

The image is a graphic design. On the left side, there is a vertical bar composed of several diagonal stripes in shades of orange, red, yellow, green, blue, and purple. On the right side, there is a blurred version of the trans flag, which consists of horizontal stripes of light blue, pink, white, and light blue. Centered over the white stripe of the blurred flag is the text "Creating Communities of Belonging" in a bold, pink, sans-serif font.

Creating Communities of Belonging

Created in the Image of God

Genesis 1:26-27

בראשית א': כ"ו-כ"ז

(כו) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵנוּ וַיְרִדוּ
בְּדֹגַת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ
וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל-הָאָרֶץ: (כז) וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹקִים
אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹקִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה
בָּרָא אֹתָם:

And God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. They shall rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the cattle, the whole earth, and all the creeping things that creep on earth." And God created man in God's image, in the image of God, God created him; male and female God created them.

By the Numbers

40% of transgender adults have attempted suicide in their lifetime, compared to less than 5% of the general U.S. population.

LGBTQ+ youth and young adults have a 120% higher risk of experiencing homelessness

In 2022, only 37% of LGBTQ+ youth identified their home as an LGBTQ+ affirming space.

43% of LGBTQ+ Jews report no longer reported no longer engaging in exclusively LGBTQ+ spaces, such as bars, clubs, and gatherings since October 7, 2023



Key Findings



83%

of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their **sense of belonging in the Jewish community has been negatively impacted** by situations related to their sexual orientation, gender expression, race, or ethnicity.



89%

of respondents have **encountered microaggressions or stigmatizing perceptions** in Jewish spaces, with 50% reporting that these incidents occur frequently or very frequently.



81%

of respondents report **struggling to find other LGBTQ+ Jews of Color** or spaces where they can connect with them, while 91% prioritize fostering these connections.



86%

of respondents **disagreed or strongly disagreed** that there are **sufficient support systems** or resources for LGBTQ+ Jews of Color to turn to.



88%

of respondents reported a **lack of representation and understanding** of LGBTQ+ Jews of Color in the Jewish community.



77%

of respondents **feel burdened** by the need to explain aspects of their sexual orientation, gender expression, race, or ethnicity.


Source: [Threads of Identity: LGBTQ+ Jews of Color in the Fabric of Jewish](#), published February 2025

"It is not in the Heavens..."

Joseph	Ruth	David and Jonathan	Pesach Sheni	Daughters of Zelophechad	Who else or what other situations can you think of?
"Joseph...would groom his eyes, lift his heels, and curl his hair."	"But Ruth replied, 'Do not urge me to leave you, to turn back and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.'"	"I grieve for you, My brother Jonathan, You were most dear to me. Your love was wonderful to me, more than the love of women."	"Why must we be diminished by not being allowed to present God's offering at its set time with the rest of the Israelites?"	"Let not our father's name be lost to his clan just because he had no son! Give us a holding among our father's kinsmen!"	
Beresheit Rabbah 84:7	Ruth 1:16	II Samuel 1:25-26	Numbers 9:7	Numbers 27:4	

Share about a time you felt included or at home. What made you feel that way?

Share about a time that you felt excluded or uncomfortable. What made you feel that way?



**It is not in the heavens, that you should say, “Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?” Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, “Who among us can cross to the other side of the sea and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?” No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.
(Deuteronomy 30:12-14)**

The 4 I's

IDEOLOGICAL



The foundational beliefs or ideas in a society that suggest that certain identities or expressions are more “normal,” “valuable,” or “deserving” than others. In many cases, these ideologies go unspoken — but they still shape behavior and decision-making.

INSTITUTIONAL



The policies, practices, and norms of an organization that result in unequal outcomes or experiences for LGBTQ+ individuals. Dress codes, hiring practices, signage, and forms are all examples of institutional structures that can either reinforce exclusion or promote belonging.

INTERPERSONAL



The everyday interactions — comments, microaggressions, or behaviors — that communicate exclusion, discomfort, or bias. They often emerge from unexamined ideologies or internalized beliefs.

