

First Complete Jewish LGBTQ Prayer Book Published

By Jo Ellen Green Kaiser

Siddur Sha'ar Zahav brings together liturgy, commentary, and art in an egalitarian, LGBTQ-normative format

June 26, 2009- San Francisco, CA,—In time for Pride 2009, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav is proud to announce the publication of Siddur Sha'ar Zahav, the first complete LGBTQ Jewish prayer book. With over 600 beautifully designed and art-filled pages, this siddur includes complete weekday, festival and Shabbat services, as well as special sections of Brachot/Blessings, Chesed v'Emet/Remembrance, and Shirim/Songs.

“Never before has a single prayerbook attempted to provide such a comprehensive Jewish resource specifically designed to address the lives and needs of LGBTQ as well as straight Jews,” said Michael Tyler, chair of the synagogue’s siddur committee and a co-editor of the siddur.

Based on a thirty-year history of innovative liturgy, Siddur Sha'ar Zahav is the work of an entire community, with over 100 congregants of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav as well as clergy contributing original texts and artwork to the siddur. These readings dive deeply into our lives, our loves, and our sorrows, providing users with a deeply compassionate, profoundly personal entry to prayer.

This prayerbook, according to Rabbi Camille Shira Angel, spiritual leader of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, is one Jews will keep in their homes and close to their hearts: “These words are sacred. Using this book you will get a new sense of the kedushah, the holiness, of prayer. It brings us closer to the age-old sensuousness of the words of our tradition for our own time.”

Grounded in Reform theology, Siddur Sha'ar Zahav draws on prayers and readings from every major Jewish movement and tradition. From new blessings celebrating all aspects of our lives – health, family, bar/bat mitzvah, sexuality and gender identity, joining or leaving a community – to an entire section offering comfort during bereavement, this siddur offers a diverse and inclusive liturgy inspiring to Jews of all genders and sexualities. It is a prayer book that can be used by congregations and havurot, at shiva minyan and joyous celebrations, and also at home for personal reflection and prayer.



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“This book is not afraid to name the deepest human experiences,” Rabbi Angel said. “It invites us, all of us, to stand naked before God, to see – and to be seen.”

The name Siddur Sha’ar Zahav (literally, Golden Gate) refers both to the Golden Gate close to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and to the iconic bridge in the congregation’s home city of San Francisco. “We pray that this book can become a bridge between isolation and community, connecting LGBTQ Jews and our allies everywhere to the Jewish tradition,” Rabbi Angel said.

Siddur Sha’ar Zahav is now available for purchase for \$36 online at www.siddurshaarzahav.com, or purchases can send a check to Congregation Sha’ar Zahav, 290 Dolores Street, San Francisco, CA 94103. San Francisco and California residents should add applicable sales tax (\$3.42 per book in San Francisco, \$2.97 per book elsewhere in California). All purchasers should add \$10 for shipping for each book.

Rabbi Angel and the siddur’s editors are available for interviews: Contact Greg Lawrence, 415.861.6932 or greg@shaarzahav.org. Copies of the siddur will be made available for review on a limited basis. Contact Jo Ellen Green Kaiser, jgkaiser@earthlink.net



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