



Annual Report
&
Financial Report
for the year
2023

STICHTING ROBERT A. LEVISSON

Zuidelijke Wandelweg 41 • 1079 RK Amsterdam • Netherlands

contact@levisson.nl • www.levisson.nl • Tel. +31 (0)20 54 00 133

Bank: 400378213 • IBAN: NL88ABNA0400378213 • KvK: 34178043 • ANBI: 811001994



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

While I am writing this introduction for the annual report 2023, it looks like the world is on fire. Not only the ongoing war by Russia against Ukraine, but also the horrible pogrom perpetrated by Hamas against Israelis, on 7 October 2023, has changed everything. 1200 Israelis were brutally murdered, and over 130 hostages are still kept prisoner in Gaza. The terrible war in Gaza, with the purpose of eliminating Hamas, is taking the lives of so many innocent people. Antisemitism is crawling back up from the sewers. Our Jewish state of Israel is the target this time, and Jews all over the world are included. Antisemitism in schools against innocent children, unrest and demonstrations against Israel and for a Palestinian state in Israel are daily occurrences. A social climate that is poisoned by out of control polarisation in many areas. The results of the Dutch election, which are not a reason for optimism. In this kind of political climate, our small Levisson Institute tries to work in a professional context toward strengthening Jewish knowledge. My hope is that 'Any which way', 'Ve Af Al Pi Chen', we will be able to keep strengthening Judaism here in our country, and will keep inspiring the Jews who make out Progressive Judaism in The Netherlands. 'Any Which Way' was the name of one of the ships that tried to take Jews from Europe, between 1934 and 1948, clandestinely to a safe haven in Eretz Yisrael.

During the past couple of years we, as the Levisson Institute, were also challenged to organise our work differently, because of the Covid pandemic. We came through quite well and are very happy that the reported year was a normal academic year. One of the big advantages was that we could hold the Ba'al Korei course in physical presence of students and teachers, including Cantor Joséé Wolff from New York City. Not only have many people from the Liberal and Progressive Congregations in our country learned how to cantillate Torah, but the weekends were also inspiring and informative. People do not only do this for themselves, but our Levisson Institute educates to strengthen our kehillot by increasing knowledge for everyone who has the ambition to strengthen Liberal Judaism in The Netherlands.

In 2023 Asjer Waterman was our rabbinical student. In the coming report year he is in New York to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary for half a year. Our other activities are described below, with thanks to our director Francine Menco-Püttmann, who was our strength and support again this year.

You will also read here that we are busy restructuring the Levisson Institute for modern times, with as one of the goals a completely renewed syllabus, in which both our curriculum and our targets are clearly described. I am glad that we have been able to enthuse new members of our Levisson family to contribute to the future of Dutch Progressive Judaism.

But I am still concerned about the succession of our current rabbis, in a society where being Jewish cannot be taken for granted anymore. We keep trying to find enthusiastic, involved and responsible men and women who are able and willing to make time for a professional Jewish training to become rabbis. We often appeal to people to make it possible financially, but with money and no students we won't get anywhere. So, if you read this and think: rabbinical training is something for me, or if you know someone in or outside of the congregation who you think is suitable, contact us.

Let us hope better times will come. Let us commit to knowledge as a weapon to strengthen our small but very brave Jewish community, as an inspiration to all. To improve our society, in which we as a Jewish community keep contributing: “Ve Af Al Pi Chen”, “Any Which Way”.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM
Dean of the Levisson Institute

The year 2023

The year 2023 was the first 'normal' year - without restrictions - after the Covid pandemic. Meetings and classes were held in person again. The use of Zoom remained a useful tool of communication to replace some meetings in person.

Rabbinical Training

In 2023 we had one student in rabbinical training. He will be studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City for half a year in 2024. During the reported year, the institute applied for several scholarships on his behalf.

During the reported year, the Training Committee started a revision of the curriculum for rabbinical training. This will result in a new syllabus in 2024.

The passing of Leo Mock on August 31st was a great shock. He was our Talmud teacher from the very beginning and was very much involved in everything in our Institute.

Courses

Ba'al Korei course

In the months of May and June the Institute organised for the second time a Ba'al Korei course. A nationwide need for people who are able to read Torah was felt. During the year 2014-2015 a similar course was taught.

This time, in 2023, fifteen participants from six congregations took the course. It consisted of a weekend with all participants in person and three Sunday afternoons via Zoom. The teacher was Josée Wolff, who came in from New York City for the weekend.

Some of the participants have already cantillated in their own congregations during services.

Other activities

David Lilienthal Lecture

The annual David Lilienthal Lecture and opening of the new academic year was postponed from the end of 2022 to 22 March 2023 due to time constraints and was held in LJJ Amsterdam.

