

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Jews Gather  
For Unique Weekend of "Authentic GLBT Jewish Spirituality"**

*Rabbis from all denominations, including award-winning rabbi Steve Greenberg, to teach at Nehirim Retreat, May 18-20, 2007*

New York, NY, April 18, 2007. Amid a year of controversy and change for the status of sexual minorities in Judaism, the Nehirim Retreat, a national gathering of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (GLBT) Jews, will take place May 18-20 at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, CT. Rabbis from all denominations, including Steve Greenberg (*Wrestling with God and Men*), Lina Zerberini (Yale University), Jacob Staub (former dean of Reconstructionist Rabbinical College), Alan Stadtmauer (former dean of the Flatbush Yeshiva) and Jill Hammer (Tel Shemesh), will be on the faculty. The retreat is expected to draw over 100 participants

Nehirim's executive director, Jay Michaelson, himself an outspoken advocate for inclusion of GLBT people within the Jewish community, says the weekend, now in its fourth year, is "less about politics than about creating a distinctive spiritual community for Jews who are members of sexual or gender minorities." Said Michaelson, "we're not waiting for straight people to decide whether we can have a personal relationship with God. What Nehirim is about is building that relationship for ourselves, in our own distinctive ways."

Over three days, the retreat features over thirty workshop sessions with ten teachers, on subjects ranging from queer midrash and GLBT identities in contemporary fiction to storytelling and practical nutrition, as well as opportunities for prayer, meditation, yoga, counseling, singing, and social activities.

Said Greenberg, whose book on homosexuality and Judaism, *Wrestling with God and Men*, won the Koret Jewish Book Award for nonfiction, said, "I'm delighted to be joining the Nehirim retreat for the first time this year. Gay and lesbian Jews have so much to offer the Jewish world, and this is a wonderful opportunity for us to come together as a community."

Nehirim -- the name roughly means "Lights" -- was founded in 2003. Since its founding, Nehirim has produced three annual retreats, as well as monthly discussion groups and programs such as "A Day Spa for the Soul," a day of meditation practice; "Queer Spiritual Valentines," an evening of GLBT-themed mystical poetry; and "After the Flood, the Rainbow," a healing service. In addition to directing Nehirim, Michaelson is the author of the book *God in Your Body: Kabbalah, Mindfulness, and Embodied Spiritual Practice* (Jewish Lights, 2007), chief editor of *Zeek: A Jewish Journal of Thought and Culture* ([www.zeek.net](http://www.zeek.net)), and a columnist for the Forward newspaper.

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"How you love God is connected to how you love other people," Michaelson said. "So as spiritually awake, life-affirming GLBT Jews, we are creating news way of being Jewish. It is a sacred task."

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture and Spirituality ([www.nehirim.org](http://www.nehirim.org)) creates innovative programs, builds community, and offers authentic, life-affirming spiritual paths for Jewish members of sexual and gender minorities. Nehirim is supported by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and is a fiscal sponsoree of the Jewish Funds for Justice.

