

THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

WEXNER HERITAGE PROGRAM

BIO BOOK
SHAI HELD SERIES

*Loving Your Neighbor, the Stranger, and
God: Judaism's Loftiest Vision*

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2022



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**RON BELLER***San Francisco 14*

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Ron Beller is an Executive Coach based in Aspen, Colorado. He works with top tech CEOs, founders, and investors to maximize their performance. Prior to starting his coaching practice Ron had a successful career in business, government, and philanthropy. As a Goldman Sachs Partner, he built global, customer-driven businesses. He has also invested in more than 50 successful startups. He founded Peloton Partners, which managed \$3B at its peak and was the top-performing hedge fund in Europe in 2007. Ron experienced failure in a large and public way when he was forced to liquidate his flagship fund at the onset of the 2008 financial crisis. In government, Ron led the restructuring of the NYC school system, the largest in the country with one million students and a \$14 billion budget. He also co-founded two innovative public school networks: Ark Schools in the UK and Caliber Schools in the Bay Area. Ron has served on various Jewish boards including The KitchenSF. He is also active in the battle to legalize psychedelic assisted therapy to treat trauma, depression and other indications. Ron is married to Jennifer Moses and has three children. He is an avid skier, mountain biker, and yogi.

**SUSAN BORISON***Cleveland 05*

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Susan Borison, a former attorney, transferred her legal adversarial skills to her next job, mother of five. During her years as CEO of her household, Sue was on the executive board of Fuchs Mizrahi School and Green Road Synagogue. She also spent time on the boards of Federation and the Mandel JCC. Today, she is on the board of Mandel JCC and Jewish Federation of Cleveland while serving on several Federation and JCC committees. Susan is honored to be on the Wexner Alumni Council. Sue is the founder (with Wexner colleague Stephanie Silverman) of Your Teen Media (YTM), delivering advice and camaraderie to parents of teenagers in search of peace of mind and community. YTM began as a print magazine but now includes online courses, social media (FB, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter), Your Teen TV, Newsletter, Facebook Group, and the Your Teen with Sue and Steph podcast.

**DEBRA BRAFMAN***MetroWest*

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Debra Brafman has been passionately involved in the Jewish Federation of Metrowest for the past 40 years. Over those four decades of volunteer service she has held many leadership positions, including Chairperson of both the Israel Program Center, now part of Global Connections and the Partnership2Gether committee. Throughout her time in those positions, she cultivated lasting relationships with MetroWest partners in Israel, many of whom continue to meaningfully impact her life each day. Additionally, she was a member of the Federation Board and the Foundation Board, and a past recipient of the Young Leadership Award. Debra also served the Jewish community in her role as President of the Hebrew Academy of Morris County, since renamed to Gottesman RTW Academy. Professionally, Debra recently retired from her private practice as a licensed psychotherapist, with a focus on child and adolescent psychology. When not volunteering or studying, Debra enjoys hosting Shabbat dinners, spending time with her husband, two children, baking with her granddaughter, playing trucks with her grandson, and afternoon walks with her dog Kobi.

**ANDRA DAVIDSON***Denver 14*

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Andra Davidson has been involved in communications, including public relations, advertising, and media training, for more than 20 years. As the principal of Davidson Consulting Andra specializes in helping organizations and individuals to maximize the impact of their communications to internal and external audiences. Prior to starting her consulting business, Andra was the managing partner at Davis Branding & Marketing, where she oversaw all public relations programs and was responsible for strategic communications planning and execution, marketing and day-to-day management of many accounts. Andra has agency, corporate, and consulting experience in many industries, including a specialty in education and healthcare. Andra received a BA in Psychology from George Washington University and an MS in Organizational Dynamics from the University of Pennsylvania.

