A FOCUS ON LEADERSHIP:

New Fellowship Programs Prepare Transformational Leaders

Leadership and Peoplehood: American and European Rabbinical Students at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem

Learning to Lead: Social Responsibility

Innovations in Sephardic Studies

Reaching Out to a New Generation of Jews

Choreographer Liz Lerman on Acts of Creation

Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators

The 40th Anniversary of the Struggle for Soviet Jewry

Faculty Features: Dr. Martin A. Cohen, Dr. William Cutter, Dr. Norman J. Cohen, Dr. Michael A. Meyer
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

PREPARING TOMORROW’S LEADERS: NEW FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS AT HUC-JIR

KIM ZEITMAN

BECOMING LEADERS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN JERUSALEM

FRANCINE LIS

LEADERSHIP AND JEWISH PEOPLEDOM: NORTH AMERICAN AND EUROPEAN RABBINICAL STUDENTS JOIN TOGETHER AT HUC-JIR/JERUSALEM

KIM ZEITMAN

LEARNING TO LEAD: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN THE HUC-JIR CURRICULUM

KIM ZEITMAN

THE SEEDS FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE: JEWISH TRADITION AND THE SEARCH FOR REALISTIC GOALS

DR. WILLIAM CUTTER AND DR. ARYEH COHEN

BEYOND THE GOLDEN AGE: INNOVATIONS IN SEFARDIC STUDIES AT HUC-JIR

LEAH KAPLAN ROBINS

A LABOR OF LOVE: DR. MARTIN COHEN AND SEVEN DECADES OF SEPHARDICA

LEAH KAPLAN ROBINS

DAILY ACTS OF CREATION: ART, IMAGINATION, AND HOPE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

LIZ LERMAN

THE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE FOR CONGREGATIONAL SCHOOL EDUCATORS

ELIZABETH McNAMARA MUELLER

WITHIN AND BEYOND THE SYNAGOGUE: REACHING OUT TO A NEW GENERATION OF JEWS

ELIZABETH McNAMARA MUELLER

LET MY PEOPLE GO: THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE STRUGGLE FOR SOVIET JEWRY

JEAN BLOCH ROSENSAFI

MOSSES AND THE JOURNEY TO LEADERSHIP: TIMELESS LESSONS OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT FROM THE BIBLE AND TODAY’S LEADERSHIP

DR. NORMAN J. COHEN

JOACHIM PRINZ, REBELLIOUS RABBI: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY—THE GERMAN AND EARLY AMERICAN YEARS

DR. MICHAEL A. MEYER

GRADUATION/ORDINATION/INVESTITURE 2007: ADDRESSES, PRIZES, PRESENTATIONS, AND PHOTO ALBUM

DEPARTMENTS

HUC-JIR/FACULTY PUBLICATIONS AND RECENT FACULTY ARTICLES OF NOTE

ON VIEW AT HUC-JIR

PROGRAMS FOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

For an inside view of HUC-JIR.....
check out the real-life stories of students at HUC-JIR at www.huc.edu/blogHUC

Students' blogs discuss why they chose HUC-JIR, their programs, courses, and faculty, student life, the HUC-JIR community, Jewish life, and experiences that are significant in their lives, including student pulpits, internships, and much more.

CALLING ALL ALUMNI!!

The Joint Commission for Sustaining Rabbinic Education, co-sponsored by the CCAR and HUC-JIR, in partnership with HUC-JIR’s Department of E-Learning, offers all alumni the second year of Ten Great Texts—a program featuring 10 HUC-JIR scholars presenting texts from our classic and contemporary sources.

You can also access the archive of the first year of this series, as well as 23 archived courses, including mini-courses, sifra study, and more.

For more information: elearning2.huc.edu/jointcomm/ or contact Dr. Ruth Abusch-Magder at rabuschmagder@huc.edu or (973) 275-1789

Year 2: 2007 - 2008

History

Carole Balin

Liturgy

Ellyahu Schleifer

Islamic Studies

Reuven Firestone

Liturgy

Richard S. Sarason

Jewish Thought

David Ellenson

Education

Isa Aron

On the cover: HUC-JIR student welcoming the New Year amid the Israeli landscape.

The Chronicle is published by the National Office of Public Affairs.

Editor: Jean Bloch Rosensafi

Contributors: Dr. Aryeh Cohen, Dr. Norman J. Cohen, Dr. William Cutter, Dr. Judah Folkman, Liz Lerman, Dr. Deborah Lipstadt, Francine Lis, Dr. Michael A. Meyer, Elizabeth McNamara Mueller, Leah Kaplan Rubins, Rabbi Herman E. Schaalman, Lynn Schusterman, Kim Zeitman

Design: Tabak Design (www.tabakdesign.com)

Photo Credits: Isaac Hanari, Richard Lobell, Janine M. Spang, Marvin Swindler

Rabbi Wise was of course not opposed to the fact that our ancestors had on many occasions performed wondrous and good deeds. However, he was uncomfortable with the rabbinic doctrine of “Zechut avot (Merit of our Ancestors),” as he felt that it was not appropriate that we rest upon the merits of the deeds performed by others – even our mothers and our fathers. Rather, Rabbi Wise desired that God and the Jewish people recall that a Covenant was established with our ancestors and that we Jews today, no less than our ancestors in generations past, are called to covenantal responsibility by God, Who asks that we serve as shutafin (partners) with the Divine in the tasks that are required to mend the world. This vision of Covenant lies at the very heart of Jewish religious tradition and this notion provides for an ideal of freedom and responsibility that animates the educational endeavors we undertake at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

As we educate students at the College-Institute, we hope that they will come to internalize the memories imposed by Jewish history, and that these future religious and communal leaders and teachers will affirm the Jewish story as their own. We hope that the knowledge that they will acquire at HUC-JIR will transform them into people who will be worthy of the covenantal tradition that all of us have inherited, and that all of us ultimately are called upon to transmit. Our students bear great responsibility to that chain of tradition that began at Sinai. At the same time, we would be remiss if we taught that fidelity to the past absolves them of responsibility in the present. The notion of Covenant requires that they be mindful of both past and present. It also demands that they understand that theirs is a responsibility that extends into the future as well.

This is the task of the College-Institute, and as you read these pages of The Chronicle I hope that you will have a sense of the vitality that is present on our campuses as HUC-JIR attempts to remain true to the teachings of Rabbi Wise and seeks to fulfill in so many ways its ongoing mandate to educate students in a tradition of covenantal duty.

Rabbi David Ellenson
November 2007  Kislev 5768

President’s Message

WE JEWS TODAY, NO LESS THAN OUR ANCESTORS IN GENERATIONS PAST, ARE CALLED TO COVENANTAL RESPONSIBILITY BY GOD, WHO ASKS THAT WE SERVE AS SHUTAFIN (PARTNERS) WITH THE DIVINE IN THE TASKS THAT ARE REQUIRED TO MEND THE WORLD.
Preparing Tomorrow’s Leaders: New Fellowship Programs at HUC-JIR

Kim Zeitman

The College-Institute has embarked on new initiatives offering intensified leadership training to exceptional rabbinical students. The goal of these programs is to develop visionary leaders for our people, who will understand the dynamics at play in the American Jewish community and who will be able to transform their synagogues and their communities into vital and exciting arenas of engagement and meaning.

“We are greatly indebted to the Mandel Foundation, Bonnie and Daniel Tisch, and the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation for their visionary support for these new programs,” says Rabbi David Ellenson. “Their generosity will enable future generations of Reform rabbis and educators to truly make a difference in our synagogues and schools, the Reform Movement, and the American Jewish community at large.”

The Mandel Fellows Program

The role of the rabbi as congregational leader is critical to creating synagogue communities that will engage the Reform Jews of today and tomorrow. Dr. Rob Weinberg, National Director of the Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE), observes, “The rabbi plays a unique role in the transformation of the synagogue and synagogue life. To transform congregations rabbis must act both as symbolic leaders and collaborative leaders.”

To help our students become such leaders, HUC-JIR has partnered with the Mandel Foundation to create the Mandel Fellows Program. This program provides an additional year of study that will enable exceptional rabbinical students to enhance their leadership skills, educational abilities, and organizational knowledge with the goal of creating vibrant Jewish learning communities in Reform synagogues.

The Mandel Fellows Program builds upon the rigorous, five-year academic and professional course of study already required of all Reform rabbinical students. Students who apply and are selected as Mandel Fellows will spend a sixth year of study earning Masters degrees in the Schools of Education on HUC-JIR’s Los Angeles or New York campuses, where they will engage in reflective learning and shaping a new vision for Jewish institutional life as well as their own professional practice and leadership.

During their year as students in the education programs, Mandel Fellows will also participate in two special seminars created by the Mandel Foundation in collaboration with HUC-JIR faculty. A winter seminar at Brandeis University’s Mandel Center will focus on a vision for Jewish life in North America and its expression in Reform synagogues. At the completion of their year of

education studies, Mandel Fellows will participate in an extended seminar at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Jerusalem, concentrating on the centrality of Israel and Jewish peoplehood with special attention to enhancing the capacity for these future rabbis to embed these two core affirmations in the vision and life of Reform synagogues.

“The Mandel Fellows will benefit from the unique training of both our Schools of Education and the Mandel Institute faculty. Through this program, they will gain a clearer sense of how to shape an engaging Jewish community that can touch people’s lives,” says Dr. Norman J. Cohen, Provost of HUC-JIR.

Eight Mandel Fellows are chosen annually from among those rabbinical students applying to the education degree programs in Los Angeles and New York. The criteria for selection include academic excellence; demonstrated leadership potential; capacity for vision; capacity for reflection; and commitment to the congregational rabbinate and transforming synagogue life. A national HUC-JIR committee of faculty and program directors selects the Mandel Fellows based on both written application materials and a personal interview. For the 2007-2008 academic year, three men and five women have been selected as the first cohort of Mandel Fellows. Mandel Fellows studying at the Rhea Hirsch School in Los Angeles are: Erin Ellis, Noam Katz, Ari Margolis, Daniel Medwin, and Rena Polonsky. Mandel Fellows studying at the New York School of Education are: Rachel Kort, Melissa Simon, and Melissa Zalkin-Stollman.

The Mandel Fellows Program will equip participating rabbinical students with the understanding and skills necessary to guide their congregations to become engaging, visionary institutions of Jewish living and learning.

The Bonnie and Daniel Tisch Fellows Program

Jewish identity is a matter of choice for American Jews today, and it falls to the Jewish leadership to encourage and inspire future generations to embrace Judaism. HUC-JIR must therefore train its rabbinical students to exert leadership in creative and innovative ways, to help bring Judaism to the center of our childrens’ lives, and create an inclusive Judaism that speaks to new generations.

The Bonnie and Daniel Tisch Fellows Program – a pilot initiative that has been inaugurated at HUC-JIR for the 2007-2008 academic year – is uniquely designed to meet this need. Each year, five carefully selected rabbinical students will be named Tisch Fellows and complete a three-year intensive leadership training program. By identifying and nurturing successive cohorts of students with outstanding potential for leadership, HUC-JIR will create an extraordinary pool of talent for today’s evolving Reform Jewish and larger Jewish world.

Tisch Fellows will be identified at the end of the second of the five-year rabbinical program, through faculty evaluations, recommendations from the Dean, Provost, and President, and personal interviews. They will receive full tuition scholarships and living stipends, enabling them to focus completely on their studies and professional development. The 2007-2008 Tisch Fellows are Jill Perlman, Joseph Skloot, Rachel Shafran, Yaron Kapitulnik, and Matthew Soffer.

The leadership program will include 3-5 days of intensive seminars each year, focusing on such areas as organizational dynamics, creating community, and becoming a change agent. Each seminar will have a major intellectual or spiritual theme, such as “Social Responsibility and Judaism,” “Israel,” or “God,” around which course work, text study, and professional development activities will be designed.

Tisch Fellows will be required to complete a summer rabbinical residency program, designed as an eight-week experience onsite in a congregation, Jewish organization, Jewish camp, or healthcare facility, under the supervision of a trained rabbinical mentor. As residents, the Tisch Fellows will receive a unique and individualized hands-on learning experience with the opportunity for reflection and advisement with a mentor.

As many aspects of the rabbinical role are learned on the job, each Tisch Fellow will participate in an additional mentoring program that will begin during their fifth year and continue for two year-following ordination. This

Rabbi Shirley Idelson, Dean, HUC-JIR/New York, and Bonnie Tisch with the 2007-2008 Tisch Fellows at HUC-JIR/New York: Yaron Kapitulnik, Jill Perlman, Rachel Safran, Matthew Sofer, and Joseph Skloot.
New Fellowship Programs at HUC-JIR
(continued)

program will pair fellows with rabbinical mentors who have demonstrated the characteristics of transformational rabbis. Fellows will meet regularly with their mentors as they interact with congregations and institutions that are increasingly sophisticated and demand a broad spectrum of professional, spiritual, and intellectual skills.

In addition to the intensive programs described above, Tisch Fellows will benefit, with their fellow students, from an enriched curriculum that will include specialized spiritual, intellectual, and professional development in such areas as pastoral counseling, social responsibility, and outreach and conversion. Tisch Fellows will also have the opportunity to pursue their academic and intellectual interests through individualized coursework, structured opportunities to interact with professors in their fields of interest, and vehicles for independent study.

“With so many unique opportunities and experiences, Tisch Fellows will acquire the skills to respond to the complex and changing issues of their rabbinate with skill, sensitivity, and confidence, inspiring the Jews of modernity to willingly and joyfully embrace Judaism,” says Rabbi David Ellenson.

The Schusterman Hevruta Program

In an effort to increase collaboration between the Reform and Conservative denominations of Judaism, Lynn Schusterman, Chair of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation (CLSFF), has initiated a five-year interdenominational pilot program for rabbinical students studying at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS). The initiative, called the Schusterman Hevruta Program, will bring together Reform and Conservative rabbinical students in academic, religious, and social settings, representing the first time JTS and HUC-JIR rabbinical students will be involved in a sustained, collaborative educational program.

“The goal of the fellowship is twofold: to train transformational rabbinic leaders capable of profound and sensitive change in the communities they serve, and to better equip the rabbinate to address the ever-evolving needs of the American Jewish community, especially those of interfaith families and other Jews who find themselves on the margins of Jewish life,” said Lynn Schusterman, who announced the creation of the program at HUC-JIR’s Graduation ceremony, held at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York on May 3 (see page 47).

In addition to their regular coursework, Schusterman Hevruta Fellows will study together in regular meetings and retreats facilitated by faculty from both seminaries as well as educators from STAR (Synagogues: Transformation and Renewal) and the Center for Leadership Initiatives, Inc. (CLI). The Program will focus on areas such as counseling congregants in areas of acceptance and diversity among mixed faith families; strategic planning and administration; interdisciplinary and interdenominational approaches to rabbinical curricula; and general leadership skills. Students will have the opportunity to collaborate, study together, and build leadership skills in a context of the shared values of the Reform and Conservative Movements in Judaism.

Rabbi David Ellenson said, “I am grateful to the Schusterman Foundation for its vision in initiatiing this fellowship. This program models the kind of cooperation that can and ought to mark American Jewish life. Ours will be a partnership that respects denominational differences, while also recognizing that the American Jewish community faces a common set of challenges and requires transformational rabbinical leaders who will revitalize contemporary Jewish life.”

Sandy Cardin, President of the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation (CLSFF); Lynn Schusterman, Chair, CLSFF; Rabbi Ellenson; and Barbara Friedman, Chair, Board of Governors, HUC-JIR.

Professor Arnold M. Eisen, Chancellor of JTS, stated, “The connections our students will make with their fellow students at HUC-JIR, and the deepening ties between our two institutions, bode well for the future of the American Jewish community.”

Starting in the fall of 2008, eight outstanding students (four from HUC-JIR and four from JTS) will be admitted to the program for each year of the five-year pilot phase of the project. The Program will cover tuition costs and provide an annual cost of living stipend for all participants for their third and fourth years of rabbinical studies; afterwards, participants will receive ongoing support as they search for employment and the opportunity to join the STAR network of rabbis.

Schusterman expressed the hope that “this cooperative relationship will yield benefits far beyond the campus walls and bring congregations from the Reform and Conservative traditions together.”
**Becoming Leaders of the Jewish People in Jerusalem**

Jorg Ahrens was born in post-Holocaust Germany. Raised in a nonreligious home in Frankfurt, he knew that one set of his grandparents were Holocaust survivors. A year ago, he decided to move to Israel.

Andrea Zanardo grew up in Milan, Italy, and is a Jew-by-choice and the first Progressive Italian rabbinical student. In 2000 he was one of the founders of the Association of Progressive Judaism in Italy.

Tracy Fishbein always loved to sing. She grew up in a large Reform congregation in St. Louis, where from the time she was 13 she sang in the Temple choir.

When Evan Schultz was a child, his family seemed to move to a new city every two years for his father’s job. As he adjusted to a new school, a new neighborhood and new friends, he always found a home in his local synagogue.

Matthew Dreffin attended a glass blowing workshop while a student at Tulane University. After Hurricane Katrina, he moved back to New Orleans to work in a glass studio to contribute to the rebuilding of the city.

After finishing Georgetown Law School, Carole Gould settled in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where she raised two sons, worked as a tax attorney, and wrote a weekly column for *The New York Times* Sunday business section. Carole was brought up by unaffiliated Jewish parents and first stepped into a synagogue when she was looking for a Hebrew School for her young children.

What do these people have in common? They are participating in the 2007-2008 Year-In-Israel Program at HUC-JIR in Jerusalem. They are among a class of 52 bright, creative, and enthusiastic graduate students from the United States, the Former Soviet Union, and Europe who have embarked on a new journey toward becoming Jewish leaders as rabbis, cantors, educators, and communal professionals. What better place than Israel to begin their training to serve the Jewish people?

“This class reflects the success of our Movement,” says Rabbi Naamah Kelman, Director of the Year-In-Israel Program. “They are outstanding products of our NFTY summer camps, our synagogues, and campus life, and inspired by our finest alumni. What distinguishes this class is their commitment to community building. Many come with firsthand life experience in social action and social justice as a source of motivation, while others have felt the “calling” to serve our people since high school and are eager to get started. Most have been out in the world for a year or two after completing undergraduate studies, which certainly enriches their journey. Unlike the beginning of the academic year last summer, during the Lebanon War, we are off to a wonderful and peaceful start; at the same time, the students are awash with activities and opportunities to enjoy Jerusalem and Israel. My hope and prayer is that this simply continues.”

HUC-JIR’s Year-In-Israel Program is a rigorous eleven-month program of professional education that marks the beginning of a challenging and inspiring path toward becoming Progressive Jewish leaders. Rabbinical, cantorial, and education students are required to spend their first year on the Jerusalem campus for a year of bonding – with classmates from around the world and with the land and the people of Israel. The goals of the program are many and include an intensive immersion in the Hebrew language, experiential living in the modern State of Israel, acquisition of core Jewish textual skills, and an exploration of one’s religious and spiritual identities. Most participants report their year in Israel to be one of the richest experiences of their lives.

**Year-In-Israel students at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem**

Francine Lis
This year’s class includes forty-one rabbinical students, five cantorial students, and six education students, one of whom plans to pursue a second Master’s degree in Jewish Communal Service at the College-Institute’s School of Jewish Communal Service in Los Angeles. Four of the HUC-JIR students were born outside of the United States in Israel, Ukraine, and Russia, three are Westner fellows, one is a United Jewish Communities Federation Executive Recruitment and Education Program (FEREP) scholar, and eight are second-career students. For many, this is one of numerous visits to Israel, and for others, this is their first time in the country.

In addition, for the first time ever, HUC-JIR is partnering with the two leading liberal Jewish seminaries in Europe to host four of their first-year rabbinical students (see page 8) as part of the Year-In-Israel Program. These four students (two from Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, Germany, and two from Leo Baeck College in London, England) are launching this historic and unique relationship.

The students experience the energy and bustle of the Jerusalem campus with its many exciting programs and activities. At any given moment during the opening week of school in July, students interfaced with Jews of all ages and backgrounds from all parts of the globe – with classmates in their own program, with adult learners studying in HUC-JIR’s two-week Liberal Yeshiva program, with alumni gathering for the annual Alumni Seminar (see page 7) for a week of study with leading Israeli academics and community leaders, with the larger Jerusalem community during Shabbat services, and with alumni living in Israel or visiting during the summer and participating in the Annual Alumni Hava’alah Reception. Furthermore, one only needs to take a short walk from the idyllic campus setting to experience the vitality of life in Jerusalem, whether it is walking through the Old City, navigating the crowds of Ben Yehuda Street, or enjoying the many cultural activities taking place at any given moment throughout the city.

The Year-In-Israel student community is diverse in background, but has shared aspirations. Igor Khokhlov and Olga Zelberg are from Bryansk, Russia, and have participated in Jewish activities in the former Soviet Union, the United States, and Israel – including a summer at the Brandeis Bardin Institute in Simi Valley, CA, and a year at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They chose to attend HUC-JIR to gain the skills and resources to succeed as outstanding Jewish educators. Upon completing their degrees at the New York School of Education, they plan to return to the Former Soviet Union and take strong leadership roles in the Jewish community.

Joe Schwartz, a second-career rabbinical student who is headed for the New York campus next year, gave up a successful law career to enter HUC-JIR with the goal of becoming a congregational rabbi. “The way of Torah is to live the best possible life we can,” he says. “A rabbi can help one lead that kind of life. Helping others to live a good life, that is a great job description!”

Many students cite the mentorship of a respected rabbi, cantor, educator, or Jewish communal professional as pivotal in their decision to enter HUC-JIR “I hope that I will inspire others to continue in Jewish life in the ways I’ve been inspired by the Reform Movement,” says Ariel Boxman, a native of Cincinnati, alumna of Camp Eisner and NFTY-NE, and the daughter of Rabbi Bradd Franklin, whose father is Rabbi Stephen Franklin, C’69.

“My vision is to be on the cutting edge of educational techniques,” adds Brad Cohen, an education student, who recalls the HUC-JIR high school weekend program that he attended in Cincinnati as a teenager. Brad chose HUC-JIR because “it’s the complete package – Israel is an important part of Jewish education and hard to grasp if one has not spent significant time here.”

David Gerber, a second-career rabbinical student who will attend the Cincinnati campus next year, believes that his prior professional experience in finance will be valuable in his rabbinate, pointing to “the work ethic and discipline, as well as the idea of leading and being part of a team.” This is David’s first time in Israel.

