

A Year of Connection, Resilience, and Growth

2021



Institute for
Jewish Spirituality

A Message from Our Leaders

Dear Friends,

We want to begin by saying thank you. Whether you come to our daily meditation sit, have participated in our online courses, are an alumnus of our cohort programs, a financial supporter, or simply share our commitment to Jewish spiritual practice – you truly have helped make 2021 a year of connection, resilience, and growth.

IJS has touched the lives of tens of thousands of people of all backgrounds throughout North America and around the world. In 2021, IJS reached more people than ever before. In this report, you will hear from four people directly impacted, including a young Jewish professional working with students and young adults, a rabbi leading a congregation through another challenging year, a JCC Association staff member supporting his colleagues and community, and one of the more than 10,000 who deepened their personal practice through accessing our free online offerings this year.

Even as we pause during this *Shemittah* year to reflect, reconnect, and renew, we are hopeful about what the coming year will bring: a new strategic plan to build on our success; new opportunities for you to deepen your own practice; and new partnerships to help even more people grow their Jewish spiritual lives. We are excited to share with you in the coming months about all of this and much more.

In the meantime, we invite you to join us in reflecting on the good we have done together over the past year. As the challenges of the world persist and intensify, the need for our work only grows. Thank you for partnering with us to make spiritual practice a vital part of Jewish life.

With gratitude and blessings,



Ann Greenstein
Chair, Board of Directors



Rabbi Josh Feigelson, PhD
Executive Director



Mission, Vision, and Values



Finding Meaning through IJS

Louis Gitlin
Providence, RI



So much has changed since I became involved with IJS. Over the past decade, I've developed life-long relationships – with teachers, my *chavruta* (learning partner), and other students. They're more than friendships, really. I think of them as just a small step removed from my relationship with God. They're that meaningful to me.

Before IJS, I didn't have a relationship with God. I had no understanding what it meant to be in relationship with the Divine. I'd never talked to God, but now God speaks to me all the time. I don't always understand what God is saying, but God speaks to me.

Because of all this, I no longer take things too seriously. I understand that most things are ephemeral and will pass. This helps me enormously with the challenges in my daily life. I'm less reactive, less easily thrown off. I'm much more grounded. I'm not going to get all of my relationships right, but I understand now that the most important relationship for me is the one with the Divine, and that it's a relationship that's ultimately unknowable. This understanding helps everything else in my life fall into place.

– Louis Gitlin

IJS provides numerous programs for the general public, many of them free of charge. Over 10,000 people participated in one or more of these offerings in the past year. Our master teachers lead the daily sit, weekly Torah study, and online Yoga studio. We offer online courses introducing people to Jewish mindfulness meditation, *Tikkun Middot*, and prayer as personal practice. We host a podcast, lead online retreats, and engage in conversation with leading thinkers on Jewish spirituality. Louis Gitlin has participated in almost every program that IJS offers.



Transforming the Lives of Young People

Over the past year, IJS and New Voices Magazine piloted the Resilient Writers Fellowship, an eight-week cohort program designed to bring together college-age writers in a virtual community to cultivate a Torah of creative, embodied Jewish spiritual practice. New Voices Editor-in-Chief Rena Yehuda Newman and IJS Senior Program Director Rabbi Myriam Klotz, who teaches trauma-informed embodied spiritual practices, collaborated on this project.

To read the fellows' work, please see the [IJS blog](#).



At a time of anxiety and isolation for so many young people, this virtual fellowship enabled the students to connect with each other as writers, friends, and spiritual *chavrutot* (learning partners). Together, we built a remarkable community that spoke to the spiritual experience of writing, gaining a new understanding of the relationship between our bodies and our creative process. For Jewish writers in particular, this isn't always an easy relationship.

Myriam Klotz's teaching was transformational, and the courage of the fellows and the chemistry of this partnership yielded amazing things: collective lists of embodied activities, opportunities for the fellows to meet their bodies as friends through dance and movement, and several truly powerful published pieces that shine with passion. Our partnership with IJS has expanded New Voices' vision of what it means to cultivate the next generation of Jewish mediamakers in body, mind, and spirit.

