

# 20/20 VISION



ESHEL PARENT RETREAT  
**20/20 VISION**

FOCUS ON OUR CHILDREN,  
OUR FAMILIES, OUR  
COMMUNITIES, OURSELVES



# Welcome

## Welcome to the 8th Annual Eshel Parent Retreat

This year is a year like no other. For many of us, this year has forced us to focus on what's most important to us; the health and well-being of our loved ones and family. This year's retreat, *20/20 Vision; Focus on Our Children, Our Families, Our Communities, Ourselves*, kicks off a year of opportunities for us to gather in order to gain clarity about our needs as parents, as well as the needs of our LGBTQ children.

This weekend we will hear from some exciting speakers, gather in smaller discussion groups (called "Chaburah Groups") and have an opportunity to learn, play, and continue to build this growing community that started to coalesce 7 years ago at our very first retreat.

With a click of a button we will all be together in the virtual space. But some of the expectations and hopes for this time together are similar to when we are in the same physical space. Please read page #7 to find out more.

This weekend would not be possible without a few devoted volunteers who have been meeting since last year's retreat, giving thought and attention to every detail. Special thanks to **Suzi, Peninah, Terri, and Yocheved** for all their effort and hard work. For them, as for many of us, this community is something they have worked hard to build; your participation makes it a reality. It has been an honor and joy to work with them and our regular hevruta has provided a respite during this difficult time in our world.

Eshel would like to also thank all of the individuals who contributed financial support; your generosity is so appreciated. Eshel's work in helping families with an LGBTQ child find a place and keep their home in Orthodoxy would not be possible without you.

We look forward to spending this time with you and building this community together.

With gratitude for this community,

**Miryam Kabakov**  
Executive Director



# Schedule of Events

## THURSDAY, DEC. 3RD

All times are in Eastern Time Zone

**To get into the main Zoom Meeting Room: [Click here](#) (pw: EPR2020)**

- 7 pm Newcomers' orientation: never been to a retreat before? This is for you!
- 7:25 Gather in the main zoom room for welcome and group guidelines
- 8-9 *When rabbinic families have an LGBTQ child* with Rabbi Chaim & Suzie Marder
- 9-9:40 Break-out rooms/Chaburah Groups - bring a photo of your child, if you wish
- 9:45 Gather in the main zoom room

## SATURDAY, DEC. 5TH, MOTZEI SHABBAT

- 8:15 pm Gather in the main zoom room
- 8:30 Havdallah
- 8:45 Film: *Marry Me, However*  
<https://vimeopro.com/go2films/marry-me-however-eshel>  
**Password: Go2EshelFilm**
- 9:45 Gather for discussion in the main zoom room with Motti Salzberg and Eshel Board chair Shlomo Ashkinazy
- 10:15 Fun & games with Becky

## SUNDAY, DEC. 6TH

- 9 am Gather in a separate zoom room for Yoga with Christine Bloom (PW: EPR 2020)
- 9:30 Coffee & icebreaker
- 10-11 *It is not good for the human to be alone* with Keynote Speaker Rabbi Benny Lau
- 11:15-12:15 Break-out rooms/Chaburah Group
- 12:30 Lunch & Kosher Foodie Tour with Elie Katz
- 1:30 *Goldilocks and the Three Orthodoxies: Traditional Responses to Same-Sex Relationships* with Rabbi Steve Greenberg
- 2:45 Talk back with filmmaker Rabbi Vardi
- 3:45-4:15 Closing
- 4:15 Decompress with Happy Hour (Optional)



**All links to sessions are above  
and on page #6**



# Speaker Bios

## **Chaim and Suzie Marder**

**Suzie Marder**, LCSW is the school social worker at Westchester Day School (WDS) in Mamaroneck, NY, for more than two decades. She also has a private counseling practice in White Plains, NY. Suzie has spoken on various topics related to parenting, anxiety, family dynamics, and behavior management throughout the tri-state area.