“I realized about two years ago that it was something that was inside of me from the beginning” shared Julia Rubin-Cadrain, a cantorial student, who was raised in Connecticut and attended the New England Conservatory in Boston. “I went to Rosh Hashanah services and observed the cantor’s beautiful voice and how she related to the congregation.” Julia looks forward to her role as a cantor, saying “I hope to find new ways to connect people to Judaism.”

Jorg Ahrens, a rabbinical student from Abraham Geiger College in Berlin, who made aliya a year before beginning the program,

In addition, for the first time ever, HUC-JIR is partnering with the two leading liberal Jewish seminaries in Europe to host four of their first-year rabbinical students (see page 8) as part of the Year-In-Israel Program. These four students (two from Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, Germany, and two from Leo Baeck College in London, England) are launching this historic and unique relationship.

The students experience the energy and bustle of the Jerusalem campus with its many exciting programs and activities. At any given moment during the opening week of school in July, students interfaced with Jews of all ages and backgrounds from all parts of the globe – with classmates in their own program, with adult learners studying in HUC-JIR’s two-week Liberal Yeshiva program, with alumni gathering for the annual Alumni Seminar (see page 7) for a week of study with leading Israeli academics and community leaders, with the larger Jerusalem community during Shabbat services, and with alumni living in Israel or visiting during the summer and participating in the Annual Alumni Hava’alah Reception. Furthermore, one only needs to take a short walk from the idyllic campus setting to experience the vitality of life in Jerusalem, whether it is walking through the Old City, navigating the crowds of Ben Yehuda Street, or enjoying the many cultural activities taking place at any given moment throughout the city.

The Year-In-Israel student community is diverse in background, but has shared aspirations. Igor Khokhlov and Olga Zelberg are from Bryansk, Russia, and have participated in Jewish activities in the former Soviet Union, the United States, and Israel – including a summer at the Brandeis Bardin Institute in Simi Valley, CA, and a year at the Rothberg International School at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. They chose to attend HUC-JIR to gain the skills and resources to succeed as outstanding Jewish educators. Upon completing their degrees at the New York School of Education, they plan to return to the Former Soviet Union and take strong leadership roles in the Jewish community.

Joe Schwartz, a second-career rabbinical student who is headed for the New York campus next year, gave up a successful law career to enter HUC-JIR with the goal of becoming a congregational rabbi. “The way of Torah is to live the best possible life we can,” he says. “A rabbi can help one lead that kind of life. Helping others to live a good life, that is a great job description!”

Many students cite the mentorship of a respected rabbi, cantor, educator, or Jewish communal professional as pivotal in their decision to enter HUC-JIR “I hope that I will inspire others to continue in Jewish life in the ways I’ve been inspired by the Reform Movement,” says Ariel Boxman, a native of Cincinnati, alumna of Camp Eisner and NFTY-NE, and the daughter of Rabbi Bradd Franklin, whose father is Rabbi Stephen Franklin, C’69.

“My vision is to be on the cutting edge of educational techniques,” adds Brad Cohen, an education student, who recalls the HUC-JIR high school weekend program that he attended in Cincinnati as a teenager. Brad chose HUC-JIR because “it’s the complete package – Israel is an important part of Jewish education and hard to grasp if one has not spent significant time here.”

David Gerber, a second-career rabbinical student who will attend the Cincinnati campus next year, believes that his prior professional experience in finance will be valuable in his rabbinate, pointing to “the work ethic and discipline, as well as the idea of leading and being part of a team.” This is David’s first time in Israel.

“I realized about two years ago that it was something that was inside of me from the beginning” shared Julia Rubin-Cadrain, a cantorial student, who was raised in Connecticut and attended the New England Conservatory in Boston. “I went to Rosh Hashanah services and observed the cantor’s beautiful voice and how she related to the congregation.” Julia looks forward to her role as a cantor, saying “I hope to find new ways to connect people to Judaism.”

Jorg Ahrens, a rabbinical student from Abraham Geiger College in Berlin, who made aliya a year before beginning the program,
ALUMNI SEMINAR AT HUC-JIR/JERUSALEM

Alumni from throughout the United States participated in HUC-JIR/Jerusalem’s annual Alumni Seminar, which this year focused on the theme of Democracy and Judaism. They expressed their pleasure at reuniting with former classmates, taking part in a stimulating week of study with outstanding faculty members, and grappling with contemporary issues with the input and guidance of Israeli community leaders. “Becoming acquainted with many of the first-year students, some of whom were their confirmation students, was a meaningful by-product of the program,” notes Dr. Michael Marmur, Dean of HUC-JIR/Jerusalem. “We were delighted to see the range and quality of the activities taking place, and to greet a new cohort of students, particularly the students from our sister institutions attending our program for the first time this year.”

Marmur points to exciting new developments at the Jerusalem campus, where he is in the final planning stages of a brand new M.A. program in Jewish Education for Israelis to be run with the Melton Center at the Hebrew University. The Year-In-Israel students had a unique experience shortly before the High Holy Days, when the Jerusalem campus welcomed some 700 residents from the western Negev who have been under almost constant rocket bombardment from the nearby Gaza Strip. The evening included Kabbalat Shabbat services, a festive dinner, and a concert by some of Israel’s finest entertainers, co-sponsored with the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ) and the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ), with the support of Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, DC.

“It was hard not to be moved by their inner strength and resolve,” Rabbi Uri Regev, WUPJ President, said of the guests. “For many this was the first Shabbat in a long time in which there was no need to run to security rooms and shelters. We felt privileged to offer this respite.”

This was just one more example of the many ways in which HUC-JIR’s Year-In-Israel students come face-to-face with the realities of life in Israel – both its challenges and its capacity for hope. As they witness the Reform Movement advancing religious pluralism and Jewish values in Israel, they are gaining invaluable knowledge and understanding that will enrich their professional lives for decades to come. Through their studies, community service, and being an active part of the Israeli community for a year, they are helping Israel fulfill the promise of the Torah. As Regev says, “It will be due not to divine intervention, but to the determination of the value-driven groups in Israeli society that you and we represent, groups that seek to change our reality, renew the Zionist-Jewish vision, and strive for a more just, progressive and peace-seeking society.”

Rabbi John Bush, C’98, Senior Rabbi at Temple Anshe Hesed in Erie, PA, says “Reconnecting with the HUC-JIR/Jerusalem faculty, staff, and classmates from our Year-In-Israel in 1993-94, celebrating Kabbalat Shabbat with the first-year students and listening to their hopes and dreams, we were again reminded of why we had decided to become the Jewish professionals that we are and of how blessed we have been.”

Mentoring the first-year students during the summer were three fifth-year rabbinical students, Daniel Mikkelberg, L’08, Kate Speizer, L’08, and Nicki Greninger, N’08, NYSEO ’08. As part of their last summer before ordination, they worked closely with the faculty to design and implement an orientation that would successfully prepare the new students for their experience in Israel and continuing studies stateside at the College-Institute. “Seeing these students beginning their HUC-JIR studies has helped me to reflect on my personal HUC-JIR experience as it is nearing to a close with ordination next May – it has been a journey of growth, study, exploration, and holiness,” says Mikkelberg. “We’ve shared memorable experiences with the first-year class, ranging from watching a sunrise concert at Masada with leading Israeli singer David Broza to exploring God’s role in our sacred journeys. This is a special group of students and it has been an honor to work with them.”

“A study group overlooking the Old City.
In July of this year, the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion opened its doors to embrace the international scope of the Progressive movement. For the first time, first-year rabbinical students at Leo Baeck College in London and Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, Germany joined their North American counterparts at HUC-JIR for a year of study based in the heart of Jerusalem.

Through this collaborative endeavor, the three partnering seminaries will ensure that all Reform/Progressive rabbinical students receive the transformational experience of a first year of study in Israel, and will foster a new current of exchange and collaboration among the Progressive leaders of the future. “Our mission to prepare leaders for the Reform Movement who share a strong commitment to the people and land of Israel and an identification with Jewish peoplehood worldwide is strengthened by this historic agreement,” said Rabbi David Ellenson, HUC-JIR President.

The agreement was reached after lengthy discussions between the leaders and administration of the three sister institutions. Rabbi Ellenson, Dr. Michael Marmur, Dean of the Jerusalem School, and Rabbi Naamah Kelman, Director of HUC-JIR’s Year-In-Israel Program, conversed at length with Rabbi Marc Saperstein, Principal of Leo Baeck College, and met in Jerusalem with Professor Dr. Sabine Kunst, President of the University of Potsdam. The agreement was announced by Rabbi Ellenson, together with the Principals of the sister institutions, Rabbi Professor Saperstein and Rabbi Professor Dr. Walter Homolka, at the World Union for Progressive Judaism conference in Jerusalem last March during a panel discussion on “The Future of Rabbinic Training.”

The arrangement stipulates that all rabbinical students at Leo Baeck College and the Abraham Geiger College will spend the first year of their rabbinical studies in Israel, learning alongside their colleagues in the HUC-JIR Year-in-Israel program and in close contact with HUC-JIR’s Israeli rabbinical students. HUC-JIR’s stateside rabbinical, cantorial, and education students are required to fulfill their first year of study at HUC-JIR’s Jerusalem campus.

“Having American students working together during their first year with European students from Leo Baeck College and Abraham Geiger College will strengthen their sense of Progressive Judaism as a world Movement, not limited just to the United States and Israel,” said Rabbi Saperstein. Students from the United Kingdom will also benefit academically, as “having the immersion experience of intensive Hebrew study in a Hebrew-speaking environment during the first year will raise the level of instruction in the first courses taken by Leo Baeck students.”

The agreement with Abraham Geiger College also outlines other areas for potential cooperation beyond first-year study, including joint graduate-level and exchange programs. The first such exchange began this past spring, when Professor Samuel Joseph of HUC-JIR/Cincinnati taught as a Fellow at Geiger College. In the 2007-2008 academic year,
Rabbi Dalia Marx of HUC-JIR/Jerusalem is in Potsdam serving as a DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) Visiting Professor. Dr. Marx will teach three courses: Jewish Women Piety, From Cradle to Grave - Jewish Life Cycle Events, and an advanced course in contemporary Hebrew. Her courses will explore women’s historical Jewish rituals, the way various streams of Judaism observe life cycle events, and conversational and literary aspects of the Hebrew language.

This endeavor represents an unprecedented venture among the seminaries affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism to coordinate their curricula in such a way as to build lifelong connections and cooperation among the members of each new generation of rabbis on a global basis. “As our North American and Israeli rabbinical students at HUC-JIR study side-by-side at our Jerusalem campus with their colleagues from the Abraham Geiger College and Leo Baeck College, they are forging permanent bonds of friendship and partnership in the service of the Jewish people,” said Rabbi Ellenson. “Their year in Israel connects them to the millennial heritage of our faith, history, and values as well as the realities and challenges facing contemporary Jewish identity in Israel, North America, Europe, and around the globe. Together, they are embarking on charting new directions and a new vision for the Jewish future – with a shared sense of responsibility that transcends geography to assert the overarching unity of the Jewish people.”

Seminary leaders expressed the hope that all of the Reform and Progressive rabbinical students will share their unique experiences from home and gain a deeper understanding of the depth and breadth of Progressive Judaism throughout the world. “It is fantastic that European students will be able to share with their colleagues from the U.S. an insight into slightly different ways of Reform Judaism and also the roots of American Reform,” said Rabbi Homolk. “The cultural exchange will work both ways and raise the awareness for each other while being immersed in the experience of Israel. It will contribute towards making the international Progressive Movement an even stronger option for Jews globally. And it will help to shape an international Progressive rabbinate where colleagues are friends because once they were classmates.”

The experience of studying together in Israel is clearly having the impact that seminary leaders are seeking. Less than one week after his arrival in Israel, Paul Strasko, a first-year rabbinical student from Abraham Geiger College, said in his blog that “Already the mere existence of this joining of programs has built amazing good will.”

The introduction of cooperative rabbinical training among these three institutions will, in the words of Rabbi Saperstein, “foster a sense of solidarity in a new generation of Progressive rabbis throughout the world.”

**ABRAHAM GEIGER COLLEGE**

Abraham Geiger College, Potsdam, is the first liberal rabbinical seminary founded in Continental Europe since the Shoah. It was founded in 1999, admitted its first students in 2001, and held its first ordination in September 2006, when it ordained the first three rabbis to be ordained in Germany since the Holocaust. Its mission is the education of rabbis for Jewish communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Rabbinical studies are integrated into the extensive curriculum of the College for Jewish Studies at the University of Potsdam, providing the ambience and resources of a large, secular state university. This in turn helps promote understanding of Judaism within a pluralistic context.

**LEO BAECK COLLEGE**

Leo Baeck College, London, founded in 1956, is a premier center for Progressive Jewish learning, training rabbis, leaders, and teachers to develop Progressive Jewish congregations and communities throughout the United Kingdom and in many other countries. The College reaches out to support the growth of today’s Jewish communities across Europe and beyond. It is the first College in Europe to train rabbis from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe - who are then able to return to lead their home communities. Through its Department of Education and Professional Development, it is helping to establish a new cadre of professionals for synagogues, youth movements, schools, and other organizations.
In the words of HUC-JIR President Rabbi David Ellenson, “Judaism is a religion of social responsibility at its very heart.” With this in mind, HUC-JIR has moved to expand and enhance the incorporation of social responsibility into the rabbinical curriculum, as part of the institution’s broader leadership vision.

The Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson Chair in Social Responsibility

The Jerome K. Davidson Chair in Social Responsibility was created to facilitate the new curricular focus on social responsibility across all four campuses. The Chair will ensure “unity without uniformity,” helping achieve the institution’s overarching aim while assisting each campus as it implements the social responsibility focus based on its own resources and goals. “Our aim is to help students shape a vision of social responsibility in their rabbinate, and provide them with the skills and experience to make it happen,” says Dr. Norman J. Cohen, Provost of HUC-JIR.

Rabbi Davidson is passionate about increasing students’ exposure to social responsibility during their education at the College-Institute. “The goal of the social responsibility focus is to awaken in students an awareness of injustices in the world that are not beyond our ability to make a difference,” says Rabbi Davidson. “By creating a congregational sense of the import of hands-on work in the community to help the needy, vulnerable, and weak, and by encouraging the community to be advocates of public policy that the world needs, rabbis can, in their role as congregational and communal leaders, inspire changes in our society and in the world.”

Several families from Rabbi Davidson’s synagogue, Temple Beth-El of Great Neck, funded this programmatic Chair in his name, an affirmation of his lifelong commitment to social responsibility through his rabbinate. Program funds were provided by a generous supporter of the College-Institute. Rabbi Davidson says that “it is my hope that all students will be moved by their exposure to social action at HUC-JIR, and will choose to make it part of their rabbinate as well.”

Since his retirement from Temple Beth-El, Rabbi Davidson has begun to work with Provost Norman Cohen and part-time leadership program coordinators on each campus:

Rabbi Ken Kanter, Director of the Rabbinic Program in Cincinnati, Rabbi Suzanne Singer in Los Angeles, and Rabbi Darcie Crystal in New York.

Social Responsibility Education

HUC-JIR has always placed a high value on educating its students in social responsibility, and courses that involve elements of social justice have been available on all campuses for years.

In New York, Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson and Albert Vorspan, a founder of the Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism and the Religious Action Center, have helped students explore the role of the rabbi as a social and political agent for change in their course, Tough Choices, Social Action in the Community. In Los Angeles, Rabbi William Cutter and Dr. Aryeh Cohen recently taught The Seeds for Economic Justice: Jewish Tradition and the Search for Realistic Goals, which brought students from HUC-JIR and the America Jewish University together with business leaders to explore whether Jewish tradition can have legitimate practical application to

If we are going to fulfill the prophetic mandate of outreach to the disenfranchised in our society, we must be much better trained in effecting change.

Rabbi Charles Kroloff, Vice President for Special Projects
The Cincinnati campus offers a fourth-year course in Leadership and Organizational Dynamics with Rabbi Sam Joseph, who incorporates social responsibility into his class by bringing in speakers from the nationally-oriented Religious Action Center as well as local rabbis and communal leaders who are heavily involved in social action.

In the past, these opportunities were generally offered only as electives. However, HUC-JIR administrators and faculty felt that those students who opted not to take such courses were missing a key element of their rabbinical education. “All rabbis will be confronted in their local communities with issues of social justice, and they need to know how to handle them,” says Al Vorspan. Adds Rabbi Charles Kroloff, HUC-JIR's Vice President for Special Projects, “Successful strategies for effecting community change have emerged, but without systematic study and supervised field work, most newly-minted rabbis will never acquire the skills to function most effectively in those areas.”

The new curricular focus on social responsibility will demonstrate to students that social justice is an authentic and essential part of Judaism, going hand-in-hand with the academic and spiritual elements of their education. Students will learn how they can best serve as agents for change in their congregations and communities.

Starting in the Fall of 2007, social responsibility will be a required and an important component of the HUC-JIR rabbinical curriculum throughout all five years of study, as part of the new program in leadership preparation. First-year students in Israel engage in a mandatory service project with a local agency or organization, with opportunities for self-reflection, including a culminating self-reflective writing assignment, built into the experience. Students in their second year are required to take a Professional Development course, now redesigned with an added focus on Reform Judaism’s emphasis on outreach and social responsibility. Third-year student pulpit will include an institutional change project focused in their congregation, enabling hands-on experience in leading social action in a congregational setting.

The fourth year brings a professional development course in leadership, focused in part on the skills to mobilize congregations and institutions to effect social justice-oriented change. Through this course in New York, titled “Rabbinical Leadership and Social Responsibility,” Rabbi Davidson and Professor Vorspan will show students that social responsibility is a mandate of rabbinical leadership. Students will read Biblical and rabbinic texts to gain a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish obligation to promote a fair and just society. In the application of this obligation, discussions will focus on such topics as civil rights, immigration, environmental issues, poverty, housing, healthcare, workers’ rights, homeless rights, church/state boundaries, civil liberties, gender issues, anti-Semitism, racism, and interfaith relations. The class will also address how congregations can be organized for effective conflict management. According to Al Vorspan, “This is not just a practical course, but an indispensable course.” With guidance from the instructors, students will also be expected to integrate some aspect of their coursework into their fieldwork experience.

Following this course, the fifth year’s professional development requirement will include a focus on pressing issues of social responsibility along with outreach. HUC-JIR administrators are also developing a list of social responsibility-oriented off-campus training experiences, such as a summer seminar at the Religious Action Center, the Jewish Funds for Justice Leadership Training Program, and the Panim Retreat entitled Spirituality, Social Justice and the Rabbinate. These experiences will include a mechanism for ongoing personal reflection, such as journaling, essay-writing, or regular dialogue with faculty, classmates, or a mentor. Students will be required to participate in one of these programs during their tenure at the College-Institute.

The Hebrew Union College-University of Cincinnati Center for the Study of Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems (HUC-UC Ethics Center) also plays a significant role in the social justice education of HUC-JIR students in Cincinnati. The Ethics Center organizes and hosts a range of conferences on topics such as violence against women, housing and homelessness, and the implications of poverty and welfare on family structures, gender roles, and social institutions. In partnership with the Graduate College of Union Institute & University, the Ethics Center hosted its third annual symposium on Poverty, Welfare, and Religion in May 2007. The symposium attracted dozens of leading scholars on these issues from the United States and Europe, and HUC-JIR students received course credit for participation in the program.

**Congregation members get a great deal of spiritual uplift from social action work.**

Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson

The new curricular focus on social responsibility will demonstrate to students that social justice is an authentic and essential part of Judaism, going hand-in-hand with the academic and spiritual elements of their education. Students will learn how they can best serve as agents for change in their congregations and communities.

Starting in the Fall of 2007, social responsibility will be a required and an important component of the HUC-JIR rabbinical curriculum throughout all five years of study, as part of the new program in leadership preparation. First-year students in Israel engage in a mandatory service project with a local agency or organization, with opportunities for self-reflection, including a culminating self-reflective writing assignment, built into the experience. Students in their second year are required to take a Professional Development course, now redesigned with an added focus on Reform Judaism’s emphasis on outreach and social responsibility. Third-year student pulpit will include an institutional change project focused in their congregation, enabling hands-on experience in leading social action in a congregational setting.

The fourth year brings a professional development course in leadership, focused in part on the skills to mobilize congregations and institutions to effect social justice-oriented change. Through this course in New York, titled “Rabbinical Leadership and Social Responsibility,” Rabbi Davidson and Professor Vorspan will show students that social responsibility is a mandate of rabbinical leadership. Students will read Biblical and rabbinic texts to gain a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish obligation to promote a fair and just society. In the application of this obligation, discussions will focus on such topics as civil rights, immigration, environmental issues, poverty, housing, healthcare, workers’ rights, homeless rights, church/state boundaries, civil liberties, gender issues, anti-Semitism, racism, and interfaith relations. The class will also address how congregations can be organized for effective conflict management. According to Al Vorspan, “This is not just a practical course, but an indispensable course.” With guidance from the instructors, students will also be expected to integrate some aspect of their coursework into their fieldwork experience.

Following this course, the fifth year’s professional development requirement will include a focus on pressing issues of social responsibility along with outreach. HUC-JIR administrators are also developing a list of social responsibility-oriented off-campus training experiences, such as a summer seminar at the Religious Action Center, the Jewish Funds for Justice Leadership Training Program, and the Panim Retreat entitled Spirituality, Social Justice and the Rabbinate. These experiences will include a mechanism for ongoing personal reflection, such as journaling, essay-writing, or regular dialogue with faculty, classmates, or a mentor. Students will be required to participate in one of these programs during their tenure at the College-Institute.

The Hebrew Union College-University of Cincinnati Center for the Study of Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems (HUC-UC Ethics Center) also plays a significant role in the social justice education of HUC-JIR students in Cincinnati. The Ethics Center organizes and hosts a range of conferences on topics such as violence against women, housing and homelessness, and the implications of poverty and welfare on family structures, gender roles, and social institutions. In partnership with the Graduate College of Union Institute & University, the Ethics Center hosted its third annual symposium on Poverty, Welfare, and Religion in May 2007. The symposium attracted dozens of leading scholars on these issues from the United States and Europe, and HUC-JIR students received course credit for participation in the program.

