The Chronicle
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HUC-JIR Students and Alumni Changing the World
IN MEMORIAM

Richard J. Scheuer, beloved Chairman Emeritus of the Board of Governors, whose devotion to HUC-JIR, vision for our Jerusalem campus, commitment to the State of Israel, and love for the Jewish people leave an enduring legacy. His intellectual curiosity, passion for biblical archaeology and scholarship, generous spirit, and warm and kind heart are an abiding source of inspiration.

Avraham Biran, esteemed former Director of the Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, former Director of the Department of Antiquities and Museums for the State of Israel, District Commissioner of Jerusalem, Senior Member of the Israel delegation to the Mixed Armistice Commission of Jordan, and diplomat on behalf of the Israeli government for many years.

Herbert R. Bloch, Jr., dedicated member of the Board of Governors (1961 to 1986), who served as Vice Chair, Secretary, and Chair of the Budget Committee; followed in the footsteps of his father, Herbert R. Bloch, Sr., Chair of the Board (1952-1957); and served as Vice Chair of the Los Angeles Board of Overseers.

Melvin Merians, distinguished Governor Emeritus, recipient of the Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from HUC-JIR, and former Chairman of the Union for Reform Judaism, who encouraged the advancement of Jewish learning and took pride in his grandchildren taking on the mantle of Jewish leadership.

Isadore E. Millstone, treasured Governor Emeritus, former Vice Chair of the Board of Governors, and recipient of the Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, from HUC-JIR, who was associated with this institution for over 40 years, played a major role in Jewish communal life, and was a generous benefactor to a myriad of worthy causes.

Charles J. Rothschild, Jr., devoted Governor Emeritus and former Chairman and Honorary Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Union for Reform Judaism, whose wise counsel, loyalty, and commitment to HUC-JIR and the Reform Movement were exemplary.

Rabbi Michael A. Signer, C ’70, cherished Professor of Medieval History and Commentaries at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles for nearly two decades and Co-Chair of the Joint Commission on Inter-religious Affairs of the Reform Movement since 1998, leader of Jewish-Catholic dialogue worldwide, and Abrams Professor of Jewish Thought and Culture at the University of Notre Dame.
1. The Rabbinical Class of 2009, HUC-JIR/Cincinnati at Plum Street Temple
2. The Rabbinical Class of 2009, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles at Temple Israel of Holywood
3. The Rabbinical Class of 2009, HUC-JIR/New York at Congregation Emanu-El
4. The Cantorial Class of 2009, HUC-JIR/New York
5. The New York School of Education Class of 2009, New York
6. The Rhea Hirsch School of Education Class of 2009, Los Angeles
7. The School of Jewish Communal Service Class of 2009, Los Angeles
8. The Doctor of Ministry Class of 2009, New York
9. The School of Graduate Studies 2009 Ph.D. Recipients, Cincinnati

Graduation/Ordination/Investiture 2009
During the High Holy Days this year, I am especially mindful of the fragile nature of our existence along with the delicate potential for renewal that infuses the **Yamim Noraim**. On a personal level, I have during this past year coped with the deaths of a close friend and beloved President and Chancellor Emeritus, Dr. Alfred Gottschalk (see page 2), the illness of another, and my own individual health problems. At the same time, I also eagerly await the birth of our first grandchild in December as I watch our own family being renewed for a new generation. As President of the College-Institute, I have had to deal with the unprecedented economic challenges HUC-JIR has had to confront this past year. Of course, there is not necessarily anything unique about any of this. The very nature of life is such that anxiety and uncertainty alternates constantly with confidence and hope. **Ecclesiastes** taught us these truths millennia ago.

With these thoughts in mind, I have been turning more than ever to the work of Rabbi Eshriel Hildesheimer (1820-1899), the founder of the Berlin Orthodox Rabbinical Seminary in 1874. This institution was the first such Orthodox seminary in history, and I first wrote my rabbinical thesis on its founder under the direction of my teacher Professor Fritz Bamberger at HUC-JIR in New York in 1977. I expanded the thesis and completed my dissertation on this topic at Columbia four years later under the supervision of Professors Joseph Blau and Gillian Lindt.

I was intrigued by this topic because I wanted to understand how a traditional religious leader like Rabbi Hildesheimer who was also wedded to the culture of the modern world could both affirm the authenticity of the **Masoret** (Jewish tradition) and be open to the changing currents of the modern world. I felt Rabbi Hildesheimer provided a model worthy of exploration and emulation precisely because he was involved in the unending dialectic that marks the relationship between Tradition and Modernity. As Rabbi Hildesheimer dealt with the trials of his day, he strove with all the knowledge and talents at his disposal to create a modern seminary that would educate rabbis and other religious leaders who would serve and guide the Jewish people meaningfully and joyfully as they faced the challenges of the modern setting. While his precise answers to the problems of the modern situation were not and are not mine, I did and do identify with the problems he faced and see his tasks as in so many ways my own.

In an 1873 letter Rabbi Hildesheimer addressed to those who might support the creation of his proposed seminary, he stated that there could be no task “more holy and pressing than the establishment of this school.” Without the best teachers to instruct and guide the graduates his proposed institution would ordain, Rabbi Hildesheimer believed that the future of Judaism and the ability of our Tradition to inform the lives of Jews would be dim. While the challenges of our day are surely distinct from the precise ones that Rabbi Hildesheimer faced in his, the overarching framework is the same and our task at HUC-JIR today – to educate religious, intellectual, educational, and communal leadership for the Jewish people – is identical to the task Rabbi Hildesheimer identified for his institution and himself in 1873-1874.

The lead article in this issue by Professor Steven Cohen describes precisely the dilemmas and opportunities that mark the situation of North American Judaism at the beginning of the 21st century. Rabbi Laura Geller and Professor Bruce Phillips offer their own thoughts on what Professor Cohen has written, and the remainder of our issue points to programs – Mandel, Schusterman, and Tisch – as well as portraits of faculty, alumni, and students who are each attempting in diverse ways to have Judaism speak in meaningful cadences to the Jewish people now and in the future. Following these portraits, a dozen books written in recent months by our outstanding faculty – who constitute the heart of our institution – are featured. The range of topics on which they have conducted their researches is genuinely breathtaking, and this scholarship, as well as the portraits of the individuals who are presented in this edition of *The Chronicle*, testify to the vitality that infuses the College-Institute and its students and faculty.

The dialectic between Tradition and Modernity with which Rabbi Hildesheimer struggled in the 19th century marks our own efforts in the present, and his attempt to create a corps of religious leaders capable of having Judaism speak in meaningful terms to a contemporary Jewish community is no less ours than his. Just as he devoted himself to the formation of Jewish religious and intellectual leaders who could provide insight and inspiration for the Jewish community of his day, so we at HUC-JIR continue this sacred and enduring task of forging leadership capable of bridging the divide between past and present in authentic and meaningful ways for our people today.

As this New Year begins, Jackie and I, along with our children Ruth, Sara and Micah, Hannah, Nomi, and Rafi, wish you and yours a **shanah tovah u’metukah**, a good and sweet New Year.

Rabbi David Ellenson
October 2009 Tishri 5770
Eulogy by Rabbi David Ellenson

For me, and for the nearly 2,000 rabbis, cantors, educators, communal professionals, and scholars trained during his tenure as HUC-JIR President, no rabbi commanded greater respect and awe than our Teacher and Rabbi—Alfred Gottschalk, whose life and accomplishments were legendary. His deepest commitments were to humanity, the Jewish people, and the State of Israel. What events prompted his fierce devotion to these values?

Twenty years ago, he delivered a powerful, culminating address at a conference of Jewish, German Protestant, and Catholic theologians in Augsburg, Germany, on the theme of “Versohnung—Atonement and Reconciliation.” Speaking in German, he unapologetically said that as a Professor of Bible and Jewish Thought and President of the oldest and most venerable rabbinical seminary in North America, his German should have been sophisticated and fluent, not the German of a nine-year-old boy. In a voice marked by the pent up sadness, humiliation, and fury of fifty years, he recalled the day when a Nazi policeman entered his Oberwesel elementary school classroom and declared, “All Jewish children—rass!” – and repeated that word three times, in ascending, deafening volume. His primal accusation revealed the motivation for his life’s work on behalf of the Jewish people and humanity.

His words to our students each year on the day before Ordination provided another glimpse of the primary trope for understanding the shape and direction of his life. He vividly described Kristallnacht on November 9-10, 1938. The morning after the desecration of his town’s synagogue, this eight-year-old child watched his grandfather wade into the stream of freezing water running past the building in order to rescue the torn fragments of the Torah scrolls and prayer books. His grandfather told him that it was his obligation to protect and piece together the Torah. This narrative provided the framework for his lifelong devotion to the preservation and regeneration of Jewish life and learning.

In 1939, a month before World War II began, miraculous exit visas brought him and his mother on one of the last ships to leave Hamburg to New York, where they joined his father, who had escaped Nazi arrest on his eighth birthday, fled down the Rhine to Holland, and eventually found safety in the U.S. A graduate of Boys High School and Brooklyn College, he was inspired by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise and his synagogue’s clergy as a fifteen-year-old to designate the rabbinate as his calling. His studies at HUC-JIR in New York culminated in Ordination in Cincinnati in 1957, when HUC-JIR President Dr. Nelson Glueck charged him as Dean with the development of HUC-JIR’s fledgling Los Angeles School. His vision transformed it from its modest beginnings on the Appian Way in the Hollywood Hills to a dynamic campus adjacent to the University of Southern California (USC) with a rabbinical program, the Jewish Studies program for USC, the Skirball Museum, and pioneering programs in communal service and Jewish education to serve the second largest Jewish population center in America and klal Yisrael. Ahad Haam, the great cultural Zionist and subject of his Ph.D. from USC, remained the lifelong focus of his writing and thought.

These accomplishments led to his appointment as HUC-JIR President upon the death of his mentor, Dr. Glueck. From 1971 to 1996, he championed the exponential growth of HUC-JIR’s programs, enrollment, and campuses and was the catalyst for key milestones: the ordination of the first women rabbis in America (1972) and Israel (1992), the first woman cantor in America (1975), and the
first Reform rabbi in Israel (1980). HUC-JIR’s Graduate School in Cincinnati, in which he took such pride, thrived as a center of advanced academic study for Jewish and Christian students alike and produced some of HUC-JIR’s leading faculty. Emulating HUC-JIR’s vital partnership with USC, he expanded and relocated the New York campus adjacent to NYU. His love of Israel guided his vision for a dramatically enlarged Jerusalem campus as the center for Reform Judaism there. The establishment of the rabbinical program for Israeli students (1975) and the required first year of study in Israel for all state-side rabbinical, cantorial, and education students transformed the Reform Movement’s Zionist stance and ensured that vital links between American Jewry and the State of Israel would thrive.

The friend and confidant of countless political and religious leaders of all faiths throughout the world, he served on President Carter’s Commission on the Holocaust (1979), which first charted the course for memorializing the Holocaust through the creation of a national museum and center for academic research. He was appointed by Presidents Carter, Reagan and Clinton to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, where he founded and chaired the Academic and Education Committees, and served on the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Committee on Conscience. He served as President of the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York (2000-2003), where he initiated and planned the sixty-thousand square foot Robert M. Morgenthau Wing, while serving as HUC-JIR Chancellor (1996-2000), and continued to serve as a Senior Fellow and Trustee.

The righteous even in death live on in their words and deeds. Y’hi zichro baruch—may the memory of Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk continue to bless us all.

(From left) Dr. Alfred Gottschalk ordaining Rabbi Sally Priesand as the first woman rabbi in America; teaching students; and meeting with Prime Minister Golda Meir.

**Personal Reflections by Dr. Alfred Gottschalk**

As a child of the generation of the Holocaust and as one who witnessed the onset of the destruction of European Jewry, I knew that I would devote myself to rebuilding Jewish life. This has been the key motivation of my life, and my work to advance HUC-JIR as a successor to the great centers of learning destroyed during the Shoah has enabled me to contribute to the regeneration of the Jewish people.

I have truly been fulfilled by my almost sixty years of association with HUC-JIR, as it has flourished as the academic center of Reform Judaism, nourished generations of spiritual and professional leaders, and fostered a liberal Judaism, consonant with modernity, in which the traditions, ethical values, and prophetic message of our faith have meaning in the present and for the future.

From the outset, it has been my intention to transform the institution into a place of warmth and creativity with academic freedom – to give students the freedom to express their Judaism fully, provide faculty the opportunity to experiment with new course offerings, and to establish a climate of free inquiry in which all members of our community could find maximum expression in the service of our Reform Movement.

My mission has been to be proactive, to anticipate the emerging needs of the Reform Movement and the Jewish people. My goals have been to develop new programs and venues that would embrace a generation whose roots are tenuous, who are “appreciative” Jews rather than committed Jews, who superficially choose between things they “like” or “dislike” in Judaism but who lack a grounding in text, practice, and belief.

HUC-JIR is a complex institution, born out of the **wissenschaft** tradition, the yeshiva heritage where we “learn to teach,” and professional concerns to impart skills and “learn to do.” Between our classical Jewish studies, engagement with modernity, and concern for continuity, our greatest challenge has been to bring all of this together into a vibrant future.

It has been my privilege to encourage women to become Jewish spiritual and professional leaders and to enable them to enjoy full equality in the service of God. I look upon the ordination of Sally Priesand in 1972 as the first woman rabbi in America, investiture of Barbara Ostfeld in 1975 as the first woman cantor, and Naamah Kelman as the first woman rabbi in Israel as historic turning points in the Jewish religion.

Over the years, I have taken pride in the enlarged numbers and enhanced quality of students admitted to all of our programs. I have sought to strengthen our faculty through the appointment of brilliant young scholars distinguished for both their scholarship and their commitment to the life of the Jewish mind.

I have supported the strengthening of HUC-JIR’s text-based core curriculum by innovations addressing the emerging needs of the Reform Movement. New initiatives have included the growth of practical skills training, mentorship programs, chaplaincy and CPE training, the enrichment of students’ spiritual lives and leadership skills, and the application of new technologies towards classical Jewish studies. The goal has always been to strive for academic excellence and cherish the qualities of humaneness and integrity within an environment grounded by reason, faith, and trust.

The future of Reform Jewry and Jewish life in America, Israel, and worldwide depends on the leadership HUC-JIR prepares today. The pressing issues of Jewish literacy and communal participation are central to the maintenance of Jewish consciousness. The universal teachings of Judaism possess great relevance — our traditions of ethics and social justice can inspire *ikkun olam*, the mending of our world.

I am thankful to all those who have been my partners — my friends and colleagues in all the arms of the Reform Movement, our alumni, my administration, deans and directors, staff, faculty, students, and Governors and Overseers who have contributed so much. I am grateful to my children Marc and Rachel and their families, for their unfailing support, my helpmate Deanna Gottschalk, for her devotion, love, and profound belief in HUC-JIR and its great work, and her dear children Andrew and Charles and their families. The blessing that best expresses my gratitude for these fulfilling, meaningful years is: “I thank you, O God, in that you have set my portion among those who study Torah.”

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Fred over the years was like witnessing the wanderings and the struggles and the challenges of the Jewish people and of Jewish history. He went wherever and whenever the Holy One demanded.

_Zecher Tsaddik livrocho_, the memory of the righteous is a blessing.

**Eulogy by Rabbi Lewis Kamrass, Plum Street Temple, Cincinnati:**

When I first met Dr. Alfred Gottschalk nearly thirty years ago as a twenty-year-old rabbinical student, I was struck by three physical characteristics that were a mirror of his character and his soul.

The first trait I noticed was his commanding presence. We marveled at his unmatched ability as an orator, who spoke with deep substance on so many topics, and without a note. It was always a joy to watch his great mind at work, and witness his capacity to tell a story, to teach, to inspire, to inform, to challenge. The man and the message were one, true extensions of one another; there was genuineness to what we heard in his words, and saw in his deeds. Fred’s commanding presence could also be seen in his high expectations. He could be demanding of others, just as he was of himself, but he was always good to his word, and did not let people down. Beneath that physical strength was an indomitable strength of will that enabled him to weather all of life’s challenges and even its tragedies, as well as to feel such gratitude for life’s blessings.

The second characteristic was his wide, embracing smile that was shaped by warmth and caring, and revealed a genuineness of soul that drew people to him. There was never pretense with Fred, for he was a man truly at home with all people because he was always comfortable with himself. When that smile widened into laughter, with his keen wit and sense of humor, he reminded us that even a seriousness of purpose was never justification for taking oneself too seriously. It also taught us of his joy for life, his ability to smile at life’s unfairness and its limitations, because there was always even more for which to feel grateful.

And the third characteristic was Fred’s piercing, clear blue eyes. He saw the future with vision, with clarity of imagination and purpose that contributed, in part, to his confident leadership. He led HUC-JIR at a time when the Jewish world was undergoing unimaginable transformation, and yet Fred could always see into that distant horizon that others could not fathom, and then lead people to new horizons. Fred also saw deeply and confidently into the future with people and with relationships, as revealed in his great gift of seeing potential in students, in young scholars, and in colleagues, whose potential he would foster with a rare combination of genuine support and honesty. Yes, he built an international institution with four campuses, but he also shaped a world-class faculty, and two generations of students and colleagues by identifying potential and believing in people.

Alfred Gottschalk was called to a life of purpose and a destiny of meaning at an early age. May the blessing of what he did and what he taught us continue to imbue our lives with meaning, and help to shape Fred’s enduring legacy.

(From left) Dr. Alfred Gottschalk at the dedication of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum with President Bill Clinton and Hillary Clinton; meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres; dedicating the memorial to his grandparents in the Jewish cemetery of Oberwesel, Germany; and with his wife Deanna in Jerusalem.
In a bold effort to increase the number of future educators and to improve the quality of professional preparation and Jewish education they receive, HUC-JIR has been granted $3.7 million from the Jim Joseph Foundation. Nearly $12 million in grants from the Jim Joseph Foundation (JJF) are going to HUC-JIR, The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), and Yeshiva University (YU), the three leading training institutions for Jewish educators.

The initial grants, to be administered over a five-year period, will be used as financial aid for students pursuing education degrees or certification in programs that prepare them to work with Jewish youth and young adults, and to assist each institution in planning new and enhanced programs that will attract more educators to the field.

The grants represent the launch of a long-term investment the foundation plans to make in these three grand institutions and model the benefits of interdenominational cooperation and partnership in developing innovative programs, strengthening recruitment and marketing, and embracing educational technology and distance learning.

Rabbi David Ellenson says, “The Jim Joseph Foundation’s history-making grant is imbued with a commitment to interdenominational collaboration that charts a new and constructive direction in partnership between the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Movements in North America. This grant addresses some of the most glaring needs in the American Jewish community. JF understands that attracting and educating quality Jewish educators in our institutions is critical to instilling in today’s Jewish youth a strong Jewish identity and maintaining a vibrant American Jewish community. Increasing the quantity and quality of Jewish educators, and giving them the tools to do their jobs effectively, will have a profound and immediate impact on Jewish life.”

“Jewish education is the key to the Jewish future, and outstanding Jewish educators are the key to making sure that children, youth and adults have the kinds of educational experiences that will prepare them to create that future,” adds Dr. Michael Zeldin, Director of HUC-JIR’s Rhea Hirsch School of Education. “We are committed to maintaining the excellence of the professional preparation we provide while greatly expanding the pathways available for Jewish young adults who want to make a difference in the world through Jewish education, both in and out of the classroom.”

“The immediate impact of this historic grant,” Zeldin continues, “is that HUC-JIR will be able to grant full-tuition scholarships to students who study Jewish education full-time at the Hebrew Union College. We believe that this will help us expand the number of highly qualified students we are able to prepare to become Jewish educators.”

The grants will provide $700,000 to each institution for each of the next five academic years for scholarships for future educators. The remaining grant funds will be divided among the institutions to be used in the 2009-2010 academic year for planning purposes. The three institutions will work to foster best practices and collaborate on projects when possible to ensure creative new directions and a renewed commitment to the education of future Jewish educators.

In addition, the foundation has agreed to explore support for inter-institutional collaborations that evidence promise for directly augmenting the educational enterprise across institutions. Two potential areas for such development are new technologies for distance learning and marketing of Jewish education as a desirable professional career.

Unique to the grants is also the unprecedented collaboration this partnership represents. To facilitate this cooperation, JJF will convene a steering committee comprised of the leadership of the three institu-
The incoming 2009-2010 cohort represents a 200% increase in enrollment. The M.A. programs include a first year of study in Israel, a curriculum focused on Jewish studies, pedagogy, and leadership development, and a rich program of mentored internships. The RHSOE is renowned as a center for innovation in Jewish education through its Experiment in Congregational Education (ECE), which re-visions congregational education and directly affect the lives of tens of thousands of Jewish children, families, congregants in Reform synagogues; and DeLeT (Day School Leadership through Teaching), the first-ever program under Jewish sponsorship leading to a California State Teaching Credential. The NYSE, in partnership with JTS, sponsors the Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators to enhance the capacity of congregational school educators through seminars, study in Israel, and innovative projects implemented in each educator’s school.

The Shimon Ben Joseph Foundation, commonly known as the Jim Joseph Foundation, is committed to the legacy of its founder, Jim Joseph, z’l, devoted exclusively to supporting education of Jewish youth in the United States. Jim Joseph was a dedicated Jewish philanthropist who cared passionately about the education of Jewish children, youth, and young adults. He believed that focusing on young people was the best way to preserve a strong Jewish faith and proud heritage, thereby ensuring success of the Jewish people for the future.

After completing his master’s degree at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, Jim Joseph began a highly successful career acquiring and developing commercial and residential property for his company, Interland Corporation. As he built his business, Joseph donated generously to a wide variety of Jewish institutions and organizations and formed the Jim Joseph Foundation in 1987. Jim Joseph passed away December 19, 2003.

The JJF’s Board of Directors and its foundation professionals are building on the philanthropic mission that Jim Joseph pursued – to foster compelling, effective learning experiences for young Jews in the United States. In accordance with Jim Joseph’s view, the Foundation recognizes that Jewish learning takes place in a multitude of settings, including but not limited to day schools, camps, youth groups, congregations, college campuses, service learning experiences, community centers, and the like.

“Our commitment is to Jewish education, and the partnership now established with these three institutions through these grants should contribute greatly to advancing this cause,” says JJF President Al Levitt. “It is an exciting development for all who care about improving the quality of Jewish life. We’re simply playing our role in helping these institutions, and the educators they educate, reach their full potential and positively shape the lives of Jewish youth.”

JFF Executive Director Chip Edelberg adds, “The Jim Joseph Foundation is confident these three institutions will produce highly qualified educators who will inspire a next generation of young Jews to value Jewish learning. The promise of this initiative is that it will enrich students in their respective programs of study, strengthen each individual institution, and enable us to infuse the field with talented educators whose collective good work will positively impact the world of Jewish education.”

How to Apply for the Jim Joseph Foundation Scholarships at HUC-JIR

The Jim Joseph Foundation grant makes possible the first-ever program of full scholarships at HUC-JIR’s Rhea Hirsch School of Education (RHSOE) in Los Angeles and New York School of Education.

