OUR MISSION

T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights brings together rabbis and cantors from all streams of Judaism, together with all members of the Jewish community, to act on the Jewish imperative to respect and advance the human rights of all people.
Since 2002, T’ruah has organized and trained more than 2,000 rabbis and cantors in the United States and Canada to be moral leaders. These leaders guide Jewish communities to help protect and advance human rights in North America, Israel, and the occupied Palestinian territories.

This annual report looks at our year from October 2019 to September 2020. It was a year that included the start of a global pandemic, major threats to American democracy, political upheaval in Israel, and racial justice uprisings that inspired a new national conversation on the legacy of racism in the United States.

Throughout this turbulent year, T’ruah’s two decades of training rabbis and cantors enabled us to rise to the challenges of the moment, responding to the ways the pandemic exacerbated existing inequality and mobilizing our network to stand up for the human rights of those most affected.

This is our reflection on an unprecedented year and how it can inform our work ahead.
Fiscal Year 2020
BY THE NUMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>70 SYNAGOGUES</th>
<th>50 RABBINICAL AND CANTORIAL STUDENTS</th>
<th>23 RABBIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>committed to supporting immigrants threatened with deportation, through Mikdash, the T’ruah sanctuary network</td>
<td>spending their required academic year in Israel met Israeli and Palestinian human rights leaders, and got on-the-ground experience through T’ruah’s year-long human rights program</td>
<td>visited the Mexican border to witness the crisis for asylum seekers and immigrants, and to bring these stories home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T’ruah supporters purchased</th>
<th>360 TREES</th>
<th>800 RABBIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for planting on both sides of the Green Line — at a school in West Jerusalem, and in the West Bank village of Susya, to replace trees destroyed by settlers</td>
<td></td>
<td>took action to protest the Israeli government’s plan to annex the West Bank</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>50 RABBIS AND JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADERS</th>
<th>8 SCHOLARS</th>
<th>955 PEOPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>visited the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, AL, to learn about the history of racial violence and to recommit to fighting its ongoing manifestations</td>
<td>worked with T’ruah to produce thought leadership on human rights concerns in the pandemic through the Jewish Law and Ethics Hackathon</td>
<td>used our human rights haggadah at their seders</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4,900 ACTIONS</th>
<th>3,127 INDIVIDUAL DONORS MADE IT POSSIBLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T’ruah members and supporters took</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>360 TREES</th>
<th>8 SCHOLARS</th>
<th>190 RABBIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>joined T’ruah virtual trainings on human rights issues of the moment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a Jew and a rabbi I know that I must stand and march, largely due to T’ruah’s constant insistence that the values of equality and dignity remain deeply connected to and animated by our Torah.

RABBI AARON ALEXANDER
ADAS ISRAEL CONGREGATION
WASHINGTON, DC
In 2019 and 2020, T’ruah showed up.

**WE SHOWED UP FOR MIGRANT JUSTICE.**
In November 2019, T’ruah and HIAS brought 23 Jewish leaders to the El Paso, TX, border to bear witness and to bring our collective moral voice to stand with immigrants and asylum seekers. This trip built on our Tisha B’Av actions to #CloseTheCamps in August 2019 when we held 56 vigils and protests outside ICE offices, and on previous delegations to the border in Texas and California.

**WE ORGANIZED AGAINST ANNEXATION.**
In partnership with other members of the Progressive Israel Network we gathered signatures from more than 800 rabbis and cantors on a public letter opposing annexation.

**WE DEFENDED CONSUMER BOYCOTTS AND FREE SPEECH IN TEXAS.**
In 2017, Texas passed a law requiring state contractors to pledge not to boycott Israel. In 2018, a school speech pathologist refused to sign it, lost her job, and filed suit. We filed an amicus brief in December supporting free speech, which includes speech with which one might disagree. We have filed similar amicus briefs in Arkansas and Georgia.

**WE HELPED RABBINICAL STUDENTS JOIN THE FIGHT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.**
During the 2019-2020 academic year, 80% of North American rabbinical students spending their required year in Israel took part in our year-long human rights program. Students learned about eviction battles in East Jerusalem, visited asylum seekers in Tel Aviv, spent a day in a military court in the West Bank, met with both Israeli and Palestinian human rights leaders, and learned skills to bring these stories back to their own communities now and in the future.

