

Shomer Collective

Educator Fellowship



2024-25 | 5785 COHORT

About Shomer Collective

Shomer Collective's mission is to improve end-of-life experiences for individuals and their families—inspired by Jewish wisdom, values, and practices—by curating content and resources and building a diverse network of organizational partners.

About the Educator Fellowship

The Fellowship is a 9-month, online, cohort-based learning experience for Jewish educators from a variety of settings and backgrounds.

Together, we will explore Jewish wisdom, texts, and traditions about life and death, dying and mourning, guided by experts in the field, and will develop resources to help our communities talk more openly, more frequently, and with less fear about death and dying. The Educator Fellowship is made possible thanks to a generous grant from The Covenant Foundation.

MEET THE





FELLOWS



GILA SILVERMAN, PHD

Shomer Collective
Education Program Manager

she/her
gila@shomercollective.org
Tucson, Arizona

Gila holds a PhD in Sociocultural and Medical Anthropology and a Master's in Public Health, both from the University of Arizona. She also completed a certificate in Congregational Health Ministry at Andover Newton Theological School and was a member of the second cohort of the Jewish Pedagogies Research Fellowship with M²: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education. Prior to joining Shomer Collective, Gila served as Director of Jewish Lifelong Learning at Case Western Reserve University's Siegal Lifelong Learning Program. She has also held positions at the New Israel Fund, Shatil, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, and the Shleimut Institute, an initiative to develop health care programs for synagogues. She now leads the Shomer Collective Educator Fellowship as the Education Program Manager, and is a certified Respecting Choices® Instructor.

Much of Gila's academic and communal work has focused on the intersections of religion, spirituality, health and healing, exploring the diverse ways that we find meaning and relevance in Jewish tradition and ritual, particularly at times of illness and loss. Her most recent writings have focused on kaddish and Jewish mourning, both from ethnographic and personal perspectives. She also co-edited a special issue on Anthropology and Grief, in the journal *Death Studies*.



RONNIE BECHER

**Director of Beth El Nursery School
Beth El Synagogue Center**

Ronnie Goldberg Becher received her Bachelor's degree from Sarah Lawrence College and a Master's degree in Curriculum & Teaching from Teachers College at Columbia University, where she was awarded a fellowship for a reading and writing project. She has taught in the public school system, at SAR Academy, and in Jerusalem, Israel, and was the director of a nursery school in Manhattan.

Ronnie has now served as the Educational Director of Beth El Nursery School in Westchester for over 20 years. She is a founding member of JOFA, the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, is the President of JECA, the Jewish Early Childhood Association, and is a member of the Westchester Early Childhood Director's Network. When not at Beth El, Ronnie is an active member of the Riverdale Repertory theater group. She enjoys going to the beach, visiting Israel, studying Judaica, playing mah jongg and celebrating holidays with her husband Michael and their extended family in Riverdale, New York.



she/her
New Rochelle, New York

JAYME EPSTEIN



In May of 2024, Jayme received her Master's in Jewish Education from Davidson at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Jayme has worked at Temple Emanu-El as the assistant director of lifelong learning, as well as a Youth Director for Congregation Ohev Shalom in Orlando, Florida, and as Regional Director for BBYO, North Florida Region. Jayme attended Texas Tech University where she earned two Bachelor's in Business Administration with focuses in Marketing and Accounting. Jayme grew up in Westchester, New York and is thrilled to be home near her family. She currently resides in Dobbs Ferry, New York with her two cats, Maddy and Soapsuds. Jayme enjoys spending time outdoors, reading, and with her friends and family.

she/her
Dobbs Ferry, New York

NORA FEINSTEIN

**Rabbi
Sixth & I**

Nora Feinstein is a rabbi at Sixth & I in Washington, DC, where she works with young professionals exploring their relationship to Jewish practice, identity, and community.

