



**ALEPH
INSTITUTE**
No One Alone,
No One Forgotten.



2019

Annual Report



Message from our Leadership

After 30 years of bringing religious services to those in the Jewish community who are incarcerated and supporting their families, our perception is that the courts and Congress' Second Chance Act reflect the progress made towards humanizing incarcerated individuals. The Aleph Institute provides those released from incarceration with the resources they need in order to become productive members of society and reach their potential, despite their past.

The numbers of those incarcerated are slowly falling. The courts are recognizing that prison is not the only solution and we are working with many in our society to develop an alternative path to incarceration, one that is focused on rehabilitation and community service. With the growth of the Aleph Institute's Alternative Sentencing Program, we hope to provide individuals and their families with alternatives, resources, and a sense of hope.

During the past year, the Aleph Institute's Shifra program -- with funding from Allegheny County Department of Human Services -- has continued to work with families in the community to connect them with the resources they need in order to address mental health, physical health, housing, food security, financial security, and other concerns.

We now have three caseworkers on staff working on both community and re-entry programs. Our staff has grown to allow the Aleph Institute to be open from 6:45 am until 9:00 pm. We continue to see over 250 people every week -- a diverse population -- who come in for programs and services, thanks to generous community support.

With blessings,



Rabbi M. M. Vogel
President/CEO



Marty Davis,
Chairman of the Board

In Prison Programs

The Aleph Institute's In-Prison Programs advocate for the needs and accommodations for incarcerated individuals. We provide a variety of humanitarian, educational, and religious services for inmates. Incarceration can often be an isolating experience and our volunteers establish strong bonds with Jewish prisoners and their families. The Aleph Institute believes in continuing education and being able to practice one's faith while one is incarcerated, and we work to support individuals who are in prisons, jails, state hospitals, and long-term medical care facilities.



Rabbi Vogel's son, Yankel, is reading from the Book of Esther during a visit with inmates.

Volunteer Visits

Currently in the U.S., 2.3 million people are incarcerated, and according to the Post-Gazette, nearly 70,000 are Jewish men and women. In Pennsylvania alone, there are almost 48,000 people incarcerated. In order to mitigate the effects of extremely isolating periods in prison, the Aleph Institute has grown its base of volunteers to over 100 chaplains who visit inmates at local, state and federal jails and prisons. Consistent visits help develop long-standing relationships not only with the inmates, but also with the prison administration who become more receptive to religious accommodations requested by the volunteer chaplains.

Andrew's Story

(name changed to protect privacy)

When Andrew was young, he was raised with many comforts, attended prestigious schools, and even interned for the Clinton administration. He was on a path for success and had a promising future ahead of him. Unfortunately, Andrew was exposed to drugs, became addicted, and began getting into trouble with the law.

Despite this, he eventually moved back to Pittsburgh and was able to secure a job. He came to the Aleph Institute seeking drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, hoping to set his life back on track. However, Andrew continued to struggle with addiction and had many stints in the local county jail for nonviolent shoplifting and petty theft offenses. Eventually, Andrew's addiction spiraled out of control and landed him a prison sentence.

While incarcerated, we continued to work with Andrew to provide him with the religious requirements necessary for him to pray and observe religious holidays. For example, the Aleph Institute provides Passover meals to prisons and jails, which are often in isolated locations across Pennsylvania. To ensure his needs were not ignored, we had volunteer chaplains make bi-monthly visits to check in on Andrew. Being able to observe religious holidays and getting consistent visits from the outside can allow individuals to remain connected to their faith and the larger Jewish community. While acknowledging the small proportion of Jewish men and women who are incarcerated, compared to the rest of the general population, the Aleph Institute's mission is to ensure that every person is deserving of dignity and capable of practicing their faith.

With the help of the Aleph Institute, Andrew is now working to get the necessary tools to become a productive member of society. Ben Khan, a Duquesne law student, worked on a letter to the courts detailing how Andrew's prior crimes were non-violent and how an alternative sentence focused on drug and alcohol rehabilitation would be more beneficial than incarceration in his case. Andrew was eventually granted parole by the courts and has since been working with Yael Saul, a re-entry specialist at the Aleph Institute, on re-integrating into society.

Finding a stable job after release, with a criminal record is challenging enough. While Andrew was incarcerated, technology also rapidly progressed and now most jobs are posted and applied for online. Yael has worked with Andrew in learning how to use a computer, improving his resume, and finding him temporary housing upon release. A home plan outlining where the inmate will stay after incarceration is a minimum requirement for release. Andrew was so hopeful and committed to turning his life around that he would write to the Aleph Institute every two weeks while he was incarcerated, keeping case workers updated on his progress. Yael has tirelessly worked to secure housing for inmates like Andrew after their release, in temporary housing like halfway and quarter houses.

Andrew has also been enrolled in a 12-step program, a nationally proven successful tool for individuals suffering from the ills of dependency. The Aleph Institute hosts a variety of anonymous meetings and Andrew has been a consistent attendee at his rehabilitation and recovery meetings. Working with the individual before, during, and after incarceration shows Aleph's commitment to our clients. The nationwide rate of recidivism is 76% and even higher for individuals who have drug and alcohol dependency issues, but involvement with the Aleph Institute's programs drastically reduces the rate of recidivism down to 8%. Our Executive Director, Rabbi Vogel, is a member of the Pennsylvania Parole Citizens Advisory Committee and continues to advocate for clients, setting them on a path towards becoming productive members of society.

Volunteer Highlight: Samuel Posin

Samuel Posin has been visiting inmates in various jails and prisons for the past nine years. About every three weeks, he makes the trip to two correctional facilities in Ohio and one in West Virginia. Sam first got involved with the Aleph Institute when he passed by the building and went inside to ask about the organization.

Coming from a small town, Sam was seeking stronger support in his faith and wanted to give back to the community. While attending Jewish religious services in Squirrel Hill, he inquired and was presented an opportunity to volunteer with the Aleph Institute. From there, he was trained as a volunteer and began making inmate visits. Sam wanted to teach others the way that his faith has humbled him. Drawing from personal experiences, visiting friends while they were incarcerated was not a foreign concept.

