



Annual Report
&
Annual Financial Report
for the August 2009 – July 2010
Academic Year

STICHTING ROBERT A. LEVISSON

Postadres: In De Wolken 45, 1186 BG Amstelveen, NL – contact@levisson.nl – www.levisson.nl

Tel.: 06-54 69 09 19, (020) 640 24 58 – Bankrekening: 40.03.78.213

KvK: 34178043 - ANBI nr. 8110.01.994

Introduction

Education and transferring knowledge have always been characteristic for Jewish communities, because they are guarantees for a Jewish future. Our Institute is dedicated to ensuring the quality of this education, at home, in congregations and in educational centers.

A body of rabbis who are genuinely at home in the specific Dutch-Jewish culture does not spring up overnight, nor can it be created by the waving of a magic wand. It requires a dedicated group of highly qualified teachers and a board that is inspired by both our traditions and contemporary developments.

Training teachers, cantors and pastoral workers who know how to convey the tradition in a relevant and inspiring way is very important, but the core of all training is that of rabbis.

Being a rabbi is both a calling and a profession; and — as nowadays is the case in all other fields — the rabbi and his/her work are more closely scrutinized and critically followed than in the past. This means that a rabbi has to be clear about motivation and moral attitude and be prepared to adapt to changing attitudes. An open ear to the needs of congregations and empathy for the spiritual quest of at least a part of the non-affiliated Jews is essential, as is anticipating needs that have not even entered the consciousness of the community.

In order to cater to all these aspects, the Levisson program takes into account the intellectual, personal and spiritual development of the students.

In this report you will find news about events and developments in our institute in the academic year 2009-2010, from the the festive start of the academic year in August 2009 to the even more festive inauguration of the new building of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, where our institute is now housed in beautiful and functional surroundings.

You will read about our rabbinic students and graduated rabbis; about the cantors, the beginnings of our teachers program, developments concerning the library and our research project. We inform you about changes in the board and the academic committee, our concerns about our limited financial resources and other issues. Last year some of our graduated rabbis and cantors wrote about their first professional experiences. This year some board members, members of the academic committee and lecturers will have the floor so you can appreciate the strong motivation that drives the institute and inspires our students.

Leaf through this report and read whatever holds your interest. We appreciate your comments and are eager to answer any remaining questions.



Robert A. Levisson was one of the great liberal leaders in our country.
He was an inspiring speaker and writer and a true friend of Israel.
He passed away in December 2001
Yehi zichro baruch - יהי זכרו ברוך

Contents¹

Introduction	2
1 The academic year 2009-2010	4
The opening of the academic year	4
The completion of the academic year	4
The rabbinic students	4
President Prof. Ted Young: Studying with Levisson	5
Professional Development	6
Teacher Training Program	7
Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman: What do you need to become a rabbi?	8
Academic research	9
The Library	9
Rabbi dr. Tzvi Marx: Exciting and chilling...	10
New Board members	11
The Dean	11
Drs. Corry van Straten: My involvement with the Institute	12
Rabbi Tamarah Benima: Bright heads	13
The Friends	14
Plans for 2010-2011 and beyond	14
Mr Ite Rümke	15
2 Finance	16
Annual accounts August 2009 through July 2010	16
Balance as of 31 juli 2010	16
Notes	16
Profit and Loss Account August 2009 through July 2010	17
Notes	17
Fundraising and Budgets	18
Teacher Training Program	19
Cantorial Training	19
Joint project: one digital catalogue for three libraries	19
Drs. Joost Levy	20
Dr. Hannah Neudecker	21
Prof. Irene Zwiep, Chair Academic Committee: Kashrut for the soul	22

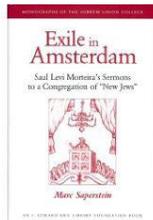
¹ The individual contributions are printed in a different font.

1. The academic year 2009-2010

Opening ceremony



The academic year began officially on August 27, 2009 with a lecture by Rabbi Prof. Marc Saperstein, Dean of the Leo Baeck College, the rabbinic school of London. He described the situation of the Jews of Amsterdam in the first half of the 17th century and spoke of the Amsterdam master-*magid* Rabbi Saul Levi Morteira and his famous drashot for the “New Jews” in the city. Saperstein has published an analysis of these sermons, which have recently been discovered in the Rabbinic Seminary in Budapest.



The text of his lecture can be found on the Institute’s web site, www.levisson.nl/en/archive/the-presentations.html.

Prior to this lecture some “Levisson rabbis” told the audience about their experiences in the first year of working in their own congregations. A few of our cantors provided wonderful musical accompaniment.

The completion of the academic year

On August 29, 2010 the new building of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam was dedicated in a grand and festive manner. Our Institute is now housed in a modest, but beautifully furnished room on the third floor. It is mainly used as a lecture room, for individual study, and as a meeting room. A small, specialized part of our library is housed in this room. The major part of our book collection is part of the main library, which we share with the Liberal Jewish Congregation Amsterdam and which is also used as a lecture and study room (read more on page 9).



