

# Sefaria Impact Report 2024

## Table of Contents

| LETTER FROM THE CEO                           | 2  |
|---|----|
| BY THE NUMBERS 2024                           | 4  |
| JEWISH LEARNING ON THE RISE                   | 6  |
| A YEAR IN LEARNING                            | 8  |
| AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES                     | 10 |
| POWERING NEW PATHWAYS INTO THE JEWISH LIBRARY | 12 |
| SPEARHEADING NEW RESEARCH                     | 15 |
| SEFARIA IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE                  | 17 |
| THE SEFARIA COMMUNITY                         | 18 |
| CELEBRATING 10 YEARS AND SEFARIA PIONEERS     | 19 |
| FINANCES                                      | 20 |
| FUNDRAISING                                   | 21 |
| THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS                   | 22 |

## Letter from the CEO

Dear Friend,

It's been a challenging year-plus for the entire Jewish world. During this time, Sefaria's team was repeatedly reminded of the power of Torah to sustain the Jewish people through difficult moments. Together with millions of Jews worldwide, we navigated the year with both sorrow and hope, witnessing Jewish learning emerge as one reliable constant at a time of great uncertainty. As participation in Jewish life trended upward globally, we were honored to provide millions with unfettered access to their textual heritage.

This trend was directly reflected in Sefaria's traffic in 2024, as we welcomed 775,000 average monthly users, with nearly 900,000 in October alone. We made further inroads into our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan while working to meet the needs of our growing user community. Among our most critical undertakings was researching AI as a tool to unlock access to and enhance the study of Jewish texts. Through dedicated research and development, we accelerated the pace of our core work and are now poised to advance our mission in ways we couldn't have foreseen just a few years ago.

Within the library, we made significant strides by adding highly sought-after texts including modern content by contemporary luminaries Rabbis Adin Steinsaltz and Jonathan Sacks, z"I, as well as English translations of canonical classics like Midrash Rabbah and Tikkunei Zohar. We also made major progress in expanding the representation of women scholars on our shelves. In 2024 we released *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* and *Learning to Read Midrash* by Simi Peters while also continuing to foster new scholarship through our Word-by-Word Fellowship for women writers. Our user-generated source sheets received an upgrade with the launch of the Sefaria for Google Docs plugin, which has been installed more than 25,000 times.

We were overwhelmed by the support we received from our user community, which collectively donated more than \$1.2 million in gifts under \$1,000, including more than \$100,000 on Giving Tuesday alone. In March, we held our 10th Anniversary Gala at the New York Public Library in Manhattan, welcoming 400 friends of Sefaria, old and new. In a year of so many pressing global needs, we were grateful for every dollar donated in support of our mission to maximize access to Jewish texts.

Torah is an *etz chaim* — a tree of life, which is to say, a source of life. It's been a difficult year for Jewish people everywhere, but I am reminded daily that we can get through any hardship by acting as Jews have acted since time immemorial: by grabbing onto a branch

of Torah and doing our best to show up for each other with love and kindness. It's been our great honor to show up for each of our users this past year. Thank you for helping us bring Torah to all who seek it.

With gratitude,



Daniel Septimus CEO

עֵץ־חַיִּים הִיא לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בְּה וִתֹמְכֶיהְ מְאָשָׁר.

It is a tree of life to those who hold fast to it, and those who bolster it are fortunate.

