



## **Annual Report**

**Academic Year 2004-2005**

## **Annual Financial Report**

**over the year 2004**

## Introduction

It is with pleasure that we present the second annual report of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation. In the following pages we report on the progress of the Levisson Institute during the period August 2004 till the end of June 2004 and give a picture of the financial year 2004.

Our first annual report contained rather more information than is usual in an annual report. The same information is again given in this report in an up-dated version. This is done in order to present the background and the goals of the Foundation and the Institute and of what we have and what we have (not yet) been able to achieve.

If the reader is not familiar with the Foundation and the Institute we recommend that you first read Part B of the report, which contains the background information, and only after that Part A which tells of the past years work.

At this point we would also like to state that the limited goal we set ourselves when starting the Levisson Institute – a Rabbinical training in the Netherlands to fill the needs of the Dutch Jewish community – seems now, at the end of the second Academic Year, to be turning even more into reality.



**Robert A. Levisson** was the son of the founder of the Liberal Jewish movement in the Netherlands. After the end of World War II and the Shoah, he initiated and led the rebuilding of the Liberal Jewish congregation in The Hague. He achieved great renown as one of the outstanding liberal leaders in our country.

Robert A. Levisson was a gifted speaker and writer and one of the foremost spokespersons for the State of Israel. Among many other achievements, he founded the Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI). He died in December 2001.

*Yehi zichro baruch* - יהי זכרו ברוך -



## PART A

### 1. The Academic Year 2004-2005

In our first annual report of July 2004 we expressed the seemingly overambitious hope that it would be possible to realize a rabbinical training institute in the Netherlands. One year later we are pleased to report that the Levisson Institute has been established and that it functions. Indeed, we are becoming more confident that this daring project will have a future.

#### The Lecturers:

In the first instance we owe the progress of the Institute to a good number of outstanding lecturers at Dutch universities and institutes who make their valuable time and energy available to teach for us. Some do not only teach, but participate in the work of the Academic Committee and in the development of the curriculum. On page 19 you can find a short description of who they are. For the Academic Year 2005-2006 a number of others will join their ranks. .

#### Guest lecturers:

Rabbi Yehoram Mazor is the senior lecturer in the Israeli Programme of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem and a member of the Advisory Council of the Levisson Institute. In January 2005 he gave an eight day long seminar in Jewish Liturgy for our students and nine other interested participants. In this intensive seminar he covered a semester's worth of material. Rabbi Mazor will return in February 2006 for another similar seminar as a continuation of the first one.



Also in January 2005 cantor Josée Wolff of the School of Sacred Music on the HUC-JIR in New York taught a course of Nusach for our students and for the *shelichay tsibbur* of our congregations, arranged by the Paula Salomon Foundation.

In September 2005 Prof. Dr. Menachem Lorberbaum of Tel Aviv University and the Shalom Hartman Institute will visit and teach the students as part of their classes in Jewish Philosophy. He will also be the main speaker at the formal opening of the new Academic Year of the Institute.

#### The Students:

The Rabbinic students also deserve special mention, next to the short biographies they wrote about themselves and which you can find on pages 20-24. They make a major investment in following a time-consuming programme next to their daily work and other duties.

The second year of study began in September 2004 and with six students. One of the original students left the programme at the end of the first year for personal reasons. Another student follows a more limited programme than the full one, which will mean that he will take longer than the regular five years to complete his studies.

All six students have completed the second year with good results and happily with growing motivation and enthusiasm.

During the spring of 2005 a number of new candidates for the training submitted their applications. Of these the Academic Committee admitted four persons (see pages 22-24). They will start their studies at the end of August 2005. Some applicants were advised first to undertake another study and to reapply at a later date, and others were not admitted but were advised that they would be eligible to follow parts of the academic programme.

We are happy to report that there is in this country an evident interest both in following the full rabbinic training, and for study of Jewish subjects on an academic level and in a Liberal Jewish context.

It is worth noting that already at the outset we made the choice of only admitting a second class of students in 2005 instead of in 2004. The reasons were on the one hand that we wanted to make sure that the plans we had actually could be realized made before starting a second group and on the other hand a need to be careful about spending the scarce financial resources at our disposal. .

### **Study visits**

Travelling for the purpose of study and networking will be a regular feature of the curriculum. Rabbinic work, particularly in a relatively small and isolated community as ours, needs to be internationally oriented. In order to be able to follow developments in research and thought it is not enough to keep up with the published literature, but to be in regular contact with colleagues in other countries working in various disciplines and institutes. This is also and not in the last instance, necessary for the personal development of the Rabbi him/herself.

During the Academic Year 2004-2005 two such visits were made and a third will take place at the beginning of the year 2005-2006.

- During the first week of May 2005 the students took part in a joint study conference in Berlin arranged by the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, attended by Rabbis, rabbinic students and lecturers from Europe, Israel and the USA.
- In July 2005 they attended the Convention of the World Union for Progressive Judaism in Moscow and the international Rabbinic Convention that preceded it.
- In September 2005 they will visit Israel. Since all the students have extensive experiences of Israel, their programme can be directed to gaining a good knowledge of all major activities of the IMPJ, meeting the Rabbis and leaders of the movement and associated organisations, and to of learn about the challenges and achievements of Progressive Judaism in Israel.

In addition they will follow a programme of study especially designed for them in conjunction with Saltz International Education Center of Progressive Judaism.

A few of the leaders of the Dutch Liberal movement and senior educators will also participate in this visit.

### **Contacts with other Rabbinic Training institutes**

During the summer of 2004 Prof. Dr. Marc Bregman of HUC-JIR in Jerusalem, a member of our international Advisory Council, came to visit. He met with both the students, a number of the lecturers and with members of the Board and the Academic Committee. He was able to help and advise on several aspects of the work we do. He has reported positively about this visit to the head of the HUC-JIR. The report is available for those interested from the Dean of the Levisson Institute.

