



Annual Report
&
Financial Report
for the academic year
August 2011 – July 2012

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Introduction

2011-2012 marked the 10th year since the Institute was established, and it has been an eventful year.

This year, with a month-long extension, has seen: our second rabbinic ordination ceremony, the induction of 'Levisson-rabbis' in our two largest Liberal Jewish congregations, the completion of the first teacher training program, the official opening of the library, the departure from the Board of our two longest serving members and installation of two excellent replacements for them, and last but not least the retirement of the Dean and the appointment and installation of the Institute's new daily leadership.

All this and more will be addressed in more detail in this report. You will see that rabbis trained and ordained by our Institute now serve in all liberal Jewish congregations in the Netherlands, in one case (Amsterdam) as the second rabbi. It should be noted that some rabbis have more than one congregation, and that the need for rabbis actually seems to grow as their number increases. The teachers who now have graduated are also at work in nearly all our congregations, spread throughout the country; the same is true for the chazzanim (cantors), who completed their studies in 2009.

The rules of the Institute prescribe mandatory mentoring for all graduates during two years. During that time and later, we also offer professional development training opportunities and possibilities of attending international meetings and conferences with colleagues.

For the outgoing Dean and the Board members who have been part of the Institute since the very beginning, it is a source of joy and satisfaction to see that this unlikely initiative could actually be realized, and that the institute has received sufficient support from the community. We hope it will continue this way. We know that many good initiatives are nipped in the bud because "we are such a small Jewish community and thus we are not able to carry this out and make it work." The opposite seems to be true. See, for example, the successes of the recent years, Crescas, the Jewish Historical Museum, Limmud (Limmoed) and our own Levisson Institute.

The aim of our foundation is to strengthen the ancient chain of tradition and to transmit it to this and coming generations in a contemporary, inspiring and sound manner. This is the essential task of the rabbis, who have to be leaders who know what they stand for, who are attentive in hearing the needs and wishes of their congregations, non-affiliated Jews and the wider community, and pro-actively find flexible and creative ways to respond to changing circumstances and insights. Training rabbis like this is what we see as the main task of the Institute. To assist them, we also need to train knowledgeable teachers and chazzanim who perform well in their work. These are the dedicated people and these are the programs that will ensure our future as Jews in this country and the spiritual development of us all, individuals as well as communities.

Browse the report at your leisure, read what seems interesting, follow the references to more information on the website and to the earlier Annual Reports that are also to be found there (in About us). We are interested in your reaction, and will be happy to reply to your questions and to furnish more information on all aspects of our efforts.

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Robert A. Levisson was one of the great liberal Jewish leaders in our country, a gifted speaker and writer and a champion of Israel. He died in December 2001.
Yehi zichro baruch – יהי זכרו ברוך

1. The 2011-2012 academic year

The opening of the academic year



Professor Melila Hellner-Eshed from Jerusalem opened the year on 21 August with a lecture-study session.

Her theme was suggested by the period of the year, the beginning of the month of Elul and the start of preparations for the High Holidays: "*Awakenings, Preparing for the High Holy Days.*"

Appropriately enough, this time the ceremony was held in the synagogue sanctuary, which certainly contributed to the special atmosphere.

The lecture and discussion with the audience was recorded and can be listened to on our website. There you will also find the texts studied, which are needed during the listening. www.levisson.nl > Archive > The Lectures > M. Hellner: Awakenings.

Prof. Hellner is professor of "Jewish Mysticism and Zohar" at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Senior Research Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute, and lecturer at the Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem campus. She was in the Netherlands at our invitation, for a four-day intensive seminar "Kabbalah and the Zohar" in the Professional Development Program for the rabbis and rabbinic students.



The rabbinic students



The year ended – with some delay – on 2 September 2012, with the ordination ceremony of Rabbi Ira Goldberg in the LJJ Amsterdam. Immediately after he received his *semicha* (rabbinical ordination), he was installed as second rabbi of the congregation, next to Rabbi Menno ten Brink

His rabbinic thesis is a study about the ceremonies that are used in different Progressive Jewish congregations at the time people converting to Judaism complete the procedure of formally entering into the Jewish people and the covenant. Interestingly, this is an area that has never been systematically investigated before. At the end of the defence of the thesis, members of the Examination Board made the proposal to make several additions to it and then to publish it as a book.