**PROVERBS 3:18** 

## By the Numbers 2024

#### Our Reach



775,000

Average Monthly Users

234

**Countries and Territories** 



162

Collective Years Spent Learning



104

External Websites Linked



230

Projects Powered by Sefaria's Data



21

Languages Represented

## Our Library



3.7 MILLION

Intertextual Links



91 MILLION

Words in Translation



104

New Texts in 2024



584,000

User-Made Source Sheets

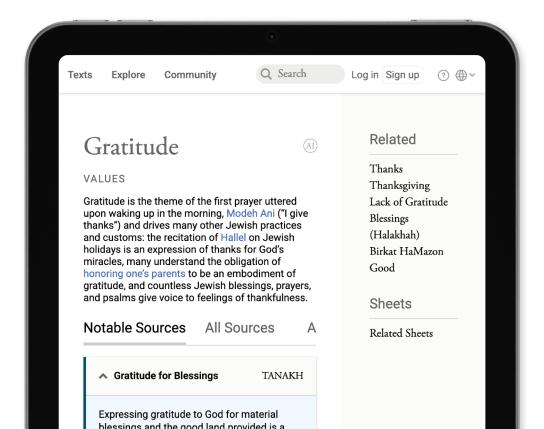


372 MILLION

Words in Library

#### **TOP 5 MOST-VIEWED SEFARIA TOPICS**

Gratitude Rashi Rambam Jonathan Sacks Chanukkah



## Jewish Learning on the Rise

In 2024, Sefaria saw a dramatic increase in users turning to our digital stacks for comfort and solace — a continuation of the surge in Jewish learning we saw in the immediate aftermath of October 7. So many of the individuals who came to Sefaria during those painful days in October 2023 continued to engage with Sefaria in 2024. With tens of thousands of new users learning and engaging with Torah, Sefaria's web traffic remained elevated and continued to reach new heights. Even *The New York Times* took note, highlighting Sefaria in <u>an article</u> on how October 7 changed American Jews.

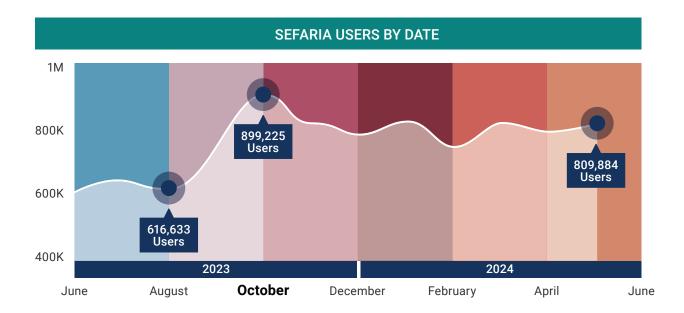
In these ways and so many more, Sefaria remains an important spiritual and community resource for Jews. A recent user survey showed that **80 percent of 18- to 44-year-olds in North America felt more motivated to study Jewish texts after using Sefaria**. These numbers speak to the enduring power of Torah, even in tumultuous times.



"A huge TODAH to everyone involved. Our local library system has NOT ONE Torah, or Tanakh, so I'm dependent for now on sites like Sefaria to keep up with my Torah study."



"Sefaria for me is like manna in the desert."



## Studying the Parashah Together

This past year marked the first full year of our Weekly Parashah Study Companion, a curated email series that supports independent learning with an overview of the weekly Torah reading. Sponsored by Samuel and Debra Moed in honor of their parents Marilyn and Leon (z"l) Moed, the series is designed to enrich Torah learning for all users, from newcomers to experts, and more than 14,000 people signed up in 2024.



"This is my first year reading the Torah in its entirety! I don't think I ever would have kept up except for this email series. It made learning Torah fun and thought-provoking and so motivating!! I'm excited to dig and learn for a second year."

#### ventures spotlight: Simchat Torah Challenge



Sefaria worked with The Margaret and Daniel Loeb Foundation to help launch their Simchat Torah Challenge, an initiative inspiring Jews everywhere to commit to reading the weekly Torah portion for one year in commemoration

of October 7. In less than two months, more than 13,000 people signed up, and that number continues to rise. This project is a direct outgrowth of Sefaria's new Ventures strategy, which aims to seed innovative Torah projects outside the confines of our website and app. With Sefaria's interface directly embedded in the Simchat Torah Challenge website, we're thrilled to help support new digital Torah experiences like these that can help realize Sefaria's vision of a rich and vibrant digital Torah ecosystem for all. See page 12 of this report for more on our Ventures work.

## A Year in Learning

The Sefaria Digital Collection is an online home for the Jewish written tradition. By preserving our sacred texts in machine-readable format, Sefaria works to safeguard our tradition for future generations of learners, helping Torah to flourish into the digital age and beyond. Below are just a few of the works we added to the Digital Collection in 2024.

## Growing the Library

#### **COMPLETE ENGLISH MIDRASH RABBAH**

Four years ago, Sefaria began to work with a team of translators to craft a new, original English translation of <u>Midrash Rabbah</u>. With the release of Vayikra, Bamidbar, and Devarim Rabbah, this year we finally brought this massive project to completion.

#### TIKKUNEI ZOHAR IN ENGLISH

In May, our library expanded to include <u>two volumes</u> of a <u>first-ever English translation of Tikkunei Zohar</u>, one of the foundational texts in kabbalistic literature.