“We are eager to attract young men and women with a passion for creating vibrant Jewish communities and for passing on Jewish tradition,” says Dr. Michael Zeldin, RHSOE Director. “We are looking for candidates who have proven leadership ability and the capacity to excite others about Jewish living and learning. We are particularly on the lookout for individuals filled with ideas for new ways of engaging others. We believe that we can take people with these raw talents and transform them into compelling leaders in Jewish education.”

To be eligible, students must be enrolled to study full-time at HUC-JIR. The requirements for the scholarship are the same as the requirements for admission to the Education Program. While applicants do not need to demonstrate knowledge of Hebrew in order to apply, they must demonstrate a mastery of Hebrew at the level of “advanced beginner” by the time they begin their studies. The first year of the program is in Israel.

Please go to HUC-JIR’s Admissions website at: www.huc.edu/links/?x=Apply

Students will be notified about the scholarships when they are notified about matriculation.
In the sixty-one years that have elapsed since the founding of the State of Israel, profound changes have taken place in Israel, in American Jews’ relationship with Israel, and in American Jews’ identities. With regard to the latter, two major changes are among the most salient and influential. One is the enormous change in the integration of Jews into the larger American society. In contrast with just fifty years ago, today’s Jews have far fewer Jewish spouses, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

This increasing integration certainly reflects several positive developments, such as lower anti-Semitism, rising Jewish achievement, and greater acceptance of Jews by non-Jews. Not only do most young American Jews have loving relationships with non-Jews, but hundreds of thousands of non-Jews love Jews – a very common circumstance now, and a fairly rare occurrence just a few decades ago. At the same time, this integration has brought some adverse consequences for Judaism and Jewishness, including diminished attachment to a sense of Jewish kinship, to Jewish community, to Israel, and to Jewish peoplehood. The link between numerous social ties to other Jews and numerous affective ties to collective Jewish things (including Israel), however, is clear and undeniable.

Aside from integration, the other major development in the lives of American Jews and Judaism is the rise of the Jewish Sovereign Self, as Arnold Eisen and I argued in The Jew Within. As compared with the parents and predecessors in 1948, Jews today feel far more ready to assert whether, when, where, and how they will express their Jewish identities, shifting from normative constructions of being Jewish to aesthetic understandings. A normative approach assumes that being Jewishly involved is both good and right. Moreover, Jewish norms, although often in conflict, in effect declare that certain ways of being Jewish are better than others. Such norms can derive from God, parents, nostalgia, tradition, halakha (Jewish law), and/or belonging to the Jewish people. An aesthetic approach, in contrast, is less judgmental and directive. It sees being Jewish as a matter of beauty and culture, as a resource for meaning rather than as an ethical or moral imperative.

As late as the 1960s, engaged American Jews still maintained a consensus that being Jewish was a matter of obligations. One could violate the norms, but then one felt guilty about it. The world has changed and the Jewish world has changed. Fewer people today regard being Jewish as a matter of norms and obligations.

The combination of increasing integration into American society on the one hand and decreasing emphasis on Judaism as a normative system on the other has had a powerful impact. The twin forces have led to substantial changes in what it means to be a Jew in America, as defined and experienced by the American Jewish public — what Charles Liebman referred to as the folk religion, as opposed to the elite religion, of American Jews. These developments have produced changes in Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform — the rubrics that continue to define a large number of American Jews, even in the post-denominational age in which we think we live.

The Major Denominational Labels

The major labels that American Jews use to define their ways of being Jewish remain Orthodoxy, Conservative, and Reform, albeit with other possibilities — such as Reconstructionist and Jewish Renewal — and the growth in nondenominational and postdenominational tendencies as well. Demographically, the JCC (Jewish Community Center) Movement is, however, the largest institutionally based association in American Jewish life, with about a million Jewish members. It even outnumbers Reform Judaism, the largest denominational movement in American Judaism. But few observers think of the 200 JCCs as constituting a movement within Judaism, notwithstanding an impressive organizational range and complexity that embraces early childhood education, day camps, youth groups, continentally based sports.
Changes in American Jewish Identities Since 1948

(continued)

events, adult Jewish education, cultural events, community-wide organizing, and engagement with Israel.

The denominational nomenclature is so prevalent in the United States in large part because American society defines being Jewish as primarily a religious option: it’s Protestant-Catholic-Jew – and now Muslim, Hindu, and so on – rather than Italian, Irish, Hispanic, Jewish. In other regions of the Diaspora, where being Jewish is more overtly ethnic, denominational labels are far less compelling. It is worth reviewing each denominational camp.

Orthodoxy has gradually become more separatist and sectarian with respect to other Jews.

Growing Larger and Sliding Right

In broad strokes, Orthodoxy has been demographically growing. Its population, according to all standard sociological measures, score highest in terms of Jewish commitment, education, activity, and social ties. On average, on a person-for-person basis, Orthodox Jews undertake more hours of Jewish education, perform more rituals, give more charity, have more Jewish friends, more often visit and move to Israel, more readily claim to be Jewishly committed, and on and on.

At the same time, Orthodoxy has gradually become more separatist and sectarian with respect to other Jews. This ‘Sliding to the Right’ is partly due to a triumphalist conviction that only Orthodoxy will survive the assimilatory impact of the larger society, and in part a reaction to what Orthodoxy sees as failure and immorality in non-Orthodox versions of Judaism.

Deep within, most committed Orthodox Jews see other systems as violating Torah-true, authentic understandings as to what Jews should do and what they should believe. They thus have far more of a problem with Conservative or Reform rabbis than with Conservative or Reform Jews. This attitude expresses itself in many ways such as the refusal of Orthodox rabbis to in any way lend legitimacy to non-Orthodox rabbis, even as many Orthodox bodies make a massive investment and commitment to reach and educate non-Orthodox Jews as individuals. Of the most traditional Orthodox figures many say, in effect, ‘To non-Orthodox denominations, nothing; to non-Orthodox Jews as individuals, everything.’

Ethnic Decline and Conservative Shrinkage

The Conservative Movement has traditionally reflected the underlying ethnicity of Jewish America. Marshall Sklare referred to the Conservative synagogue as an ‘ethnic church,’ drawing its strength from the ties of family, community, and peoplehood – or ethnoses – that once widely characterized American Jews. As Jewish ethnicity has weakened, with the decline of Jewish marriages, friendships, and neighborhoods, so too has Conservative Judaism. In the 1950s and 1960s it was the major affiliation of synagogue Jews, about two-thirds of whom be longing to Conservative congregations. Now it has declined to about one-third, and is rapidly shrinking demographically.

Yet Conservative Judaism still occupies a very critical place – ideologically, socially, and philosophically – between Orthodoxy and Reform. The movement offers a model of intensive Jewish living that is both modern and accessible to large numbers of American Jews. It boasts an institutional infrastructure that embraces congregations, day schools, camps, youth movements, Israel-based institutions, publications, and informal networks, to say nothing of its thousands of rabbis, cantors, educators, other professionals, and lay leaders. Those who care about a healthy American Jewry should worry about how to help the Conservative Movement revive itself and become again a strong pillar of American Jewry.

Jews (and others) Choosing Judaism

The Reform Movement, for its part, has made a signal contribution to American Judaism by strongly advancing and developing the notion of ‘Judaism by choice.’ In effect, its leaders have taught that for Judaism to be compelling and sustainable, Jews must make their own choices, which are informed by teaching that is Judaically authentic and at the same time relevant to the contemporary, modern context.

This approach has attracted and sustained the involvement of hundreds of thousands of Jews, including many with minimal exposure to Jewish education and social networks. Under the leadership of Rabbi Eric Yoffie, at the helm of the highly regarded Union for Reform Judaism, the Movement has grown to 900+ congregations, many of which display an extraordinary level of energy and vibrancy. With four campuses in the U.S. and Israel, the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, under the extraordinary leadership of Rabbi David Ellenson, has been training scores of rabbis, cantors, educators and communal professionals annually for an expanding Movement with ongoing demands for its ranks of professional leadership.

As Jewish ethnicity has weakened, with the decline of Jewish marriages, friendships, and neighborhoods, so too has Conservative Judaism.
At the same time, perhaps half of the couples joining Reform temples have a partner who was not born Jewish, only a minority of whom have converted to Judaism. Because the Reform Movement attracts these people, it has a population of congregants that, on average, is not highly educated in Jewish terms, at least when compared with their Orthodox or Conservative counterparts in the aggregate.

Not coincidentally, the Reform Movement, its synagogues and rabbis, are often blamed for serving as the primary home for apparently ‘weak’ Jews in their midst. In response, we can do a thought experiment and assume that the Reform Movement decided to close shop. What would happen to all these Jews, particularly those who are intermarried, or had weak childhood education in Judaism, or both – as is often the case? Certainly some would join Conservative synagogues, but probably the vast majority would not be attached to Jewish life. And, notwithstanding the large number of mixed-married and poorly educated Jews, over the years the Movement’s official policies have placed more emphasis on ritual practice, Jewish learning, Zionism, prayer, and Hebrew, trends embodied and exemplified by its newly published siddur, Mishkan T’filah.

Reform rabbis, educators, and lay leaders are thus engaging with and struggling to engage with their population, some of whom are among the most marginally involved in conventional Jewish life. This struggle is to their credit. Sometimes they succeed. On other occasions they fail, as is manifest in the large number of congregants who leave their temples upon the bar/bat mitzvah of their youngest child; perhaps about half do so. Even more worrying, perhaps, are the large numbers of children raised in Reform Judaism who marry out, more by far than the other two major Movements. But, with that said, Reform is now the largest Jewish denominational Movement in the United States, holding steady in recent years, as the number of non-Jewish Reform congregants grow, while the number of Jewish Reform congregants (be they born-Jews or converts to Judaism) slowly decline over the long haul.

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The Orthodox Struggle with Klal Yisrael

All three major religious Movements are standing at a crossroads. One major struggle within Orthodoxy is over whether Orthodoxy will remain part of the real Am Yisrael (Jewish People) in America – not the Jews they may want, but the Jews we actually have. That struggle translates into the question, ‘Can one have common educational, intellectual, or communal relationships, not only with non-Orthodox Jews but also with non-Orthodox rabbis? How does one maintain dialogue and genuine collaboration with them?’

For many Orthodox, the break with Jewish law as they understand it by Conservative, Reform, and other non-Orthodox Movements is too high a barrier to overcome. The ordination of gay and lesbian rabbis is one issue. Also the seeming acceptance of intermarriage and the incorporation of large numbers of non-Jews into Jewish congregations deeply trouble Orthodox rabbis of all persuasions.

The high rates of intermarriage, patrilineal descent, and what they regard as illegitimate conversions mean to many Orthodox parents that their children might unknowingly marry what to them are non-Jews, albeit those who were raised and educated in Reform or Conservative congregations. Significant numbers of Orthodox Jews insulate their children not only from the effects of the larger society, but from intimate contact with non-Orthodox Jews.

Yet despite these tendencies, a number of notable efforts seek to promote more openness and engagement with all of Jewry. One finds an internal struggle at Yeshiva University over which way the institution will go under the leadership of Richard Joel as its president, either in the direction of greater sectarianism or greater engagement with all of Jewry. The newly established Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, headed by Rabbi Avi Weiss, is producing rabbis committed to the unity of the Jewish people.

Conservative Turnaround?

The population of the Conservative Movement is shrinking. Reflecting trends that date back to 1960 or so, there are probably twice as many Conservative senior citizens as there are Conservative children.

The newly emerging Conservative leadership – both the recently installed and the soon-to-be appointed – will be addressing the critical demographic challenges of shrinkage and aging. Any transition from great leaders of the older generation to younger persons of great talent raises hopes for change. With Arnold Eisen as the Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), there is a widespread expectation of revival in the movement, notwithstanding that JTS is just one important element in the Conservative institutional array.

Among major Conservative institutions, JTS is not alone in the transition to a new and younger leadership. In the three major
Changes in American Jewish Identities Since 1948

(continued)

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Reflecting trends that date back to 1960 or so, there are probably twice as many Conservative senior citizens as there are Conservative children.

One example of this tendency, as is the Havurah Movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The American Jewish University – the former University of Judaism – is no longer Conservative, while its rabbinical school is still formally Conservative. The Jewish Museum is affiliated with the JTS, yet hardly anybody knows this. The well-known synagogue B’nai Yeshurun (‘BJ’) on New York’s Upper West Side was formerly Conservative but disaffiliated some years ago. This innovative congregation, with arguably the highest profile in North America, is one more formerly Conservative export. So too are the many independent minyanim (prayer groups) that have been started by people trained in the Conservative movement. These leaders were and are capable of being leaders in the Conservative Movement, yet have decided – at least for now – to build their communities outside the formal boundaries of Conservatism.

One might thus conclude that Jewish intensification often means leaving Conservative Judaism. The question then becomes how does one create a space where these people will have a sense of belonging? How can they remain within the Conservative orbit even if they operate with no formal affiliation with the usual Conservative institutions?

The Intermarriage Challenge

The extent of intermarriage and intergroup friendship is truly significant. About two-thirds of older American Jews have mostly Jewish friends. In contrast, two-thirds of the under-thirty generation have mostly non-Jewish friends. Most young Jews today who have a partner – married or not – are either married or romantically involved with non-Jews. I can say with relative certitude that none of my grandparents ever dated a non-Jew; and I can say with equal certitude that the vast majority of Jews my children’s ages have had intimate and loving relationships with non-Jews.

The Reform Movement, in the forefront of efforts to engage intermarried Jews in congregational life, is tackling the question of how to keep the intermarried and their children attached to Judaism in an authentic way. This issue is particularly challenging as so many non-Jews with hardly any Jewish background come into Reform temples with their Jewish partners, many of whom themselves have weak Jewish backgrounds.

More and more, Reform temples consist of two contrasting sorts of congregants. One segment consists of growing numbers of well-groomed alumni of NFTY, religious schools, and URJ camps; the other comprises Jewish and non-Jewish congregants with minimal Jewish social and educational capital. The growth of both populations propels seemingly contradictory tendencies. For example, more alternative services have been springing up in Reform temples’ chapels and basements. At the same time, the larger sanctuaries on Shabbat mornings are filled with one-Shabbat-a-year worshippers celebrating bar and bat mitzvahs.

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About two-thirds of older American Jews have mostly Jewish friends. In contrast, two-thirds of the under-thirty generation have mostly non-Jewish friends.

And a good fraction of the bat/bar mitzvah families will soon leave the congregation (a troubling event to say the least).

Both intermarried Jews and their non-Jewish spouses function as full members of Reform congregations, serve as temple board members, and officers, albeit with some limitations on the leadership opportunities available to the non-Jewish partner. Their needs and values shape temple practices, policies, and personnel, underscoring the professional leadership positions of the Conservative Movement, the older generation is giving way to a new one. As with JTS, that has happened at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Rabbinical Assembly, signaling a thoroughgoing and appropriate shift in culture, language, and ethos that only a new generation can bring.

The emerging generation of prominent Conservative rabbis, congregational leaders, thinkers, and others will need to reconfigure the Conservative Movement so that it regains the attachment of its erstwhile natural constituency. These are young-adult Jews who are socially progressive, religiously liberal and, at the same time, religiously and textually serious, and committed to high-quality spiritual experiences. In the recent past, the exodus of such individuals to Orthodoxy or to nonaffiliated communities has deprived Conservative congregations of their highest-caliber potential leadership.

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“Who Lost BJ?”

Over the years, the Conservative Movement has been extraordinarily productive, and has created important endeavors – many of which, however, are no longer associated with it. It is American Judaism’s biggest exporter of home-grown talent, people, ideas and institutions. Conservatism just can’t seem to hold on to some of its finest creations.

The Reconstructionist Movement is but...
challenges posed by the presence of so many non-Jews and their intermarried spouses. For example, how does the rabbi clearly promote the conversion of non-Jewish spouses to Judaism without undermining the attempt to welcome mixed-married couples? Even more pointedly, how does one teach a confirmation class of adolescents that Jews should marry Jews when half the sixteen-year-olds are the children of Jewish and non-Jewish parents? While these dilemmas are most keenly felt in Reform temples, they emerge in Conservative and Reconstructionist congregations as well.

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**Losing the Intermarriage Battle?**

No matter how well Reform congregations handle the intermarried families they reach, American Judaism as a whole is failing to reverse the deleterious impact of intermarriage on the Jewish population as a whole. As HUC-JIR sociologist Bruce Phillips reports, of those raised by two Jewish parents, almost 98% were raised as Jewish by religion; of those raised by one Jewish and one non-Jewish parent, the figure drops to 39%; and of those raised by a “half-Jew” and a non-Jew, that is with one of four Jewish grandparents, just 4% are raised in the Jewish religion.

On a proportionate basis, the number of Orthodox Jewish children is almost twice the number of Orthodox middle-aged people; while the number of non-Orthodox children falls to almost half of non-Orthodox middle-aged people. Of people with at least one Jewish parent who are now elderly, over 90% identify as Jews; of young adults with at least one Jewish parent, less than half identify as Jews. Because of intermarriage, we are in a sort of Jewish population meltdown with grave consequences for the future of Conservative, Reform, and other Judaic Movements outside of Orthodoxy.

Outreach and welcoming are certainly having an effect, bringing large numbers of intermarried Jews into our congregations. The true challenge lies not with the intermarried Jews we see, or we know, or are in our generally more committed families where, thankfully, many intermarried young people are making Jewish choices. The real problem lies with the intermarried we never see, the ones who live in areas of the country distant from congregations, the ones with only a single Jewish parent who begin their married lives with only a tentative tie to being Jewish. The two-generation outflow of such individuals – clearly visible in all our population studies – is truly sad and worrisome. Well over a million Americans today, perhaps two, report they had a Jewish parent or grandparent, yet identify as Christian or as otherwise non-Jewish. And, whatever their true number, the vast amount of recent intermarriage promises hundreds of thousands more in the coming years.

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**Multiple Modes of Jewish Engagement**

All this should not ignore the many other ways outside of religious congregational life in which American Jews are Jewishly engaged. Many still live in such Jewish neighborhoods as New York’s Upper West Side, Squirrel Hill (Pittsburgh), and Silver Spring (Maryland), even as more move to such radically different locales as Las Vegas and other sparsely settled Jewish environs in the Mountain and Pacific regions. Jews in areas of greater residential concentration, largely in the Northeast and Midwest, not only have more Jewish neighbors; they also report more Jewish spouses, more Jewish friends, and more Jewish institutional ties. Jews in the older areas of settlement often still have an ethnic style; many manifest Jewishness through domestic political concerns or with regard to Israel.

On another plane, the JCC movement, as I mentioned earlier, is widely overlooked as a locus of Jewish community-building, to say nothing of its great strides in informal Jewish education. Furthermore, American Jews have a very rich cultural life in music, art, literature, scholarship, journalism, dance, museums of various kinds, and also now on the Internet.

Indeed, there are hundreds of millions of pages on the Internet on Jewish matters. Obviously, none existed fifteen years ago. There is a documented increase in Jewish involvement in social-justice activism, of which Ruth Messinger and the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) is the most visible phenomenon. There are more Jewish cultural activities than ever, be they concerts, musical events, drama, art exhibitions, or Jewish literary magazines. There is thus a plethora of Jewish life that is being led by people in their twenties and thirties outside the traditional network. And we cannot ignore the ongoing influence of more pervasive Movements and what we may call Jewish sensibilities, be they nearly forty years of Jewish feminism, or the more recently emerging Jewish spirituality Movement with its shaping of prayer, healing, and pastoral clergy such as by Rabbi Rachel Cowan (see page 54) and others.

Particularly exciting is the work of many of the younger generation – Jews in their twenties and thirties – who are involved in self-initiated acts of Jewish communal creation. The newly established independent minyanim and rabbi-led emergent spiritual communities is particularly impressive. About eighty of these have sprung up all over the United States, several of them outside the major Jewish centers. Some such communities – Hadar and IKAR come to mind – report upwards of three thousand people on their mailing lists, while other communities number as few as sixty or seventy participants (they avoid using such conventional words as members or congregations or officers).
Extended Singlehood

Today, reflecting a world-wide pattern, most non-Orthodox Jewish adults under the age of forty are not married. In the recent past, Jews used to marry five to seven years after leaving university. This now happens after ten to fifteen years, if at all. There are also somewhat higher divorce rates than at mid-century. All this means that among non-Orthodox Jews there is a large percentage of unmarried people, almost always without children. In the past, childrearing has brought Jews to congregations and JCCs.

Fortunately and unfortunately, the diversity of American Jews and the inevitability and rapidity of change makes the task of bridging Judaic mission and Jewish market an ongoing and never-finished challenge.

Orthodox American Jews that makes three powerful points:
• However measured, younger Jews are much less attached to Israel than older Jews.
• The intermarried are far less attached to Israel than the in-married or single Jews.
• Younger intermarried Jews are even more alienated from Israel than their older counterparts.

In fact, were it not for the statistical inclusion of the intermarried, overall rates of attachment to Israel among the non-Orthodox would be holding steady. This is not to say that intermarriage brings about alienation from Israel. It is to say that whatever brings about intermarriage, plus whatever impact intermarriage may have on its own, operates to depress attachment to Israel and, by extension, to the Jewish community and the Jewish People.

The interpersonal and intimate ties of Jews with non-Jews poses major questions as to how one can strengthen, preserve, or make meaningful the Jewish commitment to the collective, without seeming or being racist. How does one argue for and promote Jewish marriage and friendship in this world without appearing bigoted and insular? Causes such as Israel, building the Jewish community, or caring about Jews locally and all over the world demand, at least empirically, the establishment and nurturing of strong Jewish networks of friends and family. Yet, to many Jews, younger somewhat more than older, teaching to forge and pursue such in-group ties seems so un-

Taking Hold of Torah

If Judaism is a matter of norms, of right and wrong, one can teach one’s children that Jewish involvement is right, and distancing from Jewish life is wrong. But if to be Jewish is a matter of aesthetics, then one can only teach that Jewish engagement is akin to the love of music and art. Such engagement can lend purpose and meaning and spiritual enrichment, but it is by no means a moral decision.

In fact, many Jews now see being Jewish the same way as loving music or art. It is a good thing to do, but for them it is not a matter of right or wrong. They have no sense that for a Jew to be Jewish is the right way to be, akin to one’s patriotic duty as an American or other nationalities.

Such morally laden language and concepts, while Judaically authentic, are admittedly not for indifferent contemporary Jews. We need to develop a third way of speaking, modeling, and teaching, one that combines the normative and aesthetic approaches, that appeals to Jews so that they will find it meaningful to be obligated, or to quote the title of Arnold Eisen’s book, that they engage in Taking Hold of Torah. We need both individual autonomy (taking hold) and a turn to Torah, in the broadest sense.

Rabbis and other leaders in all three Movements and beyond are working on blending the Judaism of meaning with the Judaism of obligation. They are struggling to bridge the longstanding gap between the Judaic mission to which they are committed and the reality of the American Jewish marketplace in which they work. To the extent that they succeed, the future of American Jews and Judaism will be assured. Fortunately and unfortunately, the diversity of American Jews and the inevitability and rapidity of change makes the task of bridging Judaic mission and Jewish market an ongoing and never-finished challenge.
Rabbi Laura Geller  Senior Rabbi, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills

Steven Cohen’s essay raises important questions about the nature of Jewish identity in America today. He asserts that we need to create a blending of a Judaism of meaning and a Judaism of obligation, but he doesn’t give us guidelines for how to proceed. In fact, most of his examples, including the discussion of the problems of synagogues within denominations, and the distance many contemporary non-Orthodox Jews feel from Israel, makes a successful blending seem unlikely. The few hopeful signs he describes – including the “self-initiated acts of Jewish communal creations” such as “independent minyanim and rabbi-led emergent spiritual communities” are not, in my view, so different from what is happening in many existing synagogues. They are, rather, just younger organizations that will inevitably grow into some of the same challenges that more mature synagogues face.

