

From the Rabbi: I'm Thrilled Our Journeys Are Bringing Us Together

by Rabbi Laurie Green

To our new Bet Mishpachah family:

My partner/wife, Mira, and our son, Gus, are delighted to join the Bet Mishpachah family. From my first conversation with Keith Cohen to my visit in March, Mira and I knew how truly special Bet Mishpachah is. I do believe that some things are *b'shert*. I didn't seek an LGBT congregation or a straight congregation, a small congregation or a large congregation. I sought the right congregation, and it is such a blessing to have found it with all of you.

As you read this, it is likely *Parshat Masei*. *Masei* means journeys and it records the 20 stops the Israelites made in their 39 years wandering through the desert. Every station is named and as their names make clear, some of them were pleasant (named 'sweetness' and 'goodness') and some of them were miserable (named 'bitterness' and 'paralyzing fear').

Torah reminds us that we must know where we have been in order to know where we are going, and that the traumatic stages of life are as important as the joyous ones.

I couldn't be more thrilled that our journeys have brought us together. Mira, Gus, and I are so blessed to have journeyed to Bet Mishpachah for a long and blessed layover.

My own journey began in New Jersey, and sent me to college at the University of Pennsylvania (B. A. Religious Studies 2000), during which time I was a founding board member of NUJLS (the National Union of Jewish LGBT students). After college, I had a brief career in professional politics on the Hill (and elsewhere), while working in a volunteer leadership capacity in a number of progressive Jewish organizations.

From my entrance into rabbinical school, through my ordination in 2007, and until today, I have served pulpits in Colorado, New York and Connecticut, as well as working as a Jewish educator, a hospital chaplain, and an interfaith organizer and activist.

Most recently, I was the Associate Rabbi at Temple Beth Zion in Buffalo, NY. There I provided the full-spectrum of pulpit and pastoral work, while creating successful new initiatives for young adults, and establishing a social justice culture in the congregation. I am most proud of leading the congregation into what was new territory for them – public advocacy. In so doing, we swung the

marriage equality vote of Senator Mark Grisanti (R), thus making the congregation largely credited with bringing equality to New York State.

Mira has a Master of Public Affairs from the Maxwell School of Syracuse University. She will be working for Teach For America in Baltimore while studying at Johns Hopkins University. We will be making our home together in Baltimore, and journeying frequently to our new home at Bet Mishpachah, and Washington, both of which are our favorite cities.

Know that wherever your journey takes you, and wherever my journey takes me, I am always on the journey with you. In times of 'sweetness' and times of 'bitterness,' I am always here for you and your loved ones. I look forward to meeting you, not only at the JCC, but also for countless coffees, lunches, and Shabbat dinners in the months and years to come.

Eleh masei – these are the journeys. May our next stage together be a blessing for us all.