

THE ISJL TURNS 18



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WELCOME TO SHALOM Y'ALL

FOR TWO DECADES, LOYAL READERS HAVE KNOWN this magazine as CIRCA. The name of the publication was selected back when the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience was expanding to become the Institute of Southern Jewish Life. The word "circa" is used frequently in the museum world, on placards and in descriptions of artifacts. It means approximately, roughly, give-or-take, our-best-guess; it generally precedes a date and indicates an estimate of time—as in "menorah, brass, circa 1920."

Now that the ISJL and the MSJE are separate entities, this publication needed a title that spoke more directly to the mission of the Institute. We asked our readers for suggestions and received dozens of delightful name options. We wanted something that reflected the ISJL's southern Jewish identity, our spirit of inclusion and welcome, maybe even with a nod to all the travels we undertake. It was a tall order, but after several rounds of review, the final decision was to go with the name Shalom Y'all.

This name change coincides with several major milestones. This issue is our first of 2018, the year we celebrate the ISJL's 18th anniversary. Throughout our "Chai Celebration" year, we'll be sharing the stories of the communities with which we partner, the programs we've championed, and the impact our board, staff, and partners have had across the region. In this issue, we're introducing not only a new name but also several new features within the magazine—a spotlight on our former Fellows, now members of the Fellow Alumni Network (FAN), in the Focus on FAN section; board member profiles to help you learn more about the terrific leadership overseeing the ISJL; and excerpts from our blog on MyJewishLearning.com, Southern & Jewish.

Shalom has several meanings: Hello, Goodbye, and Peace—or more literally, "Wholeness." This makes the name even more fitting, as we are always thankful for so many new arrivals, new beginnings, and sometimes some fond farewells as fellowships complete, interns depart, or, as in the case of this very moment, we approach a huge transition. Truly embodying the multi-faceted meaning of shalom, this first issue of the new magazine features the final "President's Message" from our founder, Macy B. Hart.

We hope you'll enjoy the new name, the new look, and the new content of Shalom Y'all, while still enjoying the updates and insights you've come to expect from CIRCA. We hope you'll get excited about celebrating the ISJL's 18th year, reading about the hopes, wishes, and memories the board and staff are sharing in honor of this milestone, join us in thanking Macy for everything he's done for us, and most of all, we hope you're as committed as we are to continuing this journey, together.

Shalom, y'all!





Michele Schipper, CEO

"ONCE UPON ATIME." That's how many of our childhood books began, and there was comfort in the repetition of reciting "once upon a time." These same stories often ended "And they all lived happily ever after. The End."

I'd like to share the beginning of another story: The story of the ISJL. "Once upon a time, Macy Hart had a vision. He wanted to create a regional organization to address issues within the Jewish community. So he found some partners to share his vision, rolled up his sleeves, and got to work."

That's the beginning. But thank goodness, there's no end in sight.

The ISJL, as an organization, has a compelling story. And all of us also have a personal story about why we work, volunteer, contribute to the ISJL.

My story is this: I was raised in Jackson, Mississippi. I have a very personal affinity for the work we do here, and especially appreciate the notion that all

CEO MESSAGE

communities no matter the size are entitled enriching Jewish experiences. As I grew up, when it came to Judaism I always wanted more more Jewish programming. more Jewish resources. more of everything. Not just for myself, but for my community. When I was asked to teach religious school when I was a senior in high school, I said yes but I was not given a curriculum, and let's face it, I didn't put a lot of time into preparation (hello,

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senioritis!). Those students deserved more, and so did I.

Almost 30 years later, I returned to Jackson to that classroom with a fully scripted curriculum, thanks to the ISJL. I felt confident going into the classroom and teaching children.

The ISJL enriches the lives of so many. On a personal level, I am pleased to know that the oral history interview with my

mother, of blessed memory, will live on in the archives of our history department. I have volunteered for the ISJL's literacy programs, firsthand witnessina our impact in the larger community. I've shared in the joy of the stories told by our traveling rabbis and the communities they visit. I love welcoming visitors from across the nation who come down for our Southern Jewish Heritage tours. My own small hometown congregation in Jackson has access to wonderful speakers, authors, and musicians through the programming department of the ISJL

Stepping into the role of CEO as the ISJL marks its 18th year is a tremendous honor. There are many nonprofits that don't survive their early years. It's not easy to sustain and grow the work of an organization. But thanks to Macy, and the team of support he's built, we're still here.

I remember my first time in the ISJL offices, when I interviewed for the COO position in 2007. The staff was half the size it is today. Over the last decade, we've had incredible growth and you – our Shalom Y'all readers, program partners, board, staff, and supporters are a vital part of this growth. I hope you feel the success of the

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THERE ARE MANY NONPROFITS THAT DON'T SURVIVE THEIR EARLY YEARS... THANKS TO MACY, AND THE TEAM OF SUPPORT HE BUILT, WE'RE STILL HERE.

ISJL as if it were your own. And that leads me to my wishes for the ISJL.

1. Our "footprint" map displays colorful dots marking everywhere the ISJL has brought a program. My wish is that the dots increase so much over the next 18 years that the whole map is one big overlapping rainbow.

2. When we introduce people to the ISJL, we often hear: "What you're doing at the ISJL is awesome. I had no idea!" We always smile at that phrase. But I'd prefer that we change the comment "I had no idea" to "Keep up the good work."

