

INAUGURAL FELLOWS

The inaugural 2016 class reflects our vibrant community and includes professionals in a wide range of positions from a diverse set of organizations throughout New York. Ruskay Fellows are rising stars with four to nine years of experience working in nonprofits serving the New York Jewish community.



ANAT BARBER, Major Gifts Officer, UJA-Federation of New York

Anat Barber is a major gifts officer at UJA-Federation of New York, where she formerly served as planning director in the Commission on the Jewish People. Anat's professional background includes strategic planning, grants management, board engagement, and resource development. Anat holds an M.A. and M.P.A. from N.Y.U., and is an alumna of the Wexner Graduate Fellowship Program and Stern College. Anat is married to Rabbi Avi Bloom and they have two children, Eliora and Ilan. Anat enjoys cooking and entertaining for family and friends, nature and the outdoors, swimming, and visiting Jewish communities around the world.



MISSY BELL, Program Director of Youth Learning and Engagement, Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York

Missy Bell is the program director of Youth Learning and Engagement at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York. She has a Master of Arts in Jewish education and a Master of Arts in Jewish communal service from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion. She did her undergraduate studies at Washington University in St. Louis, majoring in Jewish, Islamic, and Near Eastern studies. Missy serves on the board and as development co-chair of the Association of Reform Jewish Educators. Outside of her professional responsibilities, Missy loves football, traveling, and spending time with her nephew, Joey.



ILYA BRATMAN, Executive Director, Hillel at Baruch College

Ilya emigrated from Moscow to the United States in 1992. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1999. Upon graduation, Ilya enlisted in the United States Armed Forces and served honorably for more than four years active duty and four reserve, including deployments to Korea, Germany, and Iraq. Ilya received a master's degree in applied linguistics and education from the University of Pittsburgh and moved to New York in 2006. Before becoming the executive director at the Hillel at Baruch College, Ilya's work for the Jewish community included being an instructor at the Sinai Academy in Brooklyn, director of Jewish Programs at the Kings Bay YM-YWHA in Brooklyn, and the project manager of Limmud FSU USA. In his spare time, Ilya enjoys long-distance running, playing soccer and other sports, writing, playing guitar, and watching the Steelers. Ilya speaks Russian fluently and is proficient in Hebrew and German. Ilya lives with his wife, Sonya, and son, Gabriel, in New Jersey.



Erica Cohen, Assistant Director of Manhattan Division, UJA-Federation of New York

Erica Cohen is the assistant director of the Manhattan Division at UJA-Federation of New York and oversees the Center for Youth Philanthropy and Leadership. Originally from New York, Erica graduated from N.Y.U. with a B.A. and Hunter School of Social Work with an M.S.W., focusing on community organizing, planning, and development. Erica worked as director of youth and family programs at a synagogue in Syracuse before returning to New York City, and has been at UJA-Federation for four years.



Erica Frankel, Director for Strategic Development, Hillel International

Erica is the director for strategic development for the Jewish Learning Fellowship at Hillel's Office of Innovation, a proud resident of Harlem, and a dancer and dance-maker. Professional highlights include leading more than 285 students on service-learning trips to 10 countries and performing at the Guggenheim under the direction of Meredith Monk. Erica earned a certificate in experiential Jewish education from Yeshiva University and spends her "free time" as the director of engagement for National Choreography Month. She holds B.F.A. and M.A. degrees in dance from N.Y.U., where her thesis explored performance as midrash. Erica speaks only enough Russian to get herself in trouble.



Kevin Fried, Associate International Director, NCSY

Kevin Fried is the associate international director of NCSY and a member of the OU's senior staff. He oversees NCSY's key operating units, including the national headquarters, regional operations, financial management, and strategy implementation and accountability. Prior to assuming his role in 2010, Kevin served as a development executive in UJA-Federation of New York's Wall Street & Financial Services Division. Kevin graduated with honors from CUNY Queens College and completed a Master of Social Work degree with a concentration in administration from Fordham University. He currently lives in Springfield, New Jersey, with his wife, Deena, and their two children.



