



# GLOBAL JUSTICE FELLOWSHIP 2018–2019 FELLOWS AND STAFF BIOS

**The AJWS Global Justice Fellowship** is a selective program designed to inspire, educate and train key opinion leaders in the American Jewish community to become advocates in support of U.S. policies that will help improve the lives of people in the developing world.

AJWS has selected the latest cohort for its Global Justice Fellowship, which will include leading rabbis from across the United States. The fellowship period is from October 2018 to April 2019 and includes travel to an AJWS country in Mesoamerica, during which participants will learn from grassroots activists working to overcome poverty and injustice. The travel experience will be preceded by innovative trainings that will prepare rabbis to galvanize their communities and networks to advance AJWS's work. Fellows will also convene in Washington, D.C. to serve as key advocates to impact AJWS's priority policy areas.

The 15 fellows represent a broad array of backgrounds, communities, experiences and networks.

## RABBINIC FELLOWS



### ADAM BALDACHIN

Rabbi Adam Baldachin is rabbi of Shaarei Tikvah in Scarsdale, NY, and serves on the executive committees of the Westchester Board of Rabbis and Masorti Olami. Rabbi Baldachin previously served as the rabbi of

Montebello Jewish Center in Rockland County, where he founded the Rockland Clergy for Social Justice, a group of Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders advocating for fair and equitable education for the public-school students of East Ramapo, NY. As a rabbinical student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Baldachin served communities as close as Riverdale, NY, and as far as Israel and Uganda. In Uganda, he volunteered with a local NGO through American Jewish World Service and then worked with the Abayudaya—the local Jewish Community—teaching Hebrew, leading services and helping to build sustainable businesses. Rabbi Baldachin is married to Maital Friedman and has three children, Shalev, Navit and Lior.



### ADERET DRUCKER

Rabbi Aderet Drucker is a spiritual leader, community organizer and educator. She serves as Community Rabbi for an innovative new project (soon to be named!) working to create Jewish community among

a diverse population of Jews in their 20's and 30's in the greater Washington, D.C. area. Previously, Rabbi Drucker served as the Campus Rabbi & Director of Jewish Life and Learning for Hillel at the University of Maryland, where she also served as part of the University of Maryland's Interfaith Chaplaincy. Prior to this role, she was rabbi of Congregation B'nai Shalom in Northern California. Rabbi Drucker received her rabbinic ordination from JTS with a concentration in pastoral care. A recipient of the Gladstein Fellowship in Entrepreneurial Leadership, she served as Rabbinic Intern for Temple Israel Center of White Plains, where she led a community organizing Listening Campaign. A Rabbis Without Borders Fellow, she was selected to participate in the first cohort of CLAL's CLI fellowship, working on innovation in the rabbinate. Recently, she was selected to be a fellow for RRC's Campus Chaplaincy for a Multifaith World. Rabbi Drucker lives in Silver Spring, Maryland with her husband, Brett, and their two daughters.

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### JESSICA ZIMMERMAN GRAF

Rabbi Jessica Zimmerman Graf is Senior Rabbi of San Francisco's Congregation Sherith Israel, a dynamic, entrepreneurial community self-described as a "165 year old start up." Rabbi Graf

previously served the congregation for two years as the "Magalim rabbi," an experimental community-building position where she worked to create multiple circles of community within the congregation. Before joining Sherith Israel, she served for eight years as the Director of Congregational Engagement for Synagogue 3000; as rabbi at Temple Beth Israel in Scottsdale, AZ; and as visiting rabbi in Juneau, AK, Costa Rica and Mumbai, India. She was ordained at HUC-NY and received an MA in Jewish Art and Visual Culture from JTS. She graduated from Columbia in 1995 with a degree in Art History.



### SHARYN HENRY

Rabbi Sharyn Henry is rabbi at Rodef Shalom Congregation in Pittsburgh, PA. She has served the congregation for nearly two decades, and previously held roles as Director of Youth Education and

Activities and Associate Rabbi. Rabbi Henry recently celebrated her 30th anniversary of ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. In her pulpits (which have also included Pittsburgh, Kansas City, MO, and Alison Park, PA) she has focused her rabbinate on *avodah*—worship and justice—and a deep commitment to bringing more understanding and compassion into the world. She is married to Dennis Ginsberg and is the mother of sons Abi and Asher.