The ISJL's story is not ending—and we're very excited for the next chapter. Please help us continue the story.

Michele Schiper



Rachel Reagler Schulman ISJL Board Chair

REMEMBERTHEGIFT my parents gave me when I turned eighteen. It was a ring with my birthstone, emeralds. The gems were set in a beautiful, elaborate setting—receiving this gift, I thought it was so special, so gorgeous. That emerald birthday ring was one of my first "real" pieces of jewelry, and I knew that I would keep it forever... and I have.

Part of what made that gift so special is that it memorialized a special milestone time in my life. From my vantage point now, that gift is even more significant. It pays tribute to the first eighteen years of my life, spent with my two wonderful parents who are no longer with me. It symbolizes my roots, growing up in Wynne,

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PART OF WHAT MADE THAT GIFT SO SPECIAL IS THAT IT MEMORIALIZED A SPECIAL MILESTONE TIME IN MY LIFE. Arkansas, a small town where there is no longer any Jewish population at all. It marks my unique Southern Jewish childhood, spent with my family of origin when I

unique Southern Jewish childhood, spent with my family of origin, when I was the child—before life does what it does, and the landscape changed: my family expanded and grew to include my own children, and I became the mother.

Although I received my special ring more years ago than I want to count, it will always remind me of my parents who gave it to me, our family back then, my hometown of Wynne, Arkansas, and turning eighteen years old.

Gifts and milestone birthdays often go hand in hand—which is why that ring is also on my mind as I help celebrate another eighteenth birthday: Happy 18th Birthday to the ISJL!

What will this big birthday mean for our organization? Around the world, people generally consider turning 18 to represent the entry into true adulthood. It's a time to enjoy more freedoms and take on responsibility. Many eighteen-year-olds are able to vote, to get married, to serve in their country's armed forces, to drink alcoholic beverages (except in the United States), and to buy things like cigarettes and lotto tickets.

Well, the ISJL isn't about

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THIS MILESTONE
BIRTHDAY IS THE
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TO PRESENT THE
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GIFTS TO CREATE
A LEGACY FOR
THE FUTURE...

BOARD CHAIR

MESSAGE

to buy any cigarettes or lotto tickets—but we are hoping for some more (financial) freedoms, and we are ready to take on some more (proud) responsibilities.

This 18th birthday is a major milestone. We have matured—we have "made it," if you will, for eighteen years. So how can we "make it" for the next eighteen, and beyond? How can you help with the ISJL's increased freedom, so we can continue taking responsibility for supporting Southern Jewish life?

Jewish life?

That brings us back to legacy gifts, like the ring I still have from my parents. This milestone birthday is the perfect time to present the ISJL with the gifts to create a legacy for the future—gifts that will linger long after they are given.

After all, there are so many gifts the ISJL gives the region. Our education program reaches more than 4,000 Jewish

students every year. Our rabbinical services support the smallest Southern Jewish communities. officiating lifecycle events preserving dignity. and History, Heritage and Interpretation, and Cultural Programming department's document, share, and celebrate Jewish life. Our Community **Engagement** Department works to make the entire world a better place. It's a lot of responsibility, a lot of impact, and it needs a lot of support.

This why each and every gift our donors give is so very important. We ask all of our donors and supporters to recognize our "chai" year, our 18th birthday year. We ask that you and your family give a gift that the ISJL will have for years to come and will cherish as a legacy gift—no matter your income level, a legacy gift or "planned giving" can help ensure major impact.

We hope you'll give whatever type of gift works best for your family. All of your support, and all of our supporters, will be treasured for years to come, like the precious gems you truly are.

Raeld R. Schul



trying to compose what I wanted to say in this, my final article as President of the ISJL. Obviously, there are so many people to thank for the success of the ISJL; no one could have achieved all that the ISJL has achieved on their own.

There's our dedicated board, our tremendous staff, all of the Jewish professionals and lay persons who brought their communities to this regional table. We have truly proven that we can better meet the needs of our regional Jewish community if we work together. Our funders and supporters from all over who had the vision to appreciate our unique model and our commitment to "serving the under-served" as well as major metropolitan centers—none of this would be possible without you. And of course I could write volumes about my family, who supported my adventures and big ideas. Everyone included in this paragraph are

the heroes who really founded, funded, and continue to sustain this marvelous organization.

Thanks, thanks, and even more thanks. I appreciate everything you have all done in the past, and trust you will continue to support the ISJL as I enter into a new role here (because in our eighteen years thus far, we have truly proven that our impact meets important needs, region-wide).

No, I am not retiring from the ISJL. I am simply stepping aside from the primary leadership role, to allow an amazing new leader take the helm. I am so proud of Michele Feldman Schipper, who will become the second executive to run this incredible organization. Michele truly "gets it"—she grew up in Jackson, was a lifelong Jacobs Camp camper, staffer, and Assistant Director before leading JCCs out on the West Coast. For the past decade as COO, she has connected with ISJL communities and truly built out our mission and

impact. Her success here already, and everything she will do in the future, brings me tremendous pride.

