

Jewish Belonging Summit 2025

May 7-8, 2025 | Baltimore, MD



Jewish Belonging Summit Schedule

Day 1: Wednesday, May 7

- 1:30 - 2:30 pm** **Check-in and Registration** (Holiday Ballroom, West Foyer)
- 2:30 - 3:30 pm** **Opening Plenary: The Power & Possibility of Jewish Belonging in Today's Landscape** (Holiday Ballroom 4-6)
Lisa Eisen, Eric Fingerhut, Rachel Gildiner, Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein, Kohenet Dr. Harriette Wimms
- 4:00 - 5:15 pm** **Workshop Block #1: Deep Dives into Belonging**
Choose from one of the following:
- A) The Torah of Safety, Respect, and Equity** (Calloway AB)
Dr. Guila Benchimol and Rabba Yaffa Epstein
- B) The Surge: Understanding Jewish Belonging through Data and Demographic Trends** (Holiday Ballroom 2)
Stacey Aviva Clark, Dr. David Manchester, and Jessica Mehlman
- C) The Building Blocks to Creating Safe & Respectful Workplaces** (Holiday Ballroom 3)
Dr. Shira Berkovits, Dr. Deitra Reiser, and Rabbi Mary Zamore
- D) Belonging and Jewish Philanthropy** (Holiday Ballroom 1)
Jon Hornstein, Aviva Jacobs, and Erica Phillips
- 5:30 - 6:20 pm** **Small Reflection Groups**
- Groups 1, 9, 10, 11: Holiday Ballroom 1
 - Groups 7, 8, 12, 13, 14: Holiday Ballroom 2
 - Groups 2, 3, 6: Holiday Ballroom 3
 - Groups 4 & 5: Calloway AB
- 6:45 - 7:15 pm** **Opening Reception in Networking Lounge** (Holiday Ballroom, West Foyer)
- 7:15 - 8:45 pm** **Dinner Plenary: Celebrating our Belonging Heroes** (Holiday Ballroom 4-6)
Robert Bank, Paul Bernstein, Rabbi Jessy Dressin, Jon Hornstein, and Nancy K. Kaufman;
Honorees: Idit Klein and Paula B. Pretlow

Day 2: Thursday, May 8

- 8:00 - 9:30 am** **Breakfast** (Holiday Ballroom, West Foyer)
- 8:30 - 9:25 am** **Morning Wellness Block**
Participants are invited to start their morning with a wellness practice.
- A) Song Circle** (Holiday Ballroom 1)
Carla Friend
- B) R&R Walkshop** (Holiday Ballroom 2)
Josh Feldman
- C) Nefesh to Neshama — Embodied Jewish Practices for Connection, Belonging, and Healing** (Holiday Ballroom 3)
Yoshi Silverstein
- 9:45 - 11:00 am** **Morning Plenary: Belonging Across Difference** (Holiday Ballroom 4-6)
Dr. Mijal Bitton, Rabbi Ayelet Cohen, Rachel Gildiner, Rabbi Sandra Lawson, and Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein
- 11:20 am - 12:35 pm** **Workshop Block #2: Action Labs**
Choose from one of the following:
- A) Coalition Building Across Identity Groups: How do we support the growing needs of the field of Jewish Belonging?** (Holiday Ballroom 1)
Ari Levy, Dr. Deitra Reiser, and Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein
- B) Cultivating an Inclusive Leadership Talent Pipeline** (Holiday Ballroom 2)
Rachel Faulkner, Liz Fisher, Arya Marvazy, and Meredith Polsky
- C) Leading in Times of Uncertainty & Chaos** (Calloway AB)
Dr. Guila Benchimol, Nate Looney, and Shaina Wasserman
- 12:50 - 1:30 pm** **Closing Plenary: Bringing Our Work Home** (Holiday Ballroom 4-6)
Stacey Aviva Clark, Rabba Sara Hurwitz, Nate Looney, and Matthew Nouriel
- 1:30 - 2:00 pm** **Grab and Go Lunch** (Holiday Ballroom, West Foyer)
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Session Descriptions

The Power & Possibility of Jewish Belonging in Today's Landscape

Wednesday, May 7, 2:30 - 3:30 pm – Holiday Ballroom 4-6

Lisa Eisen, Eric Fingerhut, Rachel Gildiner, Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein, Kohenet Dr. Harriette Wimms

As we gather for the Jewish Belonging Summit, this opening plenary will set the stage for a transformative and inspiring experience. Together, we will explore the evolving landscape of Jewish belonging – reflecting on where we are today and envisioning the possibilities ahead. Through powerful framing and thought-provoking insights, this session will lay the foundation for the conversations ahead, equipping us with the tools and perspectives needed to drive meaningful discussions in our workshop sessions.

This is more than a moment of reflection — it is a call to action. By weaving together lived experiences, collective wisdom, and a shared commitment to inclusion, we will ignite the possibility of a Jewish community where all feel truly seen and valued. Let's begin this journey together.

