Blessings and Ritual

Blessing for Transitioning Genders—Rabbi Eli Kukla, 2006, *Transtorah*

Blessing for Chest Binding---Rabbi Elliot Kukla and Ari Lev Fornari, 2007, *Transtorah*

A Pre-Surgery (or any other transition) Mikveh* Ritual-- Max K. Strassfeld and Andrew Ramer, 2009, *Transtorah*

Naming for Jude Jussim (Ritual)

Naming Myself—Elliott Clement-Ifill

Trans Naming Ritual—Rabbi Elliot Kukla

Trans/Gender Queer Jewish Wedding Service--Rabbi Elliot Kukla, July 2006
A Blessing for Transitioning Genders
by Rabbi Eli Kukla, 2006

Jewish tradition teaches us that we should be saying a hundred blessings a day to mark all the moments of kedusha, holiness, that infuse our lives. There are blessings to recite before eating and drinking, performing religious commandments, witnessing rainbows, oceans, thunder or lightning, seeing old friends, tasting new fruits and arriving at a new season. And yet many of the most important moments in the lives of transgender, intersex and gender queer Jews are not honored within our tradition.

I wrote this blessing for a friend who wanted to mark each time that he received Testosterone (hormone therapy), but it could be used for any moment in transitioning such as name or pronoun changes, coming out to loved ones or moments of medical transition. Jewish sacred texts such as the Mishna, the Talmud, midrash and classical legal codes acknowledge the diversity of gender identities in our communities, despite the way that mainstream Jewish religious tradition has effaced the experiences of transgender, intersex and gender queer Jews. This blessing signals the holiness present in the moments of transitioning that transform Jewish lives and affirms the place of these moments within Jewish sacred tradition.

This blessing takes the same form and grammatical structure as classical blessings that mark wondrous occasions. “The Transforming One” as a name for God appears in the traditional blessings of gratitude that are recited each morning. The Hebrew verb root of this word, avar, has multiple layers of meaning within Judaism. Most literally it means to physically cross over, however it also implies spiritual transformation in High Holiday prayers. It lies at the root of the word Ivrim, Hebrew people. We are the Ivrim, the crossing over people, because we physically crossed over the Jordan River to escape from slavery and oppression and spiritually transformed ourselves. At its core, our ancestral sacred memory holds this moment of painful and yet redemptive, physical and spiritual transition. In Modern Hebrew, this same verb root is used to form the word, ma’avar, which means to transition genders.

The second blessing is also taken from morning liturgy. It is based on the book of Genesis, which teaches that male and female bodies were equally created in God’s image. The Midrash, classical Jewish exegesis, adds that the Adam HaRishon, the first human being formed in God’s likeness, was an androgynos, an intersex person. Hence our tradition teaches that all bodies and genders are created in God’s image whether we identify as men, women, intersex or something else. When we take physical or spiritual steps to more honestly manifest our gender identities we are fulfilling the foundational mitzvah, religious commandment, to be partnered with God in completing the work of creation.
The final blessing is classically recited each time we reach a new event or season. Saying it at moments of transition celebrates God’s nurturing and sustaining presence in allowing us to reach this moment of self-transformation. However, this blessing is in the first person plural and also marks our collective transition as a people as we begin to transform our tradition in order to honor and celebrate the lives of transgender, intersex and gender queer Jews.

This blessing may be recited before any moment in the transitioning process:

_Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam Ha’Mavir L’Ovrim_

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God, Ruler of Time and Space, the Transforming One to those who transform/transition/cross over

Afterwards recite:

_Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam sh’asani b’tzelmo_

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space who has made me in God’s image

For special events taking place for the first time or for the first time in this season (such as a name or pronoun change, beginning hormone therapies or surgeries) add:

_Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam Sh’hechianu, v’kimanu, v’higiyanu, la’zman hazeh_

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space who has kept us alive and sustained us and helped us to arrive at this moment
Blessing for Chest Binding
by Rabbi Elliot Kukla and Ari Lev Fornari, 2007

This is a blessing for the act of chest binding, for FTM transgender and/or genderqueer people, and anyone else who chooses to flatten the appearance of their chest. It is intended to be used as a way to sanctify the often painful act of binding. It can be recited daily and modified to meet your particular gender and Jewish needs.

