

Impact Report

2023

*Building a world of mindful Jewish life
through practice, meaning and community*

Institute for Jewish Spirituality

Dear Friends,

IJS's mission is to develop and teach Jewish spiritual practices so that individuals and communities may experience greater awareness, purpose, and interconnection.

We have done much in the past year to pursue that mission, to be here for you and so many others, and to transform Jewish life in the process. This report highlights some of our most important efforts in the past year and gives you an idea of what we hope to accomplish in the year to come.

Pillars of our work this past year include:

- **Supporting Jewish clergy** who do so much to support, lead, and guide the North American Jewish community
- **Deepening relationships** among our community of participants through daily, monthly and long-term programs
- **Expanding access** to Jewish mindfulness and spiritual practices and helping even more people engage with Jewish life through our work

To the thousands of people who have participated in our programs and brought your presence to our community over the past year—from our daily sit to our clergy leadership program, from our online courses to our text study program, from our retreats to our podcast to our weekly Shabbat posts on Instagram—thank you for making IJS, our teachings and our practices, part of your life. And thank you for making this community of practice so meaningful for so many.

We are—all of us—partners in this sacred and special project, and we are honored and grateful to be on this journey together with you.

Thank you for traveling this path with us,



MARVIN ISRAELOW
Chair, Board of Directors



RABBI JOSH FEIGELSON, PhD
President and CEO

IJS is helping to deepen relationships, build community, and expand access to Jewish mindfulness practices.



Enriching communities through spiritual leadership

Central to IJS's work is support for Jewish clergy as they lead congregations, communities and movements. For nearly 25 years, our flagship programs have been the **Clergy Leadership Program (CLP)**, a cohort- and retreat-based program, and **Hevraya**, an ongoing community of learning and practice for over 530 clergy program alumni. These immersive programs not only change the lives of the clergy involved, but they can have a significant impact on the communities the clergy serve. Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, Texas is a prime example.

A very large congregation of over 2,500 households, five of Emanu-El's clergy have participated in IJS clergy cohorts: Senior Rabbi David Stern, Cantor Vicky Glikin, Cantor Leslie Niren, Rabbi Debra Robbins, and Rabbi Kimberly Herzog Cohen. Rabbi Stern reports,

“While each member of our team has their own spiritual and theological perspective, IJS has given us a common vocabulary of prayer and spirituality, a set of common practices, and a shared horizon. This sense of shared purpose – to create a community that sees and seeks the interconnectedness in all things, that transforms hierarchical notions of God into a sense of the Oneness of all Being, that recognizes the authentic Jewish roots of contemporary spiritual practices – means that we are all swimming in the same spiritual direction, even as we recognize the distinctive gifts and insights that each of us brings.”

IJS's impact on the Emanu-El community has been manifold. Many congregants participate directly in IJS programs. IJS faculty have served as scholars in residence. And, according to Rabbi Stern, “IJS

is simply present in everything we do as leaders of a spiritual community. The texts we teach, the shtetls we lead with students of all ages, the language we use, the opportunities we explore in embodied practice, our choices in prayer and song and silence, our ethos as a community of love and care – all reflect the ongoing influence of IJS on who we are as a synagogue community.”

The connection with IJS expands beyond the Temple Emanu-El community. After his IJS experience, former Cantor Richard Cohn moved on to lead the cantorial program at HUC-JIR. Former clergy Rabbis Rachel Goldenberg and Asher Knight both participated in IJS cohorts and now lead communities in Queens, NY and Charlotte, NC.

“

IJS's impact on me is inestimable. *It is not an overstatement to say that my engagement with IJS changed my rabbinate and my life. The tools, insight and sense of community with participants and faculty have been an invaluable sense of mooring and meaning – not only in the challenging time of Covid, but in all the years since.”*

RABBI DAVID STERN

A CHANGING JEWISH COMMUNITY

IJS is committed to reaching a wide range of Jewish spiritual leadership. In the coming year, we will be training a new cadre of Jewish meditation teachers and Jewish Spiritual Directors. We are also exploring other ways to evolve in serving the changing landscape of Jewish spiritual leadership.



