



Annual Report
&
Financial Report
for het academic year
August 2012 – July 2013

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Rabbi Robert A. Levisson (1913-2001) was one of the great leaders within the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism.

He was a son of the founder of the Progressive Jewish movement in the Netherlands. After World War II he revived the Liberal Jewish Congregation (LJG) in The Hague and became a prominent Progressive Jewish leader nationally. He was a wise man, a talented speaker and author, and a great advocate for Israel.

Yehi zichro baruch - יהי זכרו ברוך - Blessed be his memory

Introduction

The past year covered by this report, 2012-2013/5772-5773, was a year full of change for the Levisson Institute.

We said farewell to our founder and dean, rabbi David Lilienthal, who with his wife Gun and eldest daughter Anna followed their two other daughters and left for their aliyah, the realisation of a long-cherished dream. He will remain involved with the Institute as a member of the Academic Committee.

We have said it many times over the past year, but will repeat it here: Thank you, David, for your efforts over many years in starting up the Levisson Institute and expanding it into an institute where so far six rabbis have attained their semicha, which means that Progressive Judaism and our ten Dutch kehillot have been able to receive a new Jewish leadership. We have trained teachers for instructing our youngsters, cantors to lead our worship and in the past academic year we have staged a very successful course for about 40 gabbai'im, the men and women whose task it is to ensure that the synagogue services in the various kehillot take place correctly and smoothly. We are now engaged in writing a 'Handbook for Gabbai'im' as a guide for the kehillot. We are holding refresher courses for teachers and cantors, and strive to develop new ideas for the future of our Institute, while remaining faithful to our core activity of training rabbis, the spiritual leaders of our congregations.

It is obvious that all of this would not be possible if the Institute were not being led by expert governors and professional teachers, from the academic as well as the Jewish world. I am therefore very thankful that this transitional year has proved so successful. Many thanks are due to the Board under the inspiring chairmanship of Prof. Dr. Ted Young; the members of the Academic Committee, chaired by Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiép; the members of the Vocational Training Committee ('BVV'), chaired by Carolyn Levisson; and my colleagues in the Management Team which has succeeded our former dean: our director Francine Püttmann, Prof. Dr. Reinier Munk and rabbi Marianne van Praag. Without the dedicated efforts of so many people we would never be able to realise our aims.

Of course all of this would not be possible at all if we could not continually make demands on our loyal benefactors, because investing in Jewish leadership inevitably is a costly matter: many thanks!

Ezehu chacham? Halomed mikol adam! (Wisdom of the Fathers, Pirke Avot 4:1), "Who is wise? He who learns from all people!" This is what I hope and expect from our rabbis, cantors, teachers and all others who have followed our training programmes and are still doing so. In the first place it is of great importance to the survival of Progressive Judaism in the Netherlands that continuity of leadership is assured. But our eyes should not be only on ourselves. We must keep an open eye for the world around us, while always seeking to maintain a manner of Jewish living that is firmly embedded in modern Dutch society, rooted in an understanding of our tradition while looking to the future.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM

Dean of the Levisson Institute

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1. The academic year 2012-2013

The opening of the academic year

The academic year started on 2 September 2012, when Ira Goldberg received his semicha (rabbinic ordination) in the course of a festive ceremony at the LJG in Amsterdam. Immediately he was also installed as second rabbi of this congregation beside rabbi Menno ten Brink.

His master's thesis focused on the ceremonies performed in various communities at the completion of the giur procedure, when a person is formally inducted into Judaism. Never before had systematic research been conducted into this subject.



Besides the members of the Academic Committee, the board of examiners included rabbi Prof. Jonathan Magonet, formerly principal of the Leo Baeck College in London and professor of Tanach studies there, and rabbi Dr Yehoram Mazor, retired associate professor of Jewish Liturgy at the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem.



Rabbi Mazor was Ira's principal thesis supervisor; the photograph shows him to the right of Ira. Left of Ira is Prof. Dr Eliyahu Schleifer, also of Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem, until recently head of the cantor school there and an old friend of the Goldberg family. We see the two of them leading Ira forward to receive his semicha.