**WE ORGANIZED FOR WORKER JUSTICE.**
T’ruah continued our longstanding support for the Campaign for Fair Food by organizing our members to support farmworkers, including mobilizing Jewish shareholders in The Wendy’s Company to pass their speaking slots at the company’s Annual General Meeting to farmworkers. As a founding member of the Worker-Driven Social Responsibility Network, we campaign for fair working conditions and an end to trafficking in the supply chain in multiple industries.

**WE FOUGHT GENOCIDE.**
Together with the Coalition to End Forced Labour in the Uyghur Region, we called on major clothing companies to stop buying Chinese cotton, which comes from Xinjiang Province where Uyghur Muslims face human rights abuses and genocide. We also joined the Jewish Rohingya Justice Network in organizing rabbis and cantors to support the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act of 2019.
WE PREPARED JEWISH LEADERS FOR CRITICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT RACISM.
In January, 50 rabbis and lay leaders traveled with Truah to Montgomery, AL, to visit the Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice and learn about the history of racial violence, and about how to work for racial justice in our own communities.

WE WORKED TO HELP END SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN NEW YORK.
For eight years, Truah organized New York State rabbis, cantors, and communities to support the Humane Alternatives to Long-Term Solitary Confinement (HALT) Act, as a member of the Coalition for Alternatives to Isolated Confinement. The HALT Act sets a 15-day limit on stays in solitary and ends the use of this punishment for the most vulnerable populations. Given the high rate of death by suicide during and after solitary, this law will save lives.

In April 2021, Governor Cuomo signed the HALT Act into law.

WE ADVOCATED FOR SAFER CONDITIONS FOR FLORIDA FARMWORKERS.
As COVID began, our members and supporters made phone calls to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis to bring mobile COVID testing units to locations accessible to farmworkers as well as to provide PPE for farmworkers. This advocacy succeeded in increasing access to testing for farmworkers.

WE SUPPORTED RABBIS THROUGH 2020’S RACIAL JUSTICE UPRISINGS.
In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, Truah supported rabbis across the country in protesting, as we have done in similar situations since the 2014 uprising in Ferguson. In July, Truah rabbis in Oregon, many of whom were joining other interfaith leaders in serving as a buffer between police and protesters, called on the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to recall federal forces from Portland.

WE ORGANIZED TO ADVOCATE VIRTUALLY FOR THE RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS, ASYLUM SEEKERS, AND REFUGEES.
On Tisha B’Av 2020, 1,200 members and supporters took part in a virtual action in which we called our representatives and urged them to tell ICE to release children together with their families.

WE PREPARED RABBIS FOR ELECTION RESPONSE.
In September and October, as the presidential election loomed large, we began preparing rabbis and cantors to help counter misinformation, and partnered with Election Defenders to train more than 200 rabbis to volunteer at polling stations, to prevent intimidation and calm any tensions. We also partnered with Faith Matters Network, a Black women-led organization, to train 80 rabbis in Movement Chaplaincy, to offer spiritual care in protests, and to justice movements and leaders.

AND WE TRAINED OUR NEXT HUMAN RIGHTS LEADERS.
Six rabbinical students, selected through a competitive process, took part in the Truah Summer Fellowship in Human Rights, a full-time program through which future clergy gain on-the-ground experience in New York-based human rights organizations, study Jewish texts, and gain the skills they need to be moral leaders.

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Our work is grounded in communities throughout 47 U.S. states, 5 Canadian provinces, Israel, and the Palestinian territories — with sanctuary synagogues in almost 70 cities.

These are the locations where our work was in progress as the COVID-19 pandemic began. Many of our in-person programs stopped in March 2020, halfway through this fiscal year. Instead, like so many organizations, we made a rapid and intense pivot to virtual events and continued nearly all of this work remotely through the remainder of the year. Our virtual events and actions attracted even more participants than in-person programs ever could.

We laid the groundwork for T’ruah clusters in New York, Boston, the Bay Area, and Chicago. Through these clusters, rabbis and cantors from all denominations work together and in coalitions across lines of difference to make concrete change in their own communities.
Here are just some of the actions we took during 2019 and 2020.

