

Resources for Transgender Jews, Their Families, Friends, Communities, and Allies

by Vered Meir, 2009

This annotated bibliography is intended to aid transgender Jews, their families, friends, and communities in learning about issues related to being transgender and Jewish; rituals to facilitate rites of passage in the life of a transgender Jew; the histories of transgender issues in Jewish history and culture; religious issues relating to being transgender and Jewish. It also contains guides, curricula, and resources for Jewish institutions and schools. It is intended to provide resources for people of all ages, though some resources may be more relevant for some age groups than others.

For this bibliography, I have defined transgender according to the glossary found in the article “Making Your Jewish Community More Trans-Friendly. In this publication, Rabbi Elliot Kukla and Reuben Zellman define transgender broadly as:

“...anyone who knows themselves to be a gender that is different than the gender they were assigned at birth...(some) trans people may have an alternate gender identity that is neither male nor female, and for some people their gender identity may vary at different points in their lives. Some transgender people modify their bodies through medical means, and some do not.”

Jewish communities have come a long way in recognizing and welcoming gay, lesbian, and bisexual Jews. It is only recently, however, that transgender Jews are also having their voices heard in Jewish communities. Two organizations were founded in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s that deal with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in Jewish communities, though they have only recently begun to actively support transgender people and issues through explicit and concrete means, specifically by including resources created by transgender Jews. The websites of these two organizations, Keshet and Jewish Mosaic, will be explored in this bibliography for the content they provide for the above named interest groups. In those reviews, the sites have been reviewed specifically for their transgender content.

I have focused this bibliography on resources available either through the web or through a local public or university library because the primary audience for this bibliography is transgender Jews and their community and families, while the secondary audience is Jewish organizations and schools. If the latter are interested in pursuing these issues seriously, the websites for both Jewish Mosaic and Keshet have contact information for their education department or staff person who can work with them on a curriculum or training program for their purposes.

Finally, this bibliography is intended to be transparently supportive of Jewish transgender people in embracing their identity and learning how to live their lives within their community. As such, it focuses on resources written by transgender people, and it does not include any sources that are not affirming of transgender people, identities, experiences, or the choices that transgender people make.

JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS/ “LIBRARY” SITES

Keshet. <<http://www.keshetonline.org>>. Accessed 23 July 2009.

Keshet, founded in 1996, works for the full inclusion of LGBT Jews in Jewish life. Based in Boston, the organization only recently went national and as such, its programs and resources are Boston and east coast-focused. In Boston, Keshet offers social and cultural events for LGBT Jews and nationally, they offer support, training, and resources for Jewish organizations, synagogues, schools, and camps looking to make their communities more LGBT-friendly. Their site is also easy to navigate. Their resources page is less extensive than Mosaic’s or TransTorah’s, offering links to sources at other websites. Most of the links work and they are thorough. Their transgender links include TransTorah (reviewed below); the Dinah blog (reviewed below); just 3 publications that seem randomly chosen, some of which are outdated versions of publications available on TransTorah or Jewish Mosaic; and links to transgender organizations that are not specifically Jewish. The resources page also includes a bibliography that does not include many transgender sources. Keshet’s website is not recommended for a transgender person who is just coming out. However, its list of transgender organizations is a useful place to start if someone was curious about what organizations exist in the US. Keshet’s “Hineini” education materials are very GLB focused and do not include a lot of transgender issues.

Jewish Mosaic: The National Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity. <<http://www.jewishmosaic.org>>. Accessed 23 July 2009.

Jewish Mosaic, founded in 2003, encourages LGBT inclusion in Jewish life through visibility, advocacy, education, and research. Their site is easy to navigate. Mosaic’s extensive “Resources” contains an LGBT “resource library” that allows easy searching through categories, authors, and keywords and contains 31 articles on transgender issues, all downloadable in .pdf format. In each of these articles, it is clear what the source of the article is (publication or movement of Judaism, for example). Some of the resources overlap with those at TransTorah (reviewed below), though Mosaic’s library includes some sources on what different movements say about transgender people, including what, according to them, is permissible under Jewish law. Other resources include a section of movements

and what each of them say about LGBT issues (with small transgender section); Torah Queeries, an archive of Mosaic's weekly Torah portion commentaries; and a page on Transgender Resources, which includes a source called TransTexts. TransTexts has an introduction, though I was not able to find the actual source, where Jewish texts on transgender issues are discussed and analyzed. Their news page was updated in late June. Jewish Mosaic would be a great site for a Jewish adult who is coming out as transgender: it contains a wide variety of resources on Jewish transgender issues. It would also be relevant for Jewish educators or organizations looking to learn more about the issues.