**GERI GINDEA***New York 5*

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Bio Forthcoming

**MAXINE HANDELMAN***Chicago Pro-99*

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Maxine Handelman is the Director of Family Life and Learning at Anshe Emet Synagogue in Chicago, where she gets to lead Tot *Shabbat* and create pathways to Jewish life and community for families with young children. Max bakes a mean *challah* and she is passionate about chocolate. Max holds an MA in Jewish Education from the Rhea Hirsch School of Education of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and an MA in Early Childhood Education from Pacific Oaks College. She holds both the titles of Reform Jewish Educator and Conservative Jewish Educator. She is a graduate of the Mandel Teacher Educator Institute. Max is the author of *Early Childhood Staff Meeting Shiurim: The Collection* (2011), *Vision for Conservative Early Childhood Programs: A Journey Guide* (2009), *Jewish Every Day: The Complete Handbook for Early Childhood Teachers* (2000), *The Shabbat Angels* (2003) and *What's Jewish About Butterflies* (2004). Max has presented keynotes and workshops at conferences across North America. Max is a professional storyteller and lives near Wrigley Field with her husband and two teenaged daughters.

**NEIL HAZAN***Montreal 17*

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Neil Hazan is lifetime Montrealer and a corporate lawyer by trade. Neil is admitted to the Quebec and New York bars and is a partner at BLG, one of Canada's pre-eminent law firms. His practice is largely concentrated on cross-border mergers and acquisitions and helping foreign companies expand into Canada. Prior to becoming a legal professional, Neil had a number of odd jobs enabling him to work in several countries, including the Israel, the US, the UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, and several Caribbean nations. Neil is actively involved in a number of charitable and non-profit organizations and initiatives.

**CAROL KEKST***NY/Kekst*

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Bio Forthcoming

**JULIE KOHL***Palo Alto 00*

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Dr. Julie Kohl was born in NYC and raised in Atlanta, Georgia. Julie attended Hebrew school at a conservative synagogue and attended summer camps run by the AJCC. Julie went to college at Yale, where she majored in American Studies and met her future husband. The summer after graduation, Julie was hit by a car on the sidewalk in NYC. While recovering, Julie became interested in a career in medicine. She did her premed requirements at Bryn Mayr and medical school and pediatric training at Stanford. Julie then practiced pediatrics at Kaiser in Mountain View, CA, and became very involved in their community Jewish day school, where her children attended, along with their synagogue and Hillel at Stanford. As empty nesters, Julie and her husband moved to Seattle in 2011. In this third chapter of life, Julie is focusing on physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. Julie is on the board of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality and also enjoys biking, yoga, Pilates, paddle boarding, and skiing.

**JOAN LAGUATAN***San Francisco 18*

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Born in the Philippines and brought to the U.S. as a baby, Joan Laguatan grew up in San Francisco with her three brothers and was raised in a Catholic household by an immigration attorney/political-activist father and oncology nurse mother. Joan converted to Judaism in early adulthood and later met her husband while attending the “Club Fed” young adult division program at the SF Jewish Federation. Since becoming a licensed real estate broker in 2004, she has represented a broad range of clients including individuals, families, companies, lenders, non-profit institutions, real estate developers, and investors. She sits on the boards of Sinai Memorial and SF senior affordable housing development Menorah Park. Joan’s extensive volunteer work includes having done research for and closed numerous real estate transactions for Jewish businesses and non-profits. She is an active member of AIPAC and the SF Hebrew Free Loan Business Circle and is taking ongoing semester-long classes with the Swig Studies Ulpan Hebrew Studies program. Joan lives in the Richmond District with her husband, two children, and labradoodle named Tov.

**BETH MANN***NY/Skadden*

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Beth Mann is a Jewish communal consultant specializing in strategy development and implementation in a myriad of functions including financial resource development, communications, organizational health, and providing interim leadership for organizations in transition. She was previously Vice President, Institutional Advancement of the JFNA, where she developed and implemented a corporate philanthropy and sponsorship strategy, bringing resources to national programs. Beth also developed articles and speeches for top leadership, and was a source for nearly every department at JFNA with respect to strategic messaging and alignment. Prior to holding this position, Beth was Associate Vice President, overseeing all the Development Affinities and Major Gifts. Beth was previously Managing Director of JFNA’s National Women’s Philanthropy, and began her career at JFNA as National Director of National Young Leadership. Beth began her career in the Jewish community as Executive Director of the 14th Street Y. She was a practicing attorney prior to entering the Jewish communal field. Beth received her BA from Barnard College, Columbia University, and her JD from Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University.