As I stated above, "No, I am not retiring from the ISJL." Instead, I'll be taking a four-month-long sabbatical, a gift from the ISJL Board of Directors, beginning March 1st. I am honored that following that break, I will be able to step into the new role of President Emeritus. I am thrilled that my connection with this amazing entity will continue. As Michele, the board, and the staff continue the vital day to day work of the organization, I will pursue a few ISJL "bucket list" items, addressing challenges that I am dying to help solve for both the ISJL and the broader Jewish community.

I want to share a few areas that are of vital interest and concern to me—things that are "unfinished business" in my mind as I prepare to leave my founding position. There is still much to accomplish by the ISJL. I would

like to invite and reach families, foundations, and organizations that have been touched by the innovation of the ISJL. I want to encourage those entities to take a more active role in sustaining our ongoing work.

One of my disappointments is that I have NOT SUCCEEDED in getting named endowments for departments, staff positions, or ISJL programs. The ISJL is a grassroots organization, thus finding funding for long term assurance of the enterprise remains a challenge. The long term viability of the organization is critical. If we can secure more endowed dollars, we can be even more creative and impactful. I want to help raise enough that we can "buy back" some of the time "spent" on development (no pun intended). My hope is that this final message here can serve as a serious request: Please, if you have the ability to fund an ISJL program or position, let's talk.

Whether you want to make that commitment as a planned gift, family foundation endowment, tax-friendly trust, or whatever works best for you, I mean it: Let's talk. One need not be a "mega funder" in order to make a truly meaningful legacy gift. You can memorialize a loved one for less than you might think, and honor their memory by directly benefitting other individuals and communities for years to come. Gifts also don't have to be immediate or lump-sum; they can be made in installments, or timed out for later payment.

As an example: Fully funding our Education Fellow positions is one of my major goals. In the 2018-2019 school year, we will have 13 staff in that department alone—eleven Education Fellows and two Educators serving more than 70 congregations. As of this summer, we will have more than 50 former Education and Community Engagement Fellows. The impact of this program is tremendous, and to keep it accessible even for schools with only two students, it needs to be supported.

For the past two years, two fellowship positions were designated Lawrence Magdovitz ISJL Education Fellows. We are grateful to the Magdovitz family for honoring Lawrence's legacy with this meaningful gift. We want all of the Fellowships to bear the names of great leaders like Mr. Magdovitz. We are VERY excited to be in the final stages of conversations with another family committed to securing one fully funded Fellowship position endowment – the details of which we will be announcing soon. Ultimately, we hope for fellowship gifts that offer perpetual support and naming rights; but short-term contracts to honor someone for a year or two are available and accessible now.

On a larger scale, there are the departments themselves. None of the ISJL's departments yet bear names. I still envision the "Cohen Family Rabbinical Services Department," the "Golden Family Community Engagement Department," and so on. I am directly asking that some angels out there in the ISJL world look hard at how the ISJL might have enriched you or your community or your children or grandchildren. Help me and help the ISJL going into these next few years by securing the long-term financial viability of the ISJL, honoring your loved ones and helping others' loved ones all at once through these tremendous naming opportunities.

The ISJL was founded, and still exists, to address at the root, some of the issues facing the Jewish community. I don't believe in Band-Aids; I believe in long-term cures. There is no peer organization that does everything the ISJL does, on a regional basis. Our organization was created as a model, a laboratory that could be replicated in other parts of the country. That's another lingering task for me: I fear I have not done a good enough job communicating the concept that the issues we address

are not unique to the Southern Jewish community.

It's never been just "us poor southerners" struggling with Jewish engagement, support, connection, and so on. The challenges we tackle are present throughout the American Jewish community (and probably throughout the Jewish world). I want to continue sharing our successful experiment, telling the ISJL story, and encouraging other regions to take this approach to communal life. There are some fantastic geographical coalitions waiting to be created. We can all have more impact, and better serve the entire Jewish community, if we get out of the "us and them" mindset and realize it should all simply be "us."

L'hitra'ot is a Hebrew phrase we use when we're leaving an event, going on a vacation, or concluding a phone call. It doesn't mean "goodbye." It means "until I see you again." So please don't take this message as my farewell, but rather as my see-youlater. There is still work to be done, and I hope I will be part of future announcements soon, sharing news of secured endowments and a more secure future for the ISJL.

After my sabbatical, I will have plenty of time for these conversations. I have some ideas, and I want to hear yours. I look forward to the conversations. You'll still be able to reach me at hart@isjl.org – so drop me an email, and let's keep talking.

SAS.

OUR PAST IS OUR FUTURE

Meet the FAN

By Rachel Stern, MAJE/MJCS and Rabbi Matt Dreffin

You're all familiar with the ISJL Education Fellows. Since 2003, we've put recent college graduates on the road to visit your communities, mentored them as they grew into communal service leaders and inspiring educators, and are so proud to play a role in helping them determine their future paths.

But we don't want the connection to end after the two-year fellowship-not for them, and not for us, either. So

working with our former fellows, we decided to launch the Fellow Alumni Network, or FAN.

FAN currently includes the 46 former Education Fellows. This summer, its numbers will grow to over 50 with the addition of 2016-2018 Education Fellows, as well as their Community Engagement Fellow colleagues. It's already an inspiring group of dedicated individuals, poised to continue having an impact.

