



Annual Report
&
Financial Report
for the academic year
2015

STICHTING ROBERT A. LEVISSON

Zuidelijke Wandelweg 41 • 1079 RK Amsterdam • Netherlands

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

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



Rabbi Robert A. Levisson (1913-2001) was one of the great leaders within the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism. He was the son of the founder of the Progressive Jewish movement in The Netherlands. After the Second World War he revived the Progressive Jewish Congregation (LJG) in The Hague and became one of the prominent Progressive Jewish leaders in our country. He was a wise man, a talented speaker and author, and a great advocate for Israel.

Yehi zichro baruch - יהי זכרו ברוך - Blessed be his memory

Introduction

During the academic year 2015/5775 the Levisson Institute proved again that a small institute can be great. In the first place, I am very happy we could welcome Joram Rookmaaker back at the Institute as a rabbinical student. After six year he has returned to his studies at the Levisson Institute and will eventually receive his s'micha. Joram is also my assistant at the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, where he was appointed on September 1, 2015. This way, he helps out the Amsterdam rabbinate while continuing his studies in the remainder of his time.

In this annual report you will find many activities that were organized by the Institute. Our mission is to offer, alongside the rabbinical training, other professional courses and studies for those who are leaders in our kehillot, or who would like to be in the future. We offer high level refresher courses for rabbis, cantors, and teachers (thanks to Rimon). We are working on a guide for gabba'im, which will give guidance to all gabba'im in our congregations. The guide will be based on the course for gabba'im which took place three years ago. There always will be the need to train new gabba'im, but also cantors and teachers, to keep our kehillot alive and to keep providing a high level of knowledge and skills. As far as rabbis are concerned: there are very few. This worries me. We will have to be more inspiring to make the position of rabbi more attractive to young people. Our concern is that most of our congregations are too small to offer a full-time position for a rabbi. For this reason it seems best to combine the position of rabbi with a second place of employment. Within five years from now, most current rabbis will retire and we will have to think about successors. This means there is a lot of work ahead if we want to keep the Progressive Jewish Congregations in The Netherlands at their current level, which took much work to achieve. We ask our members in The Netherlands to look around to see if there are members of our congregations who would consider becoming rabbis. The training in and by itself is already worth it. Imagine the opportunity to study our rich Jewish tradition in depth, from Torah to Talmud to modern rabbinic commentaries.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Prof. dr. Ted Young for his longtime efforts to lead the Levisson Institute as its President. His successor Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman was involved in the vocational training at our Institute for many years and she now is our strongly motivated President. Many thanks also to Harry Polak, who made aliyah with his wife Irith in March 2016. He was a board member of the Levisson Institute for many years.

Also many thanks to Francine Menco-Püttmann, our active and driven director. She is the motor of the Institute.

We have a good year behind us and a new year with new challenges awaits us. Obviously, we need students to face those challenges and of course the financial means to make our work possible.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M.
dean of the Levisson Institute

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1. The Academic Year 2015

David Lilienthal Lecture

The highlight of 2015 was the first David Lilienthal Lecture on June 14. The David Lilienthal Lecture was established at the retirement of David Lilienthal as Dean of the Levisson Institute in February 2013, as part of the David Lilienthal Fund. This was a gift from the Institute for David Lilienthal. The purpose of the fund is to organize lectures. The first lecture took place on June 14, 2015, with David and Gun Lilienthal as guests of honor, visiting from Israel for this festive occasion.



Anat Hoffman, Rabbi David Lilienthal and Gun Lilienthal

The key note address at the first event was given by Anat Hoffman, director of IRAC (Israel Religious Action Center) and of Women of the Wall in Jerusalem.

Preceding the lecture there was a meet and greet at the home of Mariette and Willem Koster, attended by the speaker, guests of honor and the main sponsors Jaap Rosen Jacobson and the Sally Berg Family Fund.

The speakers at the lecture in the Makaria Hall in the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam were Prof. dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen on behalf of the Board of the Levisson Institute, Dean Rabbi Menno ten Brink, guest of honor Rabbi David Lilienthal and of course Anat Hoffman. The event was attended by 120 people. After the lecture there was a reception in the Anne Frank Hall.

Anat Hoffman also gave lectures at the shuls of the Progressive Jewish Congregations of The Hague and Utrecht, by request of the Levisson Institute. The lecture in The Hague on June 15 was attended by 60 people; 30 people came to listen to Anat Hoffman's lecture in Utrecht on June 16.

