A vision come true
Rabbi Abraham Geiger was born in Frankfurt am Main on May 24th, 1810. His contribution to the humanities as well as to the renewal of Jewish religious life is immeasurable. Geiger’s main interest was to ‘form a new and fresh Jewishness from Judaism itself’. Geiger sought to place Judaism on an equal level with other denominations. Therefore, as early as 1836, Abraham Geiger demanded the integration of Jewish theology into the German university system as a proof of Jewish emancipation.

In 1872 Abraham Geiger’s dream was finally fulfilled: the College for the Science of Judaism, Lehranstalt für die Wissenschaft des Judentums, opened its doors. Abraham Geiger died in 1874 in his apartment at Rosenthaler Strasse 40 in Berlin.

In his memory the Abraham Geiger College at the University of Potsdam was founded in 1999 as Germany’s first rabbinical seminary after the Shoa.

Geiger’s motto:

“Recognition of the general through research into the individual, understanding of the present through knowledge of the past: through reason to faith.”
After the Wall came down in 1989 some 200,000 Jews immigrated to Germany. It was the beginning of a new reform movement in German Judaism. Rabbi Alexander Schindler, from Munich, was approached in 1997 to suggest ways of training progressive rabbis indigenous to the communities and the new congregations throughout Europe.

Alexander Schindler’s response:

“You have to do it yourself.”

What seemed impossible at the time became a reality.
As a former president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis I am glad together with Dr. Walter Homolka to have responded to the challenge of training rabbis in Europe.

Rooted in the academic tradition of Germany Abraham Geiger College is dedicated to the definition of what makes a fine rabbi today.

...rooted in Germany
You fought for us...

New Reform congregations and the Reform movement as a whole were not accepted by the German establishment as an authoritative arm of Judaism in the beginning.

After considerable struggle equality was finally reached. In 2006, the Jewish Reform congregations became a member of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel with the World Union Leadership and the secretary general of the Central Council of Jews in Germany
With enthusiasm...

Our Conference and the Reform Movement in America have deep roots in Germany from which most of our founders came.

We rejoice that, out of those old roots, there is a new flowering of Liberal Judaism.

We take great pride in the work of our colleagues who have created and sustained the Abraham Geiger College, and we wish them beracha vihazlacha in their continued efforts.

We welcome our new colleagues into the sacred calling into which they enter, and we pledge our support and friendship as they pursue their rabbinites.

"North America's Reform Jewish community welcomes with enthusiasm and gratitude the establishment of this seminary and looks forward to working in partnership with its various constituencies to build and strengthen Progressive Judaism around the world.

The task of providing rabbis and spiritual leaders, not only for Germany, but also for much of Europe is the first and most important step in the ongoing renewal of the country's Progressive Jewish community, which will have a profound impact not only on the larger community, but given Germany's influence, also on the vitality of Reform Judaism throughout the continent.

Under the countenance of God, may Abraham Geiger College, its faculty, staff, students and alumni continue to flourish and grow from strength to strength for many years to come.

Yasher koach.

Eric H. Yoffie
President

Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus
President

Rabbi Steven A. Fox
Executive Vice President

"...and gratitude"
“End the discrimination...

Reform communities in Germany

The Reform Movement, which began in Germany, has been reborn ... Reform groups there have met discrimination and been attacked by the organized Jewish community virtually everywhere....

They have been refused funds for synagogues, rabbis and cantors. The Central Conference of American Rabbis calls upon the German government and the officials of the “Einheitsgemeinde” to provide the opportunities for pluralism which they have publicly promised but in practice denied....

The public support provided for the Orthodox communities must be extended to all other branches of Judaism.

This must include appropriate space for worship and education as well as funds to engage rabbis, cantors and educators.

We call upon those in charge of Jewish religious life to end the discrimination which now exists.

Adopted by the 109th Annual Convention of the Central Conference of American Rabbis - June, 1998

...provide pluralism"
In 1999, Abraham Geiger College was founded; it became a part of Potsdam University in 2001. A member of the World Union for Progressive Judaism since 2002.

The first class started in 2001, the first ordination in Germany since the Holocaust was held in Dresden in 2006.

The cantorial school was added in 2007.
Nothing short of miraculous...

The role that Abraham Geiger College has played during this last decade in reviving Jewish life on German soil has been nothing short of miraculous, and I am delighted that so many of our HUC-JIR faculty members have been able to teach and study at your institution during these past ten years.