Workshop Block #1: Deep Dives into Belonging

Wednesday, May 7, 4:00 - 5:15 pm

Each of these learning sessions will provide a deep dive into a particular area around centering equity and belonging. Choose from one of the following:

A) The Torah of Safety, Respect, and Equity (Calloway AB)

Dr. Guila Benchimol and Rabba Yaffa Epstein

Join us to study the newly crafted 'Torah of SRE' sourcesheet, where we will ground our core values of Safety, Respect, and Equity in classic Jewish texts, and explore how contemporary Jewish thinkers have made these values their own. How can we utilize Jewish texts to deepen our practices of inclusion and belonging? This session is open to all levels of experience with Jewish text. All texts will be accessible and inviting.

B) The Surge: Understanding Jewish Belonging through Data and Demographic Trends (Holiday Ballroom 2)

Stacey Aviva Clark, Dr. David Manchester, and Jessica Mehlman

The "Surge" refers to the post-October 7 bump in engagement with Jewish life and interest in working in the Jewish community. As Jews are looking for Jewish belonging both personally and professionally, what does our current data indicate about their sense of belonging, and how can we utilize and address gaps in our data? This session will share key trends, paying particular attention to women and marginalized identities in Jewish life.

C) The Building Blocks to Creating Safe & Respectful Workplaces (Holiday Ballroom 3)

Dr. Shira Berkovits, Dr. Deitra Reiser, and Rabbi Mary Zamore

Before we can build cultures of belonging, we need to first establish the foundations of our organizations so they are safe, respectful, and equitable. What are the essential building blocks for creating workplaces where people are free from harm, engage one another with dignity, and are treated fairly? Using a gender-equity lens, this workshop will explore how we build this foundation through five

stages that drive culture change – including organizational readiness and codifying policy change – and share key resources to support implementation.

D) Belonging and Jewish Philanthropy (Holiday Ballroom 1)

Jon Hornstein, Aviva Jacobs, and Erica Phillips

In a time of deep polarization and shifting communal landscapes, how can funders actively foster a sense of Jewish belonging through their philanthropic priorities? What does it mean to bring an equity and belonging lens to philanthropy, and what tensions arise when values like belonging, justice, equity, and ideological diversity come into play? Together, we will discuss how philanthropies are expanding the communal table to include those with historically marginalized identities while navigating ideological tensions and grappling with questions of culture change.

Small Reflection Groups

Wednesday, May 7, 5:30 - 6:20 pm

Participate in small group discussions with your assigned small reflection group. Connect with colleagues and share reflections on what brings each of us to the work of fostering Jewish belonging and what we're navigating in this work. This networking opportunity lays the foundation for each of us to build collaborative partnerships with allies from peer organizations.

- Groups 1, 9, 10, 11: Holiday Ballroom 1
 - Groups 7, 8, 12, 13, 14: Holiday Ballroom 2
 - Groups 2, 3, 6: Holiday Ballroom 3
 - Groups 4 & 5: Calloway AB
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Opening Reception in Networking Lounge

Wednesday, May 7, 6:45 pm - 7:15 pm – Holiday Ballroom, West Foyer

The Network Lounge will host an area for organizations to table, share their resources and materials, and gift swag to people who stop by their area. The opening reception is also a time for connection and community. There will be an open bar and finger food buffet.

Dinner Plenary: Celebrating our Belonging Heroes

Wednesday, May 7, 7:15 - 8:45 pm – Holiday Ballroom 4-6

Robert Bank, Paul Bernstein, Rabbi Jessy Dressin, Jon Hornstein and Nancy K. Kaufman

Honorees: Idit Klein and Paula B. Pretlow

The evening plenary will set the stage for a transformative conversation about what it means to create a Jewish community that affirms the dignity of all. This session will also mark a historic moment with the launch of the inaugural Jewish Belonging Builders Award, honoring two exceptional leaders who have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to strengthening belonging in Jewish life. Their work serves as a model for the inclusive, connected Jewish future we are building together.

Morning Wellness Block

Thursday, May 8, 8:30 - 9:25 am

Participants are invited to start their morning with a wellness practice.

A) Song Circle (Holiday Ballroom 1)

Carla Friend, Tekiyah

This morning, we gather in song to open our hearts and ground ourselves in belonging. Led by Carla Friend, founder of Tekiyah, we will explore the power of music as a tool for healing, connection, and joy. Through ancient melodies and new harmonies, we weave a collective voice that reminds us we are never alone.

B) R&R Walkshop (Holiday Ballroom 2)

Josh Feldman, R&R: Rest of Our Lives

Enhance Your Jewish Belonging Summit Experience

Elevate your day with a unique opportunity to learn, recharge, and move with intention. Looking for a refreshing walk or guided movement during the summit? R&R: The Rest of Our Lives invites you to join Josh Feldman for a special "Walkshop"—an immersive, moving meditation designed for Summit attendees.

