



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



2017

Annual  
Report



# Message from our Leadership

2017 was a challenging year. Despite the efforts of government officials in Pennsylvania to lower incarceration levels, we actually saw more arrests, indictment and sentencing. Our population at the Allegheny County Jail has risen tenfold. The opioid epidemic has impacted the Jewish community and more programs and services are needed in the community to counteract this severe crisis.

At a citizen's review meeting of the Pennsylvania Parole, which I co-chair, we were informed that 100% of those on parole were suffering from one form of addiction or another, a significant increase attributed to the opioid problem.

I lost a dear personal friend and partner, Dr. Barry Lembersky who, for the past 15 years, had become a valuable spokesman for the good work of Aleph Institute. Despite his hectic schedule at UPMC Hillman and his speaking commitments around the world, he spent many hours every year at Aleph Institute, helping to guide Aleph to where we are today. Barry passed away during Passover, a holiday which, because of his support, thousands of people in the prison system and those at Aleph Institute had the opportunity and resources to be able to celebrate.

Despite these challenges, we continue to make a difference in the community.

Our Alternative Sentencing proposals were accepted by the US court and in those cases, the individuals remained at home, paying the penalty for their criminal activity in healthier ways than prison, without the harmful (destructive) effects of incarceration. For that we say thank you to our Chief US Justice for Western PA, the Honorable Judge Joy Flowers Conti and her Chief of Probation Belinda Ashley, for becoming partners and joining us in developing creative sentences.

Our re-entry programs at Aleph Institute are growing and helping many; those we work with after their release from prison are benefiting from our programs and are leading productive lives. One young man even had his professional license restored, a significant milestone.

In 2017, thousands entered the doors of Aleph Institute and

received guidance, strength and support (both financial and emotional) from our in-house programs and services. We visited thousands more, for the Jewish holidays and on a regular basis, those in prison and those in state hospitals and group homes.

Through our partnerships and affiliations with other agencies, we are providing help to many in the community, many who have no connections to the penal system (such as our partnership with 412 Food Rescue, and our partnership with Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS) and Women's Center and Shelter).

Aleph Institute in 2017 reached many people, reflecting our motto 'No One Alone and No One Forgotten.' The feeling of loneliness, especially when battling addiction or crisis of any kind, can be devastating. Our open doors, our support groups and counseling services bring hope and life to many.

We provide these programs with the help of our volunteers and partners, you who donate and enable us to have our lights on and our programs available to those who need us. To you, I say thank you for partnering in 2017 and we look forward to reaching many more in 2018, together with your continued support and help.

With blessings,



Rabbi M. M. Vogel  
President/CEO



Marty Davis,  
Chairman of the Board

Aleph Institute programs are divided into five categories: the In-Prison Programs, Re-Entry Programs, Family Programs, Community Programs and the Dorothy Programs.

## In Prison Programs

### *Volunteer Visits*

There are over 2.3 million individuals incarcerated in the US, including approximately 70,000 Jewish men and women. The majority may come to holiday services; however, they may have unaddressed needs during the rest of the year. Over 98% of those who are incarcerated will leave prisons eventually. It is, therefore, imperative that Aleph's more than 100 volunteers make regular visits to these individuals and create trusting relationships with them. Aleph Institute has developed a comprehensive re-entry program, one which has proven to lower recidivism from the national average of 76% to 8%.

### *Aleph Library*

During the past ten years, Aleph Institute has developed a library at our center, which is connected through the inter-library exchange to libraries in every prison, every state hospital and long-term medical facility. This library provides an opportunity for inmates and patients to read Jewish-themed literature and use their time wisely and effectively. The library currently has over 4,000 holdings and has been, and continues to be, a valuable resource to incarcerated individuals who would otherwise have very limited access to such materials. In addition, the library houses hundreds of videos, providing the Rabbi or lay volunteer the tools to enhance their presentations in the prisons.



### *Books and Religious Materials*

In 2017 Aleph Institute reprinted the Aleph Handbook, a 101-page booklet containing information on Jewish laws and customs. This book (which had been out of print for many years) was widely received and appreciated, both by Jewish men and women who are incarcerated, and by the staff who work closely with Jewish inmates.

In addition, in 2017 we saw an increase in demand for our 'Torah

Weekly' a two-sided informational publication about the Torah portion of the week and Jewish holyday laws and customs. These newsletters are printed at many prisons and distributed by the institutions; for other institutions they are printed at Aleph's office and distributed by the volunteers.