The rabbinic students

As noted in our last annual report, the required pace of studying turned out to be incompatible with the students’ professional lives. The study program was adapted, which meant extending the duration with one year. Despite this, it became apparent at the beginning of this academic year that Joram Rookmaaker could not find the needed time and was forced to stop his rabbinic studies. We all hope he will eventually have the opportunity to re-enroll. Meanwhile, he still takes the Talmud classes as a contract student and sometimes assists Rabbi Nava-Tehila as a volunteer in the services at the liberal congregation of Utrecht.



David Snuijf returned to the program after his recovery from an automobile accident. Because of personal circumstances he was not yet able to catch up on his backlog, although further delays were prevented. We also want to congratulate him here: early in this academic year he stood under the chuppah with his bride.

Clary Rooda is progressing very well with her studies. Beit Ha'Chidush is very happy with her and her work as "acting rabbi," a position in which she is coached by the Institute and that counts towards the required internships.



At the conclusion of the academic year Rabbi Albert Ringer gave up his position as pastoral worker in the Psycho-Medical Center Parnassia, The Hague. Clary applied for the position (one day a week) and was hired. She is supervised there by drs. Corry van Straten, who again taught a module Pastoral Counseling at our Institute in the fall of 2009 (see also p. 12).



At the beginning of the academic year Ira Goldberg from The Hague was officially admitted to our rabbinic program. He is an American, who got his Master in Jewish Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary (Conservative) in New York. He has been living and working in the Netherlands with his wife and children for five years. Professionally he is a Strategic Planner for the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

We developed a special integration program for him, so he can get better acquainted with both the Dutch and the Dutch-Jewish culture and with Liberal Judaism as taught and practised in our congregations. He is diligently studying Dutch and takes all his classes in Dutch.

We expect Clary and Ira to graduate in the spring of 2012 and David hopefully some time after them.

New students

Looking into the future needs of the Dutch community, it is to be expected that the congregations will need replacements for some rabbis around 2020. It is a principle of the Levisson Institute to only train rabbis for our local needs. As a consequence we will not accept any new students until the present group has finished its studies. During 2012 we will prepare for recruitment so that in the fall of 2013 a new group of rabbinic students will hopefully be ready to begin their studies. (See more on page 14.)

Learning with Levisson

A little more than a year ago I was asked if I would be interested in joining the board of the Levisson Institute to be its new chairman. Henk Wagenfeld, having filled this position with distinction since the founding of the Institute, had decided that it was time to step down from this responsibility. I had served on the Academic Committee of the Institute for a number of years and had had the pleasure of participating in the *semicha* of our first five Levisson graduates.

I weighed the decision for about five minutes, checked with my family if they were in agreement with my assuming this responsibility, and then informed Rabbi Lilienthal, who had extended the invitation, that my answer was an emphatic Yes. My nomination to this position was confirmed by the Nederlands Verbond voor Progressief Jodendom and I assumed my responsibilities in January of 2010.

The *why* behind my decision is perhaps interesting as it gets to the core of what I believe the Levisson Institute can represent and does represent to Dutch Jewry.

I have spent virtually my entire 40-year professional career as an academic. Trained as an electrical engineer and scientist in the United States, I have been involved in applied physics for the past 29 years at the Technische Universiteit Delft where I now have the status of professor emeritus. Teaching physics and mathematics, performing physics-based research, and trying to find objective ways to describe our physical world have been - and continue to be - the focus of my professional world. And at no time have I ever felt, have I ever discovered, a conflict with my life as a Jew. Indeed, the focus on learning, questioning, and participating are essential to both Judaism and my professional world.

As a member of the Levisson Academic Committee, I had the opportunity to use my formal experience as a member of an academic community to help form the character of our Levisson training programs and through that the students who participate in these programs. I did not teach in these programs; I do not have the credentials. But I could evaluate programs, procedures, and progress.

As chairman of the Levisson bestuur, I now have the opportunity of helping to guide the Institute through the coming years. We face many challenges: How do we find new rabbinic students? How many students do we need to train? In addition to the successful, ongoing training programs for chazzaniem and teachers, what other activities should we assume within the Institute? Where do we find the funds to match our needs and ambitions? Where do we find the dedicated, talented people who are essential to an Institute that has gained international recognition? And when the time arrives, where do we find a successor to Rabbi David Lilienthal whose vision and tireless effort have made all of this possible?

So why did I say Yes to the invitation? Because as someone who loves education, in general, and what it means to our Jewish community in particular, how could I ever say No?

I do not consider my efforts at Levisson Institute as work; I consider it a privilege.

Ted Young
November, 2010

Professional Development

The Stichting Collectieve Marorgelden ('Maror') promised us limited subsidies for the further professional development of graduated rabbis and cantors. Unfortunately the conditions on which the funds were granted were such that the board decided not to accept the subsidy. The programs were still implemented, though some in slightly different formats.