When we started the Education Fellowship, we knew we were creating something special, important, and even holy about this work. But there was so much more these alumni connections would provide that we didn't know about yet. When we surveyed our former Fellows, we learned that the former Fellows cherish the experience the Fellowship provides for years to

come. Like attending a particular camp or performing in a school band, the Fellowship connects all of the former Fellows to each other in a powerful way. In fact, the Fellows developed a personalized hashtag. #onceafellowalwaysafellow. This need to connect and reflect is what brought about the FAN in the first

Our Fellows have represented the ISJL so well over the years, making us swell with pride. They continue to make us beam as they serve as Jewish professionals, doctors, lawyers, artists, and businesspeople. Some of them are even senior staff at the ISJL! As they have grown and evolved as professionals, they never forget what they learn in their first full-time job, the many programs they create, or the countless memories of

the community members they serve. We knew that bringing this group of former Fellows together would glean something wonderful.

Alumni cohorts are not a new concept. In fact, a growing trend for groups that have experienced intense learning and togetherness is that they want to nurture an ongoing connection. When we were lucky enough to have a donor sponsor the initial gathering, underwriting the expense of bringing these former Fellows back to Jackson, we knew that there would be an enthusiastic response. We have held two gatherings in Jackson, in February 2016 and August 2017. These events were full of heartwarming reunions, professional development, time to sightsee at old stomping grounds and see how Jackson and the ISJL has

changed, eating at favorite places. praying together, sharing memories, and laying out plans for FAN's future.

As of this past fall, FAN elected their first board, chaired by Sara Silverman Edelman of Houston (Education Fellow 2010-2012). The first FAN initiative was a fundraising goal during the ISJL's last matching challenge; collectively, former Fellows brought in \$4,000 for the ISJL. This February, we're kicking off our second major initiative, a FAN mentorship program, where current Fellows and more recent alum are paired with mentors (former Fellows at least 5 years post-fellowship). And we're very excited about the third FAN project-- this summer, at our annual Education Conference, as part of the ISJL's "Chai Celebration," we will be featuring former Fellows as

presenters.

It's truly FANtastic, and we know that we are just getting started.

FAN would never have happened if we had not created the Education Fellowship. From the beginning days at the ISJL, we were committed to establishing a top-notch Jewish fellowship. Each year we evaluate the program, adding new training and experiences for the Fellows. Our success is measured by the fact that we are now recognized as having one of the leading post-college Jewish fellowships around. We started with two Fellows in 2003. Fifteen years later, we're thrilled that we will have 11 Fellows on our team for the 2018-2019 school year. When those 11 Fellows complete their two years with us, they too will join the FAN group, and the cycle will continue.

The Education Department's Wish for The ISJL

Our wish for our Chai Celebration is that that we will continue to see the FAN grow and evolve and that this notion of "once a Fellow, always a Fellow" will serve this extraordinary group of people in countless ways. We hope that we can grow the FAN bigger and more dynamic in the way it serves its members as we add to make the FAN 50 or even 100 strong. With this goal in mind, we hope we can fan the flame of the FAN to newer and stronger continued connections!





Rachel Jarman Myers

(pictured left)

Fellowship: 2008-2010 Lives in: Jackson, Mississippi Post-fellowship: Since completing her fellowship, Rachel has continued to see an array of projects all the way through. She completed a Master of Arts in Museum Studies from Johns Hopkins University through their low residency graduate degree program while serving as the longtime Museum and Special Projects Director for the ISJL. Rachel achieved so much in her time at the ISJL, even earning the Mississippi Humanities Educator of the Year Award. In 2017, she left the ISJL to become the first Executive Director of the recently opened Museum of Mississippi History. **Current connection to the ISJL?** After working at the ISJL for almost a decade, Rachel is still close to

the organization geographically-

and is also serving on the board

of the Museum of the Southern

Jewish Experience, helping them

prepare for their future, too.



Alli (Goldman) Parshall

spent several years teaching at Maureen Joy Charter School in her amazing educator skills back to Mississippi—along with her husband and son. She is working with Republic Charter Schools, and her family recently bought a house.

Current connection to the ISJL? Alli's husband Josh is the ISJL's new Historian (and they first met when they were both on staff at the ISJL, several years back!), and Alli is serving as a mentor in the FAN mentorship program for former Fellows.



Fellowship: 2009-2011 **Lives in:** Jackson, Mississippi Post-fellowship: Alli taught at Jim Hill High School in Jackson after completing her fellowship, then North Carolina. She recently brought They're excited to be taking on life's next adventures back in Jackson.

Beth Kander-Dauphin

Post-fellowship: Since paving the

Beth has earned two graduate

degrees (a Master of Social Work

a Master of Fine Arts in Creative

a daughter, has had several plays

serves as the host playwright for

the Ashland New Plays Festival

in Oregon, and is excited that her

trilogy Original Syn was acquired by

Owl House Books-the first book in

the series hits bookstores this fall!

Current connection to the ISJL?

Director of Communications.

Beth works remotely as the ISJL's

way as one of the two first Fellows,

from the University of Michigan and

Writing from Mississippi University

for Women). She is also married with

published and produced nationwide,

Fellowship: 2003-2005

Lives in: Chicago, Illinois

Alachua (Haskins) Nazarenko

Fellowship: 2013-2015

Lives in: Jackson, Mississippi

Post-fellowship: Since finishing her fellowship, Alachua has been quite busy. She began a graduate program through Hebrew College's low-residency option, and is currently working on her thesis, on track to complete her Master's in Jewish Education with a specialization in Interfaith Families Jewish Engagement this spring. She also got married, bought a house, and very much to her own surprise, adopted a dog!

