



Annual Report
&
Financial Report
for the year
2020

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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

Contents

Introduction	4
The year 2020	5
Rabbinical Training	5
Courses	5
Shaliach Tzibbur course	
Spiritual counsellor	
Rimon-Dutch Progressive Jewish Educational Center	6
Other activities	6
David Lilienthal Lecture	
Gabbay Guide	
Library	
Communication	7
Website	
Newsletter	
Sidra of the Week	
Organisation	8
Board	
Management Team	
Academic Committee	
Vocational Committee	
Confidential adviser	
Finances	9
Donors	
Inheritance	
Policy for the future	9
Plans for 2021	
Policy plan for the coming years	
Composition Board, Management and Committees	10
Financial report for 2020	12
Balance at 31 December 2020	
Profit and loss account 2020	

Introduction

Last year was, of course, an extraordinary year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. We had to transform, rather suddenly, our classes and other activities from 'live' to live stream. We already had some experience with this because we offered Zoom classes for our student Annette Boeckler, who lives in Switzerland and Germany, and in this way were able to overcome the geographic distance. It also turned out to be important our new rabbinical student Asjer Waterman to continue his classes by means of this modern technology. A technology, and way of communicating, that will remain part of our lives even after the Covid-19 crisis will have passed. It connects us, wherever we live. I myself had meetings with several Colleges around the world to get to know one another and find out if we can more often exchange experiences and curriculum content, and operate together. That will make us stronger, and the knowledge a College or Seminar has, can be shared with one another easily this way. Within the World Union for Progressive Judaism we are considering if we can work together more often, for the benefit of our students and the future rabbinate around the world.

In this annual report you will read what else the Levisson Institute has done last year. Beside our rabbinical training, which is and will remain our core business, we started the Shaliach Tzibbur course as announced, led by cantors Josée Wolff and Avery Tracht, with so far 14 students. Last year everything took place online, but we hope to be able to have classes on location by mid-2021. Shlichei tzibbur from all over the country are trained to lead services. Last year, we also offered a new, specific learning module, spiritual/pastoral care, for Leonie Cramwinckel, who was appointed spiritual counselor for the Department of Justice by the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism.

The *Gabbai Guide* is ready for everyone who supervises the services in our kehillot. It is a practical manual with lots of 'misheberachs' and other instructions and background information. I owe Francine Püttmann a debt of gratitude for the beautiful result of this project.

We had an inspiring presentation by dr. Yoram Stein about the philosopher Spinoza and what he means for us in these uncertain times.

I am grateful for the huge effort of so many volunteers who lead our small but beautiful institute and enrich it with their knowledge in committees. I am also very grateful for the weekly Parasha translations for our website, the organisation of our library, and - especially this year - keeping our music library up to date. This shows that we are a small but bustling and modern institute, where we keep organising and modernising professional Jewish education for our Jewish leadership now and in the future.

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM
Dean of the Levisson Institute

The year 2020

It was an unusual year. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, all work, meetings and classes took place at home via Zoom. Physical meetings were impossible after mid-March. As we write this annual report, there still is no telling when the pandemic will end and the Levisson Institute will go back to its 'normal' functioning.

Rabbinical Training

Since the beginning of 2020 we have a new rabbinical student studying at our Institute: Asjer Waterman. Annette Boeckler has been our student for a while longer.

They take some classes together, others separately, because their studies are not synchronous. All classes are taught digitally because of Covid-19.

Courses

Shaliach Tzibbur course

The Institute started a Shaliach Tzibbur course in the period 2007-2009. A small group of participants is still active as cantor in their congregations. Because there was a need for more trained Shlichei Tzibbur, the Institute started a new course at the end of 2020. It consists of eight study weekends between 2020 and 2022.

The main teachers are Josée Wolff and Avery Tracht, both former chazzanim of Liberal Jewish Congregations in The Netherlands and both living in New York City.

In Spring 2020 the Institute promoted the course by means of a flyer and in the newsletters of the individual Progressive Jewish Congregations. This led to a response of 24 interested people. In June 2020 digital intake interviews were held, including a voice audition by the candidates. The course started eventually with 15 students, including one rabbinical student.