A one day seminar under the auspices of Rabbi Prof. Marc Saperstein (London, see page 4) was organized for the rabbis, following the opening of the academic year.

In January 2010 a one day seminar took place with Prof. Zvi Zohar of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem and the Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan.

A planned 5-day seminar with Rabbi prof. Margaret Wenig (Hebrew Union College, New York) was canceled at the last moment. Rabbi Wenig encountered visa problems on arrival in London – where she would also teach at the Leo Baeck College – and was immediately sent back to New York! We live in interesting times.

The mentoring of the graduated rabbis also continues. It deserves mention that the World Union Rabbinic Review Committee at the end of the compulsory mentoring period decided to make the preliminary recognition of the *semicha* definitive. Once again this was a pleasant moment for all involved.

Four training days were held for the cantors, in which subjects were dealt with that had not yet been treated sufficiently during the program.

More seminars are planned for the year 2010-2011.

Teacher Training Program

After over a year of preparation the Teacher Training Program of the Verbond started with 14 new students in June 2010, for the first time under the auspices and direction of the Levisson Institute. In the new program the emphasis has shifted from academic rigor to didactic and pedagogic skills. The Jewish content remains a main item of study, but the focus is, in comparison to earlier courses, more directed to ensure that the students learn to “translate” Jewish contents for children in different age groups using existing teaching methods.



The coordination of the course is in the experienced hands of Matty van Eldik and Liesbeth Aussen, leaders of our National Education Center, Rimón. Rabbi Hetty Groeneveld is involved in the planning of the curriculum in consultation with the Dean of the Levisson Institute and the Centre for Jewish Education at the Leo Baeck College in London. The Leo Baeck College will also provide some of the instructors.

You can find more information on the website of the Institute.



What do you need to become a rabbi ?

It's 2003.

On the phone is David Lilienthal, who invites me for a brainstorm about "those other skills and sorts of knowledge" - not the rabbinic ones - you need to become a rabbi. "I am creating a program in The Netherlands," he tells me, "and I hope that you are willing to share your knowledge and experience at JMW (Jewish Welfare Board) to help us figure out how to do this." In no time the brainstorm group was transformed into the Committee Professional Training.



It's exciting to be involved in shaping a curriculum for a program that doesn't yet exist in The Netherlands. It's important to offer a wide range of subjects, taught by professionals who are also familiar with the Jewish community in The Netherlands and who know how we interact. Getting professionals to teach for only five students, whose classes take place at unusual times, is an art in and of itself. No supervisor has experience in supervising student-rabbis. In the end, lack of time is the toughest problem. Creative thinking is a must.

There are also differences of opinion with the students about the organization of the program. Who gets to decide? Assertive students or a group of smart-aleck programmers?

My expertise is in social work and I had no prior experience with teaching. My contribution lies in the psycho-social field. I have knowledge of and experience with what is characteristic of Jews in The Netherlands, both their strengths and their sensitivities. The Dutch-Jewish network I built working at Jewish Welfare Board comes in handy here. What belongs to the role of the rabbi? What exactly is his/her function? What knowledge do you need about the non-Jewish society around us, which position do you have inside the Jewish community and which position outside it? How do you act in groups? In your own congregation, or outside as representative of your congregation? You need to acquire knowledge of life cycle processes, different backgrounds, and questions and problems of the people you work with. How to handle conflicts? And much more, of course...

The second group of students have an even harder time of it. They are a class of three with full-time jobs. A hell of a job in limited time. But it should be possible and it's our duty - also my duty as a student counselor - to help clear part of that road for them.

I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw the first five students receive their *semicha*. What a special task this has been. There they were: five officially recognized, Dutch rabbis of our own. A small miracle.

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman

Academic research

Last year we mentioned in our annual report that the historian Chaya Brasz had been commissioned with an academic research project about developments in (religious) Judaism in The Netherlands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, eventually leading to the publication of a book on the subject. The aim is to fill a gap in the historiography of Dutch Jewry.



After sufficient funds had been promised by the Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds, Maror, the Henriëtte Boas Fonds and the Stichting Maatschappij tot Nut der Israëlieten in Nederland, the project could actually begin in November 2009. The research is progressing according to plan and the reports from the researcher make the readers want to see more.

The book is scheduled to be published by the Hebrew Union College Press in Cincinnati in November 2013 and will afterwards be translated into Dutch.

During the opening ceremony of the academic year 2011-1012 Chaya Brasz will give a lecture about her most remarkable and interesting findings until then.

For a more extensive description of the project, see Appendix 1, page 22 in the 2008-2009 Annual Report (available on our website).

The Library

A month before the Liberal Jewish Congregation Amsterdam moved from its temporary home on Stadionweg at the end of July 2010, the combined library was transported to the new building. Since the books were still in disarray from the first move, it was necessary to unpack them one at a time and to scan them in order to put them in their proper place. This work took about six weeks and was almost ready at the time of the inauguration of the new building.