Current connection to the ISJL? Alachua is the ISJL's Programming Coordinator and Development Associate.

TASTE OF TORAH

A Little Nosh of D'Rash

Throughout 2017 and for the first few months of 2018, we have been honored to have a series of inspiring rabbis and rabbinical students author Taste of Torah blog posts for the ISJL's weekly exploration of the Torah portion. Here's an example of these terrific tastes, from current rabbinical student and former ISJL Education Fellow Lex Rofeberg.

Va-Aaron: The Unsung Hero of Va-eira Torah Portion: Va'eira, Exodus 6:2-9:35

VA-EIRA IS BRUTAL.

There's no other way to put it. This second Torah portion of the book of Exodus centers around one of the most gut-wrenching elements of the Israelites' departure from Egypt--God's plagues. The first seven of the ten occur in Va-eira, as God, Moses, and Aaron attempt to achieve the twin goals of convincing Pharaoh to "let the people go" and demonstrating the superiority of the Israelite God when compared to the gods of Egypt.

God, with the assistance of Moses and Aaron, turns the Nile to blood, introduces the land of Egypt to a wide variety of invasive pests (frogs, lice, and more), brings disease upon livestock, and drenches the land with the worst hailstorm to ever occur

in Egypt. After each one of these plagues, we learn that Pharaoh's heart "has hardened"--in certain cases, God is the one who hardens it, while in others, it is possible that Pharaoh hardened his own heart.

Now, rabbis and everyday Jews for a few millennia now have provided their thoughts on the theological dilemmas that arise through this hardening of Pharaoh's heart. In the past, we may have been one of them. But this week, there's a different element of the story that catches our eye.

You may have noticed that, in describing the events of this Torah portion, I emphasized four key characters. For some, this might be counter-intuitive. Many of us were

taught that there are three primary characters in this portion of the Exodus narrative--God, Pharaoh, and Moses. We were aware that Moses had a brother named Aaron who, without a doubt, was along for the ride, but we did not (or do not) necessarily conceive of him as a central figure. If the Exodus were a movie, Aaron would be something more than an extra--but probably not quite eligible for Best Supporting Actor consideration.

I want to challenge this presumption of ours, though. Aaron plays a key role, as the spokesperson for the "heavy-of-tongue" Moses, in the unfolding of all these events. Since Moses struggles with speech, Aaron is there every step of the way to communicate on his (and God's) behalf. Most importantly, the partnership between these two brothers can be instructive for us in our familial relationships.

The Book of Genesis, which closed two weeks ago, mostly provides examples of how not to be a good sibling or a good parent. Perhaps, for example, murder is a less than stellar way to solve problems between two brothers (looking at you, Cain!). And maybe, as parents, it is a poor idea to choose one child as your clear favorite and shower them with more love and affection than your others (that's you, Rebecca, with your obvious preference for Jacob over Esau! And Jacob, who followed mom's



example through his clear favoritism of Joseph).

Moses and Aaron, however, buck this trend. Their relationship early in Exodus is so devoid of drama that we often don't even think to discuss it, focusing instead on the gory details of the plagues. Today, in our Va-eira narrative, we should look towards Aaron as a shining example of what it means to be a supportive brother. Put yourself in his shoes for a second. You just learned that Moses has been deemed, by God, to be "in

God's stead"--a kind of substitute for God on earth--while you are merely "Moses's prophet" (Exodus 7:1). In Genesis, when Joseph dreams that his brothers would bow down to him like a God, they react by throwing him into a pit with no water and then sell him into slavery.[i]

Here, however, the result is quite different. When Aaron learns that he is, in effect, reporting to his brother as a superior--his younger brother at that--he eagerly fulfills what has been asked of him without any complaints. He serves as a mouthpiece for his tongue-tied brother, playing a pivotal role in the Israelites' battle for collective liberation, even though doing so meant he had to follow the orders of his little bro.

I want to be clear to you "youngest children" out there. This Taste of Torah is not here so that you can call up your siblings to let them know, "Hey, how's life?! Also, I just learned that Exodus says that you're my inferior!" That would be a poor take-away.

Here's what might be a bit better: The relationships that we have with our siblings, our parents, and our children are holy. We learned in Genesis just how easy it can be for those relationships to shatter or collapse. In Exodus, however, we have our first paradigm for brothers that truly support one another, in a partnership that proves essential to the freedom of the entire Israelite nation.

On Shabbat, it is traditional to bless boys by saying, "May God make you like Ephraim and like Manasseh," and bless girls by saying "May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah." This week, I have a proposal. Add a new one, for your children of any gender. Bless them to be "like Moses and Aaron." If they achieve that admirable goal, who knows? Maybe they'll be the ones, today and tomorrow, to lead us out of our contemporary Mitzrayim, or "narrow places" into a future of true freedom, justice, and equality.[ii]

[i] Genesis 37

[ii] Mitzrayim is the Hebrew word for Egypt.

