



ITIM

The Right To Live Jewish

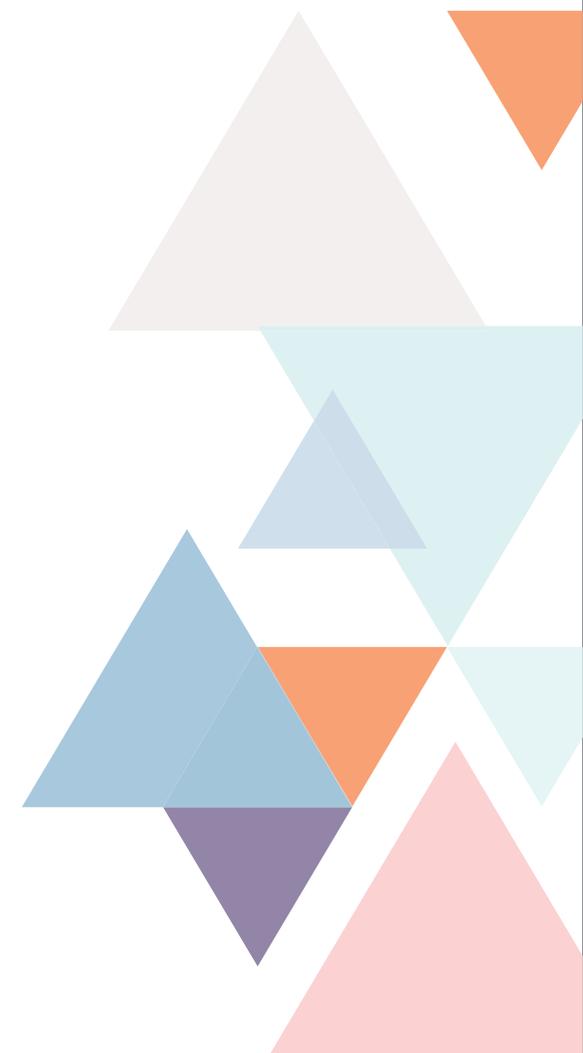
CHANGING
JEWISH LIVES
TRANSFORMING
ISRAELI SOCIETY

2017 IMPACT REPORT



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From the Founder & Director

Dear Friends:

2017 was a year of unprecedented achievement and growth for ITIM.

The ITIM Assistance Center, widely recognized as the address for solving practical issues of religion and state in Israel, helped nearly 4,500 people gain official Jewish status, marry, convert, and observe other, major Jewish lifecycle events. **The ITIM Advocacy Center, one of Israel's preeminent watchdog groups, advanced the cause of government transparency and accountability** by filing more than 70 Freedom of Information Act requests, participating in dozens of Knesset hearings, and litigating several prominent cases. In 2017, **the Giyur K'Halacha Independent Conversion Program became the leading, non-governmental conversion program in the country.**

But our 2017 successes extend far beyond numbers. In 2017, **ITIM drew international attention for exposing the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's blacklist of non-Israeli rabbis** whose authority it rejects, and leading the fight to block the controversial Conversion Bill, which would have made the Chief Rabbinate the only body authorized to perform conversions. We made significant progress in moderating the state's investigations into individuals' Jewish status, improving marriage registration procedures, ensuring that women have access to jobs within the state's rabbinical court system, and advancing independent kosher certification.

Our dedicated team grew in 2017 to carry out our expanding agenda. Our staff now includes four hotline assistants, five in-house attorneys, five conversion experts, and three communications professionals.

None of this would have been possible without the support of our devoted board members, and generous donors. Thank you for being partners in our work, which is changing Jewish lives, and transforming Israeli society.

**Sincerely,
Rabbi Seth Farber, PhD**

About ITIM

ITIM is the leading advocacy organization working to build a Jewish and democratic Israel in which all Jews can lead full Jewish lives. ITIM is committed to helping people participate in central features of Jewish life in Israel, such as gaining official recognition as Jews, marrying as Jews, and converting to Judaism, and to improving government policies that impede access to these fundamental Jewish life passages.