- **ALBANY, NY**: Halt Act against solitary confinement
- **BERGEN COUNTY, NJ**: Solidarity with detained immigrants on hunger strike
- **BOSTON, MA**: Migrant justice solidarity
- **PORTLAND, OR**: Rabbis call for National Guard to leave
- **BAY AREA**: Building a local network of leaders
- **CHICAGO, IL**: Immigration actions
- **ALBANY, NY**: Migrant justice solidarity
- **MONTGOMERY, AL**: 50 rabbis visit the National Memorial for Peace and Justice and the Legacy Museum
- **FLORIDA**: Solidarity with Immokalee workers
- **EL PASO, TX**: 23 rabbis visit the border crossing in Juarez
- **OFER**: Military Court visits
- **TEL AVIV**: Visiting asylum seekers
- **GAZA**: Skype conversation with Gisha field organizer
- **JERUSALEM**: Training the next generation of rabbis and cantors to be moral leaders
- **SOUTH HEBRON HILLS**: Community tour with Breaking the Silence
- **SUSYA**: Visiting Palestinian residents of the West Bank & Tree plantings with Combatants for Peace
I don't know why I was worthy of the gift of this fellowship, but it was truly transformational. I notice the shifts in my perspective in perceptible ways, as I ask new questions, see things from multiple views, and have kind of lost a naivete surrounding certain assumptions. I look forward to keep learning from you, my peers and the world.

TANYA FARBER
YESHIVAT MAHARAT ('21), SUMMER FELLOW 2020
In May, T’ruah launched “Jewish Law and Ethics: a hackathon for the age of COVID-19,” with the goal of applying Jewish wisdom, including halakhah (Jewish law), history, ethics, and lived experience, to ethical and human rights questions of COVID-19. Over the summer, eight Jewish scholars examined four fundamental questions:

1) Should people in need be able to stop paying rent in a crisis?
   Read the findings.

2) How much must we give up to save lives?
   Read the findings.

3) How do employers treat workers fairly when there is no work?
   Read the findings.

4) How do we make wise choices that protect both public health and private liberty?
   Read the findings.

The hackathon was not simply a scholarly exercise; we shared these findings in ways that rabbis, educators, and interested members of the Jewish community can use. We published a series of short, two-minute videos and text-sheets for rabbis and other educators to use, and engaged more than 600 people in online study sessions.

We also published longer papers that dove deep into Jewish sources to propose approaches to pressing concerns.

T’ruah has long been committed to rooting our work deep in Jewish text, history, and wisdom, and to building our moral leadership on this foundation. The onset of COVID opened major human rights questions, and demanded moral leadership.

T’ruah stepped up to answer the toughest questions about ethics and inequality during the pandemic. This type of thought leadership will be a larger portion of our work in the years ahead.
HONORING HUMAN RIGHTS HEROES

In June, we honored human rights heroes at T’ruah’s 2020 Gala. Our six honorees exemplify T’ruah’s call to protect and advance human rights. We were grateful to be able to celebrate their work along with more than 1,450 households who joined us for the virtual event.

“We learned that what’s satisfying to an activist is not always helpful to the vulnerable.”
Rabbi Aaron Brusso

“If the Torah is true in all time, then the Torah is true in this time. And it must be speaking to us in this moment.”
Maharat Rori Picker Neiss

“We who believe in human rights need to engage every single one of our collective beings to fight for justice.”
Randi Weingarten

“What after all is the work of human rights? Naso et rosh. “Lift the head,” and you see the face, see the eyes, hear the voice. Lift every head.”
Rabbi Ellen Lippmann

“In the Five Books of Moses, God says more than 50 times to love the stranger because we were strangers in the Land of Egypt. Our government has forgotten that. But many of us have not, and that’s why we are trying to help.”
Moses Silverman

“It’s not about extraordinary leaders doing extraordinary things. But it’s about ordinary people, all of our story.”
Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster
“T’ruah has taken me places where my rabbinical school can’t.”

KELLY WHITEHEAD
T’RUAH YEAR IN ISRAEL PARTICIPANT

Even before I entered rabbinical school, I knew I wanted to be involved in social justice activism. That was very much part of my considerations as I applied to school and thought about how to make the most of my time in Jerusalem. As I spoke with other students, I heard that if I wanted Palestine issues to be part of my rabbinical school experience, T’ruah was the organization to help make it happen.