TransTorah. <<http://www.transtorah.org>>. Accessed 21 July 2009.

TransTorah.org was launched in early 2009 by a collective in the San Francisco-Bay Area who are Jewish and transgender. The site is not the product of any organization, and the group does not raise funds for their efforts. TransTorah is a repository for the transgender-focused Jewish rituals and prayers that the founders and their community members were writing. The site is also meant to support Jewish organizations trying to make their communities friendlier to transgender people and to educate themselves about the issues faced by transgender people. The site has a clean and simple layout and is easy to navigate. The most extensive section is the “resources” section, which contains 16 downloadable articles in .pdf format. “Resources” includes ritual and liturgy; educational materials; essays; and sermons. The resources are limited to a handful of authors. The site also has a “learn more” section, which contains links to organizations and sites that support transgender inclusion; and general resources. Most of the links are active and have a description. The site also has a “services” section, which can connect the visitor to individuals (most of whom live in the Bay Area) who can do pastoral guidance, ritual facilitation, and trainings/workshops.

COMMUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS/101 RESOURCES

Bazant, Micah. “Trans Etiquette/Respect/Support 101.” **TransTorah.org, 2002.**
Accessed 23 July 2009. <http://transtorah.org/PDFs/Trans_Etiquette_101.pdf>

Micah Bazant's Trans Etiquette guide is a fantastic resource for both allies/friends/community members of transgender people and Jewish communities who are working to become friendlier to transgender people. Bazant covers issues faced by transgender people and explains clearly and non-judgmentally how non-trans people can respectfully avoid these issues or act in a more informed way. He goes through name and pronoun etiquette, invasive questions about bodies, out-ing, passing, transition, and others. Bazant ends with a list of positive steps that an ally can take in being an ally to transgender people.

Kol Tzedek. Gender-Variant People in the Bay Area Jewish Community. Report. San Francisco: Progressive Jewish Alliance, CA. March 25, 2009. Accessed 23 July 2009. <http://www.pjalliance.org/UserFiles/File/Gender_Variant_People_in_The_Bay_Area_Jewish_Community_from_Kol_Tzedek_3.25.09.pdf>.

Kol Tzedek's report on gender-variant people in the Bay Area is a compilation of anecdotal evidence and shared experiences of the "perceived organizational, social, and ritual needs" of transgender people. The authors are affiliated with a number of Jewish organizations in the Bay area grappling with LGBT issues. The report was published after they met with community members and rabbinical leaders to discuss how transgender people interact with the organized Jewish community (or do not). The report includes personal experiences of transgender people in the Bay Area; an overview and history of LGBT issues in the Jewish community (focusing on transgender issues); recommendations on how Jewish communities can be more inclusive and welcoming to transgender people; and a set of appendices with useful information. This resource, while written for Bay Area Jewish communities, is an excellent resource for any Jewish community looking to make concrete changes to be more inviting to transgender people.

Zellman, Reuben and Rabbi Elliot Rose Kukla. "Making Your Jewish Community Transgender-Friendly." TransTorah.org. 2007. Accessed 23 July 2009. <http://transtorah.org/PDFs/Trans_Friendly_Community.pdf>

This 4-page article, as indicated by its title, is directed specifically at Jewish community leaders. They offer concrete steps that Jewish communities can take to make their communities open and friendly to transgender people in the following categories: community-wide education; facilities (specifically bathroom); language; outreach; policy; political and social actions; ritual; and closes with a section on where community leaders can find further resources. This is a short but excellent resource, providing readers with both a basic understanding of the issues and concrete steps that they can take to improve their community. Like many resources in this bibliography, it should be used in conjunction with other resources. This resource pairs well with Micah Bazant's essay above. Transgender people and allies may also find this a useful resource to distribute to community leaders when entering into a new Jewish community that means well but does not know what to do. This takes the responsibility off of the transgender person to have to talk about themselves and their needs in a way that feels too revealing or uncomfortable.