Sam believes the most rewarding aspect of his volunteer work is seeing how much the inmates appreciate him coming. He is excited to see that his visits give them a sense of hope about life beyond incarceration and help them practice their faith properly. Because of how long Samuel has been a volunteer, he has been able to develop bonds with long-term inmates. Not only does he develop years-long relationships with some inmates, but the guards have also developed a trusting relationship with him.

Throughout his long-term service as a volunteer at various facilities, Sam has seen the drastic differences in how various administrations run their institutes. For example, some facilities are slow with kosher meal food requests or refuse to order appropriate food for the religious holidays altogether. Others are much better about making accommodations and rely on the good rapport Samuel has established over the years with the administration.

Sam hopes he can someday make his volunteer work into a career. He truly believes that people can learn from their mistakes and make a positive impact on society with the help of someone they can trust and a sympathetic ear.

Staff Feature: Malka Ringler

Malka Ringler joined the Aleph Institute in August 2019. Her official title is Office Administrator, but her role at Aleph has been integral to the overall operations and day-to-day functions of the organization. Aware of the organization's existence early-on, her family members were actively involved at the Aleph Institute throughout her childhood. Due to her passion to help others, Malka was eager to join Aleph's team.

As the front-desk receptionist, Malka is often the first to interact with potential clients and community members, so her organizational skills and friendly personality are crucial to making guests feel welcome. She ensures mail and phone calls get to the correct people because often clients call with time-sensitive situations, and Malka is on the frontline directing messages to the appropriate parties. Malka also works on a lot of the communications for Aleph including the Torah Weekly and any new updates to the Aleph website, so that community members can stay connected with Aleph Institute events.

Beyond her traditional receptionist duties, Malka is also in charge of cataloguing the extensive Aleph library. Many people who are incarcerated or re-entering society do not have readily available access to religious literature, so Malka works to keep the library organized and up-to-date. For those re-entering the community, having access to appropriate religious texts can be helpful for those wanting to build a stronger connection to their faith. Malka diligently catalogues new books that come in as well as manages the check-in/check-out system so that community members can borrow books in Aleph's library.

Malka feels very fortunate to work at an organization like the Aleph Institute. She says the most rewarding aspect of her job has been the programming at Aleph Institute including providing kiddush packages and Rosh Hashanah dinners for the community. Malka hopes that as she grows with the organization, she will be able to connect with people who do not currently know about Aleph's services and programs that could potentially help their family members and loved ones.

Books and Religious Material

Depending on the duration of a sentence, the time spent while incarcerated can be used in a productive manner to prepare for a life upon release. With the lack of Jewish literature available at various jails and prisons across the state, the Aleph Institute has developed a library that has now grown to include over 4,000 titles of Jewish-themed literature. The extensive catalogue of Jewish books, audio tapes, and video tapes is used by volunteers as educational support tools and these resources are also requested by inmates interested in Jewish literature.

Chesed Mentoring Program

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Volunteer Highlight: Jeremy Lerner

Jeremy Lerner has been a volunteer chaplain for the Aleph Institute for a full year now. As a volunteer, he visits inmates at the Allegheny County Jail about once a week. Moving from Tucson to Pittsburgh about seven years ago, he learned about the Aleph Institute through the community and hoped to make an impactful difference.

“There’s no difference between those who are incarcerated and people who make mistakes. Everyone needs help.” Jeremy believes people are often afraid of people who have been convicted of a crime and not that many people are willing to help. However, he sees the value of making people’s day even just slightly better. Often, incarceration can be an isolating experience, so Jeremy’s visits can make a huge difference in people’s lives while they are in jail or prison. Even inmates who did not list themselves as Jewish are interested in speaking with the chaplain in the hope of possibly converting and, in the meantime, seeing the value of religious guidance during a trying time.

Holiday-Based Programming

Incarceration can be extremely isolating, and the celebration of religious holidays should be for everyone, regardless of their situation. The Aleph Institute works to provide the ritual foods for Passover and Rosh Hashanah to incarcerated individuals. This program has expanded to ensure that incarcerated individuals have access to kosher food, not only on the holidays, and that family members of incarcerated individuals who struggle financially to put food on the table also have access to kosher holiday food. The goal is to ensure that individuals can participate in Judaism and be a part of the community despite being separated from loved ones, in prison, or living in halfway houses or group homes.



Aleph delivers non-perishable Seder Plates to local jails for Passover.

Volunteer Highlight: Brian Miller

Brian Miller has been deeply involved with the Aleph Institute and currently hosts the monthly Shabbat dinner for those re-entering society after incarceration and their family members who have been impacted by incarceration. This gathering of community members is thanks to Brian's efforts in organizing a three-course meal and celebration at the Aleph Institute facility. A testament to the success of Aleph's programming and services, Brian gives back in any way he can.

He has seen and practiced the true meaning of humility in his service. Brian hopes to grow the Shabbat dinners to a larger scale, by holding the dinners more frequently. Brian is also passionate about leading a recovery program one day to help others who are struggling with addiction. He sees the parallel between losing your freedom while incarcerated and losing your freedom while struggling with addiction, so he hopes he can help those struggling with their freedom.

Torah Studies

As a response to the drastic budget cuts in prison education programs during the 90's, the Aleph Institute's Torah Studies program was created, offering a variety of Jewish study material for individuals who are incarcerated and separated from the Jewish community. With the help of institutional chaplains and volunteers, the program currently serves 30 people enrolled in our various courses. A few of the course subjects include foundations of Jewish law, ethics, customs, prayers, and history.

Jewish Burial

If there is no next-of-kin to claim the remains of an inmate who passes away, the prison system will cremate the inmate and bury the ashes. The Aleph Institute has worked to provide proper Jewish burials for inmates or those in long-term medical facilities. Rabbi Wasserman of Shaare Torah also has been of great assistance in this process.

Volunteer Highlight: Michael Leopold

Michael Leopold is a prison chaplain and also helps run the Passover Silver Seder. He has been a volunteer chaplain for about a year now after first being asked to help out by Rabbi Vogel. Michael believes that we have to uncover the potential in every person and that there is a good and universal purpose for everyone. He hopes that the Aleph Institute can equip people with the right tools to live out their true potential and purpose.

