

SUMMER 2011

CIRCA

Newsletter of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life

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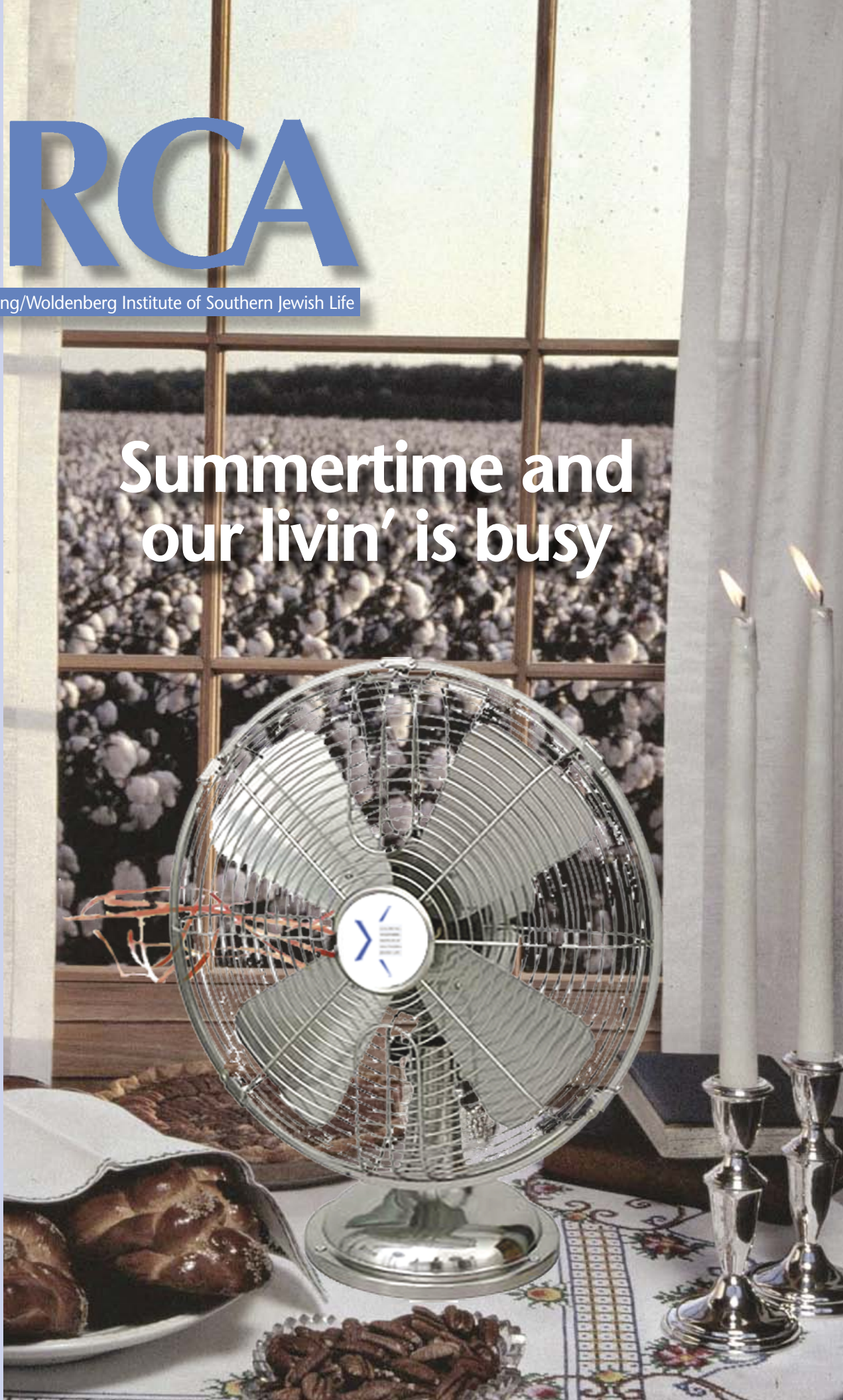
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from Tribefest

Summertime and our livin' is busy



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Summer Update



Message from
ISJL Board Chair
Rayman L. Solomon

Our Spring Board Meeting was held this April in Jackson. As always, meeting in Jackson is special because rather than simply reading departmental reports we are able to have them presented to us by the department directors and talk to them in person. Their energy and enthusiasm are contagious! It was also exciting to discuss with the fellows, their educational visits to small towns and cities throughout our region; the rabbi, the rabbinical visits to those communities without rabbis; and hear about the expansion of our historical encyclopedia and the number of oral histories we have conducted, the activities at the museum, and the development of several important new civic engagement programs. We heard from the new director of programming about the concert tour throughout our region this spring of Amir Gwartzman, the phenomenally talented Israeli musician, who has been sponsored in part, by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation. We were also able to experience Amir first hand, as he performed a short concert for us, and we saw the presentation of the new 2011-2012 programming to be offered to our region.

We welcomed to the Board several recently elected and newly elected directors: Pepe Finn, Rachel Reagler Schulman, Jay

Meredith Stein, Winnie Hoodis, and Mary Wiener. We elected to the Board: Art Salomon and Fred S. Zeidman. You will meet all of them when they are profiled in future issues of *Circa*. Each of them has deep roots in our region. Together, they bring to the board a wealth of business and volunteer experience combined with a strong commitment to the ISJL's mission. Our board now includes members from California to New York and Chicago to New Orleans.

As the ISJL enters its second decade, the Board is embarking on a new strategic planning process. The plan that the Board put together nine years ago has been vigorously and successfully pursued. The expansion of a number of our programs, most notably in education, and the establishment of others, such as community engagement, as well as the future relocation of our museum, currently located at the Henry S. Jacobs Camp, all have created the opportunity to redefine our near and mid-term goals. In order to plan for our future, we are in the process of revamping board committees, in an effort with the ISJL staff, which I will report on in future columns.

On a personal note, I recently attended the annual dinner of Project Keshet, which supports Jewish women's groups in the countries of the former Soviet Union by helping to provide the

opportunity for these women to reclaim their heritage and to discover the power of community activism through innovative leadership training and Jewish educational programs. Project Keshet also distributes Torahs to communities where there were none. My sister-in-law, Nancy Solomon, was being honored along with my hometown congregation, Temple Beth El of Helena, Arkansas, as Nancy had arranged, upon the closing of the Temple, for two of the Temple's Torahs to be donated to former Soviet communities through Project Keshet. The ISJL played an important role in helping the congregation plan and execute that closing, as it has for many congregations throughout the South. It was so rewarding to see that a process in which the ISJL initially played a part resulted in the renewal of Jewish communities halfway around the world.

It is stories like this and like those we heard from all of the staff about their activities that define the importance of the ISJL. Your support of the organization is what makes that possible, and I hope that each of you will continue to support us to the extent that you are able. I greatly appreciate what each of you does for the ISJL.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Solomon'.

Changing Culture



Message from
ISJL President
Macy B. Hart

My column this issue is dedicated to the ISJL Board, past and present, for their collective leadership and vision through a different lens.

The ISJL is eleven years old and going strong! As we enter our second decade, it's a good time to assess both our progress and our continuing challenges as we chart our course for the future. When we started the Institute, many Jewish community leaders and funders thought our vision was too ambitious, that our fledgling organization could never achieve what we were proposing. But today, as each department as originally sketched is now fully up and running, we have begun to think about how our "southern experiment" can transform the national status quo. **One thing that we have all learned, board, staff, and supporters, is that trying to change a culture is a very difficult enterprise.**

Identifying the need was the easy part. Several decades of National Jewish Population Surveys showed major challenges facing the American Jewish community. Movements and national organizations were seemingly quick to address these issues, though too often they simply repackaged existing programs or changed a name. All the while, these problems continued as organizational Judaism was shrinking. The current weakened state of the Movements and national organizations is a direct result of their slow and ineffective response to these challenges. Quite simply, they have lost their grip on the future generation of American Jews and it's an ongoing struggle that we don't seem to have a handle on.