INTERNAL/INTERNALIZED



This reflects the psychological and emotional toll of navigating a world that marginalizes LGBTQ+ identities. LGBTQ+ individuals may internalize negative messages about their worth or safety, which can affect how they show up in community life.

From [Keshet](#), based on the 4 I's of Oppression, a framework articulated by Cheyenne E. Batista.

Institutional

You are welcome to use the bathroom that best aligns with your gender identity. An accessible, all-gender, single-stall bathroom is located near the kitchen towards the parking lot exit (through Margolis Hall).

Mount Zion welcomes everybody and *every body*.
We provide menstrual products in all our bathrooms.
We hope these are helpful for you and your loved ones!
If you have any questions, please feel free to ask any of our rabbis or cantors.



- Forms
- Signs
- Systems
- Trainings
- Building

Interpersonal

When engaging with a person whose name you don't remember, or you don't recognize...

Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
Nothing Is this your first time here? Are you new?	I forget names sometimes, I'm ____ (and my pronouns are ____). Sorry if we've met before, my name is ____ (and my pronouns are ____). How is/was the service/event for you?	It is alienating to be ignored or assumed to be new. This person might be a longtime member but may not be someone you've crossed paths with.

[Source](#): Keshet, Cultivating a Culture of Belonging

When you don't know what pronouns to use for someone...

Avoid Saying...	Say instead...	Why?
<p>Are you a man or a woman?</p> <p>*Using he/she pronouns when you're unsure</p> <p>The women's restroom is that way (assuming the gender of the person in front of you and only directing them to that location)</p>	<p>Sorry if we've met before, my name is _____ and my pronouns are _____ .</p> <p>What are your pronouns? I use (e.g., she/her; they/them)</p> <p>How is/was the service/event for you?</p> <p>The women's restroom is this way, the men's restroom is that way, the all-gender restroom is down the hall. Accessible stalls are available in xyz location.</p>	<p>Approximately 10% of the Jewish community identifies as LGBTQIA+, and up to 20% of Jews ages 18-29 identify as LGBTQIA+.</p> <p>It's important to address people with their correct pronouns, and not to assume or guess someone's gender or pronouns. (Avoid the term "preferred pronouns," since pronouns are not preference, just what you call someone).</p> <p>It is also important to let people make their own decisions about what bathroom they need and which ritual garments (like kippot) they wear, ensuring that everyone knows where everything is located.</p>

!!Check your curiosity!!

When engaging with someone whom you don't know their relationship status, sexuality, or whether they have/want to have children...

Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
Are you married? When are you going to have children? Do you have a husband/wife?	Sorry if we've met before, my name is ____ (and my pronouns are ____). How is/was the service/event for you?	These questions perpetuate the assumption that being married and having children are expected and something everyone should be working towards. They also assume greeters are entitled to this information, which we are not. It's important to avoid assuming the gender or gendered title (wife/husband) of anyone's partner.

Internal

The [Trans Halakha Project](#) seeks to empower and nourish the trans Jews whose experiences are not yet at the center of halakhic exploration.

- Trans authored Teshuvot
- Blessings and Rituals for Trans Lives

[Ritual Well](#) curates original Jewish rituals for Jews and fellow seekers. We publish rituals, ceremonies, prayers and poems to mark sacred moments in Jewish life.

[Keshet](#) envisions a world in which all LGBTQ+ Jews and our families can live with full equality, justice, and dignity. Keshet offers resources and programming.

[Eshel](#)'s mission is to build LGBTQ+ inclusive Orthodox Jewish communities. They offer programs and resources.

[LGBTQ+ Jewish books!](#)

[Sefaria](#) is home to 3,000 years of Jewish texts. We are a nonprofit organization offering free access to texts, translations, and commentaries so that everyone can participate in the ongoing process of studying, interpreting, and creating Torah. Check out their [Pride collection](#)



**After this session,
I commit to...**

Don't be a stranger!

Rabbi Heather Renetzky

Pronouns: she/they

Director of Congregational Engagement

Mount Zion Temple

1300 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105

Phone: 651-698-3881, ext. 112 | www.mzion.org

*Please note that I do not check email on Tuesdays, Shabbat
(sundown Friday-nightfall Saturday), or Jewish holidays*