

[Celebrating our Institute's 16th Anniversary](#)

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Rabbi Marc D. Angel, Founder and Director of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, thanks our friends and supporters for having enabled us to reach this milestone for the Institute.

A while ago, I received a note from a friend with the following quotation: “Friendship isn’t about whom you have known the longest....It’s about who came and never left your side.”

Among the basic ingredients of true friendship are: loyalty, trust, mutual commitment, shared ideals. Friends are very special to us because we know that they are there for us, just as we are here for them.

When we have the safe haven of a true friend and genuine friendship, we have something precious beyond words. Friends make life worthwhile because they embody the powers of goodness, trustworthiness and love.

Friendship is about those special people who are part of our lives and who have never left our side. Friendship is about people who believe in us and in whose goodness we believe. Friendship is about people who really care about us, just as we really care about them. Friendship is about loyalty and trust, commitment and sharing.

There is a category of friendship that ties us together with people we may hardly know or whom we have never even met. This kind of friend—also true and loyal—is someone with whom we share ideas, ideals and aspirations. The friendship is not based on face to face interactions, but on the interactions of our minds, our hearts and souls. It is spiritual friendship of kindred minds and souls.

We have various communities of such friends: people with whom we share a religious vision; and/or a vision for society; and/or a humanitarian cause; and/or a

commitment to art, literature, science etc. Although we may not know these friends personally, we know we can count on them --just as they can count on us-- in our shared commitments to ideas and ideals in which we believe. These are people who have come into our lives and never left our sides. They are with us, as we are with them.

We are marking the 16th anniversary of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals, founded in October 2007. During these amazing years, the Institute has grown into an important force on behalf of an intellectually vibrant, compassionate and inclusive Orthodox Judaism. Our website jewishideas.org has been attracting many thousands of visits per month; our journal, *Conversations*, is read by thousands of readers worldwide; our University Network has included hundreds of students, with programs on many American campuses. Our National Scholar's online learning link and our Zoom classes have brought Torah wisdom to a large audience, as has our youtube channel [youtube.com/jewishideasorg](https://www.youtube.com/jewishideasorg). Our "Sephardic Initiative" is focusing on teacher training, publications, online resources. The Institute has been here as a resource for the many people seeking guidance in Jewish law, tradition, worldview.

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals began as an idea, as a framework for reshaping the thinking within the Orthodox Jewish community and beyond. It has been a strong, steady voice for diversity, creativity, dynamism. It has been a strong, steady voice against authoritarianism, obscurantism, extremism and sectarianism.

The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has made great strides of progress in the past sixteen years, and we hope it will continue to grow dramatically in the years ahead.

How did we get to this point? How did our Institute community manage to undertake so many projects and raise millions of dollars to fund our work?

The real answer is encapsulated in one word: friendship.

True and trusted personal friends have never left our side. They have stood with us in our successes and in our setbacks. They have rejoiced at our victories and offered consolation and encouragement at our failures.

Along with these true and trusted personal friends, we have been fortunate to have won the spiritual friendship of thousands of like-minded people throughout the world. We have a large and growing circle of friends who believe in the ideas and ideals of our Institute; who invest generously in our work; who are partners in

the Institute's efforts. Through our shared religious vision, all of us are making a stand for a better, more intelligent, more diverse, more compassionate Orthodox Judaism...a better Judaism for all Jews and for society as a whole.

As we celebrate our 16th anniversary milestone, I express my deep and abiding gratitude to the friends who have stood with us faithfully. I thank personal friends for being there for us, as I hope we have been here for them. I thank our large community of spiritual friends—Institute members and supporters—who have joined us shoulder to shoulder in our important work.

I thank Board members of the Institute for their friendship, leadership and support: Isaac Ainetchi, Rabbi Hayyim Angel, Daniel Cohen, Andre Guenoun, Nugzari Jakobishvili and Gilles Sion. We remember with love and respect our late Board member Stephen Neuwirth, of blessed memory. I thank Alan Shamoon and the Apple Bank for Savings for making office space available to our Institute.

I thank the Institute's talented staff for their remarkable work: Rabbi Hayyim Angel, National Scholar; Andre Guenoun, Business Manager; Ronda Angel Arking, Managing Editor; Laurynn Lowe, Website Manager; and David Olivestone, Production Manager of Conversations.

I thank the Almighty Who has sustained us and enabled us to reach this milestone.