ITIM works to

- ▲ Strengthen Israel's Jewish character
- ▲ Protect Jewish Israelis' civil rights
- ▲ Advance the cause of Jewish pluralism
- ▲ Increase respect for the diversity of the Jewish people
- ▲ Bridge the divide between Jewish life in Israel and around the world
- ▲ Broaden the government's perspective on Jewish peoplehood
- ▲ Moderate the government's extreme interpretations of Jewish law
- ▲ Improve government transparency and accountability
- ▲ Reduce religious coercion
- ▲ Build Israeli democracy
- ▲ Create systemic change

ITIM is both a service provider & a political change agent

The ITIM Assistance Center helps people navigate state-regulated matters of Jewish life, and refers key cases to the ITIM Advocacy Center, which addresses them at the legal and public policy levels.

The resulting improvements in government policies and procedures raise public awareness, and generate new cases for the Assistance Center. This unique organizational structure enables ITIM to make measurable change in Israeli society, and to continually expand and deepen its work.





Credit: Becky Kestenbaum

ITIM Assistance Center

The ITIM Assistance Center helps thousands of people each year observe and celebrate Jewish lifecycle events regulated by the Israeli government.

ITIM's Hebrew, English, Russian, and French-speaking staff provide information, guidance, and support-free of charge-on every government-regulated religious issue, from birth to burial, with special expertise in matters of marriage and conversion. The ITIM Assistance Center is a unique resource, widely recognized for its professionalism, breadth of experience, and direct lines of communication with social welfare organizations, government authorities, and members of the rabbinic establishment.

The ITIM Assistance Center helped Robin & Dave navigate the government system to marry in Tel Aviv

In 2017, nearly 4,500 people turned to the ITIM Assistance Center for help getting married, converting to Judaism, and observing other, central Jewish lifecycle events.

ITIM helped them establish their official Jewish status so they could immigrate to and marry in Israel, navigate the state's marriage and conversion procedures, freely use mikvehs (ritual baths), bury loved ones, and more.



The ITIM Assistance Center succeeded in getting Israeli's Ministry of the Interior to recognize Anna's Jewish identity days before she gave birth

ITIM Assistance Center Cases 2017

Total

4,457

Conversion

1,361

Marriage

1,162

Divorce

765

Burial

611

General Assistance

394

Mikveh (Ritual Bath)

64

"Thank you for helping us through our marriage process in Israel. Your support and guidance made it so easy for us to navigate what could have been a very complicated system."

Sarina & Gaby, USA

"My aliyah has just been authorized! I'm amazed and filled with joy and gratitude... Thank you for all of your efforts."

Geraldo, Brazil

"Your kind staff helped me understand what a burial society is allowed to do and not allowed to do at a funeral. At this difficult time in my life, it was so helpful to have someone to turn to who understands the system and wants to help."

Adina, Israel

"ITIM gave us personal insights and recommendations to move us forward to our wedding day when we thought we would not make it to the chuppah... As our wedding date approached, and our families from abroad purchased flights, we still did not have approval from the Tel Aviv Rabbinate. ITIM stepped in with practical guidance and reassurance."

Robin & Dave, Israel

ITIM Volunteers

ITIM is indebted to a dedicated group of volunteers that supports its work. Volunteers serve as "adoptive families" for conversion candidates, accompany conversion candidates to rabbinical court interviews, and more. In 2017, ITIM trained volunteers in three cities to provide guidance to bereaved families, from the moment they lose loved ones through shiva.



ITIM volunteers supported bereaved families in Ra'anana through the model Melavim project



ITIM Advocacy Center

The ITIM Advocacy Center works to make the Israeli government respectful of and responsive to the Jewish needs of the Jewish people in all its diversity.