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS – TRANSGENDER JEWISH IDENTITY

Dzmura, Luke. “Zeek | Aliyah: Trans(Per)forming Jewish Ritual | Luke Dzmura.” *Zeek Online. Jewcy.* May 2006. Accessed 23 July 2009 <<http://www.zeek.net/605aliyah/index.php?page=1>>.

Luke Dzmura’s non-linear article is part personal narrative and part observations on the Jewish world. In this 3-part essay, Dzmura recounts an experience at synagogue at the Kiddush following Shabbat services and the assumptions about his gender that a person might make upon making a first impression. He goes on to discuss his difficult experience with restrooms, a common theme in transgender writing, though Dzmura offers new thoughts. He finishes with a complex discussion of going up to the Bimah for an aliyah and the gender assumptions that are part of this and many other Jewish rituals and traditions. Dzmura’s writing borders on postmodern academic and is at times dryly humorous and at times serious; it would likely be too complex for teens and for an adults who are just coming out. Rather, this article is recommended for an adult who is out as transgender and has experienced the world as trans; he or she might relate to many of Dzmura’s thoughts, experiences, and analyses. Additionally, he uses many words which may be unfamiliar for someone not from a traditional Jewish background.

Kanegson, Jaron. “A Young Man From Chelm: Or A Nontraditionally Gendered Hebrew School Teacher Tells All.” *Queer Jews.* Ed. David Schneer and Caryn Aviv. New York: Routledge, 2002. p. 55-69.

Jaron Kanegson, who was born female but identifies as neither and both male and female, writes a personal account that is clearly written, funny, sweet, and informative. He begins with a story about applying for a Hebrew school teacher job and being mistaken for a bar mitzvah student. She continues to write about her gender identity and Jewish identity (which includes a fascinating family history about his intermarried parents – his mother is Catholic), which ends with him becoming a feminist in college and finally coming out as queer. She writes honestly about feeling distant from Judaism for 10 years of her life until she was able to reconnect with it. He continues with his own understanding about gender and Judaism: its patriarchy but its flexibility and the ways that Jews continue to grapple with and change rituals and customs to fit their needs. She also discusses models of non-traditionally gendered beings in classical Jewish texts, and ends with a positive account of working at an LGBT synagogue in San Francisco. Kanegson’s article is a refreshing and complex account of a Jewish adult female-to-male experience that goes beyond simply being “a man in a woman’s body” (the traditional idiom of the transgender experience). It would be a good resource for any Jewish adult or teen exploring their gender identity.

Reifler, Nelly. "Serious Moonlight: A Nighttime Epiphany Leads to a Major Change." Tablet Magazine. 1 November, 2007. Accessed 24 July 2009. Tabletmag.com. <<http://www.tabletmag.com/life-and-religion/1321/serious-moonlight/>>

This short interview appeared in Tablet Magazine, a daily online magazine of Jewish news, ideas, and culture. It is one of the few articles in this bibliography about a Jewish male-to-female (MTF) transperson. Reifler interviews Laura Jacobs about her experience in coming out as transgender and being a spiritual person. Jacobs reflects on her childhood, when she thought she might become a rabbi, and how she gradually lost touch with her religious side as a teenager. Jacobs also reflects on the relationship between her past connection to Judaism and her decision to change her gender. Importantly, she also recounts coming out to her parents and their struggle to find someone to talk to: they visited a few therapist and did not find them helpful, and finally they sought the counsel of their rabbi and found that tremendously helpful. This interview would be a great place for an adult transwoman who is first coming out to begin. Her story about her parents' rabbi also makes it a great resource for a Jewish leader to learn from.

Wittlinger, Ellen. Parrotfish. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's, 2007.

Parrotfish is the story of one tenth grade high school student in his process as coming out as transgender to his family, friends and teachers. It includes specific issues that transgender guys face such as chest binding and issues more general to transpeople such as name changes, locker rooms, and bathrooms. The main character, Grady Katz-McNair, is from an interfaith family, having a Christian father and a Jewish mother. While much of the book centers around Christmas, there is mention of challenges his family navigates in relation to his mom and her family being Jewish. The audience for this book is wide – it can be read by allies and educators looking to learn more about trans teenagers and looking for content around trans issues for their materials. Transpeople 12 and up who want to relate to the experience of a main character would also find this book useful. Teenagers who might have a family member or friend coming out might find this book helpful as a support tool.

