

Activity Name: Coming Out Service

Purpose: To Jewishly honor the process of coming out on National Coming Out Day

Time: Half an hour

Materials: print-outs of the blessing sheet, eight candles, and a prayer space

Notes: This program is adapted from the New Jersey Gay and Lesbian Havurah, using their ceremony with an addition for the college campus

Activity: The leader and participants gather in the chapel/synagogue/prayer space prior to the start of Kabbalat Shabbat. The leader introduces Coming Out Day and the Jewish use of blessings which will be applied to the process of coming out. For each blessing, a participant reads the paragraph associated with the blessing and lights a candle while the entire congregation says the blessing. The service ends with *shehechyanu* and two additional prayers, after which the community begins their standard Shabbat services.

Changes/expansions: This service is intended to be done before Kabbalah Shabbat on the Friday closest to National Coming Out Day, but it could also be done at other times.

Coming Out Service Blessings & Candlelighting

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### **Coming Out to Ourselves**

There is a traditional blessing recited in the morning which acknowledges God for endowing creatures with the ability to distinguish between day and night and which thanks God for knowing when it is time to WAKE UP. Since coming out to ourselves is akin to an awakening, the dawn of a new life, we recite this blessing to mark the first step in the process of coming out.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have made strides this year in coming out to ourselves.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech ha-olam, asher na-tan l'shech-vee vee-nah l'hav-chin bayn yom u-vein lailah. *Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us the ability to distinguish between day and night. *Amen.*

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Coming Out to Family and Friends

When we come out to family and friends, those to whom we are closest, it is like lifting a curtain and being seen for the first time as we truly are. Our lives come out of hiding and mystery; we become visible and knowable. We also hope that through this process, our friends and family will come to see and care about the political, social and religious oppression that we face through homophobia.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have made strides in coming out to friends and family this year.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech haolam, po-tey-ach ee-VRIM. *Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who opens the eyes of the blind. *Amen.*

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### **Coming Out in the Dorm**

As college students, whether we are freshmen or seniors, the start of the new school year means the start of a new living situation. As gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people, this means we must come out again—every year—to new roommates and dormmates. We face the risk of rejection, of homophobic remarks, and of

violence. It takes particular strength to open ourselves up this way to those whom we must see and live with every day.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have made strides this year in coming out to those they live with.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech haolam, she-ko-cho ug-vurah malei olam.  
*Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, whose strength and power fill the universe. *Amen.*

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Coming Out at Work

Coming out at work may put us at financial risk, threatening our material security and career aspirations. Choosing to come out at work is a declaration of independence, whether we are in a work-study job during the year or a full-time job during the summer or after graduation. As Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered people in the United States, we say this blessing collectively to celebrate our hard-won legislated freedom from discrimination in the workplace, acknowledge how far we have to go, and honor the strength of our elders who made this blessing possible.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have made strides this year in coming out at work.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech haolam, she-ah-sah-ni benlbat choh-rin. *Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who has made me a free person.
Amen.

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### **Becoming Involved in the Gay Community**

In the covenant of the rainbow, God promised human beings that their world would never again be destroyed by a flood. They would never again have to seek safety by huddling in the dark, walled-in place of the ark. When our coming out process leads us into the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community, their strength and solidarity heighten our resolve to remain out and renew our covenant to work toward making the world a place where no one will need to hide again in the ark of the closet.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have made strides this year in our involvement in the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech haolam, zo-cher ha-breet. *Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who remembers the covenant (of the rainbow). *Amen.*

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Coming Out in the Jewish Community

Many of us have felt alienated from the Jewish Community as we have faced the process of coming out. We felt that, because we were different, we would no longer be welcomed there. By coming out as Jewish gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people, we gather together and claim our place as equal members of our Jewish communities, and are in the position to educate others about the reality of our existence.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have worked this year toward integrating our Jewish and GLBT identities. In lighting this candle we celebrate our twice-blessed lives.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu melech ha-olam, ha-mik-abetz nid-chay ah-mo yis-ra-el.
Amen.

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who gathers the dispersed of your people, Israel. *Amen.*

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### **Coming Out to the Larger World**

The coming out journey culminates at the point where we are out everywhere, both in our immediate world—with our resident assistants, our professors, people at local stores, etc.—and in the world-at-large—on television and in movies, newspapers, books and magazines. The blessing we are about to say was originally designated to be recited upon seeing people who are physically unusual, such as dwarfs and giants. By blessing these people, we are reminded that EVERYONE on this earth is a blessing created by God. By coming out in all aspects of our lives, we hope, also, to change people's perceptions of us, and to help them recognize that we, too, are God's children and therefore equally deserving of blessing.

We light this candle to honor and sustain all of us who have made strides this year in coming out in our larger world.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech haolam, mi-sha-neh ha-briy-ot. *Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who varies the nature of your creatures. *Amen.*

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Hope for Those Still in the Closet

In the midst of our celebration, we also remember the people who have not even begun this coming out process, who have yet to start the journey toward self-acceptance and still hide fearfully behind the closet door.

We light this candle to encourage ourselves to lovingly reach out to these people through our own visibility and help liberate them from their fear, as others have supported and encouraged us in our struggles to find our way.

Baruch ata adonai, eh-lo-hey-nu meh-lech haolam, mah-teer ah-soo-rim. *Amen.*

Blessed are you, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the Universe, who liberates the bound. *Amen.*

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### **Shehechyanu**

Baruch ata Adonai eh-Io-hay-nu meh-Iech ha-olam, she-he-cheh-ya-nu ve-kee-ye-ma-nu ve-hee-gee-a-noo la-z'man ha-zeh. *Amen.*

Blessed are You, Adonai, our God, Ruler of the universe, who has given us life and has sustained us and has enabled us to reach this day. *Amen.*

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Odechah

(from Hallel)

Odecha ki ani-tan-ni, va-t'hee li l'yishu-ah.
Eh-ven ma-ah-su ha-bo-nim, hai-tah l'rosh pi-nah.
Me-ait a-do-nai hai-tah zoht; he ni-flaht be-a-nai-nu.
Zeh ha-yom a-sah a-qo-nai, na-gilah ve-nis-me-chah bo.

I am indebted to You for having answered me; You have become my salvation.
The stone which the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.
This is God's doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.
God has made this day; Let us be Gay and rejoice in it.

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### **T'filat Haderech**

May we be blessed as we go on our way,  
May we be guided in peace,  
May we be blessed with health and joy,  
May this be our blessing. *Amen.*

May we be sheltered by the wings of peace,  
May we be kept in safety and in love,  
May grace and compassion find their way to every soul,  
May this be our blessing. *Amen.*