On Tuesday June 16 Anat Hoffman met with five members of various national committees of the political party Groen Links (a progressive party which focuses on ecological problems) in the City Hall of Amsterdam. This meeting was organized by journalist/politician Daphne Meijer. Next there was a lunch meeting at the home of Anna de Voogt with seven Jewish women.

On all occasions, lectures and meetings, there was much enthusiasm on both sides. It was the first time in eight years that Anat Hoffman visited The Netherlands. Her inspired speeches were the first introduction to her work at IRAC and Women of the Wall for some, and a renewed acquaintance for others.

The members of the organizing committee were Rabbi Marianne van Praag, Madelon Bino, Esther van Oostrum, Mariette Koster and Francine Püttmann, director of the Levisson Institute. They were advised by Hans Weijel, Samu de Leeuw and Ronny Naftaniel. The poster and advertisement for the event were designed by Doreen Pinkus. Thanks to the close cooperation with the Progressive Jewish Congregations of Amsterdam, The Hague and Utrecht the three lectures went smoothly, for which we are grateful.

Photos of the lectures and an interview in the Jewish weekly Nieuw Israelietisch Weekblad can be found at www.levisson.nl > Photos/Videos > David Lilienthal Lecture 2015

Rabbinical student

We are happy to inform you that we are training a rabbinical student since September 2015. Joram Rookmaaker restarted his studies after a break of some years. He will divide his time between his work as an assistant rabbi at the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and his studies. Assisting Rabbi Menno ten Brink in the congregation will take 20 hours a week; the other 20 hours will be spent on studying at the Levisson Institute.

Opening of the academic year 2015-2016

The academic year 2015-2016 was opened on October 18, 2015 with a gathering at the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam. After an introduction by Prof. dr. Ted Young, president of the board of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation, and Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Dean of the Levisson Institute, Prof. dr. Wout van Bekkum (University of Groningen) held a lecture about *The family tragedy in the Piyyut: Avraham's lie, Sarah's sorrow, Yitshak's lost innocence*. See also www.levisson.nl > Foto's/Video's > Opening academisch jaar 2015 (in Dutch).



During the opening of the academic year the presidency of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation was transferred. The new president, Mrs. Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, has been involved in the work of the Levisson Institute since the very beginning, especially with the vocational department of the rabbinical training. She gave the closing address at the gathering.



Resigning president Ted Young was awarded the first “Levisson yarmulke”, designed by Jet Naftaniel-Joëls, for his outstanding efforts. The board also took leave of Harry Polak, who is making aliyah with his wife. Harry received a mezuzah for his new home, made by Piet Cohen, as thanks for his much appreciated work as a board member.

Refresher courses for rabbis

In the year of this report there were three refresher courses. During the period March-July the rabbis met five times with Marga Schreuder, who teaches mediation and dealing with conflict. On Sunday June 7 American Rabbi Arthur Green, professor of Jewish Philosophy and Religion at the Hebrew College in Boston, discussed Jewish mysticism and Hassidism.



Prof. dr. Rachel Elijor, professor emeritus of Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, gave a lecture about *The messianic-mystical tradition in Jewish History* on Wednesday November 25, in which she treated the subject of the historical origins and development of the messianic idea in Judaism.

Refresher course for shlichei tzibbur

After the successful refresher course in 2014, taught by Gilad Nezer, the Progressive Jewish Congregation's cantor, and Shura Lipovsky, singer of Yiddish songs, two days in 2015 were reserved for a follow up of the master class, by request of the cantors.



On March 22 and November 29 Gilad and Shura asked the present shlichei tzibbur to sing parts of the service and provided advice based on their performances. The emphasis was on presentation, voice technique and textual interpretation. Both instructors provided one-on-one instructions for every participant, which was felt as very positive. This formula will be repeated in 2016.

Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Education Center



The Dutch Progressive Jewish Education Center Rimon, a subdivision of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation, produced a large amount of digital educational tools during 2015, thanks to funding by the Progressive Jewish Congregations and Beit Ha'Chidush, and the Maror Foundation, for which we are very grateful. Matty van Eldik is coordinator at Rimon.

As in previous years, the production was based on the principle to use existing educational materials on the subjects of Judaism and Hebrew, from Rimon's website (www.rimon-ljloc.nl), and update, revise and complement them. The new tools are mainly for use in thematic educational projects which are part of the education in some congregations, but the tools for Judaism and Hebrew were also expanded.