When I arrived in Israel, I was really surprised to learn that the progressive left is a lot smaller here than it is in the U.S. Luckily, T’ruah showed me that there is a justice-minded network in Israel, fighting for human rights for everyone. T’ruah has important connections with Palestinians, other Jews, and Israelis of many different identities, and being with these individuals has fundamentally changed my experience here.

We have a lot of power as Americans, both financially and with our moral voice. People look to us as leaders and T’ruah takes advantage of that in the best way. T’ruah helps us bring back to the United States stories of Palestinians who are not allowed to travel there, and connects us to the network of people working for justice in both Israel and Palestine.

T’ruah has taken me places where my rabbinical school won’t, and has helped me experience things that will shape my leadership for the rest of my life. The organization has given me a firsthand understanding of what’s happening and I’ll carry that into my leadership.
$1,880,431
TOTAL BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR

WE RAISED...

$879,000
IN TOTAL INDIVIDUAL GIFTS.

WHICH WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY

3,127 DONORS WHO MADE

4,415 DONATIONS.

180 PEOPLE
BECAME MONTHLY DONORS.

$278,000
WAS RAISED FROM OUR ANNUAL GALA.

$602,944
CAME FROM INSTITUTIONAL DONORS.

AND

$80,559
WAS EARNED INCOME.

ASSETS
FY20: $395,044
FY19: $187,288
PROGRAM EXPENSES

Salaries 52.2%
Rent and utilities 8.5%
Professional fees 7.4%
Printing and copying 2.7%
Telephone & electronic communications 3.9%
Direct expenses 5.8%
Payroll taxes & employee benefits 11.9%
Depreciation 1.1%

EXPENSES IN PROGRAM, FUNDRAISING, AND ADMINISTRATIVE CATEGORIES

Program Expenses
Fundraising Expenses
Admin Expenses
FISCAL YEAR 2020
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Rabbi Esther L. Lederman
Director of Congregational Innovation, Union for Reform Judaism

Rabbi Michael Lezak
Rabbi, Glide Center for Social Justice

Rabbi Ellen Lippmann
Founder and Rabbi Emerita, Kolot Chayeinu, Brooklyn, NY

Rabbi William Plevan, Ph.D.
Independent scholar and educator; Adjunct Professor, Gratz College

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Rabbi, Beth Meyer Synagogue, Raleigh, NC

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Spiritual Leader, Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, Newton, MA

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Spiritual Leader, Congregation Kol Emet, Yardley, PA

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Interim Director of Organizing, POWER Interfaith

Rabbi Paula Marcus
Senior Rabbi, Temple Beth El, Aptos, CA
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Rabbi Steven Denker
Madd Dreffin
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Rabbi Steven Denker
Rabbi Jo David
Madd Dreffin

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Fiscal Year 2020 was a year of incredible challenges. We entered a global pandemic and faced one of the most crucial presidential elections in a lifetime. We saw governments around the world turn their backs on families facing separation, hunger, and destruction, and renewed our commitment to speaking out for our shared humanity. We endured multiple Israeli elections, and an initiative that threatened to legally annex part of the West Bank.

T’ruah powered the rabbis and cantors who joined racial justice uprisings and took action for immigrant justice. We trained the next generation of Jewish moral leaders to lead their communities in working for human rights, both in the U.S. and Canada, and in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. We changed public policy around incarceration — and did it all in the midst of enormous upheaval in our public, personal, and spiritual lives.

Our work after this year is more necessary than ever. Moving forward, T’ruah is going deeper with this work and setting out on an ambitious path to expand our impact. The events, actions, coalitions, and leaders who took part in our work in 2019-2020 continue to be the inspiration and motivation for this growth.

This year taught us once again that our safety is connected — and that together, we can accomplish incredible things.
My rabbinate is forever changed. I will never again underestimate the importance and effectiveness of being there, of simple presence. And I'm just so grateful to T'ruah for providing me with that opportunity.

PRESTON NEIMEISER
HEBREW UNION COLLEGE (‘21), SUMMER FELLOW 2020