The project of digitally cataloguing the books ended officially after the inauguration but the work of the cataloger will continue through 2011. During the project many new books were added to the collection, which means that even though the project is finished, we will need

a professional for a few hours each week to continue the work and to keep the collection in order.



The catalogue was put online at the end of 2010. It is accessible by two links that lead to the same web site: www.levissonbibliotheek.nl and www.ljgbibliotheek.nl. It is expected that the website will be completed and fully functioning at the beginning of 2011. All information about the library can be found on this website.

Chills and Thrills



Teaching Talmud to Levisson program students who bring heart and soul but no experience to the study of Talmud: How is someone like myself who has been studying Talmud since the age of 9 (I am almost 69) to bridge this great difference in background in an educational setting with limited time and adult students with jobs and families which they have to juggle with their rabbinic studies?

I took this challenge as an educational opportunity that brought me to a modular approach to Talmud study. What do I mean by that? In a yeshiva setting, one studies a tractate continuously or least a perek (chapter) with commentaries and discussion, with chavrutah and a rebbe to balance out and even correct or realign one's own thoughts and thought processes. We do not have the luxury of that much time in our program. In the setting of the Levisson Institute, we offer study units of three hours (to be prepared by homework assignments) which are topically interesting enough to capture the students' intellectual and spiritual interest in a way that gets them focused and willing to do the hard work of reading through the Aramaic and the often difficult to read script of Rashi's commentary. Coupled with this, one engages the students with a look at the relevance of the text under study for contemporary issues that he/she will face as a rabbi in the community or as a citizen in Dutch society.

The connection between the 2nd to 6th centuries text and the reality of 2011 is not so obvious, certainly not to the student. When it is made, with the help of the mentor (myself), the delight of learning is tangible in the bet midrash where we study. And this gives the student renewed energy to master parts of this difficult but critical literature so that they will have the tools to access it in the future.

As a foreigner who has been living here since 1996, speaking to the Levisson students in Dutch, Hebrew, English, here and there throwing in a Yiddish word while our primary text is Aramaic (mediated by Steinsaltz' and Schottenstein's Talmud aids), this educational experience in Judaica is a thrilling if at times enervating (chilling) adventure. But when I see how the first generation of Levisson graduates is thriving in Dutch Jewish society and taking part in the Jewish and larger society, I feel a sort of pride that I was able to contribute something of my sixty years of Talmud to this endeavor for Jewish continuity and creativity.

Ken yirbu - may many follow in their footsteps!

Rabbi Tzvi Marx

New Board Members

In the year under report two board members made their farewells. As stated in our latest annual report, Philip Menco had to leave us because of his workload. His place was taken by Fred Salomon, former secretary of the board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and of the Verbond. Professionally he is a judge, vice-president at the Court of Justice in Amsterdam. Following Leo Frijda's departure, Fred brings a welcome addition of legal knowledge to the board.

Henk Wagenfeld, our chairman almost from the beginning, had for some time indicated that, after six years at the helm, the moment had come to hand the gavel to a successor. We owe him a great debt of gratitude for his calm and thoughtful leadership and his special contributions during the establishment of the Institute.

We were pleased that prof. Ted Young accepted the invitation of the board to succeed Henk Wagenfeld. Ted is not only an experienced administrator, but as a member of the Academic Committee from its inception, he is also well acquainted with the academic matters of the Institute (see also page 6). The only drawback of this appointment was that he could not remain a member of the Academic Committee.

This matter was resolved by using the option the chairman has to attend all committee meetings (without the right to vote). This way, the committee will not have to miss his contributions and the coordination with the board will be easier.

*From left to right:
Simone Haller (treasurer)
Fred Salomon,
Wilma Stein (secretary)
Ted Young (chairman),
Marja Hené.*

(Photo made in the temporary library at the Stadionweg.)



The Dean

This is the place to report that the Dean, Rabbi David Lilienthal, has indicated he wants to transfer the management of the Institute to a successor after the current group of students have received their *semicha*, which will probably be in the spring of 2012. The Board, the Academic Committee and also the Board of Rabbis are looking into finding a suitable successor. The Dean will ensure an orderly transition by remaining available to help his successor settle into his/her new job. Rabbi Lilienthal will also be available for teaching if that is the wish of the Institute.

My involvement with the Levisson Institute

Albert Ringer got me involved with the Levisson Instituut. When he became my colleague at the Multicultural Pastoral Care team of the Parnassia-Bavo Group. It turned out that Rabbi David Lilienthal was looking for teachers and we soon found that David and I could work well together.



My first class at the Levisson Institute was Introduction to Pastoral Care, which I taught in 2007. The second class was in 2009; its subject was Pastorate and Pastoral Consultation. As pastoral supervisor and instructor I found myself in close contact with Jewish thought. I was moved by openmindedness and freedom of thought. At the same time the rules of life from Torah are taken very seriously. Pastoral care takes place in this field of tension and is inspired by Biblical texts and tradition.

This experience has helped me in my personal growth. I am very grateful for that.