We believe that the ISJL has developed solutions to many of these problems because we

addressed them head on at their root cause and we are still pushing for change. Our innovative method of providing direct services to communities has helped initiate "culture change" in the region, which has tremendous implications and potential for the rest of the country who cling too often to the ideas that "we've always done it this way." Unfortunately the misperception that these issues are exclusively Southern prevents community leaders from learning from our example. In truth, the issues the Institute has continued to confront are national in scope. In each region or state, there is a diversity of Jewish population and a mixture of urban and rural, large and small communities.

In large cities, only a small percentage of the Jewish population is active in community organizations. While small and medium-sized communities get a higher percentage of participants, their overall population numbers remain low which creates similar challenges. These smaller communities try to maintain their programming efforts. ISJL programming for these communities also has implications for the larger communities. Of course, we know that Jewish communities are not static. The large majority of us now live somewhere different from where we were raised. Many have moved from smaller towns to the big cities. If someone raised in a small town in Georgia were accustomed to an enriching Jewish religious and cultural life, they would be much more likely to become engaged and look for what they were used to once they moved to the Atlanta's or New York's. Much could be learned from

the successes of the Southern Jewish Experience that would be beneficial to the rest of the country.

The Board and I need your help! Our two biggest programs, our traveling rabbi and our education department, will never pay for themselves. The problem is that the small communities we serve are often unable to pay the real costs of the programs. These two departments alone require over a million dollars a year to operate. The bottom line is we need more angels to help support these innovative programs.

Part of the culture change we advocate is for individuals, families, and foundations to help families and communities that you may not even know. I urge you to think, as the ISJL does, outside your own zip code or community, and help us sustain these long term opportunities. We are in search of new donors at all levels and are asking our long term donors to increase their contributions. For those of you who have never given, please consider earmarking a gift toward the future and helping us continue our wonderful work.

This is how to build a Jewish community into the future; how to engage those who are not; how to connect place to place; how to move away from the "islands" we have seen for so many years; and how to make change instead of wish for it. I thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Macy B. Hart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "B".

ISJL Passover Pilgrimage

By Rabbi Marshal Klaven



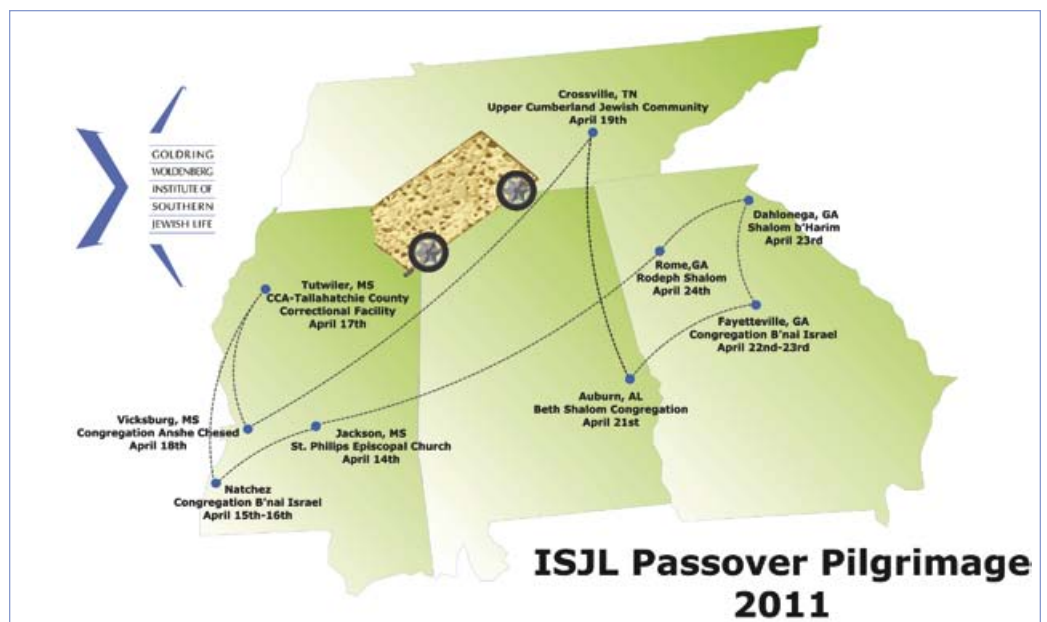
Making a pilgrimage on Passover is nothing new. For generations, our people have ventured to the Temple in Jerusalem, from far flung places, to offer and partake of the *pesach* offering with other sojourners. However, the ISJL's Rabbinic Department took this traditional journey on a whole new course, as it officially kick-started the ISJL Passover Pilgrimage.

Starting in Jackson, MS, ISJL Director of Rabbinic Services, Rabbi Marshal Klaven, made a Passover Pilgrimage to nine different communities, in four states, over 10 days. Not only did he have the blessed opportunity to celebrate this festive holiday with our communities, but the Pilgrimage emphasized that inherent message of the holiday: opening our doors and our lives to neighbor and stranger alike.

It has often been said, that breaking bread with others is a transformative experience. Well, such must also be the

case with *matza*, as Rabbi Klaven witnessed strangers becoming neighbors, neighbors becoming friends, and friends becoming extended family. And so, as a member of this family, Rabbi Klaven extends his continued support and gratitude, saying *l'shanah haba'a* -- next year in your community!

If you are interested in having your community participate in the ISJL Passover Pilgrimage next year, please don't hesitate to contact Rabbi Klaven at mklaven@isjl.org or at (601) 362-6357.



The ISJL Southern Cycling Sabbatical with the Jewish Pedaler, Rabbi Bob Levy

By Rabbi Marshal Klaven

From the end of February to the end of March, the ISJL Rabbinic Department unleashed its first ever **Southern Cycling Sabbatical** with Rabbi Bob Levy. Rabbi Levy is the senior rabbi of Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor, MI. Blessed with a sabbatical from his congregation, Rabbi Levy volunteered to pass along this blessing to others by cycling across five states, over a course of 700 miles, to support small and remote Jewish communities who are fighting to maintain Jewish life in small towns.

The ISJL **Southern Cycling Sabbatical** was a mutually beneficial program. For the congregations, they had the

opportunity to experience the tremendous skills of a superb rabbi as he officiated Shabbat/holiday observances, facilitated youth/adult education sessions, engaged in pastoral care, and so much more! “Usually we get 40-45 people attending [services],” stated Beth Tefillah’s president, Mark Friedman, “but, as a direct consequence of Rabbi Levy’s visit, we drew in over 80! He arrived a stranger,” added Friedman, “but left as a good friend.”

As for Rabbi Levy, he was enriched by the history of each community, the individual stories of their members, and the depth of their hearts and souls as they opened the doors of their



congregations and lives to him. Reflecting on his trip, Rabbi Levy stated, “It was really refreshing to see, in these small towns, that there exists a really strong Jewish identity and the strength

of Jewish knowledge. And cycling,” assessed Rabbi Levy, “was just fast enough to get to places and, importantly, slow enough to meet people along the way.”

While this program was the first of its kind, the ISJL hopes that the **Southern Cycling Sabbatical** will inspire other rabbis and cantors, in the future, to find meaningful ways to spend their own sabbaticals. Whether it is for a weekend, a week, a month, or a few months, the ISJL Rabbinic Department is ready, willing and able to creatively assist clergy in making a unique gift that will last a lifetime for the recipients as well as the giver.



REENGAGE!

By Malkie Schwartz

For the past two years, the Jackson, Mississippi community has been preparing to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the 1961 Freedom Rides. In May, Freedom Riders and their families will be visiting Jackson for a reunion that will shine a light on their courageous pursuit of racial justice. Some may see this as an opportunity to glow with pride and celebrate the bravery of a generation of Freedom Riders and Civil Rights workers. I see it as an opportunity to deliberate about the current role of many Jewish communities in the ongoing pursuit of racial justice. This 50th Anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate prior engagement, examine current disengagement and learn how we can reengage.

