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on the cover: Newly arrived Year-in-Israel rabbinical, cantorial, and education students in Jerusalem.

**T**he numbers may not be great, but the need is. Jews in the Southern United States are as passionately committed to their own and their children's Jewish education as any in the world. Because of the scarcity of Jewish professionals in the South and because of the strong cultural imperative to affiliate religiously in this part of the country, Jews here work terribly hard for their Jewish education and identification. I find the circumstances and the spirit of Southern Jewry fascinating, inspiring, and very moving. The opportunity to make a difference here – not to mention the challenge of creating a new position and a new kind of rabbinate – was too compelling for me to pass up... Most fundamentally, I hope to make it easier for Jews to be Jewish in the South."

**Rabbi Debra Kassoff (C '03)**, *Director of Rabbinic Services for the Institute of Southern Jewish Life*

**A**s a religious school teacher and a youth group and camp songleader since the 1970s, I have always loved sharing and teaching Jewish music. I was a founding member, accompanist and section leader of Kol Dodi, a Jewish community choir in New Jersey. I sing, compose and arrange music for Begeg Kefet, a group of seven singers, devoted to *tzedakah*. The group, now completing its third recording, includes my wife, Beth, and five friends who are rabbis and cantors. I left my job of 17 years as a senior computer security systems programmer to become a cantor and devote myself to that which I love so much. In the coming year, I will be leading services at Shir Shalom, the Reform Temple of Suffern, NY, and at Temple Isaiah in Lexington, MA, as well as teaching in the religious school at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun Barnert Temple in Franklin Lakes, NJ."

**Cantor Leon Sher (N '03)**

**M**y decision to enter the military began the morning of 9/11. I knew then that I wanted to directly support the efforts of defending this country. And while I feel honored to be the first female rabbi in the Air Force, it also saddens me that more women have not entered this field. As rabbi and chaplain, I hope to give the brave souls in uniform a greater sense of purpose and meaning in their work and in their life, and to deepen their love for and connection with God."

**Rabbi Sarah Schechter (L '03)**

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