

Introduction

It is with pleasure that we present the first annual report of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation. In this, we report on the progress of the Levisson Institute from its setting up till the end of June 2004. This report therefore covers a longer period than one year and also contains more information than is usual in an annual report. In this way we hope to give a picture of the Foundation and of what we have and what we have (not yet) been able to achieve.



*The students of the first year, from the left to the right:
Marianne van Praag, Mischa Schrijver, Etienne Denneboom, Kine Sittig,
Tamarah Benima, Navah Tehilla Livingstone Shmuelit, Albert Ringer.*

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1. The beginnings

In this chapter we describe the reasons that led to the setting up of the Foundation, why we started the training at the Levisson Institute and what our goals were. It sets the scene for the further development of our institute

Why a rabbinical training in the Netherlands

It became apparent from a survey by the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands (the Verbond) carried out in 2001, that there was a need in the coming decades for new Rabbis, shelichay tzibbur to lead services, teachers and other persons to give leadership to our Jewish communities and organisations. Of the present Rabbis, two are retiring, the Liberal Jewish Communities are expanding and the need for knowledge of Jewish matters continues to increase.

Moreover, until now training as a Rabbi or Cantor could only be undertaken outside of the Netherlands. Potential students were, however, for various reasons - such as age and work or family circumstances - not in a position to follow such a course of study for a long period abroad.

For this reason, the Verbond established the Robert A. Levisson Foundation on 23 August 2002. This foundation then set up the Levisson Institute, which is named after the great post-war Dutch Liberal Jewish leader Bob Levisson z.l. (RAL) from The Hague, who died at the end of 2001.

The goals of the Foundation

It is possible to follow a number of different courses to learn about Judaism, including some high level courses in the Netherlands. What was lacking, however, was a - coherent - possibility of study for the leadership of the Liberal Jewish Community in the Netherlands. This lack is now filled by the setting up of the Levisson Institute.

The training given by the Levisson Institute is aimed at granting rabbinical certification (semicha) and in the future also qualification as Cantor, teacher of Jewish subjects and Jewish pastoral worker. This goal has determined the high level and the quality of the training that is intended. The training will also be open for those who wish to enrich their knowledge of Judaism at this level.

Where existing institutes provide courses and lectures at the required high level, the Levisson Institute can let its student follow such courses and lectures. Where they are not available, the Levisson Institute will provide such courses and lectures itself. This applies both to the academic and to the more professionally oriented parts of the training.

The Dean, in close collaboration with the Academic Committee and the Advisory Council, is progressively developing the tuition programme. This cooperation guarantees the level and the quality of the training and is necessary to ensure that the diplomas which students who successfully complete the course will be given are recognised within the Liberal Jewish community and by international professional bodies.

It goes without saying that such a high level institute is not only important for the training of a professional leadership but can also make a significant contribution to the essential task of maintaining and increasing Jewish knowledge among the “ordinary members” of the community.

The organisational structure

The members of the Board of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation are appointed by the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands. This Board is charged with managing the administrative and financial interests of the Institute. A certified accountant checks the annual accounts. The Board appoints the Dean, the members of the Academic Committee and the Advisory Council.

The Dean, in the service of the Foundation, and working under the responsibility of the Board, leads the Institute. He or she is the central figure for the Institute, and has the tasks, among others, to set up the course of study, to maintain contacts with related institutes and to provide for the lectures and practical training given by the Institute itself. The Dean is supported in this by the Academic Committee and the Advisory Council. A student counsellor is responsible for giving guidance to the students.

The Academic Committee (AC) has a joint responsibility for:

- a) setting the final pass standards for the training
- b) the appointment and the assessment of lecturers
- c) the admission of students
- d) the content and the quality of the course of study
- e) judging the students' performance

all together in close consultation with the Dean, the teaching staff and the members of the Advisory Council. The AC can appoint subcommittees to prepare and implement specific tasks, but retains the ultimate responsibilities.

