ESHEL אשל

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

FY23-24 July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

In the last fourteen years, Eshel has **empowered, emboldened, and strengthened** LGBTQ+ people and Orthodox communities alike to embrace one another. Eshel is creating a brighter Jewish future by building community, providing support, educating, and advocating for inclusion and belonging.

While the crisis in Israel had a unique impact on us as LGBTQ+ Jews, Eshel continues to expand our capacity, resources, and programming to support those who need us now more than ever, and to celebrate our LGBTQ+ frumkeit.

Building National and Local Communities

650
In-Person Participants at
26
Eshel Gatherings and Retreats

682
Online Participants in
11
Recurring Meetups

2,908
Subscribers to Eshel LGBTQ+, Parents, and Allies Newsletters

34,214
Website Views

325
Mental Health Support Tickets

National LGBTQ+ Retreat: Last year, **63** returning Eshel community members and **37** first time attendees alike came for a **sold-out weekend** of Torah learning, sharing, music and more.



"Eshel is like coming home, only better. Meeting new and old friends, in a natural setting, with interesting programming – it's something I look forward to all year long."

Sheindy

Eshel Parent Retreat: The 2024 Parent Retreat included **112** participants from **16** states around the country, sharing feelings and concerns without judgment, and bringing the message of inclusion back to their own individual communities. Read more here.

"It was wonderful to meet other parents of LGBTQ children and to hear their stories and about their communities.home I didn't realize this until after returning but there was something very special about not having to think twice before discussing my LGBTQ child and their mental health struggles."

Anonymous



Community Spotlight: Eshel's B*Mitzvah and Pride Campaign



In June 2024, over **300** people came together in person for our first ever gathering of our Orthodox LGBTQ+ constituents and allies alike. Just following the in person event, **300** people again demonstrated their support online with our We All Belong Pride campaign. Read more here, and watch Modi here!

Local Communities: Eshel volunteers (LGBTQ+ and allies) hosted **24 monthly meetups in person or online** for LGBTQ+ people and parents in Orthodox hubs around the US and Israel.

11 Whatsapp Groups

557

Total Members

Baltimore-DC
Events
Israel
LGBTQ+ Women's Support
NNJ LGBTQ+
NNJ Parents
Parents of LGBTQ+
Parents of trans and gender non-conforming children
"Schmooze"
South Florida
Weddings

Community Spotlight: Israel Chapter



"This was the second year of Eshel's Israel chapter, and we've grown so close as a group - like a family. A new couple joined after their child had just come out and broken off an engagement.The parents were shattered at the time. They are so grateful that Eshel's Israel chapter provided them a nonjudgmental place they could come to for total support and understanding…. we've also brought in numerous specialists and all kinds of resources for parents to learn from."

Mindy D.
Modi'in, Israel

Supporting Mental Health and Well-Being

1,193

Support and service touchpoints to improve mental health among Orthodox LGBTQ+ individuals and their families.

325

Counseling and mentor tickets direct them to the appropriate services, both within Eshel and through external referrals.

9 Zoom and Phone-In Support Groups



Parents of LGBTQ+ individuals (Zoom) * Parents of LGBTQ+ individuals (Phone) * LGBTQ+ individuals (Zoom) * LGBTQ+ individuals (Phone) * Parents of trans and gender non-conforming children * Orthodox trans and non-binary individuals * Closeted Men's Group * Closeted Women's Group * LGBTQ+ Women's Group



Support Spotlight: The Jewish Queer Lifecycle

- Coming out: Providing mental health support
- Dating: *Yente Over the Rainbow*, a queer Jewish online dating site
- Marriage: Connecting couples with ritual and communal resources
- Death/mourning: Working with Orthodox burial societies and funeral homes