**JODI MANSBACH***Atlanta 05*

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Jodi Lox Mansbach is a creative and strategic leader who inspires people and organizations to re-think what’s possible. She is Principal of Living Playgrounds, a boutique design firm that is re-imagining a nature-based approach in the playground industry so that children have the space, time and permission to play freely in outdoor environments that inspire wonder and joy. A New Jersey native, Jodi has lived in Atlanta for more than 25+ years after living in Chicago and Washington, D.C. She loves to travel, grow dahlias, look for mushrooms and spend time with her family (husband, three now adult kids and a dog) in the north Georgia mountains.

**KAREN MARCUS***San Diego 2*

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Karen Marcus has more than 25 years of experience in advising and working with the non-profit, foundation, and social sectors and has been working as an executive/corporate/life coach since 2003. Karen's focus is in leadership, personal transformation, dynamic communication, and organizational change. Karen provides coaching, consulting, and facilitated programs to help leadership adapt and win at new and higher levels of performance. Some specific areas of personal expertise are governance for non-profits, creating vision and mission for non-profits, (predominantly Jewish organizations) effective communication for non-profits, leadership, change, and coaching considerations for the social sector, assessment of unique senior leadership requirements for non-profits, and the development of effective strategies for problem resolution. Additional practice areas include: public speaking, fundraising, solicitation training, and corporate and work/life balance coaching. In the non-profit sector, Karen has managed a nationwide fundraising campaign, was responsible for nationwide identification, recruitment and training initiative of local community leaders, formulated and implemented educational and leadership development programs for regional/national constituencies, and led all aspects of many international missions.

**JUAN MESA-FREYDELL***New York 1*

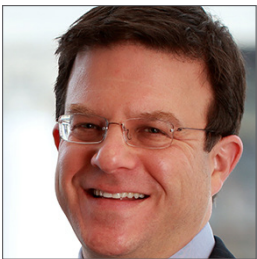
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Juan Mesa-Freydell is deeply committed to Jewish spirituality and learning and has traveled every summer (for the last 18 years) to study at the Executive Program of the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem. He is a member of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan, where he served for several years on the Board of Trustees and has been Synagogue Vice President. At Stephen Wise he has been an active member of the ritual and finance committees, and a key participant in the selection of clergy. In May of 2012, Juan and his wife Catherine Stoll were recipients of the Shem Tov award for their contributions to Synagogue life - this is the Synagogue's highest award. Juan is also a member of Congregation Shearith Israel (The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue) in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and during the summer attends the Jewish Center of the Hamptons in East Hampton, NY. Juan was for many years a board member for the NY chapter of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and within the AJC he was very active in the Diplomatic Outreach activities. Juan is a Managing Director of the International Private Bank of J.P. Morgan in New York and for the last 31 years he has worked, in various capacities, at this firm. He holds an MBA and an MS in Applied Mathematics from Columbia University in New York, as well as a degree in Economics from the Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, Colombia. Juan and Catherine live in the West Side of Manhattan and have two children, Becca and Benji.

**SAMARA MINKIN***Atlanta 18*

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Samara Minkin is a Managing Director in the Mayor's Office, City of Atlanta, responsible for advancing the mayor's vision through broad community projects and cultural arts initiatives. She has held positions at the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (Washington, D.C.), the Israel Museum (Jerusalem), the Tel Aviv Museum, and the Studio Museum and Paley Center (NY). She has consulted corporate clients on acquisitions and collection management. Samara has served on a variety of boards and is currently active with the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta, the Breman Museum (ATL), the Jewish Education Project (NY), and the Paideia School (ATL). She is a founding board member of Forge (Miami), which works closely with law enforcement and veterans' groups, and is responsible for the Overwatch Project. Past board service includes Wonderroot (ATL), JStreet (ATL), B'nai Jeshurun (NY), and New Israel Fund New Generations (NY). Educated at Brandeis University (BA) and American University (MA), Samara also studied abroad at Alexander Muss High School (Israel) and Tel Aviv University. She returned to Atlanta in 2015 inspired by the vision of Beloved Community and the opportunity to make a difference in her hometown.

