



KABBALAH EXPERIENCE

# 2020/2021 ANNUAL REPORT





Kabbalah  
Experience

2305 S Syracuse Way #10  
Denver, CO 80231

[WWW.KABBALAH EXPERIENCE.COM](http://WWW.KABBALAH EXPERIENCE.COM)  
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# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REFLECTIONS

I always find it incredible to see flowers blooming in a desert.  
A sprout peeking between boulders.  
A tree with apples growing in an orchard.

Who imagined that a modest seed, would disintegrate and become a bud, and then a tree, with fruit?

In kabbalah, we call this seed awareness, chochma. A moment of insight or inspiration- a place of infinite possibility. A seed planted, with the right water and light, disintegrates and takes on an entirely new form.

Over the past year and a half, Kabbalah Experience has been planting seeds daily. 'How might we...?' we wondered.

How might we train educators around the world in our unique approach to transformative kabbalah? Seed planted.

How might we "lean in" to the online educational experience and expand our geographic reach for student engagement? Seed planted.

How might we engage high-quality teachers from diverse backgrounds whose philosophy and approach towards kabbalah align with ours- in order to provide greater learning opportunities for our community? Seed planted.

How might we respond to the changing situation around COVID- and be safe, while building community and providing top notch classes? Seed planted.

How might we ensure fiscal sustainability while individuals are facing increased economic insecurity? Seed planted.

How might we serve isolated senior citizens and other vulnerable parts of our community? Seed planted.

How might we grow and strengthen as an organization, without sacrificing our commitment to small group participatory study? Seed planted.

And in the darkness, some light entered, with just enough water, to help the seeds germinate, the buds to form, and the trees begin to blossom.

I hope you enjoy reading our annual report, and sharing all that has manifested this year.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie S. Gruenwald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**MELANIE GRUENWALD**

*Executive Director*



# SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR REFLECTIONS

What does it mean to be committed to change? Does it imply that you are never satisfied, never relaxed or accepting, unable to just go with the flow? Perhaps it just means that we should be committed to changing those things that are no longer working well, no longer serving us?

As part of our metaphor work we ask students to reflect on “What is your most sacred value?” and for many years my answer, which I never questioned, was “loyalty.” A few years back I began to question whether I was being a bit too loyal to my answer and then, an insight. My valuing loyalty was indoctrinated in me by an entire community of loyalists, a community that is reticent and even resistant to change.

Change though is often thrust upon us and we resist at our own peril. Two years ago I chose a change because I altered how I felt and related to the word “legacy.” To put it bluntly, the idea of legacy conjured up death. Was I at that stage of life when I needed to think about what I wanted to leave behind? Then came an epiphany. Legacy was not what I wanted to leave behind, it was what I wanted to move forward, what I envisioned now as the continuing evolution of Kabbalah Experience.

This year we took a bold step to start mentoring teachers in our curriculum with the goal of expanding the reach of Transformative Kabbalah. Would any one apply was our first question which was answered quickly, with a cadre of eight amazing fellows from around the world. Our hope is that each of them will bring the light we have kindled in Denver to their communities. In the first three months of the fellowship it has become clear that I am not just a “Shamash” on this eight canded Menorah. As their mentor, I do try to ignite our fellows’ curiosity and champion their capabilities. In turn, I am being challenged to consider my “loyalty” to our established curriculum which, through their input, will yet again evolve.

I am so grateful to have your support in moving us forward in all of our initiatives. Whether here in Denver or across the globe we are committed to being loyal change agents.

**DAVID SANDERS**

*Founder and Spiritual Director*

# MEET THE KE ROSENBAUM FELLOWS IN TRANSFORMATIVE KABBALAH

Kabbalah Experience is grateful to Jane E Rosenbaum for her visionary leadership in underwriting the launch of the KE Rosenbaum Fellows in Transformative Kabbalah. This gift is in honor of her husband, Stanton, of blessed memory. Stanton was a leader in the Colorado community- a model of a person who embodied ethics and strong values in all that he manifested, both personally and professionally. Stanton was a lawyer by profession and a student at Kabbalah Experience for many years, loved to learn, and to mentor younger people. His memory will be a blessing to all who are touched by this fellowship.