These questions became very real to me in my role as the senior rabbi of a large congregation where people do not know each other very well. We were beginning the process of one-on-one conversations through Hineni, our congregation-based community organizing effort that begins with congregants talking to each other about what really matters in their lives. We trained several congregants to initiate these conversations. The way it works is that a congregant would call another congregant whom he or she often didn’t know and say: “Hi, I’m from Temple Emanuel, and I would love to meet with you for about a half an hour to get to know you and to hear from you concerns you have about the quality of life in our city that the congregation might become involved with. Don’t worry. This isn’t about money or anything like that… just about developing connections among congregants that will strengthen our community and maybe even give us some clarity about what we might do as a congregation around social justice. I’m happy to meet you in your office, in your home, at the temple, or at a Starbucks… let me know a time that would work for you.”

Most people responded affirmatively, but several did not. Their response: “I’m sorry. I’m too busy to meet with you.” Even the sacrifice of a little bit of time was too much to ask.

I must admit I was surprised. It raised the question of what institutions have a claim on us. If your alma mater calls, do you respond? Your child’s school? Your neighborhood association? Your synagogue… does it have a claim on you?

I shared this story with my congregation during the High Holy Days and asked them: who or what has a claim on you? People answered without hesitation: children, spouses, parents, more family members, friends, people in crisis.

As the discussion unfolded, it emerged that the meaning people discovered in their lives actually has something to do with being in relationships that can make a claim on them, relationships that create obligation. In other words, congregants instinctively made the connection between meaning and obligation. Given that, our challenge as a Jewish community is to make this connection clear.

So the beginning of one answer to Steven Cohen’s challenge is to create synagogues that help people understand that it is through the claims that emerge out of relationships that we create meaning. Our congregation-based community organizing is one model. Hundreds of these conversations have taken place over the past three years. People have shared with each other the concerns they have about the future of people they love. Out of those conversations have come connections and obligations and even some clarity about how we might work together to change the conditions that caused those concerns. That clarity, in turn, has led to coalitions with other faith communities in Los Angeles to work together on similar concerns. The conversations, the relationships, the obligation, and the work continue. All this adds meaning to people’s lives, to our congregation, and to the larger Jewish community. It might also make a difference in the world. It is one important model of how to blend a Judaism of meaning with a Judaism of obligation, which, Steven Cohen concludes, is as an ongoing and never-finished challenge.

Dr. Bruce Phillips  Professor of Jewish Communal Service, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles

Steven M. Cohen’s piece is breathtaking in scope and poses a wide variety of policy and values questions to the synagogue community in general and the Reform Movement in particular. Given the depth and scope of the discussion of Steve’s essay, I have chosen to explore in greater depth some issues that overlap with my own research. Steve paints a panoramic landscape of contemporary Jewish life with necessarily broad strokes. To better understand the implications some of the changes he describes, I was inspired to analyze some available studies in depth to measure with greater precision a few of the trends he discusses.

Cohen conjectures that “perhaps half of the couples joining Reform temples have a partner who was not born Jewish.” A partner not born Jewish includes both Jews-by-Choice, Christians, and secular non-Jews. The notion that the Reform Movement is being reshaped by intermarriage is widely held along with its openness to intermarried couples as an explanation for its continued growth. I have many times been told that there are synagogues in which intermarried couples outnumeralmost married couples. Steven’s article piqued my curiosity to investigate the extent to which this conventional wisdom is true. I began by turning to the 2000 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS), which asked specifically about the denomination of the synagogue to which the respondent belonged. Of all respondents that reported belonging to a Reform synagogue, 14% were intermarried as compared with 6% of Conservative synagogue members and 3% of Orthodox and “traditional” synagogue members. Intermarried couples are most present in Reconstructionist synagogues where they constitute 22% of the member households.

Although the NJPS did not ask how long the household had been a member of the synagogue, we can assume that “couples joining Reform synagogues” refers to young couples. Because intermarriage is most prevalent among the youngest couples, it seems logical that intermarriage will be more prevalent among young couples who have joined the synagogue
recently than among older couples who have been members for longer. The data from the NJPS shows this to be the case. Among Reform synagogue members under 40, there are 150 intermarried couples for every 100 intermarried couples (couples in which the spouse is a Jew-by-Choice are counted as in-marriages). Among 40 and older members of Reform synagogues, the in-married couples outnumber the intermarried couples by a factor of more than three-to-one. If Jews-by-Choice are added to non-Jewish spouses as persons of non-Jewish birth, the numbers get even closer. The trend is clear; more and more younger families in Reform congregations will include a non-Jewish spouse and Jews-by-Choice. Reform Judaism is not unique in this. Intermarried couples are less present in Conservative synagogues than in Reform, but they are nonetheless more prevalent among younger couples than older couples. Intermarried and conversionary couples are also changing the composition of Conservative congregations, and they are more associated with Reconstructionist synagogues. Among Reconstructionist synagogues members under 40, intermarried couples slightly outnumber in-married couples. It is only in Orthodox congregations that intermarried couples are few and far between, and I suspect that the intermarried couples who reported an Orthodox synagogue membership were probably affiliated with Chabad. This is important for how the Reform Movement thinks of itself vis-a-vis Conservative Judaism. With regard to intermarried congregants, Conservative and Reform share many of the same dilemmas and concerns. This adds another dimension to the growing gap Steve discusses between the Orthodox and other Jews.

Not all communities are equally impacted by intermarriage. This chart compares synagogue membership rates in four communities that have conducted demographic surveys since 1999: Baltimore, Chicago, Atlanta, and San Francisco. In Chicago, 29% of current couples are intermarried; almost double the percentage in Baltimore (17%), but the rates of synagogue membership for both in- and inter-married couples are almost the same. Half of all married couples in Atlanta and San Francisco are intermarriages, and both these communities have seen their Jewish populations grow by 50% or more during the 1990s. In Atlanta only 8% of intermarried couples are affiliated with synagogues, as compared with 13% in San Francisco. Paradoxically, the rates are reversed for in-married couples in these two cities. Among in-married couples, synagogue membership is higher in Atlanta (63%) than in San Francisco with the lower rates of synagogue membership among intermarried couples, but I highlight one that is of particular importance to synagogues, the religious composition of the couple. I have examined the impact of the religious composition of the intermarried couples on synagogue affiliation in both the NJPS and the San Francisco Jewish Population Survey, and the results are strikingly similar. Jews married to secular non-Jews are the most likely to join a synagogue (28% nationally and 33% in San Francisco), followed by Jews married to Christians (26% nationally and 20% in San Francisco). Only 1% of intermarried secular Jews in the NJPS and only 4% in San Francisco belonged to a synagogue. The figure is not much different for secular Jews married to other secular Jews (8%). Secular Jews (i.e. persons born Jewish who list “none” for their current religion) don’t waste their money on religious institutions.

Dual Religion intermarriages (Jews married to Christians) in the NJPS outnumbered Judaic intermarriages (Jews married to secular non-Jews) by a factor of four-to-one in the NJPS, and similar proportions apply to local studies as well. Among members of Reform synagogues in the NJPS, Dual Religion couples outnumbered Judaic couples by a factor of three-to-one. Surprisingly, Dual Religion couples in the NJPS were almost as likely as Judaic couples to raise their children in Judaism (45% and 53% respectively). They do so for many reasons. Some are only nominally Christian, meaning that they classify themselves according to the denomination in which they were raised but do not identify strongly with it. Others are sympathetic to the minority status of Jews and agree that one more Jewish child will have a greater impact in the big picture than one more Christian child. Gender is also important; intermarried Jewish women are almost twice as likely as intermarried Jewish men to raise their children in Judaism. For synagogues this means that coping with intermarriage will involve dealing with non-Jewish spouses with various degrees of commitment to Christianity. This underscores Steve’s conclusion that the increasing diversity of American Jews “makes the task of bridging Judaic mission and Jewish market an ongoing and never-finished challenge.”
I love being part of a group that is modeling cooperation between the Reform and Conservative Movements,” says Schusterman Rabbinical Fellow Sara Newman, N’11. “Like studying a text in bevruta (with a study partner), the point is not to come to a consensus, but to hear the other person’s ideas, learn about his/her thought process, and have richer and more productive discussions. I truly believe that we can do much more to engage American Jewry if we work as a team.”

Newman is one of the 16 Schusterman Rabbinical Fellows at HUC-JIR and the Jewish Theological Seminary, where there are two cohorts to date, with 8 students each at the College-Institute and JTS. Funded by the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and managed by STAR (Synagogues: Transformation and Renewal), this program brings future leaders of the Conservative and Reform Movements together for three years of formal study. The goal is to create a cadre of rabbis who share a broad and dynamic vision of communal leadership for American Jewry.

“I am proud to be part of this ongoing effort to train outstanding future rabbinical leaders who will be well positioned to work with Jews of all backgrounds, including those who are members of interfaith households,” states Lynn Schusterman, Chair and Co-Founder of the Schusterman Family Foundation.

“A lot of the big issues we face are the same throughout the progressive Movements of Judaism,” explains Schusterman Fellow Samantha Orshan, L’11. “Though we may view them differently, as our Movements are rooted in different approaches, we should be aware of our common ground.”

Ethan Bair, L’11, notes that he and the other Schusterman Fellows take their lead from the heads of their respective seminaries, saying “Rabbi David Ellenson and Dr. Arnold Eisen model for us inter-denominational dialogue based on friendship, respect, and a shared concern for the future of American Judaism.”

The Schusterman Rabbinical Fellows study leadership, collaboration techniques, and key issues in American and Israeli Jewry. Through semi-annual retreats, monthly conference calls or webinars, and
informal exchanges, they examine management methods, define personal visions for their rabbinate, and cultivate strategies for drawing Jews who often feel marginal – including those in interfaith relationships and those not affiliated with any Jewish congregation – closer to the heart of the Jewish community.

“At our first retreat we reviewed the National Jewish Population Surveys and their data on intermarriage, affiliation, and participation in Jewish education and ritual observance,” recalls Newman. “This has given us a strong basis, transcending intuition or anecdotal knowledge, for a better understanding of demographic trends in the changing Jewish community.”

The program, which is taught by HUC-JIR and JTS faculty and outside experts, is shaped by STAR and the Center for Leadership Initiatives, Inc. (CLI), who lend expertise in innovation, interfaith outreach, strategic planning, non-profit management, leadership development, and skills training and collaborative networking frameworks, respectively. Students receive tuition and a living stipend during the third and fourth years of rabbinical studies, in order to have more opportunity to focus on becoming rabbinical leaders of contemporary American Jewry.

“I am a committed Reform Jew, and would like more unaffiliated Jews to learn about Reform Judaism, take part in our programming, and join our synagogues,” states Newman. “At the same time, I believe that liberal Jews have more in common than our denominational affiliations let on. I want to work together to figure out how to strengthen the American Jewish community.” Aaron Miller, C ’11, (see page 42) agrees, saying “We can learn and benefit from each other as our Movements continue to evolve in their unique ways. The Schusterman Fellowship has been one of the most defining and enlightening experiences I have had as a rabbinical student.”

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THE TASK OF THE
TISCH RABBINICAL FELLOWS

In a rabbinical class on the Prophets last spring, Tisch Fellow Jonathan Prosnit, N ’11, began to think about these biblical figures through the contemporary lens of community organizers and public advocates, “speaking their mind and trying to mobilize around issues. These are Jewish themes – being part of a community and reaching out are intrinsic to the leadership development and social justice courses I’m taking at HUC-JIR.” Prosnit has just completed his Tisch summer residency at Temple Micah in Washington, D.C., where he had the opportunity to reflect on public policy and Jewish policy, from Israel to social justice, within the context of the Reform congregational setting.

The Tisch Rabbinical Fellows Program, established through the vision and generosity of Bonnie and Dan Tisch, is an opportunity for rabbinical students to specialize in congregational leadership through three years of enriched study and learning experiences. From in-depth seminars and reflective exercises to mentored summer residencies with exceptional rabbinical role models in URJ congregations, the Tisch Fellows engage in both formal and informal learning that emphasizes critical thinking in four areas:
• Advanced text study
• Congregational studies as it applies to synagogue leadership
• Sociology of religion in America, generally, and in the Jewish community, particularly
• Personal theology through ongoing dialogue and mentorship

Rabbi Darcie Crystal, Coordinator of Leadership Initiatives at HUC-JIR/New York, lauds the sense of community that has grown among the first two cohorts of the Program. “In providing support to every member of the group,” she says, “Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, who coordinates the Program with me, and I hope to model a sacred community, the kind that they will one day create in their own congregations.” Furthermore, she highlights the students’ access to an extraordinary array of distinguished leaders and rabbis with whom they “study, dialogue, question, and challenge.” Over the past two years, they have met with Rabbi Rachel Cowan (see page 54), Rabbi Art Green, Rabbi Irwin Kula, Rabbi Shira Milgrom, and Barry Shrage, among many others, and have engaged in intensive study with members of the HUC-JIR faculty and administration.

Tisch Fellows leave the classroom for the real world to examine successful and innovative enterprises in Jewish communal life. At Larchmont Temple they met with Rabbi Jeffrey Sirkman and his congregants to experience first-hand the covenantal community that he has built there. They spent time learning about managing a Board from Joan
Rosenbaum, Director of the Jewish Museum in New York. They learned about the Riverway Project that has pioneered engagement of Jews in their 20s and 30s with the founder of that program, Rabbi Jeremy Morrison at Temple Israel in Boston.

From exploring the importance of mission and vision to examining the management issues of budgeting, fundraising, and administering a staff, the Tisch Fellows enhance their leadership capacity. Students also spend several hours each month working with a coach to aid their personal introspection and professional growth, and are asked to reflect on their development as leaders. They receive tuition for three years and an annual living stipend, which allows them more time to delve into their academics.

The diversity of the 13 Tisch Fellows to date reflects the broad reach that they will have as rabbinical leaders. Some are invested in a concern for the environment, as reflected in a senior sermon where Joseph Skloot, N’10, (see page 42) noted, “Our current ecological, social, and physiological situation demands action to redress the imbalance of ordinary and extraordinary in our lives.” Others, like Matthew Soffer, N’10, are motivated by a strong commitment to social justice as seen in his interviews with great Jewish leaders of the 20th century (see page 19). Nicole Roberts, C’12, entered HUC-JIR with a track record of attracting Jews in their 20s and 30s to congregational life (see page 46), while Yaron Kapitulnik, N’10, (see page 35) is pioneering ways in which to affiliate the hundreds of thousands of Israelis living in the U.S., a project that he successfully coordinated at the 92nd Street Y in New York last year. “Being a Tisch Fellow,” says Rachel Joseph, L’12 (see page 42), “means that I will have the opportunity to be an agent for change in other people’s lives and lead them towards a vision of living a rich and full Jewish life.”

This August, the Tisch Fellows spent three days concentrated on their personal theology at the first ever Tisch Shabbaton. Through study with Dr. Steven Cohen, Dr. Lawrence Hoffman, and Rabbi Debra Hachen, prayer services planned and facilitated by the students, and numerous opportunities for focus on personal spirituality, the Fellows returned to the new academic year with renewed excitement and commitment to becoming visionary rabbis and leaders.

### SCHOOL OF SACRED MUSIC LEADERSHIP FELLOWS PROGRAM

Beginning in the Fall of 2009, cantorial students will be eligible for the School of Sacred Music Fellows Program. This new Program, made possible through a generous endowment of $1.5 million by an anonymous donor, will provide full tuition and a living stipend for up to three students’ third and fourth years of study. The SSM Leadership Fellows will integrate into the programming of the Tisch Leadership Fellowship Program, including seminars on congregational leadership, advanced text study, mentorship, visits to innovative venues of Jewish life, and presentations by leading scholars and practitioners.

### THE MANDEL FELLOWS PROGRAM MANDATE

Everything I have learned as a Mandel Fellow over the past two years is going to make me a better rabbi,” says Rena Polonsky, N ’10. “As an educator and a rabbi, I can educate, effect change, and help others transform and realize their own visions for Jewish life.” Polonsky is one of HUC-JIR’s 23 Mandel Fellows to date – 15 based in Los Angeles and 8 in New York.

Now inaugurating its third cohort, the HUC-JIR Mandel Fellowship program is enhancing the educational leadership capacity of selected rabbinical students who seek degrees in Jewish Education in a one-year intensive program in addition to their five-year rabbinical program. This initiative, created and sustained by Morton Mandel and the Mandel Foundation, is grounded in the assumption that vibrant synagogue communities are vital to Jewish life and that they require inspiring rabbinical leadership anchored in a vision for Jewish learning.

Professor Sara S. Lee serves as leader for this program, which includes three intensive seminars in California, Boston, and Israel that offer learning with faculty, presentations by guest scholars and practitioners, site visits to vision-guided institutions and encounters with innovative rabbis, and guided reflection on these experiences. She points to the outcomes of the Mandel Fellows Program, beginning with “the systematic, thoughtful inquiry into what Jewish life at its best might look like, and the encounter with visionary people and compelling institutions that offer proof to counter assumptions and arguments that suggest that the task is too complex and idealistic.” Lee explains that Mandel Fellows benefit from “the mentored development of personal stances about Judaism and Jewish life that are grounded in Jewish ideas and beliefs, and come to view all aspects of congregational growth as sites of substantive individual and communal Jewish growth.”

Melissa Zalkin Stollman, N ’10, extols the program, saying, “We challenge one another to be more thoughtful, creative, and passionate about what we care about.” She brings the Mandel Fellows’ perspectives back to her rabbinical classes, as well, explaining, “I find that I now pose the bigger, underlying questions rather than jumping immediately to find an answer.” Furthermore, educational theory strengthens her work with multiple generations in her student internships.

Polonsky values the guidance by mentors who are “committed to my development as a Jew, a leader, and as a change agent.” She recalls the unexpected insights gained by a visit to the mega church Grace Chapel, which “pushed me outside my comfort zone and presented a model that forced me to completely rethink the congregational model.”

The Mandel Fellows focus on four key areas in their seminars:

- Shaping a vision that guides a Jewish community's decisions, policies and programs;
- Discerning educational experiences that contribute to individual and
collective growth in a community as well as those that are miseducative;

• Nurturing community by sustaining values, engagement, and empowerment of members, participation, diversity, and a pervasive sense of purpose and responsibility for the community’s welfare;

• Probing the purposes, practices, ideas, and values of Jewish peoplehood over time and its challenges for contemporary Jews.

Melissa Simon, N ’10, credits the Mandel Fellows Program for transforming her vision, saying “I seek to serve a pulpit where there is an opportunity to be a part of a change process through dialogue, open communication, understanding of our collective history, and community-building educational initiatives.” She has already begun to work on re-imagining congregational education as part of her internships at Congregation Beth Simchat Torah in New York City over the past two years.

Stollman concludes, “As I struggle with the essential question of the value of a Reform Jewish education and how to articulate a compelling answer that truly speaks to families, my perspective has evolved. Hearing from educators and rabbis who work in a multitude of settings has expanded my thinking, helping me realize that building community means bringing people into Judaism, not only into a synagogue.”

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The Mandel Fellows meet with leaders of Kibbutz Ketura during the Mandel Leadership Institute in Israel, June 2009.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: “WHAT’S NOT OK IS NOT CARING”

Jean Bloch Rosensaft

Our students must emerge from their years at HUC-JIR with finely honed, successful strategies for social change and a vision for the core values of tikkun olam,” says Rabbi Jerome K. Davidson, National Coordinator of Leadership Initiatives. “As they prepare to serve as leaders of communities, our students need to be aware of the ‘Obama shift’ and have a solid understanding of the new administration’s stances in foreign policy, Israel and the Middle East, church-state boundaries, racism, the environment, immigration, and inter-religious cooperation. They must learn how to apply Jewish ethical values to the key social issues of the day and, without being partisan, exert a call to action within their communities.”

To accomplish these goals, the Jerome K. Davidson Chair in Social Responsibility infuses the five-year rabbinical program throughout HUC-JIR’s four campuses in a myriad of ways. Faculty teaching Bible and Rabbinics include texts that speak to these issues. Students are required to take specialized courses in professional development, social action and economic justice, community organizing, leadership and organizational dynamics, and training in public policy advocacy. Prominent guest lecturers focus on social issues. Infield experience is gained through supervised internships and learning opportunities with the American Jewish World Service (AJWS) (see pages 25 and 41), Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC) and Commission on Social Action of Reform Judaism, Rabbis for Human Rights, the Jewish Funds for Justice, PANIM, Hazon, the Coalition on the Environments and Jewish Life, Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, One-LA/IAF (see page 39), Progressive Jewish Alliance, MAZON, Bet Tzedek, and programs for the homeless in Cincinnati, Los Angeles, and the Soup Kitchen on the New York campus. Ongoing mentorship and self-reflective writing assignments are integrated with the requirement to implement an institutional change project to gain hands-on experience in leading social change in their congregational internship settings.

As part of their social responsibility requirement, rabbinical students Ariana Silverman, N ’10, Tisch Fellow Matthew Soffer, N ’10, and Schusterman Fellow David Segal, N ’10, participated in a seminar during which they interviewed 20th-century Jewish leaders who have had a significant impact on society, including Rabbi David Saperstein (RAC), Ruth Messinger (AJWS and Darfur), Leonard Fein (hunger and MAZON), and Elie Wiesel (Soviet Jewry and genocide). Here is an excerpt from their interview with the renowned social activist Rabbi Arnold Wolf, C ’41, z”l.
We interviewed Rabbi Wolf because his sermons and writings and activism on issues of social justice were constantly pushing the Jewish community out of its comfort zone. Many of his positions that are now considered mainstream, including those on civil rights, community organizing, and a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, were extremely radical when he first argued for them.

**Rabbi Wolf:** My personal experience is: Everything I have fought for and believed in always lost. Without fail. If you are out to win, you are in the wrong ball game. Our mission is to raise the standard, and stand for what is impossible, and lose.

_The three of us were aghast. We wanted to know how to win. What we did not know was that he would teach us an entirely different way of envisioning success._

**Silverman:** What would be your advice to people who are thinking of giving sermons to congregations in a similar vein?

**Rabbi Wolf:** You cannot be a rabbi and mimic _The New Republic_ or _The New York Times_ – that is not your text, it is not your expertise. Somebody else in the congregation will do it much better than you will. But there is something only you can do. And that is what I call the meta-political. You can talk about the principles that undergird political decisions. And you can be radical about those things. But you have to know what the other side is saying.

**Silverman:** How do you keep going if you feel like you keep losing?

**Rabbi Wolf:** That’s called God. God is the name of what you do when you lose over and over again. And it is not so terrible. It is, in a way, reassuring. If people all bought what I said, I’d have to rethink my position.