The public part of the Rimon website contains exercises and tests designed as educational games, specific for different age groups. Teachers can use them in class, but they can also be used as homework, to practice newly learned skills and knowledge. The tools are completely compatible with the tools used in Talmud Torah school. The website also contains new information for parents, like reading exercises Hebrew with which they can support their children when they are doing homework. The information about b'rachot to be said with their children at home has also been expanded.

Eight new educational games were made in the reported year and uploaded on the Rimon website. They are marked with the word 'new'. Two of them are Bingo games which use words from parts 1 and 2 of the Hebrew learning method *Hoi, ik lees Ivriet (Hi, I read Ivrit)*. Another Bingo game uses words that refer to Purim. Two games help children to read Hebrew words 'vertically', that is to say that every consonant needs a vowel underneath before the next consonant can be read. These two games (*Hi, Balloon* and *Hi, Airplane*) are also directly related to the Hebrew learning method *Hi, I read Ivrit*.

Furthermore a jig-saw puzzle was made in two versions: one easy and one hard. The image used was a shofar player. And last but not least, two new memory games, one general and one about Pesach.

As in 2014, Rimon produced two videos this year with a theme and matching learning tools. The video that was produced in 2014 was about the synagogue. The first video of 2015 is called *A Tea Visit at Grandma Rose's* and show what a Jewish home looks like, and which Jewish objects belong there. The second video *Help! I am becoming Bar Mitzvah* shows what a child has to do when it is preparing for its bar of bat mitzvah. At the request of the Jewish Historical Museum, this second video is now included in the collection of the museum.

In 2016 a video about the High Holidays will be produced. The videos are made by Liesbeth Aussen (script and production) and Jos Vecht (camera and editing). The videos can be watched on the Rimon website: www.rimon-ljloc.nl > Nieuwe media.

Rimon will discuss with Levisson board member Prof. dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen how Rimon can further be developed in the coming years and how to improve the involvement of teachers in this process.

Refresher courses for teachers



The Levisson Institute organized in cooperation with Rimon a national refresher course for Talmud Torah teachers in September 2015. The theme of the day was *The Future of Progressive Jewish Education*. Prof. dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen gave a lecture about different kinds of educational goals, transfer of knowledge and project education. During the afternoon program Lea Abram spoke about *What can I learn from attending another teacher's class?* and

Israel Golani about *Which tools do I use in teaching Hebrew and what is my personal affinity with Hebrew education?* The seminar was attended by 16 teachers from all over the country.

Torah Project

Early 2015 was the beginning of the project to record the cantillation of the complete Torah according to the Dutch Progressive Jewish trope and to publish the recordings in the music library on the Levisson website. The cantillation is done by Amir Naamani (Progressive Jewish Congregation of The Hague) and Bram Lagendijk (Progressive Jewish Congregation of Rotterdam). Both are experienced ba'alei korei (Torah readers). In this project, Amir sings all aliyot and Bram takes care of the recording, editing and publishing to the music library.



It is an extensive project which takes a lot of time for preparation, recording, editing and publication. For this reason the project was planned to take two years. Amir and Bram meet almost weekly to make recordings – usually in the shuls of The Hague or Rotterdam – during which sessions three parashiot are sung and recorded on average.

The C-year of our three-year cycle is the first to be recorded. Eventually all aliyot will be published on the Levisson Institute's website, categorized by Sidra, by book of the Torah and by year of the three-year cycle. The upload of the first recordings is expected in the spring of 2016.

The ultimate responsibility with respect to liturgy is with Rabbi Menno ten Brink. He is the go-to person in case of questions and uncertainties during the process of recording. For support and advice on the trope, Channa van Unen-Meyer will be available to Amir and Bram. She also had an important role in the preparations for the project.

Scholarly Research

The project “From Adath Jeschurun to Adath Jesjoeroen” about religious developments in Judaism in The Netherlands during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was delayed by illness

and other circumstances beyond the control of historian and publicist Chaya Brasz. Meanwhile the work is resumed. This scholarly research project, which has been going on for some years, is meant to fill the gap that exists concerning this subject in the historiography of Dutch Judaism. The project is mainly financed by the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds. Chaya Brasz decided, because the time limits set by Maror were not compatible with her personal circumstances, to find a different solution which suits her better. The situation has been cleared with Maror to everyone's satisfaction. The intention is to publish the completed manuscript at Hebrew Union College Press in Cincinnati.

