

קשר

THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY

# CONNECTION

Annual Report



2020



*Dear Colleagues,*

Upon creating the first human being, God quickly notes (Gen. 2:18), “לא טוב היות אדם לבדו”—It is not good for this Adam to be alone.” God quickly understands that Divine presence in the world is not enough for this new creation—human beings require human companionship. Our sages take this idea further when it comes to rabbis, elevating the popular phrase quoted by Rava in the Gemara (Ta’anit 23a), “או חברותא או מיתותא”—Companionship or death!”

As we have faced a global pandemic, our Rabbinical Assembly’s core mission, which is to connect and support rabbis, has perhaps never been more valued, or more challenging. Our colleagues have worked so hard, in every corner of the world, and in every setting, to share Torah, to create meaningful experiences, and to ensure connections within their communities. Our RA staff and lay leadership have, in turn, worked hard to do the same among our colleagues, providing the assurance that, indeed, we feel connection and companionship.

As you will see in this report, our response to the pandemic has included adaptations of halakhah by the CJLS to this unprecedented environment; new policies, training and support for career transitions; study opportunities and self-care programs; individual counseling and group processing opportunities; and so much more.

All the while, we have also continued our focus on implementing our 10 Bold Statements of our RA Vision Plan. We hired Sheryl Katzman as our Senior Director of Member Engagement and Ilana Garber as our Director of Global Rabbinic Development. Together with our existing staff, they have grown our opportunities to engage one another in a network of affinity groups, professional growth and learning initiatives, new partnerships within and outside our movement (including our deepening collaboration with USCJ), and leadership training programs.

Our membership and lay leaders have played key roles in helping us develop and evaluate responses to the pandemic, set priorities in our strategic plan implementation, develop messaging for Dover Emet advocacy, initiate new publications projects, and refine our budgeting and fundraising efforts towards greater sustainability.

It has been a year of challenge and growth, all sustained by our continued sense of connection and חברותא with one another. Thank you for your continued support of Our RA, and we wish you blessings and strength as we continue our joint work.

Warm regards,



**Stewart Vogel**  
PRESIDENT

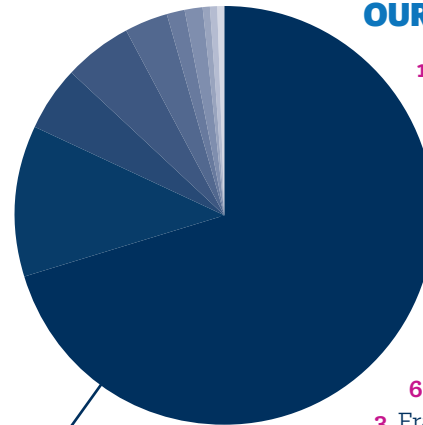


**Jacob Blumenthal**  
CEO

# WHO **WE** ARE

NEARLY  
**1,600**  
MEMBERS

Born **8**  
across  
decades  
1920's – 1990's

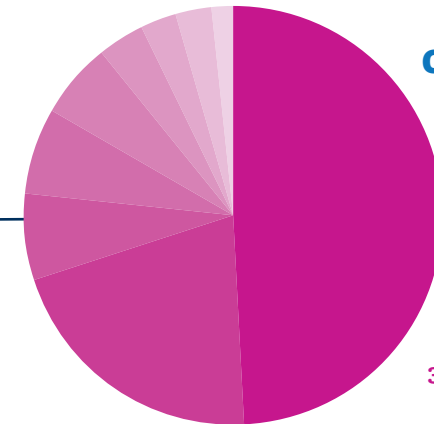


## OUR ALMA MATERS

- 1085 Jewish Theological Seminary
- 183 Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies
- 86 Schechter Rabbinical Seminary
- 84 Seminario Rabínico Latinoamericano
- 51 Hebrew Union College
- 22 Reconstructionist Rabbinical College
- 48 Other
- 11 Leo Baeck College
- 8 Academy For Jewish Religion
- 6 JTS Budapest
- 6 Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary
- 3 Frankel College