*Dr. Bruce Rabin at the Aleph Institute Symposium*

In 2017 hundreds of religious books were distributed to incarcerated men and women who requested them. Holiday brochures were also printed and distributed for those who were incarcerated, their families, and those in re-entry facilities (half-way houses, group homes etc.) and under parole (at their own home).

Aleph Institute printed beautiful, multi-colored Jewish calendars for the men and women who are incarcerated, their families and for those in re-entry. These calendars are designed to reflect the many challenges and obligations of the Jewish inmate who wishes to celebrate the holidays and fulfill her or his religious duties (for example, to observe a fast day the inmate is required to submit paperwork over a month in advance).

### ***Chesed Mentoring Program***

The Aleph Chesed Mentoring program in 2017 continued to grow. Jewish men and women who are incarcerated benefit from a mentor providing guidance, emotional support, and a sounding board as they transfer from incarceration, through re-entry, to freedom. In a 2013 study by the HOPE Foundation at the Allegheny County Jail (with which Aleph Institute works, providing Jewish programming and services at the Jail), mentoring was associated with a significant reduction in recidivism. The mentoring program provides one-on-one support, as opposed to the less intensive "Volunteer Visits" (described above) which provide group programming.

# Re-Entry Programs

## ***Holiday-Based Programs***

With prisons located in remote locations, and even in the Jail in downtown Pittsburgh, the task of finding kosher food with which to celebrate Jewish holidays can be challenging. Aleph Institute distributes kosher food for Rosh Hashanah and Passover. Our order forms for Passover 2018 were distributed in November 2017, giving the institutions sufficient time, as the paperwork flows from the Chaplain to food services and, ultimately, the warden of the prison. For Passover 2017 we shipped over 2,000 pounds of matzo, hundreds of jars of gefilta fish, 300 cans of macaroons, 140 cases of prepared meals.

## ***Torah Studies***

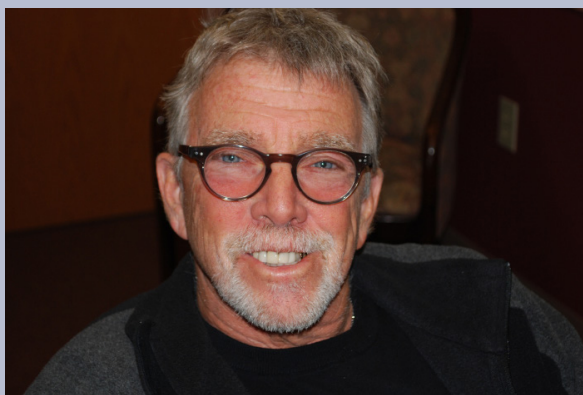
The Aleph Torah Studies program provides inmates the opportunity to take one of 14 Judaic courses, giving the individual a certificate upon completion. The program supports the individual's desire to become a better person, connect more with his or her religion, and establish a positive path post-incarceration. This year the Torah Studies program saw 30 individuals taking at least one of the courses. These courses require a volunteer to review the tested material, working with the prison's clergy to oversee the testing, etc. We receive assistance from some of the institutions' Rabbis who oversee and work with the students as they study the material.



*Dr. Zigmond, lectured at Aleph 2017 Conference*

## Mission

The Aleph Institute is a not-for-profit Jewish religious, educational, and humanitarian organization serving the Jewish community. We offer a multitude of services to Jewish men and women confined and their families, focused on the premise that “no Jew is forgotten” and that “no Jew is alone.”



*Mike Pasternak, discussed addiction at Aleph Chaplains Conference*

## Vision

Aleph Institute is a beacon of hope for those who are incarcerated, their families and those returning to society by compassionately guiding people to becoming productive members of society, where the inherent value of each person is cherished, and opportunities abound.

## ***Jewish Burial***

Every Jewish person deserves a Jewish burial in a Jewish cemetery. Unfortunately, without a next-of-kin willing to claim the remains of an inmate who has passed away, the prison system will cremate the inmate and bury the ashes. The Aleph Institute will act as the next-of-kin for these inmates, ensuring that someone will give them the final Judaic dignity they deserve. Unfortunately, in 2017 we had three inmates pass away in prison. Rabbi Vogel was named next-of-kin in those cases and handled the necessary arrangements.

