



# 5/85

LEADING PEOPLE TOWARD PURPOSE, CONNECTION AND INSPIRATION



## Welcome to Mishkan. We're glad you're here.

Beloved Mishkanite,

Well, you made it. You made it through this rollercoaster of a year. While the High Holidays always hold the opportunity for reflection, this moment, in particular, feels both fraught and full of potential – for us as individuals, our Mishkan community, and the world around us.

This past year has been laden with shock, disbelief, anger, grief, and immense loss. Loss of life, yes, but it didn't stop there: many of us lost relationships, faith, and saddest of all, hope. Yet, alongside these struggles, we've witnessed a remarkable surge in passion, motivation, and renewed vision among our people.

We're reminded of Mordechai's words to Queen Esther: "Perhaps it was for times such as these that you have attained this position." The holiday of Purim is the mirror image of Yom Kippur. Both holidays remind us of our fundamental inability to know the future, and our radical ability to act in the present. And so every day, we aspire to create spaces that nurture your spiritual well-being so you can engage with the world in ways that foster hope and a sense of agency.



Just last month, Mishkan Chicago officially turned 13 years old, the Jewish age of maturity. Like anyone at 13, there's much we're still learning, but one thing remains clear: the needs that first brought us together remain as important as ever. In a world full of distractions, we crave sacred purpose. In a world full of superficiality and filters, we thirst for genuine connection. In a world full of despair and hopelessness, we need inspiration. In a world full of echo chambers, we strive to build a community with people who bring a diversity of experiences and perspectives.



Harnessing the awesome power of Jewish tradition gives us the purpose, connection, and inspiration we need to navigate the tumultuous terrain of the 21st Century. Our goal remains, as ever, to support you in finding your place in this holy space, to find your voice, and find your people. We're so glad you're here.

*L'shannah tovah and besorot tovot* – לשנה טובה ובשורות טובות – may you be inscribed for a good and sweet new year and may the future hold better news ahead.

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann and Rabbi Steven Philp

# 2024

## 13 Years of Growth

We believe that serious engagement with Judaism changes us, and we change the world. From our first service in 2011, we have practiced and preached radical inclusivity as we strive to create a community across the spectrum of age, background, perspective and identity. We're built by people who bring their whole selves to something larger than themselves and together we find purpose, connection, and inspiration through Jewish practice and community.

Like what you see? Join us!  
We offer Buildership at the individual, couple, or family level with options available at an amount that works for you.  
[www.mishkanchicago.org/join](http://www.mishkanchicago.org/join)

**\$5,000** 2011  
**ANNUAL BUDGET**  
2024 **\$2.8 M**

**0** 2011 FULL-TIME & PART-TIME **32** 2024  
**STAFF**  
(Even Rabbi Lizzi was a volunteer)

2022 **25** LAY-HOSTED SMALL GROUP GATHERINGS **104** 2024

**100** | **2013**  
**BUILDERSHIP HOUSEHOLDS**  
**2024** | **676**

**2012** | **600**  
**HIGH HOLIDAY ATTENDEES**  
**2400** | **2024**

**200**  
**ADULT MISHKANITES CONVERTING TO JUDAISM**  
**2016-2024**

2015 **8**  
**KIDS LEARNING FROM PRE-K TO GRADE 12**  
2024  
**155**

# Looking Back at 5784

## FIND YOUR PEOPLE

Thanks to the leadership and enthusiasm of our community, our Small Groups have taken off! Whether the Vaguely Jewish Book Club, online Torah study or the Disability and Chronic Illness group, Wise Guys or Women Over 55, or our 20s/30s or Queer Shabbatluck group, these lay-led experiences are helping create new connections for Mishkanites across shared interests or common life stages. This year, consider joining an existing small group or get in touch with us to create your own!



## MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Maggie's Place, established in memory of Maggie Miretzky, is our mental and spiritual wellness center, offering clinician and peer-led support groups for grief, recovery, disabilities, fertility, and new parenthood, along with referrals for additional services. We support individuals through various in-house groups, classroom support at Mensch Academy, referrals, and pastoral care, and we're on track to assist over 450 people by year's end.



## OUR HOLY SPACE

There's nothing better than ending our week together with you. Our davening team and clergy lead the way for joyful, song-filled prayer each Shabbat, whether outside, inside, or virtually. Just as the Torah describes the Mishkan as a tent the ancient Israelites carried through the desert, our "tent" also moves, and it's the people inside who create a sacred space wherever we gather.



## COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ON ISRAEL

In the weeks after October 7th, we held space for our collective grief through song, prayer, and supportive spaces. In the months since, we have put our values into action by raising money and awareness for organizations healing the on-the-ground trauma of the war, and hearing from Israeli and Palestinian peacemakers working for a just and peaceful future for Israelis and Palestinians.







### NEW BEGINNINGS

This year, Mishkan received a grant from the Covenant Foundation to enhance *BluePrint: Building a Jewish Life*, a learning program for those who want to explore Judaism and are considering conversion. We launched new initiatives for post-conversion support, including Small Group affinity spaces and a mentoring program. This year, we took 29 new Jews to the mikvah, and since 2015, over 200 people participated in BluePrint, previously known as “Exploring Judaism.”



### MENSCH ACADEMY AND TEENS

Mensch Academy, now almost 10 years old, is an innovative and award-winning program serving more than 130 students from ages 3-11. Our teen programs, made possible by The Cohen Kadima Program, serve our 6th-12th graders and their families. This year we’re launching a teen youth group and continuing to build out programs that support our fastest growing population – people under 18!

### BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO JUDAISM

No one celebrates the holidays like Mishkan, More than 5,000 of you attended our holiday events in 5784 and even more of you engaged digitally, bringing new life to the ancient wisdom of the Jewish calendar. From babies to Boomers, we rang in the Jewish New Year, shook the lulav, danced with the Torah, lit the hanukiah, belly laughed our way through Purim, sat on the floor to read Lamentations, and are back to do it all again in 5785.





## Mishkan at 13: Our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan

When Mishkan Chicago started in 2011, we aimed to engage young and unaffiliated Jews. Thirteen years later, our community has grown in every possible way. We undertook this Strategic Planning process to continue investing in the people and practices that have brought us this far and to deepen our investment in the areas where we're seeing growth.

After 18 months of focus groups, and in collaboration with consultants, our Board, staff, and community, we are excited to unveil the next chapter of our story: our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan. We remain committed to inspiring and supporting you, breathing new life into Judaism, raising the next generation of inspired- and down-to-earth Jews, and changing the world.

### The Big Why

In a world where there are vanishingly few spaces for building the spiritual and social muscles needed for a healthy society, where Americans are increasingly polarized, lonely, and struggling with mental health, and where many Jews are disengaging from Jewish community, our mission is more crucial than ever. Mishkan's remedy for all of this has been and will continue to be joyful, serious Judaism. We are committed to creating a vibrant, inclusive, and courageous space that challenges our minds, enriches our lives, inspires our souls, and helps us navigate our differences with respect and love. Within this community, we will cultivate the skills we need to nourish ourselves and heal the world around us.

At Mishkan, we embrace our ancient practices, wisdom, and rituals, transcending denominations and drawing from the deep well of global Jewish tradition, in our own inspired, down-to-earth way.





# Today and Tomorrow: The Next Five Years at Mishkan

Harmonious **music and intellectual rigor uplift you** at Shabbat, High Holidays, and other celebrations, opening your heart and **elevating your Jewish experience**, whether in person or virtually.

You look around to see Mishkan's **kids growing in their Jewish identity** and sense of Jewish peoplehood through **Mensch Academy** and the **Cohen Kadima Program**, attending and leading their own services, classes, youth group, social justice and social programs, and **wanting more**.

**Mishkan has the staff and financial resources** to consistently and sustainably **create and innovate Judaism** for our growing community.

You are a **Builder** at Mishkan, along with 1,000+ other Builder households **across the spectrum of identity**, background, age, and belief, who are **connected by a commitment** to joyful, progressive, **inclusive Jewish spiritual community**.

This **community supports** you on your **own journey** while being a **national leader** for inspired, down-to-earth Judaism in **Chicago and beyond**.

You recognize the **depth of feeling** that you and others bring to conversations about local and national politics and Israel and Palestine. We are **empowered with the tools** for practicing pluralism and civil disagreement on the most charged subjects, with **respect and compassion**.

Mishkan serves as **your hub** for spiritual and intellectual **Jewish learning**, offering **adult programs** like BluePrint/Exploring Judaism, book groups, text study, mental health and wellness support, affinity groups, and more.

Please scan for a deeper dive into our 2024-2029 Strategic Plan



## Onward! Kadima: Our New Teen Initiative

This year, we announced the launch of The Cohen Kadima Program, a significant next chapter in supporting young adults and their families. The Cohen Kadima Program equips our teens with the Jewish knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to navigate the complexities of high school, college, and beyond. The Cohen Kadima Program will offer engaging educational opportunities tailored to 6th and 7th graders, and post-BMitzvah teens and their families.