Michael has many fond memories from his volunteer work. He remembers an event with many rabbis where one brought a group of formerly incarcerated individuals to join everyone for lunch. Although the groups separated themselves at first, the rabbi forced people to disperse among the crowd and sit with someone they didn't know. He wanted to show that we were all different, yet very similar. Michael remembers another time when he received a hand-made card from one of the people he visits at Rosh Hashanah. Michael also remembers hosting the Seder when an attendee came up to him to let him know that he was only planning to stay for a few minutes but ended up staying the entire time.

These small interactions have really impacted Michael and make him appreciative of his service. As strange as it might sound, Michael hopes that he would never have to see his clients again in the future. His hope is that they get out, successfully re-enter society, and do not end up back in prison to visit with him again.

Dorothy Program

The Aleph Institute created the Dorothy Program in honor of Dorothy, a Jewish woman who lived 87 years in a state mental hospital before passing away without any connection to loved ones or community members. The Dorothy Program is a database of patients in state hospitals, long-term medical facilities, and nursing homes meant to connect volunteers who will visit with patients. With the difficulty of correctly identifying Jews in state hospitals, Rabbi Vogel vowed to make sure another person like Dorothy does not have to spend their life alone and forgotten. The Dorothy Program worked with 18 individuals in this past year.

Volunteer Highlight: Rabbi Shneur Horowitz

Rabbi Shneur Horowitz has been a volunteer with the Aleph Institute for the last two and a half years. Rabbi Horowitz visits with prisoners and patients at the state hospitals near Altoona, Pennsylvania. When he first moved to Altoona, he wanted to be of service to his community and was contacted by Rabbi Vogel to assist with visits in that area of Pennsylvania.

Rabbi Horowitz believes the experience has been incredibly rewarding because even talking with someone from the outside environment can uplift the people he works with. He tries to make his visits a few times every month as he knows how much the visits help prisoners facing long periods of isolation. He echoes sentiments other volunteers have expressed about the difficulty of getting through certain security facilities because of paperwork and other administrative hurdles. Rabbi Horowitz believes that he could see more prisoners during his visits if these obstacles didn't take up so much of visitation time.

Rabbi Horowitz hopes to continue offering his services as much as his schedule permits because he is serving a very niche demographic in Altoona, and he values serving his community.

Volunteer Highlight: Katy Holmes

Katy Holmes is one of Aleph's many volunteers. She first came to the Aleph Institute as a volunteer for the Dorothy Program. The Dorothy Program is dedicated to visiting patients in state hospitals, nursing homes, and other long-term medical facilities. Katy has personal experiences related to the criminal justice system and truly believes that everyone deserves a second chance. "Good people can make a mistake." She was excited to combine her skills from her public health background and her passion for helping people who are often forgotten to make a difference in people's lives.

Over the past year as a volunteer, Katy has mostly visited clients in their nursing homes. She says she loves that she generally works with an older demographic because she appreciates their honesty and how they don't sugar-coat what they say. At first, she saw that people were very suspicious of her, but over time, Katy has built a rapport with many of the people she visits, and they now wait for her in the halls when she's expected to visit. One of her most memorable experiences was when she gifted a Star of David necklace to a pair of clients she's met since her time volunteering at Aleph. Katy saw "their eyes light up" and is glad to help people explore their faith, at any stage of their life.

Katy believes her visits are making a huge difference despite the macro-level, system-level obstacles. One set of clients she works with were forced into a nursing home instead of remaining in their local Jewish community. She believes her visits remind people in these institutions that they matter and are not forgotten members of our community. Katy does not believe that one bad thing should ruin a person's life and feels fortunate to make a small difference in any way she can.

Re-entry and Community Transition Programs

Transitioning back into a community after being incarcerated is often a huge challenge. Difficulty securing housing, employment, and adapting to a more advanced society requires adequate support. The Aleph Institute's caseworkers and programs work towards helping individuals successfully transition back into society with the adequate skills to find a job. Substance abuse is a rampant problem in every community and the Aleph Institute supports individuals and families in working through their dependency issues.

Support Groups

65% of those who are incarcerated struggle with substance abuse and addiction, but only 11% receive treatment. During the past year, the Aleph Institute hosted 12-step programs and other support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous, serving over 9,500 individuals impacted by incarceration and dealing with dependency. The programs operate from 6:45 am to 9:00 pm daily.

Feature Story:

Pittsburgh's Jewish and African American community organizations collaborate to address high crime rates in neighborhoods

Since April 2019, the Aleph Institute has participated in community conversations about trauma associated with the high murder and other crime rates in Pittsburgh. Dr. Bruce Rabin invited Rabbi Vogel to brainstorm ways for Pittsburgh agencies to work together and address problems impacting the local community. Along with community leaders Josh Sayles from the United Jewish Federation, Reverend Trent from Lighthouse Ministries, and Reverend Tim Smith from Center of Life, the organizations met at the Birmingham Foundation to discuss possible solutions.

With years of successfully running its programs, the Aleph Institute identified two initiatives, the Alternative Sentencing Program and the Re-entry Program, that could be expanded beyond the Jewish community to African American communities throughout Pittsburgh. The Alternative Sentencing Program identifies individuals who are eligible for a sentence served through community service and rehabilitation services instead of traditional incarceration. Aleph's Re-entry Program helps clients re-integrate into society after being released from prison.

Over the course of these meetings, the community partners identified five clients eligible for Alternative Sentencing and Re-entry Programs. Those clients have successfully participated in many of the Aleph Institute's services thanks to community organizations referring these clients to Rabbi Vogel. The Aleph Institute hopes to expand its programs throughout Pittsburgh to support ten additional clients over the coming year, in coordination with community partners.

Volunteer Highlight: Dr. Bruce Rabin

Dr. Bruce Rabin is Emeritus Professor at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Rabin joined the University of Pittsburgh in 1972 before retiring in 2017. Dr. Rabin has dedicated his professional life to understanding the immune system and the factors which influence it. He discovered early on that stress – a variable in every person’s life – exerts a profound influence on the human immune system and health. And, from that point forward, his work focused on the effects of stress and the pathways of communication between the brain and the immune system – the mind/body connection.

With a career that has spanned 45 years, Dr. Rabin’s work is widely referenced – from the scientific community to national news to local health care articles; he has been sought out to serve on a number of government panels to advance awareness and promote research in mind-body medicine. His research has yielded more than 300 publications, and his research laboratory has trained over 50 young scientists who are making their own contributions to medicine– which he once described as his single-most significant accomplishment.