### **Shmuel**

Shmuel (not his real name) is a graduate of a Jewish day school in Pittsburgh. He spent two years in college; however, during college he began using drugs... nothing serious like heroin, but opioids, pills usually found at home in the medicine cabinet. However, all that changed in November, 2016, when Shmuel was found by the Butler County police in a car, passed out over the steering wheel. Thank G-d for Narcan, he was revived. Shmuel was arrested and taken into the Butler County Jail. Rabbi Vogel, who serves as Rabbi at the local county jails near Allegheny County, was called, both by the family and by the Chaplain's office (every jail has a chaplain's office which oversees religious programming at that facility). He visited Shmuel a few times, and then worked with the attorney and presented a plan to the court, so that Shmuel would receive the necessary support for his drug addiction and assistance in the community as he began to rebuild his shattered life.

Shmuel went through a three-month drug program at a Gateway affiliate and then, upon completion, met with the Aleph Re-entry Rabbi (Rabbi Chayim Friedman) on a weekly basis. He attended the support groups at Aleph, as well as the 12-step programs, and was helped to find employment in the community.

Today, just over a year later, Shmuel is still employed and, with many supports, he is a member of the community and is doing well.





*Estelle Comay, Aleph Board Member*

## **Job Placement**

Upon leaving prison, for over 90% of individuals the most important challenge is finding employment; finding employment can be difficult for college graduates, but it is an enormous challenge for those seeking to enter the workforce with a felony. Employers fearful of liability, and with a broad array of potential employees without any criminal record, usually steer away from hiring anyone with a criminal record. With stable employment, the individual is well on the way to a successful re-entry. At Aleph Institute, we assisted 11 men and women in 2017 with obtaining employment. We do this with the help of Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS)' Career Development Center, and many kind business people who continue to help by providing employment to those in need.



*Fruit and vegetables being distributed at Aleph Institute*

# Community Transition Programs

## ***Religious Counseling***

With over 3.9 million people on probation and parole in the US, there is a critical need for support to these individuals. Often, parole agents will have over 60 cases per parole officer, not allowing them the time or resources to be an effective guide, in many cases. The Aleph Institute's in-house Rabbi is a vital part of the re-entry process. The Rabbi meets twice a week, individually and with a group, providing support, counsel and guidance in this most tumultuous time of a person's life. In 2017 the Rabbi held 732 sessions at Aleph, guiding and supporting those in crisis. The gratitude and appreciation of these individuals is so meaningful, as they begin a healthy chapter in their lives.

## ***Medical Care***

As inmates leave prison, some have medical needs that cannot wait the six-to-eight weeks it takes for Medicaid or Medical Assistance to be activated. Diabetics may require insulin within hours of being released, and without any forewarning of their release, this makes for a challenging experience. The Aleph Institute partners with the Squirrel Hill Health Center to make the necessary arrangements so that patients can receive the medication and care they need immediately. In 2017 three clients received these services.

## ***Food***

Food stamps and other welfare benefits may take weeks to arrange and the Squirrel Hill Food Pantry (a JFCS program) has been very helpful in providing food until the government benefits begin.

## Jonathan

Jonathon (not his real name) is a respected member of the Jewish community in Squirrel Hill. He is married with four children, he is an accomplished lawyer, and is expecting to be made a partner in his law firm in 2018. However, in early 2017 Jonathon faced a crisis; the internet had lured him (as it does millions of others) and he began a downward spiral. At the advice of his Rabbi, he met with Rabbi Vogel who provided him with a plan which included weekly 12-step meetings at Aleph Institute. Aleph's support has, in Jonathon's words, saved him, saved his marriage, and saved his children from what could have been a catastrophic future. Although separated for a few months, the family unit is whole now and, as his wife, Susan (not her real name) told Rabbi Vogel in December 2017, "our family unit is one and better than before -- thank you, Aleph, for being there in our time of need."

## Support Groups and Meetings

### **Support groups**

With over 60% of those on probation or parole suffering from some form of addiction, Aleph Institute's hosting of many 12-step programs is a vital tool for recovery. Aleph opens at 6:45 am daily and closes at 9:00 pm, opening the doors to hundreds of men and women every week who find these support groups essential in order to become a productive member of the community. In 2017, 9,762 individuals participated in support group meetings.