She loves connecting people to Jewish tradition in resonant ways and infusing Jewish learning with soul, joy, and meaning. Nora enjoys reading poetry, hiking, strong coffee, and yoga. She lives with her family in Northwest DC.



*she/her
Washington, D.C.*

LISA FINKELSTEIN

Communications Director

Sinai Memorial Chapel Chevra Kadisha

Lisa is responsible for community outreach, administration and learning at Northern California's only nonprofit Jewish funeral home, Sinai Memorial Chapel. This community led Chevra Kadisha, or Jewish Burial Society, has provided death care services to all Jewish People and their loved ones since the California Gold Rush. Lisa was primarily raised in Missouri, later living in Oregon, and Colorado before finding her home in the heavy fog belt steps away from Ocean Beach in San Francisco. She is a longtime member of Congregation Sha'ar Zahav and has worked for



numerous civic, philanthropic, and Jewish nonprofit organizations. She holds a BA from the University of Oregon and a Master's in Nonprofit Management from Regis University in Denver.

she/her
San Francisco, California

GAIL GREENBERG

Director of Education

Yachad Religious School:

Temple Emanu-El and Congregation Beth Shalom

Gail Greenberg, RJE, is a passionate and innovative Educational Leader who believes in the power of connecting people to Judaism and each other at in all stages of life. She has worked in the field of Jewish Family Education and Religious School Education since 2001 including roles as

Director of the PJ Library program in Detroit, Assistant Director of FedEd and Melton, and Director of Education in multiple congregations.

Currently she leads Yachad Religious School, a partnership of Temple Emanu-El and Congregation Beth Shalom in Oak Park, MI. Prior to the Jewish Education world Gail shared her passion for people while in the geriatrics field as a Music/Recreation Therapist. Gail believes in the importance of continued growth and learning. She holds a master's degree from Hebrew Union College, a Certificate in Jewish Leadership from Spertus Institute, and is a past Mandel Teacher Educator Institute Fellow and Pardes Senior Educational Learning Fellow.



she/her
Oak Park, Michigan

TERRY KAYE

**Associate Director, Director of Creative Partnerships
Jewish Grandparents Network**

As Associate Director and Director of Creative Partnerships at the Jewish Grandparents Network, Terry Kaye educates, connects, and supports grandparents as essential partners in enriching Jewish life. She collaborates with Jewish organizations and expert individuals to co-create, curate, and source Jewish experiences, resources, and live events for grandparents. She also moderates JGN's private Facebook group of 12,000 members.



Terry has worked in the field of Jewish education for 35+ years, much of that time at Behrman House Publishers where she worked closely with educators nation-wide in her role as Director of Educational Services. She also wrote, edited, or project-managed over seventy Jewish education publications for children and adults.

Terry is thrilled to be a Shomer Collective Fellow and to create resources and tools that help grandparents talk more openly and comfortably with grandchildren (and families) about their legacy, death, and dying.

*she/her
Chatham, New Jersey*

JENNIFER LORCH SELCO

**Senior Director of Jewish Life & Engagement
Tucson J**

Jennifer Selco serves as the Senior Director of Jewish Life and Engagement at the Tucson J. For more than a decade, she has designed and implemented experiences in order to build community and deepen one's connection to Jewish life and culture. Prior to her work at the J, Jennifer worked in synagogue and day school settings. Having grown up in a vibrant and joyfully Jewish family with a strong communal network, Jennifer seeks to help others find their place within the local and global Jewish community. Jennifer and her husband are the proud parents of five children. In her free time, Jennifer enjoys a good chai tea latte, cooking, reading, spending time outdoors and traveling.



*she/her
Tucson, Arizona*

GABE MINER

Engagement Director
Illini Hillel



Rabbi Gabe Miner has worked with learners of all ages in synagogues, camps, day schools, universities, youth organizations, and travel programs in the US, Europe, & Israel.