**MICHAEL NEIL***Philadelphia 16*

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Bio Forthcoming

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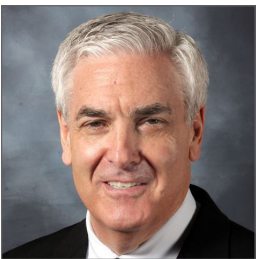
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Bio Forthcoming

**ORLI RINAT***Palo Alto 03*

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Orli Rinat has spent the past decade building a thriving, innovative, and above all integrated Israeli-Jewish Community in the Bay Area. To this end she has co-founded and co-chaired several initiatives, including the Israeli Community Connection, The Summer Camps and Israel Programs Fair, and Shalhevet – an educational journey for high school students to Poland and Israel, and ICON – Israeli Collaboration Network. She has also served in many of her community's institutions – as an executive committee member and capital campaign committee member of the Palo Alto JCC, as a board member of the San Francisco Jewish Federation, and as a committee member of its endowment fund, as chairwoman of the Israel Center, as a board member of Peninsula Havurah High School's Partner's Council, as a director and fundraising vice president of the Gideon Hausner School, and as a board member and executive committee member of ICON. In these roles Orli has often drawn on her previous career as an engineer. For a decade she helped develop software for TICI software, Analogics, and Toshiba. She has a double degree in computer science and mechanical engineering from The Technion, Israel's Institute of Technology, and an MBA from Santa Clara University. Orli has tireless energy and she disagrees with skeptics. She believes that a bright future can and should be built, and that its problems will be solved along the way.

**MICHAEL ROSENZWEIG***Atlanta*

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Michael Rosenzweig has spent the past three decades building Jewish institutions as both a lay leader and in a professional capacity, including serving as the President and CEO of Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies, President and CEO of the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, and co-founder of one of the nation's first transdenominational Jewish day high schools, the Weber School in Atlanta. Michael was formerly Senior Vice President for Corporate Development and General Counsel of Johns Manville, a Denver-based Fortune 500 company, and prior to that was in private practice as a corporate and securities lawyer. Michael graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Michigan (AB) and with Highest Distinction in Scholarship from Columbia Law School (JD) and was a member of the faculty at the University of Michigan Law School. He is widely published, with articles in *Huffington Post*, the *Columbia Law Review*, the *Harvard Law Review*, the *Michigan Law Review* and *The Yale Law Journal*. He currently serves as Vice Chair of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, the voice of Jewish Democrats.



SONIA S. CUMMINGS

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Sonia S. Cummings has been an activist/professional volunteer, focusing on the environment, the arts, coexistence, and Jewish Life. Prior to her involvement in the independent sector, Sonia spent 20 years in the design industry as product developer in the US, Japan, and China. She created textiles for architectural firms in France and Italy and was a trend forecaster for major manufacturers and retailers across the US, developing licensees and merchandising concepts. Sonia is also a fine arts painter and is currently working on a video/book project on legacy.



JACQUELINE SHELTON

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Jackie Shelton is a non-profit consultant, facilitator, and leader who loves creating connection. In 2020, she founded and continues to lead a weekly virtual women's *challah*-baking group, connecting amazing women and building community. She consulted for Lest We Forget, an outdoor photo display of living Holocaust survivors in SF. She was the exhibition director for Lost Stories, Found Images: Portrait of Jews in Wartime Amsterdam by Annemie Wolff. Jackie currently serves on the board of Sinai Memorial Chapel and is co-chair of the Parent Association at The Jewish Community High School of the Bay. Jackie received the 2020 Or Hadash award, given to one outstanding volunteer at The Brandeis School of SF. She is a past board member of the JCF and was part of the Federation's 473K planning team, organizing a conference about creating belonging. Jackie began her involvement with the young adult division of the LA Jewish Federation and served as its young adult division Chair. She received the LA Federation's Young Leadership Award. A graduate of the Coro Fellows Program in Public Affairs, the Federation Grand Leadership program, UC Hastings and UC Berkeley, Jackie lives with her husband, WHP Alum Craig Miller (LA/Bank of America), and their three boys.