**Silverman:** And you don’t think there is incremental progress?

**Rabbi Wolf:** It’s very dangerous to think in terms of incremental progress. That is the illusion that the Holocaust, I believe, destroyed – the illusion that there’s human progress without cost.

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**Soffer:** How do you distinguish between the two: losing big and losing because you don’t achieve the Messianic Era?

**Rabbi Wolf:** Our mission as rabbis, or intellectuals, or utopians, is not to produce effect, but to stand for something. What I know is a meta-political language, where theology undergirds political action and re-imagines it. And that is my function. To say something that is not simply political or simply practical, but Jewish. Let’s take the Israel-Palestine issue. You might say the world caught up with me. What I have been saying for 30 or 40 years, lots of people are saying now. But now I have to say something else. I have to be more utopian, more Messianic, more meta-political, and see if I can move the whole discourse another notch.

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**Segal:** I feel that my liberal Jewish colleagues – both rabbinical students and rabbis – are really afraid of talking politics from the pulpit.

**Rabbi Wolf:** It is less dangerous to be political than you think it is. Of course you have to be non-partisan. And you have to be fair. And you have to learn what language to talk in.

**Soffer:** Can you say a little bit about internal tensions – how have you struggled with this _am keshe orf_ [stiff-necked people] of ours?

**Rabbi Wolf:** In _Rediscovering Judaism_, a book I edited in 1965, there is an essay arguing that the _am keshe orf_ in the Bible was a bad thing, but in the post-biblical period, in the _galut_ [Diaspora], it’s the thing that has kept us alive, and I think that’s right. I like that the Jews are intransigent.

**Soffer:** Do you think the next generation of Jewish leaders is going to need different skills and face different challenges?

**Rabbi Wolf:** Instead of politics, the apparent thing is going to be psychology. You are going to be counselors. And that is a legitimate role. People will expect you to be less political and less demanding and more concersive, encouraging, and therapeutic. Philip Rieff in his book _The Triumph of the Therapeutic_ is afraid that we have given up any standards of ethics and politics in favor of happiness or even fun. People expect the synagogue to be happy and pleasant and I think that’s not our mission.

**Segal:** You said: “We’re on the right side” and “I may be in the hands of an angry God who is not applauding.” How do you know we’re on the right side? Have you ever changed your mind?

**Rabbi Wolf:** I have never changed my mind about God or ethics. I have changed my mind about me a lot. But I never thought the Torah was indistinct. Here is a story about Heschel. He was in Selma with Martin Luther King and came back and gave a lecture here on prayer. And a student asked him, “Dr. Heschel, how is it that when the world is brimming over with issues and problems and tragedies and politics, you’re talking about prayer?” Heschel did not say to him what I would have said: “I just came back from Selma, I did everything I could and I’ll do more.” He said, “Prayer is also important. Prayer is important in its own right. And you don’t have to defend it. And if you are doing prayer seriously you are doing ethics seriously.” And I’ve never forgotten that. So you don’t have to excuse yourself. The sense of being in the vanguard, in the outnumbered army, is what the best of history knows. Someone said, “Can a small group of people change the world?” The answer is: only a small group can change the world. And if you change it, fine, and if you don’t, that’s ok too. What’s not ok is not caring.”
Inspired by the Jewish values of *ahavat ger* (loving the stranger) and *keruv* (drawing near all who are far), HUC-JIR’s rabbinical students are tackling the challenges of unaffiliation and intermarried families head-on. The core curriculum through the Schusterman Outreach Weekend Institutes puts them at the center of real-life issues that they will confront as future congregational leaders: preparation for a wedding, studying for a conversion, meeting with interfaith couples about their struggles/paths, planning for a child’s *bar/bar mitzvah*, dealing with holiday dilemmas, and more. They explore these issues through their core text courses, mentorship in field experiences, and meetings with leading experts and rabbis who are applying a welcoming grass-roots effort.

At the Schusterman Institutes, students are required to delve into the most innovative outreach strategies designed to serve men and women, interfaith and interracial couples, converts, those in the process of conversion and religious seekers, Jews of color, and single adults and blended families, and assist them in making meaningful Jewish choices in the context of membership in a Reform congregation. At the same time, students learn how Reform congregations can become more welcoming through effective recruitment, engagement, and lifelong retention of members. Other outreach learning opportunities take place with the Jewish Outreach Institute, Introduction to Judaism courses, and InterfaithFamily.com.

Students spend time with rabbis and congregations that have created exceptional outreach programs, including Rabbi Billy Dreskin and Woodlands Community Temple in Greenburgh, NY; Rabbi Peter Rubinstein and Central Synagogue in New York City; Rabbi Lewis H. Kamrass and Isaac M. Wise Temple in Cincinnati; Rabbi Jeremy Morrison and the Riverway Project in Boston, and Rabbi Jeffrey Sirkman and Larchmont Temple in Larchmont, NY, among others.

Last year, students participated in the inaugural Schusterman Outreach Weekend Institute at Temple Israel in Boston. Their responses reflect the benefit of such intensive learning experiences, “I came away inspired and with a renewed sense of dedication to the importance of creating a welcoming community within synagogue life, said Sandi Intraub, NY ’10.” Neil Hirsch, NY ’10, added “I have been enriched and already begun to figure out how to amend my approach to engagement work in my fieldwork position. Our congregants are looking for something and want to be involved in our community and we need to find a way to help them.” Olga Bluman, L ’09, affirmed the “importance of providing many entry points into the congregation,” and pointed to the need to “hear more about what happens to the members once they are engaged and how they keep being engaged once they are part of the ‘mainstream.’”

This year all 4th-year students will find more answers to their questions at the Schusterman Outreach Weekend Institutes at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, TX, Larchmont Temple in Larchmont, NY or Congregation Beth Am in Los Altos, CA. The goals are for the students to articulate their personal views as future rabbis about outreach in general and the inclusion of intermarried families specifically. Furthermore, they will become conversant with the challenges and opportunities facing the synagogue and the Jewish community because of changing demographics and the increasing number of unaffiliated. They will enhance their ability to lead institutional change as they gain a better sense of who they are as leaders.

**OUTREACH: BUILDING WELCOMING, SACRED COMMUNITIES**

Jean Bloch Rosensaft

The Schusterman Outreach Weekend Institutes will focus on:

- The role of the non-Jew in the synagogue
- The approaches of other Movements and institutions
- The congregation’s work with interfaith couples before/after marriage, before/after having children, and facing life cycle events
- Interfaith families bringing up Jewish children
- Boundaries and open doors in the areas of liturgy and ritual, membership, and governance
- Diverse viewpoints on intermarriage officiation
- Professional/lay partnerships in effecting change within the congregation

Upon their return, students will be required to process their learning and express their personal points of view through a meaningful writing or action project. Most importantly, upon Ordination, they will emerge from HUC-JIR with greater knowledge and a stronger understanding as they set out to build welcoming, sacred communities.
Meet HUC-JIR’s Students

It’s a Wednesday morning in February, and inside the Minnie Petrie Synagogue the melody of the traditional blessing for wine floats though the packed room as a young woman holds the room captive with her song.

Except she has a backup band, the four-piece Afro-Semitic Experience, and they are performing Kurt Weill’s jazz setting of “Kaddish.” And the singer went to Carnegie Mellon as a math major/jazz minor and worked for three years as a financial analyst for Lehman Brothers before coming to HUC-JIR as a cantorial student. So, to put it simply, a few things here are bordering on the unusual.

Dressed in gold brocade, Lisa Shapanka Arbisser, SSM ’09 leads her senior recital – The Fusion of Jazz and Synagogue Music. This being her last semester of a five-year stint at HUC-JIR, Lisa is ready to start a career in, what she calls, “singing for a purpose.”

As a teenager, Lisa was very involved with her Reform synagogue, Temple Shalom in Aberdeen, NJ, and went through bat mitzvah and confirmation, in addition to four years at a Hebrew high school. At college she spent her junior year studying physics and math in Israel. During her senior year, she recalls, “finance and math were all I really knew, so I decided to look for a job that would leave me the free time to explore other areas.”

Lisa joined Lehman Brothers, which she says was interesting, but not exactly what she wanted to do. She went to synagogue more often and met her future husband, who also enjoyed going there. She began taking voice lessons and participating in an opera workshop, and got involved in the choir at Central Synagogue. After speaking to the cantor, she decided that it was time to get back into music, but performing just for the sake of performing was not for her. “I wasn’t interested in classical music or oratorios or German Lieder or modern music. Synagogue music was something that really appealed to me.”

After Janis Cohen, Lisa’s cantor from her home synagogue, suggested that Lisa consider becoming a cantor, the “seed was planted. I decided this is something that I wanted to do, and I told my parents. Their reaction: ‘You’re leaving a job on Wall Street that pays you nicely not just to be a cantor, but to be a student again for five years?’” Lisa laughs now, as she retells her story, but “they were shocked.”

“I wanted to do something more with my life rather than sitting behind a computer, and working in an office all day…there had to be more to a profession, and to life, than just this.” It became clear that it was working as a professional in a synagogue, which she says is all about “connecting with people and created sacred relationships, leading people in worship, and teaching.”

During her first year of study in Jerusalem, she was an English teacher to a mother and her two children who had lost their husband/father to terrorism. “I was sent there ostensibly as an English tutor. But it was really just to be there for them, to be their friend, and to remind them that there’s a life outside of the grieving and the pain.” Upon her return to the States, she became Mrs. Lisa Shapanka Arbisser and began the next four years of study at HUC-JIR’s School of Sacred Music in New York.

Her interest in jazz-liturgical music was sparked by an album that “Frank London of the Klezmatics had done for Cantor Jack Mendelssohn’s film, A Cantor’s Tale – where they took four traditional hazzanut (cantorial) pieces and broke them down and made them into avant-garde works.” She not only created her senior thesis and recital around the concept, but also plans to include the fusion idea in her cantorate.

Dr. Mark Klisman, Professor of Jewish Musicology, noted during her recital that “the Jewish love affair with jazz goes back nearly to the beginnings of jazz itself. In the 1929 film, The Jazz Singer, the young son of a cantor leaves home in pursuit of the jazz world. Al Jolson’s character was forced to choose between the world of jazz and the world of the synagogue. Now, however, the barriers between the two have long dissolved. Today, composers for the synagogue explicitly borrow jazz idioms and sometimes create entire jazz services. Working jazz musicians borrow from hazzanut, nusach, and familiar synagogue melodies to create their art, and cantors and congregations strive to integrate music and composers native to this land, and create a unique, authentic American-Jewish experience.”

Lisa concurs: “One of my conclusions in my thesis is that you can really use the musicians in your congregation. Ask them to be involved in the creative process of worship, because it’s a way for them to be engaged more deeply in congregational life. In the process, you’re also raising the level of music in the worship experience.”

Lisa suggests that anyone interested in either being a cantor or simply learning more about Judaism ought to follow through. “Everyone,” Lisa states, “has their own Jewish journey.” For Lisa Shapanka Arbisser, a pioneer in the field of fusion Jewish liturgical music, the journey is just beginning.
A Rabbinical Student as Civilian Diplomat in Iran

Sarah Bassin, L’11

Are you kidding?” These words (plus a few others not appropriate for print) comprised my parents’ reaction when I first told them that I was going to Iran. To their credit, they could not have been more supportive once they got beyond the initial shock. It just took some calmly conveyed logic. I explained my Jewish investment going: 20,000 Jews still live in the Islamic Republic. I outlined the fundamentals of civil and diplomacy: when governments only use hostile rhetoric toward one another, an obligation falls on ordinary citizens to offer a more nuanced perspective. And I assured them that this delegation was not the first from the United States to go to Iran; the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) (www.forusa.org) had led seven prior trips. Ours would be unique only in its interfaith focus and its Jewish majority of participants.

My commitment to this type of reconciliation work began during my first year of the rabbinical program in Israel. Traveling to Bethlehem and Hebron on the Encounters program, I was able to hear Palestinians speak of their experience first hand. The checkpoint that prevented hundreds from working and earning a livelihood also prevented suicide bombings in Jerusalem cafes. I saw people on both sides completely shut out the narrative of the other. They stopped listening out of fear that acknowledging the truth of another’s pain would somehow negate the truth of their own. From this experience, I came to believe that if there is any hope of conflict resolution, we have to be able to acknowledge two conflicting narratives simultaneously.

When I hung up the phone with my parents’ blessing, hopping on a plane to Tehran was still far from a done deal. More than once, I reminded myself of my friend stationed with the State Department in Baghdad and how crazy I thought she was to go. The arrest of an American citizen researching women’s rights in Iran just before my departure did not help.

Whatever fears still lingered, I could only scratch the surface of the conflict by reading about it from abroad. I needed to go – even while knowing that our delegation faced severe limitations. Substantive dialogue can be difficult even in the best of conditions. Our FOR delegation faced the added difficulties of losing nuance through translation, the unceasing presence of a government official (as both a helpful escort and a watchful eye) and what we came to know as "tarof," Iranian hospitality that prevented dialogue from starting until our hosts poured tea, coffee, and flowing expressions of gratitude around the table. In spite of these limitations, first-hand experience would be more valuable than any reading I could do.

Oscillating between the roles of civilian diplomats and tourists, we accomplished everything from a meeting with an ayatollah in the Justice Department to climbing the ruins of Persepolis. Saturday night at the tomb of the Persian poet Hafez topped my personal list of memories. It’s no discotheque, but given the strict morality code, Hafez’s tomb is the closest singles’ venue that Iranians have to a JDate booze cruise.

I was quite conscious of my role as a liaison between the American and Iranian Jewish communities. Many of us in the U.S. cannot help but be perplexed by the continuing Jewish presence there. What makes them stay? No simple answers exist, but I share with you reflections on the most common questions posed to me upon my return.

Are Jews safe there? Well, Jews live very publicly as Jews with a Federation-like infrastructure and representation in the Iranian legislative body. The community spoke with pride about its participation in civil society, particularly of the Jewish charity hospital it runs in Tehran. But non-Muslims have fewer rights in civil and criminal court under the religious system of law, making them more vulnerable when engaging with the justice system.

Are Iranian Jews anti-Zionists? Some are. Some are not. Jewish officials in Tehran towed the government line in claiming that they simply remove themselves from all issues of foreign policy. When I saw a teenager wearing a kippah decorated with American and Israeli flags at a local synagogue, I understood that policy of avoidance to be coded support of Is-
It was a personal tragedy that propelled Rabbi Stephanie Bernstein, N’09, toward the rabbinate. Her husband Michael Bernstein, a lawyer for the Justice Department’s Office of Special Investigation (OSI), was killed in the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 in 1988. He was returning from Vienna, where he had persuaded the Austrian government to accept Auschwitz SS guard Josef Eckert upon his deportation from the U.S. Of the twenty-four former Nazis who had been deported from the United States during OSI’s first 10 years, Michael Bernstein was responsible for seven.

At the time of his death, Stephanie Bernstein was a clinical social worker with two young children. A lifelong Reform Jew who had grown up within a vibrant community in Duluth, MN, she sought out the comfort of her community at Temple Sinai in Washington, D.C., and became increasingly involved as a lay leader and ultimately served as the synagogue’s President. “Community is at the heart of who we are as Jews. Judaism rests on the covenant that God made with us as a community,” she explains.

She applied to HUC-JIR after a decade of consultation with her rabbi, Fred Reiner, C’73. Being in her late 40s, and wanting to explore what it would be like to study with students the age of her own children, she trained for the Hebrew admissions exam with classes at George Washington University. This experience, along with “studying Torah with Methodists” at Wesley Theological Seminary, which has a high percentage of second-career students, helped prepare her for her years at HUC-JIR.

Married to Henry Winokur since 1990, Bernstein went off alone to Israel and at 50 was the oldest rabbinical student of her Year-In-Israel Program cohort. She nonetheless bonded with the much younger students of her mahazor (class), who became among her closest friends at HUC-JIR. She vividly recalls their hike through the Negev, which was supposed to be six hours, but lasted much longer, and required her to climb down a metal ladder built into the side of a
FACING EVIL, FINDING GOD (continued)

Feeling that something was missing from her life, Rachael Bregman, N '10, decided to hike the Appalachian Trail. Traveling alone for six months, from Georgia to Maine, she was "surrounded by other people with profound faith," she reminisced, "it was an incredible experience. I cried probably every day. And I hated it often. And I love it more looking back on it. Sometimes I think I would give anything to do it again. And sometimes I think I'd have to be crazy."

Bregman’s journey first began in a deeply committed, Reform Jewish home in the suburbs of Boston. While she loved her Jewish roots, she went to Boston College, a Catholic university. Ironically, this choice was what pushed her toward Jewish professional work. “I missed being around Jews,” she explained. So she became a vice president of BC’s Jewish student union and began working as a youth group advisor and Hebrew School teacher at a local Conservative synagogue. Her search for deeper meaning in her life propelled her to take that life-changing hike.

With her newfound experiences in tow, Bregman resumed being a youth educator and advisor, serving as a “de-facto rabbi” for the youth community of a synagogue. “I loved mattering to people” she says, but ultimately she felt she needed “more training to really be able to help people” and applied to HUC-JIR. However, she explains, “the personal interactions that first prompted me to become a rabbi are no longer the reasons I will become a rabbi.” Bregman’s experiences along the way have helped shift her thinking.

Her first stop was HUC-JIR’s Year-In-Israel Program in Jerusalem, where her vision for her life began to reshape itself. The personal turmoil of getting married and divorced in quick succession, however, hit her hard. She took a year off from HUC-JIR to recover while studying at the Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies and developed a strong support network of other transplanted Americans and Israeli friends.

A presentation about chaplaincy in the American military services inspired her to return to the U.S. and go into the Navy before she started her second year of rabbinical school. “All I wanted to do,” she affirmed, “was volunteer.” She is now a U.S. Naval Chaplain Candidate and Ensign.

Back at HUC-JIR, she looked to broaden her horizons beyond classroom learning and started working with, and eventually joined the leadership team of the New York School’s Soup Kitchen – a cause in which she is still actively involved. Every Monday evening, Bregman

Sarah Goldberg

of BC’s Jewish student union and began interacting with people from diverse walks of life, levels of education, and religious faiths. She offered weekly teachings that integrated Jewish heritage and secular beliefs, discussing “issues of justice, poverty, hunger, and homelessness with reference to Talmudic sources.”

One act of hessed led to another and in December 2008, Bregman and a group of twenty young Jews, including HUC-JIR classmates, went on the URJ mission to volunteer in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Bregman was dismayed by the continued devastation four years after the storm and touched by the gratitude of the Louisiana families.

On New Year’s Eve, Bregman spent the night at a shelter in a Brooklyn Heights Synagogue, where she spread hope for the New Year and made pancakes. She then went to Hazon’s Food Conference in Monterey, CA, to learn about Jews, food, and justice. Back in
New York, Bregman and fellow rabbinical student Rebecca Cottle Epstein, N ’09 (see page 30), began a green campaign to make their HUC-JIR community more eco-conscious and championed environmentally friendly practices. “Now, after practice and sermon discussions, when we are graciously provided with apples, they are from a local, sustainable, New York fruit farm that is a supporter of farm-to-table nutrition education for urban children,” she says.

Soon afterward, Bregman and several other HUC-JIR students went to Mexico on an American Jewish World Service rabbinical student mission to help an impoverished Mayan community develop self-sustaining practices. During their ten days in Muchacuxcha in the Yucatan, the students worked with the indigenous NGO Hombre Siempre La Terre (Mankind on Earth), lived with the Mexican families, and learned their stories. “We carried dirt, shoveled chichichitas, the Mayan word for pebbles, and unearthed huge boulders in order to create a walkable, nature-reserve trail through a beautiful forest. We worked alongside members of the village to help build this base for a sustainable tourist economy.”

This summer she took part in the IAF (Industrial Area Foundation) training to become a community organizer. She then traveled to Rwanda to do some work with Agahozo-Shalom Youth village, and forayed into the capital of Kigali to help get a micro loan for sex-traffickers trying to turn their lives around and build a new economy for themselves. Then she headed off to Uganda for two weeks of traveling from village to village, teaching with an organization called Teach and Travel, and spent Shabbat with the Abayudayan Jewish community. From there, she went to Rome for a Catholic-Jewish leadership conference. Back in the U.S., Bregman worked as the Rabbinic Intern for Jewish Community Action, a community organizing organization in Minneapolis, MN.

All of these experiences have filtered back into Bregman’s class work, her internships, and her rabbinical future. On her blog, Bregman declares, “we have to be brave enough to cross the barrier of discomfort for the sake of the greater good. I am more afraid of silence and that nothing will change.” Thus, Bregman continues to put herself in uncomfortable situations in the hopes of change. Telling her story is the key, as she explains: “I cannot allow those places to remain in darkness, and I can be noisy. We must constantly be expanding our universe of concerns, even just a little bit at a time.”

As she summed up her mission in her senior sermon, “May the tzarim, troubles of our lives, pursue after each one of us so that we can be angry! May that anger pour out against all the injustices great and small and then push us out the door into the world.”

For more about Bregman’s studies, work, and travels, please go her blog, “A Rabbinical Career Training Journal” at http://myrabbinate.blogspot.com/
Rabbi Danny Burkeman, L ’09, says “I have always felt that for me, as a British Jew, the ideal rabbinical program would involve time studying in England, Jerusalem, and America: England because it is my home community, and the place where my Reform Jewish identity developed as a minority within a minority; Jerusalem because Israel is the Jewish homeland and it is important to spend time living in the Jewish state as part of a rabbinical training program; and America as the center of Reform Judaism where exciting innovations and developments are taking place.” Consequently, after completing his first year of rabbinical studies at Leo Baeck College in London, he joined the Year-In-Israel Program at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, where he met his future wife, Micol Zimmerman, RHSOE ’08, and then transferred to the HUC-JIR rabbinical program in Los Angeles. In both the American and Israeli contexts, he was able to play an important role representing the condition of Reform Jewry in Europe. “While we may be divided by national boundaries,” he explains, “we are all part of one Jewish community and it is important that we learn about each other, work together, and support each other for the good of the Jewish people,” he explains.

Burkeman has married into a family of leaders of Reform Judaism. His father-in-law is Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, N ’70, former HUC-JIR President (1996-2000), and the eleventh generation rabbi in his family, and he now counts Rabbi Brian Zimmerman, N ’93, and Miriam (Mimi) Zimmerman, SJCS ’92, as family.

While a student at HUC-JIR, Burkeman was asked to produce an educational publication and training sessions in conjunction with the new Siddur (prayerbook) published by the Movement for Reform Judaism in Great Britain. He provided an in-depth look at the various elements of the Shabbat morning service and resources to help with planning services that were distributed to synagogues throughout the United Kingdom. (See www.resources.reformjudaism.org.uk)

In reflecting on his experiences at HUC-JIR, Burkeman notes that “it has been fascinating to live as part of the Los Angeles Jewish community and learn about the wonderful ways in which Reform Judaism is practiced in America. I feel truly blessed to have had the opportunity to study with, and be inspired by some of the leading scholars in the Jewish world. Their teaching and the insights, creativity, and innovative ideas that I have gleaned at HUC-JIR will be coming home with me to enrich the British Jewish community.”

