



Annual Report  
&  
Financial Report  
for the academic year  
2018

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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

The Levisson Institute completed last year in a wonderful manner, with Joram Rookmaker's final rabbinical exam in December. He subsequently received his Semicha in a well-attended service on January 6, 2019. Joram was already working as a rabbinical student in the Liberal Congregation of Amsterdam, and has now joined the rabbinical team of the congregation, working with me.

We were also happy to be able to give out fourteen certificates to participants of the Ba'al T'fillah course. The Progressive congregations in our country now have available a pool of people who can lead services whenever no Rabbi is present. I thank Annette Böckler, Marianne van Praag and Francine Püttmann, who conducted the weekends with me, also with support of other teachers. The Levisson Institute also organized refresher courses for sh'lichei tzibur and teachers.

Although we welcomed a new rabbinical student in 2019, Annette Böckler from Switzerland – who is one of our regular teachers at the Levisson Institute - there has been no increase in enthusiasm for rabbinical training. We keep hoping that more youngsters will apply, and be able to take over the leadership of our congregations from the current rabbis, or become welcome additions for the development of the Liberal congregations in our country.

Progressive Judaism is alive and kicking, and it is a great challenge to keep developing our congregations in this country. Our children have the right to be able to give substance to their Jewish identity, and that is only possible if there is, and continues to be, inspired leadership. Thus my call-up: come and talk to us if you think the rabbinate may be for you.

It is of great importance to the future of Progressive Judaism in this country and the continuity of our Liberal congregations to secure the necessary training for our own people.

I thank everyone who has contributed with so much enthusiasm in the reported year, and we look toward the future with optimism.

Professor Reinier Munk indicated his wish to give up his membership of the Academic Committee and the Management Team per January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019. I want to thank him for his years of contributing and his efforts right from the establishment of our Institute. I also thank our President Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman and our unsurpassed director Francine Menco-Püttmann for their commitment and great efforts for the Levisson Institute.

Yishar Koach. Stay strong to be able to do even more mitzvot.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM  
dean of the Levisson Institute

## 1. The Academic Year 2018

### David Lilienthal Lecture

On the occasion of David Lilienthal's retirement from the Levisson Institute and his aliyah, its leadership has instituted the David Lilienthal Lecture. The first lecture took place in 2015 and was given by Anat Hoffman.

The second David Lilienthal Lecture was held on October 28, 2018. Its theme was “Jewish Education Then en Now”.

The Board decided in 2018 that from now on the annual opening of the academic year will coincide with the David Lilienthal Lecture.

The opening remarks at the 2018 David Lilienthal Lecture, were spoken by our President Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman. She discussed the current situation of the Institute, the progress of the current rabbinical student, the new course for Ba'al T'fillah, which began early in 2018. Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Dean of the Levisson Institute, also spoke a few words and introduced the guest speaker, Henny van het Hoofd.



Henny van het Hoofd discussed her PhD thesis. Her lecture, titled *Het geheim van Hoogeveen, Joods onderwijs in Nederland tussen 1860-1940* ('The Secret of Hoogeveen, Jewish Education in The Netherlands 1860-1940'), had as its central theme the 'Israelitic religion teachers'. Why did people choose to become teachers of Judaism in those days and what career opportunities did the job offer? What were the challenges and what can we learn from the teachers of the past?

The next speakers were [Lea Abram](#) and [Anne-Maria van Hilst](#), coordinators of Rimon, the national Liberal Jewish Education Center. They explained what Rimon is, what the core business is of Jewish education, and what methods are currently used in Jewish education.

Director Francine Püttmann gave a short presentation about the Ba'al T'fillah course, the coming gabbay guide and the new website.

### Rabbinical training

Our rabbinical student Joram Rookmaaker has concluded his studies in December 2018 and received his Semicha on 6 January 2019. This will be reported in the annual report of 2019.

## Ba'al T'fillah course



The Levisson Institute conducted its first Ba'al T'fillah course in 2018. Its main goal was to teach the participants to lead Shabbat and Shivah services in case no rabbi is available. The students also learned to give a D'var Torah as part of these services. Secondary goals were learning to lead the Kiddush, Birkat Hamazon after dinner and Havdalah at the end of Shabbat.