The members of the Advisory Council (RvA) are also appointed by the Board of the Foundation. They are in some cases proposed by related (foreign) institutes that also provide rabbinical training. Some of them possess specific knowledge and skills that are needed by the Institute. The RvA has the specific responsibility for guaranteeing the quality of the training at an internationally recognised level. The members assess the programme against this level, and can submit the programme to experts of their own institutes for comment. The members of the RvA can give advice on request or on their own initiative. To enable this, the programme is submitted to them and they visit the Institute one or more times per year in order to discuss the progress of the training with the Dean and the members of the AC, and to maintain personal contact with the students and lecturers. The Levisson Institute considers these international contacts of great importance.

A short description of the curriculum

The present and future training is open to students who are Jewish as defined by the Rabbis of the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands¹. Students are required to already possess sufficient knowledge to be able to follow a course at this level.

At the present moment, the Levisson Institute is only giving training for qualification as Rabbi. Students who wish to receive *semichah* must also either already have or obtain an academic (Masters) degree.

The nature of the function of Rabbi also means that the life style and personal history are significant. He or she must be able to take up a leading position in a community. The life style and personal history of a student, therefore, is also taken into account in the admissions procedure, with all necessary caution and without discriminating on the ground of gender, sexual orientation, race, skin colour, political convictions or age.

The course of study can be divided into an academic part and a vocational part aimed at professional skills. In the course of the training these two parts become more and more integrated.

The academic part

The academic part involves amongst other things:

- *Hebrew*: Biblical, Rabbinic and modern variants
- *Aramaic*: those variants needed to be able to read and master the classic Jewish texts, Tanach and rabbinical texts.
- *Halacha*: principles, development, and relationship to Aggada, the approach of various Jewish schools of thought, classical and modern sources and responsa
- *History*: a thorough overall survey, the history of ideas, the specific Jewish approach to history, insight into the questions and issues of Jewish history.
- *The Land and the State of Israel*: history, theological and cultural significance, personal experience of the country and the study facilities available there.
- *Liturgy*: a thorough introduction to the content of orthodox and non-orthodox siddurim and minhagim (Ashkenasi, Sephardi, Edot HaMizrach), history, correspondences and differences between these and their theological background, contemporary issues.
- *Rituals*: the Jewish year, the life cycle and other mitzvot
- *Philosophy*: Jewish thinkers and Jewish thought in the past and present, schisms, relationship to non-Jewish philosophical systems.
- *Jewish music, art and literature*: an introduction, with emphasis on the importance and effect of music on the liturgy, modern Jewish and Israeli literature.
- *Other religions*: thorough introductions to Islam and Christianity, and acquaintance with other religions.

The academic part is completed in the fifth and last year of study with the writing of a thesis.

¹ An exception can be made for participation in certain parts of the course

The professional (vocational) part

The professional part of the training consists of, among other things:

- *Halacha in practice*: most important is the practical application of Jewish law (*halacha lema'aseh*). This involves the development of the techniques of research, ethical and halachic insight, knowledge of Halacha concerning modern problem areas (such as the field of medicine, bio-ethics, business ethics and ecology). The knowledge needed to participate in the work of a Beth Din, such as kiddushin, gittin and giur is also a requirement.
- *Liturgy and rabbinical tasks in practice*: the ability to conduct and instruct in all rituals in the Jewish year and the Jewish life cycle in the synagogue and in the home, to be able to give a sermon, to speak in public, to have sufficient didactic knowledge to teach both children and adults; the ability to write both professional, popularising and opinion-forming articles and possibly also books, to be familiar with the use of computers, Internet and multi-media techniques.
- *Pastoral work*: a major area of the work of the contemporary rabbinate, which requires much attention, is covered by lessons such as pastoral psychology, interviewing techniques, leading discussions, understanding the significance of transitional periods in the life cycle and the associated counselling and support where these give rise to problems, as well as being able to recognize when referral to another professional or institute is necessary.
- *Administrative and policy-making tasks*: the work of the Beth Din and the Rabbinical Council, preparing and organising all sorts of activities within the community and other administrative tasks; the capacity to be able to work in a dynamic yet harmonious and inspiring way with the (congregational) board, committees and a host of voluntary workers. Courses in administration and congregational dynamics are important.
- *Practical training (stages)*: In the course of their training students will have to follow stages in the Liberal Jewish communities in the Netherlands and possibly also abroad. They will at first accompany the local Rabbi and later, under the supervision of a Rabbi, carry out rabbinical tasks independently. In addition they will learn about all sorts of other institutes with which a Rabbi works.
- *Personal development*: mentoring and support for the way in which the student adapts and integrates the material learnt into his/her own life and spiritual development. Room for a personal development plan for each individual student is important.