Besides members of the Academic Committee, members of the Examination Board were Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet, former Principal of the Leo Baeck College in London and Professor of Tanach there, and Rabbi Dr. Yehoram Mazor, recently retired lecturer of Jewish Liturgy at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem.



Rabbi Mazor was Ira's first thesis supervisor; in the photograph he is seen to Ira's left. On Ira's right side is Prof. Eliyahu Schleifer, until recently Head of the Cantorial Program at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. He is an old and close friend of Ira's family. Here they bring Ira forward to receive his ordination.

This year, besides working on the thesis, Ira completed the academic study program and did his internship in LJG Brabant, working – under the guidance of the Dean – as the functioning rabbi of the congregation. He also started on his intensive language training in Dutch, which will be continued throughout the autumn of 2012

And last but not least, we also congratulate Ira and his wife Max on the birth of their 3rd child, their son Saraf Benayah on the 30th of June.

De photographs and video of the Ordination and induction can be seen on www.levisson.nl
> Photos/Videos.

The two rabbinical students, whom we expect receive their smicha in the autumn of 2013, are working hard at finishing their studies. Due to personal circumstances, this is taking longer than expected, but despite this, their progress is slow but steady.



Clary Rooda continues work on her thesis on the developments in the field of the so-called "eco-kashrut" and the Hechsher Tzedek, introduced last year in the US by the Conservative movement and Modern Orthodox groups. This is a certification of kosher meat, that not only makes high demands of the slaughtering method, but also of the animals' living conditions from birth, as well as of the working conditions of all the staff working with the animals during the entire process.



In the year 2012-2013, David Snuijf will continue to catch up with his remaining backlog in Talmud and Jewish philosophy. In addition, he will decide on the topic of his thesis and hopefully research and complete it within the projected period. Furthermore, his internship with LJG Flevoland is completed; and during the coming year he will, as Ira Goldberg's successor, perform the work of the rabbi in the LJG Brabant. This will be under the guidance of Rabbi Tamarah Benima, who is now the acting rabbi there.

And again last but not least, we also wish to warmly congratulate David and his wife Pauline with the birth of their daughter Naomi Natanya on 22 July this year.

By the way

Even though it was not an activity of the Institute, we also want to mention the appointment of Rabbi Marianne van Praag (class of 2008) as rabbi of the LJJ The Hague, and to congratulate her both with this and with her impressive induction service on 24 June 2012.

Together with the appointment of Rabbi Ira Goldberg in Amsterdam, this has marked another milestone for the Institute. For the first time 'Levisson-rabbis' are now responsible for and in all Liberal Jewish congregations in the Netherlands.

With our cantorial graduates and teachers who are active in almost all of our congregations, we have now for the first fulfilled the main purpose of the Institute.

This, however, does not mean that we can rest on our laurels. The task of improving the quality of Jewish life still needs a lot of work, as does the effort to ensure that the chain of tradition will continue. And we also see that with the contemporary movement of people, the training of more professionals will have to continue and to be improved.

Thee photographs of the induction can be seen on www.levisson.nl > Photos/Videos.



New students

In the late spring of 2012, we received six new applications for rabbinical training. Following preliminary interviews, three decided to proceed with their application procedures. We have received indications that there are more potential students orienting themselves about the possibilities of following the training. Furthermore we expect that our rabbis and congregations will find a few more suitable candidates and will encourage them to apply.

We expect that the Admissions Committee will hold the required interviews during the early part of 2013 and that the results will be announced in the spring.

In previous Annual Reports we have referred to the study of the projected future need for rabbis in our movement. The outcome was that we will need a new group of 4-5 rabbis in the period 2018-2020. This expectation is strengthened as we see that there is a growing demand for rabbis, and that some rabbis serve two to three congregations. In addition, our graduates are active in other places in and for the Jewish community, especially in the areas of pastoral work and education. For an overview, see www.levisson.nl > Archive > Board of Rabbis.

In order to meet the demand – the prime purpose our Foundation and the Institute – we have to be able to count on the support from the (Liberal) Jewish community. We are blessed with a loyal group of Friends on whom we can count, but we still need to appeal to everyone who feels for the work we do to follow the Friends' example. Ideally we hope for financial commitments for a number of years; the training of one rabbi takes at least five years. Bequests and inheritances are of particular importance to help build an endowment fund or a fund named for the giver. This would be a most valuable tool to keep our spiritual heritage alive.

The Teacher Training program

This completion of this two-year long program took the form of a festive Diploma Ceremony in a full Portuguese synagogue in The Hague.