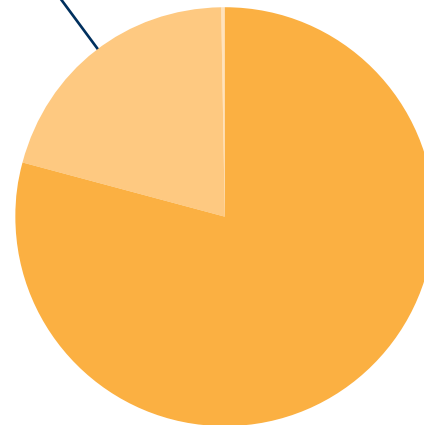
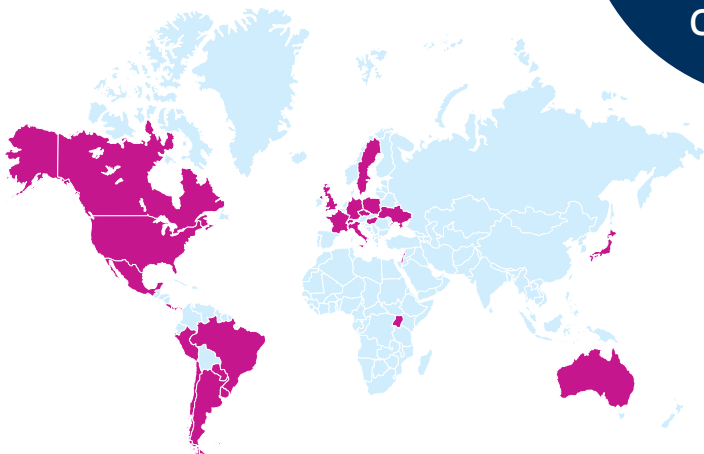
Argentina • Aruba • Australia • Brazil • Canada • Chile • Costa Rica • Czech Republic • France • Germany • Hungary • Israel • Italy • Japan • Mexico • Panama • Paraguay • Peru • Poland • Sweden • Switzerland • Uganda • Ukraine • United Kingdom • United States • Uruguay

AND RESIDING IN  
**26**  
COUNTRIES



## OUR PROFESSIONS

- 779 Pulpit
- 314 Other
- 117 College Campus
- 112 Org./Non-Profit
- 101 Chaplain
- 57 Outside Rabbinate
- 48 Day School
- 41 Synagogue / School
- 31 Entrepreneur



## GENDER IDENTITY

- 1265 Men
- 327 Women
- 1 Nonbinary







## SUPPORTING AND STRENGTHENING RABBIS

*During an unprecedented time marked by strict limits to in-person social gatherings, our RA programming provided a wide variety of opportunities for colleagues to connect with and support one another virtually.*

Our senior consultant, Bill Lebeau, counsels **241** colleagues, ranging from a single outreach to multiple emails, phone calls, meetings and mentorship meetings.

**72** new colleagues in their 1st-3rd year in the rabbinate are paired with 58 experienced colleagues through our new **Haverim** program.

**22** colleagues reach out to **133** colleagues through our COVID-19 phone tree during a time of increased isolation.



Our **Wolfe Kelman Fund** assists dozens of colleagues and their families with financial assistance.

**23** colleagues regularly reach out to members experiencing illness, loss, or in need of emotional support through our Pastoral Outreach Team. If you feel that you would benefit from occasional check-ins from the **Pastoral Outreach Team**, please use this form so that we can make a connection for you.

In October, **550** rabbis, cantors, and partners/spouses of clergy join for 5 days of virtual events aimed to renew and refresh as Heshvan begins.

With **40** virtual classes and over **70** hours of learning, our summer learning programming attracts over **800** participants and **9** partnering institutions.



Over the summer, chaplains meet virtually for **peer-facilitated conversations** to discuss topics including death, dying and grief in a time of COVID-19, tele-chaplaincy, and caring for caregivers.

We launch **virtual affinity groups** for women and parents of children with disabilities. We pilot groups for LGBTQ+ rabbis, rabbis who podcast, and clergy partners/spouses. Learn more about how to sign up for an affinity group on our website.