Corry van Straten

P.S. I have attached one of my columns from Parnassia magazine. It shows how important it is for rabbis to get a foothold in all types of hospitals: for pastoral care but also as a symbol.

* * * * *

I am actually Jewish....

While I was visiting her ward, she approached me. "Can I speak with you some time? I have watched you for a while..., what you are like... And now I want to talk with you." She seemed hesitant and reluctant.

We made an appointment. She told me about her life, her depressions, the taxing treatments, her search for meaning, her frequent experience of meaninglessness. There was something she didn't say. I could feel it, but left it at that. People only open up if they don't feel pressured or emotionally challenged. People open up when there is trust.

On our second appointment she immediately blurted out: "I am actually Jewish... But I am afraid to say it..." I was surprised.

Then she opened up. Liberal Jewish parents. Abroad during WWII. Experienced the holocaust only from a distance. This distance stayed with her and took over her life. She didn't feel at home anywhere. She tried several churches, felt faith, but didn't feel at home. Could she visit a Jewish congregation? But how would she go about it? Where? Could you just go to a service? And then?

Vervolg op blz. 13

I suggested we visit the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in The Hague. This was when Rabbi Soetendorp was still working there. We attended a Saturday morning service. She was very quiet and listened. Age-old Bible texts and music came to life and touched the deepest layers of the soul. She started crying. She came home. Rabbi Soetendorp invited her to visit more often and she was looked after by some female volunteers from the congregation. She smiled. It's the first time I saw her do that.

After this visit I had a few short consultations with her before she was discharged.

This is not a unique incident. There are more patients who are afraid to say they're Jewish or have Jewish roots. Fear of being laughed at, fear of being teased or discriminated against. This fear can be an obstacle in the healing process. This is the reason we added a rabbi to our Multicultural Pastoral Care team some years ago. The professional status of the rabbi encourages patients to speak about their religious background and its influence on their lives and how they deal with life events. As a Jew, you are less alone if there's a rabbi in the institution.

Meanwhile we noticed that Jewish employees in this large institution are also pleasantly surprised by the appointment of a rabbi. It meant a recognition of their identities as well.

Corry van Straten

Smart minds

What is it like to be a member of the Academic Committee? Over a year ago I joined this illustrious company of expert ladies and gentlemen. And they prove to be experts indeed. And wise. The Academic Committee has to consider difficult questions about what is required of the students, about their progress, about their professional perspectives and in which ways they can be best supported.



I assume (even though this was never explicitly stated) that the reason to ask a graduate from the Institute, a rabbi with *semicha*, to join the AC was that former students can share their experiences, and - more importantly - in what ways the program can be improved or changed. Oddly, the small number of students and the fact that everyone knows everyone else, sometimes makes it more difficult to take decisions.

I am impressed with the meticulousness, seriousness and expertise with which problems are analysed and solutions are sought. I am definitely wise, but also fierce and often quick to judge. In that sense, being a member of the Academic Committee is an opportunity for me to improve my managerial skills by listening to how others come to well-considered decisions. Together. Because the fun and exciting thing about committees is that a group is smarter than its smartest member. Even if only for this reason, the AC is an attraction and a privilege for me, with all these smart minds as co-members.

Tamarah Benima

The Friends

We remain grateful to all the Friends of the Foundation and the Institute for both their moral and financial support. The continuity of the work of the Institute depends in large measure on their willingness to keep supporting us financially.

Last year the Stichting (Foundation) Levi Lassen again promised to subsidize us for another three years. However, the Makaria Stichting and the Harry Philips Fonds (Fund) have indicated that they will discontinue their support, which they have already given for an unusually long period for a start-up subsidy. In the case of Makaria this is also because they have made an exceptionally large contribution to the construction of the new building in Amsterdam.

The ongoing financial crisis, added to the fundraising for the new building — as necessary as it was — have had adverse consequences for the funding of our Foundation and we fear this will not change any time soon.

Our aim remains, though, to keep this Liberal Jewish knowledge centre alive and working. This requires a common effort of the Verbond and our congregations, boards and individual members, to expand the circle of Friends. Just as important is finding foundations that are willing to support us; *we really need everyone's help with this.*

Plans for 2010-2011 and beyond

Early in 2009 the board devised a draft policy document with some preliminary ideas for the future of the Institute. This document was discussed with the board of the Verbond and the presidents of the congregations. The need for rabbis in the congregations was polled and it was found that ten years from now, the Verbond will need four full-time rabbis more than it has now. Not, unfortunately, in a few congregations but dispersed among all of them. This complicates matters but there are ways to find solutions. The poll is the underlying source for our projection on page 5 that we will start training a new group of students in 2013.

Taking into account that over the the last seven years four students have left the course because they could not fulfill the requirements and that a number of candidates have not been accepted, we will need to mobilize all our creativity and energy to recruit new students. It would help if we could somehow give them an employment guarantee after graduation. Our *semicha* is now internationally recognized, but the intention remains that the trained rabbis will be deployed for the work necessary in The Netherlands. It is the task of the congregations and the Verbond to work this out; the Institute concerns itself primarily with its core responsibility, which is the training of rabbis.