**Congregation members get a great deal of spiritual uplift from social action work.**

Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson

The new curricular focus on social responsibility will demonstrate to students that social justice is an authentic and essential part of Judaism, going hand-in-hand with the academic and spiritual elements of their education. Students will learn how they can best serve as agents for change in their congregations and communities.

Starting in the Fall of 2007, social responsibility will be a required and an important component of the HUC-JIR rabbinical curriculum throughout all five years of study, as part of the new program in leadership preparation. First-year students in Israel engage in a mandatory service project with a local agency or organization, with opportunities for self-reflection, including a culminating self-reflective writing assignment, built into the experience. Students in their second year are required to take a Professional Development course, now redesigned with an added focus on Reform Judaism’s emphasis on outreach and social responsibility. Third-year student pulpit will include an institutional change project focused in their congregation, enabling hands-on experience in leading social action in a congregational setting.

The fourth year brings a professional development course in leadership, focused in part on the skills to mobilize congregations and institutions to effect social justice-oriented change. Through this course in New York, titled “Rabbinical Leadership and Social Responsibility,” Rabbi Davidson and Professor Vorspan will show students that social responsibility is a mandate of rabbinical leadership. Students will read Biblical and rabbinic texts to gain a more nuanced understanding of the Jewish obligation to promote a fair and just society. In the application of this obligation, discussions will focus on such topics as civil rights, immigration, environmental issues, poverty, housing, healthcare, workers’ rights, homeless rights, church/state boundaries, civil liberties, gender issues, anti-Semitism, racism, and interfaith relations. The class will also address how congregations can be organized for effective conflict management. According to Al Vorspan, “This is not just a practical course, but an indispensable course.” With guidance from the instructors, students will also be expected to integrate some aspect of their coursework into their fieldwork experience.

Following this course, the fifth year’s professional development requirement will include a focus on pressing issues of social responsibility along with outreach. HUC-JIR administrators are also developing a list of social responsibility-oriented off-campus training experiences, such as a summer seminar at the Religious Action Center, the Jewish Funds for Justice Leadership Training Program, and the Panim Retreat entitled Spirituality, Social Justice and the Rabbinate. These experiences will include a mechanism for ongoing personal reflection, such as journaling, essay-writing, or regular dialogue with faculty, classmates, or a mentor. Students will be required to participate in one of these programs during their tenure at the College-Institute.

The Hebrew Union College-University of Cincinnati Center for the Study of Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems (HUC-UC Ethics Center) also plays a significant role in the social justice education of HUC-JIR students in Cincinnati. The Ethics Center organizes and hosts a range of conferences on topics such as violence against women, housing and homelessness, and the implications of poverty and welfare on family structures, gender roles, and social institutions. In partnership with the Graduate College of Union Institute & University, the Ethics Center hosted its third annual symposium on Poverty, Welfare, and Religion in May 2007. The symposium attracted dozens of leading scholars on these issues from the United States and Europe, and HUC-JIR students received course credit for participation in the program.

**Congregation members get a great deal of spiritual uplift from social action work.**

Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson
Can a Jewish study influence economic justice? This was the question for a class composed of people who have not normally studied together: eight students from two rabbinical seminaries – HUC-JIR and the American Jewish University – and eight prominent business leaders from the Los Angeles community.

The Seeds for Economic Justice was an effort to find common ground between those who study the principles of ethical living from classic Jewish texts, and those who live the ethical dilemmas on a daily basis. The course began as an effort to discover from the business community whether Jewish tradition could have legitimate practical application to the situations that confront people in practice, and the belief of the two instructors that students who learn classic values ought to confront the realities of business decisions, balance sheet values, and the need to meet a payroll.

Here are some of the dilemmas explored by the class:

Dr. Aryeh Cohen (center) and the community of learners
(opposite page: Dr. William Cutter (left) listens as a point is strongly argued by business leader Arthur Stern

Darchei Shalom
The Barenbaums (a fictional name) own a small chain of profitable stores in western Pennsylvania. Each year they hire nearly a hundred local citizens to supplement their sales staff for Easter and recreational business. Heavy rains have created a business shortfall over the winter, and the three owners of the business (grandfather, son, and grandson) feel they may not be able to afford the extra hiring this year. (Of course there are plenty of assets, but we are considering this year’s business.) Grandson, freshly out of Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, is the most cautious, but grandfather has maintained this tradition for 47 years, and is willing to take the loss in the interest of Darchei Shalom (the Barenbaum family’s status in the community and community relations). What should they do? Would such a family really consult with their rabbi – not about the economics of the decision, but about the effect on community spirit? From what principles might the rabbi draw his/her advice?

The Customs of the Place
The conscience of a Jewish manufacturer is troubled because she can outsource some of the work of her factory to a firm that probably hires undocumented workers. The customs of this industry are quite literally not to ask questions. Should she ‘ask questions?’ or follow the customs of the locale in which her business operates? What is the standing of ‘The Customs of the Place?’ Can she justify this outsourcing on the grounds that at least some workers will make a steady income? The Misnah addresses the hiring of workers from a town that has more relaxed worker standards than the town in which the workers will be hired to work.

When do you pay more than you absolutely have to?
Do Jewish workers have a right to strike? An obligation to do so? Shall they protect the work of the less efficient or productive fellow workers? Shall owners of very profitable businesses be encouraged to pay salaries that exceed the “going rate” in like industries in one’s region? And what of the fore-
man who is delegated to hire on behalf of the owner? The Mishnah and Talmud deal in some detail with the obligations of the delegated employer.

**What are the obligations upon boards to pay for benefits?**

Some public institutions have cut back on benefits for employees on the grounds that the economy is tight, and many businesses have reduced their benefit packages. Mr. Schwartz of the Jewish Family Service believes that the board is obligated to maintain a high standard of benefit payments; the other trustees of Family Service claim that he is being unrealistic, and the current climate is a good one in which to save the institution money. What are the issues one faces from a Jewish perspective? Is asset-based management justified when it is certainly possible for the board to raise more money? The Mishnah, Mishneh Torah, and Talmud are quite clear about protecting the financial stability of private business; what would the tradition say about public institutions?

These questions and more were among those examined in the seminar taught by Professors Aryeh Cohen and William Cutter. The students met weekly to consider Jewish texts and literary and rabbinic theory in depth and in Hebrew. They met once each month in plenary session with business leaders for a consideration of selected texts in English from the Mishnah, Mishneh Torah, and Responsa.

Sometimes, among the business people themselves, a dispute rang out: Does this ancient material really have any use for us today? Of course, it does; after all we are always in need of reminders of a tradition’s highest values. Do we have ideals that supercede (or trump) accepted practice? How do I as a rabbinical leader invoke the tradition among people who will say that “I don’t know how the world really operates?” What does one say to a business person who contends that theory is simply too abstract to respond to contemporary situations in the heat of the moment? Do lawyers approach a problem differently than business people?

For their final assignments, the students took on two tasks: attendance at a union meeting and interviews with workers in regard to the place of the union in their lives; and a final paper that was to be a grant application for a social justice program within a synagogue.

The students arrived at a number of conclusions, including that law is not the sole domain of the state, but an attempt by communities to articulate and live out stories about who we are as a society. Their social justice proposals for synagogues were diverse:

- a program in which the New Year (Rosh HaShanah) helps a city council to focus on their notions of an ideal city;
- a program that demonstrates that mistreatment of day workers, who are increasingly being abused, will result in a general reduction in services and quality of life for everyone;
- a program focusing on the dilemma that some congregational members are (fairly) openly taking advantage of certain statutes to underpay workers, and proposing a study group in which business people would openly discuss their business practices with each other.

In the final class, one of the business leaders urged those concerned with workers being underpaid to be bold, to stand up to people engaging in questionable business practices, and a debate ensued. But the discussion ended when Rabbi Leonard Beerman, who attended the sessions and inspired the concept of the course along with Clergy and Lairy United for Economic Justice, spoke for twenty minutes about his anguish in trying to harmonize his values with the realities of the marketplace in which his congregants have worked. “I live in a very nice home,” he said, “but, unfortunately, it has windows and so I see the thorns and thistles that exist outside my neighborhood.”

After the meeting with the union and its individual members, a student came to the realization of “what the fight was about. It isn’t a fight for salary or benefits, it is a fight to be treated with dignity.”

Another student pointed to a memorable statement by a classmate that involved the amounts of money large corporations spend on legal fees in order not to treat workers justly. “It is disturbing to see how easily we forget that we are talking about real human beings and not a nice theory or interesting idea. The instructors remind the students of the relevance of a famous law review article for that distinction between theory and real human beings.”

Is Jewish tradition subversive to modern business practice? We learned in this course that aspects of our tradition are actually quite protective, encouraging the endurance of ownership on safe grounds as a way of insuring the stability of society – one of the early meanings of tikkun olam, the repairing of our world. We learned that many very hard-headed business people – citizens of prominence and possessors of great material comfort – have strived to make their workplaces more just and dignified for the worker whose voice is not so easy to hear.

At the final session, the group reflected on the fact that the course was premised on a democratic pedagogy in which expertise was respected but was not given a veto. As a result, people who had no background in classical Jewish text study were able to actively participate in and contribute to a conversation with people who had years of study experience. Similarly those with no experience of day to day business realities were able to engage CEOs in discussions of business ethics. The groups were not neatly drawn: Some of the business people had extensive text background and some of the rabbinical students had experience in business or with organized labor. The democratic classroom is a model that can also be implemented in other situations where different communities of learners want to sit together. As the Rabbis said (Mishnah Avot 3:2), when a group of people sit to study Torah together, the Divine Presence is amongst them.
On March 17, 1998, on the 75th anniversary of Stephen Samuel Wise’s founding of the Jewish Institute of Religion, Rabbi Martin A. Cohen, Ph.D., Professor of Jewish History at HUC-JIR/New York, delivered the Founder’s Day Address to the New York campus community. He invoked the memory of biblical builders Bezalel and Oholiab, the architects of the Mishkan – the holy sanctuary in the desert, to inspire students to meet the challenges that face them:

What faith it must have taken for Bezalel and Oholiab to build their sanctuary, tabernacle, ark and all the rest – for unborn generations, for uncharted territory, and for unknown challenges! And what courage it must have taken so to innovate amidst their surrounding disorientation! … Yet they drove on. They drove on… adamantly determined to comply with God’s directive, “Let them make Me a sanctuary…”

Cohen didn’t know then that two years later, he and Dr. Lewis Barth, Professor of Midrash and Related Literature and former Dean of HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, Dr. Mark Kligman, Professor of Jewish Musicology, and other members of the HUC-JIR faculty would embark on a monumental project that demanded just such determination, ingenuity, and optimism.

In 2000, Barth was approached by Sam Tarica, a member of the board of directors of the Maurice Amado Foundation, and asked to address the lack of inclusion of Sephardic Jewry in mainstream Jewish education. With a multi-year grant from the Amado Foundation, the team developed a program to support greater inclusion of Sephardic Studies in the core curriculum of HUC-JIR, transforming the way rabbinical students encounter Sephardic history.

Cohen points out that the Sephardic heritage has all along been at the heart of the core curriculum, although students are not always cognizant of its presence. Its poets, whose gems we recite in our prayers; its commentators, who enlighten our Sacred Scriptures; its philosophers, culminating in Maimonides; its legists, who paved the way for the Sephardic Shulhan Arukh – considered the most definitive book of Jewish law since the Talmud – laid the foundation for much of what is central in Judaism.
today. Yet the Sephardic character of these icons is largely invisible to most students. "While we've been teaching it all along," Cohen says, "we have not been sensitizing our students to the Sephardic dimension of the Jewish experience. They have not seen that much of what Ashkenazic culture has incorporated was generated in the Iberian Peninsula and in the lands of the Sephardic dispersion."

Furthermore, the Sephardic history that most students do imbibe is often narrowly limited to those figures and themes from the Golden Age of Iberia (often referred to as the "Golden Age of Spain"). Kligman notes that "in academia the representation of Sephardic communities post-15th century and the Golden Age of Iberia is sporadic, though we now know that the model of this age as a "utopia" of interaction is a somewhat flawed notion developed by the German Wissenschaft scholars of the nineteenth century."

Cohen points out that this outdated model gives students a cultural handicap in their understanding of Sephardica. "The so-called Golden Age of Sephardic achievement is limited to Muslim Iberia, while Christian Iberia developed a related, but distinctive, Jewish culture, which I, along with others have called the 'Silver Age.' Nor does the representation of Sephardic culture in academia include the wider contributions of Sephardic Jewry in Amsterdam, Safed, the Ottoman Empire, and Israel in later periods." Kligman explains that "it is only in the last 50 years that scholars have investigated non-Ashkenazic communities in a serious and systematic way."

The Sephardic Curriculum Project is a major step to reverse the marginalization of Sephardic studies in academia. Rabbi David Ellenson finds tremendous need for such a program, because "to ignore the Sephardic heritage is to deny a major part of our patrimony," he says. "Furthermore, the Sephardic experience, in many ways, is more germane to our own reality today than the Ashkenazic experience has been. After all, great figures such as Maimonides and Nahmanides had to traverse and mediate among Jewish and non-Jewish cultural worlds, just as we do today in contemporary America. In this sense, the Sephardic experience has a great deal to teach us as we are in the same position and confront the same challenges in modern day America that our Sephardic ancestors faced within the orbit of medieval Islam and Christianity a millennium ago. For these reasons, and precisely because ignorance of the rich Sephardic heritage impoverishes our Judaism so very much, this project is crucial to the education of our future religious, communal, and educational leaders."

The project, now seven years old, is well underway to meeting its goals. Its website, www.huc.edu/sephardic, was launched in 2007 with readings and course guides, an index of Sephardic liturgical music, annotated Internet resources, reviews of academic studies, and a library research guide. Sephardic material is now better integrated into core courses, and funding from the Maurice Amado Foundation grant has aided faculty projects and publications on Sephardic topics. Several noted scholars, including Professor Aron Rodrigue from Stanford University and Professor Norman Stillman from the University of Oklahoma, have visited the College-Institute as guest lecturers. In November 2008, our faculty will host a conference, together with the UCLA Jewish Studies Program, to explore the Sephardic Curriculum Project and its goals. Its website, www.mauriceamadofdn.org, is well underway to meet its goals. The project has a special interest in integrating information about the religious life and culture of Sephardic Jews, whose ancestors originated in the Iberian Peninsula, into the education of all American Jews, with a special emphasis on reaching leaders, both present and future, of American Jewry. The heritage of Sephardic Jews includes the history and contributions to Jewish thought of the Spanish Jews before the Inquisition; the effects of the Inquisition on Jewish religious, cultural and intellectual life; the history of the Sephardim in the lands of their dispersion after the Expulsion; and modern Sephardic cultural and religious contributions to Jewish life.
Program and USC Casden Institute, on the Integration of Sephardic Studies in curriculum and new research in the field.

The backbone of the project’s many activities is an electronic library of Sephardic texts, a massive database involving over three hundred and fifty categories of Sephardic interest, and a comprehensive curriculum outline being compiled by Cohen. Over the past four years he has recovered and compiled thousands of data, culled from his years of research in the archives and attics of university and public libraries in many lands, and from his own extensive world-class collection of original sources of Sephardica from Roman times until today. His collection includes, among many other things, every source related to Sephardic studies cited in the entire *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, where he served as editor for three of its departments pertaining to Sephardica. He says that “you’d be surprised by how much necessary stuff we still do not have, but once this project has been completed, it will make available the whole Sephardic world to our students.”

Cohen has compiled a 1700 page reader of original texts that he has organized into 18 themes. He is nearing completion of the first three of 18 curriculum units, each of which contains a 30-page outline of the field, an appendix of maps and charts, 2-3 pages of topics and questions for masters and doctoral dissertations, followed by an approximately 200-entry bibliography. Some 500 pages of Cohen’s 1700 page reader have already been digitized, and the entire reader and curriculum will soon be available on the project’s website. Cohen has been assisted by Sheida Hakimian and Anita Rogers, whose contributions he considers “indispensable to the success of the project.”

Cohen estimates that his curriculum will be completed by 2014, assuming that funding and support continue past June 2008, when the Maurice Amado Foundation will conclude its grant. Rabbi Ellenson pledges to continue the project, because he “believes that its existence will enrich our students immeasurably by granting them access to the treasures of the Sephardic heritage. Not only will their intellectual horizons be expanded, but their ability to draw upon a great host of customs and ceremonies as they seek to facilitate religious and spiritual journeys for those whose lives they will touch will be greatly deepened.”

Kligman has noticed a marked change at the College-Institute since the inception of the project. “Faculty and students are more aware of a wider variety of Jewish texts. They have become aware of writings of rabbis in the Ottoman era and in Israel that address interesting issues of modernity that help gain a larger view of Judaism. We find that issues where Reform Judaism is often at odds with Ashkenazic Orthodoxy – women’s rights, tolerance, and acceptance of the non-Jewish world – are addressed with a more open spirit among Sephardic rabbis. Our students now have greater exposure to these ideas and to recent scholarship.”

The Maurice Amado Foundation grant has made possible the annual offering of an elective in Sephardica that previously was only offered intermittently, but now enjoys an impressive annual enrollment. Rabbi Ellenson applauds the change, saying “it will put our students in closer touch with the cultural and religious reality that informs half if not more of the world’s Jews today.”

Throughout the years, Cohen has served as the advisor for countless students seeking to write theses on Sephardic and *mizrahi* (Jews of the Middle East and North Africa) themes, but since the project began, he finds more students than ever thirsty for knowledge on the subject. Rabbi Allison Berry, N ’07, whom Cohen recently advised on her thesis on the matriarchs and the *Me-am Lo’ez*, a Sephardic Bible commentary from Turkey, says that her teacher inspired her “to want to learn about a little studied period of Jewish history – the Jews living in Ottoman Turkey. The Sephardic project is about...
opening doors to a part of our heritage many of us have forgotten but that shaped a huge portion of Jewish thought and ethics as we know them today. Dr. Cohen’s goal is to provide useable tools for future scholars and students in order to study this important genre of Jewish history.” Her classmate and another of Cohen’s students, Rabbi Lawrence Ser- novitz, N ’07, notes that the Sephardica project “is incredibly important, not only for historians, but also for all Jews who care deeply about the survival and continuity of the Jewish people.”

In the spring of 2004, Kligman was asked to present on the diversity of Sephardic liturgical music at a board meeting of the Maurice Amado Foundation. “After the presentation, a board member of the foundation came up to me and asked what I wanted the impact of this project to be on HUC-JIR students,” he relates. “I told him I wanted students to see the unique and diverse Jewish world of the Sephardic community. He responded by saying that as Americans we identify with colonial American history even though many of our direct ancestors were not in America. Given the values, lives, and fortitude of these pioneers, we are beholden to their experiences. Likewise, it was his hope that HUC-JIR students will identify with Sephardic Jewry as a part of their own Jewish history. I realized from this conversation how this important goal is our model.”

When asked how long he has been working on the Sephardic Curriculum Project, Dr. Martin Cohen answered, “68 years.”

“It reminds me of when I was just getting started in rabbinical school and ready to go out to my first High Holy Day pulpit,” he said. “All of the members of our class were assembled in synagogue in Cincinnati, and they brought Dr. Nathan Perelman, a rabbi at Temple Emanu-El, to give us a pep talk. He said ‘People ask me, how long did it take you to write your sermon last week? I always say five hours and 50 years.’”

So in these terms, Dr. Cohen has been preparing to write the definitive curriculum on Sephardic Jewry for four years and nearly seven decades. He began at age 11 when he met his first Spanish teacher, Richard D. Abraham, a western Sephardic Jew born and raised in Philadelphia, who attended the same Reform synagogue as members of his family. “Dr. Abraham saw that I had an interest and aptitude, and gave me books to read and suggestions for study, and I got interested!”

Cohen inherited his zest for education from his family, who, with several generations of rabbis, were active in Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues in Philadelphia. He received his Hebrew education through private tutoring under the eye of his parents, who also home schooled him in secular subjects before he was of kindergarten age.

Although Cohen’s family preferred that he study medicine or law, he was on a natural trajectory toward academia, pursuing his interest in Spanish literature and the Jews known as New Christians. Upon his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania at age eighteen, he started a doctoral program at that university

Leah Kaplan Robins
A LABOR OF LOVE: DR. MARTIN COHEN AND SEVEN DECADES OF SEPHARDICA

When asked how long he has been working on the Sephardic Curriculum Project, Dr. Martin Cohen answered, “68 years.”

“It reminds me of when I was just getting started in rabbincal school and ready to go out to my first High Holy Day pulpit,” he said. “All of the members of our class were assembled in synagogue in Cincinnati, and they brought Dr. Nathan Perilman, a rabbi at Temple Emancipation, to give us a pep talk. He said ‘People ask me, how long did it take you to write your sermon last week? I always say five hours and 50 years.’”

So in these terms, Dr. Cohen has been preparing to write the definitive curriculum on Sephardic Jewry for four years and nearly seven decades. He began at age 11 when he met his first Spanish teacher, Richard D. Abraham, a western Sephardic Jew born and raised in Philadelphia, who attended the same Reform synagogue as members of his family. “Dr. Abraham saw that I had an interest and aptitude, and gave me books to read and suggestions for study, and I got interested!”

Cohen inherited his zest for education from his family, who, with several generations of rabbis, were active in Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform synagogues in Philadelphia. He received his Hebrew education through private tutoring under the eye of his parents, who also home schooled him in secular subjects before he was of kindergarten age.

Although Cohen’s family preferred that he study medicine or law, he was on a natural trajectory toward academe, pursuing his interest in Spanish literature and the Jews known as New Christians. Upon his graduation from the University of Pennsylvania at age eighteen, he started a doctoral program at that university.
and was appointed to teach Romance Languages. He taught at Penn concurrently with his graduate studies for four years before he received an appointment at Rutgers University. Given his background, he was naturally drawn to the investigation of the Jewish contribution to Iberian civilization, and after receiving his master’s degree and completing his doctoral courses, he began, with the encouragement of his professor, the distinguished Miguel Romera-Navarro, a thesis on religion in the work of Cervantes, who is known to have been favorably disposed to the descendants of New Christians. In the meantime, with the help of a friend, Rabbi Theodore Gordon z”l, C ’33, his family persuaded him to turn to the rabbinate.

Cohen enlisted in the Air Force during the Korean War, and spent much of his spare time preparing for advanced standing at HUC-JIR. “I even took my psychological exams and my psychiatric exam for HUC-JIR while I was in the military.”