Equally important to his research, he has been instrumental in moving science and research to real-world application by developing programs designed to help people identify, learn and adhere to behaviors that will maintain their wellness and lower their risk of developing serious and potentially life-threatening conditions and diseases. Dr. Rabin is applying this information in regularly scheduled stress coping programs he is conducting at Aleph Institute.

Job Training and Assistance

One in four people who have been released from prison is looking for work, but still unable to find a job. The average unemployment rate for individuals who were formerly incarcerated is 27% compared to a national unemployment rate hovering around 3-5%. The risk of re-offending is higher immediately upon release, so the Aleph Institute’s Re-entry Specialist works to help individuals smoothly transition back to society. Volunteers and staff have assisted 20 new individuals during the past year with interview preparation, improving and updating resumes, and learning basic computer skills applicable for a variety of workplaces. The Aleph Institute helped 25 clients secure jobs this year since working with Aleph’s Re-entry Specialist.

Staff Feature: Yael Saul

Yael Saul recently joined the Aleph Institute as a Re-entry Specialist and Volunteer Coordinator. She helps clients who have been incarcerated make an easier transition back into society. Yael helps individuals with a variety of needs like secure housing, improving their resumes, and assisting them in finding a job. Her passion to help people re-integrate into the community is what brought her to the Aleph Institute.

With the tough adjustment of re-integration, some clients have had difficulty committing to meeting times. However, Yael's patience and determination to follow up with her clients has helped many individuals accomplish their goals. "It definitely is not easy for them, they face many challenges, but to see them work hard and succeed is just amazing."

Yael works tirelessly to secure even the most basic needs for clients that many might take for granted. For example, being able to travel around the city to buy groceries, use resources at the library, attend religious services, or get to a job interview is heavily dependent on affordable transportation. Yael has helped clients secure bus passes to accomplish their own daily errands without the financial barrier of the cost of transportation around Pittsburgh.

In her role as a Volunteer Coordinator, she helps organize prison visits and letter/birthday card initiatives to ensure that those who are currently incarcerated are not forgotten. Her role has been vital in ensuring that those who are currently or have been previously incarcerated are treated with dignity and respect. Yael strongly believes that everyone deserves a second chance, no matter what their past is, and she feels lucky to be part of the Aleph Institute.

Religious Counseling

In Pennsylvania, there are nearly 42,000 people under state parole supervision and 1 in 35 adults is on state probation. With this vulnerable population under strict state scrutiny, it is helpful to have religious counseling and support. The Aleph Institute's in-house Rabbi has held over 600 sessions this past year to counsel individuals who need religious guidance when they are struggling with obstacles in their lives.

Volunteer Highlight: Rabbi Yosef Silverman

Rabbi Yosef Silverman has been a volunteer with the Aleph Institute for many years. He visits inmates in the Allegheny County Jail once a week. His commitment to his faith encouraged Rabbi Silverman to seek out ways to help other people and he was eventually connected to Rabbi Vogel at the Aleph Institute. After going to visit inmates a few times, Rabbi Silverman really enjoyed the experience and believed that he was truly making an impact in helping people turn their lives around.

During his visits, Rabbi Silverman meets with inmates at the jail who have identified themselves as Jewish and want to meet with someone from the community. Incarceration can be an isolating and lonely experience, so many inmates are willing to meet with a community religious leader. Even if people have not previously identified themselves as Jewish, Rabbi Silverman meets with anyone at the Allegheny County Jail if they want guidance or simply to feel less alone while they are incarcerated.

While Rabbi Silverman has been a volunteer, he has experienced first-hand the difficulty in being able to visit inmates at the Allegheny County Jail. He hopes that there can be administrative-level changes to reduce the unproductive wait times he often deals with. Getting keyed into an elevator is a difficult, time-consuming process that limits the number of people he can see during each of his visits. Overall, Rabbi Silverman has been an integral part of Aleph's mission and he feels rewarded by bringing blessings into the lives of those who are currently less fortunate.

Medical Care

There is often a lapse in medical coverage from the time a person re-enters society and before Medicaid assistance can start. The Aleph Institute has partnered with the Squirrel Hill Health Center to help two patients this past year with medical conditions -- such as diabetics in need of insulin -- so that they are able to access the medication and care they need.

Volunteer Highlight: Laura Ellman

Laura Ellman is a mental health clinician who provides short-term counseling and referrals for Aleph Institute clients. For the past two years, Laura has supported Aleph's case managers in challenging cases and has been a mentor supporting many clients. Case managers identify potential clients and work with Laura to see if they would need counseling services.

Laura has advocated for a friend who experienced many injustices and challenges while incarcerated. Naturally, she was drawn to the Aleph Institute's mission to serve incarcerated individuals and their family members. She has most enjoyed working with clients and case managers to strategize ways to address unique challenges.

Laura hopes to continue in her capacity as a support person in dealing with constituents' issues. She has been very impressed with the dedication of Rabbi Vogel, the staff, and other volunteers in their support of fellow community members.

Family and Community Programs

The programs and services offered by the Aleph Institute are reflective of the needs of families of incarcerated individuals and the community at large. The Aleph Institute recently received a generous grant to further develop our community programs. We have been able to hire an additional caseworker to support community members in need of services.



Generous support from the Ladies Hospital Aid Society helps to support community families and combat food insecurity.

Project Shifra

Through home visiting and outreach, Shifra serves families in the community that are food-insecure, housing-insecure and coping with a variety of other stressors. Over the past year, 40 families, including 300 children, have benefited from the program. Our new Outreach Specialist, Lisa Knight, is currently serving 57 families, connecting them to needed resources.

Feature Story:

Networks from Pittsburgh to Texas help a constituent settle into her new life

The Aleph Institute and Center of Life in Hazelwood – a community empowerment organization and out-of-school program -- have partnered in advocating for constituents who have struggled – because of their criminal record -- to find jobs. Rachel (her name is changed to protect her privacy), who had a previous DUI conviction, was having difficulty securing employment. With the help of Reverend Tim Smith, the CEO and founder of Center of Life, Rachel was identified as a potential client who could benefit from the help of the Aleph Institute's programs.