'Look, this is Ite,' Ischa Meijer said, years ago after a radio show, to his younger brother who was in the audience. 'She is somewhat *angeyddeld*!' And that is true. How did that happen?



I was born in The Hague, in the Jozef Israëlslaan. And then the war (WWII) began and I suddenly lived in the same house, but the street was renamed after Thorn Prikker. Also a painter, but one who found favour in the eyes of the Nazi occupier because of his *Blut und Boden* philosophy. At the time, I did not understand anything of this.

In my class at the Nederlandsch Lyceum (after the war) there was a Jewish boy with whom I was good friends.

He was not present during the High Holidays and I told this to my parents as something special. My father was dismayed. Before the war there were dozens of Jewish kids at his high school and it was normal that the classrooms were emptier during the Holidays. This made me aware of the dimensions of the disaster that happened and I became interested in Judaism and Israel. It helped that Bob Levisson was one of my father's best friends. When I got older, I got to know him very well, too, and I was spellbound whenever he would discuss, for example, his favorite, the Book of Ruth.

Before I went to Law School, I worked at the Polak en Van Gennep publishing house as a kind of glorified secretary. One of my duties was the production of the quarterly *European Judaism*. This brought me in contact with some liberal English rabbis, Lionel Blue and Jonathan Magonet. When I left the publishing house, the latter thought I deserved some kind of honorary Jewish membership, which made me very proud. Thinking about the question 'if I were religious, what would I be?' I always ended up with 'Jewish'. I never had and still don't have any use for a holy trinity.

And so, when David Lilienthal asked me to counsel the rabbinic students about their 'portfolios' everything fell into place. The 'portfolio' is a virtual bag with documents that show that the student has learned to be a good rabbi. And where the answer could be found to, "What kind of rabbi would they would like to be?"

I greatly enjoyed getting to know the first group of Levisson students. And I look forward to continue working with the current class.

Ite Rümke

2. Finances

Annual accounts August 2009 through July 2010

The annual accounts for 2009-2010 have been drawn up by JAN Accountants in Landsmeer. What follows is a summary. Those wishing to receive a complete copy of the annual accounts (only available in Dutch) are kindly requested to contact the Foundation: contact@levisson.nl.

A reminder: Early in 2009 the Statutes of the Institute were officially modified to synchronise the fiscal and academic years (August 1 through July 31).

Balance as at July 31, 2010

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Accounts receivable/prepayments	€ 10.595	Founding capital	€ 126.758
Cash	€ 296.922	Appropriated reserves	€ 63.914
		Advance receipts	€ 99.287
		Taxes	€ 1.321
		Debts/deferrals	€ 16.237
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 307.517</i>	<i>Totaal</i>	<i>€ 307.517</i>

Notes

The “Appropriated reserves” are divided over four funds:

Students’ fund	€ 28.019
Israel seminar fund	€ 15.000
Scholarly research fund	€ 9.000
Teacher Training Program	€ 11.895

1. The Students’ fund (€ 28.019) provides financial support for students in tight financial circumstances for costs directly related to their studies. The initial funding was collected when the Dean retired as Rabbi of the Amsterdam Liberal Jewish Community.
2. The Israel seminar fund (€ 15.000) was set up in 2005 to facilitate regular seminars in Israel without drawing on the regular budget.
3. An amount of €10.000 was reserved in 2005 for scholarly research, which is done mainly abroad. The fund dispersed € 1.000 in 2008, reducing the reserve by this sum. In the year 2009-2010 no moneys were taken from or added to the fund.

4. In 2007 the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation made a donation, which was initially used to finance the cantorial training in the 2007-2009 academic years, but which could be used for other statutory purposes as well. The board decided to allocate the unused sum of € 11.895 in the fiscal year 2009-2010 for a reserve for the teacher training program.

Profit and Loss account August 2009 through July 2010

<i>Receipts:</i>		<i>Expenditures:</i>	
Friends and other donations	€ 30.057	Dean/Administrative assistance	€ 38.782
Grants	€ 78.002	Expenditures Dean/Board/ Committees	€ 7.744
Publication book	€ 9.492	Seminars	€ 1.104
Tuition fees	€ 3.470	Lecturers and courses	€ 30.858
Interest	€ 5.992	Books and course materials	€ 1.958
		Communication	€ 3.373
		Publication book	€ 9.985
		Accountant/wages administration	€ 9.461
		Miscellaneous/unforeseen	€ 3.605
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 129.518</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 106.870</i>

Positive balance profit and loss account: € 22.648

Notes

The credit balance of € 22.648 is due to lower expenditures for lecturers than originally budgeted. There are two main reasons for this. In the first place, in June 2009 a somewhat lower pace of study was agreed upon with the students to reduce their workload to a manageable level. Second, the student whose program was delayed for a year because of his accident was supposed to make up for the missed extra Hebrew year during 2009-2010. This, however, did not materialize, but is taking place during the year 2010-2011. Third, unfortunately the planned course with Rabbi Wenig from New York had to be cancelled (see p. 7). The budgeted expenditures for the lecturers will be spent during the next two years for which the credit balance will be used.