Ruvym Gilman, Director of Legal & Business Affairs, Birthright Israel Foundation

Ruvym Gilman is an attorney and writer born and raised in New York City. After graduating from N.Y.U. School of Law, Ruvym spent two years working for a New York law firm before beginning his nonprofit career with Birthright Israel Foundation in 2008. Over the last several years Ruvym has been involved in independent theater projects, including appearing in the Birthright Israel-inspired spoken word show Monologues, and co-writing two shows — Doroga and Covers — for the Lost & Found Project, a theater troupe focused on telling stories about the Russian-Jewish experience.



Briana Holtzman, Program Director, Foundation Board Incubator, Jewish Teen Funders Network

Briana Holtzman spends her days as the program director for the Jewish Teen Funders Network's Foundation Board Incubator. She started her work in the Jewish professional world in 2007 as the founding associate director for URJ Camp Kalsman, outside of Seattle, Washington, and participated in the Foundation for Jewish Camp's Yitro Leadership Program. An FJC Bildner Graduate Fellow, Briana earned her M.B.A. from University of Washington with a focus on marketing and management. She sits on the steering committee for PresentTense's NYC Accelerator and Sigma Delta Tau Foundation's board of trustees. Briana loves everyday adventures, culinary explorations, and traveling the world.



Lilach Koch, Director of Special Needs Programs, Shorefront YM-YWHA

Lilach was born and raised in Tel Aviv, Israel. She served as the vocalist of the Israeli IDF orchestra, graduated the Beit Zvi School for Performing Arts, and performed in numerous stage and TV productions in Israel before relocating to New York City in 2000. Lilach performed in local New York City theaters and was the vocalist of Shira NYC and Seeds of Sun bands. She worked at the Jewish Claims Conference, G&Y Kids Power, and Shema Kolainu Early Intervention agencies as a service coordination supervisor. For the last four years Lilach has worked at the Shorefront YM-YWHA as the director for special needs programs, serving individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. She is mother to 8-year-old Romi.



Dan Lange, Associate Director of Camping, Union for Reform Judaism

Dan Lange is the associate director of camping at the Union for Reform Judaism. He is a filmmaker, a Jewish educator, and a summer camp enthusiast. Dan holds an M.B.A. and a Master of Arts in Jewish professional leadership from Brandeis University's Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program, where he was named a Wexner Graduate Fellow/Davidson Scholar. Prior to joining the URJ professional team, Dan was the youth director at Temple Isaiah in Lafayette, California, and the associate director of NFTY Convention, NFTY's biannual gathering of Reform Jewish teens from across North America. Dan lives in Queens, New York.



Kate Lauzar, Planning Director for SYNERGY, UJA-Federation of New York

Passionate about synagogues, Kate Lauzar is the planning director of SYNERGY at UJA-Federation of New York, where she is responsible for SYNERGY's strategic day-to-day and long-term planning to further UJA-Federation's mission to support New York synagogues on their paths to thriving. Prior to joining the SYNERGY team, Kate ran a nine-store retail men's shoe operation in the New York metropolitan area. Kate's business acumen and expertise, along with her lay leadership experience as past president of The Pelham Jewish Center, inform her deep understanding of both the "business" of synagogues and of synagogue life in all its complexity. Kate lives in New Rochelle, New York, with husband, Adam; daughter, Rachel (17); and son, Jacob (11).



Rabbi Mordechai Lightstone, Social Media Editor, Chabad.org

Rabbi Mordechai Lightstone is social media editor for Chabad.org and the founding director of Tech Tribe. He is passionate about using new media to further Jewish identity and community-building. Under the Tech Tribe banner, he crafts events and experiences for Jews in tech and digital media, including #openShabbat, an unplugged networking event at the digital media festival SXSW. Mordechai currently resides in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, with his wife and three sons, where he happily tweets between sips of coffee from his aeropress.



