Dear Friends:

The 2013 Pew study of American Jews continues to send ripples through the Jewish community – primarily in the form of anxiety about the future of Jews and Judaism in the United States and calls for action of various types to respond to what were generally perceived as discouraging, if not alarming, findings about declining levels of Jewish religiosity and engagement. Now, we have a more recent (2014) study from Pew on religious life in America generally – including a smaller, but still robust sample of those identifying as Jewish.

This more recent study puts the 2013 findings in a somewhat different light. It turns out, e.g., that compared with 2007, the percentage of those identifying as Jewish in the American population has increased from 1.7% to 1.9%. In terms of the widespread contemporary American practice of religious “switching,” Jews also turn out to be more “loyal” than most. Three-quarters of those raised Jewish still currently identify as Jewish – a figure that may seem distressing until one notes that only American Hindus and Muslims have higher “retention rates.” (Also of note is that of the 25% who no longer identify as Jewish, 18% have moved into the “unaffiliated” column – some number of whom may well retain a Jewish identity on an other-than-religious basis.) And, 17% -- one in six -- of the current Jewish population were not raised as Jews. On top of this, Jews remain one of the best educated and wealthiest (albeit also one of the oldest, on average) sub-populations.

I cite these recent statistics not to argue that everything is all right in American Jewish life. Hardly. But, it’s true as well that neither should we be wringing our hands and bemoaning the imminent disappearance of American Jews and Judaism. In fact, there is good reason to believe that Judaism can “compete” quite well in today’s religious marketplace, especially if we make good use of the
considerable assets and resources at our disposal.

This is what we believe at Lippman Kanfer Foundation for Living Torah. **We believe that Jewish teaching and practice – what we call Jewish wisdom and sensibilities – have much to offer, certainly to today’s Jews, and perhaps to others as well.** We also believe that there are great numbers of talented, creative individuals and organizations who are keeping that teaching and practice vibrant and compelling in and for the contemporary world. Our job as a foundation is to support these people in their work – not only financially, but by helping their work achieve greater visibility, by connecting them to one another and to others seeking to take advantage of their efforts, and, when appropriate, by thinking together with them about the challenges and opportunities we face today as Jews and as humans.

**We do this not in fear of the future, but out of a powerful sense of as yet unrealized possibility.** Some of those possibilities are in fact taking shape before our eyes in the work of our grantees and conversation partners. We’re happy to share below glimpses of that work. In addition, we’d love to have you **participate with us in one of our projects:** expanding the list of Jewish Sensibilities that are central to the life wisdom we find throughout Jewish teaching and practice, both traditional and contemporary. Keep reading below to learn about our Jewish Sensibilities Crowdsourcing initiative and share some of the Jewish concepts that speak most powerfully to you.

Yours,
Jon Woocher, President

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**LEARNING**

We are currently learning a great deal about podcasting and audio editing, interviewing and scripting. It's a new world to us. So why are we doing it? We believe in the power of conversation - actual conversation - and the expressive strength of the human voice when it comes to exploring complex ideas. Stay tuned for our upcoming podcast debut...
But the medium is only part of the message - our next big project is to work on exploring the ways that Jewish Wisdom can shape your perspective, help you see all aspects of your life through a Jewish lens, provide relevant insight and instruction for life's milestones as well as day to day living. Our gateways so far have been 10 Jewish Sensibilities.

**What's your Jewish Sensibility?**

We need your help! Be our hevruta - come teach and learn with us, be part of our ongoing collection, curation, and conversations

**Participate in our crowdsourcing initiative** to add new Sensibilities. Can you think of uniquely Jewish values can infuse every aspect of life with deeper meaning, can steer a person towards benefits of a #LivingTorah mindset? [Click here to submit your Jewish Sensibility.]

We plan to publish and discuss many of these ideas during our Summer Sensibilities series on our blog - submit today!

**GIVING**

Since our last newsletter, we have finalized a new grant to [Wilderness Torah](https://www.wildernesstorah.org), a program that takes experiential Judaism literally off the beaten path on a return to deep roots of Jewish Wisdom. One of Slingshot's most innovative Jewish nonprofits four years running, be sure to check out [their programs](https://www.wildernesstorah.org) to see if you might find a connection.

Jon Woocher offered one window on our grant making process this month, from a perspective that hearkens back to the work of the great Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig: [Living Torah and New Learning](https://www.jewishplk.com/living-torah-and-new-learning).

**SHARING**

Shavuot has come and gone, and that means the completion of our Counting of the Omer series. Catch up on all the sephirot [here](https://www.jewishplk.com/couting-of-the-omer-series), and Rabbi Lee's reflections on the full process [here](https://www.jewishplk.com/couting-of-the-omer-series).
If you were inspired by our Omer guest posters, why not become one? Our Summer Sensibilities series is a perfect way for experienced and first-time bloggers to find a new audience. **Submit an essay, poem, photo, cartoon, personal story, short video, text, song, memory or thought** that explores one of our existing Jewish Sensibilities (any medium, really, as long as it can be hosted on a website) to be considered for publication or crossposting on our blog. [Click here](#) to get details from Communications Manager Shana Ross.

Nigel Savage of Hazon recently shared his thoughts on Duty, Obligation, and Community as part of the JTS torah commentary blog, including reflections on his experience with a conversation we hosted. We'd love to continue that conversation on our Facebook page - leave a comment after you read the essay! We promise to write back...

We are in a Shmita year - if you have not been following the Institute of Jewish Spirituality's monthly series on Letting Go of Excess and Practicing Abundance, now's a great time to catch up and bookmark their site.

What else should we be sharing? [Click here to send us your recommendations!](#)