When Cantor Zoe Jacobs, SSM ’09, first came from London to the URJ Kutz Camp’s song-leader training program in 1997, she learned about HUC-JIR’s cantorial program from Cantor Ellen Dreskin. Although she was attracted to the idea, she dismissed it out of hand, because to her knowledge cantors didn’t exist in Great Britain. Today, as a newly minted cantor, she is returning to her home congregation, Finchley Reform Synagogue, to be a pioneer as the first HUC-JIR-invested cantor for England’s Reform Movement.

Her journey began as an eleven-year-old preparing for her bat mitzvah, when she and her family transitioned from attending services two days a year to becoming highly engaged, weekly worshippers. “My rabbi and educator were highly empowering of young people and it didn’t take long before I was teaching as a madricha (assistant) and leading music on Friday nights for the congregation’s Erev Shabbat service,” she recalls.
That first summer at Kutz Camp turned into nine summers, and “the idea that perhaps I could be a cantor in England began to blossom.” As a student of Jewish History at the University of Southampton, she wrote her dissertation on Jewish liturgical music in 19th-century Germany and her enthusiasm for the possibility of cantorial study grew. “After taking a year to work in the Jewish community in London, I decided to spend a year in Israel, where I studied at an ulpan while also learning at the Conservative Yeshiva and Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies.” The next stop was the School of Sacred Music at HUC-JIR, first for the Year-In-Israel and then in New York. “I’m returning to England with so many possible definitions of what a cantor can be, and all of that understanding is uniquely due to the training I have received in Israel and America,” Jacobs says. Her student pulpit experience ranged from being a Cantorial Intern at Central Synagogue, the 2200-family community in New York City, to serving Or Chadash, a 200-family congregation in Hunterdon County, NJ. Her senior recital was “Hazzan as Darshan: The Role of the Cantor as Educator on the Bima.”

“I am very lucky to be returning to England at a time when the British Rabbinate has so much to offer and teach. I feel privileged to fulfill a role that the Anglo-Jewish community desperately wants and values. Communities that make up the Movement for Reform Judaism in Britain eagerly await professional Jewish musical leadership to support their changing liturgy and new Siddur, to provide access points for individuals who connect to their Judaism through music, and to support the lay musicians who so ably lead music in many communities around the country,” Jacobs concludes, “The relationships I have made and the people upon whom I know I can call will really be the force that enables me to be an agent of change.”

As a non-American Diaspora Jew, Rabbi Gersh Lazarow, L’09, recalls, “I used to justify my religious practice or juxtapose my religious practice in the context of what Orthodoxy does. Well, six years in America gave me the confidence and the vernacular to say that this is what I do because this is what I believe. And this is what I feel is the most meaningful way to live my Judaism. And it is in comparison to nothing other than my understanding of Torah. That’s what I’m so excited to go home and teach.”

His path to the rabbinate began as a nine-year-old South African Jew transplanted to Melbourne, Australia – a “strong, culturally rich community” – where he attended day school, the Liberal Jewish high school, and became involved in the Reform youth movement. For his post-high school “option period” year, he went to Israel where he worked on a Kibbutz, studied, and led archaeology tour groups. He returned to Australia to begin law school, but switched his focus to major in Jewish Civilization and minor in Near Eastern Archaeology. At the same time, his days were filled with volunteering for the youth movement – directing camps and youth groups – and ultimately he became the national leader of the movement.

After university, he worked professionally for two years as the Youth Program Director for the United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong. “There was an incredibly high rate of affiliation from young professionals who wouldn’t otherwise necessarily be part of the synagogue,” Lazarow recalls. “The community was made up of people that from all over the world, and the one thing that they had in common was that they missed their families. These young professionals wanted some sort of community and they were the core of the congregation. I was a young person living in an incredible city, learning how to program and how to be a Jewish professional from some great role models.”

Back in Melbourne teaching Jewish Studies at a high school, Lazarow began to consider becoming a rabbi. “While I loved serving the Jewish community and teaching, I felt frustrated that I didn’t have enough content, that I was just one or two pages ahead of those I was teaching,” he recalls. “Rabbinical school appealed to me for the ability to just study for the sake of studying, and learn more for myself.”

While the obvious choice might have been to study in Europe, Lazarow believed HUC-JIR in Los Angeles was culturally closer to Australia. This campus also offered the opportunity to complete a year of study at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, which he lauds for its faculty and the open, exploratory nature of its program.

Lazarow has returned to Melbourne to become the first school rabbi at Melbourne’s only Progressive day school with an ambitious goal: “The stronger the school, hopefully the stronger the congregations; and the stronger the congregations, the stronger the Progressive identity in Australia.”

For more on Reform Judaism in Australia, please see page 58.
People often ask me why I am not becoming a rabbi. Growing up I had plenty of opportunities to develop my leadership skills. I attended an HUC-JIR Cincinnati trip, was a member of NFTY, and went to the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington, DC, but it was not until my senior year of high school that I realized that being a Jewish educator could be a possibility for my path in life.

I believe that Jewish educators are the ‘offensive linemen of the Jewish sport of identity formation.’ Offensive linemen are known for being in the trenches, working hard, and protecting others; without them the plays could not be successful. Without Jewish educators, Judaism would suffer. We are the leaders who connect with and want to inspire a new generation of Jewish living and learning. I’m not receiving this degree because I want recognition; I am doing this because I want to make the Jewish people stronger.

My journey began as a seventeen-year-old madrich in a 5th-grade religious school classroom, where I enjoyed getting to know the kids but was often bored. As I bonded with the students I noticed that they were also bored by the methods that the teacher used. I wanted to find a way to help inspire the students to love Judaism the way I did.

One of my mentors, Robin Eisenberg, RJE, helped me improve my skills in working with the students. My rabbi, Daniel Levin, N ’96, connected me with his classmate, Katherine Schwartz, MAJE/SJCS ’96, who invited me to teach at her synagogue.

Over the next five years, I was able to develop my skills as a teacher working at Congregation Har HaShem in Boulder, CO, while studying Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of Colorado. I was encouraged to develop new programs and projects and had the opportunity for mentorship that helped me grow. Ultimately, I wanted to be a stronger Jewish leader and realized that the Rhea Hirsch School of Education was a place that could help me achieve my goal.

One of my special interests has been working with students with disabilities. I have volunteered with the Special Olympics and a life skills special education class, and been a manager at an inclusion-based preschool. In my teaching in Jewish Education, I’ve always asked for the students with disabilities, or behavioral issues, knowing that every child deserves as many opportunities as possible to develop a love for Judaism.

The Rhea Hirsch School of Education is innovatively developing future Jewish leaders in this field with faculty who are modeling cutting-edge techniques. For example, Dr. Isa Aron led our class through a thirty-minute synectics activity (a problem-solving method that stimulates thought processes of which the subject may be unaware) in which we created an analogy for our relationship with the Torah. The activity not only taught me the skills to use this method with my own students but it also allowed me to explore my relationship with the Torah.

The combination of class work and my professional development internship has helped further develop my skills. My mentor at University Synagogue, Rachel Margolis, MAJE/SJCS ’07, is a visionary in the field of Jewish education whose teachers and staff are fully integrated into the synagogue community. She has provided an internship opportunity for me where I can create, learn, lead, and strengthen my abilities.

The Rhea Hirsch School of Education is an intentional, thoughtful, creative, and innovative program that is reshaping Jewish education with a faculty that is passionate about their mission. The Jewish world needs all kinds of players on its team to be successful, and Rhea Hirsch is doing its part to strengthen our people.
Can art enrich spiritual exploration? Jean Eglinton, C’10, and Miriam Terlinchamp, C’10, fifth-year rabbinical students, have answered that question with a resounding ‘yes!’ Eglinton explains, “Art is important as an interpretive tool for Jewish text, history, and experience for several reasons. It can be more engaging than literary production for some people who are not drawn to text alone, or even as a change of pace for those who are. It uses different parts of our brains and especially appeals to emotional intelligence.”

Armed with a B.A. in Art from Antioch College, Eglinton worked as a freelance illustrator prior to attending HUC-JIR. She continues to work as an artist in a variety of mediums while completing her rabbinical studies in Cincinnati. She specializes in percuts, where she renders text in Hebrew and English and layers the text with interpretive imagery. Her skill as a photographer captured HUC-JIR students’ experiences on the American Jewish World Service mission to Mexico. (See page 25)

Her capstone project for Ordination is a visual commentary on Yotzer Or, one of her favorite prayers, which celebrates the daily renewal of creation. “Visual art can be a midrashic sort of interpretation of a text,” she notes. “If we explore our own stories, we can learn more about our relationships with our traditions.”

Working for the past ten years as a Hebrew teacher, Eglinton has used her art to help her students, both children and adults, “loosen up, enjoy themselves, and think about what we’re learning in a different way. I’m sure that this approach will continue to be a vital part of my rabbinical career.”

Miriam Terlinchamp has found extensive ways to weave art into her rabbinical studies at the Los Angeles campus. Terlinchamp has continued taking art classes throughout her time at HUC-JIR in an effort to find creative ways to complement and expand upon her rabbinical studies. “Art is a mode of prayer for us, it’s a way of connecting to the divine,” she explains. “So, visual art is important in a worship space. We’ve been so creative with synagogue music, which heightens prayer to a whole new level. We ought to be able to do the same with visual art.”

Terlinchamp majored in Studio Art and Religious Studies as an undergraduate at Scripps College and worked as a graphic designer before applying to rabbinical school and has clearly made sure not to leave that part of her life behind. Now in the process of incorporating art into her senior thesis, she is working closely with Ruth Weisberg, Dean of the USC Roski School of Fine Arts.

She has also brought her interest in art to her internships, from her student pulpit at Bet Chaverim in Des Moines, WA, and the Jewish Home for the Aged in Los Angeles to her chaplaincy for violent felons at the Los Angeles County Jail, where she met weekly to counsel prisoners, Jewish and non-Jewish, and performed monthly Shabbat services. Terlinchamp has also been working with the Jewish Artists’ Initiative, where she is a rabbinical mediator between guest rabbis and the group of professional artists who join together for beit midrash study. Since beginning her work there, Terlinchamp has brought this program to HUC-JIR, so that students can find ways to use art to explore Judaism.

According to Terlinchamp, “Visual artists are the ‘people of the book’ who are really good with words. Visual art pushes us to imagine those words in a very unique way that benefits artists and non-artists alike. Visual art can be a channel into our studies and also an avenue towards Jewish meaning and prayer. If we explore our own stories, we can learn more about our relationships with our traditions.”

Miriam Terlinchamp, C’10, and her supervisor, Rabbi Yosi Carron at the Los Angeles County Jail.

The Artist as Rabbinical Student

Samantha Massell

“M’lo Chol Ha’aretz” by Jean Elington.
Students leading services have asked if I would come in and do a short performance piece or lead yoga during refratlah.

Yoga during worship? Rebecca Cottle Epstein, ’09, who entered HUC-JIR’s rabbinical program as a serious modern dancer, has clearly become an innovator in her own right. Her philosophy: “I think one of the most important things about being a Jewish leader is experimenting with different ideas on how to get people engaged in Jewish life. It’s hard, especially in communities that have been established for a long time, to think about innovation and change. But that’s always been a part of our tradition – it’s what’s at the cutting edge.”

Epstein, a Vassar College graduate, certainly followed her mantra at HUC-JIR/New York. For starters, she created the Eco Kosher Potluck Group, which meets often to prepare a meal with organic, kosher, local, and packaging-free foods, to discuss environmental issues and synagogue life, and to consider the ethical standards of the companies from which the food ingredients come, including their treatment of workers.

Having studied ballet and modern dance from a young age, Epstein has integrated Jewish themes and music into her dancing with the Avodah Dance Ensemble, with whom she worked to choreograph a piece based on her senior sermon. “As I was wrestling to understand why God would have wanted Moses to kill all those who had worshiped the golden calf during the Exodus journey through the Sinai desert, I wanted to wrestle with it as a dancer, as well. So we choreographed a dance that was performed at a synagogue in Massachusetts. And then we taught a dance midrash class in Dr. Norman Cohen’s creative midrash class.”

She cites the amalgamation of dance and Judaism as a wonderful way to bring together two parts of her life. “I’ve always viewed dance and performance as a way of bringing more sensitivity and beauty into the world. And I think that Judaism helps us do the same thing. That’s also how my spiritual life as a Jew has developed.” These goals planted the seeds for her decision to apply to HUC-JIR.

About three years after graduating from college, Epstein had been busy dancing, working, volunteering at a couple of organizations, and even teaching Hebrew School. “Basically,” says Epstein, “I was kind of checking out all these different ways that I could help people.”

She cites September 11th, 2001, as the major turning point in her decision to go to rabbinical school. “Anyone who was here at that time remembers how the atmosphere in the city changed, as people reached out to one another, strangers, to help each other through this tragedy.” Soon afterward, Epstein wrote a letter to the parents of her Hebrew School class expressing her hope that the Jewish values and traditions she was teaching would bolster the children as they went through this tough time. It was then that she realized that as a rabbi she could build relationships with people by giving them a sense of community and a set of positive values.

“HUC-JIR and the Reform Movement provide a wonderful platform to express yourself and your passions,” she says. “There are communities out there who are hungry for innovation and want to see new things. HUC-JIR gives you that pathway to connect with them, and the opportunity to go deeply into your own creativity and Jewish self, and then figure out how to bring these ideas to people in order to engage their interests and talents and create synagogue life anew.” Epstein is now implementing her vision for innovation as Assistant Rabbi of Anshe Emet Memorial Temple in New Brunswick, NJ.
Gaining a deeper understanding of Israel is essential for anyone who seeks to be an advocate for the Jewish people,” says Jenna Fields, SJCS ’10, one of the 18 students from the School of Jewish Communal Service (SJCS) who participated in the biennial Israel Seminar in December 2008. A requirement for the Masters of Jewish Communal Service degree program, the students spent the equivalent of 100 class hours meeting with Israeli nonprofit professionals, political leaders, journalists, cultural figures, intellectuals, and academics to get an in-depth exposure to issues in contemporary Israeli society. With an emphasis on Jewish identity, Israel-Diaspora relations, and Progressive Judaism in Israel, the seminar included visits to a variety of social agencies, innovative enterprises, and cultural institutions.

“Most of the students had been to Israel previously, so the Israel Seminar was definitely not a "tour." Instead, the students had the chance “to see and experience Israel at its most intimate and most vulnerable,” adds Fields. “Whether it was meeting with a local Arab scholar in Jaffa to hear his perspectives on Israeli-Arab relations or visiting a Tel Aviv garbage dump that is being turned into an ecological park, we had the privilege of seeing the achievements and challenges of this incredible State.”

Richard Siegel, SJCS Director, noted that “the Israel Seminar was consciously organized to provide students with perspectives that they would not normally encounter and to expand their appreciation for the creative energies pulsing through the country. At the Diaspora Museum we deconstructed messages of the museum with the educational staff to envision how it might be re-organized to more appropriately reflect the meaning and values of the Diaspora. Our visit to Mount Herzl was an opportunity to understand how Israel creates a civic religion with the calendar, historical personalities, and national symbols. A meeting with Rabbi Jakobovitz in Bnai Brak explored how elements in the Haredi community are working to integrate with the values of the modern state. At the Tel Aviv Municipality the students met with one of the architects of Tel Aviv’s new strategic plan, which projects the city as the creative, cultural, and commercial center of the country. All of these encounters allowed the students to apply the skills and professional education they are receiving at HUC-JIR and in their dual degree programs at USC, whether in social work, public administration, or communications management.”

The Seminar was perceived as vital to the students’ preparation to be nonprofit professional leaders in the Jewish and larger community. At a time when studies indicate that American Jews are growing increasingly distanced from Israel, and there is a great diversity of viewpoints on Israel’s search for peace and security, the Israel Seminar strengthened the students’ knowledge and understanding, as well as their emotional and professional connections with the country. Fields concludes, “My understanding of Israel’s role within the Jewish nation is much stronger. This experience gave me the tools I needed to articulate Israel’s importance to Jews here at home.”

EXPERIENCING ISRAEL AS FUTURE PROFESSIONAL LEADERS OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Jean Bloch Rosensaft
For the seventh consecutive year, the HUC-JIR Pesach Project brought 16 first-year cantorial and rabbinical students to the Former Soviet Union (FSU), where they conducted seders for over 5,300 Jews in 28 cities in Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. Amy Goodman, N’13, and Jordan Helfman, C’13, student co-coordinators of the project, and Rabbi David Wilfond, project supervisor and Regional Director for Outreach and Admissions at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, were determined to ensure the success of this program, particularly during a period of diminished resources for the Jewish communities of the FSU due to the state of the economy.

The planning process for this annual project began in Jerusalem at the start of the academic year when HUC-JIR students and World Union for Progressive Judaism representatives met to work together. The seders, which involved all generations, from kindergarten classes to senior citizens, took place in Chelyabinsk-Tyumen, Lipetsk-Moscow, JEEPS (Jewish English Speaking Expats), and St. Petersburg-Tver in Russia; in Mogilev-Brisk-Vitebsk, Gomel, Baranovichi, and the Minsk cantorial festival in Belarus; and Poltava, Lvov, Odessa, Cherkass, Simferopol, starting to get really excited about learning about their Jewish heritage, even while the elderly are still visibly cautious about demonstrating too much Jewishness and the middle-aged are somewhere in between.

We, as Jews in the United States, have always had that choice. Before this trip, however, I never understood the power and importance of a collective memory of Pesach. It was a really remarkable experience and in the future, all of my Passovers and Pesach seders will continue to connect me with St. Petersburg, Tver, and Russia.

The impact of HUC-JIR’s students was confirmed by Alexander Haydar, Executive Director in Ukraine for the World Union For Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), who said, “The implementation of the Pesach Project this year encouraged the continued development and growth of Jewish life in Ukraine, showing the members of our congregations the size and importance of the Reform Movement and the concern of both HUC-JIR and the World Union for them during such difficult times.”

Alex Kagan, WUPJ Director for the FSU, agreed, saying, “I would like to express my gratitude to the HUC-JIR staff and students who took part in the project. Their presence and enthusiasm was felt in the congregations, and provided much needed spiritual assistance to our six rabbis, enabling those living in the big centers and periphery an opportunity to take part in the holiday rituals and celebrations.”

In midrash, the ancient rabbis caution us not to ask what came before Creation. If we discuss the tohu v’tohu that existed before God began to create, then something exists beyond God. This may enter dangerous territory for the rabbis of old, but as a rabbitobe, envisioning God as master Creator, working with tools and colors to create the ultimate masterpiece, presents a divine notion.

Were we to envision God as architect and artist, perhaps these raw materials became tools used to produce the masterpiece of Creation. Matisse, Rembrandt, and Chagall all created masterpieces that feel almost eternal. It is the lasting works of art that inspire generations, not the raw materials used to initially create them.

Prayer is also created from raw materials. Texts from various sources have been

Passover seder in Simferopol led by HUC-JIR students.
constructed alongside one another, creating a form of fixed prayer (keva). This structure becomes a genre allowing others to both replicate and deviate, hoping to evoke an emotional response and offer a meaningful interpretation.

In order for prayer to be complete, intention (kavanah) is also necessary. This is something that each of us must offer individually. The role of clergy is to provide the atmosphere for meaningful worship experiences that can range from quiet spaces with little distraction to a box of finger paints or sidewalk chalk.

As part of the alternative minyan, which meets on Tuesdays and Wednesdays on HUC-JIR’s Los Angeles campus, students have often led morning worship services with a creative twist. From a service held in August, the sidewalk leading up to the campus’s main doors remained decorated with vibrant, colorful depictions of the morning shacharit service long after Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur and Sukkot had come and gone. Following President Obama’s inauguration speech on January 20, 2009, students gathered once again to offer their visual hope for the new administration, sharing the juncture at which these hopes meet themes in the daily morning service. Personally, I take these ideas to my student pulpit in Spokane, WA, welcoming creative interpretations of the prayer service from adult worshippers alongside pre-bnei mitzvah participants during a Saturday morning creative service.

At HUC-JIR, we are learning to take what inspires us and integrate this inspiration into our Jewish leadership. We have our individual boxes of raw materials to create, fine tune, and strengthen. In training to become Jewish professionals, we are provided with many white canvases to experiment on and a studio space that offers supervision, instruction, and imagination. Then, we take our portfolio out into the world, hoping to collaborate and create alongside others.

As God created, so too do we. It is a mitzvah (hiddur mitzvah) to make things beautiful. By bringing art into worship we encourage an openness to the divine through our creative processes. We are given guidance (keva) but we are also in need of our imaginative self (kavanah) to internalize Jewish prayer and create a meaningful relationship with God, and our own creative communities.
for wrongdoings and turn away from sin in order to return to society. Part of this is the beauty and the challenge of the Hebrew language – many words used for secular life also hold religious meaning.

After gathering together for morning songs and prayers, we got to work. Some days we picked citrus from the trees, other days we shook down olives from branches. We created mosaic artwork as stepping-stones, did lots of landscaping, and lots of shlepping. I even learned how to brine olives.

After working for a bit, we would eat breakfast together. Following our meal, we would sit together for Torah study. Now remember – Arabs and Jews studying Torah, together.

One morning in November, we were looking at the Torah portion Vayishlach – when Jacob wrestles with a man or angel possibly, after which he is given the new name, Israel, planting in him the yoke of fathering a nation. “What does it mean to make a name for yourselves,” we asked them, “how can you grow and change and earn a good reputation?”

Every day these guys have Yom Kippur. Every day as they sit in jail they are reminded of what act they committed to find themselves there. Once a month when they come to the Kibbutz for the morning, they are reminded of the beauty of fresh air and freedom. They understand that Judaism and, therefore, the Jewish State, gives them an opportunity for renewal, repentance, and return. They can repent for their crime – and it might take a long, long time. They can renew their commitment to humanity through hard work and determination to changing their ways. They can return to society and hopefully will not return to jail.

A complete act of Teshuvah, as both repentance and turning, occurs when we are confronted with the situation once more – but make the choice that is healthy, not harmful, challenging but courageous. There is no “mapquest” route that ensures success or happiness and, at times, we might find it easier to drive along the path recklessly. Or at least, it’s faster than stopping to ask for directions. It is a true struggle to make a change in our lives. Yom Kippur is that warning sign – the pit stop in our year, reminding us to make a change, repent, and return – turn around, retrace our path, and begin again.

Excerpted from Jennifer Gubitz’s Yom Kippur Sermon during her rabbinical student pulpit at Temple Beth El in Rocky Mount, NC.
consisted of touring “Jewish Sites.” There were no Jewish sites remaining. Mostly markers. Yet, our Polish professors and the Polish participants kept talking about Jewish renewal; a cultural renaissance. The only things that remain of Lublin’s Jewish population are ghosts and remnants of a past that can no longer be recreated. The leader of my discussion group, a Pole, headed the Lublin efforts to revive Jewish culture. How can you revive a culture when there is no Jewish population?

We toured Majdanek, the concentration camp just outside of Lublin. I had been learning about the Holocaust since the 4th grade. That day in Majdanek was a culmination of all the memorials, museums, and studies that I had experienced.

