



**We are facing a culmination of crises unlike anything we have seen in our lifetimes—in coronavirus, economic turmoil and racism.**

**JAIME DIAZ-GRANADOS**

Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Acting Chief Scientific Officer,  
American Psychological Association (APA)

Institute for Jewish Spirituality / 2020

# Impact Report:

## **IJS Responds to COVID-19**

---

Providing meaningful programming that meets the needs of this moment

## **The Shofar Project**

---

Helping a growing community to prepare spiritually

## **Strengthening Leadership**

---

Supporting Jewish Clergy & Educators on the front lines

# Dear Friend,

The past year has been one of extraordinary challenge, upending our lives and bringing considerable pain and loss to so many. With this suffering, however, we have witnessed a growing awareness of essential aspects of our lives. We see more clearly our human interconnection and fragility, increasingly against a backdrop of the fundamental inequities in our society. We also recognize our capacities for resilience and creativity, courage and understanding.

While the challenges we face are medical, economic, environmental, social, and political, they also have *spiritual* imperatives. They call us to respond to the still small voice within that asks: Why are we here? For whom are we responsible? How can we live together?

Our current problems require of us both creative solutions and *spiritual* responses. We need new and effective practices to manage our anxieties and fears, and to keep our families and communities connected. We must be present to ourselves, those we love, and those with whom we share this fragile planet. And we need effective ways, as both individuals and communities, to take the courageous action these times demand so that we might live in alignment with our most deeply held values.

For more than twenty years, IJS has pioneered Jewish spiritual practices that are grounded in mindfulness, draw upon the deepest wells of Jewish wisdom, and enable people to live and lead with clarity, resilience, and a sense of sacred purpose. On the basis of that strong foundation, we responded quickly, creatively, and authentically to the urgent needs of the moment—in congregations, schools, families, and individual hearts. As we look ahead, we are poised to enter the future from a place of strength, ready to lead the Jewish community in spiritual practice that will empower our individual and collective healing, renewal, and transformation.

With gratitude and blessings for health and growth,



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

**Ann Greenstein**  
*Chair, Board of Directors*



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink.

**Rabbi Josh Feigelson, PhD**  
*Executive Director*

# IJS Responds to COVID-19



## Meaningful programming that meets the needs of this moment

When the pandemic hit in mid-March, everyday life was upended. People were confused and scared. They needed ways to cultivate patience and resilience, clarity and courage.

IJS seized the moment, making widely available to the larger Jewish community a range of spiritual practices known to do just this. IJS grew its online presence and created new offerings that help people cope, manage, and find meaning, purpose, and connection. Almost all programming was provided free of charge.

Since mid-March 2020:

---

**8,000** people have signed up with IJS for our free [Resources for Challenging Times](#)

---

Every day, **500** people view the free IJS daily online meditation

---

**1,700** people enrolled in IJS's weekly *Torah Study to Nourish the Soul*

---

**1,100** people signed up for IJS's new Online Jewish Yoga Studio

---

*"Thank you, IJS, for being a bright light in these dark times."*

—Hilarie Hauptman, Tumwater, WA

The response has been extraordinary, and the IJS community is growing rapidly. IJS is here every day, offering guided meditations with master teachers, Torah study with texts that speak to the moment, yoga, and a profound sense of community and connection.

---

**1,000** people have enrolled in our three full-length online courses, *Gift of Awareness*, *Awareness in Action*, and *Gift of Awareness for Educators*