Rabbi David Stern,
Matthew Banks (musician),
Cantor Vicky Glikin,
Cantor Leslie Niren

Deepening individuals, relationships, & communities of practice

Through IJS, seekers of Jewish spiritual practice and wisdom connect. With community. With one another. With themselves.

A clinical social worker with a diverse background, Fran Zamore considers herself an IJS super-fan. Her introduction to IJS was a weekend retreat gifted to her by family in 2011. The next year, Fran treated herself to another weekend retreat. At that point, she was hooked. Fran continued her involvement, participating in *Kivvun*, an intensive, retreat-based learning program guided by Jewish spiritual tradition, followed by JMMTT: Jewish Mindfulness Meditation Teacher Training, IJS's Wise Aging Facilitator Training and most recently, *Yesod: Foundations for Deepening Jewish mindfulness*.

In addition to connecting with IJS, studying and practicing in community, Fran created long-lasting friendships with *hevruta* study partners, an important component of many IJS programs. For example, Fran and Rose Zoltek-Jick met weekly over



“Being involved with IJS has opened my mind and my heart. It has been transformative.”

FRAN ZAMORE

several years to study the weekly Torah portion through IJS's annual Text Study program. As Fran and Rose's relationship transformed from study partners to lifelong friends, Fran and Marte Singerman, an IJS Board member and supporter, began their own shared journey with JMMTT, and this year, through *Yesod*.

In addition to these two lifelong connections, Fran and Marte were instrumental in creating a new *hevruta* between Fran's cousin, Phyllis Osterman, and Marte's friend, Natalie Broidy. Over the years, this group of four began exploring national parks together, calling their quartet the *Perkei Imahot* (Wisdom of Mothers, a

play on the section of the Talmud titled, *Pirkei Avot*, or Wisdom of the Fathers/Sages).

This is IJS's “special sauce” – enriching lives, nurturing meaningful relationships, and fostering community through transformative experiences.



from left to right, Rabbi Robin Damsky, Rabbi Kvod Wieder, Melila Hellner-Eshed, PhD, Cantor Eliot Vogel

“Meeting Fran and being her hevruta partner has been one of the most wonderful and meaningful parts of my spiritual journey. The loving and supportive relationship we formed helped me through difficult times and deeply enriched my life and guided my Jewish path.”



MARTE SINGERMAN

Expanding Jewish mindfulness practices

For many people, Jewish mindfulness can serve as a vital entry point into Judaism. As mindfulness practices become more mainstream in the general culture, IJS's teachings have become a portal for meaningful Jewish connection and engagement. This is especially true for young adults, many of whom have come of age in a world in which practices like meditation and words like mindfulness have been familiar for their entire lives.

Historically, IJS has attracted and served older adults. Central to our strategic plan is engaging younger Jewish populations to develop a deeper sense of belonging in Jewish life. In pursuit of that aim, we welcomed Rebecca Schisler to the IJS faculty in the summer of 2022.

A gifted and experienced young teacher of Jewish mindfulness meditation and ritual, Rebecca has begun to plant the seeds for engaging younger populations through IJS's Torah. She has created a multi-year plan that offers models for in-person, local programming that can be brought to scale, as well as national efforts to engage young adults in Jewish spiritual practices.

Based in the East Bay area of northern California, part of Rebecca's work has involved developing a pilot initiative called Shevet, a community of young adults that meets weekly for a Jewish meditation sit, dinner, and conversation. With her co-leader, Zvika Krieger, Rebecca has shepherded the group as it has grown organically over the last year. Over 120 people are part of its WhatsApp group.