The training began on 13 June 2010 with 14 students from The Hague, Utrecht, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. On 1 July 2012, 12 students from six congregations from all parts of the country received their diplomas: several now teach in two congregations and more teachers are needed in most places.

The study took place over 20 Sundays, including a study weekend at the Leo Baeck College in London and a full day seminar in

The Hague led by Rabbi Michael Shire, then of the Department of Jewish Education of the Leo Baeck College.

The content of the training was described in the Annual Report 2010-2011, see www.levisson.nl > About us > Annual Reports. The subjects, lecturers, some study materials and the daily schedules of the curriculum can be found under www.levisson.nl > Study programs > Teacher Training program.

With the daily programs this is also part of the study material available online to read and listen to. Especially recommended is the recorded video series of 10 hours of lectures by Dr. Bart Wallet (University of Amsterdam) on 'Jewish Historians' Philosophy,' see the website > Archives > The Lectures.

The historical research project

The project "From Adath Jeshurun to Adath Jesjoeroen" on the developments within [religious] Judaism in the Netherlands in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appears to be extremely interesting and promising. The project has suffered from delays, due to health problems of the researcher, Chaya Brasz. The restructured plan is that the manuscript will be ready by December 2013 and that the book will appear a year later.



In the Annual Report 2010-2011 we gave a few examples of her findings. Meanwhile a lecture she held in 2009 for an international conference in Germany on "The German Rabbinate Abroad" has appeared online. That conference was held on the theme of the influence of German emigrant and refugee rabbis in Jewish communities worldwide.

Chaya's lecture "*Dutch Jewry and its Undesired German Rabbinate*" concentrated on the contribution of German rabbis to Jewish religious life in the Netherlands. This is now one of the issues to be addressed by our project. The results of that conference will be published in the *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, which is due to appear in print in the autumn of 2012.

In the meantime, on 21 June Oxford University Press published Chaya's article for the *Leo Baeck Yearbook* online. To read it, please use the links on our website: www.levisson.nl > Archive > Research Project.

Persons interested in German Jewish history can now take advantage of the wide range of historical material from the Leo Baeck Institute: www.lbi.org.

The Library



The official opening of the library took place on 24 May 2012 in the LJG Amsterdam. The chair of the Library Committee, Rabbi Kineret Sittig, spoke and outlined the history, content and purpose of the collection.

This was followed by a lively discussion between philosopher Yoram Stein and Rabbi Tamarah Benima over the recently published book by the American historian David Biale: *Not in the Heavens: The Tradition of Jewish Secular Thought*.

Biale sets out to show that secularisation is not a new phenomenon in Judaism, but that it has developed over several centuries. The participants held totally opposing opinions about Biale's provocative book, and the discussion turned out to be just as sharp and stimulating as intended. It became clear that even in a mainly scholarly Jewish library one can find quite a bit of provocative literature.

The digital catalogue can be found on the library website: www.levissonbibliotheek.nl. This also gives other information about the library, e.g. opening hours, lending conditions and recent acquisitions, although only in Dutch. Some of this information and a list of recent acquisitions are also on www.levisson.nl > Archive > Library.



Changes in the Board



Thijs ten Raa

This year there have been some important changes in the board. In the Annual Report 2010-2011 we announced that Fred Salomon and Wilma Stein were about to leave and that their places would be taken by David Allick and Thijs ten Raa. Both new members were formally installed on 1 November 2011. At the same time Simone Haller exchanged her position as treasurer for that of secretary; Thijs ten Raa replaced her as treasurer. David Allick is now responsible for matters that require legal expertise.



David Allick

In late spring Marja Hené had to leave the board after eight years of active and important work. She had been a board member by virtue of her position in the Executive Committee of the Union with the portfolio 'Religion'. This meant that she was the person on behalf of the board who maintained communications with the Union of Congregations and boards of all LJG congregations in the country. In conjunction with her position as chairperson of the LJG Rotterdam she had a very interesting but also heavy load to carry. This she managed with a steady hand, always combined with a pleasant smile. She was replaced in the Union Executive by Harry Polak from Amsterdam, who therefore took her place on our Board. This appointment became final on 27 June 2012; knowing Harry he certainly will fit in well with the other board members and take good care of the work developed by Marja Hené.