Prof. Bregman will soon relinquish his post as Professor of Rabbinic Literature at the HUC in order to take up a position in the United States. As replacement in our Advisory Council Rabbi Dr. Yehoyada (Yoki) Amir, the Director of the Israel Rabbinic Programme and Associate Professor of Jewish Thought at the HUC-JIR in Jerusalem has been appointed by the leadership of the HUC-JIR.

There have been regular contacts with the Leo Baeck College in London. In March 2005 a delegation from the Levisson Institute met with a number of lecturers of the Leo Baeck College in London for consultation on a number of aspects of the further development of our curriculum.

Rabbi Dr. Jonathan Magonet, the Principal of the Leo Baeck College, has been most helpful ever since the first steps were taken to establish the Levisson Institute. The Dean of the Dutch institute was invited to address him at his official farewell as principal on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005.

### **The Levisson Library**

Mrs. Sarah Friedman, librarian of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem has helped us extensively with the first acquisitions for a reference library for our students. This has been established in the building of the Liberaal Joodse Gemeente in Amsterdam. While preparing for this, the plans for the move of the Amsterdam congregation to a new building in a few years time were taken into account. At the present time, a beginning has been made with the digital cataloguing of the initial books.

### **The website**

By the time this annual report is issued a website should have been launched with the URL [www.levisson.nl](http://www.levisson.nl). Hopefully an English version of the website will by then also be available at the same address.

### **The Friends**

The circle of Friends keeps growing, albeit at a slow pace. From the initial 25 Friends, we now have a group of 40 persons who contribute a yearly sum to the Foundation in order to help fund the training of our future Rabbis. We are most grateful to them for their continued support. The intention is that the circle will grow to 100 Friends, to enable a further growth of the institute.

We are also grateful to the Levi Lassen Foundation, the Makaria Foundation and the Maror Commission who have shown a great understanding for the need of our work and for their continued support.

As of September 2005 the students will begin their work in the congregations. We expect that the members will experience the work of the Institute more directly and that this will help in finding additional Friends and thereby to assure the financial security of the Foundation on the longer term.

## 2. The Finances

### The year 2004

We began the first courses on 1 September 2003. For the first period costs were kept as low as possible. The salaried Dean came into service on 1 January 2004 on the basis of one day a week. The administrative support is still kept to an absolute minimum. Facilities for the lessons and for the library are provided by the LJJ Amsterdam at a reduced charge.

Income in 2004 consisted of the students' tuition fees, donations from the Friends of the Foundation and of subsidies from the Levi Lassen Foundation, the Makaria Foundation and the Maror Commission<sup>1</sup>. By keeping the costs low, we could start out with a healthy financial position. In addition, Rabbi David Lilienthal asked that a collection which was made on the occasion of his retirement as Rabbi of the LJJ Amsterdam be donated to the Levisson Institute. These monies have been turned into a "Student Fund," whose purpose is to support students financially in case their personal circumstances require such support.

The positive financial result over 2004 has been added to the initial Foundation capital that by 31 December 2004 amounted to €46.917. This, however, looks more positive than it is. Such a sum is a necessary minimum in order for the Foundation to be able to guarantee a small measure of security for the students, the Dean and the lecturers. They have to be able to count on the Foundation to be able to meet its financial commitments over a longer period. It also has to serve as a reserve fund in the case of budgetary shortfalls or unforeseen events. We hope and expect a further subsidy from the Maror Commission, but a strict budgetary discipline remains necessary in order to keep control of the costs. This is now more than ever the case, since we have admitted new students who will begin their five year long training in August 2005. This will naturally require several additional courses.

### The 2004 accounts

The annual accounts for 2003 have been audited by Paul J. Wolfs RA (Chartered Accountant) of the Perdaan Den Houting Hendriksen Accountants Office, Landsmeer.

Paul Wolf has supported us in setting up the budget submitted with our application for a Maror subsidy.

Below is a summary of the 2004 accounts. The full accounts can be obtained on request.

#### *Balance sheet at 31 December 2004*

<u>Assets:</u>		<u>Liabilities:</u>	
Receivables	€ 8.467	Foundation capital	€ 46.917
		Student Fund	€ 21.350
Liquid assets	€ 201.507	Advance receipts	€ 121.786
		Debts	€ 19.921
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 209.974</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 209.974</i>

<sup>1</sup> The Maror Commission is in charge of the distribution of funds granted by the Dutch Government, banks and other financial institutions as restitution for Jewish possessions stolen during the Shoah. This refers to the funds given to organisations, not what was returned to individuals. This distribution is spread of a 20 year period and funds are given only in support of projects, and not in the form of capital payments.

*Financial activities for the year 2003*

<u>Income:</u>		<u>Expenditure:</u>	
Subsidies	€ 68.900	Dean	€ 13.381
		Lecturers/courses	€ 21.768
		Library	€ 23.563
		Lecture rooms	€ 4.000
		Board expenses	€ 3.243
		Computer	€ 1.600
		Administrative costs	€ 7.098
		Other costs	€ 5.674
Friends	€ 29.890		
Student fees	€ 13.205		
Interest	€ 3.776		
<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 115.771</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>€ 80.327</i>
<i>Credit balance</i>			<i>€ 35,444</i>

**The year 2005**

As of 1 January 2004 Rabbi David Lilienthal has entered into part-time service of the Foundation as Dean. He is responsible for the study programme, the organisation of lectures, contacts with lecturers and students, working with the board and the committees and for the full administration. We have therefore taken measures to extend his employment somewhat during 2005, also taking into account the new group of students who will begin their studies in August 2005.