Cohen met his wife, Dr. Shelby Ruth Cohen (née Brenner), at the University of Pennsylvania’s International House in 1948. They were married five years later, just before Cohen’s discharge from the Air Force. Dr. Shelby Cohen is Professor of Applied Psychology at Kean University, where she is now in her thirty-eighth year of teaching.

Immediately following the Korean War, Cohen entered the College as a second-year student, and by March of his first year in residence in Cincinnati, Cohen recalls, “I was told that the College wanted me for its faculty.” Though he wanted to complete his dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, the administration urged him to obtain his doctorate at HUC-JIR instead, with a concentration in Sephardic Hebrew texts.

Cohen came of age in this niche at HUC-JIR and has been for more than half a century a part of the College Institute’s history. He has known five of its presidents: Julian Morgenstern (President, 1921-1947) was President Emeritus when Cohen arrived at HUC-JIR, and taught a course that Cohen took; Nelson Glueck (1947-1971) was his teacher in the rabbinical program and brought him onto the faculty; Alfred Gottschalk (1971-1995) was his classmate; Sheldon Zimmerman (1996-2002) and David Ellenson (2002-present) were his students.

Cohen is recognized as one of the foremost scholars in his field. He has published five books on Sephardic themes, covering the cultural history and accomplishments of conversos, Jews in Spain and Portugal, and the history of the Sephardic experience. His well-known book, The Martyr: The Story of a Secret Jew and the Mexican Inquisition in the Sixteenth Century has been printed in two editions and adapted as an opera, El Conquistador. He has penned hundreds of articles and reviews, and presented papers throughout the United States and Latin America. He is the only Reform and Ashkenazic Jew ever to serve as President of the American Society of Sephardic Studies, and in
1998 he gave the keynote address at Santangel '98, an international conference on Sephardic studies sponsored by the Dominican University.

Cohen’s passion for this oeuvre is transmitted to his students. Rabbi Larry Sernovitz, N ’07 observes, “Dr. Cohen has invested incredible time and effort into uncovering the history and beauty of Sephardic Judaism. He cares deeply about producing a comprehensive history of Sephardic Judaism and all its nuances for people to study and honor for decades to come.”

Since joining the faculty, Cohen has taught courses, now two per year, on the development of early rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, and also writes and lectures on Bible and modern Jewish history when he is not teaching or writing on Sephardica. While working on the Sephardic Curriculum Project, Cohen has completed another book on Sephardica, scheduled for publication by the University of Nebraska Press, and has been approached to write a college text on the Sephardic experience. He hopes some day to finish a 450-page book based on his tract, Two Sister Faiths: Introduction to a Typological Approach to Early Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity.

Alongside this active academic career, Cohen has always loved the human side of his chosen profession. “Even when I started teaching,” he remembers, “the administration knew that my interest in going into the rabbinate was primarily to be a congregational rabbi. I love the rabbinate. I just love it.” Cohen speaks fondly of his years as rabbi of various congregations, including his assistantship at Adath Israel in Louisville, Kentucky and his senior interim position at the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in Manhattan.

Nowadays, however, his scholarly pursuits prevent him from serving in a rabbinical role. “My audiences don’t like me to preach. They all want me to lecture. I love to preach. I miss that part. But I get vicarious enjoyment from my students, watching them develop and seeing where they go.”

In many cases, his relationships with students have lasted for decades. He is the kind of teacher thought of by many who cross his path as a mentor, not merely an instructor. Sernovitz shares: “He is not only a true chacham, a true scholar, but he is an extremely gifted teacher and inspirational rabbi. He has had deep and profound impact on me both professionally and personally. As I was studying Sephardic Judaism with him as well as writing my thesis, he was patient, caring, insightful, and challenged me to produce high quality work in a risk-free environment, one where he supported me entirely along the way.” Rabbi Allison Berry, N ’07 adds, “His gentle manner inspired me to work harder and to truly love what I learned from him.”

Rabbi David Ellenson understands why generations of students feel this closeness. “As a teacher and mentor, no one has been more caring. His classes have always been filled with exceptional depth and real intellectual excitement.”

Cohen has advised more than 100 theses, most of them in Sephardica, in his half century of teaching at HUC-JIR, and he shows no sign of slowing down. A man of tremendous energy, he recalls that “when I was an assistant rabbi in Kentucky, I used to commute back and forth from Cincinnati to Louisville. In those days my energy level was so high I could get by with two hours sleep. As Confucius said, ‘Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.’”

Dr. Martin Cohen teaching at HUC-JIR/New York.
If we were in a theater waiting for a performance instead of listening to a lecture, the curtain would be closed and you would have a printed program, where I would be able to thank the institution—this amazing place—and my students who gave me an incredible ride last Fall.

Then you might get a kind of prologue for this theater experience: Last year I was asked to come before the American Bankers Association to do a session on creativity. Over 40 bankers showed up, and I asked them what they think about creativity. It turns out that their idea of creativity is really narrow. To them, it means wild abandonment, total uncontrol, everything going berserk. I left them with a list of my ideas about creativity, a little less narrow than their definition.

Rattle around in other people’s universes. Embrace paradox. Hold two ideas in your head at once, and find something to respect at both ends of the spectrum. Don’t confuse originality with creativity. Creativity is thou-

Sands and thousands of variations and is at the tip of our fingers every single second. I can’t say the same about originality. Learn how to frame things really big and how to frame things really small. Frame things big and you can get out of the personal and your problems. You can find amazing ways to connect. And frame things small, because nothing is too small to notice.

Finally, turn discomfort into inquiry. I’m just finishing a project working with geneticists. At one point I spent an hour with Eric Wieschaus, who is a Nobel Laureate, looking at flies through his microscope. I asked him, “How do you come up with the question that you want to spend the next bunch of years of your life on?” And he said, “I am fueled by my ignorance.” Isn’t that beautiful? Because there are many ways to deal with ignorance, one of which is to feel humiliated and to go about trying to chase away that feeling. Whereas there’s another way, which is to use it as fuel for what you want to come to understand.

So, that’s the prologue, the amazing potential in creativity.

Next, the curtain would open, and if I were giving you a dance and not a lecture, you would see three pools of light on the stage, and three little stories going at the same time. And you could be picking up images from each story. You would be able to stir them up yourself just by watching, and you would be able to make something of it. Try to imagine the possibility that the stories that I will tell you are all simultaneous.

Here is the first pool of light: I just got back from Japan, where I met with one of the chief corporate funders of Japanese art. After we said hello and exchanged our cards, he just lit
into me: “We do not want American artists here. Go away. We do not want to be influenced by you.” Well, because of years of working on negative feedback in the art world, I have learned to listen for the question I wish he’d asked me and respond with that. So I said back to him, “What an interesting question, the issue of influence.” And then I said to him, “I’m Jewish. The thing about the Jewish people is that we have allowed ourselves to be influenced for thousands of years. We understand the hyphen better than anybody. We know how to take in glorious pieces of information and beauty from other cultures. But we also know when to halt, put a stop to it and say, no, that’s far enough.”

It led me to a very long and still involved meditation on what does it mean to be influential, and what of my own tools do I want to impart, and when is it too much? That’s one pool of light on stage.

The second pool of light: When I left for college in 1965, I left Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and a beautiful tree-lined street with the elms arching gracefully over the center. One year when I came back for winter break, all the trees were gone. Dutch elm disease had ravished the Midwest. That spring, my mother told me over the phone that Milwaukee Public Works had planted a city full of new trees - all maple. She said, “What do they think is going to happen in 25 years? There’s going to be a maple disease, and all the trees are going to go. When are they going to understand diversity?”

The third pool of light: I spent ten years teaching dance in a retirement home a couple of miles from my house. One day, early on, there was a little lady sitting in the back who always had on a big, big coat, no matter how warm it was, and the place was often overheated. I was just getting to know the place, so I went up to her and said, “You know, it’s really hot in here. Why don’t you just take your coat off?” And she started to take it off, but the nurse who was nearby said, “Oh, no, no, she never takes her coat off,” at which the woman immediately put the coat back on. The nurse felt terrible. I mean the minute it was out of her mouth, she knew she’d lost a great opportunity. I was struck by the role of the outsider in this scenario. I didn’t know this woman. I had no idea what her patterns were, and sometimes that’s really good. It’s really good to have outsiders in your midst.

I’ll bring the power of the outsider a little closer to home. Through my work with Synagogue 2000, I was able to make some wonderful visits to synagogues. One day I was a guest at a synagogue in Boston, where I was leading a group of traditional scholars. We were sitting in the little library, and the group had just finished praying, and when it was my turn to begin, I said, “Well, let’s put our prayer books on the floor so we can start moving.”

“The books on the floor?” (Telling the lady “take your coat off” is fine. But “put the books on the floor?” Not so fine.) But I didn’t know that that was a bad thing to do then, so they explained to me that you can’t put God’s name on the floor. I said, “Well, you know, I’m a dancer. And when I teach, I always start everybody on the floor. And I always say to them, ‘Let the floor support you. Let the earth come up under you and hold you. Just let go for a minute and feel that support.’” So I said to the group, “Don’t you think God would like that just for a minute?” And then I gave them the choice. An interesting moment around innovation and tradition.

So, in our dance so far, we have three pools of light. And we have three stories laid out. And we have three ideas. As the choreographer, I’ll start pulling these together.

To do so I’m drawn to yet another story. I was in Hawaii to do a project, and I met a woman who is a Kuma Hula, a hula master. I went to her school so that we could teach a class together. She started chanting in this incredible language and this beautiful voice. And what she said was “bring your ancestors. Bring all your ancestors. Bring them into the room. Bring them all, of them, everyone that you’ve ever loved or who’s loved you, bring them all.” It was incredible. I had the room filled with my Jewish ancestors. I had the room filled with all those old pictures from my wall at home, family members I had never met. And then she said, “You’re not alone. You never were.” Isn’t that beautiful?

My grandfather left Russia, walked across the country, and ended up in Milwaukee. He left Russia because he wanted to avoid the pogroms, and by then he’d also already been a revolutionary in the first revolution of 1904-5. My father was the embodiment of a great Jewish spirit. He lived his Jewish commitment on a daily basis, and he made sure we knew that. We spent a Christmas day, which is my birthday, marching with Father Groppi (perhaps that’s a name some of you remember), one of the great civil rights organizers from the Midwest, in the freezing cold of Milwaukee. And my father turned to me and said, “This is what it means to be Jewish.” This is what I mean by the embodiment. It was action, doing. My mother used to tell me everyday, “If you want to be an artist, you better learn to stand up for yourself. You better discover your own voice.” This is in contrast to my father: “You want to be a good Jew, you serve the world.” So with those two influences you can see why I’m standing here.

So far on our stage, we’ve had three stories, and then we pulled them together. We brought in the ancestors so the dance came to the center. Now we get to the meat of the dance. Spending the semester at this campus, two things came up a lot that I wanted to reflect upon with you. One is the nature of our
identity. We must not base our identity on the fact that bad things have happened to us. It simply doesn’t work. It’s very powerful to be in opposition, you build up good muscles, but the minute the source of opposition is gone, the weaknesses show up. I don’t see how we’re going to build our identity on something other than opposition unless we engage in artistic practices and do good in the world.

The second is the idea of innovation in the midst of tradition. When I came here, I thought I was coming to teach three things: how to use the body as a ritual object, where rabbis, cantors, and teachers become vessels; how to explore text through movement; and how to use ensemble and improvisational techniques from dance and theater to help build congregational life. We did all those things. This is a grand set of post-modern tools that I’ve spent 33 years building in my choreographic world. I love these tools, and it’s so much fun to share them. But what we talked about most was dealing with change. What happens when you bring new things into tradition, and all of the discomfort, fear, and particularly loss that accompanies such innovation.

My rabbi, Danny Zemel, once said to me, “I think that God is most Godlike when God is creating. So, if people are created in God’s image, then do you suppose people are most Godlike when they’re creating?” I liked that, and it made me go back and reread some of the texts on creation. When we first meet God in the Bible, there’s all that chaos. I like to wonder how long God was in that chaos before God decided to organize it, because a lot of us, like me, enjoy chaos. And then God begins creating by making distinctions. I think it means that making distinctions is a very creative act. It’s also a deadly political act, an act of enormous power. You know how when you pick up something and it belongs in two files, and you wonder what to do with it? Just look at Genesis. Day is not night, that’s clear; but where would you put dawn and dusk, really?

Once you make distinctions between things, for example between ballet and modern dance; between being an artist and being an educator, then you put walls up between the distinctions. Then you build institutions around the walls that you put up around those distinctions. And pretty soon, you can’t get between them. At the college level studying dance, if you want to be a choreographer and an educator, you can’t. There’s probably not a single institution in this country that would train any artist in education. You have to choose between being an educator and being a maker. We are so bereft because of that. Each field is weakened, because choreographers are going to be much better choreographers if they’re also teaching. And believe me, teachers will be much better teachers if they’re still in touch with that element of making.

So I began to talk of, instead of distinctions, permeable membranes. This allows me, for example, to be involved in a community project in which I can demand incredible artistic rigor from people who may not have ever danced before. And at the same time be in touch with the fact that there may be some healing going on. I can move between those worlds. I have to move between those worlds. I want to move between those worlds.

The second problem of making distinctions is we didn’t just put the distinctions down sideways. We actually piled them hierarchically. When we say, for example, ballet is more important than modern, concert forms are more important than folk forms, rabbis are more important than cantors, we’re making hierarchical distinctions. I really don’t like that very much, because it’s just not true. It’s not the truth of my experience. In my world, I find it easy teaching dance to old people while at the same time, my company may be performing at the Kennedy Center. I don’t want anybody to tell me that the Kennedy Center is more important than teaching dance to old people. I want to live in a world where I can move between these things. Not just because they’re permeable, but because the value and importance of both things matter to me.

This matters to Jews and Jewish leaders. Because if you’re going to deal with innovation and tradition, you have to come to a place of understanding. It is not “here’s tradition” and “here’s innovation.” And it is not all about innovation to the detriment of tradition. You have to be able to hold the two ideas at the same time.

We also discussed performance. My students seemed concerned about being able to pray at the same time they’re leading prayer. That seemed like such an interesting, curious problem to me. I think if you asked performers of all kinds, you would find many variations to that question from inside the art world. I think what the question really demands is a reexamination of what everybody thinks they mean by praying. My suspicion is that by facilitating the prayer of others, one is in deep prayer, deep. It just doesn’t feel the same.

I sense that often Jews are afraid to get into their bodies during prayer because they think if they get into their bodies, they’ll loose their minds. It’s not exactly wrong because a lot of sacred dance forms are about reaching an ecstatic state. But my experience and what I’m interested in is hardly about losing your mind, but rather some deep connection, where the link between our minds and our bodies is so fast, and the learning is so huge, and the imagination is so animated. That’s what I think is really possible.

Let the curtain come down.
The Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators (LICSE), initiated three years ago with a $1.8 million grant from UJA-Federation of New York, has enhanced the leadership capacity of the inaugural cohort of 52 educators of Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, and Orthodox synagogue schools.

With a second grant of $1.9 million from UJA-Federation of New York, this transdenominational program, co-sponsored by HUC-JIR and the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), is recruiting a second group of synagogue educators from the tri-state New York area for training that will begin in January 2008.

“This historic initiative allows the seminaries of the Reform and Conservative Movements to work together to further the professional skills, Judaic knowledge, and vision for leadership of congregational school educators influencing the Jewish education and identity formation of over 30,000 children in this region,” explained Dr. Evie Rotstein, LICSE Project Director. “We are so grateful to UJA-Federation of New York for their visionary commitment to congregational school education through a grant that translates to $50,000 per educator.”

Rabbi Steven Brown, Ed.D., of JTS, said, “The LICSE is a pioneering and most successful effort to raise the self image and professional leadership skills of synagogue school educators. It has raised the bar on what synagogue school leadership should be and energized a deepening commitment to the excellence of synagogue schools on the part of the participants and their superb mentors.”

Congregational school educators involved in an activity to explore both personal and professional connections to Israel.
The Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators (continued)

“UJA-Federation has demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting and strengthening congregational religious schools. Partnering with HUC-JIR and JTS to create the Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators was a natural fit for us,” said Alisa Rubin Kurshan, Senior Vice President for Strategic Planning and Organizational Resources at UJA-Federation of New York. “This initiative gives congregational school leaders in our area an opportunity to focus on vision, leadership, and pedagogy, and to deepen their own Jewish knowledge. This in turn will empower participants to implement constructive change and maximize the potential of their synagogue schools.”

Guided by the vision of HUC-JIR’s New York School of Education and JTS’s William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, the LICSE stands on “three pillars” — leadership, Judaic knowledge and pedagogy — which serve as the organizing principles for each of the Leadership Institute’s professional development experiences.

The leadership component is designed to strengthen each participant’s skills and identity as a Jewish leader as well as introduce participants to research on effective educational practices. The Judaic knowledge component enables participants to study text on a regular basis and to incorporate these texts into their work with faculty and families. The pedagogic track helps educators strengthen their teaching skills and communicate about Jewish learning effectively.

Over the next two-and-a-half year period, the next LICSE cohort of educators will participate in two ten-day intensive Summer Seminars, eleven one- or two-day symposia, and a ten-day Israel Seminar. A personal mentor is assigned to guide and supervise each educator, culminating in the design of an Action Research Project. Grants of $2,000 are provided to facilitate the implementation of these projects in the congregational schools. Small grants are also available for participants to create an Individualized Learning Plan with their mentors. All New York seminars and symposia take place on the HUC-JIR and JTS campuses.

The LICSE cohort at Leo Baeck High School in Haifa, Israel, during their ten-day Israel Seminar.
The inaugural cohort completed its two-year program in April 2007. An evaluation report by the Jewish Educational Services of North America (JESNA Report, November 2006) highlighted the program’s achievements and the opportunities for those who will join the second cohort. It noted substantive growth in the participants’ professional skills and knowledge, as well as their confidence, self-image, and leadership capacity. The report described how the LICSE enabled participants to create a shared language and framework for addressing Jewish educational issues and how the various workshops enabled them to develop new strategies for professional development for staff, including text study, curriculum design, and denominational learning.

Participants from the first cohort attest to the personal and professional transformations that occurred. Educator Judy Jaffe, of Congregation Shomrei Emunah in Montclair, NJ, said, “Two years after being selected to participate in the Leadership Institute, I am not the same person. The Institute transformed my practices and outlook. I learned from the best in the fields of education and Judaism as well as from my colleagues, who I now call my friends. This was the most outstanding learning I have done in my professional life.”

Sara Losch, from Barnert Temple in Franklin Lakes, NJ, added, “The Leadership Institute rounded out the rough edges of professional insecurity, softened the lines of confusion, and strengthened my areas of weakness. The outcome was both fun and fulfilling.”

The JESNA report praised the Israel Seminar – a period of intensive study in Israel about the application of Israel studies into their curricula – as well as the preparations and follow-up for this Seminar. This experience enabled participants to enhance their personal and professional connection to Israel and stimulate their thinking about their vision for Israel education and their role as Israeli educators.

The evaluation pointed to mentorship as a significant aspect of the program, whereby the educators were given valued support for problem-solving and reflective practice. Each participant met monthly with a personal mentor, drawn from the LICSE’s cadre of mentors from the field of Jewish education, to work on their Individualized Learning Plan and Action Research Project, which implemented a change project within their school, and for guidance regarding any issues that arose in their school. The report noted that the Leadership Institute also reinforced and expanded the mentors’ mentoring skills and professional knowledge and strengthened their performance in the areas emphasized by the Leadership Institute, particularly with regard to reflective practice, improving communication skills, articulating Jewish educational vision, and engaging in collaborative decision-making.

Cathy Deutchman, a participant from the Community Synagogue of Rye in Westchester, NY, explained that “the Leadership Institute helped me personally and professionally. I was able to have a wonderful mentor to support and encourage me and an entire group of professional educators to learn from. I literally would not be where I am today without having gone through this experience.”

Menors, like Ira Wise from Congregation B’nai Israel in Bridgeport, CT, also gained from the program. Wise said, “The Leadership Institute has provided me with the most significant professional growth since I finished graduate school. The teachers, participants, and mentors form a community of praxis that will continue for many years.”

Lisa Pressman, of Temple Shalom in Chevy Chase, MD, noted that “the quality of the workshops and experiences were exceptional and touched upon a vast array of issues pertinent to my work as an education director. The diversity of our lecturers and our cohort allowed for the sharing of ideas across a broad spectrum of Jewish life. All this was done within a caring framework that created a community of learners and friends that will last for years.”

To qualify, educators must have at least two full years of experience leading a congregational school and must also demonstrate support from their congregation’s Rabbi, Board President, and Education Chair.

Further information is available at www.leader-institute.org or by contacting Dr. Evie Rotstein, Project Director, at (212) 824-2248 or erotstein@huc.edu.
According to the 2000-2001 United Jewish Communities’ National Jewish Population Study, fewer than half of American Jews belong to a synagogue, and the affiliated number further drops when studying single Jews in their twenties and thirties. Statistically there is a ‘twenty year gap’ between b’nai mitzvah and a return to organized Judaism – these Jews often only return to synagogue life when they themselves become parents. And with Jews having fewer children and waiting longer to have them, Jews in their twenties and thirties may remain uninvolved in synagogues or Jewish organizations for years. Traditional Jewish institutions frequently hold little appeal or relevance to Generation X and Y Jews.

However, studies also show that younger Jews are connecting to their religion and heritage in their own ways and on their own terms. While they may not feel attached to institutionalized Judaism, they often are inclined to participate in their religion if it is made pertinent to their lifestyles. Dr. Steven M. Cohen, Research Professor of Jewish Social Policy at HUC-JIR, recently completed a study with Dr. Ari Kelman from the University of California - Davis. The study, “The Continuity of Discontinuity,” found “young Jews, who remain single later in life, comprise a population for which traditional ‘family-oriented’ institutions have little appeal.” But they “are inventing new communal outlets and projects that reflect their individuality.”

During their years at the Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and New York campuses of HUC-JIR, future rabbis and cantors take on student pulpits that allow them to prepare for the leadership roles they will assume after ordination and investiture. Outreach is a primary issue that all HUC-JIR students reflect upon in their classes, when working with mentors, and through innovative programs and curricula. Students participate in ‘Adventure Rabbi’ training to create spiritual experiences in the outdoors, and in the Gerecht Family Institute for Outreach and Conversion program. The Gerecht program, run with the Union for Reform Judaism’s Outreach Department, helps rabbinical and cantorial students learn how to create a welcoming community for those interested in learning about Jewish life. HUC-JIR students also have had the opportunity to participate in four-day intensive programs at Congregation Emanuel in Denver and Temple Israel in Boston to learn about those synagogues’ great and tangible successes through strategic outreach.