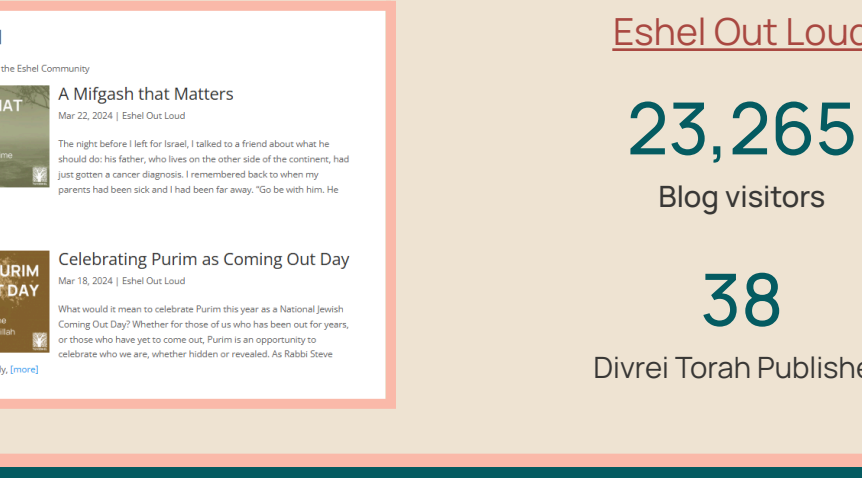
Educating Orthodox Leaders and Allies

Film Screenings: Eshel partners with directors to provide special screening opportunities on Orthodox LGBTQ+ life. In 2023-2024, we hosted **3** screenings of "The Holy Closet" in New York, Los Angeles, and Boston, with close to **200** total attendees.

Lifecycle Workshops: Eshel produced a series of workshops on Queer Lifecycle Events discussing how LGBTQ+ identity impacts participation in various Jewish lifecycle moments.

Education Spotlight: Allies Training

In June 2023, a kosher bakery in West Orange, N.J., came under fire for refusing to bake Pride-themed items, citing the instructions of the baker's rabbi. Eshel visited the community in July and began building our Allies Training series to foster understanding and acceptance in Orthodox communities. Read more here



Eshel Out Loud

23,265

Blog visitors

38

Divrei Torah Published

Education Spotlight: Parent Survey



Eshel finds Orthodox Jewish parents accept their LGBTQ+ children, but report wide-ranging community discrimination, according to a new survey. Nearly one-half (**44%**) of parents surveyed state the great upheaval away from Orthodoxy is due to their child experiencing rejection in synagogue. One in three parents (**33%**) report discrimination against their child in their local Orthodox Jewish day school. Read more here.

Advocating for Our Belonging

The Welcoming Shuls Project:

Including **22** new shuls in 2023-2024 alone, Eshel has now identified **275** synagogue Rabbis as welcoming of LGBTQ+ individuals and families. We also assist people find shuls that are a match for them. Learn more here.



"...there is more interest than ever from our Welcoming Shuls to find ways to fully embrace transgender members... We have been lucky to be able to support several trans individuals in staying in the same Orthodox community throughout their transition."

Dr. Sunnie Sterling Epstein,
Every Neshama has a Place at Shul

Day Schools:

Eshel partners with Orthodox and community day schools to help best support an LGBTQ+ student or family, as well as provide trainings and consultations to facilitate inclusive LGBTQ+ practices.

Halachic Workshopping:

- 3-part series with Orthodox Rabbis on conducting LGBTQ+ weddings
- Online series on conversion and LGBTQ+ people
- Koren teen Chumash commentary

Thank You

Eshel Board and Staff

Foundation Partners:

Anonymous

Aviv Foundation

E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Foundation

The Greater Miami Jewish Federation

JPride Baltimore, The Associated

Micah Philanthropies

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Philanthropies

SRE Network

UpStart

Organizational Partners:

- A Wider Bridge
- I Was Supposed To Have A Baby
- Jewish Fertility Foundation
- Jewish Queer Youth
- Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance
- Jewish Social Justice Roundtable
- Keshet
- Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan
- PORAT: People for Orthodox Renaissance and Torah
- Sephardic Mizrahi Q Network
- UJAPride
- Uri L'Tzedek
- Yeshiva University Pride Alliance
- Yeshivat Chovevei Torah
- Yeshivat Maharat

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eshelonline.org