**Funds and Foundations**

Funds and Foundations with the specific goal of supporting educational establishments are not to be found in the Netherlands. Even a professional subsidy seeker could find no suitable sources. Education is seen as a task for the government. An institute such as ours does not, however, because of its restricted scope and limited target group, come into consideration for public support. Nevertheless we regard ourselves as fortunate to have found two foundations, which give us financial support. In 2003 the Levi Lassen Foundation has already granted an amount of €25,000 per year for a period of five years. In June of 2004 we received a promise from the Makaria Foundation that they will furnish the same amount, i.e. €25,000 per year for five years. These subsidies are subject to certain conditions. We are extremely grateful to these two Foundations for their support.

**The Friends**

The Friends of the Foundation constitute the core support for our financial survival. We are most gratified that from the start of our Institute, already more than 35 persons have declared themselves prepared to support the Levisson Institute with an amount of € 1,000 per year for at least 5 years. This shows the importance that is attached to our Institute within the Liberal Jewish community. Some Friends have paid for five years in advance. Others pay a yearly contribution, under covenant.

For us it is important to keep the Friends up-to-date on the activities of the Institute. At least once a year a meeting is held in which our supporters are informed over various aspects of



our work and progress. This is also a good opportunity for them to meet and discuss with both the students, the lecturers and members of the Board and the committees. For these meetings we try to invite a speaker to address those present on a subject of current interest. In the past speakers have been Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh from London and Rabbi Yehoram Mazor from Israel. This year Perf. Dr. Menachem Lorberbaum will address the meeting, which is at the same time a public meeting marking the opening of the new Academic Year.

Dr. Lorberbaum chairs the Department of Jewish Philosophy, Talmud and Kabala at Tel Aviv University and is co-director of Shalom Hartman's Center for Jewish Political Thought and a co-author of the literature used for the classes on Jewish Philosophy in the Institute.

### **The Maror Funds**

At the end of October 2003, we submitted an application for support out of the available collective Maror funds. We spent a considerable amount of time preparing this grant proposal since it involved much future budgeting for the projected costs that an Institute such as ours could require.

By a decision of 29 June 2004 a (maximum) grant of € 75,000 was allocated for the period of 29 June 2004 to 19 June 2005<sup>2</sup>. According to the judgement of the Maror Commission "this important initiative merits support". It added that we "must make every effort in the year of grant of the subsidy to ensure that the project has a good chance of success both as to its aims and financially, among other things by striving for international recognition." In the meantime this latter goal has to a large extent already been achieved, as the realized co-operation with the rabbinic training institutes in Israel, England and Germany and the official reporting of our activities in the organs of the World Union goes to show.

We are pleased that also the Maror Commission has recognised that the establishment of the Levisson Institute is of great importance for the continuity of Jewish life in the Netherlands. The decision of the Maror Commission, while it does not offer any certainty of continued support in the future, does open up important possibilities of realising additional facilities, such as our own library, the organising of our own seminars and participation by our students in international seminars and meetings. These elements are of real significance for the future good functioning of the students of our Institute to the benefit of the Dutch Jewish community.

The formulation of the decision to agree to the grant proposal leaves open the possibility of further support in the following years. However, because of our financial situation, we decided not to ask for another grant for the year 2005. Now that the second group of students has materialized, we have decided to apply for an additional grant for the year 2006. We are confident that the Maror Commission will recognize the progress made in the past two years and that they will again react positively to our request for funds.

<sup>2</sup> In our budget we have provisionally allocated an amount of € 19,500 for 2004 and an amount of € 55,500 for 2005.

### The 2005 budget

All these financial developments and an increasing insight into the costs have led the board of the Foundation to adjust the budget for 2005. This budget is summarised below.

In 2005 we will continue to keep the costs as low as possible. Only the most necessary expenses have been and will be incurred.

#### *Expenses:*

Salaries (Dean and administrative support)	€	38.000
Administrative costs	€	2.600
Accommodation Dean/secretariat/library	€	650
Annual telephone/internet/website costs	€	1.600
Expenses Board, Academic Committee, Advisory Council	€	4.150
Expenses for the Dean	€	7.000
Accountants	€	5.250
External courses	€	13.500
Lecturers' fees	€	35.000
Lecture room	€	3.400
Depreciation movables	€	1.000
Purchase books	€	10.000
Various and unforeseen	€	7.250
<i>Total</i>	€	<i>156.400</i>

#### *Income:*

Subsidy Levi Lassen	€	25.000
Subsidy Makaria	€	25.000
Subsidy Maror	€	55.000
Private donations	€	35.000
Contribution LJG Amsterdam	€	2.400
Student fees	€	13.500
<i>Total</i>	€	<i>156.400</i>

## PART B

### 1. The (up-dated) background

In this part of the report we describe the reasons that led to the setting up of the Foundation, why we started the training at the Levisson Institute and what our goals were. It sets the scene for the further development of our institute

#### Why a rabbinical training in the Netherlands

It became apparent from a survey by the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands (*the Verbond*) carried out in 2001, that there was a need in the coming decades for new Rabbis, *shelichay tzibbur* to lead services, teachers and other persons to give leadership to our Jewish communities and organisations.

The pressure under which the present Rabbis work can be partly seen from the wide range of their activities (as of 2005):

- Rabbi Bar Ephraim is now the first responsible Rabbi on the LJC (Liberal Jewish congregation) in The Hague, Rabbi of LJC North Netherlands and national chaplain to Jewish prisoners.
- Rabbi Ten Brink is the Rabbi of LJC Amsterdam, LJC Flevoland and LJC Gelderland.
- Rabbi Herman, retired already since several years, has again become active as Rabbi of LJC Brabant.
- Rabbi Soetendorp is still to some extent active in the LJC The Hague and responsible for LJC Utrecht, next to his other international commitments.
- Rabbi Lilienthal, Rabbi Emeritus of LJC Amsterdam, is the Dean of the Levisson Institute. He is also responsible for the LJC Rotterdam, LJC Twente and the International Jewish Center in Brussels, chair of the European Beth Din and the Dutch prayer book committee.