We host quarterly **virtual gatherings** of members of the JTS and Ziegler classes of 2020.

From March to September, CJLS releases COVID-19 **halakhic and movement guidance** related to remote minyanim, lifecycle events, conversion, and the High Holidays.

“

*As an RA member, I want to express my appreciation for the rabbinic self-care workshops and grants, the Rabbinic (re)Design Lab, and all of the webinars and resources that helped me think about how to make this season meaningful for our members while also taking care of myself. I have heard from many congregants who have expressed appreciation to me and the Cantor for all the work we are putting in to making these days feel special. And it's true, we have put in a lot of work. But that work has been made so much easier because of the support from our RA.”*

—Marc Israel, Tikvat Israel Congregation, Rockville, MD

“

*I have been very appreciative for the RA's support with statements, digital resources, webinars, and happy hours for clergy. Prior to this year I had very little interaction with the RA, which was mostly because of my availability and choices. This year, it has been a tremendous resource.”*

—Ariel Russo, Congregation Sons of Israel, Nyack, NY







# SUPPORTING RABBIS IN **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

In 2019 and 2020, we post **77** pulpit positions on our job board and 50 jobs on our organization job board.

In July we release a brand-new **questionnaire** for congregations to fill out when they have open pulpit positions. We attempt to neutralize biases in the questions.

Emily Hendel, Director of Career Services, fields phone calls from more than **300** rabbis and **150** lay leaders and hiring managers on **4** continents.

In February, **20** congregations throughout the U.S. participate in Interview Week. Graduates from Ziegler and JTS attend **85** interviews over a 4-day period.

In the first half of the year, we enlist the help of four of our members as advisors and Placement Coaches to **support rabbis** throughout their career searches.

By July, **60** rabbis begin new jobs or receive promotions. Please see our list of Completed Career Advancements to congratulate your colleagues.

From March to June, **Our RA** participates in multiple webinars on hiring during a pandemic, including a panel discussion with representatives from USCJ, the CA, NAASE, & JEA.

We release a new rabbinic search guide manual, **Netivot**, written by Elliot Schoenberg and revised by Emily Hendel, Director of Career Services.



“

*I honestly had a much better Shavuot than I thought I was going to. I felt connected to community, plugged in with amazing teachers. It was good, solid learning with a kind of familiarity that was inviting. And most of all, the tech worked beautifully. I felt really proud to be part of our movement. It was indicative of the true power we have to mobilize a spectacular network of rabbis across the continent to do something creative and to offer a quality service to the Jewish world.”*

—Rami Schwartz, Arlington, VA

“

*The virtual experience for Tikkun Leyl Shavuot was incredible. I stayed up for practically all of it, and was amazed at the talent and the deep content of most of the Shiurim.”*

—Michael Abadi, Temple Israel, Charlotte, NC

## PUBLICATIONS

Sales of the printed *Mahzor Lev Shalem* up **25%** compared to calendar year 2019.

**180** synagogues and organizations subscribe to the Digital *Mahzor Lev Shalem*.

**4,580** purchases of the Digital *Mahzor Lev Shalem* via Issuu.

**91,000** views of the Digital *Mahzor Lev Shalem* on Issuu.

Over **50,000** downloads of free electronic versions of *Siddur Sim Shalom* and segments of *Etz Hayim* and *Siddur Lev Shalem* made available during the pandemic.