*B’hem mitzvat tzitzit v’mitzvat hityatzrut*  

For the sake of the mitzvah of ritual fringes and the mitzvah of self-formation.

*Hityatzrut is a neologism based on the biblical hebrew verb root “yatzar”, which means “to form”.*
A Pre-Surgery (or any other transition) Mikveh* Ritual
by Max K. Strassfeld and Andrew Ramer, 2009

* A mikveh is a ritual bath. Ritual immersion in a mikveh - a gathering of living water (mayyim hayyim) - marks a change in status. The mikveh pool recalls the watery state that each of us knew before we were born; the ritual of entering and leaving mayyim hayyim, living waters, creates the time and space to acknowledge and embrace a new stage of life. Every religious tradition uses water to denote change and transformation. Mikveh is the Jewish ritual that symbolically enacts this kind of profound change. Any flowing body of water can serve as a mikveh so long as there is an entrance and exit point for the water, the water touches the air and it is deep enough to fully immerse. Ideally the one immersing is totally naked. There is probably a local mikveh near you, either in a building or in nature.

OPENING: This morning you will be guided through 3 immersions, one for the past, one for the present, and one for the future. Before each immersion you will be read an intention for that immersion. Then you will immerse. After you immerse, you will be led through a blessing for that immersion.

IMMERSION 1

Intention: In the Babylonian Talmud...

Berachot 54a states: “Baruch shehechiyanu v’kiyimanu vi’higianu la’zman hazeh.” This is a blessing that should be recited when one builds a new house. Aino ela: There is no house apart from the body, as we have written: May our tradition become a house for us, and may our bodies be our home within it.

Berachot 54a states: “Hatzoek al ha-avar, harei zo t’filat shav” – “The one who calls out about the past, that is a wasted prayer.” Which is to say: the prayer may be wasted, but the act of calling out is never a waste. When we cry out we build a new past, the past-that-should-have-been. And out of our new pasts we shape our future.

— Immerse Completely —

Berachot 54a asks: “Anisa d’rabim m’barchinan, anisa d’yahid m’barchinan?” – “Do we only say blessings for collective miracles, but not for individual miracles?” We answer: like
the waters of the mikveh, miracles cannot be so easily separated. We keenly feel the loss of all individual gendered voices that have been silenced. Each member of our community who can recite with a full heart the shehechiyanu performs a collective miracle.

*Everyone present recites the Shehechiyanu to witness this moment of individual and communal miracle:*  

Masculine God language:  
“Baruch atah Adonay, Eloheinu, Melech Haolam, Shehechiyanu, V’kiyimanu, V’biganu, Lazman Hazeh.”

and/or:

Feminine God language:  
“Brucha at Shechina, Eloheinu, Ruach Haolam, Shehechiyanu, V’kiyimanu, V’biganu, Lazman Hazeh.”

and/or:

English translation:  
Blessed is the one who revives us, sustains us and enables us to reach this moment.

**IMMERSION 2**

*Intention:* This immersion is for the present, the time of transition, the in-between time. A time of adjustment, from one perfection to another. This is a liminal time: decisions have been made. Now you can surrender to your choices and be blessed. There is nothing to do but be carried and held by us, the water, and then by a blessing for the holiness of in-betweens.

— *Immerse Completely* —

*Blessing:*

As the sun sinks and the colors of the day turn, Jewish tradition offers a blessing for the twilight, for twilight is neither day nor night, but in-between. We are all twilight people. We can never be fully labeled or defined. We are many identities and loves, many genders and none. We are in between roles, at the intersection of histories, or between place and place. We are crisscrossed paths of memory and destination, streaks of light swirled together. We are neither day nor night. We are both, neither and all.
May the sacred in-between suspend our certainties, soften our judgements, and widen our vision. May this in-between light illuminate our way to God who transcends all categories and definitions. We cannot always define; we can always say a blessing.

