fabulous! Don’t believe a word of the other side.” There is not enough of that, even in this day. We have an obligation to the homeless kids. In New York City tonight there will be 4,000 homeless teenagers on the streets on New York, thirty- forty percent of them are GLBT. You do the math. There are two hundred shelter beds for those kids.

On September 22, one year ago, this year, Tyler Clemente killed himself. He was a Rutgers’s student; we all know the story so well. Last week a fourteen year old named Jamey Rodemeyer killed himself. Both of them were bullied, were humiliated, and were tortured for being gay in some way. “It gets better,” we’re told. Well sometimes it doesn’t get better. Often it does and I believe in the overall vector, it’s true. Jamey, the boy who killed himself last week, made a video, last spring, an *It Gets Better* video, to give strength to other kids. Dan Savage in his starting the program *It Gets Better*, did a miraculous thing, I believe. If you’re not familiar with it by the way, go to the website as soon as you can, but not on your smart phones right now. When you can and you’re not here go to the *It Gets Better* website. There are remarkable – hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of videos.

What was the strength of this? The response to these kids – fourteen, thirteen, sixteen, twelve who kill themselves – a community of adults came forward to try and do something. By not just living our own personal lives but making our personal lives visible. By saying you might not be seeing models you need to see of queer people who grow up and actually are sort of well adjusted, we won’t go so far as to say well adjusted, sort of happy, ok, we all have bad days. But it’s worth hanging in there because we’ve all been tortured through those adolescent years.

Gabriel Blau at CBST started a fantastic project called *Strength Through Community*, that we would record our own videos at CBST linked up to the *It Gets Better*, and you can see many of the CBST videos on the *It Gets Better* website or on the CBST website, to say we asked our community to take responsibility?.

It’s not enough to say to a kid who suffering, “It gets better.” One must first think, what are the specific things that actually help it get better? What are they? For some of us it was the right medication and a good therapist. For some of us it was just surviving high school and getting out. For others it was finding community, of being around other people in whom we started to see ourselves and have a sense of hope.

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This outpouring of responsibility of one generation toward a younger generation is something that we in the queer community have been too slow to pick up. Now part of it is, I believe, is an anxiety that has been felt about the accusation of recruiting. There's a great deal of anxiety in our community about how much we reach out to young people. In fact, CBST's bylaws only list one group of people that can't be members—non-Jews can be members of CBST, non-Jews can be on the Board of Directors—but in the early bylaws they only person who couldn't be a member of CBST was someone under eighteen years old. Precisely because of the anxiety we had that we didn't want to be seen as recruiting young people. We've got to get over it folks. There is a younger generation, both the children of our members but also the children of those out there who don't necessarily have parents who are going to love and be supportive of who they are.

Now I want to say one other thing about the *It Gets Better* videos which are very very moving and I've spent I think I could say a dozen hours in the last couple of weeks watching them. Watching and listening to people who are from all walks of life tell their stories as a gay person, as a queer person –as the person who is always on the outside. That in itself creates community. But how do we make sure that we protect the kids who are going through it right now? One thing that has become clear and in the work that Gabriel did with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and one of our members Wyle Tene– is that we have to be careful not to just make an equation between being bullied and suicide – that is really dangerous, as the adults who are responsible for these young people. Many people, in fact most people, do not kill themselves in response to being bullying. The key factors are multiple. We can't only focus on bullying. We have to make sure we understand the multiple factors involved if we are to be the responsible adults in taking care of a generation. Now we can say we care about the young people in the world but unless we as a community do something about it – understand that whether or not we have children, we have a responsibility to younger generations. We must be visible models in a way that says to others, not just our friends but to the world at large, "We're here, we're queer, get use to it!"

This world we live in has seen great changes around GLBT rights. There were three categories in which most gay people have been oppressed: First it was criminal then it was a sickness, and then it's a sin. The criminal system said it was a crime to be gay. The psychiatric world said it was a sickness to be gay. And the religious world said it's a sin to be gay. In this country we've pretty successfully done away with first two. Religion however, still remains the strongest barrier to full equality GLBT in this country. In every state in which marriage is fought or in which curriculum in schools to teach that gay people are acceptable is contested, religion is the voice of bigotry. That is the reason, politically, that CBST is so important. Religiously, it because we know that when we strengthen our own souls, when we find away inside of ourselves to be strong, when we experience a connection to the divine the genuine and deep we will have the strength both to go out there and do the work that needs to get done but also we will be able to model, really for young people that is possible to be an adult, and yes it gets better and sometimes it get worse and then it gets better again. But it's possible if we reach out our hands and we say to these young people, we can together find away to live in G-d's presence, one day at a time, get the help you need, we as a community will not abandon you, we will find away to say G-d presence is in your life as it is in ours. G-d's presence

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is all we ask for on this Rosh Hashanah on some level. We just seek to spend one day, one moment experiencing G-d's presence, to know that G-d loves us exactly who we are. Exactly who we are and also wants us to keep getting better. That's what G-d asks of us. Can you in this room right now really feel for a moment that you are completely in deeply loved by the power which has created the most significant thing in your life which you love? That's G-d presence. Think about who or what you love the most in the world and then think about the power that created whatever that is or whoever that person is and imagine that G-d loves you as much. That's all we ask – to dwell in the house of Adonai. To experience G-d's presence and to reflect it back in the world. To not allow others who use G-d and language morality to hurt and kill and oppress and denigrate; to have the last word. They don't. To dwell in the house of Adonai, that's all I ask.