Guest speaker was Daniella Zaidman-Mauer, PhD-student at the University of Amsterdam, in the field of Yiddish. She spoke about *“Every person should take it to heart to have their children vaccinated”*. Dr. E.J. Goldsmit, Maskiel El Dal Aid Organisation, and the battle for cowpox vaccination in the Ashkenazi community of Amsterdam in the early nineteenth century.

Shura Lipovsky sang the Yiddish song *Di goldene pave kert zikh um* (the golden peacock turns around), which she wrote herself.

See for the lecture (in Dutch) and the song <https://levisson.nl/fotos-videos/david-lilienthallezing/#David-Lilienthallezing-2023>

The board has decided not to organise the David Lilienthal lecture annually for the time being.

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. The Sidra of the Week is also posted on the website every week: www.levisson.nl/en/

Newsletter



One newsletter was published in 2023 as an announcement of the David Lilienthal lecture and the Ba'al korei course. The newsletter (in Dutch) is circulated to 700 e-mail addresses. Register via contact@levisson.nl

Sidra of the Week

A commentary on the Sidra of the Week (Parashat Hashavuah) is weekly sent out by e-mail to more than 500 subscribers. The coordination and editing is in the hands of Channa Kistemaker. Dick Hage takes care of the sending by e-mail. 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 have followed up on the reorganisation of the Institute that was already set in motion. The Training Committee, founded in 2022, started with the revision of the rabbinical training in the reported year. This will result in a new syllabus in the year 2024. In the reported year, a concept for an Advisory Board was made, and one will be appointed in 2024. The Board will also install an Appeal Committee in 2024. And an Exam Committee for the rabbinical training will be shaped in the reported year. Our website has the schematics and an explanation of the complete reorganisation: <https://www.levisson.nl/en/about-us/who-is-who-2/>

Board

The Board met six times in the reported year.

During the David Lilienthal Lecture on March 22, we said our official farewells to Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, who had been chair of the Board since 2015. She received a present, a silver brooch in the shape of the Levisson Institute logo, especially made for the occasion by Sharon Manassen. Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman was succeeded as chair of the Board by David Asser on January 1, 2023.

<https://levisson.nl/fotos-videos/david-lilienthallezing/#David-Lilienthallezing-2023>

Management Team

Next to the daily work of running the Levisson Institute, the Management Team was busy with the rabbinical training, the Ba'al Korei 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 e-mail during the rest of the time: contact@levisson.nl.

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 2023. We owe them much gratitude.

We owe thanks to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism 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 2024

Our plans for the year 2024 are a continuation of the current policies:

- The revision of the organisational structure will be completed with:
 - An Advisory Board
 - An Appeal Committee
 - An Exam Committee
- The curriculum of the rabbinical training will be revised where possible. A new syllabus will be published in 2024.
- A refresher course for cantors (shlichei tzibbur) will take place in January and is intended for both those who took the course in 2020-2022 and those who finished the course in 2009.
- In Januari Shabbat services in the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam will have the Levisson Institute as a theme; after services teachers at the Institute will give lectures.
- A new Ba'al Tefillah course will start in the Fall.

Policy plan for the coming years

The Levisson Institute continues to strive to attract new rabbinical students. The institute will also continue to provide courses.

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

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

Dr. Jutka Halberstadt, member (since June 2023)

Sharon Snoek, MA, member (since December 2023)

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, hearer

Francine Püttmann, MA, hearer

Admission Committee

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair Training Committee

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair subcommittee Vocational Programme

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Confidential adviser

Marion Alhadeff

Webmaster

Francine Püttmann

Librarian

Francine Püttmann

Financial Report for 2023

The annual account 2023 was drawn up by the Board on 10 April 2024 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 2023

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Investments	€ 113,144	Foundation capital	€ 255,625
Receivables	€ 0	Earmarked reserves	€ 59,177
Liquid assets	€ 266,764	Subsidies and contributions	
		paid in advance	€ 40,091
		Taxes	€ 383
		Debts/deferrals	€ 24,632
Total	€ 379,908		€ 379,908

The *earmarked reserves* comprise four funds:

Student Fund	€ 20,367
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 2023, a payment of € 1,532 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 2023.

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 2023.

Profit and loss account 2023

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors	€ 14,551	Salaries staff	€ 28,880
Subsidies	€ 55,057	Instructors	€ 40,787
Tuition fees	€ 1,500	Board/MT/Committees	€ 799
Shaliach Tzibbur course	€ 1,900	Library	€ 0
Ba'al Tefilah	€ 4,500	External communication	€ 2,630
Investments results	€ 18,600	Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 4,044
Interest	€ 0	Miscellaneous	€ 1,211
		Net result	€ 17,757
Total	<u>€ 96,108</u>		<u>€ 96,108</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), Kiwi Foundation, the Municipality of Amsterdam 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