## UPCOMING PUBLICATIONS FROM OUR RA

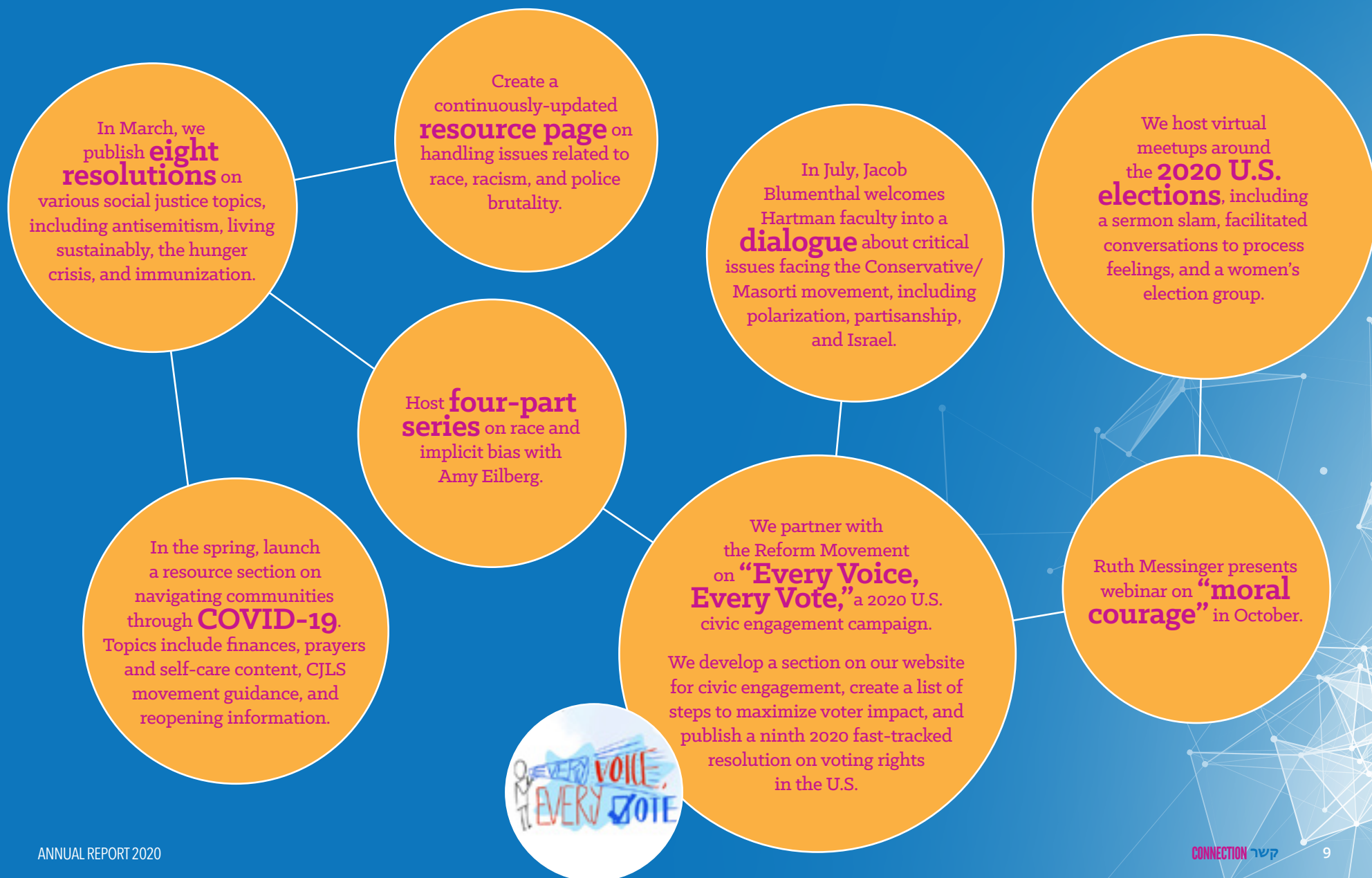
A new edition of *Megilat Esther* with translation and commentary, edited by Martin Cohen (forthcoming in late **2021**).