For photos and videos of the service see our website: <http://www.levisson.nl/en/photos-videos/the-ordination-service-2012.html>

At the writing of this annual report, Ira Goldberg has been working at the LJG Amsterdam for a year. He is the sixth rabbi to have graduated from our Institute and has recently also received his international license from the Rabbinic Recognition Committee of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

David Lilienthal's farewell



On 3 February 2013 we said goodbye to our founder and dean, rabbi David Lilienthal. Five months earlier, at the semicha of Ira Goldberg, he had already handed over his responsibilities to the new Management Team, as he was going to settle in Israel with his wife and eldest daughter. His departure from the Levisson Institute was celebrated in grand style at the LJG in Amsterdam with various speeches, a lecture by Chaya Brasz and music by Gilad Nezer (vocal), Kimball Huigens (piano) and Richard Wolfe (violin).

David Lilienthal was made honorary dean of the Institute and received a certificate of appreciation specially designed by Brenda Kaldenbach (see photo). Also David was appointed as a member of the Academic Committee. Photos and videos of the event can be viewed on our website (Dutch side): <http://www.levisson.nl/nl/fotos-videos/afscheid-van-decaan-lilienthal.html>

The David Lilienthal Fund

One of the gifts presented to David Lilienthal at his departure from the Levisson Institute on 3 February was the David Lilienthal Fund. This fund is intended for the staging of an annual David Lilienthal lecture, on subjects of interest to a broad Jewish audience.

The sum was raised by the many people involved with the Institute. The gift was presented symbolically to David Lilienthal with a list of the donors. In the same month, David and Gun Lilienthal also formally took their leave from LJG Amsterdam; the council of the LJG too had called upon its members to contribute to this fund.

The rabbinic students

In this academic year, two students continued in the training programme.



Clary Rooda completed her master's thesis on developments in the fields of "Eco -kashrut" and "Bal tashchit", with rabbi Dr Yehoram Mazor and Dr Bart Wallet as her supervisors. She is yet to perform an internship at LJG The Hague, supervised by rabbi Marianne van Praag. Clary Rooda is expected to receive her semicha in the spring of 2014.



In the spring of 2013 David Snuijf announced that his job required him to move to Switzerland with his wife and child, for a period of three years as of this summer. By mutual agreement it was decided that he would discontinue his studies.

The new rabbinic training programme

In the early spring of 2013 five candidates applied for the new rabbinic course. The Admissions Committee conducted the requisite interviews and eventually found just one of the candidates suitable for admission. We would have liked several new students to have started simultaneously, but not all of the candidates met our strict criteria. The principal requirements for admission are an academic education to at least bachelor level, a knowledge of Hebrew, active involvement with progressive Judaism and being at home in the Jewish community. It is our hope that in coming years some further suitable candidates will enroll. A core business of our Foundation and Institute is the training of rabbis. In earlier annual reports we already referred to the study that showed us to be in need of a new contingent of rabbis by 2018-2020, as several of our present rabbis will then be taking retirement. Meanwhile it is evident that the demand for rabbis is growing, and that some rabbis already are having to take care of more than one congregation. Also our graduates are finding their way into various other positions in the Jewish community, especially fulfilling pastoral tasks. Therefore it is important that an adequate number of rabbinic students are trained.



The student who started her studies on 1 October 2013 is Hannah Neudecker, a member of LJG The Hague. Hannah read Semitic Languages and cultures at Leiden University and gained her PhD with her thesis "The Turkish Bible translation by Yahya bin Ishak, also called Haki (1659)". She has been an associate professor of Modern Hebrew at the same university. In the teacher training course of the Levisson Institute that took place in 2010-2012, it was she who taught our students Hebrew.

The gabbai training course

For the first time, the Levisson Institute has organised a gabbai training course. This course was also the first to be initiated by the new Management Team. Its aim was to raise the level of competence of the gabbai, who in all synagogues ensure the smooth running of the liturgy, and also to train new gabba'im. This initiative was met with a great deal of enthusiasm and people from all of our congregations enrolled. Beit Ha'Chidush in Amsterdam, with which we collaborate within the Union, also sent three participants. There were almost 40 students in all. The three gatherings, in March and April 2013, took place in the synagogues of Amsterdam, Utrecht and The Hague. Under the supervision of the dean, instruction was given also by other rabbis and experienced gabba'im and shamashim from the various congregations. Many aspects of the gabba'ut were discussed, lively debates took place, and it emerged that there was great demand for a handbook. Therefore the College of Rabbis has decided in collaboration with the Levisson Institute to compile a Gabbai Handbook, in which gabba'im can easily read up on every aspect and discover the range of variations and options.