Geiger was convinced that the modern rabbinate was always to be informed by a commitment to modern scholarship. The Abraham Geiger College today stands proudly and ably within the tradition that he established. May your graduates be adornments of modern scholarship and may they continue to play a central role in the revival of Jewish life in Germany and Central Europe.

Rabbi Michael Marmur, Prof. Admiel Kosman and Potsdam University President Sabine Kunst at HUC-JIR Jerusalem
University of Potsdam is situated in the former residence of the Prussian kings and German emperors.

The Northern Gatehouse was given to the Abraham Geiger College.

It is currently under renovation for 3.3 million Euros and will be made available to the College, rent free, in 2012.
In Germany, clerical training is done at a state university at the government’s expense. Geiger argued in 1836 the Jewish Emancipation would be complete only when rabbis could – and would – be trained at a German university. Finally, his dream has come true.
Abraham Geiger College is part of a university of the state of Brandenburg. It is funded publicly by the Federal Republic of Germany, the State of Brandenburg, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

As such it is a national institution entrusted with the training of non-orthodox rabbis.
We have 450 students enrolled for the B.A. or M.A. in Jewish Studies.

The University of Potsdam has one of the biggest Jewish Studies Centers in Europe.
Faculty

Rabbinical School

- We have eight professors or senior lecturers in the fields of Hebrew Bible, Jewish History, Talmud, Halakha & Liturgy, Philosophy, Jewish Literature, Religious Education, Comparative Religion and Practical Theology

- 25 of our faculty members hold a PhD

- We have 13 women and 21 men on the faculty
The Cantorial School offers a

- 4-year programme with BA in Jewish and Music Studies
- Hazzanut, vocational studies and internships in congregations
The primary purpose of Abraham Geiger College is to train rabbis for Continental Europe. We are particularly devoted to Eastern Europe.

CCAR President Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus at the 2009 ordination
On these pillars we stand

We define rabbinical training according to international standards:

- five year full-time education
- on-campus
- at an accredited research and teaching university
- concurrent M.A. degree in Jewish studies

We offer

- a spiritual guidance for students
- mentoring and counseling as well as psychological coaching
- an emphasis on vocational skills alongside academic achievement
- post ordination mentoring and counseling in the first two years after ordination

We train in the German language – We expect a high command of Hebrew
Free education...

Abraham Geiger College charges no tuition fees as university education is free in Germany. Each student is eligible for a bursary of 750 Euro per month.

Here we are proud partners of the YES fund of Women of Reform Judaism. Scholarships up to 1,050 Euro per month are available for highly qualified applicants.

Scholarships do not need to be repaid. All European Union citizens are eligible as are a number of international students.

...for rabbis and cantors
The first year of rabbinical studies is undertaken at HUC-JIR Jerusalem, together with U.S. and British students from the HUC-JIR campuses in Cincinnati, New York and Los Angeles and Leo Baeck College in London.

In spring 2007 and autumn 2007 we signed contracts of cooperation with Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion to emphasize our common vision for the training of rabbis and cantors.

Rabbis Michael Marmur & Neemah Kelman and Prof. Eli Schleifer sign contracts with Geiger

The first year of rabbinical studies is undertaken at HUC-JIR Jerusalem, together with U.S. and British students from the HUC-JIR campuses in Cincinnati, New York and Los Angeles and Leo Baeck College in London.
Year in Israel

Our Curriculum includes an additional stay in Jerusalem (three months) during which students engage in learning in a traditional yeshiva style environment, train intensively in the study of Hebrew and develop high level skills in text study.

Rabbi David Wilfond coordinates rabbinical studies in Israel and co-chairs the program with Dr. Aviezer Cohen who coordinates academic studies.

2007 Agreement between HUC-JIR Jerusalem and Abraham Geiger College about first year-in-Israel

2008: Abraham Geiger College Student Paul Moses Strasko was presented the Michael L. Klein Memorial Price for Academic Excellence
Since 2007 we have Rabbis-in-Residence, who guide students during the term. Rabbi Dr. Michael Leipziger supervises the summer term; during the winter term, students turn to Rabbi Dr. Tovia Ben-Chorin.

