



Annual Report
&
Financial Report

for the year

2022

STICHTING ROBERT A. LEVISSON

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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 the son of the founder of the Progressive Jewish movement in The Netherlands. After the Second World War he revived the Progressive Jewish Congregation (LJG) in The Hague and became one of the prominent Progressive Jewish leaders in our country. 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

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Introduction

An increasingly normal situation at the Levisson Institute in the reported year 2022, after the difficult period of the pandemic. We retained the positive options of Zoom for teaching and for several kinds of meetings. This was especially useful for the Shaliach Tzibbur course, which was initially taught from New York by Cantor Josée Wolff, and later fortunately continued and concluded by her in person in the familiar surroundings of our hotel. Mazzal tov to the ten graduates, most of which are now contributing to Shabbat and Holiday services in several kehillot. Also a thank you to our Amsterdam Cantor Gilad Nezer, for his contribution, and to our director Francine Püttmann for the logistics and organisation. I am very happy with another new generation of shlichei tzibbur and look forward to the return weekend at the end of this year, together with the graduates of the first course.

Our rabbinical student Asjer Waterman also continued his rabbinical training, and we express our heartfelt hope that other students will follow his example in the current year. We need new rabbis to lead and inspire our kehillot and offer Jewish guidance to our members and future members. We are happy with the foundation of two new Liberal/Progressive Jewish Congregations, which brings the total number of our congregations to ten. But we also need new leadership for them. If this appeals to you, let us know!

We worked hard to create a new structure for the Levisson Institute. You can read about it in the annual report. The Academic Committee was replaced with the Training Committee, which consists of an academic subcommittee and a vocational subcommittee. We are pleased to have been able to welcome Prof. dr. Bart Wallet in the first mentioned subcommittee. The Training Committee is expertly headed by our trusted Prof. dr. Irene Zwiép, who also led the former Academic Committee.

During the reported year plans were developed for an Advisory Board, the preparations for which will be ready in 2023.

One of the big forces behind these new developments and structure was the chair of our Board, Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman. She stayed on after the end of her term to enable the succession of our new chair, David Asser. There are no words to express our gratitude for what Ella did for our Institute. But I will try to express in one word how she embodied her chairmanship: with neshomah. I wish David success in the future, in a wonderful Institute that keeps committed to training professional Jewish leadership.

Our director, Francine Menco-Püttmann, was the unequalled force behind our small, but beautiful and strong organisation. We owe her much gratitude.

May we all keep working to empower Progressive Judaism in The Netherlands.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM
Dean of the Levisson Institute

The year 2022

As in the year before, 2022 was an unusual year because of the COVID pandemic. Work, all meetings and courses were conducted from home via Zoom during the first couple of months of the year. After the precautionary measures were canceled on the national level, we were able to get together in person.

Rabbinical Training

One student was enlisted in our rabbinical training programme in 2022. We have an excellent relationship with the new liberal rabbinical training École Rabbinique in Paris. Our rabbinical student often attends their English language lectures via Zoom.

Interviews with former students

There are discussions about the future of the rabbinate, both in the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism and in our Levisson Institute. Our Board member Helma Blankman spoke with five former students in the framework of this discussion. A remarkable conclusion was that the former students thought their training lacked practical experience. Their wish to have learned more about Liberal Judaism and the position of the Liberal rabbi also stood out. Rabbinical training is officially part-time, but in reality turned out to be full-time. The former students also would have liked more involvement in the concrete implementation of the study programme.

Poll congregations

The Levisson Institute also conducted a poll among the member congregations of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism. An important question was which skills and knowledge a rabbi needs in their opinion. Only four congregations responded. Their answers led to the conclusion that they prefer a rabbi in their congregation with vast knowledge in the field of Judaism, but also with strong social and communicative skills.

National Oneg Shabbat

Chair of the Board Ella Wijnschenk and Levisson director Francine Püttmann conducted two workshops about the 'rabbi of the future' during the national Oneg Shabbat on June 25th in The Hague. It included a PowerPoint presentation about the work of the Levisson Institute and the structure of the rabbinical training. The ensuing discussion made clear that many members assist the rabbi in their work in smaller congregations. A rabbi must be good at pastoral work en also active in transferring knowledge. To attract young people, rabbis should be younger, and the services should also be adapted to their wishes. Young parents should be more involved in the congregation. Another request was to make modular learning with its partial certificates possible.

Courses

Shaliach Tzibbur course

The Shaliach Tzibbur course started late 2020 with fifteen participants. In November 2022 ten participants graduated. The participants were members of congregations throughout the country.

The goal of the course was for participants to be able to sing for Shabbat services and to acquire basic skills for the High Holiday and Shalosh Regalim services. An intake interview and audition were required to qualify for the course.