Most HUC-JIR alumni face the problem of the ‘twenty year gap’ wherever their pulpit or organization, and many are drawing from their leadership training at HUC-JIR to develop new outreach strategies. Young alumni are making it their mission to reach out to Generations X and Y on new terms, while still retaining core Reform Jewish values and traditions. HUC-JIR alumni are pursuing connections to unaffiliated young Jews and are engaging them through innovative cultural, spiritual, and educational programs, groups, and activities.

Rabbi Andy Bachman, N ’96, founded Brooklyn Jews in 2003 along with his wife, attorney Rachel Altstein. Brooklyn Jews’ core beliefs include “forging a meaningful connection to Jewish life through spirituality and community.” They reach out to unaffiliated Jews through social justice activities, classes, ‘indy-minyans,’ and ‘Jewltide’ – their annual Christmas Eve party. Often, these events are situated in settings like art galleries, parks, and wine bars, away from the traditional synagogue or community center.

A year ago, Rabbi Bachman took on the position of Senior Rabbi at Congregation Beth Elohim in Brooklyn, a formerly aging congregation that he has helped revitalize by reaching out to the changing Brooklyn community and through his connections from Brooklyn Jews. The synagogue has seen a significant increase in membership and activity since Rabbi Bachman joined.

Rabbi Darren Levine, N ’03, is Executive Director of Manhattan’s Jewish Community Project Downtown (JCP), whose community is “as diverse as this city: individuals, families, kids, adults, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, observant, secular, straight, GLBTQ, spiritually connected, single-faith, multifaith, interfaith, journeying, searching, and everything in between.” Rabbi Levine says, “JCP community
members come from all backgrounds and have one thing in common: we want to create a Jewish experience that is meaningful and relevant to our lives and the lives of our families.” JCP founded the first Jewish preschool below Canal Street to serve families living in downtown Manhattan neighborhoods and 70 children currently attend. JCP recently opened a 10,000 square foot space in TriBeCa that holds Shabbat potlucks, holiday celebrations, lectures, the preschool, and adult education classes. This year, Rabbi Levine brought Rabbi Erica Greenbaum, N’07, on staff as the inaugural Director of Jewish Life. Rabbi Greenbaum, who also earned her Master of Arts in Religious Education, NYSOE ’03, sees “Jewish learning as its own access point for a rapidly changing population.” JCP offers adult education classes that include Hebrew, ‘Judaism 101’, and Rosh Chodesh groups, all designed to encourage adults to “re-embrace Judaism from a more sophisticated place.”

Like Rabbi Bachman’s neighborhood-centric model that made Brooklyn Jews a success, Rabbi Levine is “a big believer in foot-traffic Judaism.” He sees JCP’s success in “engaging people where they are currently in their lives.” He says, “People want to take charge of their Jewish lives. We engage them in leadership and have a deep volunteer structure. A traditional spoon-fed style of Jewish life creates a lay leadership vacuum.”

JCP’s new building, on a busy downtown Manhattan street, allows them to attract a diverse group of Jews. One enters the building into the café and the space can hold many different types of programs and events. The building is open for families to drop by to have coffee with other adults and to let their children socialize in the play-area. JCP also holds more formal worship events and their inaugural High Holy Day services drew a sell-out crowd of 300.

Rabbi Levine asks, “How do unaffiliated Jews connect with a Jewish community today and at the same time how do we give people who are already engaged in Jewish life the feeling that what’s going on in this space is really deeply meaningful?” He says, “That tension is what we think about all the time in terms of how we program. We have music classes and intense Jewish study for children, so we will get families who are interested in Jewish culture and also families who want serious Jewish training for their child. You have many entry points.”

HUC-JIR alumni are facing “a population of young Jews who are very sophisticated,” according to Rabbi Levine. “They’re not going to the synagogue first so we need to meet people where they are.”

Rabbi Howard Goldsmith, N’07, serves as the Assistant Rabbi at Temple Emanu-El in Manhattan and has been charged with reinvigorating the younger Jewish population in the area. He also believes younger Jews are urban and do not respond to traditional institutions. Rabbi Goldsmith says, “Generation X distrusts institutions and Generation Y sees institutions as completely irrelevant. They are different from the Baby Boomers in that they don’t get everything they want from one place – especially the synagogue.” He believes that this demographic craves authenticity and does not want to feel that an institution is dictating religion. He says, “People in this group have a spiritual yearning but they are currently unaffiliated.” His target group includes Jews in their twenties and thirties, interfaith partners, the GLBTQ community, singles, and couples. He thinks the customary ‘Jewish singles group’ that synagogues often offer is not inclusive enough or relevant to this group.

These younger adult Jews are looking for a community and Rabbi Goldsmith is in the planning stages of how to engage them. He is organizing study sessions in homes, Shabbat services in a park, a monthly participatory service, and other activities that, he says, “have a low risk and only ask people to commit to one night.” He believes that “people in this group have a spiritual yearning, they have a calling for something greater, but they do not have the tools. If your last Jewish experience was your bar or bat mitzvah, you are like a lawyer practicing with the Social Studies education of an eighth grader.”

Another group in development is at Temple Chai in Phoenix, Arizona. Rabbi Evon Yakar, C’07, is responsible for developing a “twenties and thirties group of single, committed, married, and married-with-young-children Jews.” The staff at Temple Chai sees the development of this group as the “gateway to synagogue life for this
community.” Yakar says, “Our vision is that this community is about relationships built on many and varied ongoing conversations.”

Sarah Cohen, SJCS ‘02, interned at Stephen S. Wise Temple during her years at HUC-JIR and, after receiving her Master’s in Jewish Communal Service, was hired as the Director of Membership there. She was the coordinator of their twenties and thirties ‘W Group’ and, at the 2005 biennial, was awarded URJ’s Belin Award for her programming work.

Cohen brings her experience to her current position as Membership Director of Temple Chai, where she is “concentrating on recruiting and integrating new members and evaluating and creating new community-building programs.” Cohen is working with Yakar to develop the twenties and thirties group and they hope to help younger community members “engage, or in some cases, re-engage, with Judaism, all in a fun, warm, welcoming, low-key environment.”

HUC-JIR alumni who are developing young adult groups in synagogues can look to the successes at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas. After his ordination, Rabbi Oren Hayon, C ‘04, joined the clergy there. With a membership of over 2,700 families, each of Emanu-El’s four rabbis acts as liaison to specific demographic groups. Rabbi Hayon works with the young adults group – congregants aged 21 through 39 who are married, single, with or without children. Prior to Rabbi Hayon’s tenure, the congregation had been an aging one, with a small number of unaffiliated young adults only occasionally attending services or the ‘singles’ and ‘married’ young adult groups. With encouragement from the Board of Trustees, Rabbi Hayon began expanding programming and running aggressive marketing campaigns targeting this group. The Temple used age-appropriate advertising in Starbucks, local gyms, and independent movie theaters. There was an early positive response to edgier activities and the merging of singles and married young adult groups. Rabbi Hayon led a Jewish poetry study session in a beer garden, a study of the Scroll of Esther in a Mexican restaurant, and multimedia comparisons of rock and roll and hip hop’s relationships to scripture. These outside access points attracted hundreds of young Jews from the Dallas community.

Since the early events, the congregation has hired a part time Young Adults Coordinator and has introduced a significant dues reduction for this group. Jews aged 21 through 39 are now the fastest-growing demographic at the temple. Rabbi Hayon says, “The Board of Trustees was very supportive and willing to be really bold to invest so much in this group. The young adults group has acted as an escalator to move people back into congregational life.”

Rabbi Hayon credits the early targeted marketing, creative and relevant programming, and electronic communication with much of the success. “If you have a friend of a friend who is Jewish, it’s so easy to forward on the materials. We put a lot of time and energy into electronic marketing and have reached many new members this way.” The synagogue has added podcasts of its rabbis’ sermons, available on their website for current and prospective members.

The young adults group has expanded and now draws over 400 people to its annual Rosh Hashanah service, which is followed by an ‘apple martini and honey cake’ reception. Members also attend social justice programs, service activities, and monthly themed Shabbat dinners. Subgroups, such as young adults with children, business networking groups, and chavurot have also stemmed from the group.

“Generation X and Y don’t build relationships with organizations, we build them with people,” says Rabbi Hayon. “Our programs are relevant, cool, and interesting, and attendees stick around and realize the benefit of Temple membership. We have lowered the barriers to entry.”

HUC-JIR continues to work with current students on outreach and is implementing a comprehensive leadership preparation program into the curriculum. This program will help students continue to envision their post-graduation, ordination, and investiture leadership positions, and to consider their great potential for outreach, within and beyond the synagogue.
Forty years ago, the Six Day War of June 1967 sparked the Soviet Jewry movement—a Jewish awakening and the beginning of organized activities by individuals and small groups in the Soviet Union that led to public, large-scale activism throughout the USSR and around the world.

Many members of the HUC-JIR community participated in this historic struggle to advocate for human rights: the right to renew Jewish identity and heritage, the right to immigrate to Israel, and the right to nurture Jewish culture, language, and religion in the USSR.

For those who came of age during the 1960s through the 1980s, the Soviet Jewry movement was a decisive experience in their formation as Jewish leaders. Furthermore, their activism on behalf of this cause was part of a larger Jewish and societal era of political ferment, ranging from demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and activism on behalf of civil rights and women’s rights, to advocacy for the State of Israel and the Middle East peace process, among other causes.

HUC-JIR is grateful for the contributions of personal anecdotes, archival documents, and other materials by members of the HUC-JIR community, of which selections appear here. Please add your memories to this collection, which will be preserved by the American Jewish Archives at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati.

Contact: Kevin Proffitt, American Jewish Archives, 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220-2488 or kproffitt@huc.edu

Rabbi Harold F. Caminker, C ’78

The Osipov Balalaika Russian Ballet was coming to perform at the Michigan State University Auditorium. Since the local Jewish organizations were doing nothing about this performance and only the Jewish Defense League was protesting, I decided that I would join forces with them. The local group in East Lansing was not as radical or violent as Rabbi Meir Kahane’s group in Brooklyn, I had learned. To assure myself that the protest would be peaceful, I went to meet them before the demonstration. Somehow, my involvement as well as my application to HUC-JIR got back to the campus Hillel rabbi. He called me to his office one day and threatened me. “We have built a harmonious and peaceful coexistence between Jews and Gentiles here. This demonstration threatens that. It’s just a cultural event—nothing more, nothing less. If you lend your name to this, and you participate in this, I will personally call HUC-JIR and tell them not to admit you into their rabbinical program.”

His tirade had the complete opposite effect on me. I went ahead and did participate. Not long afterward, I received the letter inviting me to HUC-JIR in Cincinnati, Ohio for my admission interview. The rest, as they say, is history.

Rabbi Harry L. Rosenfeld, C ’81

Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Alaska became a popular stop for Russians and Russian Jews learning to be free and to work in a non-Communist society. The night before Rosh Hashanah, I was introduced to the Governor of Birobidzhan, the Russian Jewish Autonomous State established by Stalin near the Chinese-Russian border, who was leading a delegation to Alaska to learn about oil and gas development. In the course of the conversation he revealed that while he had been going to Yiddish theater his whole life he had never been to a synagogue. I invited him to attend Erev Rosh Hashanah services the next night.

With no Federation or other Jewish agencies in Alaska, Congregation Beth Sholom became the resettlement agency for Russian Jews in Alaska. We formed a partnership with Catholic Social Services as well as several immigration attorneys to help us with the resettlement work, and were able to settle several Russian Jewish families in the last frontier.

Rabbi Rosenfeld and the Governor of Birobidzhan in Alaska on Rosh Hashanah 5751.
When I arrived in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1968, no one seemed to be aware of the situation in the Soviet Union. The organized Jewish community (i.e., Federation) seemed unwilling to become involved in the situation. Since there was no community program, I decided to start one. I called for a rally on the steps of the State Capitol, sent out invitations to the Governor, elected officials, and to the Jewish community at large. It was a candlelight vigil, and to my amazement nearly 1,000 people came, including the Governor, who made a grand entrance with a police escort, lights flashing. We created the Phoenix Council for Soviet Jewry and focused on Simchat Torah, the occasion throughout the Soviet Union when Jews came out to assert their Jewish identity, as the time for our annual communal gathering in support of Soviet Jewry. Within five years, we numbered 2,000 marchers – rabbis from every stream of Jewish expression, carrying Torah scrolls – marching through the streets of Phoenix.

The young men and women of SWFTY, now known as NFTY-Southwest, for years remained the backbone of protests and social activism. They became teachers to the adult Jewish community, forging a strong cadre of active adults, especially in the realm of overseas phone calls. National Soviet Jewry organizations alerted us to the status of refuseniks along with their phone numbers in the Soviet Union. Following a certain procedure, we would call these folks to strengthen their resolve and allow them to know that there were thousands of their fellow Jews around the world who cared for them, and who struggled for their freedom. These calls were made in private homes and public gatherings, wired so that all could hear. Our NFTY teens ran all these calling sessions – hundreds of them – bringing a deeper understanding of the situation to the greater Jewish community.

In 1976 I was offered the job of directing the Commission on Soviet Jewry for the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles. The first post-Holocaust challenge to save Jewish lives was both an awesome opportunity and responsibility.

By far the most dramatic public demonstration was a counter exhibition we mounted on the occasion of the Soviet Union’s L.A.-based, three-week-long trade show celebrating the 60th anniversary of the USSR. They called their trade show “The Soviet Union: Six Decades of Progress,” and rented the ground floor of the massive L.A. Convention Center. We discovered that the Soviets had rented only the ground floor of the L.A. Convention Center, and decided that we would try to rent the upper floor of the Convention Center to mount our own exhibition, which we would entitle “Soviet Jewry: Six Decades of Oppression.”

When we approached the City of L.A., the City said that they could not rent the upper floor to us since the Soviets had threatened to cancel their show if we were awarded space simultaneously to their Trade Show. Our Commission then approached Burt Pines, then L.A. City Attorney and a Soviet Jewry activist, as well as Zev Yaroslavsky, the original L.A.-based Union of Councils Soviet Jewry activist, who had just left his Soviet Jewry job when he was elected to the L.A. City Council. With their support, we threatened the City of L.A. with a taxpayer’s lawsuit if they persisted in their refusal to rent space to our Commission. With loads of press coverage, the City relented and rented us the upper floor consistent with our request.

In November 1977, as people stood in line outside the L.A. Convention Center for what they thought was a Soviet Trade Show, they were actually exposed to a photographic exhibition on the oppression of Soviet Jewry. During the three weeks of the Trade Show, more than 250,000 people visited our exhibition, as did every national, international, and local news media.
During the fall of 1977, the Supreme Soviet was visiting L.A. The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry organized an action held outside the Ambassador Hotel. We arrived in large rented U-Haul trucks from many campuses. At the appointed time, out poured hundreds of students dressed in prison uniforms, carrying placards that read ‘Free Soviet Jews.’ We carried aloft a coffin with the words ‘Soviet Jewry’ painted on its sides, and demanded to meet with the Soviet representatives. All the media outlets in Los Angeles captured the event for the nightly news.

Terry and I traveled to the Soviet Union in the winter of 1983 under the auspices of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. Our travel partners were Leonard and Freda Posnock of our community, who owned the Shofar brand of kosher bologna, salami, and hot dogs. Leonard arranged for dozens of pounds of kosher meat to be packed in ‘plain wrappers’ with no Jewish markings. We were prepared to tell the authorities on landing that they were for our personal dietary requirements and that the abundance of medicines we carried were for our multiple illnesses.

In flight, we memorized the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the refuseniks whom we planned to visit. During our intermediate stop in Helsinki, we tore our notes into small pieces and flushed them down the toilets at the airport.

On May 31, 1969, John Lennon and Yoko Ono had come to Montreal to protest the Vietnam War with a ‘Bed-In’ for peace at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel downtown. Montreal was the closest major media market to the U.S., which had barred their protest visit. I decided to go up to John Lennon’s room and ask for his signature on a Soviet Jewry petition. Chutzpah, luck, and my protest-length long hair brought me into the bedroom. John and Yoko gladly signed my petition during a break in the recording of “All we are saying is give peace a chance” – the anthem of the 1960s protest movement.

In October of 1971, Aleksei Kosygin, Premier of the Soviet Union, was coming to Canada for a state visit. We knew this was our chance to put the issue of Soviet Jewry on the front pages of international papers. Boldly, a group of Hillel students at McGill University announced that the Jewish com-
community of Montreal was closed. We so intimidated the leadership of the Canadian Jewish Congress that they agreed to pay for 50 buses to transport Montreal’s Jewish community to Ottawa on a weekday. Day schools cancelled classes, union shops packed sandwiches for their Jewish employees, and meeting points were established throughout the city. An advance team of 30 students went to Ottawa to begin the PR blitz.

When Kosygin’s plane landed in Ottawa, he was greeted by long-haired Jewish students singing Hatikvah and shouting, “Mr. Kosygin, Let My People Go!” That welcome was broadcast on the evening news. 15,000 bumper stickers plastered the city of Ottawa on every possible surface, and the media played their role in pestering Kosygin on the reunification and free emigration issue. On one morning, as Kosygin and Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau were walking on the grounds of the Parliament, a Hungarian freedom fighter jumped from the crowd and wrestled Kosygin to the ground. Irving Spiegel of the New York Times turned to me and boldly asked, “What did you pay him?”

The demonstration in Ottawa on Tuesday, October 19th was one of the largest demonstrations ever held in Canada’s capital, and as Kosygin traveled across the country, our student demonstrations dogged his every move. The following year, as our creative protests continued, Inspector Guy Toupin of Montreal’s police department suggested I get a credit card to handle all the demonstration permit requests that our group made to his department.

In 1963, when serving as Rabbi of Cleveland’s Beth Israel-The West Temple, our energetic Social Action Committee decided to focus attention on the Soviet Jewry issue, and speedily formed the Cleveland Committee on Soviet Anti-Semitism (CCSA), enlisting top Cleveland civic, religious, and political leaders, including the Mayor and ranking representatives of the Catholic and Protestant communities. Our Social Action Committee had already been active in several civic action arenas, such as fair housing, voter registration, and poverty concerns.

One of the early CCSA projects in late 1963 was directed towards writing to about 50 prominent world leaders, requesting their endorsement of the Soviet Jewry issue in terms of universal human rights and not solely as a parochial Jewish issue and hence, the issue needed to be elevated to a high priority on the world community’s agenda. It was of intense personal pride to me that our revered Nelson Glueck, along with Albert Schweitzer, Bertrand Russell, A.J. Heschel, among numerous other noted humanitarian, religious, and political figures, responded immediately, positively, enthusiastically, and courageously. It was at the same time indeed disappointing, shameful and dispiriting to have also received negative or no responses from a variety of ‘notables’ and institutional leaders in and outside of the Jewish community (local, national, and international), who fearfully counseled sha shil and worse.

In the ensuing years, the CCSA helped to spawn the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry, as our grass-roots movement gradually expanded more widely and more broadly, and, in time, all the major American Jewish institutions became engaged in the struggle that ultimately enlisted worldwide general support.

The highlight of my visit to the Soviet Union was my conducting a wedding huppah/tallit ceremony, in a quiet but joyful minyan, with the happy, almost sotto voce strains of mazel tov, siman tov hanging in the air of that small, cramped, one-room flat. That evening, there was a party at a local restaurant, with a klezmer band, to our surprise. Yet all the windows were taped with opaque wrapping paper and the doors were kept shut from the cold and dark on the outside and from the eyes of passers-by, in contrast to the lightness and hopes in the hearts of those inside who celebrated with all the traditional songs and memories.

The refuseniks we met with were unemployed or underemployed in menial jobs, although they were predominantly scientists and academicians, and were therefore not a cross-sample of Soviet Jews. Their greatest frustration was that they were denied professional information from the outside world and were forbidden to send out their own work to be published, even when Soviet security was not an issue – a vicious form of punishment aimed deliberately at destroying their professional careers. Even more serious was the new criminal charge of ‘parasitism,”
part of a Communist Catch-22, where it was a crime not to be gainfully employed. But when you applied for an exit visa, you were immediately fired from your job.

Some were putting their spare time to constructive uses for the Jewish community: Leonid, a cinematographer, had begun producing plays with Jewish content. Iosef, an engineer, was developing drama groups. Elena was translating basic Jewish books into Russian to enable Soviet Jews to learn their forgotten heritage. Many were learning Hebrew to prepare for their new lives in Israel, and to be able to read the Bible and prayer book. Vera conducted a Sunday School in her home, where the children prepared holiday programs for their families and friends and where youngsters learned about the Jewish holidays, customs, and history. She told us of police harassment, and yet the classes continued and the children came.

**Rabbi Faith Joy Dantowitz, N ’93**

‘Free Alexei — College Green at Noon’ – I remember plastering flyers around campus at the University of Pennsylvania in my senior year of college when I was co-chairperson of Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ). The rally was to raise awareness of the plight of refuseniks, specifically, a man named Alexei Magarik.

In 1987-1988, I was a Program Director for Boston’s Action for Soviet Jewry. That year there was a cultural exchange with Moscow and many performances were held in downtown Boston. I helped prepare ‘alternative playbills’ – listing the facts about oppression of Jews in Russia – enlisted volunteers and together handed them out to incoming theater goers. I was also involved in a 3-day hunger strike to raise awareness for Soviet Jewry.

**Rabbi Stanley M. Davids, C ’65:**

In 1977 I traveled to Russia with Rabbi Neil Kominsky, C ’70 – once we had accomplished a core curriculum of survival techniques. We learned how to read Cyrillic. We were taught about hotel rooms that were bugged, about how to hail a taxi, about how to cover our identities as rabbis. We were instructed to raise several thousand dollars and then to use that money to purchase the goods that we had to smuggle into the USSR: jeans that could be sold on the black market by refuseniks to get cash; cigarettes that could be used as bribes in tough situations; risqué postcards that could be used by imprisoned Jews to gain favors from guards; tape recorders to help messages get out from behind the Iron Curtain, and the like. We bought books with more white spaces than words, so that we could write down with disappearing ink the names and addresses of those who wished Israel to issue them visa approvals. We also brought basic cameras and film. We were taught how to ask others on our flight to carry the exposed film onto the returning flight for us. We were taught how to challenge customs agents who wanted to examine the contents of our suitcases.