Today the Poles search for their culture. So they turn to the Jews who used to live in their country. And they try to make Jewish culture part of their culture. They hold Jewish festivals. They have restaurants that serve Jewish food. Klezmer music rings out everywhere. The only thing they’re missing is Jews. I went to Poland wondering – what remains? I learned that little remains.

Those 11 days were a journey into my emotional past and Poland’s developing future. The Germans and the Poles that I met are not the same as their grandparents. They study the Holocaust. They search out Jews so they can dialogue. They attempt to understand.

May the memory of the victims of the Shoah never be forgotten. May the Poles and Germans that I met have the strength to continue their search to understand the destruction perpetrated by their ancestors. May we all live in peace together.

Rabbi Hanish is the Assistant Rabbi of Kehillat Israel, Pacific Palisades, CA

Rabbi Jonathan Hanish at the Mila 18 memorial marking the site of the bunker of the last Jewish resistance fighters during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

**Getting the Call**

Yaron Kapitulnik, N ’10

This is a story about three phone calls. During the Passover Seder in 2002, a bomb exploded at the Park Hotel in Netanya, taking the life of 30 innocent people. The next morning Israel went to war. Like many others, I was called to report to my reserve unit.

I was part of the Yerushalmi brigade that fought in Be’er Lechem for over a week and was now surrounding the Church of the Nativity where several hundred Palestinian terrorists were hiding. I was on the roof of a nearby building – I’d been on duty for a few hours, looking at the church, trying to spot any movement. The tension was high: at any moment a Palestinian sniper could try to hit us – after all we were easy targets, sitting ducks. I was counting the minutes until my replacement would arrive.

Suddenly…my cellphone rang – you didn’t think an Israeli would go to war without his cell? I answered, not knowing at the time that this call would change my life forever.

On the line was Jeffrey Klein, the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation in Palm Beach, FL. “What are you doing in July?” he asked. “Why?” I answered. “Would you want to come and work as the Jewish educator for the JCC here?” “Well, Jeffrey,” I said – holding my M-16 in one hand and the cell phone in the other – “let me get home alive in a few weeks and we can talk then.”

Three months later, I found myself with my family on a plane to Florida. We left behind our friends, family, and a land we love. We left Be’er Lechem behind. For the first time in my life I was forced to question my relationship with Israel.

We landed in West Palm Beach with eight huge suitcases, a dog, and a lot of good will. Two weeks after we arrived, the phone rang again. Once again I answered not knowing how significant this call was going to be. On the line were Rabbi Joel Levine and his wife Susan, whom I had met when I was a tour guide in Israel. They invited me to the High Holy Day services at Temple Judea. If it were not for their phone call, I would have probably stayed home or gone to the Chabad service. Rabbi Levine and Susan opened the door for me, and continued to encourage me to develop my Jewish spirituality. They guided me as I found the path that has led me to where I am today – an Israeli rabbinical student in the North American rabbinical program at HUC-JIR.

In its first 60 years, Israel mainly fought for its security and survival. In the next 60 years the battle needs to be a spiritual one – a battle that will determine what kind of a Jewish state Israel will be. We have a role as a Movement in this battle and we need to make sure that our vision for Israel does not remain just beautiful words we utter on our pulpits a few times a year. We must continue to send missions, form connections with Israeli congregations, offer adult education, integrate Israel in our Hebrew Schools and worship, support the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism – we must continue doing all of these and more.

The beauty and uniqueness of Reform ideology is our ability to put words into action. But there is also a new opportunity that we have been missing. I am talking about our relationship with the Israeli community in the U.S. No one can say exactly how many Israelis currently live in the U.S. Figures indicate that anywhere between 100,000 to 300,000 Israelis live here today, and that in the past 20 years, that same number has lived here for a significant time and then returned to Israel. This means that on a regular basis a significant part of the American Jewish community are Israelis – and yet we as a Movement do almost nothing to connect and be partners with them. Israelis that live in the U.S. share simi-
lar stories of struggle. Many are not sure about their future yet are slowly drifting away from their past. They are confused about their identity and especially the identity of their young children. They are open and willing to do things they would never consider doing in Israel – simple things, like being Jewish.

Whenever an Israeli hears that I am studying to become a rabbi – after their first response, which is ata meshuga (you’re crazy) – I see that they have great curiosity and respect for my decision.

Here in the U.S. it feels safe for them to approach Judaism. And once they learn about liberal Judaism, many realize how they actually share its core values. Imagine if in every congregation we serve we each created havurot of 20, 30, 40 Israeli families. This means that thousands of Israelis would be exposed to liberal Judaism. These are people who care about Israel and whether they just visit Israel every year, or return to live there, they can deliver our message, in Hebrew, to their families and friends. Imagine the change they can make in Israeli society. Imagine the change they can make in our congregations. Reform Judaism can be to Israelis in America what Birthright Israel is for American college students – an awakening call to reclaim their Jewish spirituality.

The Israeli community in the U.S has power, they know each other – they seek each other out – and they can spread the message that there is a different kind of Judaism, one that cares not just about territories and land but also about people and life, not just about the politics of conversion but about the possibility of inclusion. One that is open and ethical in a way that aims to make this world a better place.

All we need to do is reach out. They can be the tipping point for our message in Israel. And working together with them, we can set the discussion about the essence and future of Judaism in Israel.

In West Palm Beach I discovered that being Israeli is just one part of my identity, liberal Judaism is the other. In Israel I was told by the religious community to leave religion to them, so I grew up convinced there was just one way of being Jewish. I think that while in Florida I converted from being Israeli to being Jewish. At HUC-JIR, I am being confirmed. The third phone call is yours to make.

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GETTING THE CALL (continued)

Rabbinical school seems to be all about Jewish geography. I think my class spent the entire year in Israel playing long rounds of the game, eventually figuring out how each and every one of us was associated through various camps, NFTY, and on rare occasions non-Jewish connections. When we stop to think about it, it’s not really all that amazing that rabbinical students are Jewishly connected, since most of us grew up active in various aspects of Jewish life. But as it turned out, the Year-In-Israel Program (and the first several weeks in Cincinnati each year, meeting the other classes of students) was only the warm up for some intense, country-wide Jewish geography.

Round One: The Frozen North

I received my assignment for my first student pulpit over the last Shabbat that I was in Jerusalem. I would begin my experience as a student rabbi in Grand Forks, ND. I had never been to Grand Forks, and I didn’t know anyone in the state. My monthly visits made me the closest thing to a rabbi in all of North Dakota. I soon discovered that their current student rabbi, a fifth-year Cincinnati student, was a friend of mine from college Hillel. And so I won round one of North Dakota Jewish Geography. Sometime later, when my older sister was talking to a friend of hers, she mentioned my future student pulpit in Grand Forks, and the friend, Catholic and having never won – or probably played – a round of Jewish Geography, exclaimed that not only did she know someone in Grand Forks, but he was Jewish and would be in my congregation. She won round two. The couple she knew was active in the congregation and promised my
In May 2008 I was fortunate to be one of fifteen participants on the special HUC-JIR trip of Germany Close Up, an organization whose purpose is to familiarize American Jewish young adults with modern Germany, its Jewish community, and its government’s support for Jews and for Israel. The itinerary of the trip was comprised of meetings, tours, social events, prayer services, and the experience of a small taste of Jewish life in modern Germany.

We had two notable political meetings. At lunch with Asaf Ichelvich, the Foreign Relations Advisor of the Israeli Embassy in Germany, the discussion centered on German-Israeli relations in particular, as well as European-Israeli relations on the whole. Ichelvich alluded to a statement made by a previous ambassador, labeling Europe as “an island surrounded by the sea of reality.” On this island, however, we learned that Germany stands out as Israel’s greatest ally on the European continent.

That sentiment was mirrored in a later meeting we had with Hans Ulrich Klose, a member of Parliament and Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Government. Klose provided us with a clear and concise picture of the government’s positions regarding the state of Israel. As the party line goes, Germany is a friend to Israel, will support Israel and its quest for peace, and will also support and protect Germany’s Jewish sister’s friend that they would look after me and make sure I had a good year. It wasn’t necessary – my time in Grand Forks was fantastic, although cold, but having that connection made me feel even more at home from day one.

Round Two: Way Down South (at least for me)

Heading into year three of HUC-JIR, Cincinnati students get to choose our student pulpits through an event of controlled chaos known as the pulpit lottery. I chose a congregation in Joplin, MO, because after having read descriptions of all the available synagogues, it seemed to provide an interesting mix of people and activities. Of course I already knew their current student rabbi, but I had no other connection to the congregation. Or so I thought when I chose it. Later that week, my fiancé mentioned to his parents where I had chosen to serve. His father was floored. As it turns out, my fiancé’s grandmother was raised in Joplin as a member of that congregation, and my fiancé’s great-grandfather is buried in the Jewish cemetery in town. When preparing for the annual congregational memorial service, held in the cemetery between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, I mentioned to the congregant who oversees the Jewish cemetery that I wanted to find the grave of my fiancé’s great-grandfather. He, too, showed his excitement that I had a true almost-family connection to the congregation, and he set out trying to help me find the grave. We found it, and the plot turned out to be conveniently located under the one tree in the Jewish section of the cemetery, and therefore we held our memorial service next to his resting place. As congregants learned of my true connection, not only through choosing to serve the congregation but through family ties, it seemed that their warm welcome became even warmer. Over Thanksgiving, I met my fiancé’s grandmother who grew up in Joplin, and now I have several more graves of family friends of hers to visit if I am back in that cemetery. The Jewish Geography connection with his grandmother made for an easy ice breaker and great discussions.

Jewish Geography is one reason I love Jewish life. I have discovered that wherever there’s someone Jewish, there’s a game of Jewish Geography waiting to be played, and perhaps won, in the most unpredictable ways that I never could have imagined.

Joshua Leighton, C ’11, at the entrance to Geiger Kolleg.
citizens. It was made perfectly clear to us that this party line is not embraced by all within the government, and certainly not embraced by the German people as a whole. That these are the official stances, however, in a country that at one point so despised the Jews, created a sense of optimism within our small group.

We also toured many parts of the city of Berlin (especially the Jewish areas), talked with a group of religion students at the Humboldt University (with whom we had a screening of the Israeli film *Walk on Water*), and met with various organizations as well as with the cultural and media relations chair of the Foreign Office and representatives of the American Jewish Committee. We visited the infamous Wannsee Villa, where the Nazis solidified and launched the implementation of the “Final Solution of the Jewish Problem.” A Jewish artist took us around Dresden to picture the once great Jewish presence there.

Two of the most powerful experiences of the trip, however, came while we were interacting with the Abraham Geiger Kolleg, the progressive rabbinical (and now cantorial) school affiliated with the University of Potsdam. While the college “campus” only spans one office suite in a city building, the enthusiasm of the staff as they described their program made me very proud.

What made me even more proud was what immediately followed that meeting. We met with the Geiger students for *Shabbat* services and a potluck dinner at the Jewish Museum of Berlin. While the museum and sharing *Shabbat* with our Geiger peers were powerful experiences, what made the night even more extraordinary was what happened when the museum closed and we had to leave.

We hadn’t yet recited the *Birkat HaMazon* or sung *Shabbat zemirot*. So what did we do? We sat outside on the steps of the museum, in the streets of Berlin, and together – HUC-JIR students, Geiger students, and one of the Geiger faculty rabbis – we sang our hearts out, drawing the curiosity of passersby. We sang and we prayed. We ended the evening by singing *Hatikvah*.

In an age of unpredictable Jewish journeys, I imagine that the winding road that led me to rabbinical school at HUC-JIR is about as unpredictable as anyone’s. My life’s journey begins with an Orthodox childhood, followed by years if not decades of a sort of Jewish wandering, and an epiphany (in Cuba of all places) that brings me back to intensive Jewish involvement and where I am today – a 5th-year HUC-JIR rabbinical student, with two grown children, two homes (one in New York, the other in Jerusalem), and a second (or maybe, third) career.

To start at the beginning … I was born in 1948 into a Modern Orthodox home in Queens. My European-born parents sent me to Ramaz Yeshiva, and to a Zionist summer camp where we spoke only Hebrew. My early adult years saw something of a rebellion against my Orthodox Jewish youth (the details of which I’ll leave to the imagination), and a suburban life in the Boston area quite distant from intensive Jewish involvement.

But with all these twists and turns in my Jewish journey, what has been a consistent thread and probably the underlying reason I am at HUC-JIR today, has been a lifelong quest to live a meaningful life. My career choices have been animated by the enduring question of what it means to be in relationship to God and how I can make a difference. These questions have informed my first two career choices: to become a clinical social worker and a Jewish communal volunteer. In both capacities, I sought to help better the lives of others. As a clinical social worker – where I worked with individuals particularly around women’s health issues and also ran a graduate training course for social work students at a Harvard teaching hospital – I tried to help people live happier and more productive lives. As a communal leader, I tried to help Jewish people and communities lead richer and more meaningful lives.

Both of my prior careers impelled and informed my decision to become a rabbi. In 1993 I moved back to New York City and faced some personal and professional situations that taught me the limitations of psychotherapy to help cope with crises, transitions, and loss. It was then, as an adult
SH JOURNEY

Jewish learner, that I began to explore how our ancient texts and traditions can help people deal with life’s most troubling and challenging issues.

About the same time, I took a life-altering trip to visit the Jewish community in Cuba with UJA-Federation of New York. I returned to become involved as a lay leader in the “Jewish Renaissance” efforts to revitalize the Jewish community in the U.S., Israel, and around the world. My intertwined passions brought me to work on strengthening the connections between North American Jews and Israel, to help Jews to engage in the moral, political, cultural, and religious complexities of both countries.

With Ordination coming up next year, I am at a juncture where I can both reflect on what it has meant to be a student, and also to give serious thought to my future role as a rabbi. It has been such a privilege to be a student at HUC-JIR, to immerse myself in the study of our texts, liturgy, theology, and pastoral counseling. I have grown to genuinely enjoy and appreciate my younger classmates, as hevruta (text study partners), colleagues, and friends. The depth of their commitment to serving the Jewish people has truly moved me. We offer each other different generational perspectives, mutually enriching one another. The HUC-JIR community has been the source of what I believe will become life-long friends, mentors, and colleagues.

In the years ahead, I am eagerly anticipating serving a congregation in a rabbinical pastoral capacity. I would hope to help build a strong synagogue community by spiritually supporting congregants during times of illness and crisis, and by creating life cycle transitions that give them profound Jewish meaning. The confluence of my life’s experiences and my rabbinical education at HUC-JIR has helped prepare me for serving Jews, Judaism, and the Jewish community.

ONE PLUS ONE EQUALS MORE

Ari Margolis, L ’10, Mandel Fellow

In early January I joined a number of classmates from Los Angeles and Cincinnati for HUC-JIR’s weeklong intensive course in faith-based community organizing. This seminar provided an opportunity to imagine what our future congregations and Jewish institutions could resemble when we systematically bring people together one-to-one and share our stories and our passions. Rabbi Jonah Pesner and Lila Foldes of the Union for Reform Judaism’s Just Congregations, along with Sister Mary Beth Larkin of the faith-based community organizing foundation One-LA, led us in an exploration in the methods and process involved in community organizing. And it all starts at one plus one.

We learned that by applying the process of faith-based community organizing infused with Jewish learning in the contemporary synagogue, our congregants can find shared vision and mission. The key to such community building begins with one-to-one conversations that delve beneath the typical oneg pleasantries and into the realm of issues of profound concern. Such conversations help us to identify the differences between the world as it is versus the world as it should be, and sharing such perceptions with others helps us to find communal support to meaningfully address such gaps. We engaged in such discussions during our coursework together and learned more about each other than spending years as classmates had yielded.

These meaningful one-to-one conversations spiral out throughout the community until there is a critical mass of people inspired to support one another, and motivated to act. Suddenly, we look around and one plus one is no longer just two, but equals a significant base of people motivated to make the world better. When partnered with a faith-based organization, one congregation plus one congregation raises the stakes even higher. This process of organizing lays a foundation for enacting meaningful social action, a core communal Jewish aspiration.

A few weeks after our intensive course ended, I had the opportunity to experience first hand what one plus one could equal, as I attended a One LA action that brought together communities from synagogues and churches across Los Angeles, all of whom had started with their own one plus one conversations, culminating in this meeting. The goal was to achieve some real action to ad-
dress the foreclosure crisis that has afflicted this region. I entered a packed high school auditorium, and I was overwhelmed that one plus one had become thousands – the venue was overflowing and people were standing in the aisles.

Congressional representatives on the state and national levels along with city leaders listened to the moving stories of individuals from the various faith-based communities. One-LA members then made targeted requests of the public officials. As the politicians responded, it was evident that they were as impressed as I had been by the informed, large crowd that stood before them – and they made public promises. I watched as one plus one had spread to all those in attendance and demonstrated the power that we all have to enact change.

I gained a new understanding of the importance of Buber’s “I-Thou” encounter whose ultimate outcome we may never know. Our interactions move us – we do not know exactly how in the moment – but the experience of the one-to-one encounter helps us to identify what is important enough to motivate us, along with thousands of others, to brave Los Angeles traffic, to stand side-by-side with those in our community, and to try to make the world a better place. Putting moments of relationship at such a high priority makes us congregant-centered, rather than program-centered, and this is truly the centerpiece of building community.

One-plus-one conversations motivate us towards action, sometimes immediately and sometimes down the road. But ultimately they plant ideas that are nourished by life experiences and blossom into action when each individual is ready. When we live this philosophy throughout our community, we as leaders begin to feel less alone planting such seeds, and instead find partners for sowing the future of our community. This method may take some time to garner its results, but as Jewish professionals this is our task at hand – to create the space to dream of the community that can be and to orient our communities to what one plus one might become.

The Magic is in the Reflection

Lydia Bloom Medwin, RHSOE ’09, L ’10

Education is what happens when experience meets reflection. This principle, a gem from my studies at the Rhea Hirsch School of Education, was a guiding principle for my work with UCLA students during their Alternative Spring Break (ASB) program. The ASB program empowers students to organize and lead their peers on a Jewish service learning experience. They chose to travel to eastern Tennessee to learn about and serve a small Cherokee Indian community still living in the Smoky Mountains. Hillel of UCLA asked me to accompany twenty-five students as their rabbi/educator.

When we arrived at the hand-built cabins in the mountains of East Tennessee, we were greeted by our hosts and project leaders Ed and Arleen Decker, who explained that we would spend our time doing a variety of things: playing with Cherokee children in their day care; visiting the local elders in their activity center; immersing ourselves in Cherokee culture; learning homesteading skills like canning apples; building bridges out of lumber; and clearing hiking trails in the remotest parts of Appalachia. After volunteering with different parts of the community, each evening we reflected on our day and what it had meant to us.

During one reflection session, we studied a text: Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? The one who learns from every person... Who is honored? The one who gives honor to others... (Talmud - Avot 4:1.) This text came alive for the students during this experience.

One student brought up a major issue for participants of intensive service experiences: Did they really make a difference? Would the effects of their work be lasting?
I must admit that nothing that I had previously experienced in my 28 years had prepared me for my visit to western Africa as a fifth-year rabbinical student at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles. On January 16, 2008 I set out on a journey to Ghana, returning 10 days later with a totally new perspective on life – acutely aware of the hardships facing the developing world, attuned to the need for global justice, and awestruck by the power of hope, kindness, and trust.

Along with 25 rabbinical students from seminaries across North America (8 of whom were from HUC-JIR), I participated in an American Jewish World Service humanitarian mission to the rural community of Gbi Atabu (near Ho Ho in the Upper Volta region of Ghana). Our task was to assist the locals in building a community center. We worked alongside our new friends, mixing concrete, carrying materials, constructing bricks, and paving a floor. This was also a week of building relationships, sharing stories, and discovering commonalities. Representing various cultures, denominations and lands, we walked hand in hand, constructing brick by brick a much needed gathering place.

One day, early in our visit, I met a local gentleman named Moses. At first, only the things that separated us were apparent. Moses has never left his hometown of Gbi Atabu. He proudly taught me some Ewe terms: mua wezo – you are welcome, akpe – thank you, and bonlo – friend. I asked Moses if he was named after someone special, perhaps his father or grandfather. Moses responded, “Oh no, I am named after a great man who stood at the shore of the seas as he traveled to the holy land of Israel.” I admitted that I was familiar with stories of that man, and that he was a hero in my faith too.

Another student pointed out that we were learning from these people so that we could be advocates for them and other impoverished communities. It was our duty to talk about our experiences when we returned and to continue to feel motivated to do something good. In this way, our text study and reflection highlighted elements of our experience and transformed them into inspirational and motivational memories.

When my UCLA Hillel students saw their experiences through a Jewish lens, they felt more connected to their Jewish identities and their Jewish community. They also saw, in concrete terms, Jewish living at its best. They had the chance to determine how to celebrate Shabbat, how to accommodate the various levels of kashrut, and how to approach one another with kavod, even (or perhaps, especially) while living in tight quarters. The trip became a chance to re-imagine their Jewish identities in a way that could then be transferred into their ongoing lives. In fact, some students involved on my trip are now consistent Hillel attendees and have assumed leadership positions in Jewish organizations.

As I reflect on this experience for myself, I realize that Jewish service learning is one of the most powerful ways for young Jewish adults to connect with their Jewish identities and to perceive Judaism as a relevant part of their lives. The opportunity to do acts of kindness and justice in the name of Judaism cannot be passed over. Jewish service learning trips, like this one to Appalachia, expand the participants’ worldview, empower them to create Jewish community with their peers, and invite them to consider what it means to be responsible and caring members of society. Armed with Jewish principles and values, they can help to establish the kinds of programs and institutions that will address the issues that the Jewish community and global community will surely face in the future.

This year, Medwin will be accompanying an ASB group of students to Yosemite National Park to learn about conservation, create Jewish community, and work to repair fire-damaged trails.

Rabbi Daniel Mikelberg, L ’08

“GOD IS IN THIS PLACE AND I DID NOT KNOW IT.”

[GENESIS 28:16]
Clearly there wasn’t so much that separated us after all.

I also befriended a teen named Brosback, who carried a great burden on his shoulders. As the eldest of three siblings, he served as the designated caregiver in his family. He shared with me that Ghana has overwhelming problems: three percent of the population of Ghana has AIDS, many with no access to treatment; forty-five percent of the population lives on less than a dollar a day; and Ghana still struggles to find a democratic path in its 50th year of independence. And yet, Brosback was hopeful for the future. One of the most spiritual moments of this trip was watching Brosback’s church choir perform. The traditional melodies, the incredible enthusiasm – the music formed a truly inspirational sukkah of peace.

On the last day of our travels we visited a Liberian displaced persons camp. Ghana plays host to 42,000 Liberian refugees who have found themselves homeless while neighboring Liberia encounters ongoing internal strife. With open sewers and minimal clean water access, the camp is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Encountering such sorrow and pain directly, I couldn’t help but wonder what it must have been like for many of our relatives who spent time in displaced persons camps in Europe after the Holocaust. While it was a different time and a different land, this Ghanaian story was also my story. Just as my family has found blessing, so too must I consider these and other disadvantaged citizens of the world.

