



Annual Report  
&  
Financial Report  
for the year  
2019

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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 highlight of the reported year (2019) obviously was the semicha of Joram Rookmaaker. In our beautiful shul, filled to the brim, we received a new rabbi in our Liberal Jewish tribe. It was a memorable ceremony, worthy of the Levisson Institute, in close cooperation with the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, where Joram is part-time rabbi, in addition to his job as army chaplain. This way, we can keep building up (Liberal) Judaism in our country, and of course in Amsterdam.

Meanwhile, some of the students who completed the Ba'al tefillah course are being deployed in several congregations. A nice support for the rabbinate in general, and some kehillot in particular.

Annette Boeckler was our only rabbinical student, and actually also a teacher, because she taught the Ba'al tefillah course. I can also tell you we have a new rabbinical student, who will begin his training in 2020: Asjer Waterman. Asjer is definitely not a stranger to the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam (he is one of our regular ba'alei korei), he is also active in Habonim and has a Master's degree in Hebrew from the University of Amsterdam. This is the mission of the Levisson Institute: to train a new generation of rabbis from our own midst for our Dutch congregations.

This year we had to say goodbye to Prof. Dr. Reinier Munk, who has been a great support for our academic education for many years. He was a member of the Academic Committee and taught our rabbinic students Philosophy for a long period of time. I owe Reinier a great measure of gratitude for everything he did to keep our education at an academic level. We are happy to welcome Dr. Ortal-Paz Saar as a new member of the Academic Committee, she will succeed Reinier.

As you will also read in this annual report, a committee was established to coordinate and connect youth education in all Liberal Jewish Congregations in our country which are united in the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism. The Union Committee for Education has as its mission to further smooth communication and discuss ideas and developments which could be implemented. I chair this committee as Dean of the Levisson Institute and also on behalf of the Union for Progressive Judaism. One of the reasons is that the Levisson Institute formed the Board of Rimon, the national education center, for the last couple of years.

I also want to thank everyone who, most of them voluntarily, dedicates themselves to our Institute: the Board, the Academic Committee, the Vocational Committee, my colleagues of the Management Team, and especially our only paid, invaluable staff: Director Francine Püttmann.

Education is essential for the survival of Judaism. It is 'education permanente' or ever-lasting education. It begins at birth and only ends when we leave this temporary life for eternal life. A beautiful quote: 'Education without vision is like the present without a future'. Our aim is to offer education, both academic and pastoral, as well as professional, at the highest possible level. We want to train the best people today to inspire our kehillot, guide them, and be their teachers. This way we strive to keep the Levisson Institute one of the pillars of Judaism in our country.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM  
Dean of the Levisson Institute

## 1. The year 2019

### David Lilienthal Lecture

The annual David Lilienthal Lecture, also the opening of the new academic year, took place on November 13<sup>th</sup> for a large audience. President Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman used a Powerpoint presentation for an overview of the history and activities of the Institute. Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Dean of the Levisson Institute, spoke a few words and introduced the guest speaker.

The guest speaker was conductor Jules van Hessen. His subject was *Mahler, Gershwin and Bernstein. Three "Jewish" masters. Can you hear that?* He illustrated his talk with videos and sound fragments.

### Semicha Joram Rookmaaker



Our rabbinical student Joram Rookmaaker completed his studies in December 2018. He received his semicha (rabbinical ordination) in a packed shul at the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, from Rabbi Menno ten Brink, assisted by Rabbi David Lilienthal.

See for photos and videos of the semicha service: <https://www.levisson.nl/fotos-videos/semicha-2008/>

There was much press coverage of this semicha, including an interview with Joram. See (in Dutch) <https://www.levisson.nl/over-ons/levisson-in-de-pers/>

Rabbi Rookmaaker is currently working as second rabbi at the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam and as army chaplain.

### Rabbinical student

Annette Boeckler started as our new rabbinical student on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2019. She is German, but works and lives in Zürich, Switzerland. She visits Amsterdam regularly during weekends for classes and in between studies via internet.