MYTYL SIMANCAS

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Mytyl Simancas was born in Mexico City. After living in New York City and for a brief time in Israel and Uruguay, she landed in Miami Beach 23 years ago. Always involved in the Jewish communities wherever she has lived, today she is the Chair of Miami-Yerucham Partnership and member of the Executive Board of Miami Jewish Federation. Mytyl is active in Amutot, Israel & Overseas, Teen Engagement, Diller Teen Fellowship Sterling committee and Israel Engagement and co-chair of Arts & Culture Committee Miami Beach JCC. Other than her family, her passions are Israel, Jewish People, and helping others. She is a realtor with Compass and is also a Zin Fellow (BGU), which helped her develop a deep love for the Negev. She is a graduate of OLAM (GMJF), Melton (CAJE) and studied at Shalom Hartman Leadership Program (Miami). Last year she founded Adopt a Family Miami, a non-for-profit that helps 130 families from the invisible workforce. She is a translator (EN-ES) having translated already two books related to the Holocaust. She has been recognized by the GMJF (Leadership Award), Jewish Volunteer Services, MBJCC, JCS, Israel Bonds and the City of Miami Beach for the work she is doing.

**STEVEN STARK***Denver 08*

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Steven Stark is currently the Executive Director of Temple Emanuel in Denver, Colorado, which is one of the largest and oldest synagogues in the west and in the country. Previously, Steve was the Managing Partner at StarkSchenkein CPAs, a 25-year-old family business that successfully merged with a larger, regional firm. While at StarkSchenkein, Steve's areas of expertise included Merger & Acquisition, Strategic Planning, Business Valuation, and Litigation. Steve also maintained operational and financial oversight of the firm. He also managed a boutique investment banking firm called Bluestone Investment Banking Group. Please see his full bio on the Temple Emanuel website.

**PAUL SUNSHINE***San Francisco 06*

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Paul Sunshine is a tech executive in environmental technology and a licensed attorney in California and Washington, DC.

**KAREN TREIGER***Seattle*

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After 18 years of practicing law in Seattle, Karen Treiger felt an unmistakable call to explore the story of her in-laws, Sam and Esther Goldberg. Educated at Barnard College and New York University Law School, where she was editor-in-chief of *NYU Law Review*, Treiger made the momentous decision to retire from her law practice and pull together the threads of a family story she had heard for many years. The result of her three-year inquiry is the award-winning book, *My Soul is Filled with Joy: A Holocaust Story*. Her current volunteer involvement in Seattle includes serving as President of Minyan Ohr Chadash, an all-volunteer, modern orthodox synagogue. She is also a board member of Limmud Seattle, which brings together the entire Seattle Jewish community. Previous volunteer gigs include leadership positions on many boards - Jewish schools, Federation, AIPAC, Jewish Historical Society, and more. She is currently working on a second book about the branches of her family tree and their early history in Seattle and how that has shaped who she has become. She is married to Shlomo Goldberg and has four wonderful children, three in-law children and four grandchildren.

**GARY WEXLER***LA/Westfield*

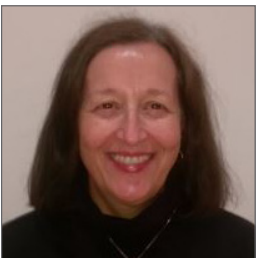
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Gary Wexler has served as Executive Manager, Third Space Thinking Initiative, USC-Annenberg and as an Adjunct Professor, USC/Annenberg School of Communications, Masters Program teaching Nonprofit Marketing, Advertising. He has taught American Creativity to visiting Chinese business delegations and is Owner of SeizeTheConversation, a seminar series on creativity, idea development and marketing for nonprofit organizations, business, and corporate philanthropy. Gary has worked with over 1,000 nonprofits worldwide, including many Jewish organizations and foundations in America, Europe, Canada, and Israel. Gary is a former Creative Director and Copywriter for major advertising agencies ranging from Chiat/Day to DDB-Needham, having produced award-winning work for clients such as Apple and Coca Cola. Gary has served on boards of Bureau of Jewish Education, Hillel, Federation, synagogue, Grand Performances World Music, USC Religion, and Society.