The ITIM Advocacy Center, which includes five, in-house attorneys, serves as a government watchdog, monitoring state policies and practices, participating in parliamentary hearings, drafting policy reforms, and, when necessary, petitioning authorities, and initiating litigation. The ITIM Advocacy Center has brought attention and change to central issues of Jewish identity and Jewish life, including the government's recognition of citizens' official Jewish status, its acceptance of the authority of non-Israeli rabbis, gender equality in marriage procedures, mikveh practices, burial rights, and more.

ITIM's legal team successfully defended women's right to privacy in mikvehs

ITIM Advocacy Center Actions 2017

72 Freedom of Information Act Requests

69 Lawyers' Letters

40 Knesset Committee Hearings

30 Knesset Member Meetings

20 Court Cases

14 Court Appearances

3 Knesset Bills

ITIM Advocacy Center Successes 2017

- **Exposed the Chief Rabbinate's blacklist of non-Israeli rabbis** whose authority it rejects
- **Blocked the Knesset's Conversion Bill** proposed by a coalition of ultra Orthodox political parties that would have made the Chief Rabbinate the only body authorized to perform conversions
- **Won a class action suit against 20 local religious councils** who overcharged women 2.5 million shekels for mikveh use
- **Challenged a Ministry of Religious Services proposal** to create an International Database of Recognized Jews
- **Secured a ruling from the Attorney General** to prevent state rabbinical courts from maintaining lists of citizens whose official Jewish status they claim require clarification
- **Submitted Supreme Court petitions** against state rabbinical courts that revoked individuals' official Jewish status
- **Filed a motion against the Ministry of Interior** to require it to recognize conversions undertaken through non-governmental programs
- **Monitored 15 local religious councils' compliance with a Supreme Court decision** in a case brought by ITIM that granted women the right to use mikvehs without attendants
- **Monitored local rabbinical courts' compliance with a labor court decision** in a case brought by ITIM that required legal aide positions to be open to the public to enable women to serve in these positions
- **Drafted the language for non-governmental kosher certificates** to enable restaurants to legally advertise that they are kosher



Top: Rabbi Seth Farber spoke at numerous Knesset hearings

Bottom: ITIM organized a public demonstration in Jerusalem to oppose the Chief Rabbinate's blacklist



Rabbi Shlomo Riskin, Rabbi Yehuda Gilad, and Rabbi Benny Holtzman were among nearly 40 rabbis who served as Giyur K'Halacha judges

Giyur K'Halacha Independent Conversion Program

ITIM oversees the Giyur K'Halacha Independent Conversion Program, a network of rabbinical courts that converts Israelis to Judaism according to Jewish law and free of government bureaucracy.

In just two years since its establishment, Giyur K'Halacha has become the country's leading, non-governmental conversion program, widely recognized for its meaningful approach and supportive staff. By embracing all those who wish to join the Jewish people, Giyur K'Halacha is changing the nature of conversion in Israel.

In 2017 - just two years since the program's establishment - the number of people who turned to Giyur K'Halacha surpassed 6,000, and dozens of respected, Orthodox Israeli rabbis now serve as judges in Giyur K'Halacha rabbinical courts throughout the country.



Natan Sharansky spoke at the ITIM Annual Conversion Conference, Jerusalem

Giyur K'Halacha Independent Conversion Program 2017

2,551	Conversion Queries
72	Rabbinical Court Hearings
37	Participating Rabbinic Judges
22	Supporting Organizations & Communities

www.giyur.org.il

ITIM Media Attention

ITIM received wide media attention in 2017. Its exposure of the rabbis' blacklist, and leadership in preventing passage of the Conversion Bill drew international press coverage, and ITIM Director, Rabbi Seth Farber, became an increasingly prominent journalistic source on a range of Israeli religion-and-state issues. ITIM's social media metrics also rose dramatically in 2017, with a growing number of newsletter subscribers and Facebook followers.