Together: Blessed are you, God of all, who brings on the twilight.

**IMMERSION 3**

*Intention: A Very Short Preface to The Book of Genesis*

Chapter 0, verse 1:
Before God began to create anything, before there was heaven or earth, night or day, good or bad, in or out, up or down, God said: “I must create myself.”

Chapter 0, verse 2:
And in the vast limitless nothingness of Her allness, with no borders or boundaries, no direction and no distinctions in Her infinite eternal Self, God said: “Let there be Me.”

Chapter 0, verse 3:
Then God stirred and stretched and shrank and strived and sighed and surged until She became who He is. And His isness is who He always was and always will be, in the midst of Her sacred unfoldings. And God called Himself Whole and saw everything that was possible from His radiant wholeness. And there was Someone, and there was somewhen, and from that somewhen, God was finally ready to begin to create a somewhere.

— Immerse Completely —

**Blessing:**

Blessed are You Eternal our God, Ruler of the Universe, who renews the work of creation every day.

**CLOSING**

Here is your intention for your time alone in the water. This is your moment to let go of anything you want to let go of, are ready to let go of; that you have not already released, and your time to invoke and draw anything that you want to carry with you from this ritual, as you bask in the warmth of these embracing waters.
RENAMING: Jude comes up to melody of “shalom, shalom, shalom”

RABBI: We gather to bestow a special name, a new name for a new identity, to celebrate the wholeness of self as we also celebrate a Jewish past and future. As we announce Jude’s new name, he inherits in a new and fuller way the covenant of his ancestors, now part of a community of Jews who are defining and redefining Judaism in this time and for generations to come.

Jude, you have been in some ways an orphan, as fits your name, Jussim. You told me the story: How your grandfather as a young man was adopted by his uncle to keep him out of the tsarist draft. Because he was an orphan, he was known as Yossel the orphan, the “yatom,” which morphed into “yasom,” and then into “yussim,” which became Jussim. Today you come closer to home.

COVENANT: Rabbi and Cantor wrap Jude in a tallit

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam Ha’Ma-avir L’Ovrim
Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God, Ruler of Time and Space, the Transforming One to those who transform/transition/cross over

Intention for the Naming: A Very Short Preface to The Book of Genesis, by Rabbi Elliot Kukla

Chapter 0, verse 1:
Before God began to create anything, before there was heaven or earth, night or day, good or bad, in or out, up or down, God said: “I must create myself.”

Chapter 0, verse 2:
And in the vast limitless nothingness of Her allness, with no borders or boundaries, no direction and no distinctions in Her infinite eternal Self, God said: “Let there be Me.”

Chapter 0, verse 3:
Then God stirred and stretched and shrank and strived and sighed and surged until She became who He is. And His isness is who He always was and always will be, in the midst of Her sacred unfoldings. And God called Himself Whole and saw everything that was possible from His radiant wholeness. And there was Someone, and there was somewhen, and from that somewhen, God was finally ready to begin to create a somewhere.

NAMING: Now, in the presence of this holy community, we announce that Jude Jussim will henceforth also be known as

Shalom Mi-Mishpakhat Yatom

You were fragmented, now you are whole. You were not restful, now you are at peace.

JUDE: Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam sh’asani b’izalmo
Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space, who has made me in God’s image

ALL SING: Siman tov u-mazal tov (Carlebach melody) + “Shalom, shalom, shalom”
Naming Myself
Elliott Clement-Ifill

Shabbat Shalom. My parents gave me my original names. They were perfectly
good names, just, as it turned out, not appropriate for me. Forging my identity by
being able to name myself has been one of the many ways in which I feel blessed.
And I have had the great privilege of shaping my identity in this way three times.

I first named myself when I was in my twenties as part of my conversion to
Judaism, and chose Hebrew names honoring my maternal grandmother, a woman
from the American South, and a maternal great-grandmother, a woman from the
British West Indies—Elisheva and Sarah.