I returned to the USSR in 1990 as a delegate to a world conference that was seeking to unite religious leaders from across the world around shared environmental concerns. Resa and I had been in steady contact with the founders of Congregation Hineini, the first Progressive congregation in the land. We were asked to attend what was to be a founding worship occasion in a Moscow apartment an hour away from the Kremlin. Of course we agreed. The setting was in a humble apartment in an even more humble neighborhood. The secret police let us know that they knew of us, but we were not in any way hindered. Together, Resa and I conducted services and led the singing of *zemtrot.* Dinner was brought out – trays of unheated leftover El Al food from our environmental conference. It was obvious to us that most of those packed into the apartment felt that they were participating in a feast.

Near the end of the evening, we felt ourselves literally pinned against the wall as one person after the other tried to slip us a piece of paper with a contact name in Israel or in the United States. We were begged to help them get visas, to help them find ways to keep their Judaism alive. We felt their fear and their despair as well as their hope. Nothing that any of us did can compare with the heroic and inspirational struggles of the Soviet Jews to whom we reached out.

**Rabbi Henry Jay Karp, N ’75**

In 1987 I, along with Rabbi Avi Schulman, was privileged to be selected by the Midwest Association of Reform Rabbis to be their *shaliach* to Soviet Jewry. We worked for months with Marilyn Tallman from Chicago Action for Soviet Jewry in preparing our trip. She advised us that a new watch had
just come on the market that might serve us well—the Casio DataBank. This watch had the capability of holding an electronic address book which could be locked by a password. So I went out and bought one and carefully programmed the names and phone numbers of the refuseniks on our list into the watch.

No sooner did we arrive in the Soviet Union than I knew that those names were indeed safe. For one of the first things that I noticed was that the old liquid crystal quartz watches with the thick red glass lens were all the rage there. In consumer technology the USSR was so far behind us that the authorities could not even begin to imagine that the little watch on my wrist contained the important information programmed into it.

After my return to Iowa, there was one family in particular with whom I kept in contact—Asya and Vladimir Knokh, and their daughter Irena. When they finally received their exit visas, they told me that they really wanted to come to the United States. My Jewish community decided to sponsor them. We worked closely with Senator Chuck Grassley, who was primarily responsible for arranging their entry into the U.S. I will never forget the day our community greeted them as they stepped off the plane in the Quad Cities Airport.

Lev Shapiro was a courageous member of the refusnik community. He lived in Leningrad and was caught up in the alleged hijacking plot of 1970. Over the years he was ostracized, his kids were kicked out of school, and he was sustained spiritually (and probably materially) by a stream of visitors from the West. When his son Israel turned 13 he was twinned with hundreds of American bar mitzvah kids. The family got out to Israel in the early 90s. We learned that Lev had sent thank you notes to every

When it was my time to become a bar mitzvah on March 14th, 1987, my parents suggested that I twin with a boy of 13 in Russia who was denied his right to observe his Judaism. I decided that I would dedicate my service in his honor and symbolically have his bar mitzvah at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto. His name is Mark Berenfeld, and I still have a postcard addressed to him: 6 Sudostroitelnaya, KV 81, Moscow, USSR.

I invited my guests to write a birthday wish to him on pre-addressed postcards, to show him we cared and wanted to help all Jews in Russia. I reminded people not to mention politics or religion in the postcard because it would get confiscated by the KGB. I still have the kiddush cup I received as a gift that day that has my name on one side and Mark’s on the other. It was a small gesture, but one I never forgot.

Judith Alban, SJCS ’86

It was the summer of 1978 and I was 16 years old. My parents had decided to take a family trip to Eastern Europe that would include the Soviet Union. But how could any thinking, committed Jews go to the Soviet Union in those days and not try and take some sort of a moral stand?

When we reached the border, I can still remember the guards squeezing our toothpaste, examining our cameras, and putting their fingers into our lotions. Suddenly, a huge commotion took place when prayer books were found in my father’s luggage, and before I knew it, we were all being whisked off for questioning.

I remember going with my mother to the bathroom, where she went into one of the stalls, and I heard the toilet immediately flush. There was a Russian guard in the bathroom so we did not talk together. Later I found out that the type of address book that we were told to take was thin and made of paper. When they frisked my parents they did not find it and my mother flushed it down the toilet. Had it been found, the refuseniks in the book would have been in greater trouble.

It was obvious that we were followed the whole time. At the end of our week, when we were to leave at the Polish border, again they searched and interrogated us. They took our cameras away for a little while and when we got home and developed the film, it had all been exposed and was largely ruined.

Upon our return home, my family adopted a Russian family who was newly arrived. They had a son my age and it meant a lot to us to help this family with some of the hurdles they faced as they acclimated to this country.

For me, the plight of the refuseniks was what inspired me to not be complacent.
Every year I present to the eighth grade class of Temple Shalom the story of 08948000, my name during the twelve days I served at the Federal Correctional Institute (prison) in Petersburg, VA, for demonstrating in front of the Soviet Embassy on May 1, 1985. Five of the nineteen rabbis and one Lutheran pastor arrested that day refused to pay a $50 fine and accept six months probation. Four colleagues from the Washington Board of Rabbis – two Conservative rabbis and two Reconstructionist rabbis – joined me in choosing incarceration. Our trial took place in December 1985. We were told to report to prison the next morning.

The reasons for choosing to serve time were many. We believed that the law we were violating was morally repugnant and unconstitutional on its face. It prohibited nonviolent protest within 500 feet of an embassy. The law had been passed in 1938 to protect the Nazi German embassy from confrontation by people who objected to that country’s immersion in violence and hatred. We also knew that by going to prison we would generate more attention on the refuseniks whose lives we were trying to save. Five of them were being threatened with death and by publicizing their plight we might be performing an important act of *pikuach nefesh*. None of them died. What we did may have helped.

We felt our confinement symbolized the imprisonment of the Jewish people in the Soviet Union. Surely that would not be lost on the press and the people who the press reached. It wasn’t. We received responses of support for the cause of Soviet Jewry from all over the country and beyond. The entire Senate Judiciary Committee, headed by Strom Thurmond, sent two resolutions to President Reagan calling on him to pardon the five rabbis. President Reagan refused.

We were sentenced to two weeks. The day we were released we drove right back to the Soviet embassy and demonstrated all over again. This time we wore our prison uniforms. The press and lots of supporters were there. The police were there and they left us alone.

Between that first demonstration on May 1 and our trial in December, it was my privilege to serve as one of four members of the Washington Board of Rabbis who arranged for seven other arrest demonstrations. Among the 180 people arrested were Rabbi Jack Stern and Dr. Martin Gilbert. The law used to convict us all was later overturned by a 9-0 vote by the Supreme Court.

I

In November 1977 we were briefed by representatives of the Mossad, to help gather family background information needed by the government of Israel in order to issue proper invitations to Soviet Jews who wished to immigrate to Israel. We traveled under the auspices of a travel agency that was a Communist front, with a group of thirty members of the American Communist party, who were not friendly to us when they learned that we were Jewish. During our harrowing two-week journey, we made many contacts, distributed literature (including Leon Uris’s *Exodus* in Russian) and developed codes for the information we gathered. Some of the apartments we visited had doors damaged by KGB forced entry. My brother-in-law Dr. Sidney Shertzer was strip-searched and interrogated. A KGB woman operative contacted me by phone in my hotel room for the purpose, I am sure, of sexual entrapment, but I scheduled the meeting for a time just beyond our departure date. Just about everyone we contacted on our journey settled in Israel.

In November 1987 I traveled to the Soviet Union. Only a few months earlier some visitors from the States had been roughed up and had to spend the night in a Moscow jail. What would I encounter?

My fears paled when compared to the struggles of the people I met. One of them was Igor Chernoshwartz – 22 years old, half a head taller than me, with deep-set eyes and a dark beard. He looked ten years older. One evening in Leningrad we stood speaking in the cold night air, afraid to come too close to the hotel where some peering eyes might see us. We talked about our families and what brought us to Jewish life.

“Where is your family from?” Igor asked.

“On my mom’s side from Germany; on my dad’s from Vilna.”

“Vilna,” Igor smiled with a sadness tinged with anger, “My family, too.” He paused, and then asked, “So what made your grandparents so much smarter than mine?”
In order to get at the Yakir family, the Soviets threatened to draft their son, Alexander (Sasha) into the Soviet military, making him ineligible for emigration for 5 years. We contacted Evgeny Yakir quite frequently to support him, and to prevent him, Rimma, and Sasha from becoming despondent. At the time, Senator Bob Dole of Kansas, who was Majority Leader in the U. S. Senate, took a great interest in the Yakir case, and agreed to participate in a telephone conversation from his Senate office with Evgeny in Moscow. I will never forget when, during the height of the crisis with Sasha’s possible conscription, Senator Dole said on the phone to Evgeny, “I know that there are others listening to this phone call (meaning the KGB), and I promise them that we will be watching and taking note of everything that is done to you, and we will respond.” I became friendly with Dole’s chief L.A. working on these issues. I proposed to him that they consider trading grain for Jews, since the Soviet Union wanted American grain and Kansas is the U.S.’s chief wheat producer. The Soviets wanted a lifting of the Jackson/Vanik Amendment. About a year later, to my amazement, I saw in the paper that the Senator had introduced legislation to sell grain to the Soviets and lift Jackson/Vanik if they would cease restrictions on Jewish emigration. But the legislation never got anywhere.

In December 1987, as a graduate student at the University of Florida-Gainesville, we were in the midst of finals week when we heard that Gorbachev, then the head of the USSR, was going to make his first-ever visit to America. We received a fax at the Hillel House that Anatoly Sharansky had just arrived in America and was urging Jews from all across the county to come to Washington to demand that Gorbachev free Soviet Jews. In two hectic days we managed to sign up 40 students and rent a bus for the 18-hour journey to Washington.

On the way we made posters, learned Soviet Jewry protest songs, and talked all night about every topic facing the Jewish people in Israel, Ethiopia, and around the world. At sunrise, we davened shacharit, standing in the aisle of the bus, as we drove up Route 95. We arrived at the rally before noon. Over 100,000 Jews had come from every state. We sang our songs, waved our posters, and shouted our protest chants for about four hours. Then we had to get back on the bus to drive another 18 hours back to the University of Florida to finish our final exams.

Six years later, as an HUC-JIR rabbinical student, I made my first trip to Ukraine to find my grandfather’s beit midrash. For Shabbat I went to our Reform Congregation in Kiev. They told me that they did not have a rabbi and asked “Maybe you would like to be our rabbi?” I responded “No, I live in America. I am just visiting.”

Two years later, I found myself serving as the rabbi in Kiev, as my first post after ordination. Now in my tenth year as a rabbi, I lead HUC-JIR’s “FSU Rabbinical Infusion Program,” which provides rabbis and rabbinical students to the nearly 70 Reform congregations in Eastern Europe. As a Jewish student activist in 1987, I could never have guessed that 20 years later I would be privileged to lead HUC-JIR’s efforts to deepen Reform Jewish life in the Former Soviet Union.

Rabbi Mark H. Levin, SJC ‘74, C ‘76, D.H.L. ’01

Rabbi David Wilfond, C ’97

Rabbi S. Shapiro, C ’60:

Hanna and I traveled to the Soviet Union in February 1982 to visit refuseniks, in a trip sponsored by Chicago Action for Soviet Jewry, and saw 23 families in 9 days. We met Leonid and Masha K., living in a collective apartment, one kitchen and bath for three families. Leonid was just out of prison for having presented his underground play “Masada.” They had a new baby girl, Ruth. I gave her a Hebrew name and Hanna somehow put together a naming certificate for the ceremony. We five had a reunion 14 years later in Jerusalem. Ruth’s certificate was on her wall.

In Leningrad, at another refusenik get-together, there were many young couples, some speaking Hebrew. One man sat uncomfortably on a cushion. They told us he had just been circumcised in Moscow. Why? “My grandfather always led our seder. He died this year. Now I have to do it. But I wouldn’t feel right taking his place if I didn’t have brit milah.” Who did it for him? “There are some old-timers in Moscow who understand such things.”

Rabbi David Wilfond celebrating Shabbat at the Reform Congregation in Kiev.

Rabbi Mark S. Shapiro and the Byaly family.
When I was rabbi of Temple B’nai Jeshurun in Des Moines, Iowa, the congregation’s President, Harry Pomerantz, and I spent ten days in July 1987, secretly visiting refuseniks in Moscow and Leningrad. We spent Shabbat at the Great Synagogue, where we picked up a low level KGB ‘follower’, who spent the next few days appearing at the hotel and offering to ‘guide’ us along our way. We also found hidden microphones in the hotel room. We communicated by use of children’s ‘Magic Slates.’ Each day, we visited a different refusenik family, bringing them kosher food, vitamins, medicine, books, and electronic goods.

We were searched by Soviet customs as we left the country. Much to my surprise, Harry tried to smuggle out a letter from a Refusenik to a relative in the U.S. Soviet customs found the letter on his person and immediately separated us. We were placed in isolation. Fortunately, I was able to tear up my notes and flush them down the toilet. After three hours alone, all the while wondering what the Russians were going to do to us, we were reunited on the tarmac of Leningrad Airport. They just wanted to give us a good scare.

Our November 1988 mission was successful in that we managed to meet with every one of the families that Action for Soviet Jewry back in Waltham, Massachusetts had arranged for us to contact. We delivered well over one hundred pounds of contraband: the usual stuff for the black market – cameras, electronic calculators, jeans; and the not so usual stuff – one hundred syringes for a diabetic living in Moscow.

To say that when Rabbi Cary Yales, z’l, and I arrived in Leningrad the authorities gave us a hard time is an understatement. The men with the badges at the Leningrad airport warned Cary and me that upon leaving the country we would have to present the men with badges at the Moscow airport with every single item of contraband they had discovered – two very long lists, indeed! As we were riding in a cab from the airport to the hotel, Cary and I agreed that by the time we arrived at the Moscow airport with our four empty suitcases, all of our deliverable goods would have been either ‘lost’ or ‘stolen.’
Moses and the Journey to Leadership: Timeless Lessons of Effective Management from the Bible and Today’s Leaders


Dr. Norman J. Cohen’s new book, Moses and the Journey to Leadership: Timeless Lessons of Effective Management from the Bible and Today’s Leaders, addresses the contemporary search for leaders with vision and integrity, by focusing on a great biblical leader whose life and actions in antiquity offer wisdom and inspiration for our own time.

Cohen explores how leaders are not simply born, but molded through life’s victories and failures, triumphs and defeats. No one exemplifies this process better than Moses, the most important and celebrated character in the Hebrew Bible. Faced with great internal and external challenges, Moses was sculpted into a great leader not only by circumstance, but also by his own determination and devotion to his people.

In his powerful and probing examination of the enduring texts in the biblical tradition, Cohen assesses Moses’s journey to leadership and its lessons on the vision, action, and skills needed to be a successful leader. Cohen relives Moses’s development from lonely shepherd to founder of a nation, emphasizing key points that the reader can utilize to enrich the different leadership roles one may be called upon to play in one’s daily life, whether in business, religion, politics, education, or other arenas.

Cohen draws from Moses’s life to provide guidance on how to articulate one’s expectations of others, as a group and as individuals; empower others to lead more responsible, ethical lives; support co-workers and family even when they fail; and challenge others to reach their highest potential.

The Leader’s Unique Song

*Exodus 15:1–21*

Passing through the Red Sea, the Israelites witness God’s power. While they walk on dry land, with the waters forming walls on their right and left, the Egyptians are inundated by those very waters and obliterated. The children of Israel see (va-yar) the strong hand (yad) of God, which delivers them from the hand (yad) of the Egyptians, from the Egyptians’ power (Exodus 14:28–31).

Though it is God who seems to act, nevertheless it actually is Moses’s hand that divides the waters: “Then Moses held out his hand over the sea and the Lord drove back the sea with a strong wind … and turned the sea into dry ground. The waters were split” (14:21). And it is Moses’s hand that destroys the Egyptians: “The Lord told Moses: ‘Hold out your hand over the sea, that the waters may come back over the Egyptians’” (14:26).

Moses is described in God-like terms: Just as God divides the waters on the second day of creation, thereby creating the earth, now Moses creates a new patch of dry land in the midst of the waters of the Red Sea, partnering with God in this moment of redemption. The creation cannot come to fruition—God’s plan for humanity fulfilled—without the actions of leaders like Moses.

So the Israelites, many of whom have doubted Moses’s ability and motivation, and have been highly critical of him, now see him as God’s partner in this redemptive moment: “They believed in the Lord and in Moses, [God’s] servant” (14:31). He is perceived as the faithful instrument of God’s will, and therefore it is fitting to refer to him by the title Eved Adonai, God’s servant.

To have faith in one implies the faith in the other, and, by extension, to doubt or speak against Moses is tantamount to speaking against the Divine.

The Nature of the Song at the Sea

The Israelites witness and understand the ramifications of the miracle God has wrought for them as they face the waters of the sea and are pursued by Pharaoh and his Egyptian soldiers, and, as a result, their faith in God and in Moses, their leader, is...
renewed. As a reward for their faith, the rabbinic tradition emphasizes that the spirit of God’s Presence rests upon them, enabling them to sing a song of praise and redemption. As they read the biblical text, the Rabbis frequently point out that contiguous passages have a causal relationship. The verse “They believed in Adonai and in Moses, [God’s] servant” (14:31) is immediately followed by “Then sang Moses and the Children of Israel” (15:1), as if the people’s ability to sing was the product of their belief. 6

Many modern-day leaders suffer from speech impediments and work hard to overcome them. Winston Churchill had a lisp, which he struggled to correct. And Churchill perhaps will best be remembered for his inspiring speeches during the battle of Britain. Part of what enabled him to become such a great communicator was how the British people responded to his leadership initiatives.11

Their words of song and praise, as the Rabbis note, are the result of God’s Holy Spirit resting on the Israelites and Moses. This meaning is underscored by a poignant wordplay: Then Moses and Israel are able to sing (yashir) the song (shirah) because God’s Spirit rests (sharta) upon them.7 God’s Shechinah is the source of the song of praise, creating a powerful irony: God is both the source and the object of the song! Their faith in both God and Moses leads to their ability to sing, as noted by the use of the simple word az, which can be understood as either “then” or “therefore.” Here we can translate: “Israel believed … therefore (az) Moses and the Children of Israel sang” (14:31–15:1).8

Perhaps it is the faith that the people have in Moses as their leader that enables him to sing this majestic song of praise to God. How is it that Moses, who describes himself by saying, “I am not a person of words … I am slow of speech and slow of tongue” (4:10), suddenly turns into Israel’s singer of God’s song?9 And not only does he give voice to Shirat ha-Yam, the Song at the Sea, but some sources claim that he composes the entire song by himself. He finds the words to express what all the people are experiencing and feeling.10 Even great leaders often need the support and faith of their followers to find the strength to overcome obstacles, such as, in Moses’s case, a speech impediment. Without the sense that the people care about them, leaders are often overwhelmed by the myriad personal challenges they face.

But precisely how is the song uttered? Do Moses and Israel sing while they are still in the midst of the waters or do they praise God once they emerge from the Red Sea and have witnessed the Egyptians drowning? It is possible that the people of Israel sing praises to God as they are crossing the sea. If so, they utter the words of the song while still unsure how it will all turn out. Their fear and anxiety, their sense that their fate is hanging in the balance, all suffice the notes of the Song, as do their hope and faith.12 When Pharaoh’s chariots and soldiers enter the sea (15:19) … then Moses and Israel sang (15:1).13 As they walk on the dry land, discovering that deliverance from the hands of Egyptians is indeed possible, Moses and Israel begin to utter praises of God.

Most commentators assume that Israel and Moses sing this song of redemption after their salvation is guaranteed. It involves a retrospective understanding and internalization of all that they have experienced and what it will mean for them in the future. It encompasses a sense of the past and present, which points them toward the future, captured by the initial verb in the future tense: “Then Moses sang/will sing [yashir]” (15:1).14

But not only does the future tense verb yashir indicate that this song will be sung again in the future, as if it were a paradigmatic song to be repeated by future generations, but this interpretation gains...
Moses and the Journey to Leadership: Timeless Lessons of Effective Management from the Bible and Today’s Leaders (continued)

greater force by the use of the word az, here translated as “then.” Though az can be taken to refer to both the past and the future, the tradition enumerates many of those verses in which az clearly points us to future events. In fact, the Rabbis say that young infants, and even embryos in their mothers’ wombs, open their mouths and sing at the sea. Also indicating that the song will be repeated by future generations is the addition of the redundant phrase va-yomru laimor, “and they said, saying,” before the song’s opening words (15:1). In the midrash, the Rabbis emphasize in this regard that “We shall tell our children and our children will tell their children that they should recite a song such as this when God performs miracles for them.”

The word for song, shir, is close to the root shur, which means “to glimpse into the future.” As Moses leads Israel in this song marking their deliverance from the hands of their Egyptian taskmasters, he enables them to see the possibility of ultimate redemption. As Miriam demands of them, “Sing to the Lord,” Shiru l’Adonai, we are tempted to complete the imperative with the messianic phrase from Isaiah 42:10, shir hadash, “a new song.” According to the rabbinic tradition, ten songs span all of human history, moving from the redemption from Egypt to the coming of the messianic age, of which Shirat ha-Yam is one. This series culminates with the song of redemption in Isaiah 42, which is also enunciated in Psalm 149:1.

Who Sings the Song?

As we have already noticed, it is not clear whether the words used at the outset of the song refer to the past or to the future. However, there is an even greater lack of clarity when it comes to who actually is singing. The verbs are both singular (yashir—he sang; ashirah—I will sing) and plural (va-yomru—they said). Therefore, we as readers are left in the dark as to exactly how the Song at the Sea is performed. When it says, “Az yashir [singular] Moshe u-Venai Yisrael,” and then “ashirah l’Adonai,” does it mean that only Moses sings and the People of Israel merely listen passively, or do the singular verbs somehow indicate that both are involved in some way? Adding to the confusion as to who performs the song is the phrase va-yomru laimor, “and they said, saying” (15:1). This confusion, however, gives rise to several alternative leadership models, each of which can be instructive for us.