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Programming

CONTINUING THE CULTURAL CELEBRATION IN "18"

By Alachua Nazarenko

THE SOUTHERN STATES Jewish Programming Series boasts a vast array of talent. It is filled with Jewish presenters of all types, and as director of this department I am so proud to send them to



ISJL Performing Artist Joe Buchanan

southern communities, spreading their amazing work and assisting in enriching the southern Jewish cultural landscape. One of my favorite things about my department is that it is always growing and changing; no two years are the same. So, in a big year of big changes for the ISJL, I am taking a look at how the Cultural Programming department has changed, where it is headed this year, and how YOU can take advantage of its offerings in more ways.

The most obvious way that the Cultural Programming department has changed in the last 18 years is through the additions to the roster. The ever-expanding menu of talent is growing rapidly, and I am constantly talking to amazing people from all over the country (and sometimes all over the world!) who are interested in becoming a part of what we do. You might be surprised how intriguing the idea of spending time in the Southern Jewish world is for a lot of presenters! I encourage you to take a look at the roster on the website. If you have not looked in a while,

you might be surprised at all of the new faces you see. Since I started my position as Programming Coordinator, we have added 17 new acts.

I have a feeling that the ISJL's 18th year would be a great time to add number 18. Have any suggestions of who that presenter might be? I'm reviewing new options now, so get your suggestions in soon...

Department is

embarking on

a targeted oral

history project that

will document the

organization's early

development and

continued growth.

Over the next

several months.

we'll conduct video

interviews with

a select group of

current and former

employees, longtime

board members,

and other friends

of the organization.

As the year goes

on, we will post

short excerpts of these interviews

online, and the full

interviews (footage

and transcripts)

will join the other

audio and video

interviews in our

oral history archives.

With all the new and great talent, I hope that 2018 is also a year when these presenters are able to go to even more places, and when communities work together to create even more expense-shared tours across the region. One of my favorite things to do in my position is to enable smaller congregations to take advantage of such high-quality presentations through resource sharing. I am always adding new performance dates to the calendar on the ISJL website so you can see where a presenter is at any given time. If they are in your area. I can help you hop on a tour!

To learn more about the ISJL Programming Department, email Alachua: anazarenko@isil.org.

The Programming Department's Wish for the ISJL

Here's a wish for the ISJL and all of you: I wish for us to work with even more communities! As we at the ISJL go about planning a year of celebration, I hope that you consider the ways in which the ISJL Programming Department can contribute to your celebrations this year – whether it is a holiday, a congregational milestone, a Shabbaton, a film festival, or one of the countless other community celebrations. As we plan celebratory events for our organization, it is my birthday wish for the ISJL that we can continue to find new ways to enhance your celebrations as well. Thank you for letting us be a part of your special moments.



As 2018 GETS ROLLING, THE ISJL History Department turns its attention to Florida, which will soon be the thirteenth (and final) state added to our Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities. Although the ISJL primarily about 130 in all—we will write one article serves North Florida, we have decided to cover the entire state in the encyclopedia. area's Jewish history. As I have learned more about Florida, I even the southern sections of the state shared cultural and economic features twentieth century.

The first task in developing a new area within the encyclopedia is identifying population of more than 100 individuals or usually cemeteries, synagogues, or the initial work also required sorting large our Chai Celebration.

portions of Central and South Florida into metro areas. For example, rather than attempting to individually address the twenty-eight cities in Broward and Palm Beach Counties that have synagogues that provides a digestible overview of the

Once I have a plan for tackling the found that, from a historical perspective, state, I will begin to collect materials and locate historical resources. The writing will begin in earnest this summer, when I with much of the South until the mid- will work with our history interns to draft approximately twenty-two essays. Florida features an exciting diversity of Jewish stories, from the failed agriculture colony communities where local Jews reached a of Micanopy (1821-1835) to the more than 120,000 Jewish residents of Miamiestablished organized Jewish institutions, Dade County today. These histories should be available on our website by the end of community centers. In the case of Florida, 2018, a nice milestone to help close out

The History Department's Wish for The ISJL

In the next year, I want to visit your community! I will be traveling to Florida for research, of course, but I am also available for lectures, scholar-in-residence weekends, and other historical programs across the region. The History Department's work is most rewarding when I can speak directly to local communities, hear firsthand about Jewish experiences in the South, and help make southern Jewish history relevant in the present. I'm ready to speak on a variety of topics, so please reach out if this is an opportunity that your community might be interested in; drop me a line anytime at jparshall@isil.org.

Heritage & Interpretation

OLD MEMORIES & NEW VISION

Within our Oldest/Newest **Department**

By Nora Katz

Here at the ISJL, WE TALK a lot about memory. Memories of childhood, of holidays spent with family, of things we learned in school, of moments that changed our perspectives. But we also talk about institutional memory – the key moments in the ISJL's past that made us who we are.

The Department of Heritage and Interpretation is steeped in these memories. It's sort of the oldest department at the ISJL, because it began with the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience at Henry S. Jacobs Camp in 1986. But it's also our newest department, with a newly minted department head and a new title inspired by current developments in the fields of public history and heritage preservation. We're staying freshwhile also staying true to our roots.

Much remains the same: The department manages our Jewish Immigrant Experience Traveling Trunks, sends groups on Southern Jewish Heritage Tours and Alternative Break trips, proudly stewards the ISJL collectionuntilthemovetoNewOrleans in 2019, and oversees renovations and programming in Temple B'nai in Natchez, Mississippi.

