MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

This past year was a watershed year for Yerusha. While maintaining our priceless relationship with the Shalom Center, our fiscal agents, we created our own organizational structure and seated two Leadership Boards.

I am deeply grateful to those who answered our invitation to serve on the Board of Directors whose responsibility it is to attend to our financial health and organizational growth and the Board of Advisors, who maintain the ethos of Yerusha. You have seen the work of the Directors, led by our talented Chair, Mark Strunin, as you’ve responded to our fundraising appeals and have participated in new and growing programs. Both Boards engaged in a strategic planning retreat on zoom this past Spring, and our work is now directed by shared vision and your responses to our participant survey.

Our small staff rolled up our sleeves and found ways to immediately respond to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic while working on a 3-year strategic plan, guided by our intrepid Director of Operations, Amitai Gross. Many wonderful volunteers stepped up to serve on Task Force groups to guide the direction of each of our programs, while others have brought new and exciting program ideas to us.

I look forward to a year of continued growth, to new programming and increased support, with great appreciation for all that we have accomplished and the vision which guides us forward.

Thank you all for being part of building the legacy for future generations.

Loving blessings,
Rabbi Nadya Gross
CEO & Executive Director

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

I feel an immense sense of gratitude to all of the people who have engaged in developing Yerusha and its programs. These include the members of the Board of Directors and the Board of Advisors along with the various task forces that have expanded our programs this year.

Yerusha is engaged in expanding the understanding and practice of Eco-Kashrut working with a growing number of specialists in both Halachic Kashrut and the ecological issues of food and labor and sustainability.

In the coming year we will be developing our educational offerings and projects such as Deep Ecumenism and more.

With your interest and participation in our programs along with contributions and the wisdom you can bring to expanding our outreach and depth of experience we can make a significant contribution to the betterment of peoples’ lives.

All the blessings,
Rabbi Victor Gross
President

www.yerusha.org
SHALOM FRIENDS OF YERUSHHA!

When the first Board of Directors in Yerusha’s history launched in the fall of 2019, who could have imagined what a year was in store for us all!!

The Sage-ing® program and Reb Nadya’s Wisdom School moved to virtual spaces. The Ruach Ha’Aretz week long in-person retreat was rescheduled into the near future as was the bi-annual Deep Ecumenism Pilgrimage to Israel.

Yet, at the same time, Yerusha programs – led with enthusiasm and loving kindness by Rabbi Nadya Gross, Rabbi Victor Gross and other talented and dedicated teachers – continued to deliver to you and so many others unique opportunities for deep spiritual and personal growth.

As you read this report, please look for more ways for you to join in Yerusha’s learning programs in 2021 and please remember to support Yerusha with your generous contributions!

With gratitude and blessings!

Mark A. Strunin
Chair, Yerusha Board of Directors

VISION

Yerusha* furthers the evolution of Jewish spiritual vision into future generations. Rooted in the wisdom of the Jewish past, Yerusha fosters respect for, learning from, and sharing with other wisdom traditions to augment the healing of the planet and all its inhabitants.

MISSION

Engaging with the diversity of the world’s traditions, and grounded in the perspective of our teacher, Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, we focus on the development of personal and collective wisdom, ethical and earth-conscious consumption, as well as the furthering of new Kabbalistic perspectives emerging from the indigenous tradition of women’s spirituality. We do this through retreats, classes, training, publishing, resource collection, and archiving across diverse media.

* Yerusha is a Hebrew word meaning legacy or inheritance.

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The Yerusha Sage-ing® Legacy Program has had a very successful first year in its new form. Even before Covid isolation we had been preparing to teach on-line in order to make our program more accessible and thus we were ready to begin teaching on Zoom for our Spring Quarter.

In the three quarters of 2020, we saw a total of one hundred and twelve (112) participants in ten courses, with registrations increasing in each successive quarter.

It is interesting to note that of all of our courses Death as Homecoming had the highest enrollment; in the Autumn semester registration was capped at twenty-four students. The evaluations in all our courses are very positive, each group becomes its own community, and many new friendships and connections are made which continue and evolve. Participants from some classes continue to meet on their own to support and inspire each other.