The powerful singular verbs lead some commentators and midrashic sources to stress that Moses and Israel sing in unison. Inspired by God’s miraculous deliverance and the presence of the Shechinah, they raise their voices as if one person were singing. Moses and Israel are seen as being equal, shekulim. This model breaks down traditional hierarchy in leadership and creates greater unity among the group.

According to one tradition, the People of Israel, deferring to their leader, request that Moses begin the song, but he declines, saying, “No, you shall begin for it is a greater mark of honor for God to be praised by the multitude than by one single human being.” At once, the people sing to God. And only after they finish does Moses also praise God’s name for the signs and miracles that he had been shown.

However, the dominant rabbinic tradition holds that Moses is the one who actually begins to sing the words of Shirat ha-Yam, and the People of Israel in some way follow his lead. The song is recited antiphonally, though the tradition is not clear as to how that works. The most prevalent view among the Rabbis is that Israel merely echos Moses’s words. The leader creates the song alone and the people simply repeat what he sings. Though the teachers to whom this tradition is attributed vary, it appears very early and is repeated over the centuries. Occasionally, there is a debate as to who the people repeated—is it all of Moses’s exact words or simply the initial key word signifiers? The notion that it is Moses who sings and Israel who merely echoes his words and melody is a masculine model of the strong frontal leader who transmits a vision that the people are to follow. Moses is the “I” standing before the people, leading them in song. In this model, only the leader possesses the wisdom and insight to articulate what they must believe and how they must act.

However, some traditions suggest that Israel does not simply mimic Moses’s recitation of the song. A number of sources emphasize that, following Moses’s singing of a particular phrase of Shirat ha-Yam, Israel repeats what
Moses has sung and then completes the line, illustrating another form of leadership. They follow his lead, pick up his melody and words, and then add their own. Moses, for example, sings, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted,” and the people repeat after him and then finish the line, “I will sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted.” The horse and rider He has thrown into the sea” (15:1). This is a powerful example of leadership development and underscores the nature of the leader’s mentoring role.

**Miriam’s Song and Model**

The notion that the Israelites sing antiphonally at the sea is first suggested by Philo of Alexandria, who imagines that they form two choruses, Moses leading the men and his sister, Miriam, leading the women. Though Miriam’s song is relegated to two verses and one line of actual song (15:20–21), its content is exactly the same as the first line of Moses’s song: “Sing to the Lord, for He is highly to be praised. The Horse and rider He has thrown into the sea” (15:21). It seems that Miriam essentially plays the same role—leading the women, who follow her, as Moses does for the men.

Yet, Miriam plays a unique role, even compared to her brother, Moses, since the biblical text emphasizes that all the women go out after her with their timbrels, and they praise God through ecstatic dance and song. Miriam is here identified by name for the very first time in the Bible and she is referred to as ha-Neviah, the Prophetess, and as the “sister of Aaron.” The tradition interprets these titles as signifying that Miriam prophecies the birth of Moses (she is five years old when Moses is born) for she is “only the sister of Aaron when she utters the prophecy.” Yet, it is significant that at the moment of Moses’s greatest triumph Miriam is also identified as a prophet, like her brother, and is thought of as Aaron’s sister. We would expect her to be called “Moses’s sister”! This stresses the special role Miriam plays. Miriam’s song is clearly different from Moses’s song. Moses’s singing is described by the verb yashir: He sang his song to the people, while Miriam, by contrast, is said to literally “respond” to [the women] (15:21). The word used is ta’am, which comes from the root anah (answer). Moses sings in front of the congregation, but Miriam reacts to those around her, responding to them and their songs. Hers is a feminine model, one of sensitivity and response, through which she encourages her sisters to sing their own song. Her empowerment of the women to sing their song is clear from the words she utters. In contrast to Moses leading the people by himself, Ashirah l’Adonai, I will sing to God, Miriam urges her sisters to sing themselves, Shiru l’Adonai, “Sing to God!” Miriam’s model as a leader is clear: to enable those around her to find their own voices through which to praise God. They need not merely emulate or echo the leader’s song. Great leaders understand that each person must be encouraged to raise his or her voice.

Larry Bossidy, former CEO of Allied Signal, realized that developing new leaders is the key to profitability as well as the sustainability of a company. Can those you lead initiate change on their own? Protégés, such as Mary Petrovich, were encouraged by Bossidy to devise their own methods for achieving the company’s goals once they had been trained. He understood that there was a difference between mentoring future leaders and telling them exactly what to do.

The tradition goes even further in positing the uniqueness of the song of Miriam and the women. Though it is only one line, in contrast to the nineteen lines of the song of Moses, the Rabbis stress that Miriam and her sisters actually sing an entire song by themselves, which is different from Moses’s song.

The women’s song is distinctive because they utilize tuppim, drums or timbrels, to accompany their song and dance. According to a frequently cited tradition, the women anticipate that God will perform miracles for them and that even though they leave Egypt in the middle of the night, in such a rush that they aren’t able to prepare food for the journey, they make sure to bring along musical instruments. Like all other righteous individuals, they are prepared for the moment of redemption! The song of the women is echoed in the drums they carry with them from Egypt; this is understood as expressive of their innate faith in the future. As women, understanding the potential of birth as a means of overcoming past suffering and death, they are ever attuned to possible moments of transcendence. They are always ready to break into song. They teach us that all leaders need to have the capacity to celebrate the potential inherent in every new moment as well as the coming to fruition of their vision.

**Drawing from the Two Leadership Models**

Miriam’s entire life is associated with water. Not only does she first appear at the Nile to save Moses’s life, but her very name (Miriam—mar yam, bitter sea or water) is perhaps tied to Marah, the place of bitter waters, mentioned, as we will shortly see, immediately after Shirat ha-Yam at the end of Exodus 15. It may also be hinted at in Exodus 17, when Israel complains that there is no water to drink when they reach Rephidim, also identified as a place of strife and bitterness (17:7). Furthermore, in recog-
nition of her song, the tradition envisions a well springing up in the desert that accompanies the Israelites on their trek through the wilderness for most of the next forty years. It is therefore called “Miriam’s well.”

According to the Rabbis, this well, due to the piety of Miriam, dates back to the beginning of the world, having been formed on the second day of Creation, when God separated the waters, and all the patriarchs and subsequent leaders of the people had access to it. And finally when Miriam dies at Kadesh, the well and its life-giving waters disappear (Numbers 20:2).

As the Israelites proceed on their journey through the desert, they carry with them both the song of Moses, the powerful singular song of the male, as well as the responsive chords of Miriam, who empowers others to sing their songs. The challenge for each of us who are blessed to play any kind of leadership role is to recognize that there are two different leadership models—one masculine, the other feminine—both of which we must tap. But to do so, we have to get in touch with that other side of ourselves and strive to make it a more active part of who we are as leaders. Those of us who are men must search for the softer, more open and responsive part of our being, so as to help us respond better to others. This will enable us to show others that they, too, can raise their voices in song. Those of us who are women can begin to draw on the more assertive sides of ourselves that will enable us to take a stand when necessary, share our vision, and help us to speak our minds and hearts when necessary.

1 They also emphasize the power signified by God’s hand in Shurat ha-Yam, the Song at the Sea, itself: “Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power, Your right hand, slatters the foe” (Exodus 15:6).
2 Meier, Moses: The Prince, the Prophet, p. 107.
3 Benno Jacob’s commentary to Exodus 14:30–31 and Me'am Lo'ez to Exodus 14:31.
4 Sarna, JPS Torah Commentary to Exodus 14:31. He is called the servant of God or some version of this over thirty times in the Bible.
5 For example, Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Be’hallah, parashah 7; Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shimoni to Exodus 14:31; and Midrash ha-Gadol to Exodus 14:31.
6 Among many parallel traditions, see Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Be’hallah, parashah 7; Midrash Tanhuma Ba’alei Be’hallah 11; Midrash ha-Gadol to Exodus 14:31; and Shemot Rabbah 22:3.
7 In addition to the sources mentioned in note 6, see also Me’am Lo’ez to Exodus 15:1 and Rabbeinu Bahya to Exodus 15:1.
8 Rashi and Ramban to Exodus 15:1, as well as Or Hayyim.
9 Meier, Moses: The Prince, the Prophet, p. 108, and Wiesel, Messengers of God, p. 193. Wiesel reminds us that while stutterers have difficulty speaking, they have no problems singing.
10 See Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, vol. 1, pp. 345–346, and Benno Jacob’s commentary to Exodus 15:1.
11 Hayward, Churchill on Leadership, pp. 98–99.
13 See, for example, Ramban and Sforo’s comments on this passage. See also Me'am Lo'ez to Exodus 15.
15 See, for example, the classic midrashic interpretation of Exodus 15:1 in Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shi’irah, parashah 1.
16 For example, Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shi’irah, parashah 1; P.T. Sotah 21a; and Me'am Lo'ez to Exodus 15:1.
17 Shemot Rabbah 23:12.
18 Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shi’irah, parashah 1; Yaltut Shimoni, vol. 1, remez 241–242; and Midrash ha-Gadol and Midrash Le'ah Tov to Exodus 15:1, among many parallel traditions.
19 Or Hayyim and Me'am Lo'ez to Exodus 15:1.
20 For example, Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shi’irah, parashah 1; Yaltut Shimoni, vol. 1, remez 241; and Midrash ha-Gadol to Exodus 15:1. See also Moshe Ashichi’s commentary to Exodus 15:1, in which he emphasizes that the words va-yomru laimor, “they said, saying,” indicate that the People of Israel are not passive, but rather sing along with Moses.
22 Midrash Va-Yosa. See a re-creation of this midrash in Ginzberg’s Legends of the Jews, vol. 3, pp. 33–34.
23 This tradition is cited very early, in Sotah 5:4, and is repeated in Sotah 6:2–4; P.T. Sotah 23c, and B.T. Sotah 27b and 30b. It is also found in many misharshim compilations, including Shemot Rabba 23:9. See also Benno Jacob’s commentary to Exodus 15:1.
24 See also, among several parallel traditions, Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shira, parashah 1; Yaltut Shimoni, vol. 1, remez 241; and Midrash ha-Gadol to Exodus 15:1.
25 See my Self, Struggle and Change, p. 25.
27 Among many sources, see Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shira, parashah 1; Midrash Tanhuma ha-Nidal Be’hallah 11; Midrash ha-Gadol to Exodus 15:1; and Me’am Lo’ez to Exodus 15:1.
28 Philo, De Vita Mosis, 1, 180.
30 Note, for example, Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shira, parashah 10; the Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shimoni to Exodus 15:21; Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 42; and Midrash ha-Gadol to Exodus 15:21. This parallelism may, in part, stem from a literal reading of Az yadir Mooe u-Venui Youael, in which Bni Youael is understood not as “the Children of Israel,” but rather as “the sons of Israel.” See also Zornberg, The Particulars of Rapture, p. 225; and Burton L. Visotzky, The Road to Redemption (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1998), p. 138.
31 Note, among several parallel sources, B.T. Megillah 14a and Sotah 12b–13a.
32 Visotzky, The Road to Redemption, p. 137.
33 The text actually says, va-yomru lehem Miriam, Miriam responded to them, where the object is masculine, lehem. Why it isn’t lehem, “to them”—the females—is not clear.
34 Benno Jacob’s commentary to Exodus 15:21.
35 Sarna, JPS Torah Commentary to Exodus 15:20–21, which alludes to such traditions as found in Sederan Gaon Commentary to Exodus 15:21; Rabbeinu Bahya to Exodus 15:21; and Hizkuni to Exodus 15:21.
36 Me’am Lo’ez to Exodus 15, 20–21.
37 Among many parallel citations, see Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Shira, parashah 10; Mekhilta d’Rabbi Shimoni to Exodus 15:20; Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer, chapter 42; Rashi to Exodus 15:20; and Yaltut Shimoni, vol. 1, remez 253.
40 Mekhilta d’Rabbi Ishmael, Maasekhta d’Vayavua, parashah 5.
41 See my Self, Struggle and Change, p. 25.
Autobiography, its students agree, is a problematic genre of literature. One cannot expect it to be a balanced and wholly accurate representation. Remembering and forgetting are determined not only by temporal distance from the events described, but also by psychological factors that often unconsciously push certain recollections into the foreground and bury others. Autobiographers are explorers of the self, but they are also its fashioners. They configure the tale of their personal development and character in a manner that is both most easily acceptable to themselves and that presents the self-image that they wish to convey to succeeding generations of their family or of a larger readership. The process begins before the text is produced. Frequently told tales are reshaped, embellished, and become exemplary for the life even as others are suppressed. In addition, literary motives play their role as the autobiographer seeks to create a coherent and intrinsically interesting narrative, omitting distractions, limiting qualifications, exaggerating importance. In a sense, the writing of autobiography is a kind of performance, a dramatization of the writer’s life for the readers’ entertainment. Like a film or play, its success depends on its holding the interest of those exposed to it.

The recollections of Joachim Prinz display the characteristics of the autobiographical genre. His work is focused upon the self. It fashions an imagined persona that must be differentiated from the historical person, whose character can only be determined from other sources. Although there are occasional descriptions of milieu, especially of his village childhood, the autobiography is less a memoir of his times than a relation of his own development and activity within a changing environment. The autobiography presents Prinz as he would like to be remembered: as the possessor of a meaningful and interesting life; a breaker of taboos; a man whose life was filled with experiences that were out of the ordinary. He was not, the autobiography repeatedly impresses on the reader, a mere run-of-the-mill rabbi. The frequent instances of self-dramatization, of setting the self apart from others without qualification, create a more powerful, if not always historically accurate or carefully qualified narrative. Despite the occasional note of self-deprecation with regard to irresponsibility and insensitivity, the dominant mood is one of self-confidence and self-admiration.

When, a few years ago, it was suggested to me that I have a look at a manuscript autobiography by Joachim Prinz (1902-1988), my assumption was that, like most such writing, it would be of interest to family and friends, perhaps belonged in an archives, but was unlikely to attract a larger readership. To my surprise, I found the life story of this provocative Liberal and Zionist rabbi in Germany and later in America extraordinarily fascinating, had difficulty in putting it down, and soon resolved to prepare it for publication.

Prinz dictated his autobiography to his secretary around 1977, probably very shortly after his retirement from the rabbinate of Temple B’nai Abraham, which he had served from 1939 to 1973 in Newark, and then in Livingston, New Jersey. He began his story with his birth in 1902 and carried it forward to the death of his mentor and idol, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, in 1949. Regrettably, he did not continue the account further, into his career as a prominent leader of American Judaism, specifically to his roles as president of the American Jewish Congress and chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. Nor does the autobiography include his relationship with Martin Luther King, Jr. and his dramatic speech at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963. However, as Prinz indicated in his remarks on that occasion, his work on behalf of African Americans rested upon his experience as a rabbi in Nazi Germany, which forms the central chapter of his autobiography. His recollections shed new light on the role of the rabbinate in a community under siege, on spiritual resistance carried on in the synagogue and lecture hall. In addition, they provide access to the personality of an unusual individual, shaped largely by the unshackled, exuberant Weimar culture, cheeky enough to confront Nazi authorities repeatedly, and finally able to find a leadership role in American Judaism. Below are a few non-annotated adapted excerpts from my introduction to the autobiography.
course of repeated retellings. Since the autobiography was created shortly after his retirement from a very successful rabbinical career, producing it may have been a way of coping with the crisis of retirement, which had closed off most opportunities for public display and induced an inward focus as well as the desire to leave a personal legacy.

The effort to contextualize Prinz’s autobiography within his life and his changing milieu seems worthwhile because Joachim Prinz, the historical figure, was indeed a significant presence in Jewish history both in Germany and the United States. His reinterpretation of the role of the rabbinate had a broad influence and the Jewish spiritual life in which he participated has yet to be fully integrated into portrayals of German Jewry during the Nazi period. Among German Zionists, Prinz was the movement’s most popular propagandist; among rabbis, his part in the spiritual resistance to Nazism is second only to that of the leader of German Jewry during the Nazi period, Rabbi Leo Baeck. His candor about his personal life is astonishing. Finally, in the United States, Prinz became one of the foremost Jewish leaders of the Civil Rights movement. Yet there has not been so much as a single critical article dealing with his life and achievements. The discovery of Joachim Prinz’s autobiography provides a window into a fascinating life as well as the opportunity to assess his significance for Jewish history.

Hitler’s appointment as chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933 unleashed a crisis within German Jewry, especially among the Liberals, who had remained optimistic about the future of Jews in Germany. Increasingly driven out from the public sphere, German Jews were forced to seek psychological sustenance from within a Jewish community that hitherto had been at best peripheral to their daily lives. As their long-standing ideology of complete equality within German society lay in ruins, they turned to the abandoned synagogue as a place of refuge where they could be among their own. Large numbers turned to Prinz as the rabbi who would dare to address their concerns the most honestly, directly, and dramatically.

Never was this more true than on Friday evening, March 31, 1933, the night before the boycott of Jewish stores that by two months followed Hitler’s ascent to power. Prinz referred to the service he conducted that evening as the most memorable in his life, especially when the worshippers in a packed synagogue shouted the watchword of the Jewish faith, the shma yisrael, with such fervor that it drowned out choir and organ. From the recollections of Prinz’s rabbinical colleague, Hans Tramer, we learn more than what is contained in the autobiography about how he chose to dramatize the crisis for the congregation. Tramer remembers that earlier that day he had met with Prinz at his home and asked his more senior colleague what he should say at the services. Prinz replied that he himself would simply read a proclamation circulated to all synagogues by Rabbi Leo Baeck and add two or three sentences about its contents. It was, he added, a time not for speaking, but for silence. That, in fact, is exactly what Tramer did in his synagogue. The next day, however, he learned what Prinz himself had done. This is Tramer’s account: “Prinz entered the synagogue, called the shammer [the caretaker of the synagogue] and had him call up the three oldest men in the congregation. He then removed the Torah scrolls from the ark. [The men] stood, two next to him and one in front of him. Then before the open ark he read [Baeck’s] letter, had the scrolls solemnly replaced in the ark, whereupon he spoke for forty minutes or even an hour saying: ‘We Jews will defend our Judaism; we have no weapons, for THIS is our weapon.’ Thereupon he wheeled around and tore open the ark containing the Torah scrolls.’” When Tramer later asked Prinz why he hadn’t suggested something similar to him, Prinz replied innocently: “All of that occurred to me only at the last minute.” He claimed to have improvised the performance spontaneously.

As Prinz had been, after Leo Baeck, the best known of the German rabbis during the Nazi years, so he later became one of the most prominent figures in American Jewry in the generation after Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver. At a meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly, Arthur Hertzberg said of him to his fellow Conservative rabbis that Prinz was “an astute mind and the most distinguished and beloved of our colleagues, revered in the American Rabbinate, the man who, I think, most of us would most like to be.” Perhaps that was an exaggeration, but it also possessed some measure of truth. The career of this audacious and talented German and American Jew is certainly one of the more significant in modern Jewish history.

Michael A. Meyer, Ph.D.

Dr. Michael A. Meyer is the Adolph S. Ochs Professor of Jewish History at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati. Recognized as the preeminent historian of Reform Judaism and of the religious and intellectual life of German Jewry, Dr. Meyer’s books include Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture (1967), Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in America (1988), and Judaism within Modernity (2002). He wrote the centennial history essay for Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years (1976), and served as the editor of the four-volume German-Jewish History in Modern Times, Leo Baeck Werke, Volume 6: Briefe, Reden, Aufsätze, and Joachim Prinz, Rebellious Rabbi.
Many years ago, when Charlie and I were preparing to get married, we faced a challenge - we could not find a rabbi who would marry us. My rabbi, steeped in the German Reform tradition, would not perform a ceremony during which Charlie wore a kippah and stepped on a glass. And Charlie’s rabbi would not marry us because I was a divorcée. Some of you may be thinking – “how odd – that would never happen today!”

Yet it would, and it does, in other forms, no less painful and no less frustrating. The sad truth is that our community has not come far enough in making Judaism open to all.

In the U.S. and around the world, there are too many young Jews and other spiritual seekers who are being thwarted in their efforts to embrace Judaism. For example, there are too many interfaith couples unable to find a rabbi who will marry them. They are stuck scouring the yellow pages for clergy who perform interfaith ceremonies. Many in the Reform Movement act as if these couples have to prove something to us about their commitment to Judaism. Yet we are the ones with something to prove.

My Jewish values tell me that every Jew is part of the Jewish people and part of our Jewish family. And, if they are part of the family, they must all have a place around the table. I believe the table will be so much richer with their presence.

That is why we need to reach out to non-traditional families seeking places in Jewish life as well as to the rapidly increasing number of Jews of color. We should actively encourage these families to raise their children as Jews, and then provide them with the help and support they need to realize their dreams.

We live in an era when all Jews are Jews by choice. All of us can walk away from Judaism if we want to – but we don’t. We turn to Judaism for its timeless relevance and its transcendent message of hope. We must do everything possible to help others make the same choice, regardless of where they live.

The Reform Movement must be a home to these and other seekers, and it must be a home to all. Because I believe that if the Torah isn’t for everyone, it isn’t for anyone.

I believe that if we make Reform Judaism an open house, people will enter. We will find Jews we didn’t know exist. We have only scratched the surface of opportunity.

All over the world, young Jews like many of you here today, are already infusing our community with creative forms of Jewish engagement. The expressive energy of this generation is just beginning to be felt - and I believe it will change American Jewish life for generations to come. But let me add this word of warning: If we as a community don’t challenge this generation – your generation – we will lose out as a community. You are talented and passionate, and so our collective responsibility is to make sure Jewish life is a showcase for your generation’s talents and passion.

We also need to shed the divisions from which our community has suffered for too long, one of the most obvious of which is interdenominational competition and strife. The leadership of the various Movements must find ways to work together more closely and more often. There is room to work together – and frankly, we had better start trying.

That is why I am announcing the creation of an unprecedented interdenominational rabbinical fellowship program. Beginning in the fall of 2008, this project will enable eight outstanding students – four from HUC-JIR and four from the Jewish Theological Seminary – to experience a collaborative rabbinical education focused on critical needs in the American Jewish community.

The goal of this fellowship is twofold. The first is to train transformational rabbinical leaders capable of profound and positive change in the communities they serve. The second is to better equip the rabbinate to address the ever-evolving needs of the American Jewish community, especially those of interfaith families and other Jews who find themselves on the margins of Jewish life.