#### **KEHOT ENGLISH TORAH TRANSLATION**

Thanks to our partnership with the Simchat Torah Challenge, we were able to acquire this <u>Torah translation</u> that is interwoven with Rashi's classic commentary as articulated by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

#### **RUSSIAN TORAH TRANSLATION**

We released a <u>modern Russian-language translation of biblical texts</u> including all five books of Torah, several books of Prophets, and the scrolls of Ruth and Esther.



"This is a huge deal. My mother runs a tehillim group every single night since the beginning of the war in English, Russian, and Hebrew and I know she relies heavily on Sefaria."

#### Partnered Collections

We are proud to include works by two great modern scholars in our collection: Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz and Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, whose wisdom is now more accessible than ever thanks to the following collaborations.



## The Rabbi Jonathan Sacks Collection

In 2023, Sefaria announced a historic collaboration with Koren Jerusalem and The Rabbi Sacks Legacy to bring Rabbi Sacks's literary legacy online and maximize its impact and reach. Since then, we've added a number of celebrated works to this collection, including The Jonathan Sacks Haggadah, the five-part Covenant and Conversation series, and Rabbi Sacks' collected essays about the weekly parashah, with plenty more to come.

Photo Credit: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy



#### The Nash-Bravmann Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz Collection

The Jack Nash and Ludwig Bravmann Collection is the digital home for works by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz on Sefaria. Rabbi Steinsaltz's complete English translation of the Talmud first became available on Sefaria as the William Davidson Talmud in 2017, and the Nash-Bravmann Collection was launched in 2024 in collaboration with the Steinsaltz Center with the addition of Steinsaltz's complete commentaries on Tanakh and Mishneh Torah.

Photo Credit: Steinsaltz Center

#### Other New Additions

**Tanakh and Talmud commentaries**, including the Ramban's (Nachmanides) commentary on Job

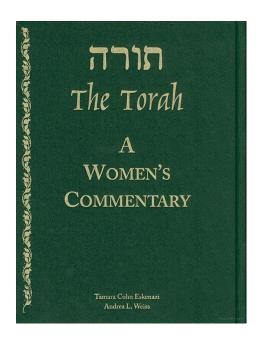
A Modern Hebrew edition of Guide for the Perplexed by Rambam (Maimonides)

Works by the contemporary Jewish theologian Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits

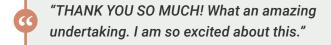
## Amplifying Women's Voices

### New Works by Women Scholars

This past year was tremendous for women's Torah at Sefaria. In December, with the generous support of Sally Gottesman, we released *The Torah: A Women's Commentary*, from CCAR Press and Women of Reform Judaism. With perspectives from over 100 scholars and artists spanning the spectrum of Jewish affiliation, it is the first comprehensive Torah commentary authored entirely by women. This release was met with lots of positive feedback from our users:



"I am so happy! I taught with Sefaria all semester, along with scanned commentaries from the Women's Commentary, since the book was WAY TOO EXPENSIVE for my students, almost half of whom are pell eligible."



We also released the following texts from Urim Publishers:

A Lifetime Companion to the Laws of Jewish Family Life by Deena Zimmerman
 Torah of the Mothers: Contemporary Jewish Women Read Classical Jewish Texts by Ora Wiskind-Elper and Susan Handelman
 Learning to Read Midrash by Simi Peters

## Word-by-Word Fellowship



Sefaria is committed to amplifying women's voices on the Jewish bookshelf and beyond. In the spring of 2023, we launched our Word-by-Word Fellowship, a three-year incubator supporting 20 women writers in developing new works of Torah scholarship. This past year, fellow Gila Fine became the first of this cohort to publish when her book, *The Madwoman in the Rabbi's Attic*, was released by Koren Jerusalem. Gila's book went on to receive a National Book Award from the Jewish Book Council as well as a Rabbi Sacks Book Prize from Yeshiva University.