An updated clergy manual for the Conservative movement, to be published both in print and in an expanded, customizable digital edition, edited by Joshua Heller and co-edited by Annie Lewis. (**2022**)

*Siddur Lev Shalem for Weekdays*, edited by Edward Feld and co-edited by Jan Uhrbach. (**2023**)

# BEING A FORCE FOR **CIVILITY, PLURALISM**, AND **GOOD** IN ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

*In an increasingly polarized world, our RA fosters a climate of civility, pluralism, and social justice.*





## CO-CREATING A MODEL 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY ORGANIZATION

*We are committed to building a culture driven by innovation, transparency, organizational partnerships, and financial sustainability.*

WE WERE THRILLED  
TO ADD THE  
FOLLOWING  
MEMBERS TO OUR  
ORGANIZATION:



**Sheryl Katzman**  
Senior Director of  
Member Engagement



**Ilana Garber**  
Director of Global  
Rabbinic Development



**Remi Fisher**  
Executive Assistant  
to the CEO



## VIRTUAL PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

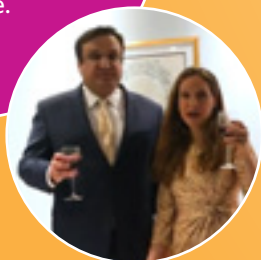
To help our members and the public celebrate the High Holidays during an unprecedented time, we release several innovative programs over YouTube, including a Seder Made to Order, How to Kasher series, pre-recorded Tikkun series, Tikkun Leil Shavuot, and Selihot.

Our **Shavuot** series features **31** presenters teaching live from coast to coast and **14** pre-recorded teachers.

Our **Rosh Hashanah Seder** features text, song, ritual, and explanations to celebrate Rosh Hashanah at home.

**10** rabbis from Australia, Israel, North America, South America, and Europe shared introductions to **High Holiday prayers** (Divrei Tefilah).

Our **Pesah Virtual Seder** features **26** parts with over **26** rabbis from the U.S., Israel, Canada, and Europe.



Our **Selihot services** feature **50** presenters from US, Canada, and Israel.



In November, our **ScholarStream** program launches with **135** sponsoring congregations and over **1,500** participants across **8** sessions taught by faculty of both JTS and Ziegler.

**SCHOLARSTREAM**  
AN INITIATIVE OF THE RA, USCJ, JTS, AND ZIEGLER



## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF OUR RA



## VIRTUAL PUBLIC PROGRAMMING

Our RA website received over **500,000** pageviews from January to December 2020. Our top 10 countries were: United States, Canada, Israel, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, India, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico.

Our average email open rate was **53%** (up roughly 10% from 2019).

We developed a public email list with over **18,000** contacts.

Facebook page reached over **450,000** people in 2020 and gained over **500** new "Likes" during the COVID-19 pandemic alone.

Tweets received over **400,000** impressions in 2020.

Our Instagram channel gained over **600** followers in 2020.

YouTube videos received over **50,000** views from January - December 2020.

Seder Made to Order video viewed over **8,000** times

How to Kasher videos viewed over **1,000** times

Prerecorded Tikkun videos viewed over **3,000** times

Tikkun Leil Shavuot video viewed over **11,000** times

Selihot video viewed over **24,000** times

## CONNECT WITH OUR RA ON SOCIAL MEDIA:



These social media channels will help you stay up to date on the latest news. You may also comment on posts, reply to comments from colleagues and the general public, and more!