This trip made me acutely aware of my responsibilities as a Jew and as a world citizen. It served as an awakening to the power of human connection. Each one of us, working together, can make a difference. The people of Ghana were among the kindest and most welcoming people that I have ever met. As we prepared for our departure, I was taught one more Ewe phrase: mau neira – may God bless you. I now hold in my prayers my new friends in Ghana. Moses, Brosback, and to all those in need: mau neira. Together, may we find a path to stand hand in hand, healing the world, spreading and sharing blessings for all.

A number of students come to HUC-JIR with family legacies to uphold. Among them, Rachel Joseph, L’12, Aaron Miller, C’11, and Joseph Skloot, N’10, describe how they are putting their own stamp on their respective rabbinical dynasties.

A third-generation rabbi-to-be and Schusterman Fellow (see page 15) in Cincinnati, Aaron Miller has traced his Reform rabbinical ancestry at HUC-JIR. “I did not know my Grandpa Judea as ‘Rabbi Miller’ until very recently,” he explained. “Last year, for my grandmother’s birthday present, I researched my grandfather’s files at the American Jewish Archives and put together a scrapbook on his life as a rabbi. As I searched though countless sermons, newspaper articles, and letters, it became clear that Grandpa Judea’s rabbinical interests extended far beyond his congregation.”

Miller learned that his grandfather was an advocate for Soviet Jewry, ardent supporter of the State of Israel, traveled to the South twice during the 1960s to advocate for integration and voter registration, and was involved in countless other causes. “I remember growing up that my family would not eat California grapes but never knew why, until I read in his archives how appalled Grandpa was by the unjust treatment of California grape workers. Grandpa dedicated himself to social justice, both in the United States and all over the world.”

Miller has a multi-generational perspective on the rabbinate. “I grew up observing and experiencing the life of a congregational rabbi first hand, and it was the congregational rabbinate – that intimate involvement within a contained Jewish community – that drew me toward becoming a rabbi. My dad, Rabbi Jonathan Miller, has loved serving as rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham, AL, and I expect to find the pulpit rabbinate equally rewarding.”

Having a rabbi as a father offers many benefits. He notes that “over the years, my dad has become my best rabbinical sounding-board. Whether I am writing a difficult sermon or experiencing some challenge at my student pulpit, I know that he is only a phone call away.”

The family cause of human rights and interfaith relations is a source of inspiration for Miller’s vision for his own rabbinate. “My dad has established close relationships with his Christian ‘clergy buddies’ with whom he has traveled all over the world – Bosnia, Croatia, and Southeast Asia – to study the effects of intolerance and strategies for resolution,” he says. “This has led to a growing sense of love and respect between the clergy of Birmingham across religious and denominational affiliations, and more importantly, between the congregants of their synagogues and churches.”

For Tisch Fellow (see page 16) Rachel Joseph, a third-year rabbinical student in Los Angeles, “one of the role models who influenced my decision to become a Jewish professional is a person who serves many roles in my life: that of my rabbi, my teacher, and most importantly, my father, Rabbi Sam Joseph” (see page 60).

Seeking to find a way to bring a Jewish voice into a non-Jewish world, the political arena became an important outlet for Joseph. She began to volunteer at the Food Bank/Free Store of Cincinnati, OH, which was located a block away from her elementary school, and subsequently became engaged in her first political campaign to secure funding for that organization.
Although she knew she wanted to attend rabbinical school after graduating from college, she sought to first “experience being a Jewish adult living my Judaism in the real world, without the safety net of my family.” This led her to Washington, D.C., where she was selected to be an Eisendrath Legislative Assistant for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC). Next, she accepted a legislative position with Americans United for Separation of Church and State. In this capacity, she spent seven years fighting for religious liberty and protecting the religious diversity of this nation.

“While I loved my work in Washington, D.C. and strongly believe it is imperative to lobby for a just government, I knew that political activism was only a part of my Judaism,” she recalls. On Capitol Hill I was working on policies that affected real people’s lives, but I was removed from those actual people. By becoming a rabbi, I can be a true agent for change by building and improving my community.”

Joseph Skloot’s journey to the rabbinate was inspired by his grandfather, Rabbi Samuel Volkmann, a 13th-generation Jewish spiritual leader who was ordained at HUC in Cincinnati in 1934. Skloot says his grandfather “wasn’t a rabbi, he was the rabbi. But, more than that, he represented a notion of scholarship, which was immensely important to me. He was simply the smartest person that I knew, and his bookshelves were three volumes deep. And that was what it meant to be a rabbi: To be learned – and to be deeply engaged in community life.”

A fifth-year rabbinical student and Tisch Fellow (see page 16) at HUC-JIR/NY, Skloot is passionate about combining his rabbinate with an academic career. He is a Modern European Cultural and Intellectual History graduate of Princeton, where he was a leader of the Princeton Center for Jewish Life, his thesis was a biography of Joseph Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, and a critical analysis of the Hertz Pentateuch.

“I went through his archive at the University of Southampton in England and spent a year reading everything that Hertz wrote. Hertz’s commentary, which is read by Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform Jews, was the book that united American Jewry and English-speaking world Jewry.”

For Skloot, Hertz represented “the struggle of many intellectuals of his historical period who were searching for the balance between being both a Jew and a citizen of the modern world.” He seeks to continue to study that struggle in his graduate work, which will explore “the formative texts of rabbinic Judaism and how those texts have some claim on our lives today.” This Fall he will simultaneously fulfill his last year of rabbinical education and begin his studies toward a doctorate in Early Modern and Modern Jewish History at Columbia University, under the guidance of Dr. Elisha Carlebach.

He credits HUC-JIR for imbuing intellectual study with heart. “HUC-JIR has been about heart and heritage, about nurturing my spirituality, love of prayer and Jewish music, and interest in counseling and engaging with people.” As he follows in the footsteps of his grandfather, and of his mentor Rabbi David Ellenson, who studied religion at the doctoral level at Columbia while completing his rabbinical studies at HUC-JIR, Skloot says “I know that my rabbinate will be enriched by my scholarship, and my scholarship will be enriched by my rabbinate.”

He points to the intellectual curiosity of his eleventh- and twelfth-grade students at Congregation Kol Ami in White Plains, NY, and their highly educated, professional parents, and concludes: “Jews are really smart people. They don’t want to be talked down to. As a rabbi and keeper of the tradition, I hope to give them a Judaism that is intellectually demanding.”

THE FAMILY LEGACY

Aaron Miller, C ’11

Whether as a Wexner Fellow, which enables her to build community across denominational lines, or as the co-coordinator of the Pesach Project in the resurgent Jewish communities of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (see page 32) during her Year-In-Israel, she says, “I am learning how to lead my future congregation through both education and action. Inspired by my dad’s example and teaching, I have found my own path to this career. I look forward to leading others toward a rich and full Jewish life.”

Jean Bloch Rosensaft
Elizabeth McNamara Mueller

Joseph Skloot, N ’10

T H E F A M I L Y L E G A C Y

Meet HUC-JIR’s Students 2009 Issue 72 | 43
When I teach Judaism in Israeli schools I always ask the participants to mention names of leaders in the Bible and the names I get are always of male characters: Abraham, Moses, Aaron. No one ever mentions Miriam, Tamar, Hannah, and others,” says Rabbi Oshrat Morag, J’08. “As a Jewish feminist I want to also find women as role models. For me, Rachel Adler is one.”

It is the opportunity to pursue her doctoral studies back home with her. “As a rabbi I would like to expose Israeli society to egalitarian theology. I believe these ideas, like Reform theology, are a part of Judaism and not the outcome of modern trends imposed on Judaism from the outside. As much as I truly enjoy expanding my knowledge, I also believe that for me to have the right to teach Jewish feminism, I need to gain more profound understanding and engagement, which can be attained by academic research at HUC-JIR.”

Rabbi Oshrat Morag, J’08

Reform Judaism from its inception has been inspired by the prophetic message of social justice. Jonathan Prosnit, N’11, Ari Plost, C ’11, and Joshua Stanton, N ’13, are immersing themselves in political activism, interfaith relations, and human rights work in preparation for their careers as rabbis in the real world.

Fourth-year rabbinical student and Tisch Fellow (see page 16) Jonathan Prosnit believes that his rabbincial studies are the key to answering vital questions: “What is my role as a public servant? And how do I channel that, foster that, and make that stronger? I would challenge anyone who says our role is simply to lead worship in the synagogue. I think our future role as rabbis is to recognize that we are developing citizens.”

During the 2008 Presidential campaign, Prosnit organized a group of Reform and Reconstructionist rabbinical students to canvass for Barack Obama in Philadelphia’s Jewish neighborhoods. He believes that “our values are religious values. And when we speak and when we act, whether politically on the right or left, it is with religious conviction and it is with Jewish conviction, with Jewish tradition and history behind us.”

Notwithstanding the prominent role of liberal religious leaders in the civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s and early 1970s, the religious right has dominated the public square for over a generation. Plost argues that “it is really essential that there be a role for progressive left-wing politics in religion. People like Rabbi David Saperstein are out there as religious leaders of our day. I think that it is really important for HUC-JIR students to recognize, wherever they are on the political spectrum, that they are a part of the public process and that there is no monopoly on the religious voice.”

Elizabeth McNamara Mueller and Jean Bloch Rosensaft

THE EGA LITARIAN AND FEM INIST SCHOLAR

Elizabeth McNamara Mueller
Ari Plost, a fourth-year rabbinical student in Cincinnati, says, “A lot of the work that I do now is inspired by work that I did before coming to HUC-JIR, when I served as a consultant for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and at the Abraham Fund, and helped create the Alliance for Middle East Efforts, an assembly of coexistence organizations in Israel.” Since enrolling at HUC-JIR, he spent a summer as the Social Justice Fellow at the Jewish Council of Urban Affairs (JCUA) and worked with the Islamic Muslim Action Center on the South Side of Chicago. Last year, he presented with Quaker and Islamic leaders at Wilmington College at a symposium about “Faith as a Tool for Non-Violent Work.”

Plost’s advocacy for social justice and collaborative interfaith efforts is firmly integrated into his rabbinical studies. In his American Jewish history course, he wrote a paper on Kivie Kaplan, founder of the NAACP, who was also instrumental in the creation of the Reform Movement’s Religious Action Center. His commitments filter into his worship experiences, as well. Plost says, saying “I was helped by Cantor Yvon Shore to design a worship service that used liturgy and themes to reflect social justice.”

Second-year rabbinical student Joshua Stanton found his direction at Amherst College through his involvement with Hillel and the Multifaith Council. “I began to take great joy both in sustaining the Jewish community on campus and representing it in inter-religious gatherings and discussion,” he says. He found another anchor point and the desire to build a career within the Jewish community through a partnership with Hedy Peyser, Director of Volunteers at the Hebrew Home of Greater Washington, where he helped to create ‘Lessons of a Lifetime.’ Awarded the 2009 Outstanding Programming Award from the Associates of Jewish Homes and Services for the Aging, this program “trains students to record the ‘ethical wills’ of senior citizens in the community and brings together students and seniors for ongoing, remarkable interchanges about life and learning.”

Joshua Stanton, N ’13

student body president of Union Theological Seminary, Stephanie Hughes. Their plan is to produce a top-flight peer reviewed journal for seminary students, academics, clergy, and non-profit leaders of all religious backgrounds. All articles will be available online, free of charge. Stanton says, “With moderated forums featured beneath each article, we can ensure that meaningful dialogue can take place between religious leaders around the world without having to arrange a formal conference. While in-person dialogue is optimal, the Journal is poised to significantly increase both the quality and frequency of religious dialogue with the broader hope of improving inter-religious relations and forming a veritable community of scholars and leaders from all religious traditions. We aim to become a lasting part of the broader movement for religious tolerance, as well as the network of seminaries that is training the future of religious leadership.”
Leading the Jacob Project at Temple Micah in Nashville, TN, was one of the experiences that made me realize I wanted to be a rabbi. It offered an opportunity for people in their 20s and 30s to experience the cycle of one Jewish year together, through alternating discussions and celebrations that were entirely lay-led. It was a year spent wrestling with how to make Judaism our own, recognizing that what was meaningful to earlier generations might differ from what’s meaningful to us today.

This project was inspired by the story of Jacob in the Torah, who one night finds himself wrestling with an ambiguous creature and emerges changed by his experience. He is given a new name, Israel, and goes on to father the ‘children of Israel,’ the Jewish people. Our hope was that in the end we would emerge – like Jacob – changed by our experience, transformed into a community that enjoys “living Jewish,” and capable of passing on what we’ve discovered to future generations.

We met twice a month for a discussion (learning, exploring, planning) and for a celebration (doing, making, holidays). The discussions were held each Rosh Hodesh and explored an aspect of Judaism relevant to the lives of people in their 20s and 30s, or an upcoming holiday’s meaning in our lives, or planning how to celebrate the upcoming holiday together in a traditional or creative way that would have meaning to this age group. The celebration of holidays, which grew out of these discussions, were held outdoors when possible – from starting the year with Rosh Hodesh under the stars and ending the year with a Shavuot sunrise hike at the lake.

When we weren’t planning holiday events, we discussed the weekly Torah portion, debated Reform Principles, learned about our congregation’s history, and volunteered in the community.

We had a Shabbat dinner and a Havdalah gathering in participants’ homes. The cost of participation was one can of food for the food bank per gathering and an occasional potluck meal. On Simchat Torah we began reading Torah together, and the synagogue gave each participant a Tanakh (Bible). Occasionally, participants were emailed a short text to read before meeting for discussion.

The success of these lay-led programs was due to the mixture of discussions and celebrations in diverse settings, offering opportunities to both learn and experience. Articles were written about each discussion so that those who missed a gathering didn’t feel left out. The unintimidating environment fostered honest discussions, in which participants learned from each other and enjoyed sharing what they found most meaningful about Jewish living. Those considering conversion felt comfortable coming to learn and to experience Judaism for the first time and began to feel more like a part of our congregation. Participants took ownership of different aspects of the Project, by offering their web-design services, hosting gatherings at their homes, leading discussions, organizing community service activities, playing guitar for our Havdalah services, and teaching the Birkat HaMazon, which was new to many in the Project.

Participants learned about our congregation’s history and their role in it. They learned how to better define Reform Judaism in affirmative terms. Our discussions were lively and our celebrations were festive and educational. The Project provided an opportunity for a group of people who were eager to engage in Judaism to do so. We had a diverse group of participants – couples (Jewish and interfaith), singles (Jewish, non-Jewish), converting, gay, parents, twenty-somethings, thirty-somethings – who now serve on the congregation’s board, teach religious school, and no longer feel estranged when they attend services. Judaism has become integral to their lives, and they have formed lasting friendships. And in the process, I found my own path to rabbinical school at HUC-JIR.

The Jacob Project received the Union for Reform Judaism’s Belin Outreach and Membership Award for actively welcoming and integrating those new to Judaism within the synagogue setting. www.JacobProject.org
A tearful congregant at my student pulpit approached me, needing help with a family crisis. Sadly, the situation involved child abuse, drug abuse, financial problems, and family secrets—things I was accustomed to seeing in my professional life as a social worker. Only this time, the “client” didn’t come to see a social worker, the congregant came to see a rabbi.

I have always wanted to be a rabbi, but it took me a while to get here to HUC-JIR. I became President of the Temple Youth Group, Social Action Vice President of what was then SCFTY, and a CIT at Camp Swig. During college, I was the youth group advisor and day camp director at my synagogue, and my teachers and mentors encouraged me to go to HUC-JIR. But my life took a different course.

I earned a Master of Social Work degree at USC and specialized in Community Organizing, Policy, and Administration. For 12 years I worked at the policy, management, and administrative levels of a Los Angeles based nonprofit agency serving women and children with histories of poverty, family violence, mental illness, and homelessness, and then at another nonprofit agency that specialized in policy analysis and advocacy for women and children to improve collaboration between substance abuse agencies and child abuse agencies across California.

I loved social work and relished the opportunities to engage in social justice, but I wanted to do that work in a Jewish way. I wanted to nurture my love for Judaism in a deeper way than I had done before, to learn and to share that learning, to teach it, and to live it. I felt called to become a rabbi, and a trusted mentor helped me to see that I had to pursue that path.

Once I became what HUC-JIR calls a ‘second career student,’ my experience differed from that of most of my classmates. This was especially true during our first year of study in Jerusalem. Following my acceptance in 2004, my husband Harvey and I sold our house and moved to Israel with our two daughters. At 7 and 3, Rebekah and Eliana were the perfect ages to learn a new language and adapt to life in a new country.

I might have missed out on some opportunities that my classmates enjoyed. While they were climbing Masada, I was waving as one daughter rode to Tali Bayit v’Gan by school bus and walking the other to Gan at Congregation Har El in Jerusalem. While my classmates were spending their free time in local bars and at concerts, my family and I were having play dates with Israeli parents and celebrating birthdays and holidays with Israeli families. My children created their own community, but they also loved being immersed in the HUC-JIR community. Our apartment became the place for anyone and everyone to spend Shabbat. My children considered all my classmates to be their family—they joked that it was like having 70 cousins!

As a student in graduate school for the second time, I had life experiences behind me and different expectations for my future. It was a special challenge to balance school and internship responsibilities with my family life and life in my own Jewish and neighborhood community in Los Angeles. It was not always easy to explain this path to people of my age who were already settled in their homes and careers, so I found myself having even more in common with my classmates. To my school community, I contributed my personal and professional life experiences to help make theirs easier. My classmates and teachers opened my eyes to new possibilities, and they taught me to be more open to change.

Along this path I have reenergized my counseling skills, reawakened my commitment to social justice, and discovered a love of Liturgy, Biblical Poetry, and Jewish Thought. Most importantly, I continue to develop a spiritual side of myself that has helped me to become a more fulfilled human being and a more complete Jew.

Rabbi A.J. Heschel wrote, “We must learn how to be one with what we do.” When people come to me needing guidance, I no longer question whether I am the social worker or the rabbi. Skills and experiences, old and new, all combine to create one whole person with varied and complex facets: a rabbi. Eventually, I even managed to climb Masada.

Rabbi Karen Sherman, L’09
The 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht was commemorated by the dedication of the Yanov Torah, donated to HUC-JIR/Los Angeles by Rabbi Erwin Herman, z”l, and his wife, Agnes. It was Rabbi Herman’s hope that this Torah, rescued out of the ashes of the Holocaust, would travel with rabbinical students to their pulpits, so that a new generation of Jews would bring the scroll back to life and with it a new era of hope for Jews everywhere. Excerpted here is the student sermon presented at this memorable event.

In the Yanov work camp at a time when hope was nearly impossible, when the greatest horrors imaginable had been exceeded, when hunger had reached its ultimate agony, a small community risked everything in order to smuggle in a Sefer Torah. These inmates risked not only their lives but also the enduring shame of sinning against God. They desecrated the Torah by tearing it into pieces. Yet they acted in the face of these risks, in order to be comforted by the Torah’s light.

This is a Torah that was hidden column by column in bedposts, inside pipes, under floor boards, anyplace where it might be safe. Its discovery would have certainly meant the death of its stewards, but its presence was also their life-force. After the liberation, it was lovingly patched together by the lonely fingers of people who had lost everything but their tradition. Like the lives of the survivors, this Torah would never be the same, stitched back together yet bearing its physical scars forever.

Receiving this Torah on the eve of the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, during Parshat Lech Lecha, is not without significance. We read of Avram receiving a divine call to journey not only physically to the land of Israel, but also spiritually inward to his soul. As we are taught by the Hasidic masters, Lech Lecha can mean to travel within ourselves. Often we consider these two interpretations separately.

We marvel at Avram’s brave physical journey and we ponder the meaning in his spiritual journey. But the Yanov Torah represents the symmetry and connectedness of both journeys. From the cemetery, through the hands of those who smuggled it into the camp, to its stay in Russia, to its safety with Rabbi Erwin Herman, z”l, and his wife, Agnes, and now to us, this Torah’s travels from captivity to freedom, from brokenness to repair, from hopelessness to faith, can inspire us to attempt a spiritual journey akin to the one God demanded of Avram.

Avram’s willingness to leave everything behind and journey to the unknown suggests that he possessed a powerful faith in God. We, however, often struggle with our faith in God; we are often afraid to admit to ourselves and each other that after answering God’s call to us, “Lech Lecha,” to travel inward, all we found were unanswered questions. These doubts can paralyze us on our personal journeys of faith as we struggle with God and our own humanity.

Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Ger wrote, “The effects of any earthly struggle with God must also affect God. The battle is not between us and some independent power. The struggle goes on inside God. It is a part of God; it is a part of ourselves.” Thus, even when we struggle, we journey.

Doubt is a profound element of our humanity. We doubt each other, we doubt ourselves, and when we look at the destruction and disorder in the world, we can’t help but doubt God. But when we allow our doubt and struggle with God to become a part of us, when we embrace our doubt, we become one step closer to the divine, one step closer to faith.
Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel taught us that faith is not the same as belief. Whereas belief occupies one part of who we are, faith is an act of the whole person, of mind, will, and heart. Rather than viewing faith as the feeling we get when we conquer doubt, our faith can be viewed as the process of dealing with doubt. Faith is not a constant, faith comes and goes; like the Yanov Torah, our faith is stitched together imperfectly as a reminder of the brokenness life has shown us. As heirs of this Torah, we are reminded and comforted that our faith comes from generations who have journeyed and struggled before us.

Twenty some years ago, Rabbi Herman took this Torah to Temple Beth Solomon of the Deaf. As Rabbi Herman was talking about the Torah, a man from the congregation stood up in the middle of the rabbi’s address and began walking toward the Torah. As he approached, in sign language he said over and over again, “That’s my Torah, that’s my Torah.” Ludovic Wurmfeld, z”l, was an inmate at Yanov. Because he was deaf, the Nazi guards thought he was dim-witted and he was allowed to leave the work camp regularly because the guards did not perceive him as a threat. Every time Ludovic returned from the town, he was wrapped in the words of Torah. Columns of Torah were curled around his legs and sewn into his jacket. Decades later, he lived to see them again, stitched back together in a shul in Los Angeles.

Faith can lead us on unimaginable journeys, from light to darkness to light again. With each journey, like the Yanov Torah, we acquire new physical and spiritual scars that we carry with us forever. These scars are the reminders both of our fragile faith and the need to mend it. When we hold this Torah, when we read from it, we cannot help but think of the courage, strength, and enduring faith of its previous caretakers. May their legacy inspire us to journey inward to discover our own courage, summon our own strength, and fortify our own faith in our tradition, which is sewn together with the threads of beauty and struggle. Through our journeys, through our brokenness, and through our attempts at repair, we too will be able to stand up, carry close our fragile faith, and say, “That’s my Torah, that’s my Torah.”

Alysa Stanton, the first African-American woman to be ordained a rabbi in Jewish history, was ordained by Rabbi David Ellenson on June 6th at Cincinnati’s landmark Plum Street Temple. She was among 14 new rabbis (10 women, 4 men) who were ordained in Cincinnati and one of the 43 rabbinical graduates of the Class of 2009 (30 women, 13 men) at Ordination convocations in New York, Los Angeles, and Cincinnati during HUC-JIR’s 134th academic year.

“Alysa Stanton’s history-making journey reflects her profound commitment to Jewish learning and leadership,” stated Rabbi Ellenson. “She brings to her rabbinate an infinite capacity for human understanding and pastoral care, as well as a passionate commitment to building a sacred, inclusive community. She and her classmates of the Class of 2009 emerge from the College-Institute imbued with leadership skills, steeped in knowledge, strengthened by a commitment to service, and dedicated to bringing hope and healing to our troubled world.”