The *Verbond* noted in the abovementioned survey that the Liberal congregations and educational activities are expanding and that the quest for more Jewish knowledge is growing, that the need for more rabbinic leadership is also increasing and hence the time had come to take real action to answer these needs.

Furthermore the survey noted that until now training as a Rabbi or Cantor could only be undertaken outside of the Netherlands. Several highly motivated potential students were, however, for various reasons - such as age and work or family circumstances - not in a position to follow such a course of study for a long period abroad.

For this reason, the *Verbond* established the Robert A. Levisson Foundation on 23 August 2002. This foundation then set up the Levisson Institute, which is named after the great post-war Dutch Liberal Jewish leader Robert A Levisson z.l. from The Hague, who died at the end of 2001.

### **The goals of the Foundation**

In the Netherlands there are various possibilities to follow courses to learn about Judaism, including some high level courses. What was lacking, however, was a - coherent - possibility of study to train a future leadership for the Liberal Jewish Community in the Netherlands. This lack has now been filled by the setting up of the Levisson Institute.

The training given by the Levisson Institute is aimed at granting rabbinical certification (semicha) and in the future also qualification as Cantor, teacher of Jewish subjects and Jewish pastoral worker. This goal has determined the high level and the quality of the training that is intended. The academic part of the training will also be open for those who wish to enrich their knowledge of Judaism at this level.

Where existing institutes provide courses and lectures at the required high level, the Levisson Institute can let its student follow such courses and lectures. Where they are not available, the Levisson Institute will provide such courses and lectures itself. This applies both to the academic and to the more professionally oriented parts of the training.

The Dean, in close collaboration with the Academic Committee and the Advisory Council, is progressively developing the curriculum. This cooperation guarantees the level and the quality of the training and is necessary to ensure that the diplomas which students who successfully complete the course will be given are recognised within the Liberal Jewish community and by international professional bodies.

It goes without saying that such a high level institute is important not only for the training of a professional leadership but can also make a significant contribution to the essential task of maintaining and increasing Jewish knowledge among the “ordinary members” of the community.

### **The organisational structure**

The members of the **Board** of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation are appointed by the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands. This Board is charged with managing the administrative and financial interests of the Institute. A chartered accountant audits the annual accounts. The Board appoints the Dean, the members of the Academic Committee and of the Advisory Council.

The **Dean**, who is employed by the Foundation and answers to the Board, leads the Institute. He or she is the central figure for the Institute, and has the tasks to develop the curriculum, to arrange the programme of study each year, to provide for the lectures and practical training given by the Institute itself and to maintain contacts with related institutes. The Dean is supported in this by the Academic Committee and the Advisory Council.

A **Student Counsellor** is responsible for giving guidance to the students.

The **Academic Committee (AC)** is responsible for:

- a) setting the final pass standards for the training
- b) appointing and assessing lecturers
- c) admitting the students
- d) determining the content and the quality of the course of study
- e) judging the students' performance

all in close consultation with the Dean, the lecturers and the members of the Advisory Council. The AC can appoint subcommittees to prepare and implement specific tasks, but it retains the ultimate responsibility.

The members of the **Advisory Council** (AdvC) are also appointed by the Board of the Foundation. They are generally put forward by the related institutes in other countries that also provide rabbinical training. Members may be appointed since they possess specific knowledge and skills that are needed by the Institute.

The AdvC has the specific responsibility of guaranteeing that the quality of the training meets an internationally recognised level. The members assess the programme against this level, and can submit the programme to experts of their own institutes for comment. The members of the AdvC give advice either as requested by the institute or on their own initiative. In order to enable them to fulfil these tasks, the programme is submitted to them for review as it is developed, and they visit the Institute once or more often each year in order to discuss the progress of the training with the Dean and the members of the AC, and to maintain personal contact with the students and lecturers. The Levisson Institute considers these international contacts of great importance.



## 2. The Programme of Study

### A short description of the curriculum

The present and future training is open to students who are Jewish as defined by the Rabbis of the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands<sup>3</sup>. Students are required to already possess sufficient knowledge to be able to follow a course at this level.

The nature of the function of Rabbi implies that his or her life style and personal history are significant. He or she must be able to take up a leading position in a community and function as a role model. The life style and integrity of the student is therefore taken into account during the admissions procedure, with all necessary caution and without discriminating on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, race, skin colour, political convictions or age.

The course of study can be divided into an academic and a vocational part. In the course of the training these two parts become more and more integrated.

### The academic part

The academic part involves amongst other things:

- *Hebrew*: Biblical, Rabbinic and modern variants.
- *Aramaic*: those variants needed to be able to read and master the classic Jewish texts, Tanach and rabbinical texts.
- *Halacha*: principles, development, and relationship to Aggada, the approach of various Jewish schools of thought, classical and modern sources and responsa.
- *History*: a thorough overall survey, the history of ideas, the specific Jewish approach to history, insight into the questions and issues of Jewish history.
- *The Land and the State of Israel*: history, theological and cultural significance, personal experience of the country and the study facilities available there.
- *Liturgy*: a thorough introduction to the content of orthodox and non-orthodox siddurim and minhagim (Ashkenazy, Sephardi, Edot HaMizrach), history, correspondences and differences between these and their theological background, contemporary issues.
- *Rituals*: the Jewish year, the life cycle and other mitzvot
- *Philosophy*: Jewish thinkers and Jewish thought in the past and present, schisms, relationship to non-Jewish philosophical systems.
- *Jewish music, art and literature*: an introduction, with emphasis on the importance and effect of music on the liturgy, modern Jewish and Israeli literature.
- *Other religions*: thorough introductions to Islam and Christianity, and acquaintance with other religions.