ITIM Media Attention 2017

40,575 Facebook Followers

16,992 Newsletter Subscribers

168 Articles, Interviews, Mentions & Op-Eds

Articles, interviews, mentions and op-eds appeared in:



theguardian

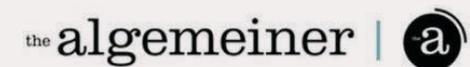


THE JERUSALEM POST

THE TIMES OF ISRAEL



JTA



The NEW YORK Jewish Week

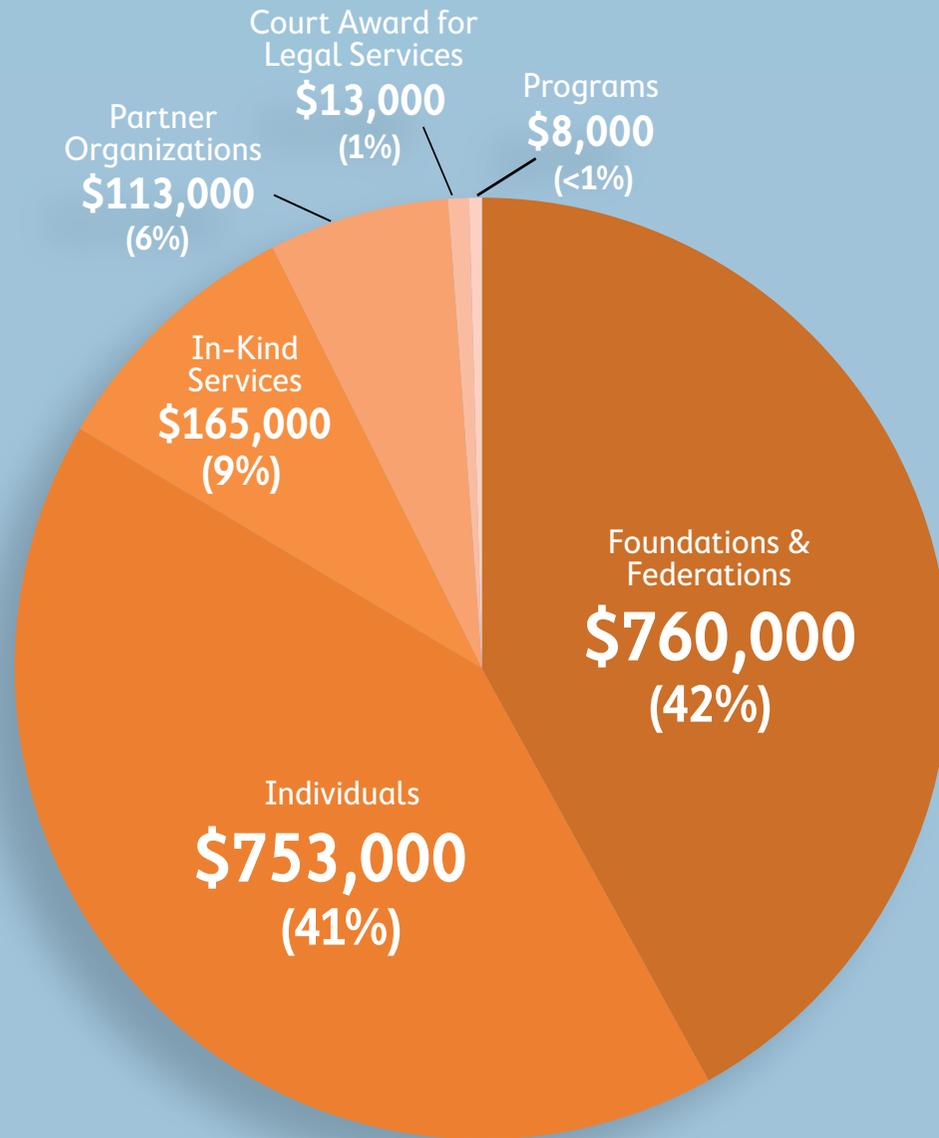


JÜDISCHE ALLGEMEINE

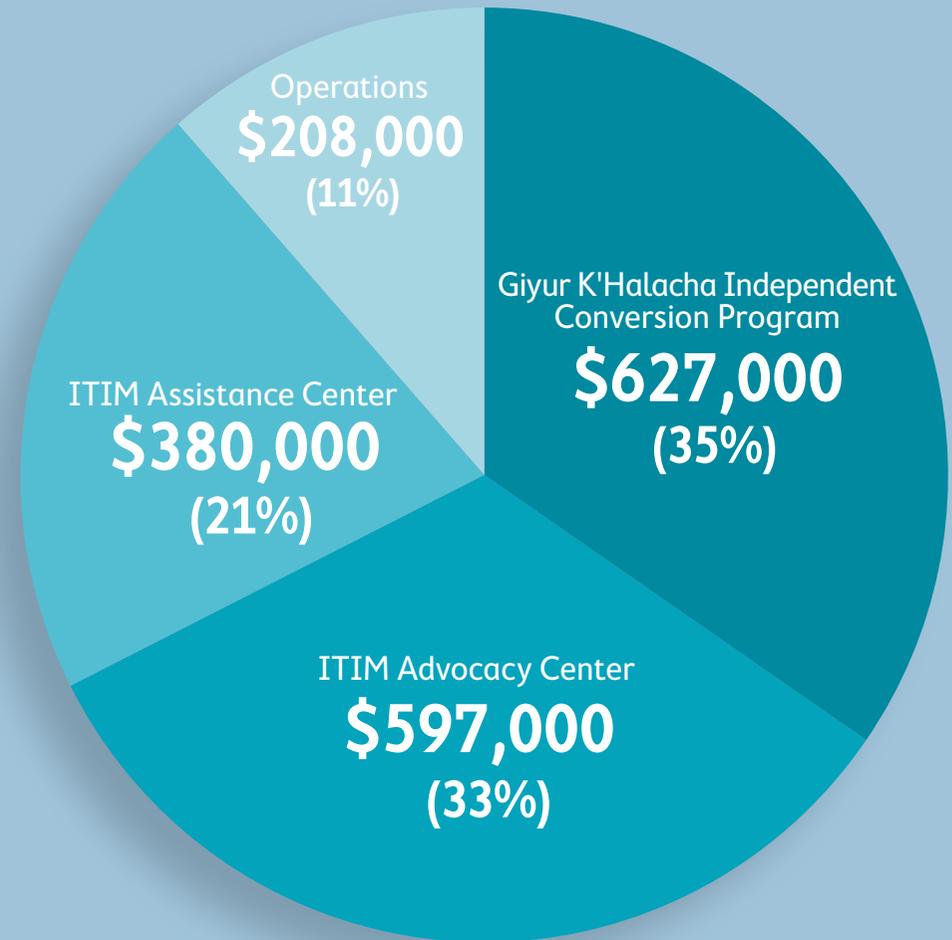
ITIM Financials 2017

INCOME

EXPENSES



Total \$1,812,000



Total \$1,812,000

Leadership

Founder & Director

Rabbi Seth Farber, PhD

Steering Committee

Mark Ziering, Chairperson

Jack Levy

Nehemia Davidi

Adina Hagege

Asher Levy

Prof. Michael Schimmel

Avraham Well

Board of Directors, American Friends of ITIM

Steven Pretsfelder, Chairperson

Daniel Conway

Susan Fader

Tovit Schultz Granoff

Bill Lipsey

David Sable



Rabbi Seth Farber and the ITIM staff

Staff

ITIM Assistance & Advocacy Centers

Elad Caplan, Manager

ITIM Assistance Center

Meitav Tessler-Schimmel, Team Leader

Yoel Botwinik

Jenny Brenner

Yoni Yentus

ITIM Advocacy Center

Reut Kleinberger

Shira Lev-Zion

Ariel Moav

Ella Sakat

Sara Weinberg

Giyur K'Halacha Independent Conversion Program

Rabbi Shay Weizman, Manager

Yael Belenky

Shani Davidovich

Yuval Ohali

Gilad Prins

Michal Kozlova

Marketing & Communications

Einat Levin, Director

Sheryl Abbey

Orly Ulriel

Finance & Operations

Sarah Cramer, VP

Michelle Cohen

Hila David

Supporters

ITIM gratefully acknowledges the support of its generous donors, including:

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation

Tulsa, OK

David Berg Foundation

New York, NY

Gimprich Family Foundation

New York, NY

Greater Miami Jewish Federation

Jewish Agency for Israel

Israel

Jewish Federation of Charleston, SC

Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City

Jewish Federation of Greater Metrowest NJ

Jewish Federation of St. Louis

Jewish Venture Philanthropy Fund

Los Angeles, CA

Targum Shlishi

Aventura, FL

The Jacob and Hilda Blaustein Foundation

Baltimore, MD

The Russell Berrie Foundation

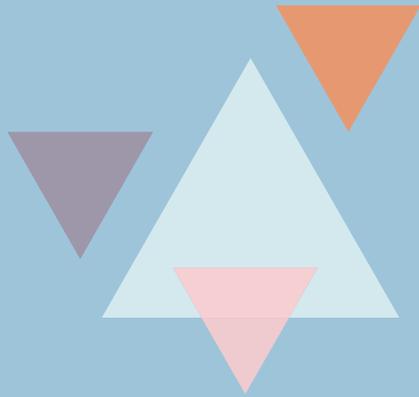
Teaneck, NJ

UJA-Federation of New York

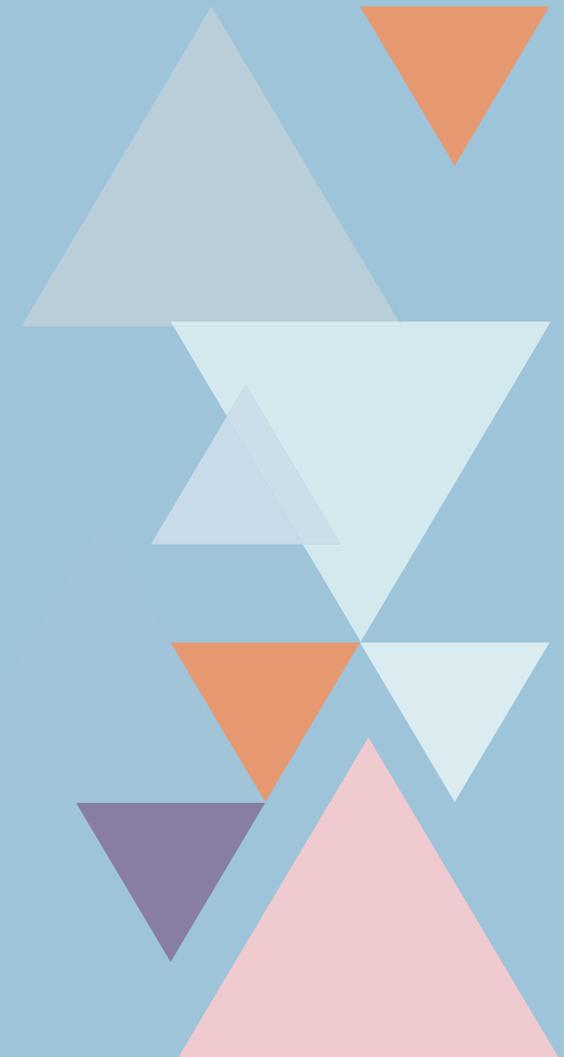
Yoreinu Foundation

Israel





**Join us in realizing our vision:
an Israel that is respectful
of and responsive to the diverse Jewish
needs of the Jewish people**





ITIM

The Right To Live Jewish

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