JEWISH RITUALS

Kukla, Rabbi Elliot Rose. “Asher Yatzar (The One who forms).” Ritualwell.org. Accessed 23 July 2009.

<<http://www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/adultpassages/sitefolder.2008-02-13.5770649914/primaryobject.2008-02-06.3825070059>>

Rabbi Kukla’s “Asher Yatzar” blessing is “a prayer of gratitude for our bodies: for men, women, intersex, transgender people and everybody else.” It is short and uses a traditional Hebrew one-line blessing with the translation: “Blessed are You, Eternal One our God, Ruler of the universe, who has formed the human being with wisdom.” An English paragraph follows, praising God as the source of life who formed us in many genders. It is a prayer for anyone looking to sanctify their gender identity within a Jewish framework. It would also be appropriate for someone who feels rejected by their Jewish community or feels that Judaism does not speak to their experience. A Jewish leader looking to make their community more transgender-friendly might include this prayer in their prayer book or other collection of liturgy.

Kukla, Rabbi Elliot Rose and Ari Lev Fornari. “A Blessing for Chest Binding.” TransTorah.org. Accessed 23 July 2009. <http://transtorah.org/PDFs/Chest_Binding_Blessing.pdf>

“This is a blessing for the act of chest binding, for FTM [female-to-male] transgender and/or genderqueer people, and anyone else who chooses to flatten the appearance of their chest.” In this blessing, Rabbi Kukla and Ari Lev Fornari are sanctifying the daily act of chest binding through a blessing. It is just one line with few explanatory words. The English translation is “For the sake of the mitzvah of ritual fringes and the mitzvah of self-formation.” Though it is not clear if one looked only at this blessing, the “fringes” portion of this blessing refers to Fornari’s Torah commentary “Bind These Words” (reviewed below). As with the “Asher Yatzar” blessing, this can be used by a transgender person or by a Jewish leader looking to make their community friendlier to transgender people.

Kukla, Rabbi Elliot Rose. “Trans/Gender Queer Jewish Wedding Service.” Ritualwell.org. Accessed 23 July 2009. <<http://www.ritualwell.org/lifecycles/adultpassages/sitefolder.2008-02-13.5770649914/primaryobject.2008-02-11.6051078310>>

In this source, Rabbi Kukla has rewritten the traditional Jewish wedding rituals for transgender and gender nonconforming and anyone who wishes to remove some of the gendered aspects of traditional Jewish wedding rituals. It is not intended to be lifted and used in its entirety; rather, Rabbi Kukla intends for users to choose parts of what he has written to use in their own ceremony. While the rewriting of gendered Hebrew is not particularly creative – Rabbi Kukla simply changes the subject gender to male and the active verb to female, or vice versa – it may be refreshing for a transgender Jew or their partner to see

that it is possible to create a wedding ritual that does not require a transgender person to name themselves as a gender with which they do not identify. If a couple is working with a rabbi who is unsure of what to do with the gendered portions of the traditional wedding rituals, they can use Rabbi Kukla's resource as part of the creation of their own ritual. The source includes an introduction and an adaptable ritual template.

Zellman, Reuben. "Prayer for Transgender Day of Remembrance." JewishMosaic.org. 1 November 2006. Accessed 24 July 2009. <http://www.jewishmosaic.org/resources/show_resource/167?resource_order=keyword>

In this two paragraph prayer, Zellman calls to mind all of the transpeople who have died senselessly and violently and ends with: Blessed are they, who have allowed their divine image to shine in the world / Blessed is God, in Whom no light is extinguished. This is a beautifully written prayer, all in English and therefore accessible to people with no Hebrew. With the exception of a mention of kaddish (the prayer said for a person who has died), this prayer can be used in any spiritual setting. Observing Transgender Day of Remembrance, and using this prayer, is a great example of a way for a rabbi to make his or her synagogue more inclusive and welcoming to transpeople.