Recently, the ISJL staff was honored with a visit by two Freedom Riders, Hank Thomas and Lewis Zuchman. They came to discuss how the Jewish community can be involved in this important commemoration. It became clear that the scope of their request was not limited to the event or to Jackson. Hank Thomas delivered a message delicately framed

as an expression of hope. His message, “Reengage,” is rooted in his desire for Jewish participation as he educates others about the roles that Jews played in the Civil Rights Movement. He also aims to actively counter anti-Semitism, a growing concern of Jewish communities around the world. More pertinently it is also based on his vision of global communities where Jews and African Americans are not isolated from each other. He wants a strong foundation of meaningful, personal friendships and community relationships to infuse all aspects of our daily life.

The 50th Anniversary of the Freedom Rides can be the start of a new commitment by each of us to reengage. We can pursue a racial reality that moves beyond structured programs such as interfaith dialogues. These programs often present information about groups of people and what “they” believe and “they” experience. To reengage is to develop strong personal and communal relationships based on strengths, capabilities, knowledge, experience, compassion and interest.



Hank Thomas

Reengagement is an exchange of stories, concerns, losses, struggles, triumphs, and priorities that collectively represent the unique “I”s and “you”s that sustain our communities. Generalizations disappear when we are not afraid to come out from behind the shields of “we” and instead, personalize our discussions.

In 1961, the Freedom Riders were on a clear mission: Civil Rights for all. The risks included death and there were many Jewish men and women who courageously participated. In 2011, fifty years later, the ride that awaits us is not life-threatening and is, in fact, life-enhancing. It is an ongoing ride that demands a foundation of genuine relationships, and it is a ride we don’t want to miss. It is our privilege to have a history of participation in the Freedom Rides. We can own that privilege by reengaging and embracing the objectives of the Civil Rights movement and the appreciation of all people for who they are—not



Lewis Zuchman

the color of their skin, their economic status and any other barriers that keep people apart.

The Department of Community Engagement is, in part a response to serious social ills. We initiate and participate in projects that showcase the strengths, rather than the deficiencies, of individuals in our communities. As examples, our peer mediation program demonstrates the ability of middle school students to work with their peers to come up with peaceful resolutions to their conflicts. Our reading program also emphasizes the capabilities of middle school students to create positive reading experiences for themselves and their younger peers. Recognizing strengths and the strengths of all members in our community is a first step toward building meaningful relationships.

I hope that the message of Hank Thomas carries the weight of a directive and travels far beyond the walls of our office, Reengage!

Webinars:

The first round of ISJL Adult Education Webinars has concluded. These webinars were the natural next step in providing educational resources to our congregations allowing our reach to go further than ever before. Our focus on community resources was once again put into action as we brought people together from near and far and from great congregational diversity to study and celebrate Judaism. We were thrilled to highlight and make accessible the many talents of our staff as webinar instructors. Be on the lookout for upcoming webinars where we will welcome fantastic guest speakers and experiment with new technology.

Summer Schedule:

The summer is rapidly approaching and while it is a time for much of the world to relax, it is the busiest time of the year for the ISJL Education Department. The highlight of our summer is the Education Conference (June 26-28 in Jackson, MS,) where all our partner congregations gather as one community. New ISJL Education Fellows start June 1st and begin their training immediately. They quickly become part of the team and build their stamina and skills for their upcoming travels. After the conference, Ed Fellows are assigned to their congregations. Within 6 weeks, they will travel to approximately 80 congregations on summer visits which is a time for congregations to get to know their new fellows and begin important planning for the year. Before we know it, we are ready for the fall.

New Writing Projects:

The Education Department views the ISJL curriculum as a living document. This means that we are always examining, editing and adding to the existing lessons to make sure that the most current topics and methodologies possible are offered. Our newest additions include:

- 10 new prayers added to our **Ivrit Enrichment** supplement. The Hebrew program for more expanded Hebrew schools focuses on the meaning of prayer.
- An expansion of our High School unit on **Anti-Semitism**. The existing anti-Semitism lessons have been expanded into an entire unit comprised of six lessons. The unit begins with an introduction to stereotypes and prejudices then moves into the history of anti-Semitism, explores modern incidents of anti-Semitism, and asks the students to reflect on their own experiences. The unit concludes with students exploring their own Judaism.
- A brand new High School unit entitled, **Judaism and Gender Roles**. Students will discuss questions such as: What does Judaism say about gender? What have been traditional roles for men and women and how have those changed? Lessons also address students' relationships with themselves, platonic relationships and romantic relationships, respectively. Students will apply and practice Jewish values and texts to the way that they treat themselves and others.
- Edits and reprinting of **Grades K-3**. These lessons will include many new activities and ideas and will also be copy edited. Much of the feedback used for these edits has come from the ongoing feedback and communication the ISJL has with our partner congregations.

Farewell to Fellows 2009-2011

Each year, at this time, we say goodbye to the Education Fellows who have been wonderful ambassadors of the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life. They have admirably completed their two-year program and each of them is heading to outstanding opportunities.

*Pictured from left to right: **Molly Glazer** came to the ISJL with aspirations of being a teacher and broadening her Jewish knowledge. She will take on the role of Director of Education at Temple Emanuel in Winston-Salem, NC. Temple Emanuel is one of the ISJL Education Partner Communities and Molly looks forward to seeing many of you at the ISJL Education Conference. **Emily Andes** has enjoyed exploring the South, its wonderful people and cuisine for the past two years. This summer, she will be doing Marketing and Development for URJ Greene Family Camp. **Alli Goldman** is pursuing her interest in education here in Jackson. She will be a member of the Mississippi Teacher Corps, a teaching program that places recent college graduates in critical need areas of the state to teach for two years while earning a Master's in education. **Alex Glass** has enjoyed getting to know all of the amazing people she has worked with in her 11 communities. She begins the next step of her career as a full-time Assistant Director at URJ Camp Coleman. She looks forward to joining the wonderful Jewish community in Atlanta.*



Summer Rabbinic Intern



Emerging from a large pool of highly qualified applicants for the 2011 ISJL Rabbinic Internship is Student Rabbi Joseph Robinson. Having completed five years at the Zeigler School of Rabbinic Studies, at the American Jewish University in California, Student Rabbi Robinson brings to this position a wealth of knowledge as well as a depth of experience whether as a Jewish education coordinator, a pastoral care provider, a skilled service leader, and so much more! It is indeed a blessing to have Student Rabbi Robinson join the ISJL team, as he is assured to be a valuable asset in supporting the valiant efforts of our Southern Jewish communities to keep Judaism alive and well in small town America.

First Year Education Fellows



Ben Chaidell is a recent graduate of Yale

University, where he majored in religious studies and was active in the Jewish community on campus. One of Ben's favorite experiences is Shabbat, which is awesome because it comes every week. Ben enjoys baseball (especially the NY Mets), and music. Ben is excited to learn about Southern Jewish life and feels privileged to be able to work with so many communities in the region.



Erin Dana Kahal is from Augusta, GA, and is very familiar

with what it means to live in a small Jewish town. As a result, she is very passionate about creating positive Jewish experiences for others. Erin has earned her bachelor's degrees in both History and Social Studies Education from UGA. She served as Director of Religious Activities for Hillel

at UGA, where she planned deliciously themed Shabbat dinners, and cooperated with other board members to reach out to Jewish students and non-Jewish members of the Athens community.

Hillel gave Erin a great sense of purpose and identity. She is excited to have a job that is an extension of her college responsibilities.



Reva Frankel is originally from Chicago, Illinois. She is

a graduate of New York University with a degree in Individualized Study and a concentration titled "Miscommunication, Language, and Literature." She was active in the Bronfman Center for Jewish Student Life at NYU and served on the Hillel student board. Reva enjoys helping Jews connect with their Jewish identities. She loves traveling and living in new places, and is looking forward to moving to Jackson and getting to know the South!



Rachel Blume was born and raised in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

She is a graduate of Emory University with a BA in Religion/Jewish Studies, received her MA in Religious Studies from Georgia State University in 2011. She was a member of the softball team during her tenure at Emory and was named as a Collegiate All-American by the Jewish Sports Review in 2006, 2007, and 2008. During graduate school, Rachel served as the Jewish Studies Program Student Coordinator at Georgia State University. Her passion for Jewish Education stems from her incredible childhood experiences at Henry S. Jacobs Camp in Utica, MS.