The first study weekend was planned for October, but Covid-19 made it impossible to meet physically. In order to be able to start the course, it was decided to begin with a digital meet and greet on Saturday night October 24th. That meeting also included a first class. Pending further developments in the pandemic, we will decide for each weekend whether it will be held digitally, a mix of digital and in person or completely in person. The first full weekend took place in January, 2021 and was completely digital.

Spiritual counsellor

On behalf of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism, Leonie Cramwinckel (Liberal Congregation of The Hague) became spiritual counsellor for the Department of Justice's penitentiary institutions, on May 1, 2020. She will receive additional training by the Levisson Institute as needed.

Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Education Center



In the year 2020 the organisation of Rimon went through an unexpected change. Because the cooperation with all local departments of Talmud Torah became impossible and both coordinators, Anne-Maria van Hilst and Shelly Bodenheimer, couldn't perform their work properly anymore because of this, they resigned from the Levisson Institute. Justifying their

position left insufficient space for working on the content of their jobs.

This made the continuation of Rimon so difficult that the Board of the Levisson Institute decided to return their commission of coordinating Talmud Torah education in The Netherlands to the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism.

From that moment on, the Boards of the Levisson Institute and the Union have been in intensive consultation to decide what the role of Rimon could still be in 2020.

During the summer of 2020 the Union held a poll about Rimon among the Boards of the congregations. The results showed that a central coordination, a website with educational materials, exchange of educational material and a central spot for educating new teachers are considered important.

In November, the Union convened - for the first time since August 2019 - a meeting of the Union Education Committee. This meeting resulted in giving the heads of Talmud Torah the assignment of developing a detailed plan for mutual cooperation, finding out what the needs are, and also how children in congregations without a Talmud Torah can be involved in education.

The Union Education Committee met again in December 2020 and discussed the plan the heads of Talmud Torah drafted. The heads were commissioned with further developing their plan.

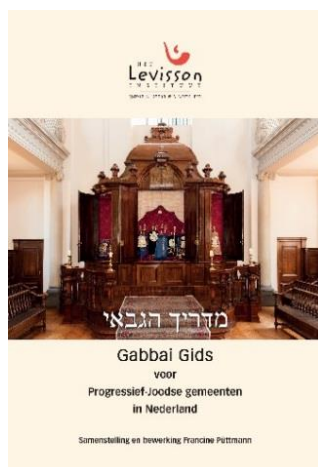
Other activities

David Lilienthal Lecture

The annual David Lilienthal Lecture and opening of the new academic year was held on Sunday 1 November. Because of the digital nature of the meeting, more people (147) than usual had signed up. Eventually 87 participants attended. At the beginning of the evening a short introductory video about the Institute was shown. This video can now be watched (in Dutch) on the home page of the Levisson website.

Guestspeaker was philosopher dr. Yoram Stein. He spoke about *Dealing with Uncertainty and what we can learn about it from Spinoza*. Using a PowerPoint presentation, he explained his story (in Dutch): <https://www.levisson.nl/fotos-videos/david-lilienthallezing/>

Gabbay Guide



The *Gabbay Guide (Madrich Hagabbay)* is the first publication by the Levisson Institute. It came out in March 2020. It is the first gabbay guide published in The Netherlands and is intended for Progressive Jewish congregations. It is a manual for the gabbay, but also for everyone who is interested in the subject. It describes the proceedings during shul services, especially the Torah service and the duties of the gabbay. The first part describes background, regulations and customs, the second part contains the Hebrew texts that are used for calling people to the Torah, special b'rachot, and misheberachs. Many of these texts can also be found in the siddur and machzor, but this Dutch gabbay guide expands many texts with variations and also adds new ones, and has adaptations to modern society.

The Gabbay Guide was compiled by the director of the Levisson Institute, with advice from Rabbi Menno ten Brink and other Dutch rabbis and gabba'im. The guide (in Dutch) is available for purchase at Foundation Sja'ar, publisher of the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism: www.sjaar.nl.