**Rabbi Chaim Marder** has served as the spiritual leader of the Hebrew Institute of White Plains since 1995, and leads the community with warmth, insight, and wisdom. Prior to his arrival in White Plains, Rabbi Marder served as a rabbi in Providence, RI and Riverdale, NY. Rabbi Marder is involved in many communal organizations, both locally and nationally. He is a former Vice President of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and current Vice President of the International Rabbinic Fellowship (IRF). Rabbi Marder holds a Master's degree in Jewish History from the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University, and received rabbinical ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary at Yeshiva University. He also studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion in Israel.

Suzie and Chaim are partners in caring for the Hebrew Institute of White Plains community. Together they have seven children, and two grandchildren.

**Shlomo Ashkinazy**, LCSW has been recognized as a leader in the LGBT rights movement for more than 40 years. He was a founding member of the National Lesbian and Gay Task Force and a founding Board Member of the LGBT Community Center in NYC. The first openly gay MSW student in the country, he became a founder of The Hetrick Martin Institute, providing services for LGBTQ youth and their families. As its first Clinical Director he created the Harvey Milk School, a high school serving LGBT youth and served as its first Principal. He currently sits on the LGBT Advisory Panel to NYC Police Commissioner. Since becoming a Ba'al Tshuva (a returnee to Judaism) in 1979, he has worked to help Orthodox LGBT people reconcile their religious identities with their sexual orientation, and has also been active in educating the Orthodox community about this issue. He has been running a monthly discussion group for Orthodox Gay men since 1983.



# Speaker Bios

**Rav Benny Lau** is the founder and co-head of the Israeli initiative 929 along with Gal Gabbai. In addition, he served as the rabbi of the Ramban synagogue in Jerusalem for many years and is a community leader, activist, author, and public speaker.

**Christine Bloom** is the proud mother of three children who are all over the spectrum regarding their gender, sexual orientation and religious lifestyle... Simultaneously as her middle child first came out as gay and then transgender, her marriage collapsed and she had to adjust and open her mind to a whole new set of circumstances. In looking for tools to overcome challenging times, she found that connecting with nature was providing much nurturing and soothing - and started a business in landscape and floral design (will gladly travel to your destination to design the floral décor of your LGBTQ simcha!) Practicing yoga (and more recently teaching as well) has been also significant in helping to go with the flow and enjoying how her children (and things in general) develop into their own being. The whole process has been a great learning experience, a chance to grow, to become more empathic and a better person."

**Miryam Kabakov** is Eshel's Executive Director. She has a background in organizational development, social research, program evaluation, social work, and community building. Miryam is the editor of *Keep Your Wives Away From Them: Orthodox Women, Unorthodox Desires* (North Atlantic Books, 2010) a collection of writings about the challenges and joys of LGBT Orthodox Jews. Previously, she was the national program director of AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps, Coordinator of LGBT programming at the JCC Manhattan, and the first social worker at Footsteps.

**Rav Mordechai Vardi** is the rabbi of Kibbutz Rosh Tzurim. As well, he is a director, scriptwriter, and instructor at Ma'aleh school of Television, Film, & the Arts in Jerusalem. He wrote the screenplay for the movie "Halake," produced and directed a 2017 documentary titled "The Field" and is the producer and director of "Marry Me However."

**Motti Salzberg** is a clinical social worker in private practice who specializes in the treatment of sexual and other traumas. He formerly worked in Jewish education with both adults and children. He has four children from his first marriage, and currently lives in Maplewood, NJ.

**Rabbi Steven Greenberg** is the founding director of Eshel and works on special projects and development. He is also a faculty member of the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. He is the author of the groundbreaking book, *Wrestling with God & Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), which won the Koret Book Award for Philosophy and Thought. He lives with his partner Steven Goldstein and his daughter Amalia in Boston.