The group has had a profound effect, as illustrated in this reflection from participant: "I never imagined I'd form such a beloved community through sitting practice. I've made new friendships and deepened existing ones through holding a sitting practice together. We hold each other through challenges in personal lives and make meaning of the world together via the Jewish calendar and meditation. And we have fun too! I've loved going to ecstatic dancing after sitting sessions with my Shevet friends." IJS hopes to make Shevet a model for young adult Jewish mindfulness groups in other communities across North America. Through these undertakings, IJS seeks

to help Jewish young adults (in their 20s and 30s) connect to Jewish mindfulness and spiritual practice as a valuable resource for well-being and emotional resilience; connection to self, others, and the Divine; actualizing a purposeful and inspired life-path; and spiritual growth in service of a more compassionate and just world – all through the language and practice of Jewish wisdom.

Like all of our Core Faculty, Rebecca is a devoted contemplative practitioner. She is currently a rabbinic student at ALEPH. Rebecca is passionate about integrating ancestral wisdom traditions with innovative approaches to personal and collective healing and liberation. She teaches Jewish spirituality as an embodied, holistic, and accessible path, with relevant and timely wisdom for all.

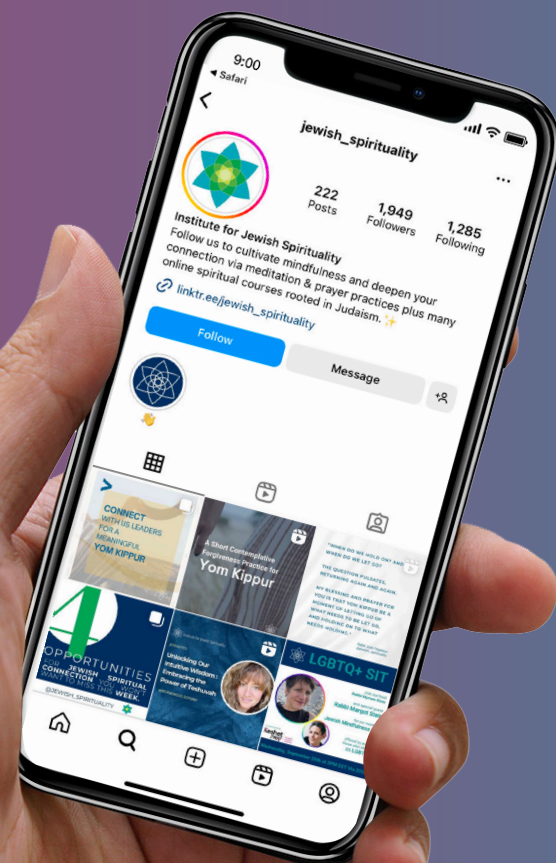
IJS Core Faculty member Rebecca Schisler leads our efforts to engage young adults through Jewish mindfulness practices.



“
Torah study isn't just an intellectual experience. If we come away only to say, 'That was interesting,' we're not doing it right. Torah study is, first and foremost, about connection: to our heritage, to our ancestors, to our study partners, to our community, to the Holy One, to ourselves.”
REBECCA SCHISLER

Staying connected

In FY23, IJS amped our efforts to engage young adults and other populations through social media. We launched an Instagram channel that quickly attracted over 1,500 subscribers. Our partnership with OneTable brought regular teachings and short video reflections to thousands of young adults around the continent. And, in partnership with Unpacked, a division of OpenDor Media, we launched a new podcast, *Soulful Jewish Living: Mindful Practices for Every Day*, hosted by President & CEO Rabbi Josh Feigelson.



Subscribe and listen today on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and more!

Follow us on Instagram @jewish_spirituality

Rachel Cowan Fund

Rabbi Rachel Cowan, one of the primary drivers in the founding of IJS, was a true visionary. Rachel was deeply committed to the work of diversity, equity and inclusion, and the Rachel Cowan Fund was established to honor her commitment to inclusion and social justice. Resources from the Fund have enabled IJS to invest in:



A COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY
This year, IJS made special efforts to recruit more diverse leaders, including Jews of Color, LGBTQ+ and differently-abled participants.