A peek at the research that will interest our Progressive Congregations:



Both the pre-war Rabbi dr. Ludwig Jacob Mehler, and post-war Rabbi Jacob Soetendorp had great ambitions on European level for the Liberal Jewish congregations. That shouldn't be such a surprise, because for both of them the circumstances were positive. During the 1930s the numbers of especially Rabbi Mehler's Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam grew rapidly because of German Jews who fled the Nazi regime, which made the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) consider the two Dutch Liberal congregations as very successful. No wonder then that the WUPJ chose Amsterdam in 1937 for its World Conference, which was the largest WUPJ event on the continent during the Interbellum. As Mehler saw it, Amsterdam had replaced Berlin. After the first difficult post-war years, first the Liberal Congregation of Amsterdam and later the one in The Hague were revived. Jacob Soetendorp, as a Liberal rabbi, played a unique and leading role at European level and even became vice-president of the WUPJ. Because of this, The Netherlands were chosen soon after the war, in 1957, as the place for the WUPJ world conference, which took place in Amsterdam.

Library

In the year 2015, as in previous year, 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.

In 2015 two experimental book reviews took place. On April 12 Mirjam Ringer and Alexander Hammelburg reviewed the book *In naam van God. Religie en geweld* (Fields of Blood) by Karen Armstrong. On September 6 *De zonnebloem* (Die Sonnenblume = The Sunflower) by Simon Wiesenthal was reviewed by Tamarah Benima.

Both evenings were visited by only a handful of people. Those who attended, gave high notes of appreciation for both evenings.

Management Team

Apart from their daily work of running the Institute, the Management Team was very busy during the reported year with the first David Lilienthal Lecture, rabbinical training, refresher courses for rabbis, cantors and Talmud Torah teachers (in cooperation with Rimon), and with the new project

of recording the Progressive Dutch Torah trope. And last but not least the opening of the academic year.

The Management Team meets once a month and in between keeps in touch by email and phone. The MT is also represented at board meetings. It stays in touch as well with the Nederlands Verbond voor Progressief Jodendom (Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism) and the boards of the affiliated congregations.

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

Composition of Board, Management and Committees



As noted above, a change of presidency took place at the opening of the new academic year on October 18, 2015. Ted Young, who started as president on January 2, 2010, gave up his position after 5.5 years and made place for a new president, Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman.

The board took its leave of Harry Polak, who initially represented the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, and later filled the position of secretary. The board has five members, as prescribed by the articles of the Foundation, since October 18, 2015. Juliette Walma van der Molen now fills the position of vice-president, and David Allick accepted the position as secretary of the board.

Ella Wijnschenk and Ted Young

Board

Prof. dr. Ted Young, chair (until October 18, 2015)

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair (since October 18, 2015)

Dr. Thijs ten Raa, treasurer

Harry Polak, MA, secretary (until October 18, 2015)

David Allick, LL.M., member (until October 18, 2015) and secretary (since October 18, 2015)

Prof. dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen, member (until October 18, 2015) and vice-chair (since October 18, 2015)

Lena Herman-ten Cate, MA, member (on behalf of the Verbond)

Management Team

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M., dean

Prof. dr. Reinier Munk, head Academic Program

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Program

Francine Püttmann, MA, director General Affairs

Academic Committee

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair
Prof. dr. Reinier Munk, secretary
Rabbi Tamarah Benima, member
Carolyn Levisson, MA, member
Ernst Numann, LL.M., member
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, member
Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M., dean
Rabbi David Lilienthal, honorary dean
Prof. dr. Ted Young, chairman of the board (until October 18, 2015)
Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair of the board (since October 18, 2015)

Subcommittee Admissions

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair Academic Committee
Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LL.M., dean
Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair Vocational Committee

Vocational Committee (BVV)

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair
Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Program
Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, member (until October 18, 2015), hearer (since October 18, 2015)
Chellie van den Bergh, member (until July 8, 2015)
Marie-José van Hoof, MA, member (until July 8, 2015)
Jorien Tamse, member (since July 8, 2015)

Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Educational Center

Matty van Eldik, coordinator
Liesbeth Aussen, coordinator
Lea Abram, staff member
Israel Golani, staff member Hebrew

Webmasters

Dick Hage
Bram Legendijk (music library)

Friends and Donors

From what you have read so far, it will be clear that the Institute is working diligently. Our finances, though, are still reason for concern, with a large net loss in the reported year. Our expenses were drastically lowered, but the revenue decreased even more.