Harry Polak

Changes in the Leadership

The most important and complicated task facing the board this year was to arrange for a responsible transfer of the leadership of the Institute a successor for the Dean, Rabbi David Lilienthal. He had announced 1½ years earlier that he wanted to leave the daily running of the Institute to someone else. In the ensuing search, all parties, directly or in-directly concerned, participated, such as the Academic Committee and the Rabbinical Assembly.

A number of discussions were held with persons deemed suitable, but none of them regarded it as realistic to combine his/her present position with that of Dean. This led the board to the decision to introduce a different leadership structure. The result was to install a “Management Team” (MT) with four members, each with his/her speciality in order to ensure that all areas of responsibility will be covered. The main outline of the planned structure can be seen in the organisation chart on the following page. Below the plan a short summary is given of the tasks of each of the members of our MT.

The four members of the MT in principle stand hierarchically on the same level and carry equal authority, each in his/her own area of responsibility. However, the Dean is the *primus inter pares*, casting the deciding vote if no consensus can be found. Following a period of transfer, the Management Team took charge on 3 September 2012. The members of the MT are:

The Dean, Menno ten Brink, Senior rabbi of the LJJ Amsterdam. Rabbi ten Brink has been a member of the Academic Committee since the start of the Institute. He has a wide national and international network, something that is necessary for the embedding of the Institute in the world-wide (liberal-) Jewish context.



The head of the academic program is Reinier Munk, Professor of Modern Jewish philosophy at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. He has been one of our permanent lecturers since the early days of the Institute and member of the Academic Committee since July 2007. He and Prof. Irene Zwiép, the chair of our Academic Committee, together form a team that belongs to the leading top experts among Dutch academics in the area of Jewish Studies.



The head of vocational training (BVV) is Marianne van Praag, the rabbi of the LJJ The Hague, the LJJ Gelderland and LJJ Flevoland. Marianne is one of our first ordained rabbis and has a many years of experience with pastoral and educational activities. In leading the vocational training, she will be assisted by the same team of experts that has led this program for our students over the last 10 years, Carolyn Levisson, Ella Oesterman and Joost Levy.



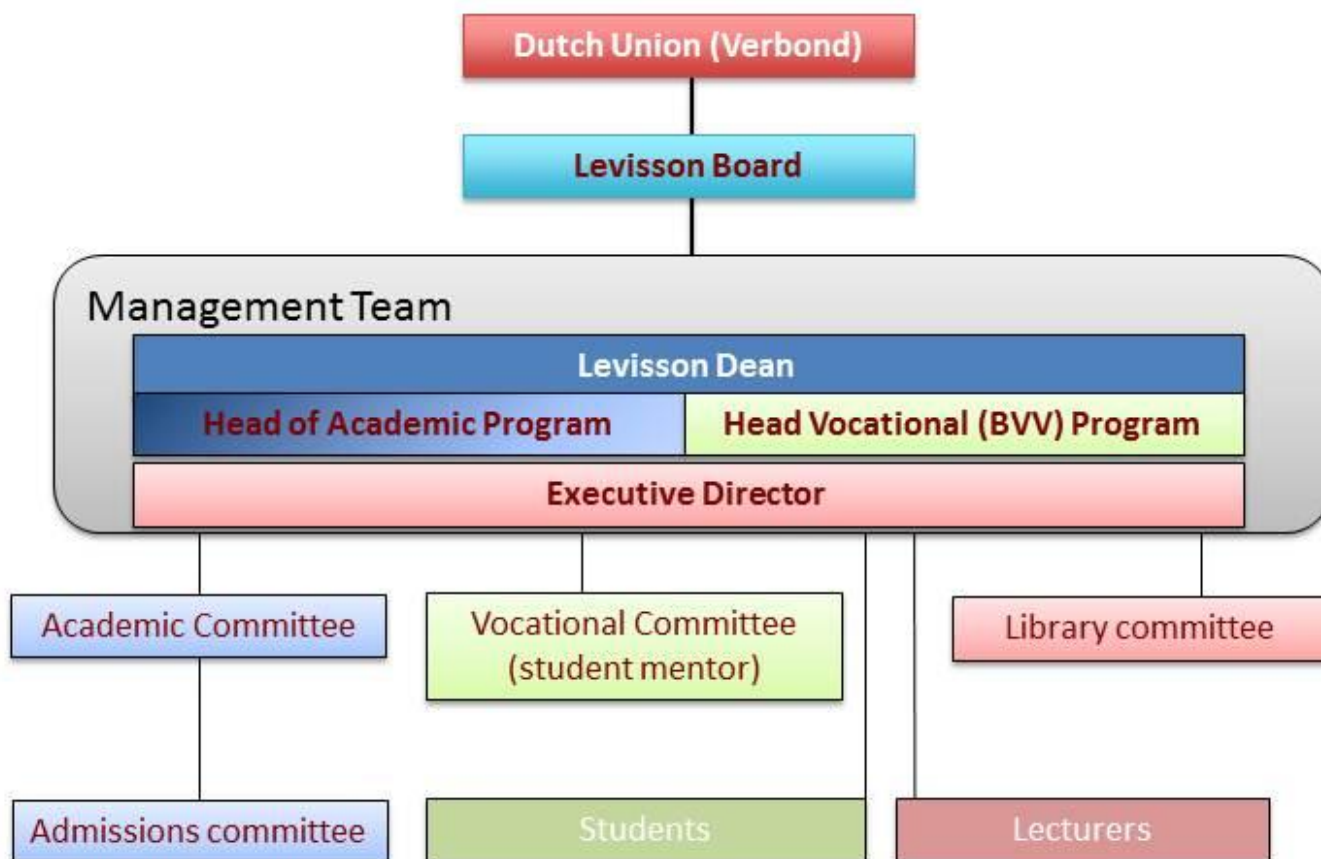
The Executive Director is Francine Püttmann. She will be the ‘spin in the web’, who co-ordinates all our activities and serves as the first point of contact for all matters regarding the MT. She was already working for us as our librarian, knows the Institute and the people, has considerable Jewish knowledge and many years of experience in leadership and work in Jewish organisations.