In the past, she taught Tenach and Liturgy at the Leo Baeck College in London, where she also worked as a librarian. After her move to Zürich in 2017 she started rabbinical training in London. But it became too complicated for her to continue her studies at Leo Baeck College, and therefore she transferred to the Levisson Institute, which could offer her a customized program. She was already a familiar face at the Institute, as a teacher of Liturgy in the Cantor's training (2007-2009) and the Ba'al Tefillah course (2018).

She is not being trained to work as a rabbi in The Netherlands, but will be able to perform duties every now and then in the future.

## **Mini-symposium 'Jewish father'**

Joram Rookmaaker completed his rabbinical training with a thesis about the Dutch Liberal Jewish policies concerning people with a Jewish father. The Levisson Institute, in cooperation with the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, organized a mini-symposium about the Liberal Jewish policies regarding people with a Jewish father, which took place on Sunday June 16<sup>th</sup>. In his introduction Joram Rookmaaker spoke about these Liberal Jewish policies, the most important halakhic texts on the subject and the development of Liberal Jewish policies in this field. Several speakers spoke about their personal experiences, and a panel with rabbis Menno ten Brink and Marianne van Praag, and Roos van den Berg for Jewish Social Work, answered many questions from the audience.

## **Come-back day Ba'al Tefillah course**

On November 17<sup>th</sup> a come-back day for participants in the Ba'al Tefillah course was organized. The participants learned in the 2018 course to conduct Shabbat and Sjivvah services in the absence of a rabbi. Meanwhile some of them are leading services in their own congregations on a regular basis, and some have been asked to conduct Shabbat services in other congregations as well.

During the come-back day experiences were exchanged and texts were 'learned' with guidance from Annette Boeckler and Menno ten Brink. Participant Rebecca van Leeuwen conducted a presentation workshop.

See for an interview (in Dutch) with two participants: [www.levisson.nl/opleidingen/baal-tefilla/](http://www.levisson.nl/opleidingen/baal-tefilla/)

## **Refresher course for Shlichei Tzibbur**

There were two refresher training for the cantors in the reported year:

February 3<sup>rd</sup>: Breathing techniques and resonance

September 1<sup>st</sup>: the High Holidays

Both refresher trainings were taught by Gilad Nezer and Shura Lipovsky. Each of the participants was given the opportunity to sing a piece from the Siddur or Machzor and get feedback from the two teachers.

It is remarkable that more people have started to attend the refresher trainings of the last couple of years. And they are not the participants in the Shaliach Tzibbur trainings that were organized by the Levisson Institute from 2007-2009. Because of this, a new course will begin in the Fall of 2020. Also, the refresher trainings will be different from the ones that were given over the last few years.

## Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Education Center



In 2019 Rimon organized two refresher courses for teachers from all over the country. In April, the theme was the same as that of the Talmud Torah weekend: Jewish congregations in The Netherlands. Representatives of several congregations gave presentations about their own congregations or other ones in their region. The refresher course in December had as its subject the new textbook *Ivriet in Sjoel* (Ivrit in Shul), and was taught by its author Henny van het Hoofd. This new textbook contains texts from the siddur and also discusses grammar, vocabulary and background information. The book is a follow-up on the earlier ones, *Hoi I lees Ivriet* (Hi, I read Ivrit) and *Hoi ik schrijf Ivriet* (Hi, I write Ivrit).

The Levisson Institute and the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism have decided together to replace the meetings with the heads of education – which took place twice annually – with a Union Committee for Education (Verbands Onderwijs Commissie-VCO). All heads of Talmud Torah, Rimon, the rabbis who are tasked with youth education and a representative of the Union will be part of the committee. Rabbi Menno ten Brink, Dean of the Levisson Institute and rabbi at the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam, will chair the consultations. The purpose of the new Union Committee for Education (VCO) is to lend more weight to the importance of Talmud Tora in the Union. The committee will meet twice annually, as before.