Putting the Shul in Schulenberg: The History of the Tri-County Jewish Community

By Dr. Stuart Rockoff

The ISJL History Department is working to complete the Texas section of the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities. The first portion of Texas, the southeast region, has been put online. Later this year, the remaining regions will be added. Below is an abridged version of the tri-county Jewish community's history. For the full version and to see the histories of eighteen other Jewish communities in the region, visit the encyclopedia at www.isjl.org

Located midway between San Antonio and Houston, Texas the three counties of Lavaca, Fayette, and Colorado have never had any settlement large enough to call a city. No town in these rural counties ever attracted more than a few thousand people, many of whom were of German or Czech descent. Nevertheless, a small number of Jews were scattered among such towns as Hallettsville, Schulenburg, Columbus, and La Grange, and came together to establish a Jewish community that served the tri-county area.

La Grange, the seat of Fayette County, was the first to attract a significant Jewish presence. Seelig Alexander left Prussia in 1849. After a short time in New York City, Alexander moved to La Grange with his wife Bettie in 1851. After serving as a captain in the Confederate Army, Alexander returned to La Grange and opened a successful dry goods store.

By 1860, a number of Jews lived in La Grange, most all of whom, like Alexander, were Prussian-born and involved in retail trade.

By 1868, La Grange Jews had founded a Hebrew Benevolent Society, which purchased land for a Jewish cemetery after two Jewish children died in late 1867. Later, the cemetery came under the control of the women in the community, who formed the Ladies Hebrew Cemetery Association. Although the La Grange Jewish cemetery was never large, it contains only 32 marked graves, it was the first effort of Jews in the tri-county area to organize. A decade later, Jews in Columbus, the seat of Colorado County, established a Jewish cemetery in 1879. The following year, Jews in Hallettsville did the same.

By 1880, Jews in Columbus had begun to meet together informally for prayer. Later,

the Steiner family gave the group a Torah, which has been used by the tri-county Jewish community ever since. In 1904, the Jews of these various towns decided to establish a formal congregation. To raise money for the fledgling group, members decided to auction off the naming rights for the congregation; Coleman Asher, a 70-year old widower who owned a grocery store in Hallettsville, made the winning bid and named the congregation "Beth Asher," after himself. Beth Asher met in a rented room on Texana Street in Hallettsville. In 1907, the congregation had 20 members and held services on Friday nights and major holidays. Albert Saft, a German-born book store owner, usually led the services, which used both Hebrew and English prayers. Most all of the members of Beth Asher owned retail businesses. Indeed, by 1890, Jewish merchants dominated the downtown streets of Hallettsville, Columbus, and Schulenberg.

As in so many other southern towns, Jews in the tri-counties took on civic leadership roles. Michael Levey, who moved



A longtime community leader, Hirsh Schwartz, served as Mayor of Schulenberg for 17 years.

to Schulenberg from Hallettsville in 1880, quickly got involved in local politics, serving three terms as mayor of Schulenberg, from 1883 to 1889. This civic involvement continued into the 20th century. Hirsh Schwartz was a lawyer and banker who became one of Schulenberg's most prominent citizens. Schwartz was president of the First National Bank and helped found a local industrial foundation that sought to bring industry to Schulenberg. Schwartz capped off his long civic career by serving as mayor of Schulenberg from 1964 until his death in 1981.

Not much is known about the 40-year history of the Beth Asher congregation. For many years, the group met in a rented room on the ground floor of the Odd Fellow's Hall in Hallettsville. While most services were lay-led, occasionally the congregation would bring in a visiting rabbi. Around 1932, Susan Steiner, Irene Waldvogel, and Clara Klein

created a new Sunday school for the congregation. In 1938, Beth Asher celebrated its first confirmation class in a ceremony at the Odd Fellow's Hall led by Rabbi Robert Kahn of Houston's Congregation Beth Israel. The women of the congregation established a chapter of the Council of Jewish Women in 1936, which functioned as the sisterhood for Beth Asher.

In 1945, the Jews of the tri-county area decided to reorganize the congregation with a new name and constitution. Now called Temple Israel, the congregation's first meeting was held in Hallettsville, though they had members in such towns as Columbus, Schulenberg, Edna, Cuero, La Grange, Weimar, and Flatonia. In December 1946, the congregation began to discuss building the first synagogue in the tri-county area. The first

question was where to build it, as the members of Temple Israel were scattered in eight different towns. Congregation members voted overwhelmingly to build the synagogue in Schulenberg, since it was the geographic center of the region. Hirsh Schwartz was president of the congregation at the time, and donated land in Schulenberg for the new temple. Schwartz also led the fundraising effort, which collected money from local gentiles as well as Jews in other cities.

In 1951, Temple Israel dedicated its first synagogue on Baumgarten Street in Schulenberg, using the same Torah that had belonged to Beth Asher in Hallettsville. Clergy from three different Houston congregations participated in the event. The congregation was small, numbering only 37 members in 1962. Services were only held one Friday night

a month and on the high holidays.

The Jewish communities in the tri-county area were never large. In 1937, 22 Jews lived in Columbus, 30 in Hallettsville, 23 in La Grange, and 24 in Schulenberg. Temple Israel, which had a peak membership of 37 families in 1962, soon went into decline. The religious school, which had been run by the women of the congregation, closed by the early 1970s as there weren't enough Jewish children to sustain it. The remaining Jewish kids in the tri-county area usually went to Houston for religion instruction. By 1976, the congregation was down to 23 families as many of the Jewish children raised in the area had moved away to larger cities. By 1995, the congregation only had 9 families.

Despite these declining numbers, Temple Israel has



Members of Temple Israel in their synagogue during the High Holidays in 1956.

persevered. From 1978 to 1991, Rabbi Jerome Sherman led High Holiday services for the congregation. In the mid 1990s, the remaining members began to discuss suspending services, but soon after Temple Israel experienced a revitalization. David Vogel, who assumed the presidency of the congregation in 1994, along with his wife Vickie, brought a new energy to the group. Rick Stein, the grandson of one-time lay leader Eli Rubin, agreed to drive in from Houston each year to lead Rosh Hashanah services. Stein and his wife Paula, who was the daughter of longtime Schulenberg mayor Hirsh Schwartz, continue to celebrate the Jewish New Year at Temple Israel, which now numbers 28 member families. Today, the remaining members of Temple Israel, several of whom live in Houston or other large cities, are committed to maintaining the little "shul in Schulenberg."

Members gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Temple Israel in 2002



Temple in Brookhaven, MS Becomes Museum

By Rachel Jarman

The story of small town congregations closing their doors as membership slowly dwindles is not uncommon in our region. But the unique transformation story of Temple B'nai Sholom in Brookhaven, MS highlights how the legacy of Jewish communities across the South can and should be preserved.

With only two remaining Jews left in Brookhaven, the greater congregation of family and friends decided it was time to close their temple. Built in 1896, Temple B'nai Sholom had served its congregation for 113 years. Temple B'nai Sholom was deconsecrated on August 30, 2009 in a ceremony performed by ISJL Rabbi Marshal Klaven. During the deconsecration it was

announced that the building would be donated to the Lincoln County Historical and Genealogical Society to be used as a county history museum. This donation served as a way for the Jewish families and their Christian friends to ensure the building would be preserved and to honor the history of the Brookhaven Jewish community.

It was agreed upon that with the donation of the building, a B'nai Sholom Jewish Heritage exhibit would also be included in the museum. The ISJL Museum and History departments as well as the Samuels family worked together to put together the exhibit.

On the bimah, panels describe the original use



of the Temple and explain the various Judaic items still in the sanctuary including the ner tamid, Ten Commandments and menorahs.