Some elements of the training will take the form of seminars covering several days.

The student is required to spend one or more periods for study in Israel, unless he/she already has had a sufficient Israel experience. A thorough first-hand knowledge of the Liberal Jewish institutions and their work in Israel is also an absolute requirement.

2. Developments up till the present

The Levisson Institute started its educational programme on 3 September 2003. Seven students were admitted to the course. Each week ten hours of lectures are given, and students are also required to devote an average of two hours preparation for each hour of lecture. A study year consists in principle of four blocks, each of seven weeks. In addition there are one or two (international) symposia.

Classes at other institutes and under the auspices of the Institute itself

During the first year of the course of studies the students have attended lectures that were provided by the Levisson Institute itself. They have also followed lessons at the University of Amsterdam and the Crescas Jewish Education Centre.

The courses at the university covered both classical and modern Hebrew, and Aramaic.

The Crescas courses followed by the students are part of a high level programme for advanced students that this educational centre has developed. It covers history and the reading and learning to handle classical rabbinical literature (Midrash, Mishnah and Talmud), extending to the classical rabbinical Halacha.

These courses provided by Crescas are at university level. The content and way of presentation is, however, - other than at the university - more directed to reinforcing the individual Jewish identity and experience of the students.

Because Crescas does not set examinations or give credits, the students' results are assessed by teachers of the Levisson Institute. These set written and oral examinations and/or the students are required to submit a paper on the topic studied. We expect that following courses at the Crescas centre will mainly be appropriate in the early stage of the training. Once the students reach a more advanced level in their studies, the likelihood will lessen that the Crescas courses will maintain the required level.

The lessons given by the Institute itself have until now been mainly directed to the practical skills of rabbinic work. An important part of this is the Professional Preparation classes. Much attention is paid to Pastoral Psychology and Pastoral Work. Presentation techniques (speaking and conduct in public and in the synagogue) and a number of practical rabbinical activities (such as conducting services, writing sermons, relations between rabbi-board-committees-voluntary workers) are also covered. The Institute has also itself provided a course in Tanach at an academic level.

Access to classes for others

The Institute began its work with the rabbinical training. Other courses, such as that for Cantors, will start up at a later date.

The aim of the Institute is not only to provide professional training, but also to offer the opportunity to follow certain courses to those who are interested in specific topics and who wish to deepen their knowledge in a Jewish environment. The academic part of the training is open to those who are interested, provided that they already possess enough knowledge to be able to follow the lessons. Several persons did indeed make use of this possibility in the academic year that has now ended.

Guest lecturers

During the first academic year two guest lecturers have given their services to our students. Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh of the Leo Baeck College, London, England, gave a series of guest lectures in January 2004 as an introduction to the Institute's Tanach lessons. Rabbi Middleburgh also spoke to the Friends of the Institute on the subject of rabbinical training.

In March 2004, Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, senior lecturer in Liturgy at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, in Jerusalem, gave several lectures to our students as an introduction to the liturgy module. In January 2005 he will, in a period of two consecutive weeks, cover the complete module for one term. Later, he will return and continue to deal with the liturgy part of the syllabus. This is a good example of the possibility to have parts of the course provided by qualified teachers from related institutes in America, Israel and England. We attach great value to these visiting lecturers.

3. Who is who?

In this chapter we give the names and a brief account of the functions of those who are connected with the Foundation and the Institute. They have all made serious contributions to the Liberal Jewish movement in the Netherlands.