**SARA BRANDES**

*My spiritual direction work is rooted in Kabbalah and therapeutic in nature. I suspect the KE mentorship is the missing link in my craft. Principled living is the centerpiece of my life. Aiming to leave this world better than I found it, from the soil on up, has become my most stern teacher of the sanctity of life, the golden mean, integrity, and accountability.*

Ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Sara Brandes is a writer, teacher and healer who makes her home with her family in the north of Israel. Past Executive Director at Or HaLev: Center for Jewish Spirituality and Meditation, Sara teaches Judaism as a world wisdom tradition. A certified yoga instructor and mindfulness practitioner, Sara is author of *Magical World: Stories, Reflections, Poems*.



**DAVID BURSTEIN**

*I am looking to expand my own practice of Kabbalah and increase opportunities for Jews and non-Jews to find the spiritual path of transformation instead of the religion based transactional models that are being offered. I am trying to be more intentional in my living, embracing the vulnerability I need to help myself and others.*

Rabbi David Burstein, ordained as a rabbi from HUC-JIR Cincinnati in 2001, has worked for the past 25 years as an experiential educator. He was the director of Kulanu-the Reform Jewish High School in Cincinnati from 2003-2018. David trained at Harvard College in their program on mediation and negotiation and traveled with peace negotiation missions to Israel, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Northern Ireland. He plays the hand-drum, holds two black belts in martial arts and is working on his third in Krav Maga. Rabbi David has taught mindfulness meditation for over 20 years. His greatest joy comes from being a dad to Emma, Coy and Nadia, and husband to Elizabeth.



## TRACY BYARLAY

*My motivation for studying Transformative Kabbalah is dual in that I want to help others find the light, and I want to further open my own awareness. Prayers are answered by our acts of kindness. Simply love yourself, your neighbor, your enemy. I can say on many levels I understand what that means. I want to help others find this too by sharing what I learn on my journey as a student of the Kabbalah and a life-long mystic.*

Tracy's passions are fitness, music and writing. After many years working as a fitness expert, he started Breakthrough Sports Therapy in Colorado which has been honored with the "Best of Boulder Award" for the past three years. Trained in helping clients overcome injury through working with the body's connective tissue, Tracy conveys the importance to recovery in the interplay between body, emotion, mind and spirit. He also co-founded Without Warning, a self-defense academy which provided hands-on training and group seminars. Tracy lives with his "Little Buddha" son, in Longmont, CO.



## MATTHEW KALKMAN

*I am a curious person by nature and I feel open to being drawn in the direction that feels right as well as making rational sense. After my grandfather passed away I pursued an understanding of what gives life meaning. Having one day looked up Kabbalah while living in Colorado, I noticed that there was a class that evening at Kabbalah Experience. From that class I enrolled in the online programs and continued to explore the Tree of Life and creative manifestation. I have been following the "bread crumbs" ever since and they have led me here.*

Matthew has a law degree from Durham University and a Masters from the London School of Economics. After having been called to the bar and having worked in the financial world, he is currently undertaking doctoral studies with a focus on human value. His dissertation topic is: "Human Rights and the Embodied Semiotic Image of God." He is the author of New Liberalism, a book on restoring the progressive liberal vision. He lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two children.



## AARON MARCUS

*Three years ago I read McGilchrist's awesome book on the brain. I wondered – Why does he sound kabbalistic? We have to learn from the heroes of the past and learn how to wrestle with God and prevail. I fear the challenge. I hope I have strength to make the necessary sacrifices. To borrow a Christian trope, I know that the letter alone is clearly insufficient. There must be spirit.*

Aaron is a teacher, lawyer, and tax professional who has spent most of his working life teaching math, history, and Torah in Jewish day schools. After nine years at Akiba Schechter Jewish Day School in Chicago he is currently moving back to tax. His primary intellectual interests stem from Torah, midrash, philosophy--most recently an interest in Neoplatonism and Heidegger, myth, and psychology. He lives in Chicago with his wife and three children.



## NICOLE MONTANARELLI

*Grace is my most sacred value. Living with Grace, Being Graceful, Accepting Grace and Giving Grace. I think Grace is the most profound feeling a person can have for someone else. Grace to improve, to forgive, to inspire and to let go.*

Nicole is a yoga teacher, yoga therapist, life coach, natural health and healing educator. She is the founder of Life Thrive Yoga in New Park, PA. Nicole was raised in a dual faith family; her father's lineage is Roman Catholic and her mother's lineage is Russian Jewish. Her faith in the existence of ultimate Love, Goodness and the right to equality and joy has helped her move past difficult times and into service over and over again. She is drawn to mythology and religious, spiritual studies and has always had a strong draw towards esoteric mysticism and Kabbalah. Nicole lives with her husband on a homestead where they grow much of their own food and practice permaculture-based sustainable gardening. She has an adult step daughter, a perfect dog, and multiple cats and chickens.