Gabe loves American folk and bluegrass music, theatre, Jewish camp, and Yiddish. He is an award-winning playwright and a former axe-throwing coach who has written digital media for Shalom Sesame and The Dodo Kids.

Gabe has earned fellowships in Jewish theater, Yiddish language instruction, overnight camp management, Israel education, and Jewish environmentalism.

While living in Warsaw, Gabe served as the Rabbinic Intern for the Taube Center for Jewish Life and Learning and shadowed Poland's Chief Rabbi. Gabe holds a Masters in Jewish Education and a BA in Modern Jewish Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary and a BA in Dramatic Literature and Playwriting from Columbia University. Gabe is the creator of VirtualSeder.org, a collection of more than 75 short videos from educators, scholars, and clergy from around the world and across denominations.

he/him
Champaign, Illinois

STACY ROSENTHAL

**Director of Programs
Gesher Disability Resources**

Stacy is a longtime Jewish educator with over two decades of experience at a Reform congregation - her last role as the Senior Director of Education and Youth Engagement. She was in the first cohort of the Executive Masters program at Hebrew Union College and obtained the title of RJE (Reform Jewish Educator) in 2013. She is currently serving the Jewish disability community through Gesher Disability Resources of Scottsdale, Arizona where she is the Director of Programs. She is the first Vice President of the Association of Reform Jewish Educators and an instructor for the Union for Reform Judaism.



Stacy became interested in the Shomer Collective upon the untimely deaths of two members of Gesher and the realization that resources on death and dying for the disability community are difficult to come by.

Stacy lives with her husband, Greg, and a small dog, with a large personality, named Lily who fills the empty nest vacated by their three grown children.

*she/her
Phoenix, Arizona*

CLAIRE SOLOMON NISEN

Manager, Lasting Impressions Programs
DOROT

Claire Solomon Nisen, LMSW, MPH, is the Manager of Lasting Impressions programs at DOROT, where we seek to focus effective programs to reach those who are at higher risk of social isolation and for whom social connections may be more challenging to build. Claire earned a Master's in Social Work and a Master's in Public



Health from Columbia University, and earned a B.A. in American Studies from Skidmore College. She lives with her husband and two young children in Forest Hills, Queens.

she/her
Forest Hills, New York

RIKI WIEDERHORN

Director of Year-Round Programming Ramah New England

Riki Wiederhorn (she/her) has been the Ramah New England Director of Year-Round programming for the past two years but has been a part of the Camp Ramah Camper Care Team since 2011. Most recently, Riki spearheaded a Ramah New England's trail blazing initiative aimed at providing solace, support, and an immersive Jewish experience to families affected by serious illness or loss and its after-effects. Prior to joining the year-round staff, she worked in various formal and informal Jewish educational settings including Bi-Cultural Hebrew Academy in Stamford, CT as a 4th grade Jewish Studies teacher for almost a decade. Riki holds an undergraduate degree from the University of California at Santa Barbara (political science) and an MA in Jewish Education from the University of Judaism in Los Angeles. She lives in Westport, CT with her husband Jeremy but spends much of her time in Israel, where two of her children live.



she/her
Westport, Connecticut

FORREST YESNES

**Director of Youth and Family Education
Shir Tikvah Congregation**



Forrest has been the Director of Youth and Family Education at Shir Tikvah since 2015. He oversees their entire youth and family experience, from tots to high school seniors. Forrest is an accomplished educator who specializes in student wellness, curriculum and leadership development, and parent

engagement. He leads a team of twenty faculty members. Forrest guided the congregation through a major education-revisioning in 2021.

Forrest is an alum of the National Outdoor Leadership School (2014). He earned his Bachelor's Degree in Youth Studies from the University of Minnesota (2015) and his Executive Master's Degree in Jewish Education from Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion (2022). He also has a Certificate in Jewish Education for Adolescents and Emerging Adults from HUC-JIR and a Certificate in Jewish Inclusion from Matan.

*he/him
Minneapolis, Minnesota*

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