The teachers were Josée Wolff and Avery Tracht, both former chazanim of the Liberal Jewish Congregations in the Netherlands and living in New York. Josee Wolff also teaches chazanut at the Hebrew Union College in New York and at the Geiger Institute in Potsdam. Gilad Nezer, chazan of LJG Amsterdam, and Annette Boeckler were also teachers involved in the course.

The weekend courses could initially only be taken via Zoom, because of COVID. Starting from the first weekend in 2022 the course became partly digital, partly in person: the teachers were in New York, where they taught via Zoom, but the participants were present in person in the building of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam. This was also the first time the group met in person. The next four weekends were held in a hotel in the central part of the country, with Cantor Josée Wolff, who flew in from New York, present in person.

At the end of each weekend the participants filled out an evaluation form. Based on their remarks, the weekends were adapted each time.

The course started with fifteen participants but over time some dropped out, for a variety of reasons. Eventually ten participants graduated. Most of them are now active as chazan in several congregations.

During the Shaliach Tzibbur course, the music library on the Levisson website was expanded and improved with new sheet music and recordings. Cantors Josée Wolff and Avery Tracht undertook this effort.

Other activities

Talk on Spinoza

With an audience of 136, Prof. Yitzhak Melamed discussed Spinoza and Judaism with Yoram Stein, philosopher and Spinoza expert, on 10 February 2022 via Zoom: *Spinoza: heretic or first secular Jew?*

Yitzhak Melamed – a philosophy professor at John Hopkins University in Baltimore and a renowned Spinoza scholar – was due to come to Amsterdam to make a documentary about Spinoza's life and thought. The rabbi of the Portuguese synagogue (Esnoga), however, refused Melamed entry because of the ban the Esnoga had once placed on Spinoza.

The video recording of the conversation can be viewed on Levisson's website:

<https://www.levisson.nl/en/2022-melamed-2/>

David Lilienthal Lecture

The annual David Lilienthal Lecture and opening of the new academic year was postponed from the end of 2022 to March 2023 due to time constraints.

Library

As in previous years, many people wanted to donate books from inheritances or from their own collections. Only books which fit in the collection and are a good addition were accepted.

The library is a joint library of the Levisson Institute and the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and is placed in its building in Amsterdam. The library is managed by the director of the Levisson Institute.

The collection contains textbooks and reference works relevant to rabbinic training, rabbis and all others interested in the study of Judaism. See for the catalogue: www.levissonbibliotheek.nl and www.ljgbibliotheek.nl

Communication

Website



The website is an important means of communication to the outside world. It is frequently viewed, especially the music library: www.levisson.nl/en/

Newsletter



One newsletter was published in 2022 as an announcement of the talk between Yitzhak Melamed and Yoram Stein on Spinoza on 10 February. The newsletter (in Dutch) is circulated by mail.

Sidra of the Week

A commentary on the Sidra of the Week (Parashat hashavuah) is weekly sent out by email to subscribers. The coordination and editing is in the hands of Channa Kistemaker. Dick Hage takes care of the sending by email. It is possible to subscribe to the (free) weekly commentaries via the website of the Levisson Institute. All comments (in Dutch) are also published on the website: <https://www.levisson.nl/toralezingen/sidra-van-de-week/>

Organisation

The Board, Management Team and all Committees took a critical look at the organisation of the Institute during the reported year. This resulted in a revision of the organisational structure, with as most important result the creation of the Training Committee. The Board is also creating an Advisory Board and an Appeal Committee.

A schedule and an explanation for the entire reorganisation can be found on the website:

<https://www.levisson.nl/en/about-us/who-is-who-2/>

Board

The Board met eight times in the reported year. The chair's second term ended in October 2022. Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman remained on as an advisor to the board until 1 January 2023.

In the year under review, the Board started looking for a new chair. As of January 2023, David Asser has been appointed as her successor.

Management Team

Next to the daily work of running the Levisson Institute, the Management Team was busy with the rabbinical training, the Shaliach Tzibbur course and the revision of the organisation.

The Management Team meets once a month. It is represented at the meetings of the Board and all Committees. It also maintains contact with the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism and the boards of the affiliated congregations.

The General Director is in the office three days a week in the Levisson room in the building of the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and can be reached by email during the rest of the time: contact@levisson.nl.

Training Committee

The revision of the organisational structure led to the decision to create a Training Committee, and dissolve the old Academic Committee. The responsibilities of the Academic Committee were partly transferred to other bodies within the organisation over the course of the years. The new Training Committee has a different mission and consists of two subcommittees: the subcommittee Academic Programme and the subcommittee Vocational Programme. Both subcommittees meet independent of each other, but have at least two joint meetings every year, to format the rabbinical training and integrate both parts of the training programme. The Training Committee also gives advice on the courses of the Levisson Institute.