The academic part is completed in the fifth and last year of study with the writing of a thesis.

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<sup>3</sup> An exception can be made for participation in certain parts of the course

## The professional (vocational) part

The professional part of the training consists of, among other things:

- *Halacha in practice*: most important is the practical application of Jewish law, (*halacha lema'aseh*). This involves the development of the techniques of research, ethical and halachic insight, knowledge of halacha concerning modern problem areas (such as the field of medicine, bio-ethics, business ethics and ecology). The knowledge needed to participate in the work of a Beth Din, such as kiddushin, gittin and giur is also a requirement.
- *Liturgy and rabbinical tasks in practice*: the ability to conduct and instruct in all rituals in the Jewish year and the Jewish life cycle in the synagogue and in the home, to be able to give a sermon, to speak in public, to have sufficient didactic knowledge to teach both children and adults; the ability to write both professional, popularising and opinion-forming articles and possibly also books, to be familiar with the use of computers, Internet and multi-media techniques.
- *Pastoral work*: a major area of the work of the contemporary rabbinate, which requires much attention, is covered by lessons such as pastoral psychology, interviewing techniques, leading discussions, understanding the significance of transitional periods in the life cycle and the associated counselling and support where these give rise to problems, as well as being able to recognize when referral to another professional or institute is necessary.
- *Administrative and policy-making tasks*: the work of the Beth Din and the Rabbinical Council, preparing and organising all sorts of activities within the community and other administrative tasks; the capacity to be able to work in a dynamic yet harmonious and inspiring way with the (congregational) board, committees and a host of voluntary workers. Courses in administration and congregational dynamics are important.
- *Practical training (stages)*: In the course of their training students will have to follow stages in the Liberal Jewish communities in the Netherlands and possibly also abroad. They will at first accompany a number of the practicing Dutch Rabbis and later, under the supervision of a mentoring Rabbi, carry out rabbinical tasks independently. The mentoring will continue during the first years after the students receive their semichah. In addition they will learn about all sorts of other institutes with which a Rabbi works.
- *Personal development*: mentoring and support for the way in which the student adapts and integrates the material learnt into his or her own life and spiritual development. Room for a personal development plan for each individual student is important.

Some elements of the training will take the form of seminars covering several days.

The student is required to spend one or more periods for study in Israel, unless he or she already has had a sufficient Israel experience. A thorough first-hand knowledge of the Liberal Jewish institutions and their work in Israel is also an absolute requirement.

### **Classes at other institutes and under the auspices of the Institute itself**

The course of study takes in principle five years to complete. An Academic Year consists basically of four blocks, each of seven weeks. Each week ten hours of lectures are given, and students are also required to devote an average of two hours preparation for each hour of lecture. In addition there are one or two (international) symposia, the hours needed for the practical training and for a number of additional activities.

During the first two years of the study the students have attended lectures that were provided by the Levisson Institute itself. They have also followed lessons at the University of Amsterdam and the Crescas Jewish Education Centre. In the coming Academic Year, the first year students will also follow courses at the Leiden University.

The courses at the Amsterdam University have covered both classical and modern Hebrew, Aramaic, Midrash and Parshanut.

The Crescas courses followed by the students are part of a high level programme for advanced students that this educational centre has developed together with the Dean of the Levisson Institute specifically for the Levisson students. It is, however, possible for others who have the required level of knowledge to attend these classes. These courses cover subjects such as History, Jewish Philosophy, and the reading and learning to handle classical rabbinical literature (Midrash, Mishnah and Talmud), extending to the classical rabbinical halachic works.

The courses provided by Crescas are at university level and are taught by the best university lecturers available in the Netherlands. The content and way of presentation is, however, - other than the same lecturers do at their universities - more directed to reinforcing the individual Jewish identity and experience of the students. They also bring the students knowledge to a higher level than is normal in the university master programmes, in the areas that are relevant to their rabbinic training.

Since Crescas in principle does not set examinations or give credits, the Levisson students' results are assessed by their lecturers at the request of the Levisson Institute.

The lessons given by the Levisson Institute itself have until now been mainly directed to the practical skills of rabbinic work. An important part of this is the Professional Preparation classes. Much attention is paid to Pastoral Psychology and Pastoral Work. Presentation techniques (speaking and conduct in public and in the synagogue) and a number of practical rabbinical activities (such as conducting services, writing sermons and articles, relations between rabbi-board-committees-voluntary workers) are also covered. The Institute itself also provides some academic courses such as Tanach, Jewish Liturgy and Parshanut at an academic level.

### **Access to classes for others**

The aim of the Institute is not only to provide professional training, but also to offer the opportunity to follow certain courses to Jews who are interested in specific topics and who wish to deepen their knowledge in a Jewish environment. The academic part of the training (at the Institute itself and via the Crescas Education Centre) is open to those who are interested, provided that they already possess enough knowledge to be able to follow the lessons. Several persons have indeed made use of this possibility during the first years and several have registered for the coming Academic Year.

### 3. Who is who?

In this chapter we give the names and a brief account of the functions of those who are connected with the Foundation and the Institute. They have all made serious contributions to the Liberal Jewish movement in the Netherlands.