We are building a Sage-ing community and currently have two monthly Wisdom Circles that have been meeting since Covid began. One Wisdom Circle is for the Vatikim/ot (Sage-ing® Mentors) and the other is open to all the participants of this year’s courses.

A fifth cohort of Sage-ing® Mentorship training will begin in June. Many students who completed the two foundation courses, Wisdom of the Heart and Death As Homecoming, are looking forward to taking this next step in their Sage-ing Journey.

The program is guided by our administrator, Annie Klein, along with an enthusiastic group of Vatikim/ot (graduates of the four previous cohorts). A Curriculum Committee met to create the curriculum for the on-line Wisdom of the Heart core class, developing a format that is readily accessible on the Moodle learning platform for any of our Vatikimot to facilitate and teach.

The Steering Committee created the Mission and Vision Statements for SLP and are outlining the 3-year course plan and other offerings, to be unveiled in the coming year.

Our Vatikimot are encouraged to develop new courses to add to the growing work of spiritual eldering; their proposals are reviewed by the administrator and task force and included in the expanding course offerings when appropriate.

Plans in the coming year include outreach to JCCs, congregations, senior communities etc. to create custom programming in a variety of formats, both on-line and in person. We continue to explore ways of getting our programming out to a wider audience, extending our reach beyond the Yerusha community.

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The 7th Circle of Secrets My Grandmother Told Me: a Wisdom School formed in November 2019. The largest cohort to date, 17 women gathered at Sunshine Mountain Lodge in Allenspark, CO together with Rabbi Nadya Gross and her amazing co-conspirator, Connie Naharit Reider, for the first of four retreats over a period of two years. It was Connie’s insistence that Nadya extend the circle beyond the 12 maximum that had been her practice, and she was singularly responsible for inspiring most of the applications.

Meanwhile, in March of 2020, just as the pandemic was causing a shut-down, the annual alumni retreat, for all who completed Circles 1 – 6, was the first opportunity to experience a week-long Zoom retreat. It proved to be a much needed and welcomed time of daily connection and deepening. Our beloved Connie Naharit’s soul ascended on the first morning of our retreat, as we were gathered in spiritual practice and her body surrendered to the pancreatic cancer which she had battled valiantly for 20 months. Later that week, we learned that she had left a legacy gift with the instructions to create a scholarship fund for future participants in the wisdom school.

The continuing pandemic led Reb Nadya to experiment with new online formats for the unfolding of the 7th Circle’s program, including monthly 2-hour sessions and a 5-day immersion on Zoom in November 2021.

While we all hope that this circle may gather for a final in-person retreat in November 2022, the shift to Zoom has not stopped the wisdom from flowing and the relationships blooming. Rosemary Lohndorf, who is participating in Wisdom School for a second time, and stepped up to fill part of the void left by Connie’s death, said:

“This year I participated in Wisdom School on-line. Through using zoom rooms, taking frequent breaks and sharing prayer time together every morning, I was surprised by how deep the lessons and learning time went. The time with my spirit buddy between sessions has solidified my learnings and the one-on-one time with Nadya has enhanced my personal growth spiritually.”

The Wisdom School program also includes a monthly Sunday morning gathering for spiritual practice and community building.

A task force has been formed to imagine and guide the future development of Wisdom School, with many new online options being considered, and greater involvement of ‘graduates’ in transmitting the wisdom.

www.yerusha.org
YERUSA AND THE PLACE OF DEEP ECUMENISM

Deep Ecumenism recognizes that there is one spiritual river that flows through consciousness and there are many wells (Jewish well, Hindu well, Christian well, Muslim well, etc). The river feeds the wells and the wells feed the river. Yerusha is founded on Deep Ecumenism as a core value that underlies its programs and projects. This is articulated in the following ways:

A bi-annual Interfaith Spiritual Pilgrimage to Israel and Palestine co-lead by Lutheran ministers, Pastors Linda and Larry Daniels-Block, along with Rabbis Nadya and Victor Gross. Two successful pilgrimages were completed in the Spring of 2016 and Fall of 2018. The planned trip in Fall 2020 was postponed due to the pandemic and is being rescheduled.