But new energy and new ideas help us grow. In 2018, the Department of Heritage and Interpretation is looking forward to strengthening our institutional history collection, so that the ISJL can better tell our eighteenyear-long story. Our Jewish Immigrant Experience Traveling Trunks will travel to more states throughout our region, with an expanded curriculum that includes oral history materials and an entire lesson that affirms the relevance of the past in contemporary global immigration challenges. Our program of Southern Jewish Heritage Tours is also expanding, with itineraries that give potential visitors options to travel throughout our entire region. At the same time, we're strengthening partnerships in Mississippi so that our tour program can continue to be robust and meaningful for all involved.

As this edition of Shalom Y'all goes to press, we are soliciting bids from contractors to begin work on building a ramp for wheelchair access to Temple B'nai Israel in Natchez, Mississippi. The ramp should be complete in the summer of 2018, and will mark the first phase of our ongoing renovation process. With enough funding, we plan to completely refurbish the HVAC and electrical systems in the temple, install an elevator and update exhibits telling the story of Natchez's Jewish community.

While construction is still underway. I'm excited to be directing a staged reading of Mark Twain's The Diaries of Adam and Eve in Temple B'nai Israel, the first of many innovative programs that will take place in the space in the years to come. Follow the ISJL on social media and check our website for details - we'd love to see you in Natchez in May for the performance!

We are also looking forward to welcoming our summer interns at the end of May 2018. They will contribute toward our current programs while developing projects and skills of their own. Internships in cultural heritage prepare the next generation of heritage professionals to succeed in their diverse and challenging careers. We can't wait to meet them, train them. and watch them shine.

Perhaps most excitingly, we are launching a collaborative, multimedia art project to celebrate the ISJL's Chai Celebration year: Picturing Southern Jewish Life. What does your southern Jewish experience look like? By sharing photos and creating collages that capture southern and Jewish identity, partner communities will come together to celebrate heritage and the arts. We'll take those images and turn them into online image galleries, prints, and maybe even a book.



Do you have ideas for heritage programs in the Jewish south? Are you interested in hosting the Jewish **Immigrant Experience Traveling** Trunk or scheduling a Southern Jewish Heritage Tour? Do you want to support renovation and restoration efforts at Temple B'nai Israel? Are you interested in participating in the Picturing Southern Jewish Life **project? Get in touch:** *nkatz@isjl.org.*



From documenting and interpreting the Southern Jewish past to helping people have Southern Jewish experiences today, we're keeping busy!



The Heritage & Interpretation Department's Wish for the ISJL

We wish for full funding to renovate and restore Temple B'nai Israel in Natchez, Mississippi, a building the ISJL has managed for more than twenty years. To learn more and to donate to the capital campaign, visit templebnaiisraelnatchez.org or email Director of Heritage and Interpretation Nora Katz at nkatz@isjl.org.

Community Engagement

GROWING OUR LITERACY **PROGRAMS**

Family Style

By Dave Miller

ONE OF THE LESSONS WE are taught in the Talmud (Kiddushin 29a) is that it is the responsibility of a parent to teach their child to swim, because their survival could depend on it. Similarly, we believe that it is our responsibility to teach people to read and to love books, because once again, their survival could very well depend on it. This is why we advocate for and actively engage in improving literacy skills throughout our community. There is power in the written and spoken word, and providing the opportunity to harness that power is a significant form of tzedakah (righteousness).

We've featured two of our literacy initiatives in previous articles here: Read, Lead, Succeed and the Literacy Achievement Bonanza (LAB). In the fall of 2017, we launched our third literacy program, Our Reading Family. This program continues our work improving the literacy skills for struggling students but adds one significant factor: the family.

Many parents/quardians feel disconnected from what is happening in their child's education. All too often, they are told their child is struggling, but are not invited into

the process of addressing the issue, or provided with the resources to do so. Our Reading Family (ORF) works to empower families. They learn how to be a part of the intervention process and at the same time explore how

Our current partnership is with the local library system. In October, we were able to provide this program to 15 families. The program consists of six consecutive Saturday sessions. During each four-hour-long session, children spent time on intensive reading interventions and engaging in fun literacy activities, while their parents/quardians spent part of their time working with their children and the rest of the time exploring resources available to them, engaging with experts in a variety of relevant fields. and learning about current issues pertaining to their child's education.

For most of human history, our traditions were passed down by word of mouth. In Judaism, these traditions gained new meaning when they were written down. Similarly, in the process of recording some of their own family history and traditions, our adult participants discovered a token of their own memories in each

amazingly fun reading can be.

The Community Engagement Department's Wish for the ISJL

Happy birthday, ISJL! We are so proud of you on your 18th anniversary of amazing programming! Our wish is that this innovative organization continues to have the opportunity to work with partners around the South so that they are empowered to build partnerships with their communities.

shared story. They found themselves sharing beautiful descriptions of lavish breakfasts before church, the first time they showed the neighborhood boys that yes, a girl can play basketball, and the quilt of marching around a muddy lawn in Mama's Sunday heels. Having taken the time to put these memories to pen and paper, they have ensured that their children will get to read something even more special than the books they came to love: stories of their own family.

