



INSTITUTE FOR
**Jewish
Spirituality**

Grounded in mindfulness. Guided by wisdom.



Impact Report 2024

A spiritual haven in a turbulent world.

DEAR FRIENDS,

For many of us, 2024 stands unmatched as a year of pain, turmoil, and division—within our Jewish community and in the world at large. We endured the most brutal attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust and profound suffering in its aftermath in Israel and Gaza. There's been rising antisemitism on the left and right, a divisive election season, and the escalating disasters of the climate crisis. Over and over, we were reminded of our vulnerability and fragility. At times it was hard to breathe.

IJS was built for this moment—and we enabled our community to exhale.

On retreats, programs, and during our free online daily sits, our faculty provided wisdom, inspiration, and a deep well of comfort. We held space for our community to grieve the trauma of October 7th and launched a new initiative for a trauma-informed, mindfulness-based approach to confronting antisemitism. We expanded our outreach to young adults, welcoming hundreds to meditate, go on retreat, and study Torah together. And we trained 120 Jewish leaders to bring mindfulness practices to their communities—extending our reach throughout the Jewish world.

This report highlights our impact in the past year and charts a path for more growth, connection, and deep Jewish mindfulness practice in the year ahead. The stories on these pages are a celebration of your presence and your support.

To all who joined our programs in 2024—thank you for making IJS, our teachings, and our practices part of your life. And to our generous donors, thank you for making everything we do possible.

Together, we'll hasten the arrival of the peace we all dream of—both within ourselves and in our world.

Thank you for being our partner in this sacred work.

With gratitude,



Marvin Israelow

MARVIN ISRAELOW
Chair, Board of Directors



Josh

RABBI JOSH FEIGELSON, PhD
President and CEO

To the thousands of people who came together with us in community and generosity in 2024...

Thank you for your *tzedakah* and for your powerful presence.

Together we're building the Jewish life we've always dreamed of.



HOLDING OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH HEARTBREAK

We are living through one of the most difficult moments in recent Jewish history. The horrific events of October 7th, the war that followed in Israel and Gaza, and the worldwide explosion in antisemitism have triggered intense emotions—fear, rage, grief, shame, urgency, isolation, helplessness, and defensiveness—that have reverberated across the Jewish world.

These shocking and painful events have also activated in many Jews the deep, largely unconscious wounds of Jewish intergenerational trauma, making it hard to think clearly, respond wisely, act in alignment with our values, and hold onto our self-worth and humanity.

IJS provided a spiritual haven during this painful year: We breathed together, studied together, and gained solace in our sacred connection with one another and the Divine.

Immediately after October 7th, we welcomed more than 1,000 people on Zoom for three community-wide gatherings called “Holding Our Heartbreak.” For rabbis and cantors, we created a safe online space to reflect and recharge so they could support their congregations. And

attendance at our daily sits rose significantly, as people sought solace, healing, and hope through community and practice—with hundreds continuing to attend regularly each day.

“Thank you for creating this sacred container *to hold our collective grief.*”

—PARTICIPANT



When antisemitism spiked this year, we noticed a lot of powerful Jewish activism to stop the hate, but felt a deep need for healing the heart. And so we launched a new initiative—**Countering Antisemitism Within and Without**—which we will pilot in 2025. We plan to develop a replicable in-person workshop and a full-scale curriculum that will be used in partnership with Jewish organizations around the country.

Countering Antisemitism Within and Without will empower Jewish leaders and laypeople with trauma-informed Jewish spiritual practices designed to heal the corrosive impact of antisemitism on Jewish minds, hearts, and souls.

JEWISH LEADERS FIND A HOME FOR RESILIENCE AND EXPANSION

Jewish rabbis, cantors, and educators drew on reserves of strength this year, as they led their communities while experiencing trauma themselves. But this took a spiritual toll. To help them repair and recharge, we created a haven in our flagship programs—the **Clergy Leadership Program (CLP)** and our **Hevraya alumni community**.



After October 7th, we brought more than 70 alumni together for a Zoom titled “*Or Chadash al Tzion Ta’ir*, Let a New Light Shine on Zion,” led by Rabbi Naamah Kelman, an alumna of our Clergy Leadership Program and former Dean of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. Rabbi Kelman urged clergy to nurture themselves before serving others: “In these moments of darkness and despair,” she said, “I think we need to—as clergy, as caretakers, as leaders of our community—find that place of light within ourselves.”

Our annual Hevraya retreat at American Jewish University’s Brandeis-Bardin Campus in February provided this much-needed respite for 55 clergy. And our alumni listserv has been especially active, as alumni swapped ideas and resources for bringing their spiritual practice home to congregants and supporting their communities through the crisis.

We also launched a new leadership program in 2024, Kol Dodi: Jewish Spiritual Director Training, which will expand the field of professionals teaching spirituality across the Jewish world.

Twenty-nine participants are now more than a year into the program, learning to support individuals and lead communities on transformative spiritual journeys.