Named in honor of Bernice and Buddy Cohen, may their memories be blessings, Kadima (meaning “onward” in Hebrew), encapsulates the essence of this program. It signifies our commitment to guiding teens toward Jewish adulthood, fostering a sense of belonging, purpose, and connection within, and beyond, our community.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Bruce and Lisa Cohen for their visionary leadership and generosity in making this program a reality. Their dedication to honoring Bruce’s parents through support for Jewish education is an inspiration and a lasting tribute to Bernice and Buddy’s legacy.



# cohen kadima

## MISHKAN CHICAGO



**If you are inspired by the mission of The Cohen Kadima Program and would like to explore ways to support our efforts in youth education or other areas of the organization, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Executive Director Rachel Cort.**



## Our Givers

Financial inclusivity is one of our core values. Everyone is welcome regardless of ability to pay for Buildership or programs. We are grateful for every dollar of support from every donor at any level, and part of what makes our financially inclusive model possible is the generosity of those who can give at higher levels. Gifts of \$5,000 constitute about 30% of our annual budget. Thank you for your visionary support.

### **MACHER COLLECTIVE: \$10,000+**

In Yiddish, *macher* means a person who gets things done, literally a “maker.” This group makes this community possible for so many others with their support.

Anonymous (x5)

Britta Bolin & Peter Kupferberg

Anita & Stephanie Cohen

Lisa & Bruce Cohen

Margaret & Lee Cohn

Melanee Cooper

Gabriel Felsen

Terri & Michael Freeman

Sari Gluckin & Lance Friedmann

Kate Grossman & Peter Fidler

Vered Hankin, Jeremy Kaufman & Family

The Heydemann Family

Vicki & Bruce Heyman

Hannah Bloom-Hirschberg  
& Gary Hirschberg

Karen & Andy Jacobs

Karen & Larry Kurtzon

Avi Lewittes & Family

Katherine Linzer

Margaret & Paul Lurie

Dorlee & Jonathan Michaeli

The Morgenstern Wilson Family

Sharon & Lee Oberlander

Naomi Pollock & David Sneider

Lisa Portnoy

Elizabeth & Ross Posner

Rebecca Richards

& Matthew Kutcher

Ann & Stephen Ross

Joshua Schwartz

Caryn & Larry Straus

Rona Talcott & Owen Deutsch

Ericka & Matt Thacker

Joshua  
Turnbull

Laren Ukman

Alicia Weber & Adam Case

### **MISHPUCHA: \$5,000-\$9,999**

You are family! And like any strong *mishpucha*, people contribute in different ways to create a warm, vibrant, loving home for themselves and others.

Anonymous (x3)

Ellyn & John Bank

Kathy & Peter Bresler

Denise Burch & Eric Weinstein

Joan Colmar & Mitchell Sabshon

Rachel Cort & David Frankel

Renee Foster & Mark Weinberg

Liz & Gary Fisch

Galit & David Gottlieb

Rachel & Devin Gross

Rabbi Lizzi Heydemann

& Henry Bernstein

Jennifer Hogan

Meme & Gary Hopmayer

Evan Jacover

Sharon Kahan & Alan Miretzky

Abigail Kuchnir & Jacob Levin

Julie & David Levenstein

Molly G. Levitt

Karen & Avi Lothan

David & Betsy Seligman

Amy  
Swibel & Justin Hoss

Janice  
Wahnon

Andi & Larry Wolfe

Cindy Wolfson

Deb & Jeff Zaluda

### **FOUNDATIONS:**

An Anonymous Family Foundation

The Bruce C. Abrams Foundation

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Hemmelstein Foundation

Jewish United Fund

Nikoh Foundation

### **HOW TO GIVE**

Your gift, of any amount, will help us continue impacting the lives of thousands in Chicago and beyond, reimagining and breathing new life into Judaism. We gladly accept donations via your preferred method – check, credit card, Donor Advised Fund, stock, corporate matches, and more. For more information, please contact Rhonda Abrams, [rhonda@mishkanchicago.org](mailto:rhonda@mishkanchicago.org).





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## Buildership

### (MEMBERSHIP MISHKAN-STYLE)

Buildership is like synagogue membership, but more of a partnership that allows us to co-create your spiritual journey with you, covering about 20% of our annual budget. We offer Buildership at the individual, couple, or family level with options available at an amount that works for you.

Let's build this world from love, together. [www.mishkanchicago.org/join](http://www.mishkanchicago.org/join)





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