The exhibit also highlights the history of the Brookhaven Jewish community and its impact on the town. Jews began to immigrate to Brookhaven in the mid 18th century. Many became successful store owners and prominent members in the Brookhaven business community. Even though Jews were a small

minority of the town's population they became part of the social fabric of Brookhaven and three Jewish men served as mayor.

The museum opened on March 11th, 2011. The Samuels and Gurwich families were there to represent the congregation as well as dozens of excited community members. The museum located on S. Church St. is open from 9-5 Monday through Friday. For more information please call Rachel Jarman at 601-362-6357.



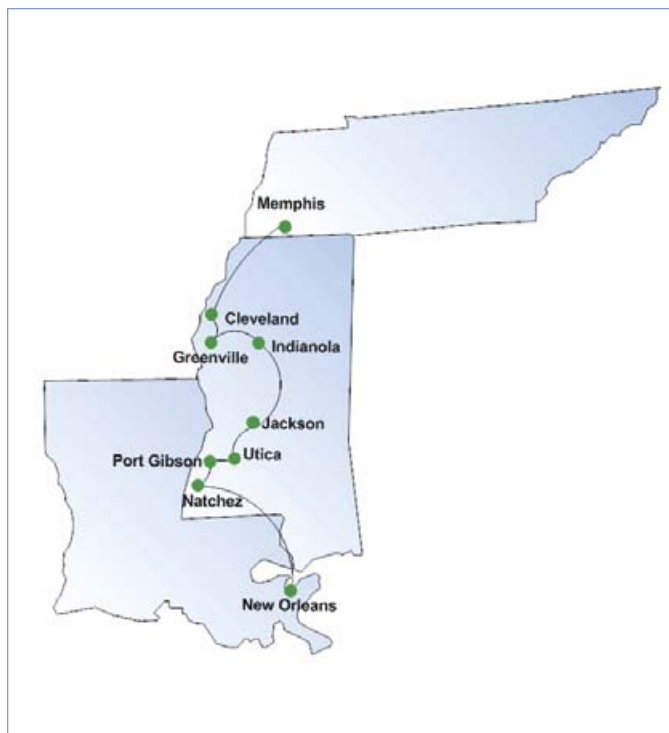
ISJL Leads Oak Park Temple through Deep South

In March, the ISJL brought thirty members of the Oak Park Temple from suburban Chicago to Mississippi for an exploration of the history and culture of the Deep South. Starting their journey in New Orleans, the group, led by Rabbi Max Weiss, learned about the Jewish history of the Crescent City and the efforts of the community to recover from Hurricane Katrina. The group then traveled to Natchez, Mississippi, where they visited Temple B'nai Israel and heard from local history expert Teri Tillman. Later, they experienced the hoop-skirted magic of spring Pilgrimage. After visiting the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience and enjoying the classic southern lunch of fried chicken at the Henry S. Jacobs Camp, the group toured the home of slain Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers.

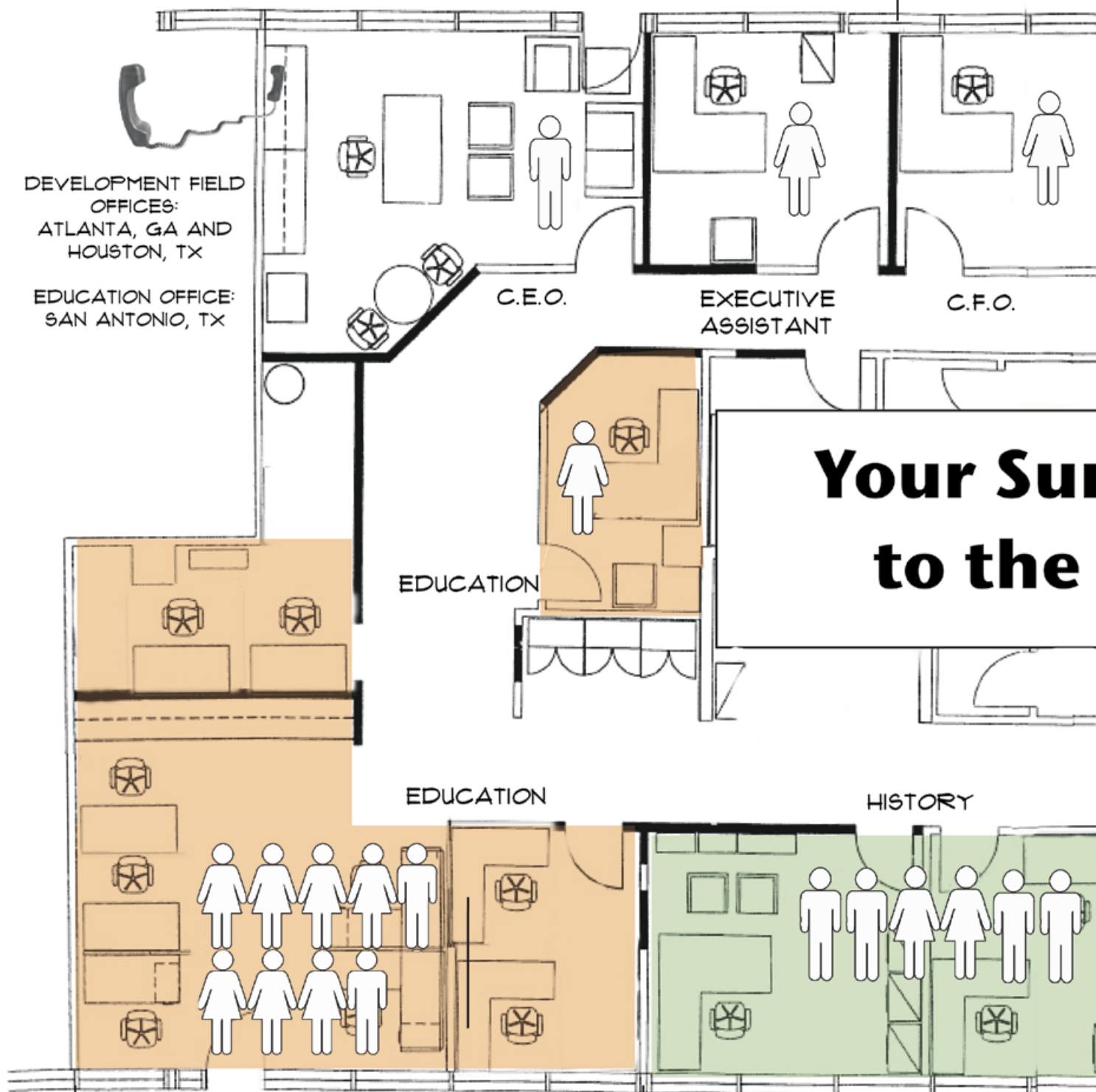
The following day, the travelers experienced the Mississippi Delta, with visits to the B.B. King Museum and the Hebrew Union Congregation in Greenville. They also heard from Indianola mayor Steve Rosenthal and Dr. Luther Brown of the Delta

Studies Center at Delta State University. The group spent their last day in Memphis at the National Civil Rights Museum before heading back North.

ISJL historian Dr. Stuart Rockoff put the trip together and served as the group's Mississippi tour guide. If you are interested in bringing a group to learn about the unique mix of southern Jewish and civil rights history as well as authentic southern culture and cuisine, contact Dr. Rockoff at (601) 362-6357; rockoff@isjl.org.



The **Cultural Program** is gearing up and moving forward in Fall 2011- Spring 2012.