### RACHEL KAHN-TROSTER

Rabbi Rachel Kahn-Troster is Deputy Director of T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights. She directs campaigns to fight mass incarceration (with a focus on ending solitary confinement),

end modern-day slavery and forced labor, and support the rights of immigrants. She spearheads T'ruah's #TomatoRabbis partnership with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, who bring higher wages and human rights to the Florida tomato industry through the Fair Food Program. Ordained in 2008 from the Jewish Theological Seminary, where she was a student activist and leader, she is a noted speaker and writer on Judaism and human rights, including speaking internationally on behalf of the U.S. State Department on the issue of human trafficking. Her writing has appeared on CNN.com, *The Forward*, *New York Daily News*, and many other publications. Rabbi Kahn-Troster lives in Teaneck, NJ, with her husband, Dr. Paul Pelavin, and their daughters Liora and Aliza.



### MICHAEL KNOPF

Rabbi Michael Knopf is the spiritual leader of Temple Beth-El, a dynamic Jewish community in Richmond, VA. Named one of "America's Most Inspiring Rabbis" by *The Forward* and one of Richmond's "40

Under 40" by *Style Weekly*, Rabbi Knopf is dedicated to helping contemporary Jews meaningfully engage with their tradition, each other, and the world. Passionate about social justice and interfaith partnership, Rabbi Knopf is a member of Leadership Metro Richmond and proudly participates in several interfaith roundtables and organizations that champion human rights. A fellow of Rabbis Without Borders and the Clergy Leadership Incubator, Rabbi Knopf is a regular contributor to local, national and international publications. He received rabbinic ordination from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies in 2011 and is a member of the international Rabbinical Assembly. He lives in Richmond with his wife and three children.



### BARBARA PENZNER

Rabbi Barbara Penzner has served since 1995 as rabbi of Temple Hillel B'nai Torah, a Boston Reconstructionist congregation committed to social justice, spirituality, and inclusivity. She

currently co-chairs the New England Jewish Labor Committee and leads its annual Labor Seder, and she was previously president of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association and the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis. In 2011, Rabbis for Human Rights-North America (now T'ruah) named Rabbi Penzner a Rabbinic Human Rights Hero for her advocacy for workers' rights. Her activism is grounded in the words of the prophet Micah, who said to "do justice, act with love, and walk humbly with your Source"—meaning that working for justice is sustained by spiritual practice, and both are held together through building loving relationships. Rabbi Penzner was born in New York and grew up in the suburbs of Kansas City. She and her husband, Brian Rosman, have two children, Aviva and Yonah.



### EVE POSEN

Rabbi Eve Posen serves as the assistant rabbi at Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland, OR, where she teaches, preaches, inspires, and engages all generations of the synagogue

community. Previously, Rabbi Posen spent four years as Campus Rabbi of the Ann and Nate Levine Academy in Dallas, TX. Born and raised in the suburbs of Detroit, MI, Rabbi Posen attended the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where she received a B.A. in Judaic Studies. She also holds a master's degree in Experiential Education from the American Jewish University's Fingerhut School of Education. Upon her ordination from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at AJU in 2010, she received the Schechter Residency in Educational Leadership Fellowship. Rabbi Posen recently co-authored a new book with Lois Sussman Shenker, *Pirkei Imahot: The Wisdom of Mothers, the Voices of Women*. She is married to Duncan Gilman and has two children, Shiri and Matan.



### JILL PERLMAN

Rabbi Jill Perlman serves as a rabbi at Temple Isaiah in Lexington, MA. Prior to her ordination at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbi Perlman received her master's degree in Judaic

Studies and Jewish Communal Service from Brandeis University. Her rabbinate is based in social justice, guided by the wisdom of our texts and traditions, and dedicated to creating an engaged community through building one on one relationships. She is a Tisch Fellow and a Brickner Fellow. Committed to interfaith work, she is president of the Lexington Interfaith Clergy Association. She also serves as president of the Boston Area Reform Rabbis and is on the rabbinic advisory council for JALSA, the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action.



### PHILIP RICE

Rabbi Philip "Flip" Rice is the co-senior rabbi of Congregation Micah, in Nashville, Tennessee—a pulpit that he shares with his wife, Laurie. As leader of this innovative, interfaith-friendly, and musical

community, Rabbi Rice is passionate about storytelling and teaching how ancient texts can still speak to us today. A community leader of interfaith dialogue, he lectures locally at Belmont University and was a founder of Get Connected, Nashville's Israel teen trip and youth exchange. He and Laurie are the parents of three children.