Library

In the year 2020, 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 and www.ljgbibliotheek.nl

Communication

Website



The website is an important means of communication to the outside world. It is frequently viewed, especially the music library. www.levisson.nl/en/

Newsletter



One newsletter was published in 2020 as an announcement of the David Lilienthal Lecture on 1 November. The newsletter (in Dutch) is circulated by mail.

Sidra of the Week

A commentary on the Sidra of the week (Parashat hashavuah) is weekly sent out by email to subscribers. The coordination was in the hands of Rabbi Tamarah Benima for many years. In the reported year this task was transferred to Channa Kistemaker, who already assisted Tamarah for a while. She chooses commentaries and has them translated from English to Dutch by a pool of translators. Michel Waterman is the new editor of the Sidra commentaries. It is possible to subscribe to the weekly commentaries via the website of the Levisson Institute.

All comments (in Dutch) are also published on the website: www.levisson.nl > Toralezingen > Sidra van de week

Organisation

Board

The Board met eight times during the reported year. The second term of two board members ended in the Fall of 2020. At the end of 2020 ads to fill the vacancies were published on the Levisson website, in all newsletters of Liberal Jewish Congregations, in the magazine Joods Nu (Jewish Now), and in the national Jewish weekly NIW.

One candidate will be presented to the members of the board in 2021. A new ad has been published for a second board member.

The two outgoing board members will remain available as consultants until they have been replaced by new board members. Board members are allowed two terms of each three years.

Management Team

Next to the daily work of running the Levisson Institute, the Management Team was busy with the rabbinical training, the new Shaliach Tzibbur course, the revision of the study guide, the new spiritual counsellor at prisons and the situation at Rimon.

The Management Team meets once a month. It is represented at the meetings of the Board, Academic Committee and Vocational Committee. It also maintains contact with the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism and the boards of the affiliated congregations.

The General Director is in the office 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).

Academic Committee

The Academic Committee met once in 2020. The chair of the Academic Committee was regularly consulted on various issues. The Academic Committee dealt with the rabbinical training, the examination regulations, and the revision of the study guide.

Vocational Committee

The Vocational Committee met five times and was mostly focused on rabbinical training and the revision of the pastoral part of the training.

In November 2020 Carolyn Levisson stepped down as chair of the Committee. She was involved in the development of this part of the rabbinical training from the very start of the Levisson Institute. She will remain a member of the Academic Committee.

Both remaining members of the Vocational Committee will rotate the presidency of the committee. The vacancy in the Admission Committee will be filled by rotation as well. We are searching for a new member for the committee.

Confidential adviser

The confidential adviser of the Levisson Institute, Marion Alhadeff, had no reports during the year under review.

She is independent and not accountable. The appointment of such an adviser is a measure designed to promote the organisation's integrity.

A confidential adviser is a specially designated individual in whom anyone connected to the Levisson Institute can confide. See for more information about the role of the confidential adviser: www.levisson.nl/en/about-us/confidential-advisor/

Finances

Donors

The Levisson Institute thanks its loyal donors and also its new ones who donated to the Institute in 2020. 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 en Kiwi Stichting.

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.

Inheritance

In 2020, the Institute received an inheritance. It was placed in the Marjolein Levy Fund with the goal of financially supporting rabbinical students and participants in courses.

Policy for the future

Plans for 2021

Our plans for the year 2021 are a continuation of the current policies:

- The rabbinical training will remain our priority. The curriculum is being revised.
- In 2021 the Shaliach Tzibbur course will be continued.
- In the Fall there will be a David Lilienthal lecture, coinciding with the opening of the academic year.
- A refresher evening for Ba'alei T'fillah will be organized in January.

- The Union for Progressive Judaism and the Levisson Institute will review together whether Rimon can still have a function in supporting the Talmud Torah education in The Netherlands.

Policy plan for the coming years

The Levisson Institute received a grant in 2019 from the Amsterdam Leasehold Fund. This money will be spent on three projects which will be implemented over the next five years: rabbinical training, a course for cantors (Shlichey Tzibbur) and a Ba'al Tefillah course.