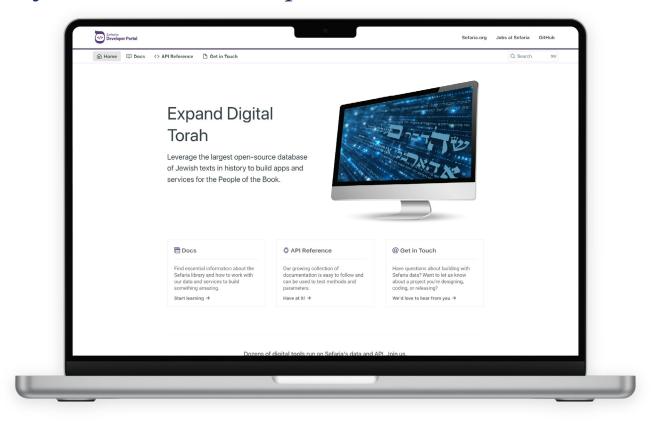
"I had the tremendous privilege of spending time with my amazing colleagues at the Word-by-Word Fellowship, thinking together about the best way to bring Torah to today's world."

- RACHEL SHARANSKY DANZIGER, Word-by-Word participant

# Powering New Pathways Into the Jewish Library

As part of our Strategic Plan, Sefaria is committed to both enhancing the accessibility of our library and using our free data to support the development of innovative new learning tools outside of our website and app. We refer to initiatives that support this latter goal as Sefaria Ventures, and we're honored to share here just some of the ways Sefaria helped to build a more vibrant Torah learning ecosystem in 2024.

## Sefaria API and Developer Portal



More than 230 Torah technologies already make use of Sefaria's free data, from popular sites like My Jewish Learning and Hadran to major media outlets like *Tablet Magazine*. With the launch of our new Developer Portal, we are working to make the digital building blocks of our library accessible to a wider range of developers.

Here are a few highlights of projects that our open API and Developer Portal have helped bring to life this past year:

#### **TANAKH TRIVIA GAME**

A high school student in Israel used the Developer Portal to write code for a <u>new tutorial</u> that demonstrates a proof of concept for a Tanakh trivia game powered by Sefaria's API.

#### YESHIVA UNIVERSITY THESIS

Gila Linzer, a senior in Stern College's honors computer science program used Sefaria's API to conduct research on her <u>undergraduate thesis</u>, coding a function that transcribes lectures on the daily Talmud page (Daf Yomi).



"I find Sefaria's searchable Jastrow Dictionary to be an invaluable tool when I encounter an unfamiliar Aramaic word."

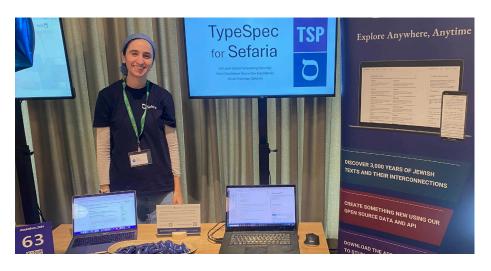
- GILA LINZER

#### **SEFORIM BLOG**

A researcher used Sefaria's list of library connections to <u>computationally determine</u> which tractate of the Babylonian Talmud is the best representative of all six orders of Mishnah.

#### MICROSOFT HACKATHON

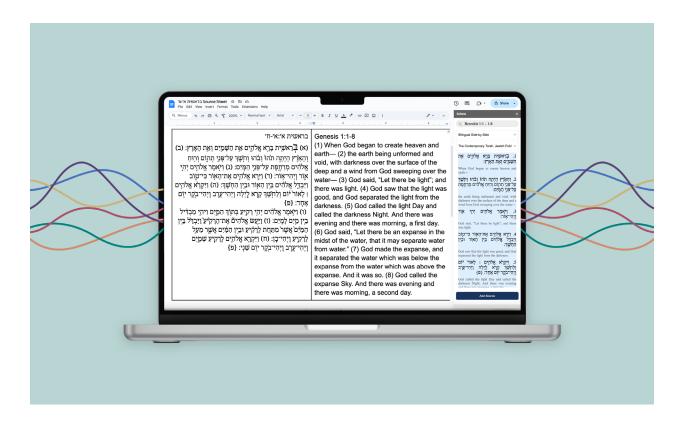
An engineer at Microsoft (and avid Sefaria fan) reached out to work with us for a hackathon project focused on helping Sefaria expedite the way we generate the interactive API reference portion of our Developer Portal.



Sefaria Junior Software Engineer Sarah Kreitman presenting at the Microsoft Hackathon in Israel.