— Rena Yehuda Newman

Rena Yehuda Newman
Editor-in-Chief, New Voices Magazine



By the Numbers

Participation

IJS is growing dramatically and supporting thousands of people.

21,000

downloads of our
podcast (over 600 unique
listeners each week)

19,500+

on our email list to
receive program
updates, a 95% increase
over the year before

8,500

people registered for
The Shofar Project, a
month of programs to
prepare spiritually for
the High Holidays

6,500

people registered for our
public conversations with
leading Jewish thinkers,
artists, and writers

1,000

participants attended
our four online retreats

6,900

people have signed up
for the daily sit

Program Impact

98%

of students in our
online courses
would **encourage
others to enroll**

87%

of *Awareness in
Action* students say
they now **respond
more intentionally
and wisely**

84%

say they are **more
aware of their
emotional triggers**
and habitual
reactions

87%

of *Gift of Awareness*
students say they are
**committed to continuing
their Jewish
mindfulness practice**

Fundraising

122%

increase in total
donations in
FY2021 over
FY2020

103%

increase in new
donors in FY2021
over FY2020

300+

people sponsored
a daily sit in honor
or memory of a
loved one

Supporting Clergy, Uplifting Communities

Working closely with clergy is central to IJS's mission. Over the past two decades, IJS has served more than 500 rabbis and cantors, who collectively touch the lives of more than 250,000 people. Our main programs for clergy are the Clergy Leadership Program (CLP), an 18-month fellowship experience, and *Hevraya*, which provides ongoing support for CLP alums. Both programs help clergy reenergize and deepen their spiritual lives.

Rabbi Rachel Timoner is a long-time member of the IJS community, a CLP graduate, and an active participant in *Hevraya*. She's also a graduate of our Jewish Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training Program, which she credits with enabling her to lead online meditations for her congregation every day during the pandemic, 575 days and counting.



We live in a moment when people are choosing how and even whether to participate in Jewish communal life. So it's essential that Jewish leaders provide our communities with offerings that are fully authentic, alive, and responsive to congregants' needs as human beings in the world today. IJS helps us learn how to do this.

What IJS has given me is invaluable – infusing my Jewish practice and my leadership with mindfulness, a deep connection to my body, and the understanding and language to draw others into contemplative practice.

This matters because Jewish communal life must connect to our inner lives. We must create the space for people to be in touch with their lived experience so that the prayers we sing, the words we say, and the actions we take are alive, with no disconnect between inner and outer. IJS offers a way to infuse the outer forms of Jewish life with the most essential aspects of our inner experience. This is everything.

– Rabbi Rachel Timoner

Rabbi Rachel Timoner

Senior Rabbi, Congregation Beth Elohim, Brooklyn, NY



Spiritual Practice at Work:

A Collaboration Between IJS and JCC Association



Tikkun middot practice made a huge difference for me personally and for my colleagues in Tucson. It's a cliché to say last year was stressful, but it was. This program and our partnership with IJS gave our Jewish and non-Jewish staff a way to better regulate our sometimes rollercoaster emotions and build resilience for the stresses and anxieties that kept coming. Personally, *tikkun middot* practice helped me become a more thoughtful professional and a better colleague. IJS clearly cares deeply about the mental, emotional, and spiritual health of Jewish community professionals. Our partnership helped us learn new ways to tap into Jewish wisdom and practice, and it provided us tools that really help us be our best selves at work and at home.

— Josh Shenker

Josh Shenker

Chief Program Officer, Tucson JCC

IJS and the JCC Association of North America initiated an exciting partnership that helped hundreds of JCC staff learn Jewish mindfulness practice. Given the pandemic's ongoing stress and isolation, JCC Association was looking for ways to help their staff rebuild community, cultivate resilience, and deepen connections to Jewish practice. IJS supported 300 JCC professionals across the country, first training a cohort of 25 in *tikkun middot* practice through our online *Awareness in Action* course. These leaders then brought the practice to their own JCCs, facilitating groups of their colleagues.

Feedback showed that **82%** of participants feel closer to their colleagues, **70%** are more aware of emotional triggers and habitual reactions; and **69%** respond much more intentionally and wisely. **96%** would recommend the program to their colleagues.