## VANJA BOKUN POPOVIC

*I was lucky to be born into a Godless communist-gone-socialist society (the former Yugoslavia) which taught me to value unity, citizenship and giving back to the community. It set me on a privileged, yet tumultuous path of having to find God on my own. In working with others there comes the value of Responsibility and Integrity which I put above all others. I love science and business as they help me to build greater structures for the grand architecture of the Invisible to have a place to land.*

Vanja is a professional lecturer, integral psychotherapist and author. She is currently a PhD candidate in Psychology having previously completed a Master's in Urban Education and a Master's of Philosophy in Psychology. In her work she honors science (the masculine power of action and logic), and the language of Soul (the feminine way of graceful expansion and inspiration). The KE mentorship will prepare me to "present Kabbalah in an authentic way to the people in my part of the world." Vanja resides in Belgrade, Serbia with her husband Nikola and their son and daughter.



## MARTINA YOUNG

*When one looks around or turns on the news, it does not take a lot to feel discouraged or to wonder: "Where is this world headed"? I found Kabbalah the year I turned 40 and it has helped me find faith. I find the synchronicities and parallels in life fascinating, and I am quite puzzled about the question: How did I not see them before? I would like to take an active part in the rebirthing process of mankind.*

Martina works as a therapist for BodyWise Physical Therapy in Colorado. She has a Doctorate in physical therapy and a Master's degree in public relations. She was an avid triathlete until injuries sidetracked her and forced her to "slow down" and she discovered Kabbalah, Yoga, Jin Shin Jyutsu and Muay Thai. Enrolling in the KE teacher mentorship program allows me to "dive deeper in teachings that speak to my soul and provide me with the tools to share that knowledge with others." Born in Slovenia, she moved to the United States in 2000. Martina lives with her daughters, Angelina and Scarlett, in Longmont, CO.

# 2020/21 BY THE NUMBERS

**573**

KE received 573 registrations from over 180 individuals for 'live-study' course options—showing retention from semester to semester.

**400**

We engaged over 400 individuals in free weekly classes and special events.

**180**

KE had almost 30 people learn through our self-study videos, and 100 purchased the Passover to Freedom Haggadah and Seven-Week Journey to Transformation Omer Journals (available through KE's website and Amazon.com).

**100**

KE provided \$4,600 (a 25% increase from the prior year) in scholarships to 25 students.

**30**

KE received ten generous grants from the following foundations in order to advance our work:

- Amazon Smile
- Bender Foundation
- The Benevity Community Impact Fund
- Dennis Schuman Charitable Fund
- JEWISHcolorado
- Pay it Forward Charitable Fund
- Sims Lines Charitable Fund
- Rose Community Foundation
- Singer Family Foundation
- Upstart Change Accelerator Grant

**25**

**10**

Underwritten by Jane E Rosenbaum to honor her husband Stanton Rosenbaum (z"l), KE launched the first cohort of Rosenbaum Fellows in Transformative Kabbalah. David Sanders is mentoring eight educators around the world who will bring the unique KE curriculum and methodology to their home communities.

**8**

**6**

Kabbalah Experience engaged six outstanding Adjunct Faculty, while Rabbi Jamie, David and Melanie provided the core class curriculum, as well as special and advanced classes.

**2**

Kabbalah Experience received two PPP Loans, which were forgiven as grants, in order to maintain our financial sustainability through the pandemic.

# 2020/21 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## HANUKAH PROJECT 2020

Kabbalah Experience Board of Directors coordinated a Hanukkah candle delivery and mailing to the KE community, to help spread gratitude for sharing light with us during the pandemic. This project was so well-received, the Board did it again in 2021!

## AUTHOR TALK: EVONNE MARZOUK, THE PROPHETESS

Evonne Marzouk joined KE for a discussion about her book, The Prophetess.

## FILM SERIES: *ENOUGH*.

KE hosted a screening of *enough*. and conversation with film-maker Nathan Nzanga.