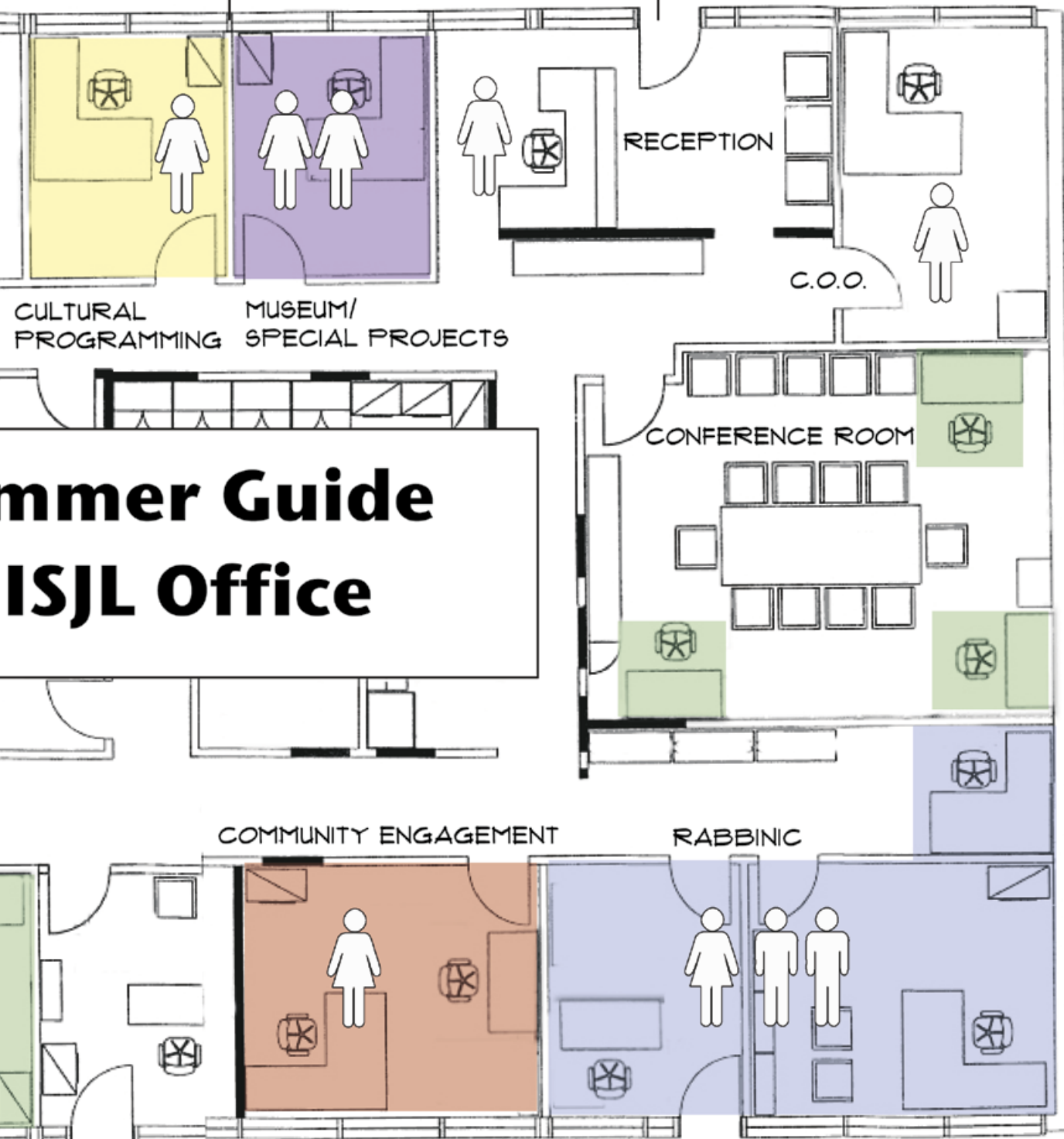


The **Education Department** will be adding 4 new Fellows just in time to plan their biggest program of the year, the ISJL Education Conference. After the conference, Fellows will criss-cross the region to complete visits to over 70 communities covering 13 states in our region in only 6 weeks.

The **History Department** will triple in size and add four interns this summer. They will hit the road west towards Texas to research and write new entries for the Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities.

Programs Department marketing the 2012 Program Menu.

The **Museum Department** will double with the addition of a summer intern and will be busy with tours and developing new community outreach programs.



Summer Guide ISJL Office

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The **Community Engagement Department** will hold trainings for staff members who will oversee the ISJL program in their school during the upcoming academic year.

The **Rabbinic Department** will travel to congregations in MS, AL, LA, TN and TX. With the addition of a rabbinic intern, twice as many communities will have the opportunity to receive summer visits.

Fall 2011 - Spring 2012

Southern States Jewish Programming Series



Noa Baum
Storytelling performances for families:

“If Not Higher”
Stories that bring forth the joy and meaning of tradition, with a focus on the values and customs of Shabbat,

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Chanukah, Purim, Passover and Shavuot.

“A Land Twice Promised”

Israeli storyteller Noa Baum began a heartfelt dialogue with a Palestinian woman while living in the United States. She weaves together their memories, and their mothers’ stories, to create a moving testimony that illuminates the complex and contradictory history and emotions surrounding Jerusalem, for Israelis and Palestinians alike.



- She also has available an interactive, workshop for further learning.
- [This show and workshop is for adults and teens.](#)

Batsheva

“i, Batsheva, SINGER is a concert for the fringes and the masses. A cross (you should pardon the expression) between Theodore Bikel and Tom Lehrer, but from a distinctly feminine voice.”



Singer, Songwriter, Musician, Comedy Writer

Batsheva sings in Ladino, Yiddish, Hebrew and English. She is an award winning songwriter and has performed in Israel, Canada, Australia, and the United States.

- Her “Song of Remembrance” is part of the official archives of Yad Va-Shem.
- She is a classically trained musician, studying piano and cello at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. She accompanies herself on guitar. Batsheva holds a degree in Theatre from York University in Toronto.

The Baal Shem Tones

A Baal Shem Tones concert is more than great music; for many it is a spiritual event that stays with them for years. Helene and her husband Michael, the duo’s producer, co-write most of their material, a tightly crafted style of pop-influenced Americana which has been described as “100% American and 100% Jewish,” with a powerful spiritual punch that stands out!

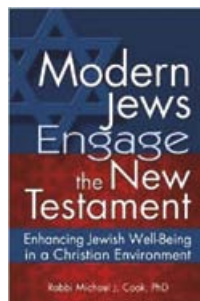


Rabbi Michael Cook, Ph.D.

Rabbi Michael J. Cook, Ph.D., is the Bronstein Professor of Judeo-Christian studies at Hebrew Union College and the only rabbi in America with a Full Professorial Chair in New Testament. Dr. Cook has received an “Excellence in Teaching Award”. He serves on many advisory boards in Jewish-Christian relations and has served on the Executive board of the CCAR.



- Despite the New Testament’s impact on Jewish history, virtually all Jews have avoided learning its underlying dynamics, thereby leaving Christian friends perplexed as to why Jews are wary of the “Good News”. A ground breaking solution oriented book intent on leading Jews out of anxieties plaguing them throughout history and on enlightening Christians to alternative ways of processing New Testament texts.



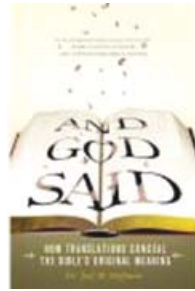


Dr. Joel Hoffman

For centuries, translations of the Bible have obscured our understanding and appreciation of the original text. Now, *And God Said* provides readers with an authoritative account of significant mistranslations and shows how new

translation methods can give readers their first glimpse into what the Bible really means.

- Dr. Joel M. Hoffman is a much sought after speaker who presents to dozens of popular and academic audiences each year. He holds a Ph.D. in linguistics and has served on the faculties of Brandeis University and Hebrew Union College. He is the chief translator for the 10-volume series, *My People's Prayer Book* and *My People's Passover Haggadah*. He is also the Author of the critically acclaimed *In the Beginning: A Short History of the Hebrew Language*.
- His lectures are engaging, informative and fun!



Nine Lives of a Marriage

Eva Friedlander & Mickey Goodman

Eva and George Friedlander had nine lives like their cat Rainy. Their romance blossomed in the ashes of post-WWII Hungary, they were transplanted to Rome where they married and took root in Atlanta, GA. They survived the Nazi occupation of Hungary; she a dazzling Ingrid Bergman look-alike and he a brilliant scientist who escaped three forced labor camps. The story follows the Friedlander's through their individual wartime experiences, George's 45-year love affair with another woman and their tumultuous years of living separate lives under one roof.