A Deep Ecumenism Circle which has met monthly by zoom conference since February 2014. The group consists of Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Interfaith clergy and teachers who have explored issues of deep connection and faith traditions, and have inspired one another’s work in their communities and congregations. The work has become essential to each member’s growth and spiritual leadership. Future plans include expanding this work to form and mentor more of these intimate groups.

Rabbi Victor Gross, along with a Deep Ecumenism Task Force, has begun to develop a more expanded set of course offerings and trainings for clergy and other students based on the many years that he and Rabbi Shaya Isenberg taught Deep Ecumenism in the ALEPH Seminary. The program will be open to all who seek to include this focus in their lives and work.

Deep Ecumenism informs the overall work and intention of Yerusha, and is visible in the makeup of our Leadership Boards and Task Force work, in the programming and outreach of the Eco-Kosher Project, Ruach Ha’Aretz, Sage-ing® and more.
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ECO-KASHRUT PROJECT

The Yerusha Eco-Kosher Project certified a new Mashgiach in this past year and re-certified Maple Mama products as eco-kosher.

The newly formed EcoKosher Va’ad, comprised of Rabbi Victor Gross, Rabbi Elisheva Brenner, Oran Hesterman, and Joe Laur, has been meeting regularly and assessing two key issues.

First: what is the purview of EcoKashrut? Halakha is fairly well established, albeit always emerging. What standards should we employ in assessing environmental, social, technology, ethical and governance issues? There are labor practices, environmental justice issues, transparency in governance, organizational ethics, and a plethora of environmental and sustainability standards, bridging climate change, pesticides, emissions and pollutants, systemic effects, fossil fuel use vs renewables, species impacts, etc. Additionally, there are a wide range of certifications in the field: Organic, non-GMO, Fair Trade, B-Corp, Rain Forest Certified, etc., all whose standards must be assessed.

Second: in order to comprehensively address this broad range of concerns, the Va’ad is actively seeking to expand and recruit subject matter experts across the spectrum. People with food industry experience, sustainability backgrounds, labor professionals, social justice activists etc. Since EcoKashrut bridges both Jewish and general concerns, the Va’ad need not be comprised of only Jewish voices; in fact to be effective, it should reflect viewpoints unrelated to Jewish norms, but that deeply address the other concerns inherent in EcoKashrut.

As the Va’ad continues this important work, we are also in conversation with some new healthcare and other products seeking EcoKosher certification, and one of our mashgichim will be supervising the Kosher Line at an east coast private college.
Using a governance structure that is unique among most non-profits, the Board of Directors of Yerusha shares equally in setting the direction, supporting the development of high-quality Jewish, ecumenical and spiritual learning, providing resources to the professional staff and collaborating with Yerusha’s dynamic Board of Advisors.

In particular, the Board of Directors holds the accountability for designing and implementing the funding efforts. This past year, the Board initiated a series of fundraising appeals that provided support for specific programs like Sage-ing® and the Wisdom School.

The generosity of dozens of past and present participants have begun to establish a more secure fiscal basis for Yerusha. We have achieved a level of support just under half of what we consider to be appropriate for Yerusha’s staff and programming to flourish in the near future.

This coming year, the Yerusha Board will expand by adding several new members, some of whom will come with wider, more ecumenical and diverse backgrounds, bringing the Board to fifteen members.

Anyone interested in joining this dynamic group should contact Rabbi Nadya at rebnadya@yerusha.org.
BOARD OF ADVISORS REPORT

The Board of Advisors holds responsibility for the ethos of Yerusha, ensuring adherence to our stated mission and values.

In this first year as a Board, the Advisors articulated a broader Vision and Mission for the organization and wrote a Code of Ethics and procedures.

In the coming year, the Advisors will continue to clarify the values of Yerusha, specifically as they guide our relationships with all who work within our programs, other organizations with which we choose to collaborate and the funders we approach for support.