Nathan is a young, up and coming Hip Hop artist who addresses racism and its remedies in his short film, *enough*.

He joined us for a community wide discussion via ZOOM of his film, his life and his advocacy. The child of Congolese immigrants to the United States, he always felt he was a quirky kid, out of place in his own community. Following the murder of George Floyd, he connected more to his experience as a black man, feeling the need to be a voice for breaking down the sense of otherness in our nation.



## FILM SERIES: PALLIATIVE

Kabbalah Experience and Feldman Mortuary co-sponsored a screening of *Palliative* and conversation with Dr. Nadia Tremonti.

*Palliative*, a documentary short, explores the conversations during end-of-life care with pediatric palliative care specialist Dr. Nadia Tremonti. *Palliative* highlights the caretakers and families working with Dr. Tremonti.

Filmed in Detroit at the Children's Hospital of Michigan over several years, *Palliative* aims to draw attention to a vital area of care struggling to overcome the stigmas of death and dying.

<https://www.palliativefilm.com/>



# 2020/21 HIGHLIGHTS, CONT.

## PURIM PROJECT

In March of 2021, KE launched a Purim Mask Project, to deliver Purim Packages with masks, paints and hamantaschen to our community- and also raised funds to send these gifts to seniors at Kavod Senior Life, Shalom Park, and Jewish Family Service.

## PROTECTING ONE ANOTHER

KE distributed Kabbalah Experience cloth masks with our logo to the community, to help keep one another safe in this new year.



## ONGOING EVENTS

Details at: <https://kabbalahexperience.com/special-events-and-free-courses/>

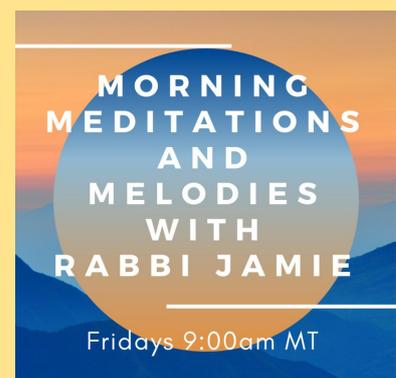
## COFFEE AND KABBALAH

Melanie Gruenwald continued to host a weekly 'drop in' Coffee and Kabbalah- attracting students from all over the world for conversation, community-building and reflection.

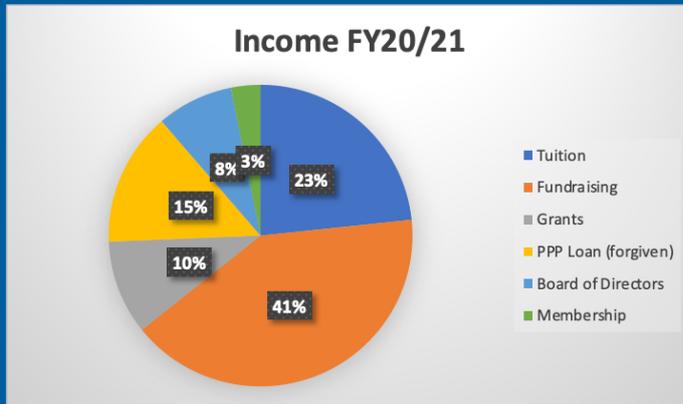
Thursdays, 2pm Mountain/ 4pm Eastern

## MORNING MEDITATIONS AND MELODIES

Rabbi Jamie hosted a weekly music and meditation session, every Friday 9am Mountain/ 11am Eastern.



# 2020/2021 FINANCIAL UPDATE



## INCOME

Tuition \$93,857  
 Fundraising \$164,730  
 Grants \$40,600  
 PPP Loan (forgiven) \$57,790  
 Board of Directors \$32,794  
 Membership \$12,639

Total Income \$402,410



## EXPENSES

Operations \$45,291  
 Marketing and Development \$23,616  
 Faculty and Course Development \$104,760  
 Salaries and Contract employees \$162,115  
 Employee Related Costs \$38,097

Total Expenses \$373,879

# UPCOMING IN 2022

- Time streaming course and student guide
- Expansion of Newish: A New way to BE Jewish, thought leadership from Dr. David Sanders
- Publication of *Original Skin*, a book by Dr. David Sanders
- New subscription model – supporting Kabbalah Experience
- Increased access to Adjunct Faculty, learning from top educators from around the world
- New website launching in January!