The course was advertised by flyers which were dispersed in all Liberal Jewish Congregations and by word of mouth and newsletters. Eventually twenty people enrolled. After evaluation fifteen of them, from six different congregations, were accepted. Fourteen of them received a certificate after successfully finishing the course.

The course was taught in five weekends in Conference Center Woudschoten in the town of Zeist. It was lead by the Management Team of the Levisson Institute: Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Rabbi Marianne van Praag and Francine Püttmann. Dr. Annette Böckler from Zürich attended the weekends as a fourth leader and teacher. Three other teachers taught individual classes.

The Friday night and Saturday morning services were a standard part of each weekend. The participants were required to lead the services themselves, at first small sections each, but as the course progressed, they had to lead increasingly large parts. A short D'rasha (sermon), often in the format of a D'var Torah (explication of the Parasha of the week), also was a recurring task for every weekend. There were separate classes about the structure of the Siddur, text study of the Amida and Shema, cooperation with the Chazzan (Cantor), and presentation. The Torah service, the most complicated part of the Saturday morning service, was practiced as often as possible.

Some of the participants are already being deployed regularly for services in some congregations. Every member congregation of the Verbond (Union for Progressive Judaism) can ask a Ba'al T'fillah to conduct a service for them. The congregation can choose any Ba'al T'fillah it prefers.

## Torah project

The project to record the melodies for Torah cantillation with the traditional trope of the Progressive Jewish Congregations in The Netherlands, which started in 2015, is concluded mid-2018.

This project includes the complete recording of all sidrot and parshiot, in accordance with the three-year cycle of Torah reading on Shabbat which is used the Dutch Progressive congregations. All Torah portions were cantillated by Amir Na'amani, and recorded and edited by Bram Lagendijk. All recordings can be found on the website.

See [www.levisson.nl/en/](http://www.levisson.nl/en/) > Music > Reading Torah on Shabbat

## Refresher course for shlichei tzibbur

Due to agenda problems no refresher course for shlichei tzibbur took place in 2018. It has been postponed to February 2019.

## Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Education Center



Led by its two coordinators, Lea Abram and Anne-Maria van Hilst, Rimon worked hard to produce additions to its website during the reported year: [www.rimononderwijs.nl](http://www.rimononderwijs.nl)

The heads of Talmud Torah met twice in 2018, on April 8<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup>. During the April meeting it was decided that the 'Heads Meeting' will from now on be called 'Education Committee', because it is part of a larger structure. All heads of Talmud Torah are part of the Education Committee. This means that the heads will brainstorm about education (vision, contents, and curriculum). The heads are also responsible for communication with their own boards and teachers. Rimon will coordinate the educational needs and is responsible for the execution of new education projects.

In a meeting between the boards of the Levisson Institute and the Verbond (Union for Progressive Judaism) it was decided the meeting with the heads of Talmud Torah will be replaced in 2019 with an Union Education Committee of which all heads of Talmud Torah, Rimon and rabbis with educational tasks will be part. Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Dean of the Levisson Institute and Rabbi of the Liberal Congregation of Amsterdam, will preside over the meetings of the committee.

In 2018 the coordinators visited the Talmud Torah in the congregations of The Hague, Rotterdam and the province of Brabant to find out how Jewish education works there. Amsterdam was not visited, because the coordinators themselves are the heads of Jewish education there. An assessment was made of the results of those visits. This is not complete however, as visits to the Talmud Torah in the congregations of Utrecht, Gelderland en Twente/Noord-Nederland were canceled for various reasons.

## Refresher courses for teachers

In 2018 – as it does every year - Rimon organized two national days of refresher courses for the Talmud Torah teachers in all congregations. Like other years, it took place in the building of the Liberal Congregation of Amsterdam.

The first meeting was on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Ido Abram (z"l) explained how the '*identity circle*' works and asked the teachers to make their own circles. Subsequently preparations for the national Talmud Torah weekend were made. At the second day of the refresher course, on November 4<sup>th</sup>, Merav Barzel spoke about *Working with Talent – discover, recognize and develop*. She taught how to recognize (also your own) talent and how to make sure you work more from your own talent, also when teaching children Talmud Torah.