Becca Linden, Director of Jewish Greening Fellowship and Associate Director of Thought-Leadership & Capacity-Building, Hazon

Becca came to Hazon having previously worked as the chief operating officer of Eden Village Camp, in development for the Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding, and as a researcher for the Natan Fund and the Jewish Teen Funders Network. After spending two years studying at the Pardes Institute for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, Becca founded a democratic giving circle philanthropy for her extended family of 150 people through the Presentense Fellowship, and serves as the co-chair of its board. She graduated from Wesleyan University with high honors, and completed an M.P.A. at the Wagner School for Public Service and an M.A. in Jewish studies at N.Y.U. A native of Charlottesville, Virginia, Becca now lives in Riverdale, where she loves to explore farmers markets with her husband, Ari, and son, Hodi.



Menachem Menchel, Director of Synagogue Education and Youth Programming, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

A passionate Jewish educator, Menachem Menchel believes in the unique power of experiential learning as a means for self-actualizing. Currently serving as director of Synagogue Education & Youth Programming at the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, Menachem establishes his educational design through "empowerment, engagement, and exploration." Menachem has led numerous international service missions for high school and college students, and has supervised more than 100 inclusion-based Shabbatons for Yachad, the National Jewish Council for Disabilities. Menachem holds a master's degree in Jewish education and is a fellow in the iCenter's Master's Concentration in Israel Education. A lover of live music, cooking, and dancing, Menachem welcomes opportunities to connect over good fun!



Rabbi Jessica Minnen, Resident Rabbi, OneTable

Originally from Paducah, Kentucky, Rabbi Jessica Minnen is the resident rabbi at OneTable, an online and in-person hub that helps emerging adults find, enjoy, and share Shabbat dinner. She is also the founder of Seven Wells, an education initiative that explores sexuality, intimacy, and relationships through a Jewish framework, and the founder of Ecstatic Mincha, a monthly Shabbat dance party. Jessica is an alumna of Washington University in St. Louis, Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, Paideia: The European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, Baltimore Hebrew University, and the Jewish Theological Seminary.



Rabbi Joshua Rabin, Director of Kehilla Enrichment, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

Rabbi Joshua Rabin is the director of Kehilla Enrichment at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), where he serves as program director of the USCJ Convention and rabbi-in-residence of Sulam Leadership. He previously served as rabbi-in-residence of the Schechter School of Long Island from 2011 to 2014. Joshua received his rabbinic ordination from the Jewish Theological Seminary in 2011, and received a certificate from The Principals' Center at the Harvard University Graduate School of Education in 2014.



René Reinhard, Chief of Staff, Jewish National Fund

René was born in Australia, where he earned his B.A. and M.B.A. He has lived in several countries including Israel. He has a passion for learning, traveling, and experiencing other countries and cultures. René's keen interest in learning led him to explore more deeply his own Jewishness, LGBTQ identity, and the centrality of Israel in his life. Working at Jewish National Fund enables him to fulfill his passions and manifests his immense pride in being Jewish.



Valerie Rosen, Director of Compass Project, JCCA

Valerie Rosen, L.M.S.W., is director of the Jewish Child Care Association's Compass Project. Compass provides services for teens and young adults with developmental disabilities and autism spectrum disorder in Queens, Long Island, and Westchester. Compass collaborates with school districts, colleges, synagogues, JCCs, and businesses to provide internship, social, recreational, and vocational opportunities so that each individual can live as independently as possible. Valerie is a member of the UJA-Federation Special Needs Roundtable and Building Communities. Prior to working at JCCA, she was the coordinator of a Mentally Ill Chemical Abusers (MICA) day treatment program in New Jersey. She is an avid marathoner and yoga instructor and is president of Westchester Achilles.