#### The Board

The Board of the Institute consists of:

- *Henk Wagenfeld*, Chairman since 1 January 2004. Henk Wagenfeld is a past chairman of the Liberal Jewish Community of The Hague, chairman of the Mr.L.E.Visserhuis Jewish Old Age Home in The Hague and chairman of the Levi Lassen Foundation in The Hague.
- *Wilma Stein-Olman*, Hon. Secretary. Wilma Stein was executive director of the Dutch national Jewish Welfare Services (*Joods Maatschappelijk Werk*). She has also been a member of the Executive Board (*Dagelijks Bestuur*) of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and is now a member of the National Board of the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands (*Verbond*) and a board member of the Crescas Jewish Education Centre.
- *Leo Frijda*, treasurer since 1 January 2005, was Vice-President of the Amsterdam Court of Appeals. He is Hon. Secretary of the Executive Board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and a former member of the National Board of the *Verbond*.
- *Marja Hené-Toncman*, is the Chair of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Rotterdam and is a member of the Executive Board (*Dagelijks Bestuur*) of the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands (*Verbond*) with responsibility for the section "Religion."
- *Stephen Kahn*, lawyer, has been member of the Board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of The Hague and a past member of the National Board of the *Verbond*.

#### The Academic Committee

The following are members of the Academic Committee:<sup>4</sup>

- *Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiep*, Chairperson. Prof. Zwiep is Head of the Department of Hebrew, Aramaic and Syrian languages and cultures at the University of Amsterdam and a member of the Advisory Board of the Crescas Jewish Education Centre.
- *Dr. Emile G.L. Schrijver*, Secretary. Dr Schrijver is curator of the Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana of the University of Amsterdam, and Director of the Menasseh Ben Israel Institute, Amsterdam and a Board member of the Crescas Jewish Education Centre.
- *Ernst Numann*, Master-of-Laws (NL), is a member of the Dutch Supreme Court at The Hague, and a past Chairman of the *Verbond*.
- *Drs. A. Carolyn Levisson* is a students' Psychological Counsellor at the Delft University of Technology and a daughter of Robert A. Levisson, after whom the Institute is named.
- *The Rabbis Awraham Soetendorp, Menno ten Brink and Ruben Bar Ephraim*.

<sup>4</sup> For the tasks and responsibilities of the Academic Committee, see page 12.

The Academic Committee has appointed three subcommittees:

- The Admissions Committee: this subcommittee assesses applicant students and recommends on admission to the Academic Committee.  
Members are *Prof. Dr. Irene Zwiép* and *Drs. Carolyn Levisson*, members of the Academic Committee, and the Dean, *Rabbi David Lilienthal*
- A subcommittee for consultation between students and the Academic Committee.  
Membership of this subcommittee varies, depending on the topic under discussion.
- A subcommittee for development of the Professional Training programme.  
This committee consists of:
  - *Drs. Carolyn Levisson* (member of the Academic Committee)
  - *Dr. Fanny Heymann*, formerly of the University of Wageningen, who now has her own research and advice bureau.
  - *Ella Wijnschenk-Oestermann*, group leader and first trainer at the Dutch national Jewish Welfare Services (*Joods Maatschappelijk Werk*)
  - *Drs. Joost Levy*, p|r|o|Consult training and advice bureau

The Dean, *Rabbi David Lilienthal*, usually attends meetings of this subcommittee.

### The Advisory Council

The Advisory Council's name reflects its advisory role, and its membership gives expression to the collaboration that the Levisson Institute is establishing with related institutes abroad. These are the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (with campuses in Cincinnati, Los Angeles, New York and Jerusalem), the Leo Baeck College, London, England (the most important institute for training liberal Rabbis and teachers outside of the U.S. and Israel) and the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, Potsdam, Germany (a recently founded institute that is part of the Potsdam University).

Members of the Advisory Council are:

- *Prof. Dr. Ian T. Young*, Head of the Department of Imaging Science & Technology, Delft University of Technology, member of the board of the Liberal Jewish Congregation, The Hague, member of the Executive Board of the *Verbond* and chairman of the Sja'ar Foundation<sup>5</sup>. Prof. Young is the "link-man" with the Academic Committee, whose meetings he attends.
- *Prof. Dr. Marc Bregman*<sup>6</sup> of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, senior lecturer in Rabbinical Literature – for the HUC-JIR
- *Rabbi Yehoram Mazor* of the Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Jerusalem, senior lecturer in Liturgy.
- *Rabbi Prof. Dr. Jonathan Magonet*, Principal of the Leo Baeck College, London<sup>7</sup>
- *Rabbi Dr. Walter Homolka*, Executive Director of the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, Potsdam.

<sup>5</sup> The Sja'ar Foundation is part of the *Verbond*. It deals with the book publications of the *Verbond*, the publication of a new Hebrew-Dutch Tanach, and with various adult education projects.

<sup>6</sup> As reported on page 6, as of July 2005 Rabbi Dr. Yehoyada Amir, the Director of the Israel Rabbinic Programme and Associate Professor of Jewish Thought at the HUC-JIR in Jerusalem has replaced Prof. Bregman in this post.

<sup>7</sup> Rabbi Magonet retired as Principal of the LBC in July 2005 but remains in the Advisory Council.

### The Dean

*Rabbi David Lilienthal* is the person who took the initiative to set up the Institute and is the driving force behind it. Now Dean of the Institute, he was the first chairman of the Board. Rabbi David Lilienthal is Emeritus Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregations in Rotterdam and Twente and the International Jewish Center in Brussels and chairman of the European Bet Din of the World Union for Progressive Judaism.

### The Student Counsellor

*Rabbi Menno ten Brink*, Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, is responsible, as student counsellor, for supporting and guiding the students and monitoring the progress of their studies. He is also the students' "confidant" for the study.

### The Lecturers

The success of a training stands or falls with the lecturers. We are fortunate in that we have been able to attract many outstanding lecturers, mainly from the Dutch academic world. All are highly reputed specialists in their fields. As the programme develops, additional lecturers will be asked to contribute to the course of study. Most of the lecturers are Jewish. If not, they have a strong affinity with Judaism and the Jewish community.