When I named myself the second time—my male English names—I wanted to
maintain the connection with my maternal ancestors and chose Elliott and Scott. I
also chose Scott as my middle name in remembrance of the brother of a very dear
friend.

My new Hebrew names are again very special—Eliyahu (the Lord is my God) and
Saadia (God has supported; blessed). Eliyahu Saadia identifies me as a Black,
Jewish man, whose belief in God is paramount, whose blessings from God are
never taken for granted, and whose connection with my heritage is enduring.
Adult Name Changing Ritual  
By Rabbi Eli Rose Kukla, July 2006

Introduction

Jewish tradition teaches that each name is a prophecy. For some people the name that they were given at birth by parents or caregivers is a prophetic visions that makes sense throughout their lifetimes, while others may feel a need to find their own prophecy and claim a new name as an adult that more accurately reflects their evolving identities.

Many key biblical figure changed their names: Avram and Sarai became Avraham and Sarah in order to indicate a new relationship with God; Jacob became Yisrael (the God-wrestler) after a life changing experience wrestling with a divine being; Naomi became Mara to make her grief after the death of her husband and children tangible; Esther was also known as Hadassah to reflect the complexity of her cultural identity.

In a contemporary context some people may choose new names in order to indicate a major life change such as: recovery from illness or abuse, marriage or divorce, or conversion to Judaism. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people may choose a new name as part of a coming out process as they reveal new parts of their identity. Transgender and gender nonconforming people often change while gender transitioning. For many transgender and gender nonconforming individuals a new name is a way to make an inner sense of self that may have existed for a long time finally visible to the outer world.

I. Welcome

The Torah opens with the teaching that the world was created by the word. In Judaism speech both reflects and shapes reality. This welcoming ritual is an opportunity to give reality to a new name by speaking it out loud and affirming that we know the
ritual honoree “by name” in the deepest sense of this phrase: we see and recognize him/her/hir\(^1\) as a full and unique person in the way that he/she/ze is asking to be seen.

Ritual participants are seated in a circle. We begin by going around the circle and asking community members to share their own name and briefly (in one or two sentences) tell the story of their name. What does it mean literally and what does it mean to them? What language is it in? Who named them? Have they ever changed their name(s)? Were they named after someone? The ritual honoree should introduce him/her/hirself last and tell the story of the name(s) that are being taken on in more depth.

After the ritual honoree has told the story of his/her/hir new name, we go around the room again and each participant greets the ritual honoree with this new name using a simple sentence like: “Hi Isaiah”, “Hello Shoshana”, or “I see you Max.”\(^2\)

**II. Blessings**

Now that the ritual honoree’s new name has been made real by speech, we can celebrate the transition that has taken place. If this ritual can take place on a Saturday night, it would be appropriate to use the *Havdalah* ceremony that ends Shabbat here. *Havdalah* is a traditional service that centers around change and transition so it is a natural way to mark this moment. If the group is small enough participants can offer also offer personal blessings for the ritual honoree. After personal blessings have been offered and/or havdalah blessings have been recited, a reader announces the new name with these

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\(^1\) I am using the pronouns “ze” and “hir” to refer to gender nonconforming people who choose not to identify as either male or female, both male and female or who inhabit an alternate sense of gender identity. These third pronoun options are becoming increasingly used in LGBTIQ communities.

\(^2\) This ritual of greeting was created by Stosh Cotler for my own name changing ritual in New York. Hearing my new name spoken out-loud by a room full of loved ones was an unforgettable experience that made my new name real for the first time.
words that have been adapted from the traditional blessing for naming a newborn in synagogue:

Mi Sheberach Eloheinu v’elohei avoiteinu... Our God and the God of our ancestors sustain and support this member of our community. Let him/her/hir be called in Israel _____________ ben/bat/valad (son/daughter/descendent) of _____ and ______. Just as our ancestors Avraham, Sarah, Yisrael and Mara changed their names to make their inner selves more visible, may ______ be fully seen and recognized by this name. May ______ be renewed in living a life filled with Torah (learning and thinking), Chuppah (being surrounded by loving relationships) and Ma’asim Tovim (action in the world). And let us say: Amen.