JEWISH TEXTS AND SERMONS

Fornari, Ari Lev. "Parashat Ekev: Bind These Words." August 11, 2006. Jewishmosaic.org. Accessed 23 July 2009. <http://www.jewishmosaic.org/torah/show_torah/34>

Ari Lev Fornari's Torah commentary "Bind These Words" weaves together words from Torah that form the shema, the central prayer of shacharit, the Jewish morning service with words about female-to-male chest binding. Fornari creatively plays on the double entendre of "bind" in the Torah context and in the context about chest binding. Through this Torah commentary, Fornari also tells his own personal narrative about being a transgender Jew and feeling affirmed by sanctifying this daily task. Like many of the resources in the "rituals" category above, this resource is recommended for transgender people looking to sanctify their gender identity in a Jewish context. It might also be useful for a rabbi or teacher to use or teach with. Fornari writes in English and when he quotes text he does so in English, and he also explains each unfamiliar term, making this resource accessible to transgender Jews and allies with any Jewish educational background.

Kukla, Rabbi Elliot Rose. “A Created Being of Its Own: Toward a Jewish Liberation Theology for Men, Women, and Everyone Else.” [TransTorah.org](http://transtorah.org). Accessed 23 July 2009. <http://transtorah.org/PDFs/How_I_Met_the_Tumtum.pdf>

In this resource, Rabbi Kukla delves into ancient Jewish texts and explores the rabbinic gender categories of tumtum and androgynus, categories traditionally understood to have been invented by the rabbis of the text to explore the limits of Jewish law in relation to gender. Kukla reclaims these terms and interweaves his personal experience of coming out as transgender and becoming a rabbi. He talks about the usefulness of these terms to everyone, not just to people who identify as transgender. He also explores the myriad experiences of people who do not conform to society’s strict gender roles and how reclaiming the tumtum and androgynus can be useful to everyone. Kukla writes, “Jewish gender diversity provides anyone who can’t or won’t conform to modern binary gender, a solid connection to another time, space and community – a spiritual home.” This text can be useful to transgender Jews who are struggling with their identity and have been made to feel that being transgender is at odds with their Judaism. It may be especially useful to transgender Jews and their allies who come from Orthodox Jewish backgrounds, who are generally told that Jewish tradition and texts are hostile to gender nonconforming people.

Prell, Vanessa “Vinny.” “Surely God is in This Place: A *d’var Torah* for Transgender Day of Remembrance.” November 17, 2007. [Jewishmosaic.org](http://www.jewishmosaic.org). Accessed 24 July 2009. <http://www.jewishmosaic.org/torah/show_torah/92>

This is a Torah commentary on the Genesis story of Jacob’s ladder, where he dreams that God came to him and told him that the place he was was sacred. After Jacob wakes up, he proclaims “God was in this place!” and renames the place Beit El, the House of God. Prell’s commentary for Transgender Day of Remembrance explores the parallels between Jacob renaming a place after experiencing God there and transgender people’s experience of renaming themselves. There is tremendous power in naming. Prell also writes of the self-love it takes to understand and love our bodies. “Taking on a new name or pronoun marks the moment when we gather up the courage and the vision to find and embrace the image of God inside us. It is a moment of empowerment; a moment of being at home in oneself. “Surely God is in this place...”” This Torah commentary is a helpful resource for any Jewish transgender person looking for empowerment in their gender identity. While not specifically about transgender issues in Torah, it takes a piece of text and applies it beautifully to the real experiences of transgender people. This could also be a useful source for a rabbi who wants to make his or her community more inviting to transgender people.

Tyler, Michael and Leslie Kane. Siddur Sha'ar Zahav. San Francisco: Congregation Sha'ar Zahav, 2009.

Sha'ar Zahav is a Reform synagogue in San Francisco founded in 1977 for GLBT Jews and their allies. Their newest siddur (prayer book) came out just a few months ago and is a fantastic resource for all of the audiences of this bibliography. Siddur Sha'ar Zahav offers complete weekday, festival and Shabbat services, as well as special sections of Brachot/Blessings, Chesed v'Emet/Remembrance, and Shirim/Songs. Of particular note for this bibliography, the Blessings section contains blessings for transgender transitionings and for the partner of someone in gender transitions. Other sections include prayers for Transgender Day of Remembrance and Transgender celebrations. As a whole, the siddur is representative of the lives and experiences of Transgender people. A synagogue or other Jewish institution wishing to make itself more friendly to transgender people should keep this siddur in its library and incorporate readings and blessings from it into their services. A Jewish transgender person at any stage in their coming out or life process might find this book comforting and helpful.