With the Aleph Institute's expansive network, Rabbi Vogel was able to accommodate Rachel in her move to Texas to raise her three children as a single mother. The Aleph Institute was able to enroll Rachel into a 12-step recovery program and connect her with a social worker in Texas to ensure that she stays on the right path. With her recent move to a new community, Rachel struggled to find service opportunities that could accommodate her schedule as a busy mother. Through the Chabad Lubavitch Network of various social service agencies and personal networks, Rabbi Vogel was able to connect Rachel with the wife of one of the Rabbis, named Baila. With Baila's help, Rachel found a community service opportunity that would best accommodate her schedule and she has been consistently volunteering for the past few months.

Consistent community involvement and attendance at recovery meetings have made a tremendous impact on Rachel. She has prioritized her role as a mother for her three children and has the support of her new community in Texas. The Aleph Institute and Center of Life are thrilled to see such success from a client they partnered together in working with. Recognizing Rachel's progress, the Aleph Institute has notified the courts of her community service and steps towards recovery, warranting an end to her negative record that has been inhibiting her from moving forward with her life.

Former Staff Feature: Lisa Knight

Lisa Knight is the Aleph Institute's Outreach Specialist in the Shifra program. In her role, she helps community members with housing, food scarcity, finding employment and resume building, and assistance with financial issues, and by connecting people with other resources in the community. Lisa's wide skill set adapts to many situations from challenging family dynamics to providing basic school supplies for children. She is passionate about advocating for people who need a little extra help and believes that Aleph is engaging a community that is underserved.

Lisa draws on eight years of experience as an EMT dispatcher on the front lines of intense and high-pressure situations. She is passionate about engaging youth, as a mother and as a volunteer with children's and teens' programming and addiction advocacy groups in Pittsburgh. She has a bachelor's in social work and Deviance Concentration from California University of Pennsylvania and is currently working on her Master's in Public Administration and Graduate Certificate in Victim Services. Lisa hopes she can bring her previous experiences to her work and is already seeing Shifra's positive impact.

Clothing

With the help of the National Council of Jewish Women-Pittsburgh's Thriftique program, the Aleph Institute has helped seven individuals in financial need or who are being released from prison obtain clothing. This is especially helpful when individuals are re-entering the workforce and need appropriate clothing for work or a job interview.

Former Staff Feature: Amy Ngo

Amy Ngo was the Aleph Institute's first Outreach Specialist working in the Shifra program. She has assisted families with a variety of needs ranging from career counseling, food assistance, and emergency financial assistance for housing. Although she has moved on to another place of work, we are very grateful for the time she spent at the Aleph Institute.

With a technical science background, Amy found a passion in utilizing her skills to advocate for community members. Her close attention to detail and nuanced ways of problem solving have helped many community members recover from a short-term personal setback. Often, unexpected personal matters like a sudden illness or the loss of a job can impact the entire family dynamic. In order to ensure basic necessities like food and shelter, Amy met with clients to identify their temporary needs and then worked to fill those gaps. Through Amy's support and the services provided at the Aleph Institute, she helped many families get back on their feet during a time of need.

Emergency Funding

With the help of the Jewish Family Assistance Fund, the Aleph Institute has helped identify community members in desperate financial need. An unexpected medical diagnosis, a death in the family, or job layoff can set a family back financially. Over the past year, we have worked with seven families in dire circumstances who were eligible for emergency assistance funding.

Volunteer Highlight: Andi Fischhoff

Andi Fischhoff has been a volunteer with the Aleph Institute for about five years. With experience as a development director for a local child abuse prevention organization, Andi primarily assists Aleph with grant writing. She believes in the mission at the Aleph Institute and regularly meets with Rabbi Vogel to discuss ways to bring in additional resources to the organization. Andi's focus on funding has helped other Aleph staff focus their time and efforts on working directly with clients in the community.

Andi's role and contributions have been integral to the operations of the organization. One of the most rewarding aspects of her work is seeing the success of projects that have been brought to fruition over the last several years. Project Shifra, for example, helps families with a variety of needs ranging from food insecurity, housing stability, and employment. Another project is the Alternative Sentencing Program. The program works with local judges to identify an alternative to traditional incarceration, because not all crimes are deserving of prison. The Alternative Sentencing Program allows people to stay with their families, keep a job, and receive support from a faith leader while serving the community. Andi believes that Rabbi Vogel and the Aleph Institute are uniquely well positioned to engage people and their families because they have the trust of the community.

Project Shifra and the Alternative Sentencing Program are just a few of the initiatives the Aleph Institute has been able to expand due to Andi's efforts to bring in additional resources for programming. As successful as these programs are, the next crucial step is getting the word out about these programs. Andi believes that "diverse communities need to know that the Aleph Institute is available to advocate for their loved ones." The challenge is publicity and engaging local judges to advocate for an alternative before sentencing.

Overall, Andi feels very fortunate to be able to support the Aleph Institute in its efforts to help families during their loved ones' incarceration and help people re-connect to the community post-incarceration. She supports Rabbi Vogel's vision and capacity to think creatively about issues impacting the community.

Food

Hunger is a silent, but growing problem in almost every community. Children rely on their school lunch as their only meal of the day and, with the cost of kosher foods slightly higher than that of average groceries, being able to participate in their faith can often be a challenge. The Aleph Institute partnered with Jewish Family and Community Services' Squirrel Hill Food Pantry and 412 Food Rescue to deliver 56 kosher food packages to families in the community during the holiday season. In addition, the Aleph Institute recently purchased a large refrigerator to expand our capacity to store more goods, to serve more community members.



Community volunteers help pack kosher food packages for the busy holiday season.

Feature Story:

The Aleph Institute works with community partners to address food insecurity during the Jewish New Year

During this past Rosh Hashanah holiday, the Aleph Institute partnered with Jewish Family and Community Services' (JFCS) Squirrel Hill Food Pantry and 412 Food Rescue to deliver 56 packages to families in the community. The JFCS Squirrel Hill Food Pantry provides nutritious food along with necessary kosher food for those in the local community and is a great local resource. With the additional help of 412 Food Rescue, a local organization that picks up food that would have gone to waste and distributes it to community members who are food insecure, hundreds of loaves of bread and vegetables were delivered to Aleph's community members.