- *Hebrew and Aramaic:*  
Prof. Dr. Irene E. Zwiep, University of Amsterdam (UvA)<sup>8</sup>  
Dr. Hannah Neudecker, Leiden University (UL) (as of September 2005)
- *Tanach I:*  
Rabbi Dr. Charles Middleburgh, Leo Baeck College, London (LI)
- *Tanach II:*  
Prof. Dr. Athalya Brenner, University of Amsterdam (LI)
- *Parshanut*  
Prof. Dr. Albert van der Heide, University of Leiden (LI)  
Drs. Martin Baasten, University of Leiden (LI)
- *Talmud:*  
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Marx, Folkertsmastichting (LI)  
Drs. Leo Mock, *inter alia* University of Amsterdam (C)
- *Rabbinical skills:*  
Rabbi Ruben Bar-Ephraim, LJG Den Haag (LI)  
Rabbi David Lilienthal, Levisson Institute (LI)
- *Professional preparation:*  
Pieter-Jan André, lecturer in Ethics, Utrecht Institute of Higher Education (LI)  
Drs. Joost Levy, p|r|o|Consult (LI)
- *Presentation techniques:*  
Jaïr Strandens (LI)

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<sup>8</sup> The initials in brackets indicate under whose auspices the lessons are given. (UvA) stands for the University of Amsterdam, (C) stands for Crescas, (UL) stands for the Leiden University and (LI) for the Levisson Institute.

- *History:*  
Drs. Hetty Berg, Jewish Historical Museum (C)  
Dr. Shlomo Berger, University of Amsterdam (C)  
Drs. Tirtsa Bernfeld-Levie (C)  
Drs. Joel Cahen, Jewish Historical Museum (C)  
Dr. Emile Schrijver, Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana (C)  
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp (C)  
Rabbi Drs. Edward van Voolen, Jewish Historical Museum (C and LI)
- *Liturgy:*  
Rabbi Yehoram Mazor, Hebrew Union College, Jerusalem (LI)
- *Jewish Philosophy:*  
Prof. Dr. Reinier Munk, Free University of Amsterdam and University of Leiden (C)

### The 2<sup>nd</sup> Year students

The following six students started their training in September 2003:



*Tamarah Benima* (1950) from Amsterdam:

‘My wish to be a Rabbi dates at least from 1987; that is five years before I returned to the *Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad* (as editor in chief of the only Dutch Jewish weekly newspaper). At the end of the 1980’s I was for the first time – in England – confronted with a female Rabbi and I thought: “This is it!” Because of my circumstances, that wish could not be realized; there was no way I could move abroad to study. Back in the Netherlands I did start a study Semitic Languages, but my work as editor in chief prevented me from going down the path I had

planned; this was, however, very good for my further development.

We have now completed two years at the Levisson Institute and it has altogether been very stimulating. It feels as if all the varied knowledge I already had is being combined with the new knowledge I’m acquiring. Everything falls into place and gets a direction.

When I began the study, I was convinced that I would never be the Rabbi of a congregation. But after two years, I am less certain. However, I still see my future most important tasks as 1. to make contact with the 80% of the Jews who are not affiliated with any community, 2. to build bridges between Jews, Muslims and Christians, 3. to give information about Judaism to anyone who wishes to hear about it, wherever they are and in any number of ways (lectures, articles, programmes, workshops, retreats).

Whatever form my work will finally take, there is still time enough to think that through. It will, after all, take another three years before we are finished. I will then be 58 years old and I hope to be able to work for at least another 20 years. Not exactly a boring life.’



*Marianne van Praag* (1956) from The Hague:

‘By profession I am a teacher, and I have been teaching at the religion classes for the LJJ The Hague for 25 years. I have lived in Israel and worked there as a tour guide for some years. The Levisson training is the opportunity I had been waiting for to deepen my knowledge and I took it at once.

My interest lies first and foremost in the area of pastoral care, in particular in connection with people who are ill and who need terminal care. I also hope to pass the knowledge I gain on to many others.’

*Albert Ringer* (1952) from Rotterdam:

My background is that of an art historian. Amongst other things I have published a work on the synagogue architect Elte.

Furthermore, for years I have been active in many aspects of the work of the Liberal Jewish movement in The Netherlands.

I have made a career as a software engineer, but now I have decided to change course professionally. I participate in the rabbinic training and at the same time I work as a Jewish chaplain to the Dutch Armed Forces and as a chaplain at the Psycho-Medical Centre Parnassia in The Hague. I am married and have three children.’



*Mischa Schrijver* (1963) from Abcoude:

‘I am married to Gaby Schrijver-Dreese and the father of six children. I am the owner of *MasterBenefits*, a firm giving advice and management trainings in the field of Employee Benefits and Financial Planning. I have been active in the LJJ for many years, first and foremost in LJJ Amsterdam as *madrich* (youth leader), teacher and in various other areas. I have been working since 2002 in a very part time function as “para-rabbinic assistant.” Together with others I lead services, do some pastoral work and lead other activities. On occasion I also lead services

for other LJJ congregations. From 1997 till 2003 I wrote a weekly column for the Nieuw Israëlitisch Weekblad (the Dutch Jewish weekly) and since some years I teach at the Crescas Jewish Education Centre.

It seems as if rabbinical activities form part of my genetic makeup and as if I am now about to fulfil an old wish of my grandfather z.l. He wanted to become a Rabbi already when he was a young man, but there was no money to finance the study.

My motivation lies primarily in what I call ‘*tikoen am Yisrael*’: to help repair the unity in the Jewish People and thus to renew its real strength. That work can be done in many ways, and one of them is by working as a Rabbi. I experience the Levisson training as very worth-while but I find it a heavy burden in conjunction with my full daily work and my large family.