Since 2007, weekly Shaharit services have been part of the curriculum; monthly Kabbalat Shabbat services are held on the initiative of the students.
“Germany – Land of Ideas” is an award given by the German President for achievements in a nation of science and culture, innovations “made in Germany”.

In 2007 it was given to the Rabbinical School, in 2009 to the Cantorial School.

We honour...

Abraham Geiger Award

- 2000 Prof. Dr. Susannah Heschel
- 2002 Prof. Dr. Emil Fackenheim*
- 2004 Prof. Dr. Alfred Grosser
- 2006 Karl Cardinal Lehmann
- 2008 Prince Hassan bin Talal of Jordan
- 2009 Prof. Dr. Hans Küng

...and we are honoured
Indeed, the notion of creating a new indigenous leadership of rabbis and cantors for the twenty-first century strikes me as a dream beyond reach, beyond the stark reality of our times.

Yet miraculously the College has risen from the ruins of Jewish life in Europe to assume a new and creative role for Jews in Germany and beyond. In invoking the name of Geiger, the College is committed to training a generation of leaders who are effective leaders and creative thinkers. Geiger’s commitment to Jewish life meant a thorough grounding in Judaism, as well as Islam and Christianity, a Jewish literacy of the highest order, and an enormous pride and conviction that Judaism had much to give to Jews and to the world at large.

And this is the message the College which bears his name has imbued as well. With its creative merger with the University of Potsdam and its dynamic faculty, it makes serious intellectual demands of its students.

In turning to a new generation of young Jews from Eastern Europe and Russia, it is also committed to shaping a community of students who connect east and west in a new European Jewish reality. And it is also committed to training scholars who are both caring and humane individuals and who can lead a lost generation of Jews back to the beauty of their heritage and faith. This indeed was my experience when I encountered the wonderful rabbi and Reform congregation of Munich, the first of many recently ordained graduates of Geiger College who will leave their imprint on European Judaism for generations to come.

David B. Ruderman, MAHL, PhD, DHL
Joseph Meyerhoff Professor of Modern Jewish History
Ella Darivoff Director, Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies University of Pennsylvania
We regularly invite HUC-JIR faculty to teach for up to a month at Abraham Geiger College:

- 2005: Rabbi Prof. Dalia Marx, HUC-JIR Jerusalem
- 2006 and 2007: Rabbi Prof. Sam Joseph, HUC-JIR Cincinnati
- 2007–2009: Rabbi Prof. Dalia Marx, HUC-JIR Jerusalem
- 2008: Rabbi Prof. Reuven Firestone, HUC-JIR Los Angeles
- 2009: Rabbi Prof. Leonard Kravitz, HUC-JIR New York
- 2009: Cantor Prof. Eli Schleifer, HUC-JIR Jerusalem
I was particularly impressed with both their high level of intellectual sophistication and their first-hand experience of working across religious boundaries in Germany and Europe. They represented a mix of European nationalities. They are a cadre of pioneers that is engaged in re-establishing the Jewish community life in Europe in general and Reform Judaism in particular. As rabbinic colleagues they deserve our assistance and the Abraham Geiger College deserves our support and encouragement as an equal partner within the family of accredited seminaries of the global Reform Movement.

Rabbi Reuven Firestone, PhD
Professor Medieval Judaism and Islam
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
Los Angeles
I was greatly impressed

Spending four weeks in Berlin, during May and June 2009, gave me the opportunity of meeting students and teachers of the Abraham Geiger Kolleg.

I must say that I was greatly impressed by them. The diligence of the students, the devotion of the teachers indicated to me that your institution is truly worthy of the name it bears.

I had the delight of conducting a seminar on Maimonides’ Guide. I found the students in the seminar to be bright, interested, and hardworking. Some students had an excellent background in philosophy in general and medieval philosophy in particular. Any of the students in the seminar could have fit into my elective course on the Guide.

There is something that your school has, that I wish our school had; by being associated with the University of Potsdam, you are able to offer free tuition. We can’t.

There is something that we both share: members of the Faculty of the College-Institute who as HUC fellows can have the delight I had of teaching at your Kolleg. There is another thing we share: your students and ours spend a joint year in Israel at HUC Jerusalem.

I am also impressed by your vocational studies. I say that, even were the Director, Rabbi Drs Edward van Voolen, not to be a former student and an old friend.