The ritual honoree recites this blessing marking a life transition:

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam Ha’Mavir L’Ovrim

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space, the Transforming One to those that transform/transition/cross over

Everyone recites the blessing for having reached a new occasion:

Baruch Ata Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha’Olam Sh’hechianu, v’kimanu, v’higiyanu, la’zman hazeh!

Blessed are You, Eternal One, our God Ruler of Time and Space who has kept us alive and sustained us and helped us to arrive at this moment!

MAZEL TOV!

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3 Some people may not wish to name their parents because of being estranged from their family of origin, in that case the ritual honoree may choose to name themselves after Avraham and Sarah (the spiritual ancestors of all Jews) or simply be called by their new first name alone.
Trans/Gender Queer Jewish Wedding Service
By Rabbi Elliot Kukla, July 2006

Introduction

Over the past months as a newly ordained rabbi I have had the privilege of officiating at a number of weddings involving transgender and/or gender nonconforming people. In some ways these weddings are no more or less unique than any other wedding and involve the same spiritual complexities and personal nuances as a mainstream wedding, however there are also a few issues that emerged that led to different ritual or pastoral decisions. This is a ritual template for creating a Jewish wedding service that celebrates gender and sexual diversity.

This ritual template is very similar to a traditional Jewish wedding. I have made a few linguistic changes in the service to more honestly speak to a variety of different identities, but the flow of the ritual follows the classical pattern. This choice reflects my belief that rituals that have organically developed over centuries are more effective and multi-vocal than the newly minted kind. I also think that gender and sexual diversity has always existed within Jewish communities and this diversity lies buried within the traditional texts of our tradition and it is up to us to claim the richness of our heritage.

There are two main issues that are specific to weddings for transgender and gender nonconforming families that impact the creation of this ritual:

1) **Ritually signifying the gender identity of each member of the couple.**

Weddings can be an opportunity to bring together relatives or friends from the past. This is a wonderful chance to pull these people into the present life of the partners however there may be confusion about how the partners want their gender to be understood. It is up to the officiant to clearly indicate how each member of the partnership should be celebrated: as a bride, as a groom or as
something else. It is possible to indicate gender subtly within the liturgical flow of the service. This is a spiritually significant moment for these lovers and they deserve to be seen and recognized as fully as possible.

2) **Family of origin and chosen family.** Because of the realities of homophobia and transphobia many queer, transgender and gender nonconforming people have estranged or difficult relationship with their families of origin. Furthermore, within LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer) communities the concept of “family” has been redefined to encompass a wide variety of configurations and includes relatives not connected by the traditional ties of biology or legally sanctioned marriage. It is important for the officiant to understand who each member of the partnership does or does not see as their family and extend the appropriate honours and visibility to these people.

Finally, a note on the Hebrew used in this template. It is impossible to refer to an individual without using gender in Hebrew. To solve this problem one possible option is to mix up the gender of the pronoun and the gender of the verb as I have done through-out this template in order to indicate gender complexity. If these “mixed up” options are bring used, they should be explained and contextualized by the officiant so it doesn’t seem like simply incorrect Hebrew.
Ritual Template

Outline

I. Welcome
II. Birkat Erusin (Blessings of Commitment)
III. Kiddushin (Blessings of Holiness)
IV. Ketubah
V. Sheva Brachot (Blessings of Joy)
VI. Birkat Kehilla (Blessing of Community)
VII. Breaking the Glass

I. Welcome

It is traditional to welcome the partners to the chuppah with a Hebrew blessing and this is a good opportunity to immediately signal how the partners want their genders to be understood. This can be done by saying something simple like: “We welcome Shoshana and Chaya with the blessing for two brides…” Each member of the partnership can be welcomed individually or they can be greeted together.