---

**300** people participated in the three-day IJS online summer retreat

---

**17,000** people are on our email list—an increase of **60%**

---

**2,500** people downloaded the free IJS Jewish Meditation Starter Kit

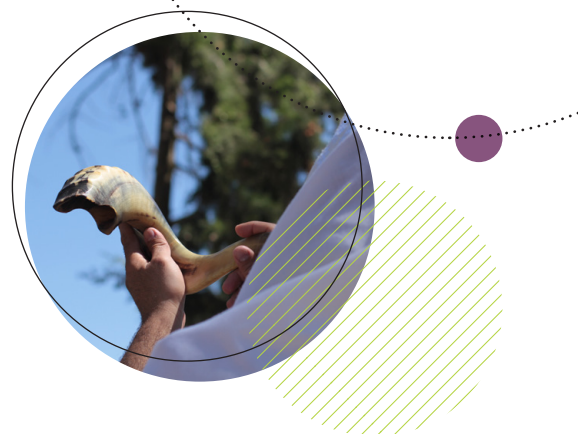
---

*"I look forward so much every day to the sits. They are an anchor, an oasis in the middle of a turbulent day. A moment of connection with a community spread across the country."*

—Evelyn Halstead Cooper, San Antonio, TX



# The Shofar Project



## Helping a growing community to prepare spiritually

As the High Holy Days approached this year, a pressing question emerged: How do we prepare spiritually in such unprecedented times? While IJS has long provided meaningful programming during the Jewish month of Elul, this year it felt imperative to develop new ways for people to get ready.

*“This has been one of the most fulfilling and loving experiences of my Jewish life.”*

—Project participant

In response, IJS led an historic interdenominational partnership of eleven organizations, including the rabbinic, cantorial, and congregational arms of the Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Modern Orthodox, and Renewal movements, to offer a diverse array of spiritual practice programs every day during the month of Elul. Over 5,000 people took part.

At a time when so many are hungry for ways to deepen their spiritual lives, IJS is creating exciting and innovative ways for people to find the spiritual sustenance they need.

**5,000** people signed up for The Shofar Project, **60%** of whom were new to IJS

**95%** would recommend The Shofar Project to a friend next year

**85%** say, “The Shofar Project helped me prepare spiritually for the High Holidays.”

**89%** say because of The Shofar Project, “I’m inspired to continue growing in my spiritual practice.”

**72%** say, “I discovered new value in Jewish learning and practice through The Shofar Project.”

## In Partnership with:



# Strengthening Leadership

## Supporting Jewish Clergy & Educators on the front lines

Clergy and educators serve on the frontlines of this pandemic, in essential roles that some call “spiritual first responders.”

Jewish clergy are supporting congregants wrestling with illness and loss, civic unrest, forest fires and hurricanes, and a deep loneliness born from uncertainty and isolation.

Jewish educators are teaching online to students who are too often stressed and depressed, separated from their friends and essential childhood experiences.

IJS has always worked with clergy and educators. Now, we are committed to providing them with supports and resources that are even more vital—including spiritual practices to stay grounded and strong, and communities of peers to share with and learn from.

*“I had no idea how impactful and life changing this work would be for both me personally and for many in our school.”*

—Oren Kaunfer, Jewish Community Day School, Watertown, MA



*“The reason I’m doing any meditation at all is a credit to IJS, which introduced me to a form of Jewish spirituality that has enhanced my rabbinate and my life in such profound ways. I’m so grateful to pay it forward to my community.”*

—Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, Central Synagogue, New York, NY

Since mid-March:

IJS has held weekly meetings for over **500** IJS alumni clergy who collectively serve over **250,000** congregants

**160** educators have taken our course on Jewish mindfulness meditation that includes proven strategies for bringing practices to students of all ages

**14** Jewish day and religious schools—representing **100** faculty and **4,000** students—from across the country are enrolled in Educating for a Jewish Spiritual Life (EJSL) this school year



Institute for Jewish Spirituality™

Cultivating Mindfulness. Deepening Connection. Enlivening Jewish Life.

121 W 27th Street, Suite 404

New York, NY 10001

646.461.6499

[jewishspirituality.org](http://jewishspirituality.org)

*I don't know what I'd be doing  
without my IJS training at this time.  
My IJS skills are the **only** coping  
mechanisms that work. God bless you  
and your colleagues. I am grateful,  
admiring, and beyond appreciative.*

—Alum, IJS Clergy Leadership Program