The item accountant/wage administration remained within the budget for this year. We still feel the costs should be lowered even further and are looking for ways to do this.

There are no funds and foundations in The Netherlands that specifically aim to support educational institutions. Even a professional fundraiser has not been able to find any.

Education is considered by society to be the responsibility of the government. Due to its small size and limited target group, however, an institute such as ours does not easily qualify for state support.

We therefore appreciate even more the support from Maror and the Stichting Levi Lassen, some private foundations, the Verbond and a few of the Liberal Jewish Congregations, and the Friends of our Institute. We are grateful for their support.

Since the Makaria Foundation and the Harry Philips Fund ended their support – which in essence was intended as starting grants – the financial basis of our Institute is less healthy now than in the past. In spite of this, we owe a great debt of gratitude to both organisations for continuing their support for a longer period than they originally intended.

It is far from certain that we will find other foundations or funds that will support us to the extent that the now terminated grants did. The Teacher Training Program and the Professional Development projects for rabbis and cantors cannot be funded from grants alone. They will also impinge on the still existing reserves. In addition, supplementary funding for the deficit of € 8,815 in the research budget for Chaya Brasz has not yet been found; the Stichting Levisson has given a guarantee for the amount to allow the project to begin.

We are, therefore, looking for more Friends, foundations and funds willing to support our work, preferably for a longer period and with a fixed annual amount.

Our Friends are kept informed about the work of the Institute and are regularly invited to attend meetings that usually include a lecture by a speaker from The Netherlands or abroad.

Fundraising and Budgets

For the year 2010-2011 Maror has granted us a subsidy to a maximum amount of € 20.000, on condition that this sum be used exclusively for the cost of lecturers and courses for the Rabbinic Program. On June 9, 2010 we submitted a new grant request to Maror for a € 25.000 grant for the year 2011-2012. This request is also intended to meet the cost of lecturers and courses in the Rabbinic Program only. The Stichting Levi Lassen has promised us an annual grant in the amount of € 25.000 from 2010 through 2012. The budget of the Institute for the year 2010-2011 amounts to € 137,000. This leaves us with a € 40,000 deficit. Unless other funds can be found, the Institute's capital will decrease by this amount.

Teacher Training Program

The budget for the two-year Teacher Training Program is € 58.575. Last year, after Maror rejected our grant request, we started a fundraising campaign to allow the program to proceed in spite of this. This led to some positive responses and grants providing a total of € 27.000, which includes the tuition fees of the participants. This was sufficient to allow program to begin. Furthermore, the Institute has earmarked € 11.895 from its reserves for this goal. There remains a deficit of € 19.680, which could cause problems in the course of 2011-2012. During the 2010-2011 year the search for more funding will continue.

Cantorial Training

The two-year Cantorial Training was completed in May 2009. In the year 2009-2010 the settling of the account with Maror with regard to their grant for this project was completed and the remainder of the grant received. Because of some additional expenses during the year 2009-2010, the project was concluded with a negative balance of € 884.

<i>Expenses:</i>	<i>Actual totals</i>	<i>Budget totals</i>
Coordinator	€ 12.767	€ 23.000
Expenses settling grant	€ 1.785	€ 0
Lecturers	€ 18.714	€ 28.150
Course materials	€ 1.730	€ 1.600
Expenses weekends	€ 59.212	€ 58.480
Expenses coordinator	€ 6.333	€ 2.400
Additional expenses	€ 1.369	€ 1.400
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 101.910</i>	<i>€ 115.030</i>

Joint project: one digital catalogue for three libraries

In 2007 the cataloguing of the libraries of the LJG (Liberal Jewish Congregation), the Stichting Jiddisj (Yiddish Foundation) and the Stichting R.A. Levisson (R.A. Levisson Foundation) and making them available began. Maror provided funding for 2007 and 2008; this was supplemented by a grant from a private fund. The Maror grant request was made by the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam on behalf of the three organizations, but the funds are managed by the Levisson Foundation. The project as agreed upon with Maror was completed in November 2010 and at the time of this writing the accounts are being settled. In an appendix to the annual accounts, as made by the accountants, the expenditures and receipts related to this project are specified.

The expenditures for this project through December 31, 2008 consisted almost entirely of payments for the appointed cataloger. The total of the expenditures through July 31, 2010 came to € 81.405. They were covered by funding from the three organisations and, as mentioned above, by grants from Maror and a private fund. In all, as of July 31, 2010, these receipts amounted to a sum of € 68.315.