In order to ensure a proper Jewish New Year for more local families, the Aleph Institute identified families enrolled in the Shifra program who would benefit from these packages of food.

In the future, the Aleph Institute hopes to continue collaborating with JFCS' Squirrel Hill Food Pantry and 412 Food Rescue to identify a way to remove the stigma of being food- insecure and needing assistance. One method to alleviate the stigma identified by Rabbi Vogel is to create an application accessible online or through a smartphone. "Most of our community members have smartphones," and being able to fill out private information in the privacy of their own homes as well as a remote first-time meeting can not only better accommodate schedules, but also take some of the anxiety and shame away from receiving food assistance. Rabbi Vogel believes that making the registration process less intimidating and more convenient will drastically increase the number of participants who are not only now aware of the food pantry, but who are properly making use of this excellent community resource.

Alternative Sentencing Program

As of 2019, Pennsylvania's incarcerated population approached 48,000. Despite the reported decrease in the prison population by 0.5%, there has been a 22.3% increase in spending. The high costs associated with incarceration can be attributed to housing non-violent and first-time offenders with a relatively low risk to public safety in jails and prisons. Often, these offenders do not require secure confinement. Traditional incarceration can often lead to long-term adverse impacts on the individual and their families due to unemployment, poverty, fractured family dynamics, and neglected children. Therefore, the Aleph Institute's Alternative Sentencing Program works with the courts to develop an individualized restorative program for non-violent first-time offenders in lieu of traditional expensive and debilitating incarceration.

The benefits to alternative sentencing are two-fold.

First, offenders, their families, and their community benefit from the individual keeping their job to support their families, volunteering for the community, and receiving counseling and support services from the Aleph Institute. While an individual remains in the community, they will receive a range of services provided by the Aleph Institute. Our services are often a part of the individual alternative sentencing plan which can include attending anonymous rehabilitation meetings for addictive behaviors, counseling and support groups with religious leaders, and various education and job training programs. Addressing the root cause of addictive behaviors and preserving family and community bonds can help drastically lower recidivism rates.

Second, alternative sentencing saves costs in the short- and long-term. The annual cost of traditional incarceration in Pennsylvania was \$42,727 in 2015. Comparatively, alternative sentencing programs can produce potential savings of \$97 billion across the U.S. In addition, the focus on rehabilitation and strengthening community ties ensures successful re-entry for first-time offenders and aims to prevent re-offending, which would cost taxpayers much more in the long run to continuously house these repeat offenders in prisons and jails.

The ASP was initially a pilot project serving 10 eligible clients in various stages of the alternative sentencing process. There are currently 18 individuals enrolled in the program. All participants are currently employed and those without a substance abuse problem have strong success rates of keeping their family unit intact. The results have been so promising, and endorsed by judges on the Pennsylvania court, that there are plans to work with Center of Life in Hazelwood to expand the program to other communities throughout Pittsburgh. Rabbi Vogel was recently appointed to the Judicial Merit Selection Committee for Pennsylvania to help select administrative judges who could impact the future of the state's criminal justice judiciary.



Rabbi Vogel speaking to Pitt Law's Prisoner Legal Support Project group about the Aleph Institute. Law student interns help clients in the Alternative Sentencing Program.

Former Staff Feature: Vanessa Nael

Vanessa Neel recently joined the Aleph Institute as a Reentry Specialist, helping clients make a seamless transition back into society. She earned her Master of Science in Education for Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Duquesne University. Vanessa hopes to continue her passion of helping others and serving as an advocate. She feels grateful to be serving Aleph's mission.

Feature Story:

Pilot Parole Waiver Program in Pittsburgh

Rabbi Vogel was put into contact with a man named Robert (name has been changed to protect privacy) who was seeking help concerning a warrant for his arrest issued 15 years ago that has kept him from pursuing many opportunities in his life. Robert violated parole many years ago and has been paralyzed by the fear of going to prison if he ever had to pass a background check for a new job. Rabbi Vogel agreed to help Robert, desperate to re-join the workforce, with his situation.

Robert was put in contact with an Aleph case manager and began working on an Alternative Sentencing Plan. Rabbi Vogel is involved with the parole board of Pennsylvania and heard about a Harrisburg program that would waive warrants for parole violations. Rabbi Vogel decided to work with the Citizens Advisory Committee in Pennsylvania to establish a pilot program in Pittsburgh. Robert will be the first client under this new program and will present an alternative sentencing plan to the courts in order to waive his outstanding warrant. The hope is that Robert can re-join society as a productive member without this hanging over him the rest of his life.

Robert is scheduled to continue working with the Aleph Institute in getting his life back on track after a 15-year delay and has plans to seek employment once his waiver is finalized.

Chaplain's Conference

The Annual Chaplain's Conference is a two-day event that brings together chaplains and rabbis from across Pennsylvania who are involved in the federal, state, and local prisons. Prison visits can be a new and challenging experience, but the conference provides a refresher course in best practices for working with incarcerated individuals. In addition to the training provided to all Aleph volunteers, the conference brings together a community of advocates to centralize a cohesive network of information regarding re-entry programs, security updates, and new regulations impacting the prisons.



The 2019 Chaplain's Conference hosted community members to speak about their work and experience with the criminal justice system impacting incarceration.

Volunteer Highlight: Rabbi Brian Idell

Rabbi Brian Idell has been serving as a chaplain for the Aleph Institute for almost five years. When he first moved into the Pittsburgh community, he was contacted by Rabbi Vogel to assist with visiting inmates in prison. Though Rabbi Idell did not have prior experience working with the criminal justice system, he found the work very rewarding and believed he was truly making an impact on people's lives.

For the past few years, Rabbi Idell spends 7-8 hours on Sunday at one location visiting inmates and then spends 3-4 hours at another facility every other week. During this time, he meets with both Jewish inmates and anyone interested in speaking with a religious community leader. Rabbi Idell always feels guilty when he cannot make one of his visits. "I try to have a very relaxing atmosphere where people can reveal who they really are and open up." He knows his visits are often the only few hours the inmates have in their week when they can talk safely with someone. Regardless of the reason they are incarcerated, Rabbi Idell wants people to understand that everyone makes mistakes and people who are incarcerated are still human.