A. Nathan • A. Nitzan • Aaron • Abbi • Abby • Abe • Abigail • Abraham • Adam • Aderet • Adir • Adrian • Ahud • Akiba • Akiva • Alan • Albert • Alberto • Alejandro • Alex • Alexander • Alexandre • Alexis • Alfred • Alfredo • Allan • Alon • Alvan • Alvin • Amanda • Ami • Amichaim • Amy • Analia • Andras • Andrea • Andrew • Andy • Annabelle • Anne • Antonio • Ari • Ariana • Arie • Ariele • Ariel • Ariella • Arielle • Armando • Arnold • Arthur • Ary • Aryeh • Asher • Ashira • Aubrey • Avi • Avigayl • Avinoam • Avis • Aviva • Avraham • Avram • Ayelet • Azriel • Barat • Barbara • Barry • Barry Dov • Baruch • Baruj • Batya • Bea • Becca • Ben • Benay • Benjamin • Bernard • Bernhard • Beryl • Beth • Beverly • Bezalel • Bill • Bob • Brad • Bradley • Braham • Brian • Bruce • Bryan • Burton • Cara • Carie • Carl • Carla • Carlos • Carol • Carolyn • Catharine • Cecelia • Chai • Chaim • Chana • Charles • Chaya • Cheryl • Claudia • Claudio • Clifford • Colin • Corey • Cornelia • Craig • D'ror • Dahlia • Dan • Dana • Daniel • Daniela • Daniella • Danielle • Danny • Dany • Danya • Dario • David • David-Seth • Debi • Debora • Deborah • Debra • Deena • Dennis • Diana • Diane • Dianne • Diego • Dina • Donald • Dorothy • Douglas • Dov • E Noach • Earl • Ed • Edgar • Edmund • Eduardo • Edward • Edwin • Efraim • Efrem • Ehud • Eitan • Elaine • Elan • Elana • Eli • Elianna • Eliav • Elie • Eliezer • Elijah • Eliot • Elliott • Eliseo • Elisha • Elizabeth • Ellen • Elliot • Elon • Elyse • Emanuel • Emily • Ephraim • Erez • Eric • Ernesto • Ervin • Erwin • Esther • Etan • Ethan • Eugene • Evan • Eve • Everett • Eytan • Ezra • Fabian • Faith • Feivel • Felipe • Fernanda • Floriane • Fred • Fredda • Frederic • Frederick • Gabriel • Gad • Gadi • Gail • Gali • Gary • Geoffrey • George • Gerald • Gerry • Gershon • Gershon • Gesa • Gideon • Gil • Gilah • Gilbert • Gloria • Gordon • Graciela • Greg • Greta • Guido • Guillermo • Gustavo • Guy • Hillel • Hagit • Hal • Hanan • Hanna • Hannah • Harlan • Harold • Harry • Harvey • Hayim • Hayyim • Heather • Hector • Helene • Henry • Herbert • Herman • Herschel • Hillary • Hirsch • Howard • Ian • Idit • Iehuda • Ilan • Ilana • Ira • Iris • Irvin • Irving • Irwin • Isaac • Iscah • Ismar • Israel • Ita • Ivan • J.B. • Jack • Jacob • Jacqueline • Jaime • Jama • James • Jan • Jane • Janet • Jarrod • Jason • Jay • Jaymee • Jeff • Jeffrey • Jeni • Jenna • Jennifer • Jeremy • Jerome • Jesse • Jessica • Jill • Jim • Joanna • Jodie • Joe • Joel • John • Jon • Jon-Jay • Jonah • Jonas • Jonathan • Jonina • Jordan • Jordán • Jorge • Josef • Joseph • Josh • Joshua • Joyce • Juan • JudahJudd • JudiAhavah • Judit • Judith • Jules • Julia • Julian • Julie • Justin • Kara • Karen • Karina • Kassel • Katie • Keilah • Kelley •



