



Annual Report
&
Financial Report
for the year
2025

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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

Although it technically fell just outside the reporting year, we are delighted that we were able to witness the semicha (rabbinic ordination) of Rabbi Asjer Waterman. I am very pleased that we have once again been able to train a young rabbi, enabling him to become a *rav u'moreh beYisrael*. From June 2026, Asjer will succeed Rabbi Marianne van Praag as rabbi in the Liberal Jewish Community of The Hague. I once again wish him *mazal tov* on receiving his semicha. It is a great mitzvah to add a new link to the chain of rabbis.

During the past year, two new students also began the rabbinical training programme. Ellis Vyth and David Kromhout started their studies with great enthusiasm, and I sincerely hope that in time they will be able to take on rabbinic responsibilities within our Liberal/Progressive Jewish congregations.

We also launched a course on Liberal Judaism. Using the various roles of the rabbi as a framework, the course covered the history and many different aspects of Liberal Judaism. Attendance was strong, and I hope it will inspire the non-rabbinical students to continue their studies.

My thanks go to all those who have worked so hard for, and continue to contribute to, the strength of our small but wonderful Institute. In particular, I would like to mention our director Francine Püttmann, the driving force behind our organisation, as well as everyone who contributed their time and expertise to the preparation of our renewed study guide, which will be published in 2026.

The Talmud (Eruvin 13b) teaches that both the schools of Hillel and Shammai claimed that halacha followed their interpretation. A Bat Kol declared: *Elu wa'elu divrei Elohim chayim* "Both these and those are the words of the living God". *We'hahalacha k'vet Hillel*, "but the halacha follows the school of Hillel". Why? Because Hillel's school was "gentle and humble", *nochin we'alavin*, always presenting the arguments of Shammai before its own. The Talmud teaches that learning and teaching must take place in an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. This is what we seek to instill in our students: remain open to others, value every opinion, and carry out your future work as rabbis according to the principles of Beit Hillel.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM
Dean of the Levisson Institute

The year 2025

The reporting year 2025 (5785/5786) saw one rabbinical student complete his studies and two new students begin their training. The Ba'al Tefillah course continued, a course on Liberal Judaism was offered, and a Haftarah project was launched.

Rabbinical Training

At the end of 2025, our rabbinical student Asjer Waterman completed his studies with a thesis on a Jewish confession of faith in a nineteenth-century Dutch manuscript. On 1 February 2026 he received his semicha from Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Dean of the Levisson Institute.

In October 2025, two new students began the rabbinical programme and are now actively pursuing their studies.

The Training Committee continued revising the curriculum in order to further professionalise the rabbinical training programme. The new study guide will be published in 2026 on the website of the Institute. We are very grateful for the efforts of experts to enable us to place our rabbinical training programme at the highest possible academic level.

Courses

Ba'al Tefilah

The Institute began a new Ba'al Tefilah course at the end of 2024. Participants learned to lead services in the absence of a rabbi. Due to the retirement of rabbis in the coming years, there is a need for people who can lead services. The course consisted of four intensive weekends, from Friday evening till Sunday afternoon, the first of which took place in late 2024 and the remaining three in the first half of 2025. It attracted eleven participants from six different congregations. Sadly, one participant passed away during the course. Rabbis Menno ten Brink and Marianne van Praag served as instructors, with Annette Boeckler teaching liturgy. Participants studied Shabbat and festival services, practised leading services, delivered divrei Torah (explanation on the Torah reading), and completed internships within their own congregations. Most students now regularly lead services in the various kehillot.

Liberal Judaism

The Liberal Judaism module, required for first-year rabbinical students, was also opened to interested participants. Eleven external students from across the country attended five lessons from October through December. The first lesson covered the history of Liberal Judaism, while the remaining sessions explored the various roles of the rabbi.

Other activities

Lecture

On Saturday 1 February 2025, after the synagogue service, Prof. Dr. Jessica Roitman, professor Jewish Studies at the faculty of Religion and Theology at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, delivered a lecture in cooperation with LJG The Hague. Under the title *Colonial Contradictions: Jews and the Dutch Empire*, she discussed Jewish settlement in the Caribbean, the development and decline of these communities, and issues relating to Jews, slavery, and colonialism.

Haftarah Project

Ten years ago, the Institute recorded the entire Torah to support Torah readers and bar/bat mitzvah children. In 2025, Etienne Denneboom recorded all the Haftarot for the year, including those for special Sabbaths and festivals. These [recordings](#) are available on the Institute's website.