- An Awareness in Action course for leaders of Jewish social justice organizations, in partnership with the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable
- A Jews of Color Caucus, part of IJS's Antiracism and Shemitah Course
- An LGBTQ+ Beit Midrash of thought-leaders to help diversify IJS's curriculum
- Participant scholarships for IJS's pioneering Yesod program, in partnership with Or HaLev
- IJS's first Faculty Fellow, Kohenet Keshira haLev Fife

In honor of Rachel's fifth yahrzeit, IJS continues to honor her memory and legacy ensuring that members of marginalized communities can participate in, benefit from, and be welcome in IJS offerings.



*Growing up, I never had any question about my own identity as a Jewish person. The only time it was ever in doubt was when people would ask whether my mom was Jewish, often as a way to put me in a box or try to invalidate my Jewishness. **It is powerful to be in spiritual space with other people, together in affinity, to transcend the distinctions through togetherness, even among beautiful diversity. It's an honor and a privilege to be part of making Rachel's legacy a blessing by doing this work through IJS.***

KOHENET KESHIRA HALEV FIFE

By the numbers

59,017 participants in IJS Daily Sit and Weekly Yoga Studio*



525

registrants in new monthly meditation sits for members of the Jews of Color and Jewish LGBTQ+ communities



6,822
followers on Facebook

1,777

followers on Instagram



10,730 hours of IJS content viewed on YouTube



9,249

downloads of our Soulful Jewish Living podcast (7 episodes)

PROGRAM IMPACT

90% of participants agree IJS programs support their learning and growth

88% of participants expressed interest in further developing their Jewish spiritual practices

87% of participants expressed interest in other IJS programs

80% of participants recommend IJS programs to others

FINANCES

\$3.9 million total budget

(185% growth in budget size since FY20)