# Family and Community Programs

## ***Clothing***

Thriftique – a program of the National Center of Jewish Women-Pittsburgh – has helped Aleph Institute distribute clothing to individuals released from incarceration who have nothing. In 2017 Aleph distributed clothing to 11 individuals in need.

## ***Emergency Funding***

For over twenty years, the Jewish Family Assistance Fund has been working with Aleph Institute to provide funding for housing. In 2017, 15 individuals re-entering society without any resources were provided a month's rent and financial support for their immediate, urgent needs.

## ***Job Training and Assistance***

For many returning to the community, the changed and changing world adds another challenge, in that the overwhelming majority of jobs are posted electronically. Men and women served by Aleph may have spent years or decades without access to a computer. Knowledge of basic internet use is expected by a majority of employers. At Aleph Institute, we provided training to 25 men and women in 2017, helping them with email, basic computer use, internet use, and job search strategies.

## ***Community Programs***

In the first quarter of 2017, Aleph Institute signed a partnership with 412 Food Rescue, which began providing financially-struggling families in the community with fresh fruit and vegetables. Special arrangements were made for both Passover and Rosh Hashanah/Sukkot, when thousands of pounds of food were made available to those in need (kosher food can cost 30% more than non-kosher food). As one recipient, Leibish (not his real name), told Rabbi Vogel one Friday night at shul, "We have not had fresh fruit or vegetables at our table since I lost my job -- thank you for making this available."



*Rabbi Larry Heimer, at the Aleph 2017 Conference*

### Shifra Program

Jennifer (not her real name) struggles with her lot in life. Larry, her ex-husband (not his real name) spent most of 2017 in and out of jail and state hospital; unfortunately, this was not his first time in prison. He has a long history at the Allegheny County Jail. Jennifer and Larry have four children who are suffering the devastating effects that children with a parent in prison often suffer from.

Samantha, Aleph's outreach staff member, helped Jennifer get the children to and from jail visits, and Samantha worked with Jennifer to connect her children with therapeutic resources in the community.

A grant from the Opportunity Fund and funding from Allegheny County Department of Human Services made this collaboration among Aleph, JFCS, and Women's Center and Shelter possible. Shifra has proven to be a tremendous asset for the community, providing women and children with essential services to strengthen families and prevent child abuse.





Joy Flowers Conti  
Chief Judge

**United States District Court**  
Western District of Pennsylvania  
5250 U.S. Post Office & Courthouse  
700 Grant Street  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219

Telephone: (412) 208-7330  
Fax: (412) 208-7337

January 15, 2015

Allegheny Health and Human Services

Re: Letter of Support for the Concept Paper  
submitted by the Aleph Institute

Dear Sir or Madam,

During the last year our Probation Office, with the support of my court, initiated a program to identify community resources to assist in the reentry of federal ex-offenders in the Western District of Pennsylvania. The impetus for this program was a meeting with Rabbi Vogel, the Executive Director of the Aleph Institute. When we learned about the services to the ex-offender offered by the Aleph Institute we concluded that having those services available to federal ex-offenders would be beneficial. The expansion of the Aleph Institute's programming, which is envisioned by the proposal it submitted to you, would help many ex-offenders who opt to participate in those programs.

With the increasing number of individuals who are incarcerated and the decreasing budget for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, our court needed to identify community programs to support the successful reentry of ex-offenders into our community. The community's safety is enhanced by programs like those offered and proposed to be offered by the Aleph Institute. I wholeheartedly support the concept paper it submitted to you. If you have any questions, please call me at 412-208-7330.

Very truly yours,

  
Joy Flowers Conti  
Chief U.S. District Judge

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
**WESTERN DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA**  
**Probation and Pretrial Services Office**

**Belinda M. Ashley**  
Chief U.S. Probation Officer

**John A. Poglinco**  
Deputy Chief U.S. Probation Officer

**Demetrius L. Hatley**  
Assistant Deputy Chief U.S. Probation  
Officer



700 Grant Street  
Suite 3330  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
Telephone: 412-395-6907  
Fax: 412-395-4864

January 13, 2015

Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel  
Aleph Institute  
5804 Beacon Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15217

**RE: Letter of Support**

Greetings, Rabbi Moishe Vogel;

The U.S. Probation Office is committed to facilitating long term positive change in defendants and offenders through proactive interventions including reentry services. Our approach has been to embrace and partner with community agencies that are striving to reintegrate individuals returning to their communities to become productive citizens. With over 18 years of experience in the U.S. Probation Office, I relocated to Pittsburgh in 2011 where I have continued to broaden my impact by joining with community leaders in providing re-entry services. Within a short time of my arrival, I met Rabbi Vogel and became aware of the great work of the Aleph Institute.