More information about the MT and contact details for the members can be found on the website of the Institute www.levisson.nl > About us.

Levisson Organogram English

as of 3 September 2012



Levisson Dean – Rabbi; responsible for the overall running of the Institute ; primus inter pares in the management team; representation with a wide network in and outside the Netherlands; long experience in working in the Jewish world and in congregations; fundraising.

Executive Director – Administrative background; general secretariat, extensive knowledge of the Dutch Jewish community, able to communicate well in English and Hebrew; responsible for the finances, making time schedules, travel arrangements, correspondence, reports and annual reports, publicity, support for the fundraising, etc. Authority for independent decision making within set limits.

Head of Academic Program – University background; responsible for developing the curriculum, lecturers, educational materials, etc.; works in close co-operation with the Academic Committee.

Head of the Vocational (BVV) Program –Rabbi with professional experience; responsible for the professional training, pastoral trainings, internships ,etc.; works in close co-operation with the Vocational Committee (a sub-committee of the Academic Committee).

Tuesday 21 August 2012

The Friends

The information above is intended to show that the transfer to the new leadership has been completed with the necessary diligence and care and a minimum of hitches. We expect a reasonably quiet year; looking forward to receiving new rabbinic students. We feel we can state with confidence that the future of the Institute seems to be ensured. The wording “seems to be” is intentional, since, as always, the finances are a concern, if not a threat.

Thanks to a couple of generous Friends, for the moment our immediate concerns have been relieved. For the longer-term continuity of the work, we still have to rely on our loyal Friends and donors to continue their support. We are greatly indebted to them and to the Levi Lassen Foundation, Maror and a few smaller foundations for their confidence in the work we do and the commitments they make to us arising from this.

In the Mishna, Pirke Avot 3:21 we read: "אם אין קמה, אין תורה, אם אין תורה, אין קמה" – *im eyn kemach, eyn Tora, im eyn Tora, eyn kemach* – (in a somewhat free translation) “without physical sustenance, there is no Torah, without Torah the physical sustenance loses its significance.” Thus we learn that those who invest their physical means in Jewish learning thereby give significance to the lives of many in, and even outside, the Jewish community.

Together with the Management Team, the board will continue their search for a structural solution to the financing so that that the students and all concerned with the Institute, not to mention the congregations, will not remain uncertain about their future. A very good long-term solution would be if those able to do so were to make a bequest to the Foundation so that their names will be remembered for good for many years to come. However, before an endowment fund can be built, we will continue to need your help to find more Friends, donors, foundations and funds that are prepared to assist us financially, so that this “knowledge centre” of Liberal Judaism in the Netherlands can be maintained and remain active.