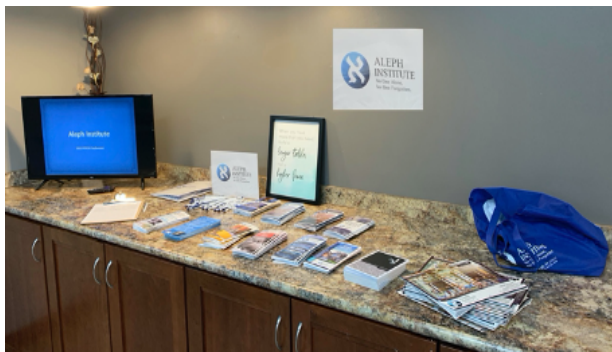
The most rewarding aspect of working with Aleph has been developing a rapport with the people and seeing how they apply Judaism to develop spiritually and move towards a path of being a better member of society. Despite the administrative obstacles that take up about 20% of his time during his visits, Rabbi Idell hopes to continue working and growing with the Aleph Institute. He hopes in the future to develop a program that Aleph can implement across all state jails and prisons to leave his mark in the community.



The Aleph Institute honors the legacy of long-time volunteer and board member Fred Landay, during the Fred Landay Garden naming ceremony.

Annual Symposium

The Annual Symposium hosted by the Aleph Institute seeks to bring awareness about issues impacting the Jewish community; complex family dynamics, financial stress, and unhealthy coping mechanisms are entrenched in every community. The goal is to open a dialogue about tough topics. In addition, the symposium has been recognized as a community event for secular organizations and community advocates passionate about humanizing incarcerated individuals.





Community members network and learn about other available resources in Pittsburgh.

Former Staff Feature: Meghan Brown

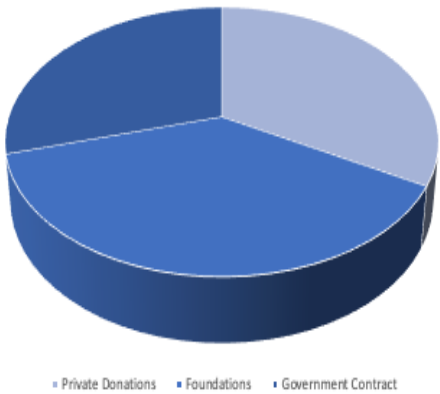
Meghan Brown was a Program Development Intern for the Aleph Institute, introduced to the Aleph Institute at a Public Service Career Fair at Carnegie Mellon University. Meghan was excited to bring her background in criminology to her work. In her role, she helped draft grant proposals for state and local foundations to expand the Aleph Institute's programming. She enjoyed her semester-long internship so much that Meghan decided to extend her internship into the summer.

With her experience working in a law firm for a few years and the Public Defender's Office in North Carolina, Meghan was most excited about working on the Alternative Sentencing Program and getting involved in prison reform work. Meghan was amazed at all of the connections that Rabbi Vogel had. She was able to sit in on many meetings with community leaders from all around Pittsburgh and appreciates Rabbi Vogel for accommodating her specific interests during the internship.

As the organization grows in the future, Meghan hopes that some of the projects she worked on or helped develop will come to full fruition in the future. She says that it is very rewarding to see the physical result of a housing grant or funding for an afterschool study space, after she had tirelessly worked on it in hopes of approval. In addition, Meghan's most valued experience at the Aleph Institute is the Symposium hosted in the spring. It was a great opportunity to bring together many community leaders and organizations which can be used as a catalyst for a coalition of really impactful people in the local community.

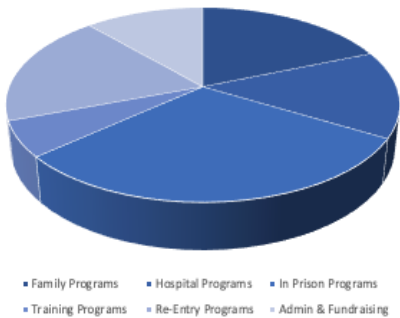
Financials – 2019

Revenues



Private Donations.....	\$145,774.56
Foundations/Grants.....	\$165,434.85
Government Contracts.....	\$129,539.41
Total	\$440,748.82

Expenses



EXPENSES

No One Alone and No One Forgotten;

Family Programs	\$76,450.67
Hospital Programs	\$58,764.21
In prison programs	\$122,568.74
Training Programs	\$23,745.96
Re-Entry Programs	\$76,451.23
General admin & Fundraising	\$47,259.71
Total	\$405,240.52



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Aleph Institute is grateful to all of our donors and supporters.





Thank You

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The Aleph Institute



Sukkot

SURFERS

Surfing is a popular sport for the beachgoers. The following are the surfers who are competing in the 1978-79 season. The surfers are listed by their names, their ages, and their surfboards.

Name	Age	Surfboard
John Smith	22	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Mike Jones	25	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Tommy Brown	28	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Steve White	30	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Paul Black	32	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Chris Green	35	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
David Grey	38	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Robert Hall	40	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
William King	42	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
James Lee	45	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Richard Miller	48	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Charles Moore	50	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Joseph Parker	52	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Thomas Scott	55	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
George Taylor	58	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Frank Walker	60	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Albert Young	62	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"
Harold Ziegler	65	10'6" x 21" x 1 1/2"

The surfers are competing in the 1978-79 season. The surfers are listed by their names, their ages, and their surfboards.

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אלו דברים These are the precepts that have no
prescribed measure: the corner of a
field (which must be left for the poor),
the pilgrimage, acts of kindness, and

Sukkot

What is a joyride? For younger boys, who are not yet old enough to be considered "adults," it is a ride in a car. For the original People of Menominee, it was a ride in a canoe. The Greatmen of the Menominee were the only ones who were allowed to take a ride in the "Clay Boat of Glory." Only men there alone. The Greatmen of the Menominee were the only ones who were allowed to take a ride in the "Clay Boat of Glory." Only men there alone. The Greatmen of the Menominee were the only ones who were allowed to take a ride in the "Clay Boat of Glory." Only men there alone.

a "four kinds" during the day

...the twelve dimes on the first night, is well-known, the descending, every organ and key is called to take the really royal of Torah reading, and begins d'neim.