## Creating New Digital Tools for Sharing Torah

In April 2024, we launched <u>Sefaria for Google Docs</u>, a free browser extension that makes it easier to bring texts from the library into any Docs-based project. In just one month, the extension surpassed 10,000 downloads, with more than 25,000 downloads to date.





"Just wanted to say how great, helpful, [and] user friendly your new Google docs extension is... just started playing around with it — but it is so fun! Kudos to the Sefaria team :-)"



"Okay, okay—I finally did the Sefaria integration with Google Docs thing and my life is officially transformed. Well done, friends."

## Spearheading New Research

## Letter from Lev Israel, Chief Technology Officer

Sefaria Community,

When Sefaria was founded a decade ago, our co-founders Josh Foer and Brett Lockspeiser made a bold decision to keep our project open source to remain maximally accessible to the Jewish people. They weren't sure what technology would look like in 10 years, but they were certain about one thing: that whatever technology existed, it would need data. This belief led to Sefaria's organizational mandate to keep everything — from code to content — entirely open access, so that new educational tools can evolve as technology evolves. Today, the fact that AI systems like ChatGPT and Claude are able to work with Jewish texts is a direct result of their being trained on the content in Sefaria's open-access library — a true testament to the vision of our founders.

As a nonprofit tech company, Sefaria is committed to utilizing the most cutting-edge technology to advance our mission to bring Torah into the digital age. This past year, our engineering team was intensely focused on researching the potential of AI to enhance the study of Jewish texts, investing tremendous resources into developing new products that will make the Sefaria user experience better than ever.

As we explore ways to enhance our library using AI, we are committed to doing so in a responsible manner that fully aligns with the needs of the broader Jewish learning community. Maximizing the utility of our library in service of our users will always remain our top priority. As we embark on this exciting next chapter, we invite Torah learners everywhere to join us in ushering in the next era in the great Jewish conversation.

Yours in learning,



Lev Israel
Chief Technology Officer



Data and APIs from Sefaria underlie the model of Torah in ChatGPT, Anthropic's Claude, Google Gemini, Dicta's models, and many smaller AI projects.

#### SNEAK PEEK: Semantic Search

The best librarians not only help readers find what they've come to look for, they also offer tailored suggestions for titles and resources that might otherwise be overlooked. For this reason, exploring the creation of an "Ask the Librarian" feature for Sefaria was named as a core goal in our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan.We're excited that advances in Al have offered new paths forward in this direction.

This year we partnered with two giants in the fields — the German tech nonprofit AppliedAI and the Technical University of Munich (TUM) — to develop a tool that will enable users to use semantic search to locate any text within our library. Unlike keyword search, which relies solely on exact word matches, semantic search understands the context and meaning behind words, yielding more exact and sophisticated results. AppliedAI spotlighted our project in a white paper (see page 17).

## Sefaria in the Public Square

Sefaria aims to be a leading voice in the exploration of Al's potential for Jewish text study, and accordingly, we are leaning into the responsibilities of this role. Below are several public engagement highlights since Sefaria began its deep dive into Al research:

Sefaria Chief Learning Officer **Sara Wolkenfeld** has emerged as a leading authority on the pedagogical implications of Al. She recently published articles in *The Atlantic* and *Arc*, and presented talks on Al in Jewish education at the SAPIR Summit on Jewish Leadership and other conferences.

Senior Engineer **Noah Santacruz** was a featured speaker at Israel's annual PyCon conference, <u>presenting a talk</u> on the clustering algorithm that he developed to advance our Topic pages work.



Chief Technology Officer **Lev Israel** spoke about our semantic search prototype at the **Digital Life Design (DLD) Conference** in Munich in a session on using Al to help people study Jewish texts.



Sefaria Senior Engineer Noah Santacruz presenting at PyCon

"Much of the debate around AI hinges on the question Can a computer do it better? But Jewish texts insist that the most important question is about process, not product."

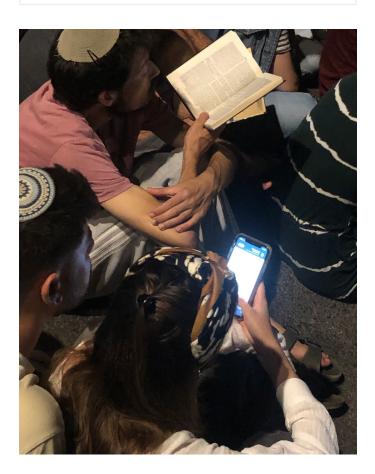
- SARA WOLKENFELD, The Atlantic

## The Sefaria Community

I have the ability to look-up quotations quickly and from anywhere at any time (except, of course, Shappat and Yom Tov).