Mickey Goodman is an award-winning writer with more than 500 bylined articles. Together she and Eva tell the story and have been received with resounding smiles and endorsements!

Ellen Bernstein

Ellen Bernstein is an author, teacher, rabbinical student and a founder of the modern Jewish environmental movement; Shomrei Adamah: Keepers of the Earth. She is the author of *The Splendor of Creation: A Biblical Ecology, Ecology & the Jewish Spirit: Where Nature and the Sacred Meet*, and *Let the Earth Teach You Torah*.



- "Ellen Bernstein is an inspired speaker, and her ability to merge scholarship with personal passion, coupled with her activism and vision makes for particularly compelling presentations." -Professor Alan Tal of Israel's Ben Gurion University.

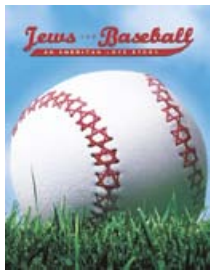
Dr. Stuart Rockoff

Stuart Rockoff received his Ph.D. in US History from the University of Texas at Austin with a special emphasis on immigration and American Jewish history. He has taught several history courses at UT-Austin, UT-San Antonio, Central Texas College, and Millsaps College. Stuart serves as the director of the history department at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, and is the President of the Southern Jewish Historical Society.



- Dr. Rockoff shares his incredible knowledge with the following three engaging topics: "Bagels & Grits: How Jews found a home in the South", "The Fall & Rise of the Jewish South" and "Southern Jews in the Crucible of Civil Rights".

Films Available from the ISJL Programming Department



Jews and Baseball – An American Love Story

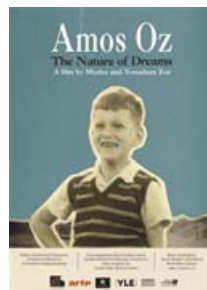
This film portrays the contributions of Jewish major leaguers and the special meaning that baseball has had in the lives of American Jews. More than a film about sports, this is a story of immigration, assimilation, bigotry,

heroism, the passing on of traditions and the shattering of stereotypes. The story is brought to life through Dustin Hoffman's narration, and interviews with dozens of passionate and articulate fans, writers, executives, and players.

Presenter is available upon request.

Amos Oz; The Nature of Dreams

Exploring the persona of Amos Oz, the film opens a rare window of opportunity to experience the world as observed through the eyes of one of Israel's greatest authors; a man of whom it has been said, knows Israeli society inside out, especially since he is an outsider, in a very profound sense, of all worlds.



Circumcise Me

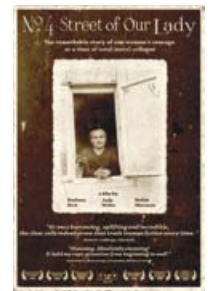
Yisrael Campbell looks more like a rabbi than a comedian, but don't be fooled by the big black hat! Born Chris Campbell, the son of an



ex-nun and a Catholic school teacher, he converted to Judaism not once, but three times. This is a hilarious, searching story of one man's quest for spiritual enlightenment against the bewildering backdrop of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

No. 4 Street of Our Lady

This film tells the remarkable, yet little-known story of Francisca Halamajowa, a Polish-Catholic woman who rescued 16 of her Jewish neighbors during the Holocaust while cleverly passing herself off as a Nazi sympathizer. For two years, she hid her Jewish neighbors in her tiny home and cooked and cared for them, right under the noses of German troops camped on her property as well as hostile neighbors. Two families were hidden in the hayloft of her pigsty, and one family in a hole dug under her kitchen floor. Pre WWII there were 6,000 Jews living in Sokal, only 30 survived and Francisca Halamajowa saved half of them herself! She has been listed among the Righteous Gentiles at Yad Va-Shem. **Presenter is available upon request.**



The Klezmatics

Defying categorization, the geniuses of world music/klezmer fusion known as the Klezmatics have been breaking ground by continually redefining Jewish music for more than 20 years. Their restless energy, infectious concert performances and on-camera candor make for a rousing behind-the-scenes documentary covering four up-and-down years in the life of the band. **Presenter is available upon request.**



The ISJL provides complete support for all programs!

- Press releases
- Brochures and flyers
- All travel & hotel arrangements
- All book and CD arrangements
- Advance email of speaker handouts
- Anything else? Just ask!

For information or to book any of these musicians, authors, speakers or films please contact:

Ann Zivitz Kimball, Director of Programming, 601-362-6357, akimball@isjl.org

My Southern Music Tour: Interview with Amir Gwartzman

By Ann Zivitz Kimball

Through the generosity of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation, for the second year in a row, world renowned Israeli jazz musician toured the Southern region partnering



with the ISJL. The Schusterman Foundation strives to expose American audiences to Israeli artists and anyone who was lucky enough to see one of Amir's concerts knows firsthand what a fabulous success this has been! At the end of his three month, 2011 tour, Amir had appeared in 25 different cities, across 9 states, spreading goodwill through his incredible music and underlying message of peace.

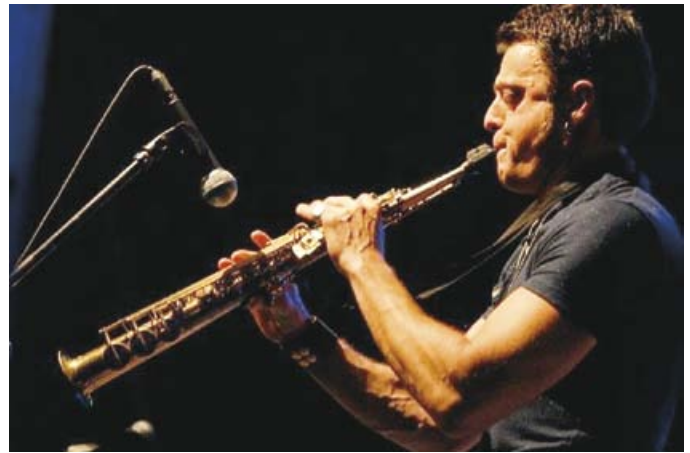
"My home base is Tel-Aviv Israel, but for this program I was based in Jackson, MS which is no doubt, THE

capital of Mississippi." stated Gwartzman. And he added his feelings about Jackson and the south, "Jackson is indeed a big city with everything you would expect, however, it still hasn't lost its sweetness and the feel of a village, which is so beautiful to me. People are friendly, relaxed and laid back, and it's characteristic all over the south that they say hello to one another and are easy to engage in conversation and are not threatened by one another."

"I performed and taught people about Israel, world music, instruments,



techniques and more, but I also learned and absorbed much myself. Israel is tiny in size; however, it is a microcosm of the world, with immigrants from everywhere. The nuances of the cultures in Israel are much like the south; each city has its own flavor. I remember every town I've been in, however, some



left a deep impression on me, such as New Orleans." Upon returning home last year, Amir recorded his Inhale/Exhale album which includes a composition dedicated to New Orleans and much of the flavor revealed in the music is reflective of Gwartzmans' Southern tour.

Among highlights for Amir was his concert at the Wells Memorial Church in Jackson, MS with an enthusiastic full house and five standing ovations! He also led the Hal & Mal's St. Patrick's Parade with his bagpipes two years in a row. Along with performances for middle schools, high schools and universities, churches, synagogues and day schools, he also played at the Jazz Hall of Fame in Tulsa, OK; the



International Music Festival in Lafayette, LA; The B.B. King Museum in Indianola, MS; and received the key to the city in Lake Charles, LA! Amir prides himself on his newly acquired "southern jive" as he greets southerners with a "Hi Y'all, I'm fixin' to play some music!"



A Living Legacy for the Future

It is incredible what the ISJL has accomplished in our first 10 years. Some said we would be unable to accomplish all we set out to do. Our visions have become realities. Today we serve our 13-state region with a myriad of programs, as you have seen through the pages of CIRCA. But, we need your help to sustain these programs and ensure a bright future for those individuals we serve.