## Communication



Three newsletters (in Dutch) were published in 2018. It contains a variety of subjects concerning the Institute. The newsletter is distributed by email. Subscriptions via [contact@levisson.nl](mailto:contact@levisson.nl).



Work was done on a new website in 2018. This went online in April 2019 and replaces the more than 15-year-old website: [www.levisson.nl/en/](http://www.levisson.nl/en/)

## Sidra of the Week

Every week a Dutch comment on the Sidra of the Week (Parashat Hashavuah) is sent by email to people who subscribe to this service. Subscriptions are free and you can enlist on the Levisson Institute website. All comments (in Dutch) are also published on the website: [www.levisson.nl](http://www.levisson.nl) > Toralezingen > Sidra van de week

## Library

In the year 2018, 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.

See for the catalogue: [www.levissonbibliotheek.nl](http://www.levissonbibliotheek.nl) and [www.ljgbibliotheek.nl](http://www.ljgbibliotheek.nl)

## Management Team

Next to the daily work of running the Levisson Institute, the Management Team was busy with the Rabbinical training, the Ba'al T'fillah course, the situation at Rimon and improving the publicity of the Levisson Institute.

The Management Team had to take their leave of their member Prof. Dr. Reinier Munk, who headed the Academic Program and was also a member of the Academic Committee of the Levisson Institute. His increased work activities made it impossible for him to keep participating in the Management Team and the Academic Committee. The three remaining members will continue the work of the Management Team. The Academic Committee is looking for a new member. Reinier Munk was involved in the Levisson Institute from the beginning in 2002.

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 (contact@levisson.nl).

## **Board, Management and Committees**

There also was a change in the Board. Lena Herman, Board member on behalf of the Union for Progressive Judaism, was replaced by Liane van Dantzig. The Board met every two months, in total six times, and was mostly occupied with the evaluation and the future of the Rabbinical training program, the new Ba'al T'fillah course, Rimon and the financial situation.

In June 2018 a change of articles was made that states that from now on board members will be appointed for the duration of a maximum of three years. They can be reappointed once for a consecutive period of three more years.

The Academic Committee did not meet in 2018, but consultations were conducted by phone and email. Part of the Academic Committee did, however, assess the rabbinical student's final exam as an examining committee.

The Vocational Training Committee met five times and was mainly occupied with the rabbinical training program and the new Ba'al Tefillah course.

### Board

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair

Prof. dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen, vice-chair

Dr. Thijs ten Raa, treasurer

David Allick, LLM, secretary

Lena Herman-ten Cate, MA, member (on behalf of the Verbond/Dutch Union, till 1 July 2018)

Liane van Dantzig, MA, member (on behalf of the Verbond/Dutch Union, from 1 Sept. 2018)

### Schedule of resignation board

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman: October 2021

Juliette Walma van der Molen: August 2020

Thijs ten Raa: August 2020

David Allick: August 2020

Liane van Dantzig: September 2021

### Management Team

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Prof. dr. Reinier Munk, head Academic Program (till 31 December 2018)

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 (till 31 December 2018)

Rabbi Tamarah Benima, member

Carolyn Levisson, MA, member  
Ernst Numann, LLM, member  
Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp, member  
Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean  
Rabbi David Lilienthal, honorary dean  
Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair of the board

#### Vocational Committee (CBV)

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair  
Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Program  
Jorien Tamse, member  
Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, hearer

#### Subcommittee Admissions

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

#### Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Educational Center

Lea Abram, coordinator  
Anne-Maria van Hilst, coordinator

#### Webmasters

Dick Hage  
Bram Legendijk (music library)

### **Donors**

The Levisson Institute has made efforts in the reported year to improve publicity of the activities of the Institute and its plans for the future. Part of this effort is starting a dialogue with the members of the Liberal congregations, to find out what is important to them.

The Institute organized two informal meetings In 2018, in Amsterdam and in The Hague. These meetings also produced new donors, for which we are very grateful. The meetings will continue in 2019. Our loyal donors keep supporting us. We owe them a large measure of gratitude.

We give special thanks to the Liberal Congregation of Flevoland, which donated a large sum from its own capital to the Levisson Institute to support education, on the occasion of its dissolution. We also owe thanks to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, the Stichting Collectieve Marorgelden, Carel Abas Stichting, Kiwi Stichting, Stichting tot het verschaffen van woningen aan minvermogenden and Stichting Levi Lassen.