For the continuation of our work we remain dependent on the willingness of our loyal friends and donors to keep supporting us. We owe them a great debt of gratitude, as well as the Stichting Collectieve Maror-gelden.

2. Finances

Financial Report for 2015

The annual account 2015 was drawn up by the Board on February 22, 2016 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 2015

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Receivables	€ 3,403	Foundation capital	€ 120,350
Liquid assets	€ 210,629	Earmarked reserves	€ 66,412
		Taxes	€ 577
		Debts/deferrals	€ 26,693
Total	€ 214,032		€ 214,032

The *earmarked reserves* comprise five funds:

Student Fund	€ 25,981
Israel Seminar Fund	€ 15,000
Academic Research Fund	€ 9,000
Training Fund	€ 14,969
Rimon	€ 1,462

The Student Fund is intended for allowances for students who need them on ground of personal circumstances to be used for expenses directly linked to their studies. The first finances were collected for the Student Fund as a farewell present for Dean Rabbi Lilienthal on the occasion of his retirement as rabbi of the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam. So far, one modest allowance has been awarded.

The Israel Seminar Fund was founded in 2005 with the goal of regularly organizing seminars for students in Israel.

In 2005 € 10,000 was reserved for academic research, mainly abroad; in 2008 a € 1,000 payment was made.

A gift from the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation in 2007 was partly used to finance the training of shlichei tzibbur in the period 2007-2009. The remaining money, € 11,895 was donated to the appropriated reserves for the teacher training. In 2011 the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation donated an amount to cover the cost of a study trip for the teachers training to Londen in 2011. The remaining money, € 3,074 was added to the reserves. The board has allotted the reserves for all courses and training programs.

In the summer of 2013 the Robert A. Levisson Foundation took over the activities of Rimon, the Dutch Progressive Jewish Educational Center from the Sja'ar Foundation by request of the Verbond (Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism). Rimon's core business is to develop educational

materials and tools for all congregations that are affiliated with the Verbond. The gross result for the first year was reported separately, without detracting management cost.

The deferrals in the balance include € 2,930 as a gift to the David Lilienthal Fund in honor of his retirement as dean. It will be used to finance a second David Lilienthal lecture.

Profit and loss account 2015

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Friends and other gifts	€ 9,686	Salaries staff	€ 26,452
Subsidies	€ 9,523	Instructors and courses	€ 9,028
Tuition fees	€ 2,000	Board/dean/committees	€ 794
Interest	€ 2,540	Library and teaching materials	€ 401
Rimon	€ 14,485	Rimon	€ 15,927
		External communication	€ 4,652
		Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 5,352
Net loss	<u>€ 26,298</u>	Miscellaneous	<u>€ 1,926</u>
Total	€ 64,532		€ 64,532

The year 2015 showed a loss of € 26,298. Spending was reduced considerably, but revenue decreased even more.

The largest expenses are staff (€ 26,000), teachers (€ 9,000), Rimon (€ 16,000) and accountant (€ 5,000). The height of this last amount is due to the fact that Rimon still has its own administration. This problem was solved a year ago and the accountant wrote in answer to my inquiry: "The invoice for 2014 was € 4,500 (excl. VAT). For the financial year 2015 the cost of accounting was € 3,000 (excl. VAT)." Rimon itself suffered a mild loss (revenue € 15,000). The costs for teachers have decreased substantially. The expenses for staff are unchanged.

The largest source of income, contributions by friends, has imploded. The annual reporting of the Levisson Institute was transferred from the academic year to the calendar year, because of which the last reported year (2013-2014) consisted of 17 months. Correcting for this, the gifts in 2014 amounted to € 32,000, while the current report shows a decrease to € 10,000. We are especially grateful to our Friends and the Progressive Jewish Congregation of Rotterdam for their contributions, as well as to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism and the Maror Foundation.

The cost of staff and the income from contribution and donations are not in good balance. Because of the financial loss the Institute's own capital has decreased to € 186,762. Without a change in policy the Levisson Institute will be forced to close its doors within a little over seven years. To prevent this from happening, the Board will need to change its policy.

Note that a return to the former level of donations would solve the problem to a large extent. Therefor we implore you to give generously and in excess of your earlier donations. Your donations are completely tax deductible because of our ANBI status.

Thijs ten Raa
 treasurer