The Committee Professional Training (see also p. 8) offers the rabbinic students custom-made training. The second, small, group of students started with a wide range of knowledge and skills that had been acquired elsewhere. By conviction and necessity we are focusing, therefore, on offering each student knowledge and skills that are in keeping with these earlier acquired competences. In the 20th century we called this "in keeping with the current situation".

By asking the students to describe their competences in portfolios, we hope to activate the consciousness of the students to make them discover what their specific educational needs are and encourage them to find ways to get that education, partly by choosing from the Institute's own syllabus and beyond that by developing individual study habits to find sources and study them.

I have a professional interest in group-dynamic processes and the development of individuals. I try to insert this expertise into the students' curriculum. One of our students took a three-day seminar last year, in which learning about groups and systems is the central theme. Another student had been through this learning process elsewhere. Learning by experiencing the complexity of dynamics will prove its value when they assume their positions in Jewish congregations.



I don't limit these activities to my role at the Levisson Institute. Together with colleagues from the Israeli association for the study of groups and organisational processes (OFEK), I am organizing a European seminar for 2012 with the title "Finding New, and Exploring Existing Roles of Judaism, Jewish Communities and Jews in the 21st Century". We hope to create an educational setting in which a wide range of people involved in the Jewish communities in Europe can further develop their roles.

I have been involved in the Committee Professional Training right from the start. This participation is valuable for me because the group, which has a permanent core, works well together in designing custom-made curricula. Further, we can reflect on what happens in our own group, which mirrors the educational process of the students. This enables us to keep offering educational projects that are multi-dimensional: the personal development of the students, of their skills and eventually finding a place for them both within the dynamic surroundings of Jewish congregations and in society at large.

Joost Levy
Arnhem



In my professional life I am a lecturer in Modern Hebrew at the University of Leiden. My syllabus includes virtually all classes that deal with contemporary Israel: language, literature, and history. Conversation is taught by my colleague Uzi Hagai. Students from all walks of life, with all kinds of education and different (religious) backgrounds are attracted to our classes; the Jewish students form only a tiny minority. Of course most students have some kind of affinity with Israel — if they did not they would not attend my classes! — either because of their Christian background or because they have an Israeli boyfriend, or maybe somehow have a distant Jewish relative...

This being as it is, I always felt it somewhat weird that I am trying to teach 'outsiders' some understanding of Israel and Judaism, but not Jewish students about their own cultural heritage, even though there is so much there for them!

Thus, when the opportunity was offered to teach the second group of rabbinic students Tanach and Parshanut (Commentaries), I jumped at the opportunity. I enjoyed the experience, as well as a later one, when I taught a course Siddur Hebrew for the cantorial students. For now, all the students have learned enough (well...), but who knows if and when there will be another opportunity. I would love that! It's not that I have too much spare time, what with being a mother, the social life of the Liberal Jewish Congregation and playing music, but after all it is for the good of the cause, *leshem shamayim...*

Hannah Neudecker

Kahrut for the soul

'If you would not have gone on to study Hebrew,' a somewhat older acquaintance once told me long ago, 'you definitely would have been keeping kosher by now.' At the time (around 1997) this analysis baffled me, but since then I have come to terms with it. Happily, even. My relationship with kashrut has always been a little loose, to put it mildly. Even in Jerusalem I could not keep the yoghurt and the minced meat apart for longer than a month. Dinner of any kind is no dinner without a lavish dessert with lots of (real) whipped cream. I would bike a long distance for a good club-sandwich and when one of my university students told me that a grilled cheese-ham sandwich is actually kosher, I spontaneously gave him good marks on his next test.



For someone like me, with a reasonably well-working brain, but the spirituality of an old bath mat, the academic study of the Jewish canon and its colorful history turned out to be a reasonable (read: rational and safe) alternative to weekly visits to shochet and shul. As long as I could explain to my students why at the end of Shoftim 5, suddenly 'out of the blue' a quote from *The Persians* by Aeschylus appears, why Rashi's commentary on the Talmud and not Maimonides' *Guide* is the most important work in the history of Jewish literature, how it is possible that the Haskalah never reached The Netherlands, and why Gershom Scholem's philosophy is by far preferable over Martin Buber's, I was simply happy at the University of Amsterdam. For someone who lives in her head, like me, Jewish Studies have always been a synonym for 'Jewish life'.

But it turned out it could be even more synonymous when I was invited (I think in 2001) to contribute my academic five cents to the new Levisson Institute. Now I could, to paraphrase Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), make 'my' Jewish Studies even more relevant for 'Jewish life' in the wider sense. Initially there was some sniggering among my friends when they heard I was involved in discussions about training a new generation of religious leaders. But the sniggering stopped when, on 26 Menachem-Av 5768, a new batch of home-grown Liberal Jewish rabbis were standing there with a new group already being prepared. You will not hear from me that the Levisson students are smarter or faster than those at the University of Amsterdam. But the opportunity I have had over the last years to connect 'my' Torah with their 'Derech Eretz', I have certainly experienced as an unexpected, and probably even undeserved privilege.

Irene Zwiep