The Board

The Board of the Institute consists of:

- Henk Wagenfeld, Chairman since 1 January 2004. Henk Wagenfeld is a past chairman of the Liberal Jewish Community of The Hague, and is also, amongst others, chairman of the Mr.L.E. Visserhuis Jewish Old Age Home in The Hague and chairman of the Levi Lassen Foundation in the Hague.
- Wilma Stein, Hon. Secretary. Wilma Stein was executive director of the Dutch national Jewish Welfare Services (Joods Maatschappelijk Werk). She has also been a member of the Executive Board (Dagelijks Bestuur) of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and is at present among other things also a member of the National Board of the Union of Liberal-Religious Jews in the Netherlands (Verbond)
- Ronald Hené, Treasurer, is a medical specialist of internal medicine with the Medical Centre of the University of Utrecht,. Ronald Hené is, among other things, chairman of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Utrecht and until recently held the “Religion” portfolio in the Executive Board of the Verbond.²
- Leo Frijda was Vice-President of the Amsterdam Court of Appeal. He is also, among other things, Hon. Secretary of the Executive Board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and member of the National Board of the Verbond.
- Stephen Kahn, lawyer, has been member of the Board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of The Hague and is among other things member of the National Board of the Verbond.

² Ronald Hené will be succeeded on 1 January 2005 by (his sister-in-law) Marja Hené, chairman of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Rotterdam, who has succeeded him as Religious Affairs officer in the Executive Board of the Verbond.

The Academic Committee

The following persons are members of the Academic Committee:³

- Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiep, Chairperson. Prof. Zwiep is Head of the Department of Hebrew, Aramaic and Syrian languages and cultures at the University of Amsterdam.
- Dr. Emile G.L. Schrijver, Secretary. Dr Schrijver is curator of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana of the University of Amsterdam, and Director of the Menasseh Ben Israel Institute, Amsterdam.
- Mr.⁴ Ernst Numann, is a member of the Dutch Supreme Court at The Hague, and a past Chairman of the Verbond.
- Drs. A. Carolyn Levisson is Student Psychologist at the Technical University, Delft.
- The Rabbis Awraham Soetendorp, Menno ten Brink and Ruben Bar Ephraim.

The Academic Committee has appointed three subcommittees:

- The Admissions Committee: this subcommittee assesses applicant students and recommends on admission to the Academic Committee.
Members are Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiep and drs. Carolyn Levisson, members of the AC, and the Dean, Rabbi David Lilienthal
- A subcommittee for consultation between students and the Academic Committee.
Membership of this subcommittee varies, depending on the topic under discussion.
- A subcommittee for development of the Professional Training programme.
This committee consists of:
 - Drs. Carolyn Levisson (member of the AC)
 - Dr. Fanny Heymann, formerly of the University of Wageningen, who now has her own research and advice bureau.
 - Ella Wijnschenk-Oestermann, group leader and first trainer at the Dutch national Jewish Welfare Services (Joods Maatschappelijk Werk)
 - Drs. Joost Levy, p|r|o|Consult training and advice bureau

The Dean, Rabbi David Lilienthal, usually attends meetings of this subcommittee.

³ For the tasks and responsibilities of the Academic Committee, see on page 5.

⁴ In Dutch, the title Mr. means Master (Meester) of Law, member of the legal professions.

The Advisory Council

The Advisory Council's name reflects its advisory role, and its membership gives expression to the close collaboration that the Levisson Institute is establishing with related institutes abroad. These are the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (with campuses in Cincinnati, Los Angeles, New York and Jerusalem), the Leo Baeck College, London, England (the most important institute for training liberal Rabbis and teachers outside of the U.S. and Israel) and the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, Potsdam, Germany (a recently founded institute that is part of the Potsdam University).

Members of the Advisory Council are:

- Prof. Dr. Ian T. Young, Head of the Department of Imaging Science & Technology, Technical University of Delft, member of the board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation, The Hague, member of the Executive Board of the Verbond and chairman of the Sja'ar Foundation⁵. Prof. Young is the “link-man” with the Academic Committee, whose meetings he attends.
- Prof. Dr. Marc Bregman of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, senior lecturer in Rabbinical Literature – for the HUC-JIR
- Rabbi Yehoram Mazor of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, senior lecturer in Liturgy.
- Rabbi Prof. Dr. Jonathan Magonet, Principal of the Leo Baeck College, London
- Rabbi Dr. Walter Homolka, Executive Director of the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, Potsdam.