THE SPIRITUAL SEARCH FOR THE LIVING LIGHT TROUBADOUR
ARTIST AND REMEMBRANCE
EXCUSE ME 30: 40

26 As for the Taborians, make it of ten strips of cloth, make these of fine, substantial linen, of black, purple, a golden green, with a design of abbeys marked into the

2. When the same is
shown in the same manner as in the first case, the same is shown in the same manner as in the first case.

[illegible]

The second stage of the paper market took place in 1940. Although the price of paper had not fallen as much as in the 1930s, it was still lower than in the 1920s. It had been an extremely strong rise in the 1930s, and the price of paper had been high. It had been an extremely strong rise in the 1930s, and the price of paper had been high. It had been an extremely strong rise in the 1930s, and the price of paper had been high.

THE LORD speaketh by Moses: See, I have spoken unto thee secretly before all the people of Israel; saying, Thou shalt be holy to me, thou shalt be my sanctuary.

gavorah

The Moorish remains up to the palace, the
branched candelabra that was in the Holy Sepulchre
light that it sheds stands for the brightness of the Torah.
Signs of the past have been in every corner of the city
where the Jewish people lived. And every day the
passenger sees a copy of the Torah, and a copy of the
Mishnah and the Talmud, and a copy of the
Zohar and the Shulchan Aruch, and a copy of the
Mishnah Berurah, and a copy of the Shema Yisrael
and a copy of the Shema Yisrael, and a copy of the
Shema Yisrael, and a copy of the Shema Yisrael.

over burning lamp reminiscent of that of the Taboracle and the Temple in Jerusalem.

24 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Command the Israelites to bring you a pair of blue donkeys for lifting the binding lamps regularly. The pair of donkeys shall stand up in the tent of meeting outside the screen of the door of the tent of meeting before the LORD regularly; it is a law for all time. It shall be for you and your sons and your brothers forever."

ORD [to burn]

[illegible]

LORD.

JERUSALEM (Yerushalayim): Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles), beginning 4 days after the 7-day holiday recalls how Moses (Moshe) the Children of Israel dwelled in tents. "Sukkot" is they left Egypt to wander in the desert. Observant families have meals and services in built, highly decorated yet simple huts, located in one's own or in public places. Sukkot is also a

THE ALE

Festival and thus an agricultural and kibbutz favorite. In ancient times, the harvest of Sukkot was the most important of the annual pilgrimages destined to Jerusalem. On the first and last day of Sukkot, Sukkoth-like celebrations are

* **Simhat Torah** : As Sukkot ends, Jews rejoice that they have the Torah (the Law); street festivals - festivities in synagogues and all over mark this day. On Simhat Torah, readers read the final verses of the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), a custom known as **Maftir**.

Jerusalem is the city which miraculously
transforms may into pilgrims; no one can enter
it and remain unchanged. - Elie Wiesel

sings, I am the harp.

SUKKOT
Agricultural Time

Each of the three major Jewish pilgrimages—Pesach (Passover)—Shavuot (Week of Weeks)—and Sukkot (Festival of Tabernacles)—are connected with the Jewish calendar of planting agricultural crops such as wheat and barley. Sukkot is the Jewish festival of the harvest of the grain. It is a time of rejoicing in the harvest and a time of giving thanks to God for the bounty of the harvest. It is a time of giving thanks to God for the bounty of the harvest. It is a time of giving thanks to God for the bounty of the harvest.

C. H. L. F.

When I pointed the grapes on the painting to the left, I was told that I was pointing to the fruit of the land, and that was a very good thing. I was told that I was pointing to the fruit of the land, and that was a very good thing. I was told that I was pointing to the fruit of the land, and that was a very good thing.

From the tribe of Judah, Caleb son of -
Jephthah (Numbers 13:6) -
From the tribe of Ephraim, Hazkiah son -
of Nun (Numbers 13:8) -

[illegible]

...because of the danger that the ...

- and down there. (Memphis 13:22-23)

- Even in the Talmud says that the fruit of the land was quite large. Since there were giants in the land. It was the land of milk and honey. And in the

Even praying for the time
of Heaven on Earth—of G

Agricultural Time

His two months are olive harvest;
His two months are planting grain;
His two months are sowing plantings;
His month is hoeing up of Flax;
His month is harvest of barley;
His month is wheat harvest and treading;
His month is vintage and vine treading.

His month is summer fruit (figs)
— Jewish Calendar
tenth century B.C.E.

Equally significant are the post-Biblical Babylonian-derived names of the Hebrew month still in use today. For lack of writing space, I can only list and show one Jewish Calendar month as an

AV. Named after the wood and made from it

a. erected
b. in place

— Pinkei d' Rabbi Eliezer &
RAIN
Rabbi Eliezer said: "When the rain comes, it is a sign that the world is about to be destroyed." — Talmud, Berachot 35b
Rabbi Eliezer said: "When the rain comes, it is a sign that the world is about to be destroyed." — Talmud, Berachot 35b
Rabbi Eliezer said: "When the rain comes, it is a sign that the world is about to be destroyed." — Talmud, Berachot 35b

day of the Fair.

[10] the termination of the last day of
 Tabernacles; all watched the sunset, the peo-
 ple. [11] it indicated towards the increased beauty
 of the land, then [12] that the year's crop was
 in beauty and the crops would flourish. [13] the
 people the sun, the year was indicated and
 the people rejoiced because [14] that was, indicating that
 that the year's crop would be mainly and the people

...the west, ...

RAIN/WATER

Several religious ceremonies place emphasis on the use of water. The Subbotnik is the time of the Temple. Featured Subbotniks are: Shovelvok (The great and joyful festival of the Water Carrier) and Rosh mshahon (the beginning of the year). Rosh mshahon also became the occasion for the Tashel ceremony, where once Shins are symbolically cast on the water.

Water Drawing Festival

During the Shukran morning service at St. Michael's in Jerusalem (ESQ 8.1.1), a special chalice of water was used along with the customary wine. It is available also at Mass along the Jordan River, but some Shukran concelebrants insisted that water be used in Palestine. In Israel, the water-labron symbolizes the rain. Today the annual ceremony is offered at the Jordan River, but many understand that the bread and wine were poured on the Jordan River, not the Jordan Sea.

