

## **Shlomo Gleibman**

When I was 16, still in Ukraine, my grandfather, a Holocaust survivor from a Hasidic family, passed away, and I started going to a Hasidic synagogue to learn more about my family heritage. I spent some time studying in yeshivot in New York and in Israel. After I moved to Toronto, I attended Modern Orthodox, Litvitshe, and Chabad shuls, and actively engaged in planning, promoting, and facilitating their educational, social, and outreach programs. I valued their commitment to Jewish knowledge, as well as the warmth and mutual support in a community that felt like family. However, I did not share the dominant values and social norms of these communities. For years, I had to sacrifice big parts of who I was and what was important to me. I never felt that I fully belonged. When I hit my 30s, I “broke up” with Judaism, I left the community where I had spent almost a decade, and I came out as gay. It took me several years to reconnect to Judaism and to begin attending liberal synagogues. I was comfortable there, I shared their modern liberal values, I appreciated their openness and acceptance, but I was still longing for a sense of community that would also feel warm and heimishe, in addition to commitment to inclusiveness, social justice, and Jewish spirituality that would creatively synthesize the traditional and the new. I found this in Shir Libeynu and became a member several years ago. I was glad to offer several workshops on Jewish and gay cultures for Shir Libeynu members throughout these years.

I have an insider knowledge of Jewish and LGBTQ communities. My professional experience includes teaching, research, writing, editing materials for publishing, updating websites, developing new programs, planning events and doing outreach and educational work for Toronto Jewish and LGBTQ organizations and community groups. I have taught Hebrew language and Jewish history in Jewish schools. I have also taught Jewish history, religious studies, and gender studies at York University and Trent University.

In 2012 – 2015 I served on the executive committee of Kulanu Toronto in the capacity of Director of Education. I have also spent several years on Jewish Diversity Committee at Congregation Darchei Noam and on planning committee at University of Toronto Qu(e)rying Religion. In 2011, I organized and led Queer Academia Discussion Group on Meetup, Facebook, and at The 519 Church Street Community Centre. In 2013, I was a member of GLBTQ Jewish Forum at Miles Nadal JCC in Toronto. In 2014, I was a co-organizer of the panel “Toronto Queer Jewish History” at University of Toronto.

I hold a Master’s degree in Humanities from York University and a Graduate Diploma in Jewish Studies from Israel and Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York. I am currently finishing my Ph.D. in the same program, with concentrations in Jewish studies and queer studies. My studies and research focus on Jewish queer culture and community. On this subject, in 2008-2017 I have delivered over 40 presentations and workshops at Jewish Studies conferences, universities, synagogues, JCCs, and Jewish groups and events across Canada and the United States. In 2017 my award-winning essay “The Jewish Queer Continuum in Yeshiva Narratives” was published in *Shofar*, an interdisciplinary journal of Jewish Studies. Another essay of mine, “Same-Sex Desire and Jewish Community: Queering Biblical Texts in Canadian and American Jewish Literature,” was published in *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* the same year.

In my capacity of a Shir Libeynu board member in the past 2017 year, I worked on a variety of areas and issues, including the following:

- Serving as a liaison between the Board and the Education Committee, helped in planning our new programs for children and adult education programs.
- Planned, organized, and coordinated Yom Kippur 2017-5778 afternoon workshops.
- Delivered a Rosh Hashanah sermon on the meaning of community to about 300 shul members.
- Coordinated co-sponsoring of MNjcc LGBTQ Shabbat dinner series and partnership between Shir Libeynu and MNjcc on other projects.
- Reached out to and engaged a number of new volunteers, new members, and potential new board members.
- Reached out to a grant writer/fundraising professional and coordinated a research of grant opportunities for Shir Libeynu.
- Participated in revising and defining the board policies and procedures.
- Proposed new priorities in our 2017-2020 programming that supported the larger mission of downtown Jewish community, namely, community strengthening and serving underserved groups.
- Supported other board members and other volunteers.
- Collaborating with other board members, past board members and ex-officios, rabbi, and shul administrator, helped with planning, marketing and promotion of programs and events, and proposed new programs and new strategies that are in progress, such as establishing Community Engagement and Outreach Committee, LGBTQ Committee, project Mishpacha, and adult study sessions/groups.