As the organization grows and more programming is considered, it is the task of the Advisors to review all plans in light of our Vision, Mission and Values.

BOARD OF ADVISORS 2019/2020

Annie Klein, BC
David J Cooper, CA
Jeff Roth, NY
Malka Drucker – Secretary, CA
Marvin Anderson, ON
Phyllis Berman – Vice President, PA
Sara Schley, MA
Seth Oppenheimer, MS
Victor Gross – President, CO
Jennifer Katz, BC
Within a few months of its launch, the new Board of Directors designed an overall strategy for growth. We began with preparing a Case for Support document describing the importance of ensuring Yerusha’s educational and spiritual mission. Following that, the Board launched a survey of close to 2,000 past participants in Yerusha programs.

The intent of the survey was to determine satisfaction with Yerusha programs, ideas for new programming and Yerusha’s organizational strengths. The results of the survey which generated a reliable response of around 10% were reviewed by the Board at a strategic planning retreat in May, 2020.

The survey had these important findings:

- High level of satisfaction with the Sage-ing® and Wisdom School programs.
- Recommendation to increase the number of offerings, while shortening length to three or four sessions on-line or no more than three days in person.
- Positive response to programs fees and tuitions with perceived solid value for money spent.
- Outreach to more diverse audiences such as young adults, congregations, interfaith families, Jews of color, Jews by Choice.
- Expand offerings about Reb Zalman’s teachings, interfaith and ecumenical exchanges, end of life doula training, Jewish home centered practices, Eco-Kashrut practices and approach.

We mourn the passing of Irv Newman, a wonderful friend and supporter of Ruach Ha’Aretz.
Yerusha’s programs have successfully responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to offer many of our services at a distance. Moving into 2021, our educational programs will continue to grow, including the very popular Sage-ing® Legacy Program and Secrets My Grandmother Told Me: A Wisdom School.

In addition, Yerusha will engage more with education, action, and community development around issues relating to social, economic, and climate justice.

In the coming year, all of Yerusha’s programming will grow to offer more opportunities for learning, action, and community development.

From challenging injustice in the food industry with our EcoKashrut Program, to building interspiritual collaboration through Deep Ecumenism, and confronting injustice and our social and ecological responsibility through Ruach Ha’Aretz, Yerusha embodies a shared legacy of our teachers who came before as well as the new thinkers and activists of the modern era.

Some programs already in development:

- A new pilot project, led by former Ruach Ha’Aretz Kids’ Program Director, Sara Klugman, will offer a chevruta-style learning program for high school teens to engage with anti-racism literature.

- An exploration of white supremacy within Jewish culture, both historically and in the modern day, guided by Yerusha Director of Operations, Amitai Gross.

- We are excitedly collaborating with our friends at The Shalom Center and our beloved teacher, Rabbi Arthur Waskow, to launch a Multireligious Climate Activist Training Program.

- Rabbis Nadya and Victor Gross in collaboration with Gavriel Strauss, Spiritual Counselor and Real-ationship™ Coach, will host a Summit and 3-part series for multifaith clergy aimed at midwifing a New World emerging from out of the lessons of the pandemic.
Thanks to the focused work of our Board of Directors, Yerusha experienced a significant growth in donations from individual donors, some matched by employee matching funds.

Donations were invited for the general development of Yerusha, as well as to create a scholarship fund for the Sage-ing® Legacy Program. Additionally, the Connie Naharit Reider Memorial Fund was established after her death to provide scholarship aid for participants in the Wisdom School; this was Connie’s legacy gift at the end of her life.

The 2019/2020 fiscal year saw 196 individual donations averaging $265 per donor.

Yerusha operates under the umbrella and 501(c)3 of the Shalom Center which has served as our fiscal agent since our founding in June 2017. We are deeply grateful to Rabbi Arthur Waskow and the Board of Directors of the Shalom Center for their continuing support and friendship.

### 2019/2020 FINANCIAL REVIEW
October 2019 – September 2020

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| NET             | 21,738.50     |

For more information or to make a donation – yerusha.org/donate.