### MICHAEL ROTHBAUM

Rabbi Michael Rothbaum serves as the rabbi for Congregation Beth Elohim in Acton, MA. He has been extensively involved with faith-based social justice organizations and has spoken

widely at conferences and rallies, from Moishe House to the House of Representatives. He currently serves on the advisory committee of the Boston-based Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) and on the board of the New England Jewish Labor Committee. In 2012, he joined a rabbinic delegation to Ghana that was sponsored by American Jewish World Service. Rabbi Rothbaum is devoted to creating and nurturing vibrant learning communities and sharing his love of Torah and commitment to justice in both formal and informal settings. His writing and speaking has been featured in *Haaretz*, *The Forward*, *Tikkun*, the *Huffington Post*, KQED radio, CNN and *Zeek*. He lives with his husband, Anthony Russell, in Maynard, MA.



### DEAN SHAPIRO

Rabbi Dean Shapiro has been the Senior Rabbi of Temple Emanuel in Tempe, AZ, since the summer of 2011. Rabbi Shapiro is a graduate of Clal's Clergy Leadership Incubator, a fellowship of Rabbis

Without Borders and the Jewish Spirituality Institute's Clergy Leadership Program. He participates in Tempe's Interfaith Ministry work and writes a monthly column on spirituality for the East Valley Tribune. Rabbi Shapiro previously served Jewish communities in Auckland, Los Angeles, and the Bay Area; and he has lived in Israel, New Zealand, Spain, and Egypt. He received rabbinic ordination and a certificate in Jewish Communal Service from Hebrew Union College and a bachelor's degree, with Honors, from Harvard College. Prior to joining the rabbinate, he was a movie industry executive who specialized in international distribution of feature films (including the hit "My Big Fat Greek Wedding"). He and his partner, Haim Ainsworth, have a young son.



### ERIC SOLOMON

Rabbi Eric Solomon has served as the spiritual leader of Beth Meyer Synagogue in Raleigh, NC, since 2005. Rabbi Solomon is also the Senior Rabbinic Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute

in Jerusalem and currently serves on the boards of T'ruah: The Rabbinical Call for Human Rights and Urban Ministries of Wake County. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Maryland, and following ordination from the Hebrew Union College in 2000, was selected as the 4th Marshall T. Meyer Rabbinical Fellow at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun in New York City. Together with his spouse, Rabbi Jennifer Solomon, he has three children: Meirav, Adi and Natan.



### SUSAN TALVE

Rabbi Susan Talve is the founding rabbi of Central Reform Congregation in St. Louis, MO. When other congregations were leaving the city for the suburbs, she and a small group came

together to keep a vibrant presence in the city and to be on the front lines of fighting the racism and poverty plaguing the urban center. Rabbi Talve continues to lead her congregation, now a large diverse community, in promoting radical inclusivity by developing ongoing relationships with African-American and Muslim congregations and by fostering civil liberties for the LGBTQ community. Rabbi Talve attributes her success to the relationships she has built by showing up—on street corners where violent crime has taken lives; at rallies for worker's rights, gun control and access to health care; and at the bedsides of the suffering, regardless of religion or membership in her community.



### DAVID WIRTSCHAFTER

Rabbi David Wirtschafter has been serving Temple Adath Israel and the greater community of Lexington, KY since 2015. Prior to that, he worked at congregations in New York, California and Iowa,

and served as rabbi-in-residence for the Minneapolis Jewish Day School and the Jay Phillips Center for Interfaith Learning. He taught for the JPC's academic partners, the University of St. Thomas and Saint John's

University, both in Minnesota. A graduate of Brandeis University and Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, he remains dedicated to the core values of his training, including a commitment to justice. In 2015, his congregation sponsored two refugee families from the Congo. In 2016, he represented Kentucky as part of a nationwide coalition to lobby for criminal justice reform. In March 2018, he was Kentucky's representative in the AJWS effort to lobby Congress to take action on the Rohingya crisis in Burma, to stop codification of the Global Gag Rule, and to prevent cuts to Foreign Aid.

## AJWS STAFF



### ROBERT BANK, *President and CEO*

Robert Bank is President and CEO of American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the world's leading Jewish organization working to end poverty and promote human rights

in the developing world. Robert has spent his career championing human rights as an attorney, activist and leader. He joined AJWS as Executive Vice President in 2009 and previously served in New York's municipal government and in the leadership of GMHC—one of the world's leading organizations combatting HIV/AIDS, where he played an instrumental role in the campaign to overturn the ban on HIV-positive people entering the United States and becoming U.S. citizens.