The Dean

Rabbi David Lilienthal is the person who took the initiative to set up the Institute and is the driving force behind it. He was the first chairman of the board until named Dean of the Institute. Rabbi David Lilienthal is Emeritus Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregations in Rotterdam and Twente and the International Jewish Centre in Brussels, and, among other things, chairman of the European Bet Din of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

The Student Counsellor

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, is responsible, as student counsellor, for supporting and guiding the students and monitoring the progress of their studies. He is also the students' “confidant” for the study.

⁵ The Sja'ar Foundation is part of the Verbond. It deals with the book publications of the Verbond and with various adult education projects.

The teachers

The success of a training stands or falls with the teachers. We therefore consider ourselves to be fortunate that we have been able to attract so many outstanding teachers, from the academic world and elsewhere. All are highly reputed specialists in their field. After the first study year a number of other teachers will be asked to contribute to the course of study. Most of the teachers are Jewish. Where this is not the case, they have a strong affinity with Judaism and the Jewish community.

- *Aramaic:*
Prof. Dr. Irene E. Zwiep, University of Amsterdam (UvA)⁶
- *Tanach I:*
Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh, Leo Baeck College, London (LI)
- *Tanach II:*
Prof. Dr. Athalya Brenner, University of Amsterdam (LI)
- *Tanach III (from September 2004)*
Prof. Dr. Albert van der Heide, University of Leiden (LI)
Drs. Martin Baasten, University of Leiden (LI)
- *Talmud:*
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Marx, Folkertsmastichting (C and LI)
Drs. Leo Mock, *inter alia* University of Amsterdam (C)
- *Rabbinical skills:*
Rabbi Ruben Bar-Ephraim, LJG Den Haag (LI)
Rabbi David Lilienthal, Levisson Institute (LI)
- *Professional preparation:*
Pieter-Jan André, lecturer in Ethics, Utrecht Institute of Higher Education (LI)
Drs. Joost Levy, p|r|o|Consult (LI)
- *Presentation techniques:*
Jaïr Strandens (LI)
- *History:*
Drs. Hetty Berg, Jewish Historical Museum (C)
Dr. Shlomo Berger, University of Amsterdam (C)
Drs. Tirtsa Bernfeld-Levie (C)
Drs. Joel Cahen, Jewish Historical Museum (C)
Dr. Emile Schrijver, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (C)
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp (C)
Rabbi Drs. Edward van Voolen, Jewish Historical Museum (C and LI)
- *Liturgy I:*
Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem (LI)
- *Jewish Philosophy:*
Prof. Dr. Reinier Munk, Free University of Amsterdam and University of Leiden (C)

⁶ The initials in brackets indicate under whose auspices the lessons are given.
(UvA) is the University of Amsterdam, (C) is Crescas, (LI) is the Levisson Institute.

The students

The first year of training to be a Rabbi has already passed. I can hardly believe it. The course of study really exists now. We attend lectures, write papers, take exams and form an increasingly close-knit group.

Tamara Benima in the NIW⁷ of 9 July 2004

In the spring of 2003, the Admissions Subcommittee interviewed and checked a number of candidates for the rabbinical training. The Academic Committee accepted seven students proposed by them for the course:

- Tamara Benima from Amsterdam, columnist, publicist, speaker, translator of Jewish books, radio and television commentator, formerly editor in chief of the Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad.
- Etienne Denneboom from Amsterdam, working for Liberal Jewish Congregation Gelderland, member of the Ritual Committee of the Liberal Jewish Congregation Amsterdam
- Marianne van Praag from The Hague, businesswoman, manages her husband's law office, for long years involved in both in education and in the board of Liberal Jewish Congregation in The Hague.
- Albert Ringer from Rotterdam, art historian, architectural historian, IT expert. In the course of the study year he was appointed pastoral worker at Parnassia⁸ in the Hague. From 1 August 2004 he will succeed Rabbi Menno ten Brink as Army Chaplain.
- Mischa Schrijver from Abcoude, Financial Planner, former Council member in the city of Abcoude, involved in education in the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, active in rabbinical and pastoral work in the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Utrecht.
- Kine Sittig from Amsterdam, received a doctorate in Mathematics and Natural Sciences at the University of Utrecht, former member of the board and now leader of religious services of Beit Ha'Chidush (Reconstructionst chavurah) in Amsterdam, lecturer at the Crescas Jewish Education Centre.
- Navah Tehilla Livingstone Shmuelit from Utrecht, Israeli born, works in music and theatre, active in the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Utrecht.