36% growth in earned revenue in FY23

23% increase in institutional support in FY23

17% increase in major gifts in FY23

22,163 participants in IJS free programs*

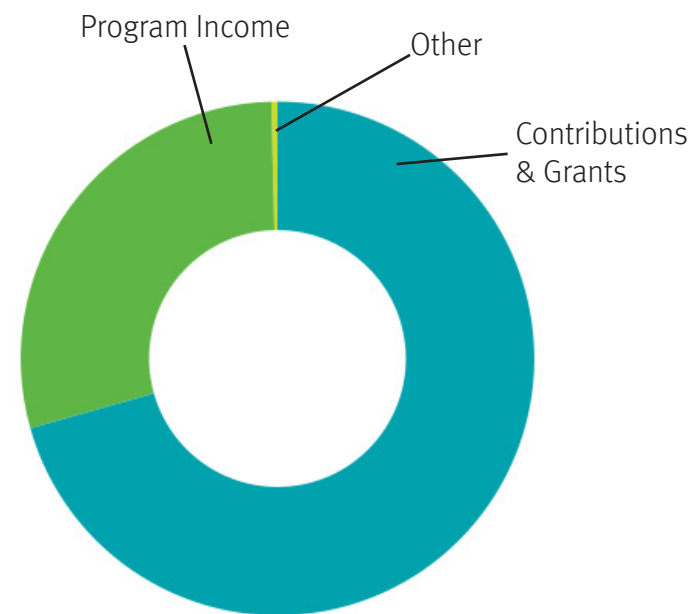
2,209 participants in online courses

*Total, not unique, users

Financials

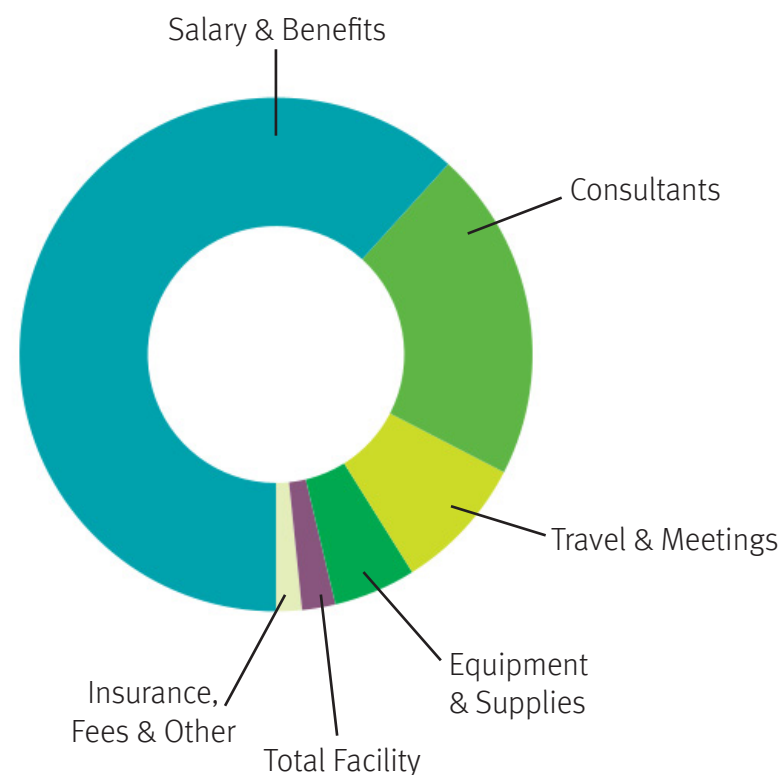
REVENUE

Contributions & Grants	\$2,520,469
Program Income	\$1,034,929
Other	\$13,780
Total Revenue	\$3,569,178



EXPENSES

Salary & Benefits	\$2,352,373
Consultants	\$795,196
Equipment & Supplies	\$197,724
Total Facility	\$80,188
Travel & Meetings	\$324,127
Insurance, Fees & Other	\$61,909
Total Expenses	\$3,811,517
Surplus/Deficit	(\$242,339)



IJS Leadership

BOARD

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|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Marvin Israelow, Chair | Bob Schechter |
| Sue Ellen Corning, Treasurer | Mitchell Shames |
| Monte Dube | Jonathan M. Silver |
| Judy Fisher | Marte V. Singerman |
| William Klingensmith | Madison Slobin |
| Julie Kohl | Rabbi Jenny Solomon |
| Keith Krakaur | Rabbi Aaron Weinginger |
| Rabbi Ellen Lippmann | Dorian Goldman, Emerita |
| Rabbi Shuli Passow | Larry Schwartz, Emeritus |
| Rabbi Rex Perlmeter, Secretary | Rabbi Josh Feigelson, PhD, ex officio |
| Rabbi Benjamin Ross | |

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.

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| Jane Eisner | Sarah Hurwitz | Abigail Pogrebin |
| Rabbi David Ellenson | Rabbi Amichai Lau-Lavie | John Ruskay |
| Sharna Goldseker | Dr. Lisa Miller | |

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 President/CEO, Board and Staff.

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| Rabbi Nancy Flam | Rabbi Shelia Peltz Weinberg | Larry Schwartz |
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DIRECTORS CIRCLE

The Directors Circle is a community of former members of the IJS Board of Directors who host periodic conversations with experts and field leaders to help IJS's Board and staff leadership learn about and reflect on emerging developments and trends.

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| Nancy Belsky | Nancy Krakaur | Miriam Scharf |
| David Ferleger | Marion Lev-Cohen | Susan Schechter |
| Ellen Friedman | Dan Liben | Larry Schwartz |
| Judy Glaser | Steven Reikes Fox | Amanda Silver |
| Dorian Goldman | Terry Rosenberg | Steven Targum |
| Ann Greenstein | Dan Scharf | Lawrence Yermack |