Create a lasting personal legacy at the ISJL by establishing an endowment fund in support of ISJL staff positions and programs. The following table illustrates available options. Please call Macy at (601) 362-6357 to discuss endowment giving opportunities.

If you or a family member has been touched directly by a program that we have delivered or if you feel the responsibility that Jews support one another, no matter where they live, we ask you to support the ISJL. Every Jewish life does count!

With your support, we will continue to make a difference for the next 10 years.

ISJL Staff Position and Program Endowments

ISJL Staff Positions

Title	Number of positions	Endowment cost per position	Endowment cost total
Jewish Educator	6	\$1,800,000	\$10,800,000
Education Fellow	18	\$700,000	\$12,600,000
Rabbinic Chair	2	\$2,000,000	\$4,000,000
Historian	1	\$1,900,000	\$1,900,000
Oral Historian	1	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Museum Coordinator	1	\$1,200,000	\$1,200,000
Cultural Programs Director	1	\$1,400,000	\$1,400,000



Title	Number of positions	Endowment cost per position	Endowment cost total
Community Engagement Director	1	\$1,600,000	\$1,600,000
Summer History Intern	3	\$50,000	\$150,000
Summer Museum Intern	1	\$40,000	\$40,000
Summer Community Engagement Intern	1	\$50,000	\$50,000
ISJL Programs			
Program Name	Total available	Annual Cost	Endowment cost
Literary Series	Multiple	\$50,000	\$1,000,000 (per series)
Jewish Cinema South	1	\$50,000	\$1,000,000
Cemetery Trust Fund	1	\$250,000	\$5,000,000
Other			
ISJL General Unrestricted Endowment Fund		n/a	No established limit.



The Perfect Gift: An Oral History Interview

Do you know a parent or grandparent who seems to have everything? Then commission an oral history interview for your loved one with the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.

Commissioned oral history interviews:

- Result in edited DVDs of interview footage (video and audio) and, optionally, bound interview transcripts.
- Are conducted by a skilled interviewer with a strong background in Southern Jewish culture and history.
- Take advantage of extensive pre-interview research.
- Preserve your loved one's story in his or her own words.
- Provide unique and rewarding opportunities for interviewees to reflect on their experiences and achievements.
- Support our History Department's documentation of the Jewish experience in the American South.



For more information about fees and availability, please contact Josh Parshall at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life by email (jparshall@isjl.org) or telephone (601-362-6357).

ISJL Awarded Slingshot Grant from TribeFest

TribeFest, held in March 2011 was an interactive and educational celebration that drew over 1,500 Jewish young adults from across North America. The Jewish Federations of North America's National Young Leadership - a local, national and international network of socially conscious Jews in their 20s, 30s and early 40s - hosted the event in Las Vegas. Through presentations by dynamic leaders in politics, entertainment, music, art, food, religion and other aspects of Jewish life, TribeFest offered attendees many ways to connect to their own Judaism and the Jewish community.

During this conference, in an accelerated version of the Slingshot Fund allocation process, a group of participants had the opportunity to grant \$5,000 to one of the fifty innovative Jewish organizations featured in the Slingshot '10-'11 Guide. "Leadership, innovation, impact, effectiveness - are the qualities important to consider when evaluating grant applications from progressive Jewish organizations," stated Will Schneider, Director of the Slingshot Fund, an organization that seeks to support the Jewish future by building next-generation leadership and philanthropy. He asked the group to consider these qualities in the "90 Minute Slingshot Fund" breakout session at TribeFest.

Each group evaluated the Slingshot organizations and then chose one of the organizations to "pitch" to the rest of the groups. There were a total of nine presentations to the entire group and then everyone voted on the organization that they thought best reflected the values and goals.

We are pleased that the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) was chosen as TribeFest's winner. The ISJL is grateful to the Slingshot Fund for sharing this opportunity with young leadership throughout North America.

Beth Israel Congregation of Jackson, Mississippi

is celebrating its

150th anniversary

with a year's worth of exciting programming for current, prospective and former congregants. From **September 15 – 18, 2011,**

there will be a reunion weekend to include several exciting events including the "Beth Israel Ballyhoo", which will feature Joshua Nelson, the Prince of Kosher Gospel, the Mississippi Mass Choir and the temple's own Shirim Choir, special services and a lunch at Henry S. Jacobs camp, a golf tournament, and special services including past rabbis and well-known Jewish leaders.



SAVE the DATE

The 24th Annual

Delta Jewish Open

October 16, 2011

in Greenville, Mississippi

The Delta Jewish Open golf tournament is a benefit event for the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life and the Henry S. Jacobs Camp. More information coming soon!



Thank You to Our Contributors!

In these CIRCA pages, you can see the impact our education, history, museum, cultural and rabbinic programs have on thousands of people just like you. With deep appreciation, the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life extends thanks to everyone who made a contribution from January 1, 2011 – April 1, 2011, to enable our important work.

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January 10, 2011 and
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<i>Jean & Sol Shepp</i> -Barbara & Jerome Magdovitz	<i>Mr. & Mrs. William Carroll's grandson's marriage</i> -Eve & John Herzfeld	<i>Macy's newest grandchild-Jessel Hart Martin</i> -Stacy Schusterman	<i>Phrose & Maurice Raphael's recovery & new home</i> -Reva & Ellis Hart
<i>Beatrice Bursack Snyder</i> -Susan & Macy B. Hart	<i>Buddy Cohen's birthday</i> -Marilyn & Stan Rothstein	<i>Goldie Himelstein's birthday</i> -Ilse Goldberg	<i>Dr. Stuart Rockoff</i> -JCC of Houston, TX -Philippa Newfield & Phillip Gordon
<i>Ray Spingarn</i> -Dr. Rachel & Edward Cusnier	<i>Rebecca Cooper becoming a Bat Mitzvah</i> -Eve & John Herzfeld	<i>Steven Holman becoming a Bar Mitzvah</i> -Barbara & Curtis Joseph	<i>Jeri & Marc Shapiro</i>
<i>James Paul Stephan</i> -Yvonne Stephan	<i>Jack Cristil's retirement</i> -Reva & Ellis Hart & Family	<i>Rabbi Bernard Honan for the Honan Library at Hillel, University of Alabama</i> -Judy & Chuck Stokes	<i>Pam & Lee Rubin</i> -Dan Cohn
<i>Emanuel Sternberger</i> -John D. Benjamin	<i>David Crystal becoming a Bar Mitzvah</i> -Michele & Ken Schipper	<i>ISJL History Department</i> -Timothy Parshall	<i>Betty Claire Samuels' birthday</i> -Sylvia & Seyman Goldstein
<i>Flo Streiffer</i> -Ann & Rick Streiffer	<i>Pepe Finn's appointment to the ISJL Board</i> -Mary Ann "Skipper" Masur & Ezra Singer	<i>Ivy & Caleb Joseph's birthdays</i> -Sandra & David Ginsburg	<i>Leona Shlosman</i> -Jo-Ellyn & Abe Kupperman
<i>Adolph Susholtz</i> -Norma B. Frachtman	<i>Pam Friedler</i> -Julie Grant Meyer	<i>Carolyn Katz</i> -Keith Katz	<i>Lou Shornick</i> -Philippa Newfield & Phillip Gordon
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<i>Jack Wormser</i> -Carla Wormser	<i>Dr. Marshall Frumin's recovery</i> -Janet & Mickey Frost	<i>Rabbi Marshal Klaven</i> -Temple Meir Chayim-Dermott, AR -Congregation B'nai Israel-Fayetteville, GA -Congregation Beth Israel-Meridian, MS -Jack Lasofsky -Hattie Heiman -Teri & Barry Tillman -Temple Shalom-Lafayette, LA -Melanie & Will Dann & Family	<i>Claire Solomon</i> -Nina Gussack & Allan Stein
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<i>Jerry Black being Mardi Gras King</i> -Isabel Posner	<i>Dena Grenell</i> -Dan Zimmerman	<i>Maxwell J. Lyons, II birthday</i> -Susan & Mark Jacobson	<i>Paula Stein</i> -Jan & Leslie Cohen
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