Zellman, Reuben. "Erev Rosh Hashanah 5767 Sermon." JewishMosaic.org. Accessed 24 July 2009. <<http://www.jewishmosaic.org/page/file/109>>

Reuben Zellman's powerful sermon on the "in between" in Judaism draws parallels between the sacred in between in Jewish texts and those who are in between genders. He tells a story about a student being challenged on the street about the ambiguity of their gender. He then explains that "Jewish tradition has a unique relationship with twilight: that ethereal moment in every day when dark and light meet...Our rabbis believed that twilight held great and unique power." Beautifully written, intricate yet accessible to all audiences, Zellman's sermon is useful for synagogues, Jewish institution, allies, and transgender people looking for meaning and holiness in their own experiences.

ORTHODOXY

Anonymous. Weblog. The Dina Blog. <<http://dinablog.wordpress.com/>>. Accessed 24 July 2009.

The Dina blog is a site for Orthodox transgender Jews, though it seems that the creator/s have folded the site's contents into a private listserv. The mere existence of this site is important, though it has not been updated in two years, as transgender people from Orthodox backgrounds rarely have a safe space to discuss their identities in a religious context. The issue is especially contentious in Orthodox communities because transgender people may feel that their gender identity and/or their choice to alter their bodies with hormones

or surgeries runs counter to halacha (Jewish law). The opening entry states: “...we have created this blog is because of the unique challenges that are faced by this group within the Orthodox community, and the fact that frum trans people have almost no voice or visibility, individually and collectively, for the broader community to experience.” This blog, while having just a handful of entries, is an important site for Orthodox transpeople and their allies and does provide clear access to a listerv that they can join to connect with other transpeople.

ARTICLES – GENERAL

Anders, Charlie. “Transformed Before God.” Tikkun Magazine. Sept.-Oct. 2005. Accessed 26 July 2009. <<http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/Anders-TransformedBeforeGod>>.

Charlie Anders’ 2005 article on transgender issues in Judaism’s most important element is that he quotes a tremendous number of Jewish transpeople in their own words. In this way, a variety of perspectives shine through, highlighting the myriad types of Jewish transpeople and the myriad ways those people relate to Judaism, Jewish community, and Jewish practice. In addition to covering personal stories and perspectives of Jewish transpeople, Anders also covers different movements’ positions on transgender issues and the resources available to trans people, including mikvaot (ritual bath), used by transpeople as a way to mark their physical or emotional transition in some way. Quoting a young transman, Anders writes: “Adapting traditional rituals for use in my transition, especially the surgery, helped me to feel safe, grounded, [and] settled about what I was doing,” Jerrold explains. “Because Judaism is so rich in life-cycle events, everything can be very easily adapted to provide a ritual framework for transition and celebrate what are truly joyous, freeing occasions.” This article is appropriate for all audiences and ages, transpeople and allies alike, not simply because it presents a variety of viewpoints but because it leaves readers with a number of names of people who they could reach out to if they wanted more information.

Kristan, Ari. “Opening Up the Mikvah.” Tikkun Magazine. May-June 2006. Accessed 26 July 2009. <<http://www.tikkun.org/article.php/Kristan-OpeningUptheMikvah>>.

Ari Kristan’s article is about a specific issue related to transgender Jews: that of the use of the mikvah (ritual bath) to mark gender transition or anything else. The main problem is that mikvaot (pl.) are traditionally gendered spaces, run by Orthodox synagogues or institutions, with times designated for men and for women. Kristan focuses on Mayyim Hayyim, a non-denominational mikvah in Boston, whose director and staff made it their business to create a space that was open to all LGBT people, specifically transgender people. The article highlights the steps taken by the staff and the rituals that transgender

people have conducted at the mikvah. Jewish leaders might find this article useful as a model for another way to make their communities more friendly to transgender people, especially as non-Orthodox mikvaot are becoming more popular in the United States. Jewish transpeople might find it a useful article for practical reasons, especially if they are looking for a way to sanctify their transitions or mark them in a way that is Jewish. Importantly, the article ends with how one can contact the organizations mentioned in the article.

Spence, Rebecca. “Transgender Jews Now Out of Closet, Seeking Communal Recognition.” *The Forward* 31 Dec. 2008. Accessed 26 July 2009. <<http://www.forward.com/articles/14854/>>.