Refresher course for cantors



In the weekend of 8-9 July 2013 we organised a refresher course for our cantors, taught by Josée Wolff. For many years she was a member of LJG Gelderland, where she also sang as a cantor. Nowadays she lives in New York and has worked there for many years as Adjunct Faculty at the School of Sacred Music of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, besides performing as a cantor. By special request she came over to the Netherlands to instruct our cantors. The theme of the weekend was nusach, the chanting to special notes of certain parts of the liturgy, distinct from the familiar melodies. With Josée's considerable experience of teaching at HUC, she managed to teach our fourteen students a tremendous amount in the space of just three sessions, besides instructing individual cantors on some of the finer points during a masterclass.



At the end of October 2013 another refresher course for cantors will take place. This will bring the American cantor Gershon Silins to Amsterdam. He has taught at the cantor school of the Geiger Institute in Berlin and is currently employed at the Montagu Centre of Liberal Judaism in London.

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Rimon - Dutch Progressive-Jewish Educational Centre



In the summer of 2013, the Robert A. Levisson Foundation took over the Dutch Progressive-Jewish Educational Centre 'Rimon' from the Sja'ar Foundation.

Rimon has as its main task the development of teaching materials for all of the congregations associated in the Union. In this framework, Rimon performs the following tasks:

- compiling new teaching materials and collecting and revising existing materials for pupils following Talmud-Torah lessons in the age category of 3-13
- gathering teaching materials into educational packages for all teachers
- arranging nationwide refresher courses for all teachers involved
- offering practical support to teachers
- engaging in (digital) educational innovation, also of the Hebrew language method
- developing new methods for teaching special-needs pupils
- organising the annual Educational Weekend
- organising the annual Rimon Education Day.

Rimon is no stranger to the Levisson Institute. The two-year teacher's training course starting in 2010 was a joint effort, which in the summer of 2012 eventually saw 12 participants gaining their diplomas.

To the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism and to the Robert A. Levisson Foundation it therefore seemed a logical step to incorporate Rimon into the Levisson Institute.

However, the Levisson Foundation made it a condition that Rimon should be financially robust. Levisson did take over Rimon after almost all of the congregations associated in the Union had agreed to contribute to Levisson a fixed annual amount for Rimon, depending on the size of the congregation. Rimon's two coordinators, Matty van Eldik and Liesbeth Aussen, made the move along with Rimon.

The first joint project in the new set-up is a foundation course for new teachers in Talmud-Torah education. This will take place in the autumn of 2013.

See also the Rimon website: www.rimon-ljloc.nl.

Academic research



The project "From Adath Jeshurun to Adath Jesjoeroen", about the developments within (religious) Judaism in the Netherlands in the 19th and 20th centuries, is still in progress. Some delay has occurred owing to health problems of researcher Chaya Brasz and some organisational hitches. According to current planning, the manuscript will be ready by December 2014 and the book will appear about a year later..

At rabbi Lilienthal's farewell in February, Chaya Brasz spoke about an aspect of her study: *"The deaf, the poor and girls: the Israelite creed (Confirmation) as a nineteenth-century phenomenon in the Netherlands"*. On our website there is a video of her lecture (in Dutch): [www.levisson.nl>Foto's/video's>Afscheid van decaan Lilienthal](http://www.levisson.nl/Foto's/video's/Afscheid%20van%20decaan%20Lilienthal).

The Library

When they moved to their apartment in Jerusalem, as soon as late February, the Lilienthal family were unable to take along all of their belongings. Prior to packing up, David donated many hundreds of books from his private collection to the library of the Levisson Institute / LJG Amsterdam. For this we are very grateful. These books, mainly on the subject of progressive Judaism, will in the coming months be catalogued and made accessible. They are a fine addition to the library.

The library can be found on www.levissonbibliotheek.nl and www.ljgbibliotheek.nl.