# WE COULDN'T DO THIS WITHOUT YOU!

## 2021/2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brynn Asarch  
Vicki Danský  
Michelle Friedman, Co-Chair  
Mark Grimm  
Dr. Daniel Jacobson  
Bettina Kurowski, Immediate Past Chair  
Jani Majewski  
Martin Morris, Co-Chair  
Karen Novick  
Marta Pentecost  
Michelle Saxer  
Morgan Sicklick  
Amy Topelson

## 2020/21 GRANT FUNDERS

Amazon Smile  
Bender Foundation  
The Benevity Community Impact Fund  
Dennis Schuman Charitable Fund  
JEWISHcolorado  
Pay it Forward Charitable Fund  
Sims Lines Charitable Fund  
Rose Community Foundation  
Singer Family Foundation  
Upstart Change Accelerator Grant

KE is grateful to Gwen Crawford,  
Dr. Sharon Sagel, and Stacy Wasserman  
for your service to the Board in 2020/21

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## KEEP PLANTING THE SEEDS

Your support makes Transformative Kabbalah available  
and accessible to students around the world.

Donating appreciated stock to Kabbalah Experience held longer than a year can result in capital gains tax savings and if you itemize, an income tax deduction based on the fair market value of the gift at the time of transfer.

IRA Charitable Rollover If you're 70 ½ or older you are eligible to roll over up to \$100,000 annually from your traditional IRA to Kabbalah Experience and other qualified charities without being taxed.

Contact your financial and tax advisors to determine what strategy makes sense for you. For instructions to transfer stock to Kabbalah Experience or other questions, contact [melanie@kabbalahexperience.com](mailto:melanie@kabbalahexperience.com).

# FY2020/2021 DONORS

As a school, tuition is a significant source of KE's income. With that said, tuition accounts for less than 25% of our budget. We would never be able to offer as many courses, educational materials and events without the even larger sum of private donations from our community. We are grateful for this powerful support you and other students provide. We thank you for your generosity.

This list reflects donations from July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021

We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

## KETER

Richard and Eileen Greenberg,  
Bender Foundation  
Robert Corn  
Vicki Dansky  
Dennis Schuman Charitable Fund  
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Jane E Rosenbaum  
Michelle Saxer  
Andrea and Cintra Pollack  
Singer Family Foundation  
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Stacy Wasserman  
Drs. Anne and Mel Wernimont

## TIFERET

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Jani Majewski  
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Lisa Mintz  
Grant Netzorg  
Nancy Nowak  
Melinda Quiat  
Sims Lines Charitable Fund

## YESOD

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Myndie Brown  
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Michael Charney  
Lisa Cook  
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Gwen Crawford  
Wendy Davis  
Bonnie Davis  
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Chris Oldroyd  
Lesly Pogrew-Terrance  
Caren Press  
Michael and Roslyn Rudnick

# FY2020/2021 DONORS

## YESOD, CONTINUED

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Lori Sigman  
Carolyn Steele  
Nancy Steele  
Kiki Stein  
Barry Winograd  
Terri Wolinetz  
Elizabeth Woods  
Myke Woods

## MALCHUT

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Albert Banker  
Sarah Bell  
Amy Benjamin  
Diane Bergeron  
Tamara Berkman  
Michael Berteaux  
Peggy Brody  
Mimi Cohen-Bergen  
Cheri Cohn  
EG Daily  
Marissa Diaz  
Rena Dulberg  
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Sue Parker Gerson and  
Rabbi Bernard Gerson

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Jennifer Stern  
Tara Strong  
Karin Susskind  
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Peggy Thompson  
Claudia Trevithick  
Michelle Wecksler  
Sonia Weisselberger  
Ronit Winkeljohn

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We apologize for any inadvertent omissions.

# WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR YOU!

At Kabbalah Experience we are building upon a powerful foundation by nurturing creativity, community, and connections.

In the Tree of Life, Hod is Surrender: acknowledging what is, accepting and giving way. HOD is also representative of GRATITUDE as we flow on to Malchut, manifestation.

With your support, we have hope that the evolving story of Kabbalah Experience continues on.

Please consider making a gift to help support the future of Kabbalah Experience today!



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Experience

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**303.337.0959**

**[www.kabbalahexperience.com](http://www.kabbalahexperience.com)**