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.

Newsletter



No newsletter was published in 2025, although 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

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 were in the hands of Harry Polak from Israel for 1.5 years, who had taken over this task from Channa Kistemaker. As of 1 January 2026, Channa is back as coordinator and editor. We sincerely thank Harry for taking care of the sidra during the period of 1.5 years. Dick Hage handles the sending via email. One can subscribe for free via the Institute's website.

Every week, the new sidra appears on the homepage of the website. All comments (in Dutch) are also published: <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 continued the Institute's reorganisation. The Exam Committee became fully operational. See for the schedule [Who is who](#)

The Levisson Institute became an independent member of the EUPJ (European Union for Progressive Judaism) during the reporting year, and this will be confirmed in 2026. The other rabbinical training institutes in Europe are also members of the EUPJ. Memberships gives access to the EUPJ Rabbinical Training Fund.

Board

The Board met five times in 2025. Key topics included rabbinical training, student recruitment, and the semicha ceremony. 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 focused on the rabbinical programme, semicha, the Ba'al Tefilah course, organisational restructuring, the study guide, and the Haftarah project.

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.

Training Committee

The Training Committee, chaired by Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiep, has met three times and is in regular contact via email. The learning trajectories and objectives of the rabbinical training programme, as well as the structure of the entire new study guide, were reviewed. It will result in a new study guide in 2026.

Examination Committee

The Examination Committee was appointed in 2025 and consists of three members, with Prof. Dr. Judith Frishman as the chairperson. The committee ensures, among other things, the quality of exams, grants exemptions, and determines whether a student meets the conditions of the examination regulations for obtaining the semicha. The Examination Committee has established *Rules and Guidelines*, which will be posted on the website.

Appeal Committee

The Appeal Committee mediates in serious disputes. No formal complaints were received during the reporting year.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides the Institute with solicited and unsolicited advice. It did not meet during the reporting year.

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 all loyal and new donors who donated to the Institute in 2025. Thanks to them, we can do the work for the community.

Additional gratitude is extended to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, LJG Amsterdam, Paula Salomon Foundation, en Maror Foundation. We would also like to thank other grant providers supporting 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 2026

Our plans for 2026 are a continuation of our current policies meeting the same challenges:

- The semicha of Asjer Waterman
- Publication of a new study guide
- A new Ba'al Koreh course (Torah reading, leyning)

Policy 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, 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 are deeply grateful to everyone who contributes, in whatever way, to the work and goals of the 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

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

Sharon Snoek, MA, member Training Committee

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Exam Committee

Prof. Dr. Judith Frishman, chair

Dr. Ariadne Meiboom, member

Rabbi Dr. Kine Sittig, member

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

Harry Polak, MA (till Dec. 2025)

Channa Kistemaker, MA (from Jan. 2026)

Dick Hage (shipping)

Webmaster

Francine Püttmann

Librarian

Francine Püttmann

Financial Report for 2025

The annual account 2025 was drawn up by the Board on 11 February 2026 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 2025

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Investments	€ 154,134	Foundation capital	€ 288,573
Receivables	€ 14,519	Earmarked reserves	€ 47,591
Liquid assets	€ 172,636	Subsidies and contributions	
		paid in advance	€ 0
		Taxes	€ 422
		Debts/deferrals	€ 4,705
Total	€ 341,289		€ 341,291

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. No use was made of this in 2025.

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 2025.

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 2025.

Profit and loss account 2025

<i>Receipt</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors	€ 38,220	Salaries staff	€ 30,221
Subsidies	€ 19,271	Instructors	€ 39,089
Tuition fees	€ 825	Board/MT/Committees	€ 2,167
Investments results	€ 10,185	Library	€ 16
Interest	€ 4,046	External communication	€ 212
		Accountants/bookkeeping	€ 5,687
		Miscellaneous	€ 863
Total	<u>€ 72,547</u>		<u>€ 78,255</u>
		Net result	./ € 5,708

We thank our loyal and new donors who contributed to the financial well-being of the Levisson Institute in 2025. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. It was not only private donors who contributed financially. Foundations and organizations also donated. These included the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, LJG Amsterdam, the Foundation Maror, and the Paula Salomon Foundation.

The donated funds are spent with great care. If you decide to contribute financially, we are grateful for your support. Your donation is fully tax deductible because of our official ANBI charity status.

Leopold I. Hertzberger
treasurer