The Management Team

Ira Goldberg's semicha on 2 September 2012 was David Lilienthal's last day as dean of the Levisson Institute. The new Management Team set to work immediately afterwards. By now, the MT has been active for a year, while successfully learning the ropes. Besides its everyday business it has been focusing on the departure of David Lilienthal, on the existing rabbinic training programme, on setting up the new one and the admission of rabbinic students, and on the refresher courses for rabbis and cantors. The first gabbai training in the Netherlands was also organised by the MT. After the merger with Rimon, a foundation course for teachers was started as well.

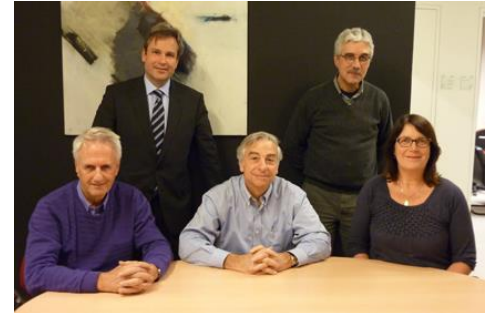


The Management Team convenes once a month; in between, there is a great deal of conferring by e-mail and telephone. The MT is represented at the meetings of the Board of Governors. The MT's director of General Affairs has an office three days a week in the Levisson Room on the premises of the LJG Amsterdam, and on other days can be contacted by e-mail.

Members of the Board, management and committees

Board of Governors

Prof. dr. Ted Young, chair
Simone Haller, secretary
Dr. Thijs ten Raa, treasurer
David Allick, LL.M., member
Harry Polak, MA, member (on behalf of the Union)



Management Team

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M., dean
Prof. dr. Reinier Munk, head Academic Programme
Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Programme
Francine Püttmann, MA, director of General Affairs

Academic Committee

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair
Prof. dr. Reinier Munk, secretary
Rabbijn Tamarah Benima, member
Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M., dean
Carolyn Levisson, MA, member
Rabbi David Lilienthal, honorary dean
Ernst Numann, LL.M., member
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, member
Prof. dr. Ted Young, chair Board of Governors

Admissions Subcommittee

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M., dean
Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair Academic Committee
Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair Vocational Training

Vocational Training Committee

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Programme

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman

Joost Levy, MA

Chellie van den Bergh

Marie-José van Hoof, MA

Rimon – Dutch Progressive-Jewish Educational Centre

Matty van Eldik, coordinator

Liesbeth Aussen, coordinator

Lea Abram, staff member

Israel Golani, MA, Hebrew language staff member

The Friends and benefactors

From the above it will be clear that Levisson is a dynamic institute. The new rabbinic student embodies its principal purpose. Only, as ever, the funding continues to be a matter of concern.

Thanks to some very generous Friends and numerous benefactors, we are free from immediate worry. But for the continuity of our work we remain dependent on the willingness of our loyal Friends and benefactors to continue their support. We owe them much gratitude, as well as to the Maror Foundation, the Levi Lassen Foundation, and to some smaller foundations.

In de Mishna, Pirke Avot 3:21 we read: אין קמח, אין תורה, אם אין תורה, אם אין קמח – *im ein kemach, ein Torah, im ein Torah, ein kemach* – which freely translates as "Without a means of livelihood, there is no Torah; without Torah, the means of livelihood lose their relevance". Thus we see that those who use their wealth to invest in Jewish scholarship give significance to our whole community and to many people beyond.

The Board and the Management Team will have to continue looking for a structural resolution to the funding problem, to ensure the financial health of the Institute. We are a recognised charity, and an excellent long-term solution would be if people would grant us a share in their estate by means of a bequest. But before we can build up such a capital fund - an endowment - to safeguard the future, we shall continue to need your help in finding more friends, benefactors, foundations and trusts that can support us financially in order to keep this knowledge centre of Progressive Judaism in the Netherlands in good shape and active.

Plans for 2013-2014 and beyond

The plans for the year 2013-2014 are to continue on our current course. One of the rabbinic students is due to complete her studies and obtain her semicha in 2014, the other student will continue her studies, which she has just embarked on. In October 2013 the Israeli professor rabbi Admiel Kosman will come to work with our rabbis, and in the same month the American cantor Gershon Silins will give our cantors a refresher course. For the trained gabba'im a Gabbai Handbook is in preparation, under the supervision of the College of Rabbis. With Rimon now under the wing of Levisson, also the training of the Talmud-Torah teachers and the development of new educational material will be further stimulated and supported.