During a painful year, our programs were sources of tremendous personal growth for clergy. Rabbi Jonathan Roos, Senior Rabbi of Temple Sinai, in Washington, D.C., said: “I have been completely transformed. I have a newly emerged understanding of God’s presence in my life and the world around me. My professional priorities have shifted to much greater emphasis on prayer, relationships, teaching, and studying—not just for the head, but for the heart.”

“I am grateful to IJS for elevating the entire Jewish community over the last 25 years. The joy, the love, and the consistent level of teaching has raised all of us, clergy and laypeople alike, into a realm of mindful meditation and learning that I believe is enriching the face of American Judaism. Thank you.”

—RABBI JUDITH HALEVY, RABBI EMERITA OF THE MALIBU JEWISH CENTER & SYNAGOGUE AND RABBI OF THE TAOS JEWISH CENTER

GROWING THE NEXT GENERATION OF JEWISH SPIRITUAL SEEKERS

In 2024, young adults flocked to IJS in record numbers. Some sought new ways to cope with the trauma of this year. Others had been practicing yoga or Buddhist meditation and wanted to find their peace within the safety and tradition of their Jewish heritage.

“IJS’s young adult retreat embodied so much of what young Jews are missing and seeking in mainstream Jewish spaces: *ruach* (spirit), joy, and deep connection.”

—LIV STEEN, 21

At a time when many Jewish communities are shrinking, IJS is growing—and that’s because there’s more interest in mindfulness than ever before, especially among our youth.

Shevet East Bay (our pilot Jewish mindfulness community for young adults) doubled in size to 220 members in 2024, with record attendance at Shabbat dinners, a Chanukah party, a mindful Tu Bishvat seder and our weekly sits.

In February, **we took Shevet online and worldwide.** Building on the momentum begun in the East Bay, this new group blossomed on Zoom and in our WhatsApp group. We added affinity-group sits for LGBTQ+ folks and Jews of Color, and young-adult tracks for our popular Awaken and Elul courses. Our online Shevet community is now 500-strong and growing!

In August, we held our **first-ever silent retreat for young adults.** This week-long immersion drew 30 young people, most of whom were at a silent retreat for the very first time. Noa Baron, 24, said: “This retreat was perhaps the most meaningful experience of my life so far... I’m walking away a changed person in all the best possible ways.”



NEXT-GEN GUIDING THE WAY: YOUNG-LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

“For young people today, taking a moment to just *breathe* and be with your body and see what it’s like to be *you* in this moment, is a pretty radical act.”

That’s Jes Heppler, a PhD student and up-and-coming meditation teacher who got their start at IJS this year. Jes knows how this generation thinks, because they’re part of it. At age 27, they took our Yesod and Tiferet teacher-training courses, and now serve as retreat manager and a vibrant young voice teaching in the Shevet community.

Jes is also making short, soulful videos to introduce their peers to IJS and the weekly Torah portion on Instagram. “It might seem paradoxical to advertise a practice that requires deep presence on a platform that doesn’t,” they say. “But in an age of Insta reels, **being able to give a bite-sized piece of what IJS offers is really important. It’s a doorway to so much more.**”

Jes observed that the retreat in August filled a yearning: “Participants brought with them grief, hope, and transitions they were grappling with. But they also brought deep *kavanah* (intention), *kavod* (honor), openness, and a lot of heart. It really felt like we created something beautiful together.”



“IJS is meeting a spiritual hunger that many young people have today—the desire to figure out what Judaism should look like in our lives, in 2024.”

—JES HEPPLER, IJS
RETREAT MANAGER

Jes underscores in their teaching that meditation is an antidote to the challenges of the world today. “Young people are realizing that when we have a hard moment, we can remember our 10-minute sit that morning or the peace of being on retreat. We can call on that body-mind muscle memory to **return to the breath, return to our anchor, and return to wholeheartedness.**”

Jes also has a message for all of us who want to ensure this tradition gets passed on: “Bringing young adults into the world of Jewish mindfulness requires financial support. Our generation’s salaries haven’t kept up with inflation. It’s deeply meaningful when donors and organizations are able to support young adults to go on their first retreat or take their first course. It can make a major difference in the trajectory of their lives.

With your help, IJS is committed to nurturing this next generation of spiritual Jews. And as Jes would say, “may it be so.”