⁷ NIW (Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad) is the Dutch weekly Jewish newspaper of which she is a former editor in chief.

⁸ Parnassia is a chain of mental hospitals covering The Hague and the surrounding region.

4. The Finances

The year 2003

We began the first course on 1 September 2003. For the period up to 1 January 2004 costs were kept as low as possible. There was no salaried Dean in service, and also no question of administrative support. Courses provided by the Institute itself were still limited in number and advantage was also taken of the facilities provided free of charge by the LJJ Amsterdam.

Income in 2003 consisted of the students' tuition fees, a subsidy from the Levi Lassen Foundation and donations from the Friends of the Foundation. In addition, Rabbi David Lilienthal asked that a collection which was made on the occasion of his retirement as Rabbi of the LJJ Amsterdam be donated to the Levisson Institute. We are grateful for this to him and to the members of the LJJ Amsterdam.

By keeping the costs low and because the student fees, the subsidy from Levi Lassen and the donations related to a full year, while the academic year began on 1 September 2003, we could start out with a healthy financial position. The positive balance for 2003, mainly due to the money collected on the occasion of Rabbi Lilienthal's retirement, has been booked as a capital fund for the Foundation. This capital also serves as a reserve fund in the case of budgetary shortfalls. Such a fund may be needed in anticipation of further financial developments.

The 2003 accounts

The annual accounts for 2003 have been approved by Paul J. Wolfs RA (Certified Accountant) of the Perdaan Den Houting Hendriksen Accountants Office, Landsmeer. Paul Wolf has supported us in setting up the budget submitted with our application for a Maror⁹ subsidy.

Below is a summary of the 2003 accounts. The full accounts can be obtained on request.

Balance sheet at 31 December 2003

Assets:		Liabilities:	
Receivables	€ 4,600	Foundation capital	€ 32,823
Liquid assets	€ 96,821	Advance receipts	€ 61,584
		Debts	€ 7,014
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 101,421</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 101,421</i>

Financial activities for the year 2003

Income:		Expenditure:	
Subsidies	€ 10,333	Education costs	€ 7,025
Friends	€ 7,333	Other costs	€ 4,080
Gifts / retirement DL	€ 21,595		
Student fees	€ 4,667		
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 43,928</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>€ - 11,105</i>
<i>Credit balance</i>			<i>€ 32,823</i>

⁹ The Maror Commission is in charge of the distribution of funds recently granted by the Dutch Government, banks and other financial institutions as restitution for Jewish possessions stolen during the Shoah.

Explanation

As indicated above, we only partly assigned the student fees, subsidy from Levi Lassen and donations from Friends received in 2003 to the period from 1 September 2003, the date from when the course of study really began. For 2004 and the following years the amounts received will be attributed to a complete calendar year.

The year 2004

As of 1 January 2004 Rabbi David Lilienthal has entered into service of the Foundation as salaried Dean for one day per week. On the basis of the study programme, the organisation of lectures, contacts with lecturers and students, working with the board and the committee and the administration all require much attention and time. Nevertheless we have tried to keep the costs as low as possible in the first half of 2004. Uncertainty over the subsidies applied for make this necessary. Only in June of this year will the situation be clearer.

Funds and Foundations

Funds and Foundations with the specific goal of supporting educational establishments are lacking in the Netherlands. Even a professional subsidy seeker could find no suitable sources. Education is seen as a task for the government. An institute such as ours does not, because of its restricted scope and limited target group, come into consideration for public support. Nevertheless we regard ourselves as fortunate to have found two foundations, which give us financial support. In 2003 the Levi Lassen Foundation has already granted an amount of € 25,000 per year for a period of five years. In June of this year we received from the Makaria Foundation the same amount, i.e. €25,000 per year for five years. These subsidies are subject to certain conditions. We are extremely grateful to these two Foundations for their support.