In a way, Rebecca Spence’s article summarizes much of the work annotated in this bibliography. She interviews both Rabbi Elliot Kukla and Reuben Zellman, themselves transgender, who have written tremendous resources, blessings, and commentaries relating to transgender people in Judaism. The article focuses on the notion that transgender people are now having their say in Jewish communities. Rebecca Spence also interviews religious leader in different movements about their opinions and thoughts on the topic. This article is recommended as an introductory article for transpeople, allies, and religious leaders, as it does not go into depth on many of the issues; rather, it gives an overview of what transgender Jewish leaders are saying, writing about, and asking for within their Jewish communities and what organizations (she names Jewish Mosaic) are working on these issues.

Tanenbaum, Leora. “Transgender Professor at Yeshiva U. – Mazel Tov!” *Huffington Post*, 19 Sept. 2008. Web. 26 July 2009. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/leora-tanenbaum/transgender-professor-at_b_127305.html>.

In her article on Yeshiva University (YU) Professor Joy Ladin, a transwoman who made headlines in the Jewish world last fall for coming back to work after coming out as trans, Leora Tanenbaum presents the facts of the story while making sensitive observations about Ms. Ladin. Avoiding the tempting trap of sensationalizing this story, Tanenbaum presents both sides while holding the Orthodox institution accountable and responsible to treat Ladin with respect once she returns to work. She also points to the tumtum and androgynus about which several transgender authors have written (see reviews above), for “ample evidence that the great rabbis have long recognized the limits of the male and female categories.” She closes by writing about the holiness of “in-between” spaces in Judaism, complicating an issue that many others who have covered it chose to see in black and white. An Orthodox transperson might find solace in this article and particularly in the story of Joy Ladin, who fought through a tremendous media blitz simply because she came out at an Orthodox institution.

Trevenon, Stacy. "A Stranger in a Strange Land." Review Magazine Jan. 2007: 18-23.
Accessed 26 July 2009. <www.jewishmosaic.org/page/file/78>.

While perhaps somewhat less sensitive an article than others reviewed in this bibliography Stacy Trevenon's article is important to list because she writes of a unique situation, in which the spiritual leader of a synagogue in Pacifica, California came out as transgender to his community and began male hormone therapy while at his job. No other article deals with the very public nature of Jhos Singer's transition. While the article has its faults – Trevenon uses female pronouns for much of the article and focuses on the physical aspects of Singer's transition (hormones, surgery), making the article more sensationalist than it needs to be – it also emphasizes the supportiveness of Singer's community and the reactions of his children when he came out, both important pieces of this story. Singer also mentions other pieces of Biblical text, this time from Isaiah and Deuteronomy, as texts that spoke to him as a transgender person. This article, like others, is useful not alone but alongside others. It serves as a model for how a community can support a transgender person and might serve to be inspiring to transgender people looking for supportive community.

CONCLUSION

Transgender Jews have made a name for themselves over the last 10 years, particularly over the last few, in the Jewish world. Most of the resources reviewed for this bibliography were written by transgender people themselves, and were not written under pseudonyms, a marker of the progression of both the Jewish community and the world at large. Many of the authors are rabbis or rabbinical students, another marker that transgender Jews are not only making their issues heard in the Jewish community as members of the community but as its leaders.

Just as the richness of the resources reviewed highlight the progressions made by the Jewish community, the limitations of these resources highlights strides still yet to be made in the Jewish community. While the strides in the more progressive movements of the Jewish community are important, transgender issues have only skimmed the surface of the Orthodox world, as shown in this bibliography. Most Orthodox communities today are simply not equipped ideologically or emotionally to fully accept transgender people in their communities.

Another limitation demonstrated in this bibliography is the number of resources written by or about FTMs (transgender men) as opposed to MTFs (transgender women). One can speculate about why this is true: sexism and patriarchy make it difficult for transwomen to be accepted in community and the workplace and they therefore have less time and fewer community resources to make the strides made by authors like Kukla and Zellman. The Jewish world has yet to experience its first transwoman rabbi or rabbinical student. I believe that this will change over the next few years.



TRANSTORAH

For more information, interested individuals or organizations can reach out to Keshet, JewishMosaic, and the TransTorah collective, all of whose websites are cited above. The staff and members of these organizations can provide support and many more resources than this bibliography alone ever could.