

Aug. 5, 2005

Shabbat Masei

by Davi Cheng

I don't know how this Shabbat came to be the date to honor me, my guess is that this is probably the only date everyone is in town and available. But the timing of this Shabbat, the Torah portion and all the changes that are happening in my life couldn't be more appropriate, let me explain.

This week we finished reading the book of Numbers with the Torah portion Masei. The word Masei means "journeys". The portion begins with a detailed summary of the Israelites' forty years of journeying from Egypt to the border of the Promised Land. It ended with the Israelites receiving instructions at the steppes of Moab, preparing to enter the land of Canaan. Next week, we begin reading a new book; the book of Deuteronomy, Torah portion Devarim - meaning "words". Some of you might remember eight years ago on the Shabbat of Devarim here at BCC, that we were all tangled up in strings of colorful yarn, as I took my first step on my journey as a Jew. I stood here in this same place, a slightly different person with a different name then, but receiving the same outpouring of love and support from YOU, the congregation. For those of you who were not here eight years ago, I used yarn as a way to feel connected to the community. Here they are now, in a bundle with your Devarim, your words, still attached. Eight years ago was also when I joined the board, now with my presidency winding down, the completion of the stained glass windows, (they are done, we just have to install them), how fitting it is, that I end this part of my journey like the Israelites in this week's Torah portion. So maybe, in addition to the end of the book of Numbers, it is also the end of the first book of Davi - the making of a Chinese lesbian Jew.

Beth Chayim Chadashim - House of New Life. I didn't think much of the meaning of this name when I first joined as a member. I know now, that it is this community; [YOU] the congregants of BCC, who are the creators of new life. Thanks to YOU, My friends, for creating a safe place for me to build my identity, and molding me into the person that I am today. Thanks for giving me the opportunities to serve you, and the courage to

represent what you, and BCC so proudly stand for. Last night, I was looking over at some of the words attached to this bundle of yarn, the instructions you gave me as I embarked on my first journey eight years ago: Adventure, Listen, Persistence, Passion, Truth, Diligent, Honesty, Ruach, Foreskined Lips, Love, Challenge, Wisdom, Shofar, Family, and To Life! Tonight, you have given me more words, so that at the next Shabbat, Shabbat Devarim, I can take with me all these instructions and start the Second Book of Davi.

I like to end now by saying a few more Thank Yous from the bottom of my heart. To Victoria, Tim and Ralph, the office staff, thanks for always covering crisis behind the scene to make me look good. To the volunteers; committee chairs; board of directors, and executive committee members; past and present, thank you for being my teachers, I've learned from each one of you, your unique talent, and professional skills you have so generously shared. To Tracy, the chieftain of all Jews by choice; thanks for being a mentor, and teaching me the finer details of people skills & about life. To you Fran, my bat-mitzvah tutor and Hebrew coach, thanks for enriching my life with not just the culture of Yiddish and Jewish music, but also with the culture of family life of children and parents. To you, my Rabbi Lisa, thanks for instilling in me the teaching of Jewish values; thanks for your wise counsel, and always keeping me on track so that I did not forget the delicate balance between spirituality and the business of running a synagogue. And To you Bracha my love, thank you for your unconditional love, and for your patience. For putting with all my BCC business and with me for all these years. It has not been easy to live with a high octane Jew running around having a love affair with BCC, you deserved a standing ovation.

And again to all of you BCC members and friends, you should give yourself a round of applause, because it is YOU who shape and build this community. My experience as your president these past years have been transformative and meaningful. Thank you for a wonderful New life.

Shabbat Shalom.