As we teach, we also get to learn from the participants. Each time we got together, the parents and grandparents discussed their personal experiences involving health, voting, and advocating for their children with our quest speakers. With the students, we revisited familiar stories like Clifford the Big Red Dog through the perspective of a child hearing it for the first time. We got to see the children sound out letters and blend those letters into words and realize that they know exactly what the word means. In one writing activity, the students shared about their families' traditions and took the time to ensure every letter was formed perfectly so that their parents would be able to read it. The ISJL staff and volunteers gained at least as much as we gave over the course of this pilot program!

As with all our Jewish values, it is not enough to simply enact them within Jewish circles. Jews also have a responsibility to seek meaningful interaction with the larger community. In sharing our knowledge of and passion for literacy, we are continuously expanding ORF- and we would love to bring the initiative to your community. Our Reading Family can take place at a library, or in your synagogue, school, community center, a local church-- the list goes on and on. The program is designed so that you do not need to be a literacy expert to run this program. If you are looking for a new way to engage with your community, this program is available to you. (There's a great picture from ORF on page 3!)

MEET THE BOARD

our board members have Southern Jewish roots. But from New York to Los Angeles and Chicago to Houston, they live all over. They are united by their commitment to our communities, and all believe that big or small, all Jewish communities deserve support and resources. We want you to get to know and be inspired by our board members, so we're devoting a new section of Shalom Y'all to help you "Meet the Board." We're starting with two board members committed to the legacy giving aspect of the ISJL, one of our development focuses in 2018. Meet Joe and Charlett!

The ISJL is overseen by

a dynamic, nationally-

comprised Board

of Directors. Most

(although not all!) of



Charlett Frumin

Originally from Shreveport, Louisiana, Charlett Frumin now calls Houston home. When she and her husband Marshall aren't spending time with their grandchildren or visiting friends near and far, both are committed to supporting their Jewish community. For Charlett, it's a question of legacy—honoring what her parents did for her, and providing a model for her children and their children. Commitment to Jewish causes certainly runs in the family; Charlett's daughter, Dori Frumin Kirshner, is the Director of MATAN, a Jewish education, access, and advocacy nonprofit. Before joining the Board of Directors, Charlett worked as the ISJL's Houston Area representative. Now, as a member of the board, Charlett continues to advocate for the long-term sustainability of the organization. She speaks eloquently of her Ethical Will, and using the development of the document to spark conversations with her children about what truly matters to her. Charlett's wish for the ISJL is that all of their supporters and potential supporters will engage in similar conversations, clearly identifying what they value and communicating how and why they want to support what they hold dear.



Joe Herzog

Joe Herzog's Southern roots run deep—his family hails from Meridian, Mississippi. Joe has known about the ISJL since its earliest days, due to knowing its founder for more years than either of them care to count: A former President of the Southern region (SoFTY) of the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), he worked closely with another Mississippi boy named Macy B. Hart, who helped reinforce Joe's continued Southern and Jewish focus. A proud Vanderbilt University graduate, Joe also went on to earn an MBA in International Business from the University of Dallas. As Vice President of Government Business Development for Travelport, Joe lived for many years in Washington, D.C. But recently, he and his wife Candace fulfilled a lifelong dream and moved to a farm outside the city. When not working, or running the farm, or spending time with his lovely wife and daughter, Joe manages to make time for the volunteer projects and Jewish communal endeavors he's passionate about. For the past two years, Joe has chaired the Development Committee. Establishing a Planned Giving strategy for the organization has been his key focus area in that role. Joe's wish for the ISJL is that more folks will include the organization in their planned giving, and ensure that the impact of the Institute will continue in perpetuity.

18 YEARS OF THE ISJL

Here is one memory from every year along our journey so far. It was hard to pick just one moment to mark each year! All year long, we would love to share memories with you. Visit our Facebook page to share your ISJL memories!



2000 First CIRCA Cover



2002 Jewish Cinema South helps film festivals launch across the region.



2004 Encyclopedia of Southern Jewish Communities gets rolling



2006 Rabbi Debra Kassoff completes her three year term as the ISJL's first Director of Rabbinical Services



The Education Program continues to grow



2013 The ISJL Linda Pinkus Memorial Labyrinth travels to its first communities



2017

The Passover

the South

Pilgrimage now includes 3 Rabbis traveling across

2015 We keep adding states to the Traveling Trunk

ISJL PASSOVER PILGRIMAGE APRIL 6-17, 2017

2003

A huge year for the ISJL with debut of the Education and Rabbinical Departments and first Education Conference



2001 Stuart Rockoff hired as Historian



2005 Rachel Stern joins the ISJL team full time as Director



The Helzner Trio performed for communities still rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina



State Sen. **David Blount** presents Macy B. Hart with a Resolution commending his award from the Foundation for Jewish Culture

2008



Annie E. Casey Foundation



Malkie Schwartz becomes

the ISJL's first Director of

Community Engagement

2009

 $\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond\Diamond$



2012 TAP wins Kids Count Award from





2016 **Summer Orientation** keeps getting bigger



As programs like LAB grow, we are excited for the future!



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In these pages, you can see the impact our education, history, heritage and interpretation, cultural, community engagement 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 or pledge from January 1- December 31, 2017 to enable our important work.

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Learn more at www.isjl.org/donate

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