"Wisdom, history, tradition, critical discourse, open source networked data and beautiful art, all in one at Sefaria."



"Thank you guys!! Your project is absolutely mindblowing, every little portion of text is incredibly well explained (through resources, commentaries, sheets, dictionary, you name it!) I can only imagine the absurd amount of work this takes! I donated and will donate again, as this is a priceless resource for me. I'm studying for gyur and you are of huge help. Keep up the great job!"

DEAR SEFARIA,
THANK YOU FOR MAKING SO MUCH
AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH! YOU HAVE
MADE MY WORLD SO MUCH BIGGER.

C

"Sefaria is simply outstanding. To be able to access our Sacred texts with ease anywhere is truly a gift. In addition I ran out of bookshelf space a couple of years ago, and now I have these texts close at hand. Baruch ha-Shem."

0

"Sefaria, you guys make me so excited to finally start keeping up with the weekly parsha in the next jewish year. Sending so much love."

## Celebrating 10 Years and Sefaria Pioneers

On March 4, 2024, Sefaria held its 10th-anniversary gala at the New York Public Library in Manhattan, a spectacular evening attended by 400 friends of the organization, old and new. We honored several remarkable individuals who have demonstrated deep commitment to Sefaria since day one:

Phyllis Cook
 Joshua Kushner
 James Rothschild
 Ilan Kaufthal
 Ilan and Dana Rubinstein

Thank you to the people who have helped empower us to create a brighter, more connected world of Jewish learning.



"Sefaria has built the modern luchot (tablets), opening up the world of Jewish learning to everyone and helping to make universal Jewish literacy a true possibility, perhaps for the first time in modern times."

- GILA SACKS



▲ Comedian Alex Edelman emceed the evening.



▲ CEO Daniel Septimus honoring several Sefaria Pioneers.

## Finances

Sefaria's spending in 2024 reflected the goals outlined in our 2023–2027 Strategic Plan, with key expenditures including investments in platform development, content expansion, user engagement, and organizational infrastructure. Our revenue for the year came from individual donations as well as foundation grants. In sum, we received \$8.6 million in cash revenue and spent \$8.2 million on Sefaria's maintenance and expansion.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the individual supporters and grantmaking institutions who make Sefaria's work possible. In a year of so many pressing global needs, we were grateful for every dollar donated in support of our mission.



**Engagement and Learning** 

23%

Library Acquisitions

24%

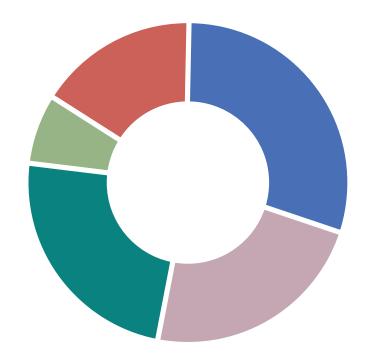
**Product Development** 

7%

Operations and Organizational Management

16%\*

Fundraising and Events



\*Our 2024 Fundraising costs were higher than previous years because we held our 10th Anniversary Gala.

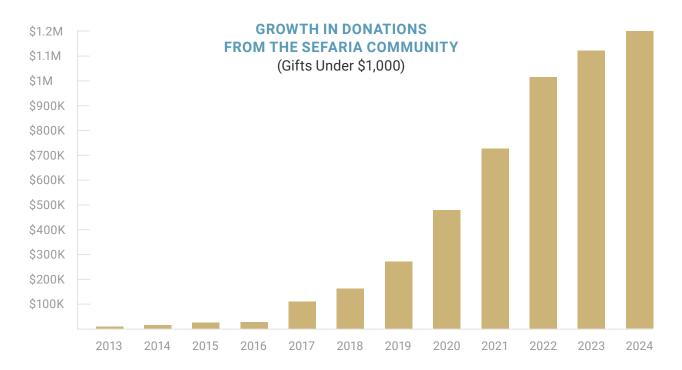


To learn more about Sefaria's financials, you can look at the latest IRS Form 990 at <u>sefaria.org/ways-to-give</u> or you can explore <u>Guidestar.org</u>.