Composition Board, Management and Committees

Board

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, chair

Prof. dr. Juliette Walma van der Molen, vice-chair (from 1 September adviser)

Leopold I. Hertzberger, MA, treasurer

David Allick, LLM, secretary (from 1 September adviser)

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

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 Zwiep, chair

Rabbi Tamarah Benima, member

Carolyn Levisson, MA, member

Ernst Numann, LLM, member

Dr. Ortal-Paz Saar, 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 (till 2 November 2020)

Rabbi Marianne van Praag, head Vocational Program

Jorien Tamse, member

Judith Goudsmit, member

Ella Wijnschenk-Oesterman, hearer

Francine Püttmann, MA, hearer

Subcommittee Admissions

Prof. dr. Irene Zwiep, chair Academic Committee

Rabbi Menno ten Brink, LLM, dean

Carolyn Levisson, MA, chair Vocational Committee (till 2 November 2020)

Rimon – Dutch Progressive Jewish Educational Center

Anne-Maria van Hilst, coordinator (till 1 February 2020)

Shelly Bodenheimer, coordinator (till 1 February 2020)

Confidential adviser

Marion Alhadeff

Webmaster

Francine Püttmann

Librarian

Francine Püttmann

Financial Report for 2020

On 10 July 2019 Marjolein Levy-Bijlsma z"l passed away. She was a member of the Liberal Congregation of Rotterdam and left all her assets by will to the Foundation Robert A. Levisson. After deduction of the costs of her burial and matsevah, an amount of around 217,000 euro remains. The inheritance became available to the Levisson Institute during the year 2020. We are sad about the unexpected death of Marjolein. She was a lively woman who meant much to everyone around her. We are grateful that she has secured the financial future of the Levisson Institute for many years with her inheritance. May her memory be a blessing for all of us.

The annual account 2020 was drawn up by the Board on 12 April 2021 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 2020

<i>Assets</i>		<i>Liabilities</i>	
Investments	€ 10,130	Foundation capital	€ 274,029
Receivables	€ 650	Earmarked reserves	€ 75,687
Liquid assets	€ 509,672	Subsidies and contributions	
		paid in advance	€ 164,933
		Taxes	€ 470
		Debts/deferrals	€ 5,333
Total	€ 520,452		€ 520,452

The *earmarked reserves* comprise five funds:

Student Fund	€ 24,902
Israel Seminar Fund	€ 15,000
Academic Research Fund	€ 8,841
Training Fund	€ 14,969
Rimon	€ 11,975

The Student Fund, a farewell present for Dean Rabbi Lilienthal, is intended for allowances for students who need them on ground of personal circumstances to be used for expenses directly linked to their studies. In 2020, a payment of € 1,079 was made to one student.

The Israel Seminar Fund was founded in 2005 with the goal of regularly organizing seminars for students in Israel. No use was made of this in 2020.

In 2005 € 10,000 was reserved for academic research. The last payment was made in 2016.

The Training Fund consists of unused portions of various grants for training that the Kiwi-Tielens Foundation has given Levisson over the years. The board has allotted the reserves for all courses and training programs. No use was made of this in 2020.

Since 2013, Rimon, the Dutch Progressive Jewish Educational Center has been under the care of the Levisson Foundation. The annual contributions from all congregations affiliated with the Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism have been added to the Rimon earmarked reserve. In 2020, no contribution was requested from the congregations, given the situation surrounding Rimon (see above). However, there were still expenses in 2020.

The City of Amsterdam paid Leasehold money to our Foundation in 2020. € 70,867 was received for the purpose of the Shaliach Tzibbur course.

Profit and loss account 2020

<i>Receipts</i>		<i>Expenditures</i>	
Donors	€ 19,145	Salaries staff	€ 28,158
Subsidies	€ 28,006	Instructors	€ 18,995
Tuition fees	€ 1,500	Board/MT/Committees	€ 1,015
Shaliach Tzibbur course	€ 12,529	Rimon	€ 1,360
Rimon	€ 0	Library	€ 0
Investments results	€ 103	External communication	€ 1,665
Interest	€ 0	Accountant/bookkeeping	€ 3,632
		Miscellaneous	€ 770
		Net result	€ 5,688
Total	<u>€ 61,283</u>		<u>€ 61,283</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 Verbond (Dutch Union for Progressive Judaism) and the City 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