The Friends

The Friends of the Foundation constitute the core support for our financial survival. We are most gratified that from the start of our Institute, already more than 25 persons have declared themselves prepared to support the Levisson Institute with an amount of € 1,000 per year for at least 5 years. This shows the importance that is attached to our Institute within the liberal Jewish community. Some Friends have paid for five years in advance. Others pay a yearly contribution, under covenant.

The Friends also get something in return. A newsletter will keep them regularly informed of everything of interest concerning the Levisson Institute. Furthermore, we will hold a meeting at least once a year where we will tell the Friends about developments. As far as possible this meeting will also have a programme with a speaker from the Netherlands or abroad. In January 2004 such a meeting was held for the first time, with an introduction by Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh.

The Maror Funds

At the end of October 2003, we submitted an application for support out of the available collective Maror funds. We broadly budgeted for the costs that an Institute such as ours could require.

By a decision of 29 June 2004 a (maximum) grant of € 75,000 was allocated for the period of 29 June 2004 to 19 June 2005¹⁰. According to the judgement of the Maror Commission “this important initiative merits support”. It added that we “must make every effort in the year of grant of the subsidy to ensure that the project has a good chance of success both as to its aims and financially, among other things by striving for international recognition.” This has not fallen on deaf ears, even if we would certainly also do this without such encouragement.

We are pleased that the Maror Commission has also recognised that the establishment of the Levisson Institute is of great importance for the continuity of Jewish life in the Netherlands. The grant from the Maror Commission leaves open the possibility of further support in the following years. This offers in particular the possibility of realising important additional facilities, such as our own library, the organising of our own seminars and participation by our students in international seminars and meetings. This is all of real significance for the future functioning of the students of our Institute to the benefit of the Dutch Jewish community.

The 2004 budget

All these financial developments and an increasing insight into the costs have led the board of the Foundation to adjust the budget for 2004. This budget is summarised below.

In 2004 we have also kept the costs as low as possible, pending the outcome of the applications for subsidies, for which we did not have any certainty in the first half of 2004. Only the most necessary expenses have been incurred.

Expenses:

Salaries (Dean and administrative support)	€	17,500
Administrative costs	€	2,500
Accommodation Dean/secretariat/library	€	600
Development of website	€	1,500
Annual telephone/internet costs	€	1,050
Costs for board, Academic Committee, Advisory Council	€	3,000
Expenses for Dean	€	2,000
Accountants	€	6,500
External courses	€	7,500
Lecturers' fees	€	20,000
Lecture room	€	3,400
Purchase computer	€	2,000
Depreciation movables	€	500
Purchase books	€	20,000
Various and unforeseen	€	8,350
<i>Total</i>	€	96,400

¹⁰ In our budget we have provisionally allocated an amount of € 19,500 for 2004 and an amount of € 55,500 for 2005.

Income		
Subsidy Levi Lassen	€	25,000
Subsidy Makaria	€	12,500
Subsidy Maror	€	19,500
Private donations	€	25,000
Contribution LJG Amsterdam	€	2,400
Student fees	€	12,000
<i>Total</i>	€	<i>96,400</i>

Although students are supposed to purchase their own books and build up a personal library, the Institute will also have to set up a reference library with specialist and (for most students, too) expensive publications.

A start will be made with this library in 2004.

Seminars and meetings outside the Netherlands are included in our budget.

This concerns seminars, arranged by the Levisson Institute, for the benefit of its own and foreign students, and for our students to visit seminars and meetings abroad.

Given the existing study programme and the time needed for preparation, a start will be made on these seminars and visits abroad in 2005.

5. The Near Future

A wise man once said “It is difficult to be a prophet, especially when it concerns predicting the future.” However, what we could only hope for when setting up the Levisson Institute has – with the help of many – become reality.

The Finances

The modified budget – albeit provisional – for the year 2005 is ready. In 2005 we will expand the library and start with organising seminars (Spring 2005) and the students, together with the Dean, will attend meetings abroad (see insert). Moreover, we will admit new students to the course of study from September 2005, which will require an additional programme of lectures and courses for these students. Salary costs will rise, as the number of hours for the Dean and administrative support will have to be increased. In the provisional 2005 budget expenses come to an amount of €156,000.-. Thanks to allocated subsidies the budget should – at is seems at present – be balanced.