The board and the management will have to keep looking for a structural solution for financing, to keep the Institute financially sound. The Robert A. Levisson Foundation, owner of the Institute, is a certified charity (ANBI). Meanwhile, we still need your help to find more donors, foundations

and funds who are willing to support us financially to maintain this center of knowledge of Progressive Judaism in The Netherlands and keep it active.

## **Plans for 2019**

Plans for 2019 are a continuation of our current policies, in which the rabbinical training program takes priority. A new rabbinical student started training on 1 January.

The newly trained ba'alei t'fillah will remain in our focus with a return day. And of course we will offer refresher courses for rabbis, cantors and teachers.

The David Lilienthal Lecture will be held annually from now on and will replace the opening of the Academic Year.

The Levisson Institute will appoint a confidant, where everyone involved in the Institute can tell his/her story in confidence.

Rimon will also continue its new policy, in which all heads of the Liberal Jewish Education will meet twice a year to discuss youth education and initiate new projects. In 2019 this will be refashioned as a Union Education Committee, in which the heads of Talmud Torah and rabbis with educational tasks will participate. This way more weight will be given to the importance of collectively shaping Talmud Torah in The Netherlands.

Rimon will also organize two national refresher courses for teachers in 2019.

In this new year the Institute will consider again the possibility of new courses and training programs. This depends both on need and financial circumstances.

The new website will be launched in 2019.

The first Dutch gabbai guide will be published in the new year as well. It is a publication of the Levisson Institute and will be published by Sja'ar, the publishing department of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism.

## 2. Finances

### Financial Report for 2018

The annual account 2018 was drawn up by the Board on April 15, 2019 and afterwards confirmed by accountant Kuhlman. What follows is a summary. If you would like to receive the complete annual account, please address your request to [contact@levisson.nl](mailto:contact@levisson.nl).

#### Balance at 31 December 2018

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Receivables	€ 22,210	Foundation capital	€ 62,635
Liquid assets	€ 125,630	Earmarked reserves	€ 75,021
		Taxes	€ 510
		Debts/deferrals	€ 9,674
Total	€ 147,840		€ 147,840

The *earmarked reserves* comprise five funds:

Student Fund	€ 25,981
Israel Seminar Fund	€ 15,000
Academic Research Fund	€ 8,841
Training Fund	€ 14,969
Rimon	€ 10,230

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.

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 and in 2016 € 159.

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 London 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).

The deferrals in the balance include € 2,800 as a gift to the David Lilienthal Fund in honor of his retirement as dean. It will be used to finance the David Lilienthal Lectures.

## Profit and loss account 2018

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors and other gifts	€ 27,194	Salaries staff	€ 21,949
Subsidies	€ 26,032	Instructors and courses	€ 66,184
Ba'al T'fillah fees	€ 42,637	Board/MT/committees	€ 1,230
Tuition fees	€ 667	Library and teaching materials	€ 30
Rimon	€ 13,750	Rimon	€ 11,296
Interest	€ 105	External communication	€ 1,541
		Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 3,327
		Miscellaneous	€ 1,077
		Net result	<u>€ 3,751</u>
Total	<u>€ 110,385</u>		<u>€ 110,385</u>

The cost of personnel remains almost constant, but the expenses for teachers have tripled because of the increase in offered courses, especially the Ba'al T'fillah course. The amount of donations and subsidies has increased. There were two meetings with potential donors.

Maror has dropped the requirement of a minimum number of students at our request. The Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism has reinstated its financial contribution to the old, agreed upon level. Stichting Collectieve Maror-gelden, Kiwi Stichting and Stichting tot het verschaffen van woningen aan minvermogenden have generously subsidized the Ba'al T'fillah course. Rimon is financially healthy. The costs of administration, board, dean and committees remain moderate.

Our loss of € 14,790 in 2017 was reverted to a positive result of € 3,751. We thank our donors. We are especially grateful to the Liberal Congregation of Flevoland, which dissolved itself and donated a considerable part of its capital to the Levisson Institute. This contribution is of course not structural and we welcome new donors who will keep the Levisson Institute financially healthy. Your donation is fully tax deductible because of our official ANBI charity status.

Thijs ten Raa  
treasurer