Two meetings of the new committee were held, in April and in September. The goal of the committee is to have the heads of Talmud Torah and Rimon discuss the core objectives of Talmud Tora, as established in 2017 by Rimon, all heads of education, and boards of congregations, and find out how to raise the level of education, for example by producing new learning materials and learning from one another. Rimon coordinates and decides if the proposed projects are achievable.

During one of the meetings an inventory was made of the gaps in learning materials and what is needed. Early 2019 a start was made to fill these gaps on the Rimon website [www.rimononderwijs.nl](http://www.rimononderwijs.nl).

There also was a change in staff in 2019 in Rimon. Lea Abram gave up her position of coordinator in April. She was followed up in September by Shelly Bodenheimer, head of the education at the Liberal Jewish Congregation of The Hague. Together with Anne-Maria van Hilst she now performs the task of coordinator.

## Communication



Hard work has been done to transfer the content of the old website to the new one. Texts were rewritten also and the navigation has been made more rational, making it easier to find the different sections. All in all it looks modern now. The new website went online in April 2019 and replaces the over 15 years old earlier one. [www.levisson.nl/en/](http://www.levisson.nl/en/)



One newsletters (in Dutch) was published in 2019. It contains a variety of subjects concerning the Institute. The newsletter is distributed by email. Subscriptions via [contact@levisson.nl](mailto:contact@levisson.nl).

## 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 2019, 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 new website, the situation at Rimon and improving the publicity of the Levisson Institute.

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](mailto:contact@levisson.nl)).

## Board, Management and Committees

There were two changes in the membership of the Board in 2019. Thijs ten Raa gave up his position as treasurer, which he filled for eight years. The new treasurer is Leopold Hertzberger. The Board met every two months, six times in total, and was mostly focused on the future of the rabbinical training, Rimon and the financial situation.



The Academic Committee met three times in 2019, the first time shortly before the semicha of Joram Rookmaaker. Apart from the two regular meetings, there were consultations via email and phone. Ortal-Paz Saar replaced Reinier Munk in the Academic Committee.

The Vocational Training Committee met five times and was mainly occupied with the rabbinical training program, the portfolio-examination and looking for new members of the Committee.

#### Board

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair

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

Dr. Thijs ten Raa, treasurer (till 31 December 2019)

Leopold I. Hertzberger, MA, treasurer (from 7 October 2019)

David Allick, LLM, secretary

Liane van Dantzig, MA, member (on behalf of the Verbond/Dutch Union)

#### Schedule of resignation board

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman: October 2021

Juliette Walma van der Molen: August 2020

Leopold Hertzberger: October 2022

David Allick: August 2020

Liane van Dantzig: September 2021

#### Management Team

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Program

Francine Püttmann, MA, director General Affairs

#### Academic Committee

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiép, chair

Rabbi Tamarah Benima, member

Carolyn Levisson, MA, member

Ernst Numann, LLM, member

Dr. Ortal-Paz Saar, member (from 1 August 2019)

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

Judith Goudsmit, member (from 18 November 2019)

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

Anne-Maria van Hilst, coordinator  
Lea Abram, coordinator (till 1 May 2019)  
Shelly Bodenheimer, coordinator (from 15 September 2019)

#### Confidential adviser

Marion Alhadeff

#### Webmasters

Francine Püttmann  
Bram Legendijk (music library)

### **Confidential adviser**

The Levisson Institute has had a confidential adviser since autumn 2019. Marion Alhadeff will perform this function not only for the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, but also for the Levisson Institute.

A confidential adviser is a specially designated individual in whom anyone connected to the Levisson Institute can confide. The appointment of such an adviser is a measure designed to promote the organisation's integrity. The job of confidential adviser is unpaid.

A confidential adviser's main job is to provide a listening ear. Approach her with any issues that have to do with integrity in the broadest sense. It needn't be to report a breach of integrity. You can also go to the confidential adviser for advice or simply to discuss something. It may emerge from the discussion that there isn't a role to play for the confidential adviser in which case she will refer you to someone else.