New in the offerings of the Levisson Institute is a ba'al koreh training for anyone who on the Shabbath or on feast days will be reading the Torah or wishes to learn. The Institute intends to offer this two-year course on a nationwide basis, starting from 2014. In September 2013, the Board, the management and all sections of the Levisson Institute dedicated an evening to debating the Institute's policies. Plans for the more distant future are still to be worked out. You will be kept informed of our news by means of the newsletters and through the website.

2. Finances

Financial Report of the academic year Augustus 2012 - July 2013

The yearly accounts of 2012-2013 were accepted by the Board on 29 October 2013 and audited by accountant Kuhlman. They are summarised below. If readers wish to receive the full accounts, these can be requested through contact@levisson.nl.

Balance sheets, 31 July 2013

Assets		Liabilities	
Receivables	€ 16.584	Foundation capital	€ 175.844
Liquid assets	€ 270.595	Earmarked reserves	€ 65.863
		Taxation	€ 584
		Debts/short term assets	€ 44.888
Totals	€ 287.179		€ 287.179

The earmarked reserves comprise four funds:

Student Fonds	€ 26.894
Israel Seminar Fund	€ 15.000
Academic Research Fund	€ 9.000
Training Fund	€ 14.969

The Student Fund provides financial support for students in tight financial circumstances for costs directly related to their studies. The initial funding was gathered as a farewell present for Dean Lilienthal at his retirement as the rabbi of the LJG Amsterdam. So far, one modest grant has been awarded.

The Israel Seminar Fund was instituted in 2005 in order to offer the students a seminar in Israel on a more-or-less regular basis.

For academic research, especially abroad, € 10.000 were reserved in 2005; in 2008 a sum of € 1000 euros was paid out.

In 2007 the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation made us a donation, which initially was used for training cantors in 2007-2009. The remaining part, amounting to € 11.895, was allocated for the teachers' training course. In 2011 the Kiwi-Tielens Trust made a gift to cover the cost of a study trip to London in late 2011 for the teachers in training.

The unused part, € 3.074, has been added to the reserve. Moreover, the Board has decided to make this reserve available to all trainings organizes by the Institute.

The short term assets include € 5.119 in contributions to the David Lilienthal Fund on the occasion of his departure as Dean, which will be used to fund the David Lilienthal lectures.

Statement of revenue and expenditure, August 2012 - July 2013

Revenue		Expenditure	
Friends and other donations	€ 58.181	Staff	€ 26.002
Subsidies	€ 32.808	Teachers and courses	€ 21.788
Publication book	€ 0	Board/dean/committees	€ 6.816
Tuition rabbinical students	€ 3.100	Library and educ. materiaal	€ 56
Tuition teacher students	€ 0	External communications	€ 6.089
Other gifts	€ 2.618	Publication of book	€ 2.357
Interest	€ 4.034	Accountant/wages administr.	€ 5.105
Other income	€ 0	Miscellaneous/unforseen	€ 1.817
Totals	€ 100.741		€ 70.029
Net result			€ 30.712

Last year, we wrote that a year in which the second group of rabbinical students were catching up on their backlog of studies, the net result should be higher, and we announced financial cuts. These measures have been effective. All expenditures are lower than they were in 2011-2012: teachers -40%, board/dean/committees -35%, staff -25%, accountant/wages administration -20%.

This year the subsidies have once more been reduced by a third. We count ourselves fortunate in that in 2012-2013 too we have been supported by the Maror Foundation, the Levi Lassen Foundation, the Herbert and Nina Kiwi-Tielens Trust, the Liberal Jewish congregations of Flevoland, Gelderland, Rotterdam and Amsterdam, and by the Union. However, our Friends and our benefactors are the very foundation of the Levisson Institute. They have made it possible for the Institute to remain financially sound. We are all extremely grateful for their support.

The Board has in the past year submitted four Maror applications, of which three were granted. The Levi Lassen Foundation provided the last of three subsidy portions. It will be clear that to fund the recently started courses ***we are in search of more Friends and benefactors, foundations, trusts and LJG congregations willing to support our work with a fixed annual amount, however large or small.***

Thijs ten Raa
 treasurer