For a bride:

Brucha Ha’ba’a b’shem Adonai

For a groom:

Baruch Ha’ba b’shem Adonai

For an individual who wants to indicate an alternate gender identity:

Brucha Ha’ba b’shem Adonai

For two brides:

Bruchot ha’baot b’shem Adonai

For two grooms, for a bride and a groom or for a couple that wants to indicate as little gender as possible:

Bruchim ha’baim b’shem Adonai

For a couple that would like to indicate complex genders:
Bruchim ha’baot b’shem Adonai

Translation of all of the above:
Blessed are you who come in the name of the Eternal!

After welcoming the partners to the chuppah it has become a common tradition to mention deceased loved ones who are not physically present, but whose memories we want to honour at this ritual. This is an opportunity to signal to the community who is seen as “family” at this event and identify deceased members of the couple’s chosen family as relatives.

II. Blessings of commitment (Birkat Erusin)

In a traditional wedding service birkat erusin, the blessing of betrothal, indicates that the couple is entering into a “permitted” as opposed to a “prohibited” relationship. The definition of “prohibited” relationships in traditional Jewish law includes LGBTIQ expressions of love and identity. However, I think the idea of a blessing for commitment that asserts the idea that the relationship we are celebrating is worth sanctifying is important. I wrote this alternative birkat erusin¹ to reflect the idea that lovers of all genders and sexual identities can be holy, but only caring consensual relationships are sanctified within Jewish sacred tradition.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, borey p’ri ha-gafen
Blessed are You, O Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World, Who creates the fruit of the vine.

Baruch ata Adonai Eloheynu melech ha-olam, asher kid’shanu b’mitzvotav vitzivanu al mitzvot beyn adam l’chaveyro, v’asar lanu nitsul v’hit’al’lut, v’hitir lanu britot ahuvim. Baruch ata Adonai, m’kadesh amo Yisra’el al y’dey chupah.

Blessed are You, Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World, who has set us apart through sacred obligations and commanded us about the responsibilities of all humans for each other. You have forbidden exploitation and abuse, and permitted covenants of love. Blessed are You, Eternal One, who makes your people Israel (all those who struggle with God), holy with a chupah (a canopy of love and protection.)

¹ Rabbi Justin Lewis helped me to formulate the Hebrew of this blessing.
Partners share the wine.

III. Blessings of Holiness (Kiddushin)

*Kiddushin*, which literally means holiness or “setting apart”, is the heart of the Jewish wedding service and signifies the sanctity of this moment. However, in traditional Jewish law the words of *kiddushin* lead to the legal acquisition of the bride by the groom. Modern egalitarian communities have tried to redefine these words, however I feel like the formula itself is inherently problematic. I have changed the liturgy to reflect the idea that no acquisition is taking place in an egalitarian wedding. Instead of saying: “Behold I am making you holy/set apart!” I suggest that couples say: “Behold, you are holy/set apart for me.” This change in the language shifts the beloved from the object to the subject of the sentence, hence avoiding any implication of objectification!

Partners exchange an item of value and each says to the other:

To a groom:

_Harai ata kodesh li!_

To a bride:

_Harai at kodesheth li!_

To an individual who does not wish to identify as either a bride or a groom:

_Harai at kodesh li!_

Translation:

Behold, you are holy to me!

Some couples may choose to add the traditional words: *K’dat Moshe v’Israel* (according to the religion of Moses and Israel)

IV. Ketubah and/or Personal Vows
At this point in the ritual the in order to indicate the break between the legal betrothal and the joyful celebration of the partnership, the wedding contract is usually read. A variety of forms of ketubot can be written to reflect the particular needs of the couple. This is also an appropriate moment to insert personal readings, vows, etc. to reflect the complex realities of queer, transgender and gender nonconforming families. These vows may also reflect the cultural diversity of chosen families or families of origin.

VI. Blessings of Joy (Sheva Brachot)

The seven blessings recited at a wedding shift the ritual from a legal commitment ceremony to a joyful celebration of the union. Most of the words of these blessing can be used with queer, transgender and gender non-conforming families with very small adjustments and/or explanations.