Seminars abroad:

- April 2005: Annual Study Conference of the Abraham Geiger Kolleg in Berlin.
Subject: “Tzedek and Tzedaka from the Bible to Modernity.”
- June/July 2005: Bi-annual Conference of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Moscow, followed by Rabbinic Kallah: Study meeting for Rabbis and Rabbinical students.
- Autumn 2005: Ten day study trip to Israel.

There is no need to apply for a subsidy from the Maror Commission¹¹ for 2005. Based on a yearly budget of at least €150.000,-, we will, however, have to apply to Maror again for 2006 and following years. For this, it is important that we are also supported with other secure funding.

The Friends

We have already written that the Friends of the Institute are essential for its continuity. Their contributions are indispensable. Furthermore, by their continued support they demonstrate that our Institute has become an established and integral part of Dutch Jewish life.

For the Institute to be able to stand on its own feet and be able to provide concurrent training for students of different years, the number of Friends will have to be significantly increased in the coming years. In the budget for 2005 we assume 35 contributors, and thus an amount of at least €35,000.-. We are grateful to our Friends for this support. We are, however, striving to increase the number of Friends over time and hope to reach at least 100. This number of supporters would give us a more secure financial basis! A minimum annual budget for the Institute amounts to expenditure of at least €150,000. We hope that the Friends that we already have will help us by finding new supporters from amongst their friends and colleagues.

¹¹ About the Maror Commission, see note 9 on page 15.

The present students

At the moment when this report is written, not all of the study results for the first year are known. The students may use the summer period to finish writing their required papers. We do, however, expect that they as a whole have achieved sufficiently good results to be able to proceed to the following year.

The students have had to work very hard to be able to follow this study, and this will remain so in the coming years. This is a part-time study and, while making sure that the training keeps to the required quality, we must also see to it that the burden does not become too heavy. Apart from the study, the students also have to earn a living and some of them have a family that – rightly – demands attention. We have based ourselves on ten hours tuition a week with, in addition, one to two hours of preparation time per hour in class. To this must be added the writing of papers and examinations. We have noticed that for a few students this is somewhat too much. For these students a revised programme, adapted to their circumstances, will be defined, with the result that the overall length of their study will be extended.

Future students

The board has decided not to admit new students for the year 2004/2005. We needed to first develop the study programme and gain experience from this. Available funding was also a problem. Admission of new students inevitably means that additional lessons have to be provided.

As of today, we are making it known that a new intake of student can take place for the year 2005/2006. We are hoping for students who are somewhat younger than the initial class. But let it be said, the present students are highly motivated; for them, this was their first possibility of at last doing what they have long desired.

International cooperation

The Maror Commission, in awarding the present subsidy, asks about the prospects for international recognition of our institute. This is probably a misunderstanding since foreign institutions of good reputation have appointed members to the Advisory Council of the Levisson Institute. This means that they already acknowledge our Institute as an educational institute that can be trusted to train Rabbis.

It is possible that the Maror Commission is referring to international recognition of the *semichah* that will be granted by the Institute. For this to be achieved the Advisory Council is of vital significance. The members of the Advisory Council must guarantee the quality of the training so that a *semichah* awarded by the Levisson Institute at the end of the course will be recognised by the Liberal Jewish Community and by the international professional bodies. Given the duration of the course it will still take some time before we can give further assurance on this.

As regards European cooperation, one can say the following. The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, the Leo Baeck College and the board of the European Union of the World Union for Progressive Judaism have all expressed their support for us by word and by deed.

During discussions with Prof. Dr. Jonathan Magonet, Principal of the Leo Baeck College, London, a member of our Advisory Council, we considered the possibility of closer co-operation between the three European training institutes. This has to be studied further. Among the ideas under consideration are exchange of students and of teachers, and joint seminars. This

co-operation could in the long run even lead to the three institutes awarding a joint European *semichah*. All of this will take time, and has to be undertaken step by step. We consider it very encouraging that the existing and established bodies already take us sufficiently seriously so that such plans can be discussed. We could not have dared even dream of this a few years ago.

Amsterdam, 20 July 2004 – 2 Av 5764