**SUSAN WOLFE***San Francisco 3*

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Susan Wolfe is a creative content developer currently focused on ghostwriting biographies as well as developing nonprofit marketing collateral materials. Jewish community is Susan's center. Boards Susan has served on include the Palo Alto JCC, Congregation Beth Am, J. the Jewish News Weekly, and Hillel@Stanford, where Susan is a past president.

**TERRY YOFFIE***Boston 2*

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Terry Yoffie supports nonprofit organizations working on youth health, education, and civic engagement applying her professional skills in the areas of civics, service, finance, accounting, auditing, and strategic planning. Terry is involved with several nonprofits on finance, accounting, development, and program. Terry also runs a civic engagement and service lab at Newton North High School working to change school culture to one where every student and staff member has an opportunity to experience civic life and service during their time at the school.



HOWARD ZACK

San Francisco 2

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Howard Zack's communal passions focus on broadly building Jewish community. Locally he has done this through multiple leadership roles over the years in the San Francisco Federation, his community day school, shul, AIPAC, and Ramah summer camps Northern & Southern California. Nationally and in Israel, Howard serves as a current Board member of both Shalom Hartman Institute of North America and Honeymoon Israel. Howard runs WhoKnew Ventures, a pre-seed and seed early stage Fund focused on Health & Wellness. A native Canadian (Vancouver) and transplanted Bay Area native since 1983, Howard is married to fellow WHP Alum and classmate Diane and they have three adult kids - Marty, Nathan, and Alana.



ANGIE ATKINS

Director, Wexner Heritage Program Alumni and Summits

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Angie Atkins has worked as the Director of Heritage Alumni at the Wexner Foundation since 2011. Previously, she founded, ran, and then sold an international jewelry business, which manufactured in Israel and wholesaled fine designer jewelry around the world for 22 years. In her current position, Angie draws on some of her marketing expertise from her business days to build up platforms, opportunities, and desire for 2,200 Jewish lay leaders across North America to cross-pollinate (both online and in person); to continue their high level Jewish and leadership learning; and to invigorate their dedication to the Jewish world. Angie is in touch daily with top lay leaders in 33 communities across North America to listen and advise on challenges facing synagogues, day schools, federations, JCC's, national organizations, and every other kind of institution imaginable. She loves her job! Angie and her husband WHP Alum Norman (Metrowest 08) regularly host *Shabbat minyans*, *seudot* and learning in their Upper West Side home. They are blessed with three (more or less) adult children: Zohar, Ari, and Shira and three grandchildren! Angie currently serves in an advisory capacity to Romemu, Mechon Hadar, and Base Hillel.



RABBI SHAI HELD

President and Dean at Hadar

Wexner Graduate Fellowship/Davidson Scholars Program Alum, Class 7

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Rabbi Shai Held – theologian, scholar, and educator – is President and Dean at Hadar. He has taught both theology and *Halakhah* at the Jewish Theological Seminary and also served as Director of Education at Harvard Hillel. A 2011 recipient of the prestigious Covenant Award for excellence in Jewish education, Rabbi Held has been named multiple times to *Newsweek's* list of the 50 most influential rabbis in America. He holds a doctorate in religion from Harvard; his main academic interests are in modern Jewish and Christian thought, in biblical theology, and in the history of Zionism. Rabbi Held's first book, *Abraham Joshua Heschel: The Call of Transcendence*, was published by Indiana University Press in 2013; *The Heart of Torah*, a collection of essays on the Torah in two volumes, was published by JPS in 2017.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



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THE WEXNER FOUNDATION

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The Wexner Foundation trains and inspires leaders in the North American Jewish Community and the State of Israel. Through diverse, cohort-based educational programs, the Foundation invests in promising professionals and volunteers and gives them tools to exercise transformative leadership. Working in partnership with other foundations, philanthropists and communities, the Foundation strengthens North American Jewish life and Israel's public sector by making their leaders more skilled, visionary and collaborative.

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