IJS BY THE NUMBERS

199,677

participants in IJS
free programs*



55,113

participants in IJS Daily Sit
and Weekly Yoga Studio*

386

registrants in new
monthly meditation sits
for LGBTQ+ folks and
Jews of Color



7,375

followers on Facebook



3,672

followers on Instagram



11,281

hours of IJS content
viewed on YouTube

1,762

participants in
14 online courses

570

members of our
clergy alumni
community



119,042

downloads of our Soulful Jewish
Living podcast (50 episodes)

PROGRAM IMPACT

97%

of participants in IJS
Young Adult programs
are moderately to
significantly more
involved in Jewish
life as a result (47%
significantly more
involved)

90%

of participants
agree IJS
programs
support their
learning and
growth

88%

of participants
expressed
interest
in further
developing their
Jewish spiritual
practices

87%

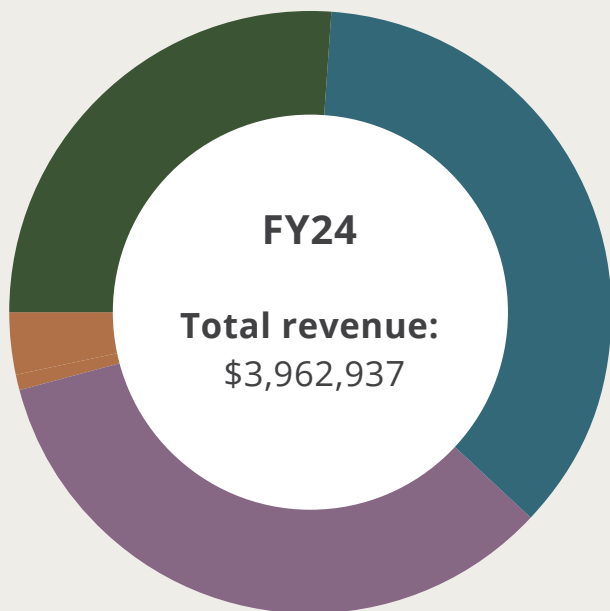
of participants
expressed
interest in other
IJS programs

80%

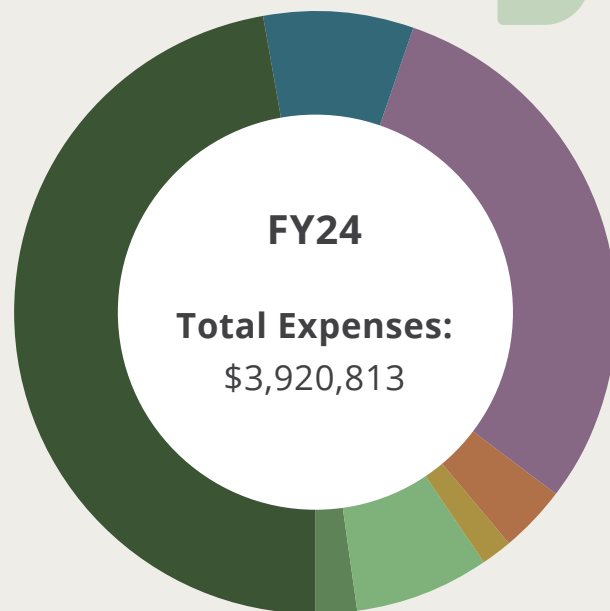
of participants
recommend IJS
programs to
others

**Total, not unique users*

2024 FINANCIALS



- Earned Revenue - \$1,041,107
- Foundation Support/ Institutional Support - \$1,430,400
- Individual Donors - \$1,366,242
- Other - \$125,188



- Salary & Wages - \$1,854,172
- Payroll Taxes & Benefits - \$315,507
- Professional Fees - \$1,183,331
- Equipment & Supplies - \$134,215
- Occupancy Expense - \$70,997
- Travel & Meetings - \$281,769
- Insurance, Fees & Other - \$80,822



Growth over the past four years:

85%

growth in total budget size

135%

growth in foundation support

101%

growth in individual donor contributions



GRATITUDE TO OUR DONORS

All of this was possible because of you—our dedicated community of donors. Thank you for your presence, your practice, and your generosity.

Tuition covers only 1/4 of the cost of running our retreats and programs, and that's why your gift is so invaluable. Your *tzedakah* in 2024 sustained IJS and the many ways we're supporting our community and revitalizing Jewish life for the 21st century.

Here are a few ways to take your giving further:

- ✔ Give Monthly
- ✔ Sponsor a Scholarship
- ✔ Join our Sustainers Circle
- ✔ Make a Legacy Gift

Contact maidellegb@jewishspirtuality.org or 646.863.5233 to learn more.

**This is the Judaism so many are yearning for.
Your support of IJS helps it flourish.**



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

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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.

Rabbi Nancy Flam
Larry Schwartz
Rabbi Sheila Peltz Weinberg



*IJS leadership as of July 2024

TUNE IN WITH OUR LATEST OFFERINGS!

- ✓ **LISTEN** to our three hosted podcasts on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and more!



- ✓ **PRACTICE** with our free Daily Sit for everyone and affinity groups for LGBTQ+ folks and Jews of Color

- ✓ **LEARN** with our latest course offerings

- ✓ **SUBSCRIBE** to Josh's Friday Reflections

- ✓ **FOLLOW US** on Facebook & Instagram to continue the conversation

- ✓ **BE IN TOUCH!**

Mailing Address:

Institute for Jewish Spirituality
PO Box 95000 – 2602
Philadelphia, PA 19195-0001

Phone: 646.461.6499

Web: www.jewishspirituality.org