# Meet the Team

**Peninah Taragin Gershman** is from Silver Spring, Maryland. She and her husband Greg are the parents of three amazing young adults. Her oldest son, who is now 21, came out as gay 7 years ago and Peninah attended her first Eshel retreat not long after. She has co-chaired the parent retreat for the past 4 years. In her spare time, Peninah works for the federal government and has recently started to needlepoint. Additionally, she loves to play a good game of Jewish Geography, so feel free to challenge her at any time. The parents and friends she has made through Eshel (especially the other committee members) have become a second family to Peninah and she is grateful to be in the presence of so many amazing people at this virtual retreat and any Eshel event. If you want to join the secret Eshel parent group on Facebook, friend Peninah and let her know that you want to join!

**Suzi Fuld**, along with her husband Lenny, are the parents of four adult children, two children-in-law, and two grandchildren. Their youngest child is gay. They have been involved with Eshel since their son came out and have helped create some of the parent initiatives such as the monthly support phone call and the parent retreat. Suzi is (proudly) the first straight member of the Eshel board.

**Terri Rosenberg** is from Highland Park, NJ, by way of Southern California so if she thinks it's too cold, you'll know why. Luckily, this is a virtual conference. She and her husband, Michael, are the parents of 3 adult children, one child-in-law and two adorable grandchildren. Their transgender daughter came out 5 1/2 years ago. This is Terri's 4th parent retreat and she is grateful for all of the support and friendships she has made through Eshel. She was happy to be asked to help again this year, and hopes you realize that Suzi, Peninah, Yocheved and Miryam are beyond amazing. Otherwise, Terri works as voice/speech pathologist in central New Jersey and is determined to exercise daily especially during this pandemic.

**Yocheved Grunberger Lindenbaum** lives in Teaneck, NJ and is married to Nathan. They are grateful to be the parents of 5 adult children, 4 in-law children and grandparents to a bunch of girls and 2 boys. Her youngest son Yitzi, 24, is gay and lives in Israel, now studying math and computer science at Hebrew University. Due to Covid, Yitzi learned how to prepare Pesach on his own, and now bakes challah every erev shabbat. Nathan is Head of Tax at a Hedge fund, and Yocheved is a chaplain at a hospice. Their experience at the parent retreats have been a source of support and deep friendships all year long. Eshel events and friendships have helped them face the nexus of LGBTQ and Orthodoxy with bravery and compassion.



# Zoom links and access

We will be meeting in one main Zoom room during the retreat. The only exceptions are for the film Saturday night on Vimeo and the Sunday morning Yoga class. See schedule for all of these links or see below.

## **All zoom passcodes are: **EPR2020****

For the best Zoom experience: Download the latest version:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/download>

## **Zoom Meeting link for the retreat**

<https://zoom.us/j/96913809696?pwd=aU1YM3dVdWdVb1NzSnUTTJoNEl1QT09>

One tap mobile+16465588656,,96913809696#

Dial by your location+1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 969 1380 9696

**Passcode: **EPR2020****

[Find your local number](#)

**[Click here for Film: Marry Me, However](#)** (Film is subtitled)

Password: **Go2EshelFilm**

**[Click here for Sunday's Yoga class](#)** (pw: EPR2020)

## **Access to retreat for the hard of hearing:**

You will notice a button in the top left corner of your Zoom screen that reads "Otter Live Transcript" If you wish to see a live transcription of the session, click on it and select "View Otter Live Transcript." A new window will open up with the live captions. You may have to adjust the size of the Otter and Zoom windows on your screen so you can see both at the same time.

## **NEED HELP DURING THE RETREAT?**

If you are having technical issues during the retreat, feel free to contact the Eshel Help Desk at #302-354-0705

email: [Francesco@eshelonline.org](mailto:Francesco@eshelonline.org)

If you need help with anything else, or feel that you need to talk to someone on the team in between sessions, or if you feel "unsafe" during a session, reach out to us at: [info@eshelonline.org](mailto:info@eshelonline.org).with the subject line: NEED HELP



# Confidentiality & Chaburah Groups

## **Expectations: confidentiality and being present**

This retreat is for parents. Only the parent (or parents) who have signed up for this retreat can attend and participate.