Plans for the year 2012-2013 and beyond

On page 12 in last year’s Annual Report (see www.levisson.nl > About us > Annual Reports) we presented the background for the estimate that we need to train still more rabbis. Perhaps surprisingly, the need for people well-educated in Judaism for the leadership of our congregations, rabbis, chazzanim and teachers is increasing rather than diminishing. This may very well also be due to the influence the already-trained people have on their surroundings, how they do their work and what they bring with them. This is also reflected in the number of people who show an interest in following the courses of study. The impact of what we have achieved during these first 10 years begins to be visible and to be felt.

Our plans for the year 2012-2013 are modest. The current two rabbinical students must complete their studies, the prospective students will have their preparatory work assignments and the new leadership must find its feet and get to work with the Academic Committee and the Board to further define and develop plans for the future. We will keep you up-to-date through our newsletters, on the website and by occasional meetings for our Friends and supporters.

2. The Finances

The financial statements August 2011 - July 2012

The annual accounts for 2011-2012 have been drawn up by accountant A. Kuhlman in Amstelveen. 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 at contact@levisson.nl or the Contact form on our website.

Balance as at July 31, 2012

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Accounts receivable/prepayments	€ 22.450	Founding capital	€ 145.132
Cash	€ 260.201	Appropriated reserves	€ 65.988
		Taxes	€ 1.271
		Debts/deferrals	€ 70.260
<i>Total</i>	€ 282.651	<i>Total</i>	€ 282.651

Notes

The “Appropriated reserves” are divided over four funds:

Students’ fund	€ 27.019
Israel seminar fund	€ 15.000
Scholarly research fund	€ 9.000
Teacher Training Program	€ 14.969

1. The Students’ Fund provides financial support for students in tight financial circumstances for costs directly related to their studies. The initial funding was collected as a present for the Dean when he became Emeritus Rabbi of the Amsterdam Liberal Jewish Community.
2. The Israel Seminar Fund 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 2011-2012 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. The board decided to allocate the unused sum of €11.895 in the fiscal year 2010-2011 for a reserve for the Teacher Training program. In 2011 the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation made an additional donation to cover the costs of the study weekend in the Teacher Training program in October 2011. The unused part of this donation of €3.074 has been added to the reserve. In addition the board decided to make this reserve available to all trainings organized by our Institute.

Statement of income and expenses August 2011- July 2012

<i>Receipts:</i>		<i>Expenditures:</i>	
Friends and other donations	€46.705	Dean/Administrative assistance	€34.905
Grants	€49.010	Lecturers and courses	€35.595
Publication book	€ 4.780	Expenditures Board/Dean/ Committees	€10.461
Tuition fees Rab. students	€ 7.975	Library and course materials	€ 3.641
Tuition fees Teacher stud.	€ 1.200	Communication	€ 7.629
Other gifts	€ 1.630	Housing and facilities	€ 4.781
Interest	€ 4.115	Publication book	€ 6.369
Other income	€ 383	Accountant/wages administration	€ 7.180
		Miscellaneous/unforeseen	€ 2.657
<i>Total</i>	<i>€115.798</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>€106.038</i>
Positive balance profit and loss account		€9.760	

Notes

The net result reflects that the academic year 2011-2012 in fact turned into a year in which the second group of students were catching up on their backlog of studies. Seen in this light, the net result is too low. In order to make the organisation more robust, the board has decided that a) the accounts are no longer outsourced to an accountants' firm, but is done by the treasurer, and b).the administrative support, especially for the Dean, be cancelled. However, it was discovered that in 2010 a commitment had been made to this assistant. In the table above this is included in the Expenditures Board (half of this post).

The income from grants is a third lower than the year before. This came about that since we expected a lower expenditure we did not apply for the Maror grant, but extended the use of the grant for 2011 to also cover 2012. Nevertheless, we count ourselves fortunate that in 2011-2012 we were also supported by Maror, the Levi Lassen Foundation, some private funds, the Union and a couple of Liberal Jewish congregations. Still, the basis of the Levisson Institute are our individual Friends, who enable us to remain financially healthy. We are most grateful for their support.

During the past year, the board has submitted five grant applications to Maror, four of which have been approved, albeit that the amounts granted are shrinking. In the past year the Levi Lassen Foundation donated the second of their promised subsidy in three instalments.

You will realize that we really require more Friends, foundations and funds that are prepared to support our activities with a fixed annual amount, large or small.

Thijs ten Raa
treasurer