



Annual Report  
&  
Financial Report  
  
for the year  
  
2024

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

We are pleased to bring you the Annual Report 2024.

The contents of the report tell you everything, and show how active this beautiful, but small organisation is in its commitment to the ongoing professionalisation of the Progressive Jewish community in our country. We consider ourselves lucky to have Francine Püttmann as our director. She does an incredible amount of work, especially in the organisation, which is changing with the times and reaching ever higher levels. My heartfelt thanks to the Board, the Training Committee, and everyone else who is actively involved in the work of our Institute. Our greatest challenge is the future. We consider ourselves lucky with the courses we teach, which make the participants enthusiastic and produce candidates for the rabbinical training, the core mission of our Institute, the reason it was founded.

We hope we will be able to present a completely updated course catalogue, compiled with the advice of many experts, in this calendar year 2025.

Let us keep working, as Liberal and Progressive Congregations, towards increasing Jewish knowledge among our members and spiritual growth in our growing community. Especially in times in which tensions in the world increase, also within Jewish communities, we will need to reinforce ourselves with knowledge and professionalism.

In summary, my old principle from the Sayings of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot 2:4): “*Al tifrosh min hatzibbur*”, “Don't set yourself apart from the community”, but do your part, wherever you can.

Enjoy reading this report and we hope to see you at one of our activities.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM  
Dean of the Levisson Institute

## The year 2024

The Levisson Institute's reporting year, 2024 - 5784/5785, included a year in which we were able to offer a number of courses, appointed new committees, and, of course, the essence of our Institute: the training of rabbinical students.

## Rabbinical Training

During the first half of 2024 our rabbinical student Asjer Waterman took classes at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York for six months. JTS is the renowned Conservative rabbinical seminary, an institute for Jewish higher education. He took courses that enriched his knowledge. It is wonderful that this also enabled Asjer to explore the rich traditions of Jewish life in New York, both in its diversity of synagogues and communities and in its educational institutes.

During the reported year the Training Committee reviewed the curriculum for rabbinical training, with the goal to further professionalise our education. The results will be published in new course catalogue in 2025. We are very grateful for the involvement of experts in our pursuit of the highest possible academic level for our rabbinical training.

## Courses

### Shaliach Tzibbur

A refresher course for people who participated in the 2022-2023 Shaliach Tzibbur course was held in January 2024. Participants in the first course of 2009 were also invited. All in all, sixteen 'shatzos' participated. A *shaliach tzibbur* leads services as a *chazan* in several of our *kehillot* that don't have a *chazan* employed by the congregation. They also substitute when a regular *chazan* can't be present at the service.

Led by Cantor Josée Wolff (she teaches at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute for Religion in New York, and mentors students who are training to be cantors), several issues participants had in leading services were discussed. Our own teacher of liturgy Dr. Annette Boeckler offered in-depth lectures.

### Ba'al Tefilah

During the reported year it became clear that congregations are in need of people who can lead services when no rabbi is available, a *ba'al tefilah*. Because some rabbis will retire in the next couple of years, there is a need for people who can lead services. Because of these circumstances the Institute started a new course at the end of 2024. The latest in its kind was held in 2018. The new course comprises four weekends of intensive learning, starting on Friday nights and ending on Sunday afternoon. Three of the weekends will be held in 2025. There are eleven participants in this course, from six congregations. The course is taught by Rabbi Menno ten Brink and Rabbi Marianne van Praag; the subject Liturgy is taught by Dr. Annette Boeckler.

The weekends are held, as all of our courses, on location. Students will need a thorough knowledge of Hebrew. They will be introduced to the content of Shabbat and *Chagim* (Holiday) services. Apart from studying in-depth the substance of texts and concepts, they will learn how to conduct a service and prepare a *d'var Torah* (explanation of the weekly Torah portion). We also intend to let students do a kind of internship during services in our *kehillot*, to gain experience. After completing the course, the students will receive a certificate from the Levisson Institute. This will happen in 2025. The *kehillot* are free to decide whether they will accept the offer.

## Other activities

### Study day

The service on Shabbat 20 January 2024 at the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam was completely dedicated to the Levisson Institute. The service was led by the Dean, Rabbi Menno ten Brink, a Board member served as *gabbai* and the other Board members were honoured with *mitswot*. The participants from Amsterdam in the 2023 *Ba'al Korei* course, got the opportunity to show what they had learned: each of them *layend* (cantillated) an *aliyah* in the Torah service.

After the service the Levisson Institute offered the attendees lunch. After lunch they could participate in an afternoon of study with three teachers at the Institute.

Dr. Annette Boeckler: *Traditional and Liberal Liturgies - what are the differences and why do they exist?*

Carolyn Levisson: *Ledor wador, from generation to generation - Genogram, a structured way to talk about family (history).*

Prof. dr. Bart Wallet: *What is liberal about liberal Judaism? Historical background of liberal Judaism.*

The purpose of this day was among others to motivate more congregants to enroll in the rabbinical training and the variety of courses the Levisson Institute offers, by allowing them a look behind the scene of our Institute.

### 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](http://www.levissonbibliotheek.nl) and [www.ljgbibliotheek.nl](http://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/](http://www.levisson.nl/en/)

### Newsletter



No newsletter was published in 2024. However, announcements were regularly sent to the kehillot for inclusion in their own newsletters.

The newsletter (in Dutch) is circulated to 700 e-mail addresses. Register via [contact@levisson.nl](mailto: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. Channa Kistemaker coordinated and edited this publication for seven years. In 2024, Harry Polak, based in Israel, took over the task. 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/>

Thanks to those who volunteer to spread Torah knowledge, one of the Institute's tasks.