Robert received Harvard Law School's Wasserstein Public Interest Fellowship and his leadership has been recognized with GMHC's Lifetime Achievement Award and the Partners in Justice Award from AVODAH: The Jewish Service Corps. He is an advisor to The Conversation: Jewish in America, and he is on the board of Leading Edge: Alliance for Excellence in Jewish Leadership. Robert's passion for human rights was shaped growing up in a Jewish family in South Africa, which was engaged in the struggle to end apartheid.



### RUTH W. MESSINGER, *Global Ambassador*

After a remarkable 18-year presidency, Ruth took on a new role as AJWS's first Global Ambassador in July 2016, continuing her crucial work of engaging global leaders, activists,

rabbis and interfaith leaders to speak out on behalf of oppressed and persecuted communities worldwide. Ruth joined AJWS in 1998, following a 20-year career in public service in New York City.

As a leading activist for human rights around the globe, she lectures widely and holds leadership roles in the faith-based advocacy arena. She chairs the social justice committee of the State Department's Religion and Foreign Policy Working Group and is a member of the World Bank's Moral Imperative working group on extreme poverty. Ruth has been honored by many national Jewish organizations and has been named for the past decade among the "world's most influential Jews" and religious leaders by *The Forward*, *The Jerusalem Post* and *The Huffington Post*.



**LILACH SHAFIR, *Director of International Education and Jewish Education (IEJE)***

Lilach Shafir is responsible for overseeing the creation and implementation of the Global Justice Fellowship. Lilach has spent more

than five years living overseas, including three consecutive years in East Timor as a leadership trainer and one year in Israel as a Dorot Fellow. Lilach has led groups of North Americans on international travel programs in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Mexico, Brazil, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Ghana with AJWS, National Geographic and Putney Student Travel. Lilach holds a Master's in international education from Stanford and a bachelor's in international studies and Latin America. Lilach is an advanced speaker of Spanish, Portuguese, Tetun and Hebrew.



**JOSEPH GINDI, *Program Officer (IEJE)***

Joseph Gindi is the Program Officer for International Education and Jewish Engagement at AJWS, where he is responsible for the creation of Judaic content, including the

weekly Dvar Tzedek, and engaging rabbis and North American Jewish communities. Joseph, who hails from the Syrian Jewish community of Deal, New Jersey, is a Jewish educator with over 10 years of experience across the Jewish organizational and denominational landscape. He has Master's degrees in Near Eastern and Judaic studies from Brandeis University and in religious studies from the University of North Carolina, where he wrote his Master's thesis on the use of classical texts in the Jewish environmental movement. Joseph has studied in batei midrash at the Pardes Institute, Mechon Hadar, and The Jewish Theological Seminary.



**RORI KRAMER, *Director of Government Affairs***

Rori Kramer is the Director of Government Affairs and leads AJWS's advocacy work in Washington, D.C. Most recently, she was the Deputy Assistant Secretary

for Senate Affairs at the U.S. State Department, leading the department's legislative priorities and managing its relationship with the United States Senate. Previously, she served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Regional, Global and Functional Affairs and Senate Director, both also at the State Department. Rori has worked as the Senior Foreign Policy Adviser to U.S. Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD), member of the Senate Foreign Relations and the Finance Committees. There, she played a key role developing the senator's legislative priorities on foreign policy, international development and trade. She holds degrees from the College of William and Mary, University of Oxford and the London School of Economics.



**SHAYNA SALIMAN, *Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Programs at AJWS***

Shayna Saliman serves as the Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Programs at AJWS and is also a Program Associate

for International Education and Jewish Engagement, supporting the Global Justice Fellowship program. Prior to joining AJWS, Shayna worked as the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning Fellow at the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village (ASYV) in Rwanda, a community for orphaned and vulnerable youth that provides housing, healthcare, schooling and extracurricular programming. Shayna earned her Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and was a former AJWS intern in Los Angeles in 2012.



**HANNAH WEILBACHER,**  
*Program Officer, Jewish Advocacy  
and Engagement*

Hannah Weilbacher is an organizer and advocate serving American Jewish World Service as the Program Officer for Jewish

Advocacy and Engagement. Prior to joining AJWS, Hannah worked at the Jewish Social Justice Roundtable, a coalition of progressive organizations pursuing social justice from a Jewish perspective. She has been a community organizer for a number of campaigns and causes, and she was the chief organizer for the groundbreaking DC Paid Family Leave Campaign with Jews United for Justice. She was also a field organizer for a winning congressional campaign in New Hampshire. Hannah believes in the power of organizing and building relationships that lead to meaningful action. She holds a B.A. in politics from Oberlin College and is originally from the suburbs of Philadelphia.