Financials

Fiscal Year 2021

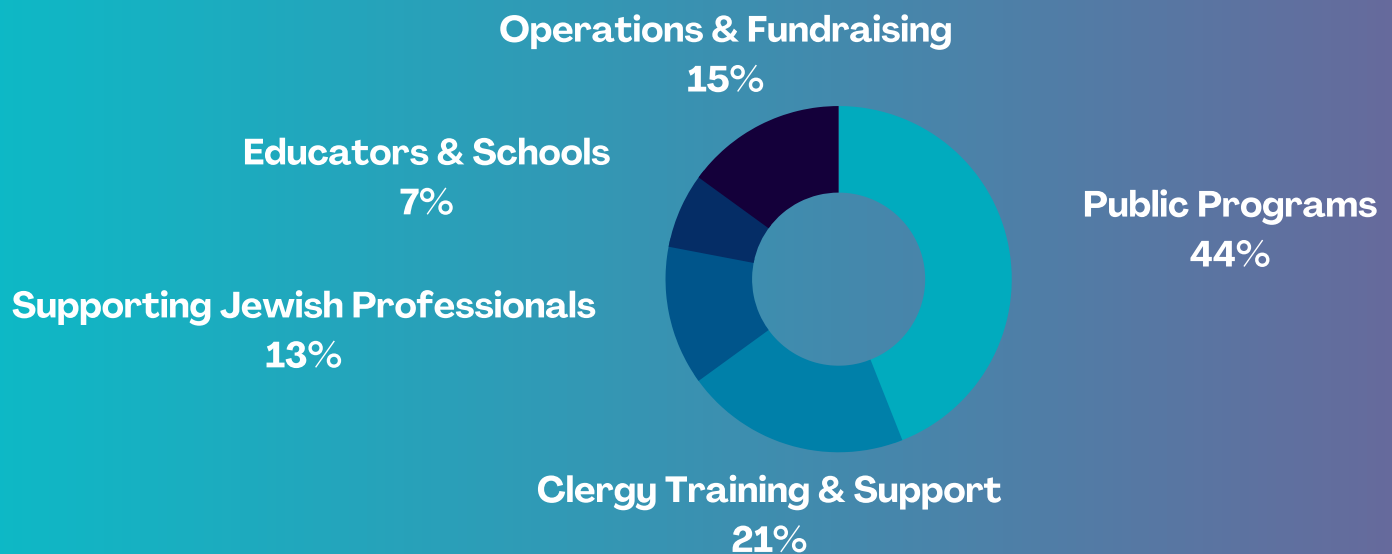
Revenue

Individuals	\$1,036,268
Grants	\$638,050
Program Income	\$535,991
Other	\$2,369
Total Revenue	\$2,212,678

Expenses

Compensation	\$1,624,780
Consultants	\$434,987
Total Facility	\$94,896
Equipment & Supplies	\$70,186
Grants Paid by IJS	\$43,000
Insurance, Fees, & Other	\$31,346
Travel & Meetings	\$15,697
Total Expenses	\$2,314,892

Expenses by Program Area



Board of Directors

Ann Greenstein, *Chair*

Sue Ellen Corning

Monte Dube

David Ferleger, *Treasurer*

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Marvin Israelow, *Chair-Elect*

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Mitchell Shames

Jonathan Silver, MD

Marte V. Singerman, *Secretary*

Steven Targum

Dorian Goldman, *Emerita*

Larry Schwartz, *Emeritus*

Advisory Council

The Advisory Council is a diverse group of influential leaders who provide the organization with perspective and expertise and who help IJS develop relationships with partners and supporters in order to advance the Institute's mission.

Jane Eisner

Rabbi David Ellenson

Sarah Hurwitz

Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie

Abigail Pogrebin

John Ruskay

Wisdom Council

The Wisdom Council is composed of people who, by virtue of their long experience with and personal investment in IJS, have developed an exceptional understanding of the Torah, history, and soul of the Institute. They provide guidance to IJS's Executive Director, Board, and Staff.

Rabbi Nancy Flam

Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg

Larry Schwartz



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