*Martin Reubin* (1946), now from Amsterdam:

‘I was born and raised in an Orthodox Jewish area of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. My primary education was at Yeshiva Torah Vadath. This period of Jewish studies instilled in me a lifelong commitment to Tikkun Olam and a thirst for spiritual knowledge. Feeling constrained by the narrowness of Orthodox views, I continued this spiritual journey in Asia, studying Buddhist meditation and scriptures while living in monasteries in Sri Lanka and Thailand. During my wife’s conversion to Judaism, I joined a Reconstructionist synagogue and discovered an inclusive Jewish movement that used traditional prayers and rituals as a joyous instrument of spirituality. Further reading and studies opened the windows of Jewish renewal and Jewish meditation. My years in France and the Netherlands have committed me to using the tools provided by Rabbinic study to help struggling Jewish liberal communities and bring individuals back to their heritage.

Professionally I am a retired financial consultant, and in the past I have also dealt in fine furniture and antiques.’

#### **4. The Near Future**

A wise man once said “It is difficult to be a prophet, especially when it concerns predicting the future.” However, what we could only hope for when setting up the Levisson Institute has – with the help of many – become reality.

##### **The Finances**

The budget for the year 2006 is already prepared, since it was needed for the grant proposal to the Maror Commission.

A new group of students will begin their course of study in August 2005. This will require an additional programme of lectures and courses which means that costs will rise. We will try to keep these additional costs as low as possible by combining a number of courses with those of the third year students.

No decision has been taken regarding the admission of more students in September of 2006. Our preference would be only to start a new class in 2007. There are several reasons for this. First of all our financial means are limited (unless the circle of Friends increase strongly or we find additional foundations prepared to support us). Secondly we are not certain that the lecturers will be able to free up enough time to provide the necessary classes. And finally we may have problems finding enough class room space until the new building of the LJG Amsterdam will be finished in 2008.

As the Institute grows, salary costs will rise, not only because of the number of hours for the lecturers, but also because the Dean will require more time and more administrative support. In the provisional 2006 budget expenses come to an amount of €173.800.-. A decision on admitting new students will have to await the decision by the Maror Commission.

We will, however, have to expand the library in order to cope with the needs of the students in the highest class. This will be done in consultation with the Academic Committee and the lecturers. Furthermore the students will be expected to attend at least one study seminar abroad and one seminar will be planned in the Netherlands.

##### **The Friends**

We have already written that the Friends of the Institute are essential for its continuity. Their contributions are indispensable. Furthermore, by their continued support they demonstrate that our Institute has become an established and integral part of Dutch Jewish life.

For the Institute to be able to stand on its own feet and be able to provide concurrent training for students of different years, the number of Friends will have to be significantly increased in the coming years. In the budget for 2006 we assume 40 contributors, and thus an amount of at least € 40,000.-. We are grateful to our Friends for this support. We are, however, striving to increase the number of Friends over time and hope to reach at least 100. This number of supporters would give us a more secure financial basis! A minimum annual budget for the Institute amounts to expenditure of approximately €175,000. We hope that the Friends that we already have will help us by finding new supporters from amongst their friends and colleagues.

### **The present students**

We are happy to report that all students have completed their second year with more than sufficient grades and that they will proceed to their third year.

The students have had to work very hard to be able to follow this study, and this will remain so in the coming years. This is a part-time study and, while making sure that the training keeps to the required quality, we must also see to it that the burden does not become too heavy. Apart from the study, the students also have to earn a living and some of them have a family that – rightly – demands attention. We have based ourselves on ten hours tuition a week with, in addition, an average of two hours of preparation time per hour in class. To this must be added the writing of papers and examinations and in the coming year their practical training (stages) will be added to this. For one student this is somewhat too much and for him a revised programme, adapted to his circumstances, is being defined, with the result that the overall length of his study will be extended.

### **International cooperation**

In our first annual report and in our brochure we express the hope that we will be able to come to a good co-operation with the older Liberal Jewish institutes of good reputation that provide rabbinical training. Elsewhere in this report we point out that since they have appointed members to our Advisory Council, this in practice means that they acknowledge our Institute as an educational establishment that can be trusted to train Rabbis.

During the year that is covered by this report, this implicit recognition has been repeatedly confirmed. The World Union for Progressive Judaism now includes the Levisson Institute in its official reports and extends all possible help to us. The Leo Baeck College in London prepared a full day of study and consultations with their experts for a delegation from the Levisson Institute to review and discuss the development of our curriculum. The Principal of the LBC also participated in these sessions.



As stated elsewhere the students and the Dean participated in a Rabbinic Study seminar in Berlin in May 2005 at the invitation by the Abraham Geiger Kolleg.



The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem agrees to their senior lecturer Jewish Liturgy coming to Amsterdam to give a yearly 8 day seminar and to assess the progress made by the students, and has now appointed the Director of the Israel Rabbinic Programme also to oversee our programme. The HUC-JIR will also provide part of the programme during the study visit of our students to Israel in September 2005. The organisation of this visit is largely being done by the Saltz Education Center which is part of the World Union for Progressive Judaism. They kindly provide some of their prime lecturers for the 10 days to lead the intensive study part of the programme. These institutions also regularly assist us in word and deed as necessary.



On July 7<sup>th</sup> 2005 Prof. Dr. Jonathan Magonet retired as Principal of the Leo Baeck College in London. The Dean of the Levisson Institute was invited to be one of the speakers at the farewell ceremony in London. We are grateful to Rabbi Magonet for the support he has given us from the very first beginnings of our Institute and we wish him health and happiness and much success in his further activities. We are happy that he will remain as a member of our Advisory Council, and we hope for an equally good co-operation with this successor.

Amsterdam, June 2005 – Sivan 5765