Finally, that the Abraham Geiger Kolleg exists now in the land where Abraham Geiger lived and helped create Reform Judaism has a message for world Jewry: we are a people spread throughout the world, within the Land of Israel and outside the Land.

Rabbi Leonard S. Kravitz, PhD
Professor of Midrash & Homiletics
Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion
New York
I’ve been in touch with Abraham Geiger College since April 2005, when I taught there a crash course on Year Cycle Liturgy. Since then, I came to teach at AGK a few times. I got an excellent opportunity to get to know the institution better during last two academic years (2007–2009), when I was invited by the German ministry of education (DAAD) to serve as a guest professor at Potsdam University. During the course of these two years I taught also at AGK, and was very pleased with the rapid and solid evolution of the institute.

Apart from their vocational studies at the college, the students of AGK are required to get a Masters Degree in Judaic studies from Potsdam University. Therefore the program is academically compatible both with the American and the Israeli rabbinic programs of HUC-JIR. The Judaic studies department at this university is an ever increasing and a vibrant one. The fact that more students in Potsdam University study Hebrew than French (!) may testify to the role this department plays in this university. The director of the academic program, Professor Admiel Kosman, is a scholar, thinker and a poet of very high estimation in Israel.

As a professor at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem I witness how important the encounter of our HUC students, especially those in the “Year in Israel” program with the students of AGK. The peer-encounter helps our students to expand their horizons regarding Progressive Judaism and to increase their understanding of their Jewish world outside Israel and the US.

As a liturgy scholar and a Jew of German descent, I believe that this is crucially important to reestablish vibrant Reform Judaism in its birth place. For me personally, it is a matter of Tikkun Olam. Reform Judaism should, in my opinion, support the new and promising institute and contribute to its thrive and growth.

Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD
Assistant professor for Liturgy and Midrash,
HUC-JIR Jerusalem
Post-Ordination Programme:

I have had the opportunity to teach on an extended and intensive basis at Abraham Geiger College. I was the HUC Fellow at the Abraham Geiger College in 2006 and in 2007. I also worked with AGK students as part of two extended lay leader training seminars for leaders of German Progressive Congregations, in 2008 and 2009. Based on my experiences, I want to reflect on several facets of the AGK curriculum.

Having helped shape the clinical aspects of rabbinical training at HUC-JIR for the past three decades, I believe I am quite able to give an assessment of the clinical facets of the AGK curriculum. I especially want to touch on the work of Rabbi Drs Edward van Voolen and Dr. Dorothee von Tippelskirch-Eissing.

For two years, post ordination, meeting 3-4 times per year, two days each meeting, graduates come together to study Judaica/Hebraica, meet with Rabbi Drs van Voolen for one-on-one supervision, study an area of practical Rabbinics with the rabbi-in-residence, and have opportunities to process challenges in their rabbinate with the AGK psychologist, Dr. von Tippelskirch-Eissing.

Overall, the program gives the participants opportunities to receive vocational coaching in life cycle events, religious education, lay-rabbinic relationship, board relations. Psycho-social coaching and some psychological counseling are also part of the experience.

During their studies at AGK, leading to ordination, students are also trained and supported by Rabbi Drs van Voolen and Dr. von Tippelskirch-Eissing. The subject matter is comparable to the post ordination program. The clinical component of the AGK curriculum, pre and post ordination is well conceived and executed.

Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph, PhD
Professor of Jewish Education and Leadership Development
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion
Cincinnati, Ohio
As Patron Artist I teach cantorial arts at the Abraham Geiger College in Berlin. What a wonderful group of students.

I was really impressed with their musicality, their voices and, most importantly - their spirit. This gives me a lot of hope for the future of Judaism in Europe. I am, indeed, committed to the cause in Germany.

Danny Maseng
Leo Baeck College London & Abraham Geiger College are a sound basis for rabbinical education in Europe and beyond. As a fellow of the one I am proud to be a Senator of the other: because at Geiger fine rabbis are trained – academically and vocationally.

Eastern Europe, Latin America, South Africa are just some regions where the issue of training rabbis is critical. Thanks to Abraham Geiger College, we can retain our highest standards and educate candidates cost-free.

Rabbi Dr. Andrew Goldstein, Chairman of the European Union for Progressive Judaism
ZENTRALRAT DER JÜDEN IN DEUTSCHLAND
Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts

Land Brandenburg