Anyone employed by or connected to the Levisson Institute can talk to the confidential adviser.

Till the publication of this Annual Report there have been no reports to the confidential adviser.

See for more information about the role of the confidential adviser: [www.levisson.nl/en/about-us/confidential-advisor/](http://www.levisson.nl/en/about-us/confidential-advisor/)

### **Donors**

The Levisson Institute thanks its loyal donors and also its new ones who donated to the Institute in 2019. The number of donors who committed for a number of years has increased. We owe them much gratitude.

We owe thanks to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, the Stichting Collectieve Marorgelden, Carel Abas Stichting, Stichting Levi Lassen and the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam.

We still need your help. We hope to find more donors, foundations and funds who are willing to support us financially to keep this training center of Liberal Judaism in The Netherlands alive and active.

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

- The Levisson Institute received a grant in 2019 from the Amsterdam Leasehold Fund, which compensates the Jewish community for unlawfully charging persecuted Jews for leasehold payments over the period 1940-1945. This money will be spent on three projects which will be implemented over the next five years: rabbinical training, a Ba'al Tefillah course and a course for cantors.
- The Levisson Institute received an inheritance in 2020. De board is discussing how this money can be spent to ensure the goals of the Foundation in the long term.

### **Plans for 2020**

- The rabbinical training will keep priority.
- In 2020 the first Dutch Gabbai Guide will be published. It is the first publication of the Levisson Institute and will be published by the Sja'ar Foundation, the publishing house of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism.
- A meeting of the Union Committee for Education was planned for March, but had to be postponed because of the COVID-19 crisis. The subject to be discussed was how Talmud Torah in The Netherlands and the task of Rimon will be structured in the future.
- In the Fall of 2020 the Shaliach Tzibbur course will begin. The course is restarted after a gap of ten years. This course is one of the projects that will be partly financed by the money from the Amsterdam Leasehold Fund.
- In the Fall there will be another David Lilienthal lecture, coinciding with the opening of the academic year.
- We expect to be able to begin a training for pastoral work.
- A refresher course for the Ba'alei Tefillah is planned for later this year.

## 2. Finances

### Financial Report for 2019

The annual account 2019 was drawn up by the Board on March 31, 2020 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 2019

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Receivables	€ 9,359	Foundation capital	€ 49,667
Liquid assets	€ 236,509	Earmarked reserves	€ 78,126
		Subsidies and contributions	
		paid in advance	€ 112,516
		Taxes	€ 493
		Debts/deferrals	€ 5,066
Total	€ 245,868		€ 245,868

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	€ 13,335

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). In 2019, € 3,105 was added to the earmarked reserve Rimon.

The City of Amsterdam paid Leasehold money to our Foundation in 2019. € 71.000 was paid in advance for the rabbinical training and € 38.962 for the Ba'alei Tefillah course.

## Profit and loss account 2019

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors and other gifts	€ 25,535	Salaries staff	€ 23,279
Subsidies	€ 6,230	Instructors and courses	€ 14,053
Semicha	€ 11,315	Semicha	€ 13,136
Tuition fees	€ 3,980	Board/MT/committees	€ 2,143
Rimon	€ 13,600	Rimon	€ 10,495
Negative result	€ 9,863	Library and teaching materials	€ 103
		External communication	€ 2,762
		Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 3,327
		Miscellaneous	€ 1,225
Total	<u>€ 70,523</u>		<u>€ 70,523</u>

We are grateful to all our donors and supporters. It is impossible to mention all of them, but we are happy to mention the Carel Abas Stichting, Stichting Marorgelden, Verbond (NVPJ), the City of Amsterdam, Stichting Levi Lassen and the Liberal Jewish Congregation of Amsterdam which have supported our Foundation generously. We welcome new donors who want to keep the Levisson Institute financially healthy. Your donation is fully tax deductible because of our official ANBI charity status.

Leopold I. Hertzberger  
treasurer