



Macy B. Hart
says
"Lhitra'ot"

I HAVE SPENT A LOT OF TIME 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. Stay tuned.

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 "buyback" 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."

Lhitra'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-you-later. 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.