The only language that I have changed is using “ahuv v’yedid” (gender neutral terms for “lover and beloved”) in the place of the words “chatan v’kalah” (bride and groom). In the seventh blessing I have also changed the word “narim” (servant boys) to “chevarim” (friends/community) to reflect a queer sense of chosen family.

The rest of the language I have not changed, but I sometimes feel a need to interpret some of these texts so that they make sense in a queer context. The focus on Zion and Israel in the fifth blessing may feel overly particularistic to queer, transgender and gender nonconforming individuals who are used to experiences of exclusion. I usually explain that the word Israel can be understood as a non-national or ethnic concept in classical texts. The translation of “Israel” is “God-wrestler” and I often suggest that we understand the word literally as all people who are struggling to live a more whole life in relationship to the Divine.

The Garden of Eden and Adam and Chava, the first human beings, are mentioned in the third and fourth blessings. To some LGBTIQ people this reference may feel inherently
heterosexual, however it may be helpful to explain that according to the Midrash (Bereshit Rabbah) the first human being created in the image of God was an androgynos, an intersex person. Hence the primordial joy of the first human being connecting to another person is relevant for lovers of all genders.

1) *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, borey p'ri ha-gafen*  
Blessed are You, Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World,  
Who creates the fruit of the vine.

2) *Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, she-ha-kol bara lich-vodo.*  
Blessed are You, Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World, who has created everything in Your glory.

3) *Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, yotser ha-adam.*  
Blessed are You, Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World, who is forming the human being.

4) *Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam, asher yatsar et ha-adam b'tsalmo, b'tselem demut tavnito, v'hitkin lo mimenu binyan adey ad.*  
*Baruch atah Adonai, yotser ha-adam.*  
Blessed are You, Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World,  
who has created us all in Your image,  
in the image of the likeness of Yourself,  
and placed within us an eternally renewing structure.  
Blessed are You, Eternal, Architect of humanity.

5) *Sos tasis v'tagel ha-akara, b'kibuts baneha l'tochah b'simcha.*  
*Baruch atah, Adonai, m'sameyach Tsiyon b'vanehah*  
Joy – bring joy and gladness to the lonely city,  
by gathering her children to her in happiness.  
Blessed are You, Eternal, who will make Zion happy with her children.

6) *Sameycha t'samach chaverot(im) ha-ahuvot (im), k'samey-cha-cha yetsir-cha b'Gan Eyden mi-kedem.*  
*Baruch ata, Adonai, m'sameyach chaverim ahuvim.*  
Give delight, delight to these loving friends,  
as you delighted Your creations in Paradise of old.  
Blessed are You, Eternal, who delights these loving friends.

7) *Brucha atah Adonai, Eloheynu Melech ha-olam,*
Asher bara sason v’simcha, ahuv v’yedid,
gila, rina, ditza v’chedvah, ahava v’achava,
v’shalom v’rey-ut.
M’hera, Adonai Eloheynu, yi-shama
b’arey Yehuda u-v’chutsot Yerushalayim,
kol sason v’kol simcha, kol ahuv v’kol yedid,
kol mitz-halot ahuvim mey-chupatam,
u-chaverim mi-mishtey neginatam.
Baruch ata, Adonai, m’sameyach ahuv v’yedid.

Blessed are You, Eternal, our God and Ruler of the World,
Who created delight and gladness, lover and beloved,
glad song, pleasure, merriment, laughter, love and companionship, friendship and wholeness.
Quickly, Eternal, our God, let us hear
in the cities of Judah and Jerusalem’s streets,
voices of gladness, voices of joy, the voice of the lover and the voice of the beloved,
voices of jubilant lovers at wedding feasts,
and friends at their banquets of song.
Blessed are You, Eternal, who delights the lover and the beloved.

VI. Blessings of Community (Birkat Kehilla)

This point in the service is an appropriate time to ask the community to silently offer
blessings to the couple and signal the significance of community/chosen family at this ritual.

VII. Breaking the Glass

MAZEL TOV!