We'll gather in person before you step outside (or modify indoors) with a guided call-in experience. This 1-hour session is accessible to all bodies and abilities, offering a chance to unplug, reconnect with the world around you, and cultivate a sense of rest and renewal. This is an excellent opportunity to create capacity to be present for the rest of the conference.

Gear note: Please bring headphones, a charged cell phone, and gear for being outside (like walking shoes or coats if needed). This session works for all ways bodies move and can be an outside walk/move or modified to an indoor moving practice.

C) Nefesh to Neshama — Embodied Jewish Practices for Connection, Belonging, and Healing (Holiday Ballroom 3)

Yoshi Silverstein, Mitsui Collective

In this interactive session, experience embodied practices rooted in Jewish wisdom and learning that connect us to the living Torah of body and soul. Using movement and breathwork, we'll explore and deepen relationships with both ourselves and others, tap into intergenerational wellsprings of resource and healing, and strengthen our capacity for resilience in the face of the immense pressures facing us today. This session will include light movement that can be adapted to a full range of accessibility needs. All bodies are welcome.

Morning Plenary: Belonging Across Difference

Thursday, May 8, 9:45 am - 11:00 am – Holiday Ballroom 4-6

Dr. Mijal Bitton, Rabbi Ayelet Cohen, Rachel Gildiner, Rabbi Sandra Lawson, and Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein

What does it mean to belong in a Jewish community when your identity doesn't always fit the mold? In this powerful session, three esteemed leaders—Dr. Mijal Bitton, Rabbi Ayelet Cohen, and Rabbi Sandra Lawson—will share personal vignettes exploring their experiences of belonging across differences. Each speaker will reflect on moments when they felt seen, welcomed, excluded, invisible, or

valued—and how they have navigated the complex, sometimes painful, sometimes beautiful work of writing their names and identities into Jewish communal life.

Together, these leaders bring rich and intersecting identities and a wide range of experience navigating both institutional and grassroots Jewish spaces. Following their reflections, we will engage in a conversation with the speakers and open the floor to questions from the audience.

This session is an invitation to listen deeply across lines of difference and complexity. There is no single story of belonging—only a tapestry of experiences shaped by the many identities we hold. You may not agree with or fully understand every perspective shared today, and that's not just acceptable—that's the heart of this work. Belonging asks us to hold space for one another's truths, even when they challenge us. We're grateful to our speakers for their honesty and leadership, and to everyone in this room for being part of this conversation.

Workshop Block #2: Action Labs

Thursday, May 8, 11:20 am - 12:35 pm

Choose from one of the following:

A) Coalition Building Across Identity Groups: How do we support the growing needs of the field of Jewish Belonging? (Holiday Ballroom 1)

Ari Levy, Dr. Deitra Reiser, and Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein

This session explores how we can build coalitions across diverse identity groups and ideologies so that we can create a more inclusive and flourishing Jewish communal ecosystem. Together, we will unpack the urgent need for a coordinated field-wide approach to Jewish belonging, and identify ways to mobilize leaders and organizations to move from fragmented efforts to collective impact. Participants will learn from practitioners and will leave with tools, frameworks, and a renewed sense of shared purpose to drive systemic change in their communities and organizations.

B) Cultivating an Inclusive Leadership Talent Pipeline (Holiday Ballroom 2)

Rachel Faulkner, Liz Fisher, Arya Marvazy, and Meredith Polsky

This workshop explores the complexities of building inclusive leadership within the Jewish communal non-profit sector. Participants will examine current data on representation, unpack the risks of tokenization, and discuss equitable strategies for hiring and advancement. Through reflection and dialogue, we'll consider pathways to more authentically elevate underrepresented voices and create lasting, systemic change.

C) Leading in Times of Uncertainty & Chaos (Calloway AB)

Dr. Guila Benchimol, Nate Looney, and Shaina Wasserman

There is a palpable sense that we are currently living in uncertain times in both the global and Jewish communities. Challenges include economic vulnerability, a backlash against DEI efforts and gender equity, rising antisemitism, and more. These are eliciting feelings of alarm, anger, sadness, and even despondency. In addition, we are seeing transitions among leadership teams and personnel across a shifting Jewish professional landscape. Where are leaders turning for support? How are they helping their teams navigate these troubled waters while making space for very real fears? What are they doing

at the individual and organizational level to maintain a sense of calm and consistency? Learn some practical tools to build resilience in a time that is filled with doubt.

Closing Plenary: Bringing Our Work Home

Thursday, May 8, 12:50 - 1:30 pm – Holiday Ballroom 4-6

Stacey Aviva Clark, Rabba Sara Hurwitz, Nate Looney, and Matthew Nouriel

As we gather together to conclude the first-ever Jewish Belonging Summit, this closing plenary will focus on bringing together the ideas, skills, and connections that participants have experienced over the past 25 hours. A conversation between Rabba Sara Hurwitz and Matthew Nouriel will highlight “belonging in action,” spotlighting two organizations that are creating meaningful change. We’ll also explore how to bring the learnings home and collectively set an agenda to advance Jewish communities of belonging that are safe, respectful, and equitable for all.