## Fundraising

Last year, more than 11,000 individuals and several major Jewish foundations supported Sefaria's growing work and impact. We are deeply grateful to everyone who has cast their vote of confidence in Sefaria's library by supporting us financially. In 2024, we launched Giving Circles, a new program aimed at building Sefaria's long-term sustainability, and we've been heartened to see so many individuals sign up.

We also continued to see more and more Sefaria users give back to the library through monthly or annual gifts. These contributions – the vast majority of which are under \$1,000 – have quickly added up to form a foundational component of our budget. It's inspiring to see so many Sefaria users from around the world and of all backgrounds come together in their love of Jewish learning to give back to the library.



## Community Giving At a Glance

\$1,248,662 Total Raised in 2024
\$35 Average User Donation
11,630 Total Donors
4,538 First-Time Donors
\$386,422 Raised from 2,107 Sustainers (monthly donors)
133 Days of Learning Sponsored

## Thank You to our Supporters

## Recognizing Lifetime Giving

#### FOUNDERS (\$5,000,000+) -

Jim Joseph Foundation William Davidson Foundation

#### PARTNERS (\$1,000,000-\$4,999,999)

Anonymous

Anonymous

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family

Philanthropies

Crown Family Philanthropies

Koschitzky Family Maimonides Fund

#### PATRONS (\$500,000-\$999,999) -

Anonymous Joshua Kushner

## 2024 Giving Circle Members

#### **VISIONARIES (\$100,000+)** -

Anonymous

Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family

Philanthropies

Crown Family Philanthropies

The Gottesman Fund

Joshua Kushner

Jim Joseph Foundation\*

Koschitzky Family\*

Maimonides Fund\*

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The Margaret and Daniel Loeb Foundation\*

Walder Foundation

William Davidson Foundation\*

#### INNOVATORS (\$72,000-\$99,999) -

Anonymous

#### BUILDERS (\$36,000-\$71,999)

Anonymous

Aryeh B. and Elana Bourkoff Gary and Lois Kohn-Claar

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Kolatch Family Foundation\*

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The Natan Fund

The Paul E. Singer Foundation

Samuel and Debra Moed

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Tony Felzen

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Andrew and Jackie Klaber

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The Clergy of Temple Israel of Boston

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Emily Yoffe and John Mintz

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Herlands\*

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Giti and Jack Bendheim\*

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Rabbis of Park Avenue Synagogue

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Yehuda and Rebecca Shmidman

Xavier Montes Yitz and Adira Hier

Yoni and Talia Engelhart

## We are thankful to the following individuals and organizations for their generosity:

David Nimmer Leading Edge

Noah Leibowitz and Dechert LLP Mark Cohen and Pearl Cohen LLP



#### Contact

To learn more about becoming a lead supporter, please contact Desiree Neissani, development officer, at <a href="mailto:desiree@sefaria.org">desiree@sefaria.org</a>. Donations to Sefaria are tax deductible as allowed by law.

<sup>\*</sup>These supporters generously sponsored Sefaria's 10th Anniversary Gala in 2024.



#### Learn

Learn with Sefaria. Join the 775,000+ people visiting Sefaria every month to learn Torah, build source sheets, and keep the great, millenia-old Jewish conversation going.



#### Share

Have you published or translated a text that you'd like to share on Sefaria? Reach out to our content team at <a href="mailto:hello@sefaria.org">hello@sefaria.org</a>.



#### Donate

Your support keeps our library open and free for all, forever. <u>Join</u> the thousands of people who contribute what they can to keep Sefaria going.



#### Sponsor a Day of Learning

You can make a more permanent mark by sponsoring a <u>Day of Learning</u> in honor or memory of loved ones, or in celebration of a life event or learning milestone.



#### Join a Giving Circle

Ensure a vibrant future for the Jewish textual tradition by joining a Giving Circle. <u>Giving Circle</u> members ensure Sefaria's long-term sustainability and strategic growth. Each Giving Circle includes special opportunities to engage with our team, leadership, scholars, and educators at events and in custom learning sessions.



#### Stay Connected

Like us on Facebook, follow us on Instagram, or sign up for our newsletter to keep abreast of our latest text releases, features, and updates. To get involved, email <a href="mailto:desiree@sefaria.org">desiree@sefaria.org</a>.