Kenneth • Kerrith • Kerry • Keven • Kevin • Kim • Kvod • Larry • Laura • Lauren • Laurence • Laurie • Lavey • Lawrence • Lea • Leah • Lee • Len • Leon • Leonard • Leonardo • Leonel • Leor • Leora • Leslie • Lester • Levi • Lewis • Lia • Liebe • Lilly • Lindsey • Lionel • Liron • Lisa • Loel • Loren • Lori • Louis • Lucas • Lucca • Lucia • Lyle • Lynn • Lynne • Malcolm • Manes • Manoj • Manuel • Marc • Marcela • Marcelo • Marcia • Marcos • Marcus • Marcy • Margalit • Margaret • Margit • Marim • Mario • Marion • Mark • Marshal • Martin • Marvin • Mary • Mary • Brett • Matan • Mathew • Matt • Matthew • Maurice • Mauricio • Max • Maximiliano • Mayer • Megan • Meir • Melanie • Melinda • Melissa • Melody • Melvin • Menachem • Mendel • Mervin • Micah • Michael • Michal • Michel • Michele • Michelle • Mikie • Miles • Milton • Mimi • Mira • Miriam • Miriyam • Mitchel • Mitchell • Moishe • Mordecai • Mordechai • Moriah • Morris • Morton • Moshe • Murray • Mychal • Myra • Myrna • Myron • Nadav • Naomi • Nason • Natan • Natasha • Nate • Nathalie • Nathan • Nathaniel • Neal • Nechama • Neil • Nelly • Nicole • Nilton • Nina • Nisim • Noah • Noam • Nogah • Nolan • Norbert • Norman • Norton • Oliver • Orit • Orrin • Pablo • Palti • Pamela • Patricia • Paul • Paula • Paulette • Peretz • Perry • Peter • Philip • Pinchas • Raanan • Carnie • Maurice • Marshal • Randall • Rachel • Rafael • Rafi • Ralph • Rami • Randall • Randy • Ranon • Raphael • Raquel • Ravid • Raymond • Raysh • Rebecca • Reuben • Reuven • Rhonda • Richard • Rick • Rivon • Rob • Robert • Roberto • Robin • Robyn • Rodney • Ron • Rona • Ronald • Roni • Ronit • Ronnie • Rory • Rose • Roy • Royi • Ruben • Ruti • Ruven • Ryan • Salomon • Sam • Sammy • Samuel • Sandra • Sanford • Sara • Sarah • Sarina • Sarit • Scott • Sean • Sebastian • Selilah • Sergio • Seth • Shai • Shaina • Shalom • Shamma • Sharon • Sharyn • Shaul • Shawn • Shaye • Shayna • Sheldon • Shelley • Sherre • Sheryl • Shimon • Shira • Shlomo • Shmuel • Sholom • Shoshana • Shoshi • Sidney • Simcha • Simeon • Simkha • Simon • Solomon • Stanley • Stefan • Stephan • Stephanie • Stephen • Steve • Steven • Stewart • Stuart • Sue • Susan • Suzanne • Sydny • Sylvan • Tal • Tamar • Tamas • Teresa • Theodore • Thomas • Tim • Tirza • Toba • Todd • Tracee • Tracy • Tsafreer • Tsvi • Tziona • Tzvi • Uri • Uriel • Ute • Valerie • Vernon • Vicki • Victor • Warner • Warren • Wayne • Wendy • Wesley • Will • William • Yaacov • Yael • Yafet • Yehiel • Yehoshua • Yerachmiel • Yeshaya • Yisrael • Yitzchak • Yoav • Yoel • Yonatan • Yonina • Yosef • Yvonne • Zachary • Zalman • Zari • Zelick • Zevi • Zoltan • Zvi • **אירנה**

## CAPTIONS

**Page 3** Our RA staff celebrated Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg's 30 years of service to the organization as placement director with lunch at Noah's Ark Restaurant & Deli and a trip to Monster Mini Golf in Paramus, NJ. We wish Elliot all the best on his retirement!

Front row (left to right): Ashira Konigsburg, COO; Lee Paskind, Social Justice Commission Consultant; Diana Denza, Marketing and Communications Specialist; Christine Aucoin, Administrative Assistant; Gina Morales, Business Manager; Bill Lebeau, Senior Consultant for Rabbinic and Institutional Leadership. Back row (left to right): Jacob Blumenthal, CEO; Elliot Schoenberg, Senior Vice President Emeritus and Global Director of Rabbinic Career Development Emeritus; Sasha Mastriano, Office & Project Manager; Max Arad, Assistant Director of Operations; Emily Hendel, Director of Career Services; Katharine Baker, Publications Director

**Page 6** Back row, left to right: Rabbi Stephanie Ruskay, David Lerner, Jacob Greenberg, Hazzan David Lipp, Rabbi Aaron Brusso, Rabbi Debra Newman Kamin, Linda Sussman, Jennifer Stofman, Rabbi Stewart Vogel, Myra Meskin Gurin, Rabbi Cheryl Peretz, Channah Estrin, Deena Cowans, Hazzan Stephen Stein, Natan Freller, Emily Hendel, Ned Gladstein. Front row, left to right: Zevi Lowenberg, Danny Lutz, Sam Blustin, Adam Lautman, Mary Brett Koplen, Jessica Fisher, Cornelia Dalton, Ariana Capptauber, Jenna Turow.



## The Rabbinical Assembly

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