Evan Rosenstock, Director of Global Immersive Experiences for JDC Entwine, JDC

Evan Rosenstock is director of Global Immersive Experiences for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Entwine: the young-adult platform of JDC. In this capacity he oversees the development of one-week and two-month overseas service programs for Jewish young adults that offer the opportunity to impact global Jewish and humanitarian issues. Evan joined JDC in 2011 after pursuing his graduate studies in international relations at N.Y.U. Evan was a founding resident of the Moishe House - Buenos Aires when he lived in Argentina and remains active with Moishe House as the founding co-chair of Moishe House's Ambassador's Circle. He is also a member of the ROI Community, having participated in ROI-Latin America and the Charlie Award Program. Evan received his B.B.A. from Emory University and originally hails from Syosset, New York. He lives in Manhattan with his wife and their French bulldog, Melvin, and enjoys filmmaking, running, jamming/preserving, and the New York Rangers.



Rebecca Saidlower, Director, Kehila Initiative, UJA-Federation of New York

Rebecca Saidlower is director of the new Kehila initiative at UJA-Federation of New York, working to create opportunities that bring together diverse Jewish communities in meaningful ways. Previously, she was the director of marketing and communications at The Jewish Education Project, where she developed marketing infrastructure and materials to connect a 100-year-old agency with today's lay leaders, educators, and families. She has also worked for McGraw-Hill Higher Education. Rebecca has been actively involved with several Jewish communities and organizations, including ROI Community, Columbia/Barnard Hillel, Mt. Sinai Jewish Center, Darkhei Noam, Bnei Akiva of New York/New Jersey, and Project TEN, The Jewish Agency for Israel's Global Tikkun Olam initiative. Rebecca loves to travel, spend time in the great outdoors, and practice her new hobby of photography.



Jack Sherratt, Associate Director of Project ORE, Educational Alliance

Jack Sherratt is the associate director of Project ORE, a program of the Educational Alliance that provides outreach and support to Jewish older adults who are socially isolated, low income, mentally ill, homebound, or at risk. Jack is a licensed master social worker with an M.S.W. from the University of Toronto. Jack also holds a master's degree in religion and culture from Wilfrid Laurier University (Ontario, Canada). He is an avid beekeeper and master carpenter. Jack lives on the Lower East Side with his partner, Jeffrey, and their 4-year-old daughter, Frankie.



Franny Silverman, Director of Youth Education, Kolot Chayeinu

Franny Silverman is a creator of theater, ritual, and experiential Jewish learning opportunities for humans of all ages. She is the director of youth education for Brooklyn's independent progressive synagogue, Kolot Chayeinu, and has created and performed numerous works of new Jewish theater as a founding member and former associate artistic director of Storahtelling-Lab/Shul. Franny is a Resetting the Table Fellows (2015-2016), and in 2012 was a Paul Artist-in-Residence in Indiana University's Jewish Studies Program. Drawing from her background in ritual and devised theater, she officiates tailor-made life-cycle ceremonies for families and couples. Franny lives in Brooklyn with her beloved partner and toddler.



Joshua Smith, Assistant Camp Director, 92nd Street Y

Joshua is a passionate Jewish professional serving as assistant camp director at the 92nd Street Y. Previously he worked at Camp Ramah in the Berkshires and in a variety of educational roles with synagogues and youth groups across New York and New Jersey. Joshua earned a Master of Arts in Jewish education at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and is currently an M.B.A. candidate at N.Y.U.'s Stern School of Business. Josh and his wife, Sarah, live on Manhattan's Upper East Side and are active members of the New York City Jewish community.



Alana Tilman, Program Director, National Ramah Commission

Alana Tilman is the program director of the National Ramah Commission. Her work includes coordinating the camping movement's various year-round programming and leadership training initiatives. Alana holds an M.A. in informal Jewish education from the Davidson School at the Jewish Theological Seminary and is a graduate of Brandeis University. She has been an educator and dedicated participant in a variety of Jewish communal settings. Alana's passion for Jewish education stems from her many summers at Camp Ramah as a camper and staff member. Originally from suburban Philadelphia, Alana now lives an active Jewish life on the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

The Ruskay Institute, developed by The Wiener Center for Leadership and Learning of UJA-Federation of New York, is an intensive, cohort-based, leadership learning opportunity designed to deepen understanding, sharpen vision, and equip professional leaders with essential strategies and tools to imagine and bring about a new Jewish future. For more information about the Ruskay Institute, visit our webpage.