*Confidentiality.* We come together this weekend in the spirit of trust. We take confidentiality seriously and trust that all participants will abide by the confidentiality agreement made upon registering. Some of you may still be "in the closet" regarding your child's identity outside of this retreat. Please do not repeat what you heard someone say unless you have that person's explicit permission. Also please do not repeat anything you heard from a smaller session within this retreat to individuals not attending that session. In the context of this virtual retreat, confidentiality also means:

- You agree not to reveal the identity of any participant to anyone outside of this retreat.
- You agree to not have your screen visible or audio audible to anyone around you, except for another parent who is registered for the retreat.
- You agree not to record, photograph or transcribe any part of the retreat that will reveal anyone else's identity. If you are using Otter you may not download the transcript of the sessions.

*Expectations concerning attendance at this virtual retreat:* Attending includes being attentive to what is being said. Participants are encouraged to keep their video on, but we understand that some may wish to keep their cameras off. Participants who wish to may change the name that appears on screen for additional privacy.

While some of the speakers will be recorded, Eshel will not capture any identifying information on the participants in those recordings.

If any part of these rules is unclear, please ask for clarification.

Thank you for taking these expectations seriously.

## **What's a Chaburah Group?**

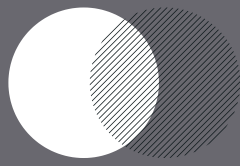
Your Chaburah group is a "home base" to connect with a smaller group of people and reflect on your experience. You should speak from your own experience and listen to other people's experience. Chaburah groups will meet once on Thursday night, and once on Sunday.

Confidentiality is essential within the Chaburah groups. Please do not repeat what you hear in the group (even amongst other retreat participants).

*Time:* Please come on time and stick to the time limits so everyone can get a chance to share.

*Attendance:* Even if you don't feel the need or desire to be at a group, we ask that you attend anyway. Your fellow group members will be counting on you to make the Chaburah group a worthwhile experience. If you don't feel like talking in the group, you can pass until you are ready.





# Thanks to our Supporters

## **Conference Sponsorship**

Lenny & Suzi Fuld

Miriam & Ira Parness

In tribute to Rabbi Steve, Miryam, and the planning committee and staff.  
Thank you all for putting this together!

## **Patron**

Anna & Rob Brimm

Joel Gross & Mindy Shankman

Nathan & Yocheved Lindenbaum

Rachel & Allen Friedman

In tribute to Miryam, Rabbi Steve and all those responsible for the amazing work of Eshel

Kenneth & Regene Prager

To Steve Greenberg, Miryam Kabakov

## **Full Sponsorship of Session**

Linda Sugarman

Jessica & Gary Rozenshteyn

James Rozenshteyn

Ken Rosenstein & Sunnie Epstein

In honor of the Boston branch of our family, Rachie, Liz, Talie, Mimi, and Miriam

Greg & Peninah Gershman

In honor of all of the amazing parents who are attending this virtual retreat. Your children are so lucky.

## **Partial Sponsorship of Session**

Curtis & Sheera Sobin

Diane Sandoval

Janice & Marc Adler

Joyce & Jeffrey Joseph

Michael & Felene Schwartz

Smadar & Jerome Parness

Mattice & Marc Aaronson

To Miryam Kabakov and all the staff of Eshel

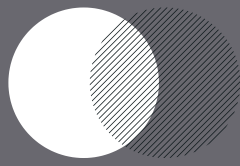
Shoshana Poloner

In honor of all of Peninah's hard work for Eshel..

...and for helping me personally and countless others through difficult times with her insight and humor!

The Kabakov children

In honor of their father Bernard



# Thanks to our Supporters

## **Other Donors**

Annick Abrams  
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Amalia Haas  
Jessica Rozenshteyn  
Batsheva Williamson  
Steven & Paula Gopin

Help create an inclusive Orthodoxy for you and your family.  
[Support Eshel here.](#)

## **SPECIAL THANKS TO STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Thank you to the local Eshel chapter leaders who are helping people every day in their communities.

Special thanks to Francesco DiMaio and Meira Davidowitz and the entire Eshel staff and board for their tireless work in helping to make this retreat happen.