Confidential adviser

The confidential adviser of the Levisson Institute, Marion Alhadeff, had no reports during the year under review.

She is independent and not accountable. The appointment of such an adviser is a measure designed to promote the organisation's integrity.

A confidential adviser is a specially designated individual in whom anyone connected to the Levisson Institute can confide. See for more information about the role of the confidential adviser: www.levisson.nl/en/about-us/confidential-advisor/

Finances

Donors

The Levisson Institute thanks its loyal donors and also its new ones who donated to the Institute in 2022. We owe them much gratitude.

We owe thanks to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, Foundation Collectieve Marorgelden and Kiwi Foundation.

We still need your help. We hope to find more donors, foundations and funds who are willing to support us financially to keep this training center of Progressive Judaism in The Netherlands alive and active.

Policy for the future

Plans for 2023

Our plans for the year 2023 are a continuation of the current policies:

- The revision of the organisational structure will be completed.
- Rabbinical training remains our priority. The curriculum will be adapted where possible. We also hope to attract new rabbinical students.
- The postponed David Lilienthal Lecture will be held in March 2023.
- In the spring, a new cantillation course (Ba'al Korei) will begin.
- A refresher course for chazanim (shlichei tzibbur), meant for both graduates of the latest course (2020-2022) and graduates of the 2009 course, is planned for late 2023.
- A study group is being created, with lectures by different teachers.

Policy plan for the coming years

The Levisson Institute received a grant in 2019 from the Amsterdam Leasehold Fund. This money will be spent on three projects which will be implemented over the next five years: rabbinical training, a course for cantors (Shlichei Tzibbur) and a Ba'al Korei course.

Composition Board, Management and Committees

Board

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair (till 1 January 2023)

David Asser, MA, chair (since 1 January 2023)

Helma Blankman, MA, vice-chair

Anita van Leeuwen, LLM, secretary

Leopold I. Hertzberger, MA, treasurer

Liane van Dantzig, MA, member (on behalf of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism)

Management Team

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Programme

Francine Püttmann, MA, director General Affairs

Training Committee

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair

Subcommittee Academic Programme

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep

Prof. dr. Bart Wallet

Francine Püttmann, MA, hearer

Subcommittee Vocational Programme

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Programme

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, hearer

Francine Püttmann, MA, hearer

Admission Committee

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair Training Committee

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair subcommittee Vocational Programme

Confidential adviser

Marion Alhadeff

Webmaster

Francine Püttmann

Librarian

Francine Püttmann

Financial Report for 2022

The annual account 2022 was drawn up by the Board on 6 February 2023 and afterwards confirmed by accountant Kuhlman. What follows is a summary. If you would like to receive the complete annual account, please address your request to contact@levisson.nl.

Balance at 31 December 2022

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Investments	€ 84,537	Foundation capital	€ 237,868
Receivables	€ 1,660	Earmarked reserves	€ 60,709
Liquid assets	€ 315,477	Subsidies and contributions	
		paid in advance	€ 94,666
		Taxes	€ 441
		Debts/deferrals	€ 7,990
Total	€ 401,674		€ 401,674

The *earmarked reserves* comprise four funds:

Student Fund	€ 21,899
Israel Seminar Fund	€ 15,000
Academic Research Fund	€ 8,841
Training Fund	€ 14,969

The Student Fund, a farewell present for Dean Rabbi David Lilienthal, is intended for allowances for students who need them on ground of personal circumstances to be used for expenses directly linked to their studies. In 2022, a payment of € 2,059 was made to one student.

The Israel Seminar Fund was founded in 2005 with the goal of regularly organising seminars for students in Israel. No use was made of this in 2022.

The Academic Research Fund aims to support students who conduct scientific research. The last payment was made in 2016.

The Training Fund consists of unused portions of various grants for training that the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation has given Levisson over the years. The board has allotted the reserves for all courses and training programmes. No use was made of this in 2022.

Profit and loss account 2022

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors	€ 18,690	Salaries staff	€ 28,524
Subsidies	€ 69,101	Instructors	€ 68,521
Tuition fees	€ 3,460	Board/MT/Committees	€ 1,916
Shaliach Tzibbur course	€ 0	Library	€ 0
Ba'al Tefilah	€ 0	External communication	€ 714
Investments results	./ € 11,556	Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 3,812
Interest	€ 62	Miscellaneous	€ 2,418
		Net result	./ € 26,148
Total	<u>€ 79,757</u>		<u>€ 79,757</u>

We are grateful to all our donors and supporters. It is impossible to mention all of them, but we are happy to mention the Verbond (Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism), Maror, Kiwi Foundation and the individual donors, who have generously supported. We welcome new donors who want to keep the Levisson Institute financially healthy. Your donation is fully tax deductible because of our official ANBI charity status.

Leopold I. Hertzberger
treasurer