## **Organisation**

The Board, Management Team and all Committees have continued the already started reorganisation of the Institute. Only the Exam Committee remains to be realised. 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 five times in 2024. The appointment of an Advisory Board and a Appeal Committee were important issues. The President of the Board occasionally contacts the President of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism.

## **Management Team**

Next to the daily work of running the Levisson Institute, the Management Team was busy with the rabbinical training, the new Ba'al Tefilah course, the revision of the organisation and the organisation of the study day on 20 January 2024.

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 in the Levisson room in the building of the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and can be reached by e-mail: [contact@levisson.nl](mailto:contact@levisson.nl).

## **Training Committee**

The Training Committee, led by Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiep, convened several times and is in regular email contact. The issues discussed were the learning routes and objectives of the rabbinical training. The spectrum of rabbinical roles was formulated with its appropriate competences and skills. The goal is to have this result in a new study catalogue in 2025.

## **Appeal Committee**

The Appeal Committee was appointed in April 2024 and consists of three members, chaired by Ernst Numann, LL.M. This committee mediates in serious disputes.

## Advisory Board

The Advisory Board was appointed during the reporting year and consists of seven members, chaired by Prof. Dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen. The Advisory Board provides the Institute with solicited and unsolicited advice.

## 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/](http://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 2024. Thanks to them, we can do the work for the community.

We also owe thanks to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, Kiwi Foundation, Maror Foundation, Levi Lassen Foundation and Foundation Lexhanna. We would also like to thank the other funding agencies for our rabbi student's stay at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

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. The text from the tractate Berachot of Talmud Jerushalmi applies here: *Whoever concerns himself with the needs of the community is as if he is concerned with Torah.*

## Policy for the future

### Plans for 2025

Our plans for 2025 are a continuation of our current policies meeting the same challenges:

- The review of the organisational structure will be concluded by the establishment of an Exam Committee.
- Publication of a new study catalogue.
- Prof. Dr. Jessica Roitman gave a lecture on *Colonial Contradictions: Jews and the Dutch Empire* on 1 February 2025 at the Liberal Jewish Congregation of The Hague. Its purpose was also to make the Levisson Institute more visible and motivate more students to enroll in training and courses.
- The remaining three weekends of the *Ba'al Tefilah* course were held in the first half of 2025.
- The reading of the *Haftarah* for the whole year will be recorded and placed on the Institute's website. As ten years ago, when the complete Torah reading was recorded, this is specifically meant to support Bar and Bat Mitzvah children, and everyone else who will



read the Haftarah in the Torah service. We are grateful to Etienne Denneboom for volunteering to take this task upon himself.

### **Policy plan for the coming years**

The Levisson Institute keeps striving to attract new rabbinical students, which is a huge challenge. The Institute will also continue to offer courses to ensure that lay people will be able to contribute to the development of our Liberal Jewish and Progressive Jewish Congregations. This is important in view of the impending retirement of several rabbis, as we said before, and also because we consider the professionalising of Jewish leadership of the utmost importance to strengthen and expand our Liberal Jewish Congregations. Inspired rabbis and professional leadership are of the essence in this objective. We undertake this task in co-operation with the (congregations affiliated with) the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism and the Board of Rabbis.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to everyone who contributes in any way to the work and objectives of our Levisson Institute.

## **Composition Board, Management and Committees**

### **Board**

David Asser, MA, chair

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 (till end of 2024)

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Programme

Dr. Jutka Halberstadt, member

Sharon Snoek, MA, member

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, hearer

Francine Püttmann, MA, hearer

### **Admission Committee**

Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiep, chair Training Committee

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair subcommittee Vocational Programme (till end of 2024)

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

### **Advisory Board**

Prof. Dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen, chair

Dr. Channa Al

Prof. Dr. Joachim Duyndam

David Kat, MA

Irith Koster, MA

Bert Oude Engberink

Chaya Rodrigues Pereira, MA

### **Appeal Committee**

Ernst Numann, LLM, chair

David Allick, LLM

Anita Zonneveld-Philips, MA

### **Confidential adviser**

Marion Alhadeff, MA

### **Coordinator Sidra of the Week**

Channa Kistemaker, MA (till Aug. 2024)

Harry Polak, MA (since Aug. 2024)

### **Webmaster**

Francine Püttmann

### **Librarian**

Francine Püttmann

## Financial Report for 2024

The annual account 2024 was drawn up by the Board on 6 June 2025 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](mailto:contact@levisson.nl).

### Balance at 31 December 2024

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Investments	€ 143,949	Foundation capital	€ 294,281
Receivables	€ 0	Earmarked reserves	€ 47,591
Liquid assets	€ 205,524	Subsidies and contributions	
		paid in advance	€ 232
		Taxes	€ 359
		Debts/deferrals	€ 7,010
Total	€ 349,473		€ 349,473

The *earmarked reserves* comprise four funds:

Student Fund	€ 8,781
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 2024, payments of € 11,586 were made.

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 2024.

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 2024.

## Profit and loss account 2024

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors	€ 12,260	Salaries staff	€ 28,650
Subsidies	€ 19,000	Instructors	€ 26,761
Tuition fees	€ 1,500	Board/MT/Committees	€ 458
Shaliach Tzibbur course	€ 6,650	Library	€ 164
Ba'al Tefilah course	€ 14,900	External communication	€ 756
Investments results	€ 30,805	Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 3,872
Interest	€ 6,289	Miscellaneous	€ 861
		Net result	€ 29,882
Total	€ 91,404		€ 91,404

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, Foundation Maror, Foundation Levi Lassen, Foundation Lexhanna 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