This cooperative relationship, I hope, will yield benefits far beyond the campus walls, and bring congregations from the Reform and Conservative traditions together. I hope, too, that this fellowship program will inspire others to embark upon similar collaborative efforts to strengthen our Jewish community. For, ultimately, what has brought all of us here today is our pride in being Jewish and our commitment to Judaism in all its glory.

And what exactly does that commitment mean? According to Reform tradition and to me it means:

To open eyes when others close them.
To hear when others do not listen.
To seek understanding when others stop learning.
To strengthen the hands of the weak, and to shelter the innocent.
To cry out for justice when others keep silent.
To be a Jew means to follow the example of Dalia Samansky and Wendy Feller (see page 48): To give hope ... and, literally, to give life.

These values have helped you reach this day – and may they always guide you as you guide our community.
The 2007 Dr. Bernard Heller Prize was awarded to Dr. Judah Folkman at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati’s Graduation. Dr. Folkman is the Julia Dyckman Andrus Professor of Pediatric Surgery and Professor of Cell Biology at Harvard Medical School, Director of the Vascular Biology Program at Children’s Hospital Boston, and the founder of the field of angiogenesis research.

In receiving the Dr. Bernard Heller Prize, Dr. Folkman evoked the legacy of his father, Rabbi Jerome D. Folkman, who was ordained at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati in 1931, and stated, “You are graduating today as ‘Ministers’ – not to be served, but to enter into service. You have been attracted to your new profession, as I was to mine, through a sense of altruism, with a real desire to do good. But what is the definition of a profession? As a medical student, my dean explained ‘A profession is a set of behaviors above the market place.’ Being of service to your fellow human beings puts you exactly in that position. I would say to you what my father said to me in a blessing on my confirmation day: ‘Be a credit to your people.’”

The Dr. Bernard Heller Prize is an international award established by the Dr. Bernard Heller Foundation and presented to an individual or organization whose work, writing, or research reflects significant contributions in the areas of Arts, Letters, the Humanities and Religion.
Twas last Shabbat 66 years ago that I stood in the chapel of what was then Hebrew Union College with my small ordination class of 14 students. Ever since I received the wondrous invitation to be here with you on this most significant day in your young lives, I have attempted to reconstruct for myself what it was like when I was ordained herein Cincinnati. Two emotions surfaced. One was relief that the six years of study (not counting those in Berlin) had finally come to an end and that somehow I was deemed worthy to step out and take responsibility for myself in a manner I had never known before. But the other was a sense of being lost, even afraid, for there was so much I did not know, had never experienced, that confronted me – not the least that on the day following ordination I was going to get married in compliance with the rule of the day that no HUC student was allowed to be married while a student at the College, a rule that was broken by only a couple of very daring colleagues!

Wha’t life it was. None of us had ever flown in an airplane. A long distance call was an event and no one dreamt of an international call. In the entire student body there was one person who had a car. There were five women on campus – two in the administration as secretaries, two in the kitchen as our cooks, and the incomparable Lillian Waldman, matron of our dormitory.

The 2007 Roger E. Joseph Prize was awarded to the Whitwell Middle School Holocaust and Paper Clip Project and accepted by Linda Hooper, Whitwell Middle School Principal, in a presentation by Roger E. Joseph’s grandchildren at HUC-JIR/New York’s Ordination Ceremonies. In 1998, assistant principal and football coach David Smith and principal Linda Hooper launched a voluntary after-school 8th grade course on the Holocaust to teach tolerance within their rural southeastern Tennessee town’s middle school of 425 students. Inspired by the altruism of those courageous Norwegians who had expressed solidarity with their Jewish fellow citizens after the Nazi occupation by pinning ordinary paper clips to their lapels, the Whitwell School students embarked upon a project to collect one paper clip for each of the six million Jewish victims of the Shoah in order to demonstrate the magnitude of this genocide and the individuality of those who perished.

Their project attracted international attention, leading to an acclaimed documentary film and donations of eleven million paper clips from around the world. The students acquired a German railcar used to transport victims to the concentration camps during the Second World War to serve as a permanent Holocaust memorial and museum in their schoolyard – with each paper clip stored there a testament to the power of memory, education, and human understanding.

In accepting the Roger E. Joseph Award, Linda Hooper said, “As I look at the life of Roger Joseph, I think about what he overcame and the choices that he made. At an age younger than some of you who are becoming rabbis today, he chose not to let polio take his life away. He chose to do good and be the kind of person that he thought his God wanted him to be. And you today have made a choice, to go out and serve your God and serve other people.

I would just ask you today as you leave here to think about the paper clip, a tiny insignificant thing, and to think about your choices and I would ask you to join with the students, staff and community of Whitwell, Tennessee in creating a world where acceptance and respect become the rule and not the exception.”

The Roger E. Joseph Prize is an international award established by Burton M. Joseph and Betty Greenberg through the Joseph Foundation and presented annually to an individual or organization, which, by virtue of religious and moral commitment, has made a distinctive contribution to humanity.

In accepting the Roger E. Joseph Award, Linda Hooper said, “As I look at the life of Roger Joseph, I think about what he overcame and the choices that he made. At an age younger than some of you who are becoming rabbis today, he chose not to let polio take his life away. He chose to do good and be the kind of person that he thought his God wanted him to be. And you today have made a choice, to go out and serve your God and serve other people.

I would just ask you today as you leave here to think about the paper clip, a tiny insignificant thing, and to think about your choices and I would ask you to join with the students, staff and community of Whitwell, Tennessee in creating a world where acceptance and respect become the rule and not the exception.”

The Roger E. Joseph Prize is an international award established by Burton M. Joseph and Betty Greenberg through the Joseph Foundation and presented annually to an individual or organization, which, by virtue of religious and moral commitment, has made a distinctive contribution to humanity.

[From left] Rabbi Ellenson, Jesse Leopold, Linda Hooper, Thomas and Roger Joseph, and Sarah Leopold.
Our life, except for the summer, was totally confined within the dormitory. We were fed three times a day. We had African American waiters who waited on us and cleaned our rooms. Our laundry was taken care of. No word of Sephardic Hebrew was spoken—we were all genuine true Ashkenazim. The President’s wife each year hosted a dinner for the freshman class and fed us artichokes so that we would learn how to deal with this strange fruit. After all, we were being prepared to be the rabbis of the leading stratum of American Jewry. We lived in a cocoon, an unreal world.

There had not yet been a big bang. A genome was unknown. DNA never existed. No one had heard of a quantum theory. We had heard of Einstein and Freud, but I can’t recall any major conversations. We knew there was a war, and some of us who had family in Europe anxiously followed the bulletins, but in a manner that is still totally incomprehensible to me.

We lived in a world that had not yet heard of Heschel, Berkowitz, Greenberg, or Borowitz. Will Herberg had written a book that made a temporary splash, and Mordechai Kaplun’s work on Jewish assimilation engaged us. But in a real way, we lived sheltered, protected. The world outside was only an occasional intruder. The world we live in today is almost unrecognizable in its relation to the world that I entered at the time of my ordination.

We live in truly revolutionary times. The explosion of knowledge and discovery seems to have no pause, but seems to expand and accelerate even beyond what we know now. It presents a question that is pertinent and insistent: Is there anything out of our past that in some way can accompany us into the present and give us guidance or direction?

Permit me to point to one. Abraham is in a major marketplace in the apex of the Fertile Crescent, when all at once out of nowhere there comes a call, “Lech lecha – go.” Where to? Destination uncertain, hidden, cryptic. Did Abraham really know who had called? How could he? He entrusts himself to an unknown future and to a God who had never been with him before, whose very nature, purpose, and intent must have been puzzling to him. It is an event of such profundity that perhaps nothing thereafter equals it. His response would change all of the history of humanity to this very day….

God’s question, “Where are you?” still reverberates in the vastness of time and space.

Our life, except for the summer, was totally confined within the dormitory. We were fed three times a day. We had African American waiters who waited on us and cleaned our rooms. Our laundry was taken care of. No word of Sephardic Hebrew was spoken—we were all genuine true Ashkenazim. The President’s wife each year hosted a dinner for the freshman class and fed us artichokes so that we would learn how to deal with this strange fruit. After all, we were being prepared to be the rabbis of the leading stratum of American Jewry. We lived in a cocoon, an unreal world.

There had not yet been a big bang. A genome was unknown. DNA never existed. No one had heard of a quantum theory. We had heard of Einstein and Freud, but I can’t recall any major conversations. We knew there was a war, and some of us who had family in Europe anxiously followed the bulletins, but in a manner that is still totally incomprehensible to me.

We lived in a world that had not yet heard of Heschel, Berkowitz, Greenberg, or Borowitz. Will Herberg had written a book that made a temporary splash, and Mordechai Kaplun’s work on Jewish assimilation engaged us. But in a real way, we lived sheltered, protected. The world outside was only an occasional intruder. The world we live in today is almost unrecognizable in its relation to the world that I entered at the time of my ordination.

We live in truly revolutionary times. The explosion of knowledge and discovery seems to have no pause, but seems to expand and accelerate even beyond what we know now. It presents a question that is pertinent and insistent: Is there anything out of our past that in some way can accompany us into the present and give us guidance or direction?

Permit me to point to one. Abraham is in a major marketplace in the apex of the Fertile Crescent, when all at once out of nowhere there comes a call, “Lech lecha – go.” Where to? Destination uncertain, hidden, cryptic. Did Abraham really know who had called? How could he? He entrusts himself to an unknown future and to a God who had never been with him before, whose very nature, purpose, and intent must have been puzzling to him. It is an event of such profundity that perhaps nothing thereafter equals it. His response would change all of the history of humanity to this very day….

God’s question, “Where are you?” still reverberates in the vastness of time and space.

Jewish tradition posits “scholars enhance the possibilities of peace in the world.” You have spent your years here engaged in the enterprise of scholarship. Today our hearts are filled with the hope that you will use the education that has been implanted within you to prevent the triumph of evil and to enhance the possibilities of peace. Let that be a major motif of the story you write.

Let us never, in our desire to heighten the identity of our community, focus on the bad at the expense of the good. Rather than letting what is done to Jews be what energizes us, let what Jews do be what unites us. We must fight the attacks on us with all our energies, but we must never let them become our raison d’être. To do so is to cede to our oppressors control over our identity.

We hope you will do well, but we pray that you will do good. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that “to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded.” That is the kind of success we hope for from you.
HONORARY DOCTORS OF HUMANE LETTERS

HUC-JIR recognized the distinguished communal, civic, and scholarly leadership of:

Alumni Honorary Degree Recipients

HUC-JIR honored distinguished alumni for their 25 years of dedicated leadership and devoted service

New York, May 3, 2007

Honorary Doctor of Music, Doctor of Jewish Communal Service, and Doctor of Jewish Religious Education recipients

Los Angeles, May 14, 2007

Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree recipients

Cincinnati, June 3, 2007

Honorary Doctor of Divinity, Doctor of Jewish Communal Service, and Doctor of Jewish Religious Education recipients

Honorary Doctors of Humane Letters

HUC-JIR recognized the distinguished communal, civic, and scholarly leadership of:

Burton Lehman, Past Chair, Board of Governors, HUC-JIR; Lynn Schusterman, Founder and Chair, Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation; Dr. Judith Plaskow, Professor of Religious Studies, Manhattan College; Harold Tanner, Chair, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; and Aaron Feuerstein, Founder, Chair, CEO, Malden Mills; at Graduation in New York.

Reverend Cecil L. Murray, Rel.D., Tanzy Chair of Christian Ethics, University of Southern California, Retired Minister, First African Methodist Episcopal Church; Dr. Deborah E. Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies, Director, Institute for Jewish Studies, Emory University; and Dr. Joseph E. Aoun, President, Northeastern University; at Graduation in Los Angeles.

Dr. Alvin H. Rosenfeld, Professor of English and Jewish Studies, Director of the Institute for Jewish Culture and the Arts, Indiana University; Dr. Martha C. Nussbaum, Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics, The University of Chicago; and Rabbi Professor Jonathan Magonet, Past President and Professor of Bible Emeritus, Leo Baeck College, London, England; at Graduation in Cincinnati.
Graduation/Ordination/Investiture 2007

Doctor of Philosophy (far left) recipients, Cincinnati; Master of Arts (left) and Master of Philosophy (center) recipients, Cincinnati; Master of Jewish Studies (right) recipients, Los Angeles

Rabbi Ellenson bestowed the President’s Medal upon Dr. Harvey Horowitz (center), Librarian Emeritus of the Frances-Henry Library at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, in recognition of his decades of distinguished service to the College-Institute, at a ceremony during Graduation in Los Angeles, in the presence of (at left) Dr. Yaffa Weissman, his successor as Librarian of the Frances-Henry Library; Dr. Steven Windmuller, Dean, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles; and Dr. David Gilner, Director of Libraries, HUC-JIR/Cincinnati.

Graduate medallions were presented by Rabbi Ellenson to distinguished alumni of the School of Graduate Studies (from left) Dr. Mary Ruth Graf, Dr. Reuben Ahroni, Dr. Ronald A. Veenker, and Dr. Rodney Eugene Cloud.

HUC-JIR’s Department of Youth Programs offers exciting opportunities for study, enrichment, and friendship. Reform youths are encouraged to come to Cincinnati to study with faculty, meet our students, and explore Judaism’s unique spiritual, ethical, and cultural heritage.

January 18-21, 2008
A Song of Freedom HUC-JIR ACADEMY

February 22-24, 2008
The Ethics of Sex COLLEGE HUC-JIR COLLOQUIUM

March 14-16, 2008
War: What is it good for? HUC-JIR/RAC SOCIAL JUSTICE WEEKEND

April 11-13, 2008
When to lead and when to follow? HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (HSLC)

For more information: www.hucyouthprograms.org (513) 487-3232 youthprograms@huc.edu

Calling All High School and College Students!!

[Image of students]
Dr. Gerald Bubis, The Director Had a Heart Attack and the President Resigned: Board-Staff Relations for the 21st Century, revised edition (iUniverse). Essays, real-life scenarios regarding governance, job descriptions, self-assessment tools, and other scenarios focused on how to govern synagogues, churches, and NGOs.


Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Dr. Andrea Weiss, eds., The Torah: A Woman’s Commentary (UR Press). The Women of Reform Judaism’s comprehensive commentary addressing women in the Bible and women’s perspectives on the Bible, incorporating new critical approaches such as literary criticism, sociology, and feminism; new research and information about the biblical world; and topics of importance in our world today. With contributions by current and former HUC-JIR faculty and administration, and alumni including Dr. Rachel Adler, Dr. Carole Balin, Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Dr. Nili Fox, Dr. Lisa Grant, Dr. Alyssa Gray, Rabbi Naamah Kelman, Rabbi Zoe Klein, Dr. Sharon Koren, Dr. Beatrice Lawrence, Dr. Adriane Leveen, Dr. Carol Ochs, Dr. Dailit Rom-Shiloni, Dr. Dvora Weisberg, Cantor Joséé Wolff, and Dr. Wendy Zierler.

Dr. Reuven Firestone, Jews, Christians, Muslims in Dialogue: A Practical Handbook, with Leonard Swidler and Khalid Duran (Twenty-Third Publications). A book about dialogue between the three “Abrahamic” religions, offering insight about each and suggesting ways to engage in true dialogue while avoiding some of the more common pitfalls.

Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman, My People’s Prayer Book, Volume 10 (Jewish Lights). The tenth volume completes the entire daily and Shabbat cycle of prayers.

Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman and David Arnow, My People’s Haggadah, Volumes 1 and 2 (Jewish Lights). HUC-JIR faculty contributors to the Haggadah include Dr. Carole Balin, Dr. Alyssa Gray, Dr. Joel M. Hoffman, and Dr. Wendy Zierler.

Dr. Adriane Leveen, Memory and Tradition in the Book of Numbers (Cambridge University Press, January 2008). An imaginative re-reading of the Book of Numbers that considers the ways in which its authors understood and used memory and tradition to shape a narrative of the wilderness past on behalf of their own generation.

Elizabeth Loenzt, Let Me Continue to Speak the Truth: Bertha Pappenheim as Author and Activist (HUC Press). In 1953 Freud biographer Ernest Jones revealed that the famous hysteriac Anna O. was really Bertha Pappenheim (1859-1936) – the prolific author, German-Jewish feminist, social activist, and pioneering social worker. This study directs attention away from the young woman who arguably invented the “talking cure” and back to Pappenheim and her post-Anna O. achievements.

Jean Bloch Rosensaft, ed., Elements of Alchemy: Prints by Paul Weissman (HUC-JIR Museum), with foreword by Dr. David Ellenson and essays by Dr. Norman J. Cohen and Laura Kruger.

Jean Bloch Rosensaft, ed., The L.A. Story (HUC-JIR Museum), with essays by Laura Kruger and Matthew Baigell.

Recent Faculty Articles of Note


Dr. Joshua Holo, “Hebrew Astrology in Byzantine Southern Italy,” in Paul Magdalino and Maria Mavroudi, eds., The Occult Sciences in Byzantium (La Pome d’or, 2006, 291-323).


On View AT HUC-JIR

HUC-JIR Museum/New York
One West 4th Street, New York, NY 10012
Hours: Mon.-Thurs., 9 am - 5 pm; Fri., 9 am - 3 pm; Selected Sundays, 10 am-2 pm, October 28, November 11, December 2 and 16, January 13, 27.
Information/Guided Tours: (212) 824-2205
www.huc.edu/museums/ny
Admission: Free; photo ID required for entrance.

On view January 27, 2008:
Moshe Zabari: Scripture as Sculpture
Sculptures and Judaica express biblical texts and themes.

Elements of Alchemy: Prints by Paul Weissman
Inspired by Primo Levi’s The Periodic Table, reflections on humankind’s values.

Project Kesher: Women and Jewish Renaissance in Ukraine
Photographs by Joan Roth
The empowerment of ordinary women creating extraordinary change.
Including Susan Malloy’s drawings of a Project Kesher journey.

The L.A. Story
Founders of the Jewish Arts Initiative of Southern California present works informed by personal identity.

Peachy Levy: Threads of Judaism
Unique interpretations express a dialogue between sacred texts and a personal search for the spiritual.

Fiorello’s Sister:
Gemma La Guardia Gluck’s story
Nazi persecution of the New York Mayor’s sister during the Holocaust.

For information on bringing HUC-JIR’s TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS TO YOUR SYNAGOGUE, MUSEUM OR CITY, please call (212) 824-2218 or visit www.huc.edu/museums/ny

On view February - June 2008:
The Yom Kippur War: Tom Heyman
Close-up photographs of Israel’s struggle for survival, on loan from the Israeli Army, presented on Israel’s 60th anniversary.

Rosalynd Engelman: Silent Scream
Installation evoking the Holocaust.

Cinema Judaica: The Epic Years, 1949-1971
Hollywood film posters reflecting Jewish experience.

Living in the Moment: Contemporary Artists Celebrate Jewish Time – Ongoing
The sale of unique and limited edition works of innovative Jewish ceremonial art.

HUC-JIR Skirball Museum/Cincinnati
3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220
Hours: Mon.-Thurs., 11 am - 4 pm; Sun., 12 - 5 pm
Information: (513) 487-3055/8
Guided tours upon request. Admission: Free

On view Spring 2008:
Jewish Graphic Novels
Cinema Judaica: The War Years, 1939-1949
Works by Judith Margolies

Noah’s Ark at the Skirball – Ongoing
Animals crafted of recycled materials teach the value of community.

Visions and Values: Jewish Life from Antiquity to America – Ongoing
HUC-JIR’s permanent collection traces Jewish history and values over 4,000 years.

The Teri B. Ziffren Archaeology Discovery Center – Ongoing
Interactive exhibits and Near Eastern antiquities.

The American Jewish Archives at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati
3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220
Guided tours by appointment only.
Contact: 513-487-3000
Documentation of American Jewry’s religious, organizational, cultural, and social history.

On view December 21, 2007:
Visions of Israel: Marvin Rand
Photographs evoking Israel’s antiquity, modernity, and enduring search for peace.

Israeli Art from the Nancy Berman-Alan Bloch Collection – Ongoing

HUC-JIR/ Los Angeles
3077 University Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90007
By appointment only. Contact: 213-765-2106

The Archaeology Center at the Skirball Museum
– Ongoing
A hands-on learning and research facility.

Mapping Our Tears – Ongoing
Survivors, rescuers, and liberators recall the Holocaust.

The American Jewish Archives
3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220
Guided tours by appointment only.
Contact: 513-487-3000
Documentation of American Jewry’s religious, organizational, cultural, and social history.

For information on bringing HUC-JIR’s TRAVELING EXHIBITIONS TO YOUR SYNAGOGUE, MUSEUM OR CITY, please call (212) 824-2218 or visit www.huc.edu/museums/ny
Graduation/Ordination/Investiture 2007

Doctor of Philosophy (far left) recipients, Cincinnati; Master of Arts (left) and Master of Philosophy (center) recipients, Cincinnati; Master of Jewish Studies (right) recipients, Los Angeles

Rabbi Ellenson bestowed the President’s Medal upon Dr. Harvey Horowitz (center), Librarian Emeritus of the Frances-Henry Library at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, in recognition of his decades of distinguished service to the College-Institute, at a ceremony during Graduation in Los Angeles, in the presence of (at left) Dr. Yaffa Weisman, his successor as Librarian of the Frances-Henry Library; Dr. Steven Windmueller, Dean, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles; and Dr. David Gilner, Director of Libraries, HUC-JIR/Cincinnati.

Graduate medallions were presented by Rabbi Ellenson to distinguished alumni of the School of Graduate Studies (from left) Dr. Mary Ruth Graf, Dr. Reuben Ahroni, Dr. Ronald A. Veenker, and Dr. Rodney Eugene Cloud.

HUC-JIR’s Department of Youth Programs offers exciting opportunities for study, enrichment, and friendship. Reform youths are encouraged to come to Cincinnati to study with faculty, meet our students, and explore Judaism’s unique spiritual, ethical, and cultural heritage.

Calling All High School and College Students!!

January 18-21, 2008
A Song of Freedom
HUC-JIR ACADEMY

February 22-24, 2008
The Ethics of Sex
COLLEGE HUC-JIR COLLOQUIUM

March 14-16, 2008
War: What is it good for?
HUC-JIR/RAC SOCIAL JUSTICE WEEKEND

April 11-13, 2008
When to lead and when to follow?
HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE (HSLC)

For more information:
www.hucyouthprograms.org (513) 487-3232 youthprograms@huc.edu