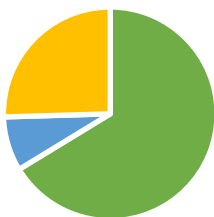
For the past several months, I have met with Rabbi Vogel in planning for an alternative sentencing program in the U.S. Courts. Needless to say, there is great excitement surrounding the prospect of positively impacting recidivism and incarceration rates by increasing resources and providing a continuum of care to this population. We wholly support this proposal and look forward to working with Rabbi Vogel as this program materializes.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Belinda Ashley  
Chief U.S. Probation Officer

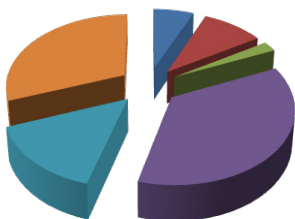
# Financials – 2017



Foundations/Grants  
 Government Contracts  
 Private Donations

## REVENUES

Private Donations.....	\$216,003.69
Foundations/Grants.....	\$26,868.46
Government Contracts.....	\$82,982.18
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$325,854.33</b>



■ 1 General Adm. / Fundraising  
 ■ 2 Family Programs  
 ■ 3 State Hospital Programs  
 ■ 4 In Prison Programs  
 ■ 5 Training Programs  
 ■ 6 Re-Entry Programs

## EXPENSES

No One Alone and No One Forgotten;

Family Programs .....	\$28,378.68
Hospital Programs .....	\$36,774.26
In prison programs .....	\$114,521.53
Training Programs (Rabbis & Volunteers) .....	\$26,201.72
Re-Entry Programs .....	\$86,287.07
General admin & Fundraising .....	\$42,606.25
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$319,769.51</b>



## Community Support

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







# Thank You

## OUR SUPPORTERS

AAbrams, Richard and Marilyn  
Adelkoff, Steven  
Anouchi, Abraham and Patricia  
Ash, Harry  
Askin, C. Daniel and Ronna  
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Bursin, David  
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Dinkin, Elliot and Laura  
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Eisner, Milton and Sandra  
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Fisher, Stephen and Maxine  
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Friedman, Manis and Chana  
Friedman, Mordechai & Chaya  
Friedman, Nisson  
Friedman, Shlomo and Bracha  
Gallagher, Kathleen  
Garrett, Jeffrey and Bloom, Elana  
Gefsky, Arnold and Adrien  
Glasser, Sondra and Richard  
Glosser, William  
Goldberg, Benjamin and Marline  
Goldman, James and Susan  
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Goldstein, Morton and Racelle  
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Goodman, Mark  
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 Miller, Marcia  
 Mindful Ohio  
 Minsky, Robert  
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 Moritz, Donald and Janet  
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 Mositas, Cynthia  
 Mustin, Rona  
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 Ostrow, Douglas, Nancy, and Molly  
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Small, Levi  
Small, Mitchell  
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Sonis, Lee  
Spatt, William  
Spear, Amy  
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Spotz, Mark  
Steif, Robbin  
Steinberg, Ida  
Steinberg, Kenneth and Terry  
Sun, Min  
Sunstein, David  
Tabor, Nathan and Zara  
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Weiss, Lila  
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Wishnev, Robert & Helene  
Zak, Marsha  
Zigmond, Naomi & Michael  
Zoffer, H

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Perlow Family Foundation  
Rogal Family Foundation  
United Jewish Federation Foundation  
Fine Foundation  
Spatt Family Charitable Foundation  
Steinsaper Family Foundation

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Nosson Meretzky  
Pinchas Naiditch  
Tzvi Perelman  
Yitschok Idell  
Shneur Horowitz  
Elliot Katz  
Yanky Dlinn  
Yisroel Baumgarten  
Leibel Cohen  
Mendel Goldwasser  
Shmuel (Sam) Posin  
Yossi Silverman  
Moishe Mayir Vogel

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Max Gross  
Rabbi Chayim Friedman  
Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel  
Samantha Schwartz  
Mendel Lester  
Lee Sonis  
Yaakov Drabovsky

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Barbara Cynamon  
Arthur Feldman  
Mendel Goldwasser  
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