Stanton said “I am honored to be a visual presence of the ‘new face’ of Judaism in an era for deepening our faith in humanity and strengthening our faith as Jews. My goals as a rabbi are to break down barriers, build bridges, and provide hope. I look forward to being the spiritual leader of a community that welcomes and engages all.”

According to the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, at least 20% of American Jews are racially and ethnically diverse by birth and by the portals of conversion and adoption. Approximately 20,000-30,000 marriages between Jews and African-Americans grew out of the civil rights movement. This diversity, reflecting the variety and richness of Jewish heritage, is embraced by the Reform Movement with its commitment to inclusivity.

Stanton entered HUC-JIR’s rabbinical program in 2002 after a career as a licensed psychotherapist in trauma and grief. A native of Cleveland, OH, she and her family moved to Lakewood, CO, at the age of eleven. She comes from a Pentecostal Christian home, but started her own spiritual quest at the age of nine. She converted to Judaism over twenty years ago during her college years, driving 144
miles each week to study with a Conservative rabbi in an Orthodox synagogue. This focused determination culminated with a traditional conversion in 1987.

As a student rabbi she preached, taught, and applied Jewish tradition to lifecycle rituals and contemporary issues, and promoted interfaith and intracultural dialogue in Reform congregations and communities throughout the United States, including Piqua and Portsmouth, OH; Columbus, IN; Dothan, AL; Petoskey, MI; Williamson, WV; and Grand Forks, ND. Her rabbinical training included Clinical Pastoral Education at Christ Hospital in Cincinnati. She joined Crossroads Hospice in Blue Ash, OH, where she served as its Jewish Chaplain.

Prior to HUC-JIR, Stanton studied social psychology, neuropsychology, and interpersonal relationships at Lancaster University in England (1983-84), received the B.S. in Psychology (1988) and M.Ed. in Counseling and Multiculturalism (1992) from Colorado State University, and Professional Counselor Licensure (1998). She received the M.A. in Hebrew Letters from HUC-JIR on June 7th at Graduation Ceremonies in Cincinnati.

On August 1, 2009, she became the rabbi of Congregation B'ayt Shalom in Greenville, NC – a Conservative congregation of 53 families that recently became dually affiliated with the Reform Movement. She is the proud mother of an adopted 14-year-old daughter, Shana.

“Alysa Stanton has a genuine depth of soul that will make her congregants quite blessed to be in her presence,” said Rabbi Ellenson. “Her Ordination, coinciding with the election of Barack Obama, offers a ray of hope that the world can become a better place.”

A fter preparing for the move to rabbinical school at Geiger Kolleg in Potsdam, Germany, I got the news in April of 2008 that Geiger had signed an agreement with HUC-JIR. Would I be interested in going to Jerusalem instead?

As an American, my first days at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem in July 2008 were continuously punctuated by double-takes when introduced as an Abraham Geiger Kolleg student. Despite my Montana birth and American passport, I nonetheless saw myself and was seen as a European student. Most poignantly, while visiting Yad Vashem as part of the weekly “Israel Seminar,” a fellow student asked me as we watched a film of the Nuremberg Nazi rally grounds, “How many people were there? What were they thinking? How did I suddenly become the expert on German Volk-Psychology? I answered as best as I could and accepted my surprise role.

The four international students at HUC-JIR that year, two from Leo Baeck College in London, two from Geiger, spent the year soaking in as much as possible from the experience while trying to interject as much of the Old World as possible. We led a special “German” service for the Reform Liturgy Workshop with liberal doses of Lewandowski, Sulzer, and readings in the vernacular of “our” tradition. It was important to us to use the German language in worship – to reclaim the language of Buber and Heine from the National Socialists.

Choosing rabbinical school in Germany is a guaranteed lightening rod across the Jewish world. Reactions to my story have run the continuum from looks of confusion to outright hostility and anger. My answer: “We are going to serve the German community so that you do not have to.”

When I started looking at rabbinical schools in 2004, I discovered that a new progressive rabbinical seminary, the first since the Shoah, had opened in Germany in 1999. I felt drawn to the poignant act of tikun olam that the Jewish Wiederaufbau (rebuilding) in Germany represented.

In reality, Progressive leadership in America and in central Europe demands two different perspectives. The mere comparison of the nearly thousand Reform shuls in the States and the slightly more than 20 liberal communities in Germany makes the necessity of a different approach obvious. In Germany we are project managers as much as spiritual leaders, attempting to help realize a complete rebuilding. When we speak of minhag we count our tradition in years instead of decades or generations.

“You are truly moving to Germany forever?” asked a friend a few hours after our last finals marked the conclusion of the Year-In-Israel. I reiterated the open invitation to host my colleagues should they ever visit Berlin. “I never wanted to visit Germany before,” commented another, “but now I think I want to – need to.” With that, the year was proved a success, a little bit of the universe was repaired, and we all went to our separate campuses.
When Operation Cast Lead first began in late December, my first thought was about our soldier friends: where were they, were they going to be okay, and how could I help them?” recalls rabbinical student Jaclyn Fromer, L ’13. “Talking with them, even hearing the limited information they could give us, provided a much deeper understanding of the Israeli psyche, the effect of war on a society, and the way in which Israelis live their day-to-day lives.”

Months before the war, Fromer and education/communal service student LuAnne Tyzzer, RH SOE/MAJCS ’11, had become the HUC-JIR coordinators for ‘Parallel Lives,’ a program that links Israeli soldiers with Jews of the same age around the world in order to expose Israelis to different streams of Judaism and to promote the integration of Jewish identity in Israeli and Diaspora youth. Through this program, Fromer and Tyzzer were able to ensure that their first-year classmates in the Year-In-Israel Program could accomplish one of the year’s key goals: to become more intimately connected with the people and land of Israel.

From social events and educational get-togethers to being guests at a ‘live drill’ at an Army base, Fromer and Tyzzer brought together Israeli elite unit soldiers and HUC-JIR students to learn more about one another. The HUC-JIR students were able to get a better understanding of what it is like to come of age in Israel, join the army, and serve one’s country. In turn, the soldiers learned about the Reform Movement and the students’ lives in North America.

“It is so important for us to leave the classroom, to get out and experience the real Israel,” Tyzzer explained. For example, during a joint tour of the tunnels underneath the Western Wall, “the juxtaposition of the civilian HUC-JIR students with the rifle-draped uniformed soldiers symbolized the merging of shared history and common links. We were forging our own personal relationships with the Jewish homeland and its people. As for the soldiers, they were learning about what it’s like to be Jewish in the Diaspora; about maintaining a religious identity in the world outside Eretz Yisrael.”

Fromer described a two-day Shabbaton, when “we began by welcoming Kabbalat Shabbat together in the Murstein Synagogue with five female sh’lichot tzibbur, guitar and drums, and men lighting candles and saying Kiddush, and concluded with Havdalah in our home. Many of these secular soldiers were being introduced to Reform Judaism for the first time. For the soldiers, it crystallized why we’re here in Jerusalem studying at HUC-JIR, and why the Reform Movement is and will continue to be significant for their country, and ours.”

After years of Jewish and Zionist activism at Wheaton College and with AIPAC, it was her year as a DeLeT Fellow at the Stephen S. Wise Day School that propelled Tyzzer toward the joint master’s program in Jewish education and Jewish communal service at HUC-JIR. In addition to ‘Parallel Lives,’ she said that being the ARZA-ARZENU liaison on campus further enriched her understanding of Israel and Jewish peoplehood. “When I attended the 35th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem, I felt like I was a part of history,” she noted.

Fromer’s lifelong attachment to Stephen S. Wise Temple inspired her role as a cantorial soloist and worship leader during college at UC Davis, and ultimately led her to define her future aspirations as a Jewish leader. “I was drawn to fuse my love of Judaism with a desire to teach, learn, and help others cultivate their own connection to God and Judaism. I had wanted to study at HUC-JIR for years, especially because of the Year-In-Israel. I knew it would be an amazing education with unparalleled experiences, and that’s exactly what it’s been.”

Jaclyn Fromer, L ’13 (top, left), and LuAnne Tyzzer, RH SOE/MAJCS ’11 (top, right) with Israeli elite unit soldiers and HUC-JIR Year-In-Israel Program students (below).
DRUMMING MY WAY TO DAVENNING

David Vaisberg, N ‘11, Mandel Fellow

A lthough I am a trained guitarist, most of the time I play on my drum, which I still find fascinating as I never actually learned how to play the drum. I only started because one of the traditional egalitarian minyanim in Jerusalem asked, at the beginning of my Year-In-Israel, if there was anyone who could drum for their services. I was the only one to volunteer, and I’m still drumming two-and-a-half years later.

The following year, I arrived in New York with its cantorial school and community of trained musicians. When my turn came to lead services as a rabbinical student, rather than as an accompanist, I suddenly had to figure out how to create this same mood with words rather than beats. I learned how to collaborate at a higher level with a cantorial student, and how to lead, rather than follow, with the musical ensemble.

At HUC-JIR we learn to build sacred environments. We have countless chances to try new things, we tell stories and we teach, we bring in new melodies and new translations, and we build moods. Sometimes our ideas and efforts soar, and sometimes they do not. And that’s ok, because it is all part of the learning experience.

We all have the opportunity to workshop our skills and build a repertoire of ways to make worship meaningful. We learn from each other and from our incredible faculty. There are other forums for learning as well. I sit on the Worship Working Group, a committee of students and faculty responsible for planning the overall worship and spiritual experience of students. On the committee we learn what it is to envision and implement long-term ideas and projects.

We learn from our pulpits and internships, where we leave the protective HUC-JIR atmosphere and transpose what we’ve learned to communities with their own unique traditions. My own pulpit outside of Toronto likes to have its own blend of melodies in Hebrew and English, with a touch of whimsical spontaneity. They even have an accordionist. Thanks to the skills and knowledge taught at HUC-JIR, I have been able to adapt to that environment and learn even more.

We have also had some training in theater. Dr. Lawrence Hoffman has taught us that the service is a ‘sacred drama.’ For example, when we read Torah we are not just reading from a sacred book; we are actually standing at Sinai and receiving divine words. In sacred dramas, intonation, words, and feelings matter. Movement and choreography are crucial.

HUC-JIR has hosted several workshops in this area. In the past, choreographer Liz Lerman has been a visiting faculty member and taught us about movement. Amichai Lau-Lavie’s ‘Storah-telling’ organization has led a five-day workshop on how to bring the Torah text to life through dramatic storytelling. We have ongoing speech and communication classes to teach us the basics.

The Talmud (Berachot 55a) teaches us that Bezalel, the artist commissioned to build the Tabernacle and its holy vessels, was able to bring the experience of God to the Israelites. Likewise, it is through our art, as future rabbis and cantors, that we can bring the experience of the sacred to our communities. HUC-JIR gives us a tremendous gift by developing in us the skills necessary to build our own tabernacles for our future communities.

Israeli Agents for Change

Jean Bloch Rosensaft

A mong the 22 students enrolled in the Israel Rabbinical Program, there is a broad diversity of background but a shared passion and commitment to advancing Reform Judaism in the Jewish State. These students will ultimately join the 59 Israeli rabbinical alumni who are transforming the Orthodox-secular divide in Israeli society by introducing a liberal, egalitarian, and inclusive form of Jewish identity, spirituality, and religious practice.

Benjie Gruber, who will be ordained this Fall, serves as the student rabbi of Kibbutz Yahel and teaches adult education, provides conversion programs for soldiers in the Israeli Army, and works at the beit midrash at Congregation Mevasseret Zion and at the Reform mechina in Jaffa. He says, “My four years at HUC-JIR have given me the chance to study Talmud, midrash, halakhah, theology, Bible, and more with wonderful faculty, and to be introduced to the world of pastoral care by teachers and mentors who are experts in both theory and practice.”

Here are some of his classmates who are entering their second year of the Israel Rabbinical Program, and who will be Reform leaders and agents of change in Israel in the years to come:

Na’ama Dafni-Kellen was exposed to Reform Judaism through her high school studies at the Leo Baeck Education Center in Haifa and has been involved in the Israeli Movement for Progressive Judaism ever since. Upon completing her Army service, she moved to Jerusalem and studied Jewish philosophy and community work at Hebrew University, while at the same time working as the national director of the Reform Students’ Association. After completing an M.A. in non-profit management, Na’ama became the director of Kehilat Tzedek, a training center for congregational social action that works with Reform,
Conservative, Secular, and Modern-Orthodox congregations in Israel, under the auspices of the Israel Religious Action Center.

Born in New York and raised in Tel Aviv, Galit Cohen Kedem serves as program director at Kehilat Tzur Hadassah, is a graduate of Tehuda-Beit Midrash for Jewish Leadership in Israel (Hamidrasha and Kolot), and a former community organizer at Beit Tefilah Israeli in Tel Aviv. She received her B.A. in Hebrew Language and Literature from Hebrew University in Jerusalem. She studied in several pluralistic batei midrash (including Be’it Shmuel/HUC-JIR and the Hartman Institute) and worked for Gesher to promote dialogue between secular and religious high school students. Galit served as a Hebrew teacher at the school for overseas students at Hebrew University. She is moving to Holon, where she will be part of a city-wide effort for Jewish renaissance.

Since 2005, Uri Lam has been a rabbinical assistant at Congregacao Israelita Paulista (CIP), in Sao Paola, Brazil, where he was responsible for Shabbat Neshama, the egalitarian minyan, and taught b’nei mitzvah classes and introductory Judaism courses to candidates for conversion. As a translator, he worked on the first translation of the Tanakh into Portuguese, was responsible for assembling, translating, and transliterating the new siddur, Shavua Tov, and is currently working on the new siddur, Chag Sameach. He also translated Reform responsa and the American Jewish Conversion website into Portuguese. He received a degree in psychology from the Institute of Psychology, University of Sao Paolo in 1995 and the master in philosophy at Pontificia Universidade Catolica in Sao Paolo in 2003.

An instructor and lecturer in Jewish Thought and Jewish Education at Oranim College, Telalit Shavit is one of the founders of “Nigun Shel Nashim” College (a pluralistic women’s beit midrash), which she directed for many years. Telalit taught at several pluralistic batei midrash and learning communities in the northern part of Israel. Currently, she is working as a curricular advisor and director of Educators’ Seminars under the Partnership 2000 Tel Aviv and Los Angeles program. She is moving to Modiin and will join Kehillat Yozma as they transform the fastest growing city in Israel.

Orr Zohar is a student and teacher of Kabbalah, a writer and performer of music, and an instructor of musical texts related to the Jewish tradition. He is a doctoral student of Kabbalah research at the School of Jewish Studies at Tel Aviv University. He teaches Kabbalah and the Zohar for the Conservative Movement in Tel Aviv, at the Mousaoff Center at Bar Ilan University, and elsewhere. He presents programs such as “Kabalah Shabbat” and “The Holy Trinity – an Interfaith Dialog” on the radio. Orr writes on Judaism, Kabbalah, and other spiritual topics, for the on-line Ma’ariv newspaper.

Meirav Kalush returned home from England after three years as an emissary of the Jewish Agency for Israel. In England she worked with the community and with the Netzer Youth Movement. Prior to this position, Meirav worked as an education supervisor and director of the “Amitim” program of the Jewish Agency. Meirav is a graduate of Hebrew University’s Jewish Studies program. She grew up in Kibbutz Masuot Yitzhak, and believes that a thought can create a reality, and that we all have a part in mending our world.

Eli Yoel Levin was born in Tel Aviv in 1960. His Polish father, the only survivor of his family after the Holocaust, immigrated to Israel in 1949. Eli’s mother was born in Argentina and came to Israel in 1953. Eli graduated from Tel Aviv University with a degree in dentistry in 1989. Since then, he has been working as a dentist dividing his time among two kibbutzim and his own clinic in Netanya. Eight years ago, he started to study the history of the Jews at Tel Aviv University. He is a member of the Reform Congregation “Netan-ya” and at times serves as rabbi in conducting services and ceremonies.
As an ardent advocate for spiritual practice in contemporary Jewish life, Rabbi Rachel Cowan is having a significant impact on the creativity and enrichment of worship, liturgy, and ritual throughout the Jewish community, its institutions, and congregations,” said Rabbi Ellenson in presenting Rabbi Cowan with the President’s Medallion at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem’s Academic Convocation on November 14, 2008.

Ordained at HUC-JIR/New York in 1989, Rabbi Cowan was recognized for her groundbreaking contributions to Jewish spirituality; as a guide to the Mezorim Program at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem, which is creating the language and vocation for a new profession of pastoral care-giving to serve Israelis at times of illness, crisis, and joy; and for her ongoing inspiration and support for HUC-JIR’s students and alumni.

In a recent article for Sh'ma, Rabbi Cowan noted that “finding ways to promote the spiritual formation, development, and nurturance of rabbis is a critical issue for seminaries. As students develop skills in studying and analyzing texts, teaching, preaching, counseling, and leading services, they also need to understand the importance of cultivating their soul.” Acknowledging that students emerge from HUC-JIR to enter intense lives in their professional placements, she notes that “they need spiritual practices that strengthen their middot, their faith, their courage, their equanimity, their sense of authenticity, their prayer-life, and their vision, so that they can inspire congregants and the larger community. These qualities keep their rabbinate fresh and live, mitigating the burnout and compassion fatigue that are dangerous professional traps.”

Rabbi Cowan has witnessed this first-hand in her capacity as Executive Director of the Institute for Jewish Spirituality (IJS). The IJS seeks to develop, nurture, and disseminate through mainstream Jewish institutions the vitally needed stream of contemplative Judaism that serves to enrich the inner lives of Jews, revitalize the Jewish wisdom tradition, open Jewish institutions to new forms of liturgical and ritual expression, and ultimately to link the search for inner wholeness with social and environmental activism. The IJS creates extensive learning experiences for Jewish professionals and lay people and supports Jewish professionals in creating environments in their own communities that will provide such learning opportunities for others. It guides Jewish institutions to develop their capacity to meet more effectively the needs of their constituents for a contemplative Jewish practice, and nourishes a network of faculty and students to support these goals. More than 50 Reform rabbis have participated in the Institute’s rabbinical leadership program and more than 20 Reform cantors

Pointing to the concept of “spiritual reformation,” Rabbi Cowan advocates for the opportunity to take the time and “look anew at our theology as it evolves with life experience, to reconnect with prayer.” This is crucial, she says, because “without a spiritual practice of cultivating humility, clarity, truthfulness, and discernment,” spiritual leaders may run the risk of “not seeing how the power of their ego can lead them to believe that they are exempt from normative standards.” She believes that the “core of spiritual formation for rabbis is simple: God wants our heart; the essence of the spiritual life is to work on ourselves; and we cannot teach authentically when our role is divided from our soul. We cannot give what we don’t possess.”

Rabbi Cowan received her B.A. in Sociology from Bryn Mawr, and her M.S.S. from the University of Chicago. She served as the Director of the Jewish Life and Values Program at the Nathan Cummings Foundation and Director of Outreach at the 92nd Street Y in New York.

Born to a Boston-based Unitarian family that traces its roots to the Mayflower, Rabbi Cowan converted to Judaism after sixteen years of marriage to the writer Paul Cowan, z”l, with whom she co-authored Mixed Blessings: Untangling The Knots in an Interfaith Marriage and A Torah is Written. She has spent many years leading workshops for interfaith couples and advocating for Jewish communities to be more open to non-Jewish spouses and to encourage their commitment to Judaism.
It's a long commute. In some ways, I am a regular congregational rabbi: I lead services, give sermons, teach, officiate at different life cycle events, and have student interns. In other ways, I am not a regular congregational rabbi because my congregation or more accurately, congregations, are so widespread. I am an itinerant rabbi who visits multiple pulpits, and each of them is very different. But they all share the same qualities: they are Southern and they do not have full-time clergy. They may have a student rabbi, a part time rabbi, or a retired rabbi who visits them once a month. There are congregations just like them throughout the country.

The demographics of the congregations that I serve are very different. Some are old enough to have been founding congregations of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations [now the Union for Reform Judaism] in 1873. Some have sprung up in the last twenty years. Because of the advanced age of the congregants, religious school is a distant memory for some of these congregations, but for other congregations, with members who are young families with children, it remains a very vital part of the community. Some of these congregations are very rural and some are in the midst of good-sized cities. I serve communities that are Reform, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Orthodox, and unaffiliated, which makes leading worship interesting each Shabbat. In each place, I find an underserved Jewish community that is committed to being Jewish. There may be fewer than a dozen Jews in town, but if there is anything Jewish happening, everyone is there to support it.

We sometimes have to be creative in how we bring the services of a rabbi or cantor to an isolated community. Each week I write a bima-ready d’var Torah that is sent by e-mail and is available on our web site, www.isjl.org. For some communities that have lay readers for Shabbat services, this means the difference between having a d’var Torah at services or not.

I have used other computer technology as well. I had a student who became a bar mitzvah last summer at United Hebrew Congregation in Fort Smith, AR. He had a tutor in Fort Smith who worked with him on his Torah portion, his Haftarah portion, and his prayers. He studied with me weekly by web-cam. It was a little strange at first, but we soon settled into our routine and figured out the technology. When I spoke with a friend of mine, who runs a very large religious school in New Jersey, about my technological tutoring, her immediate response was, “Well of course, you’ll see him a couple of times in person before August.” I had to explain that I wasn’t counting on seeing him in person at all before the Shabbat he became a bar mitzvah. As it happened, I was wrong. He and his mom went to Space Camp in Huntsville, AL, for Spring Break and we were able to get together at the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience for a tutoring session.

Some of the work that I do for the Institute isn’t as specific as leading Shabbat or holiday services for a congregation. Some of what I do is for the surrounding community, representing both the Institute and the Jewish people.

I have had the honor of being invited to participate in interfaith sunrise services on the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast. When the University of Louisiana at Monroe asked the Jewish community for someone to sit in on an interfaith panel about the Book of Job, they were able to call on me to represent a Jewish viewpoint. As part of the Mississippi Coalition for Racial Justice, I stood on the steps of the State Capital and gave an invocation for the ceremony kicking off “The Welcome Table,” a year-long program promoting dialogue on race in Mississippi. When a company that operates towboats on the Mississippi River wanted to name its newest vessel for the patriarch of a Jewish family in town, I was invited to participate in the launch of the MV David Solomon (and steer it as well!).

Then there was the unusual unveiling in Brookhaven, MS, for Mr. Elias Bowsky, 1848 – 1896. I received a call from the Sons of Confederate Veterans in Brookhaven asking if I would help with the dedication of a marker for a Jewish Confederate soldier as well as another memorial that had been created by the brother of the deceased for the remains of 23 unidentified Confederate soldiers. This wasn’t anything that I could have expected before coming to Mississippi. We made arrangements for the details of the service. I also invited Rabbi Eric Wisnia of Congregation Beth Chaim of Princeton Junction, NJ, to assist me. Rabbi Wisnia is a colleague, a friend, and a Civil War buff since the fifth grade. He sent me “The Prayer of the Confederate States Soldier” by Rev. M. J. Michellbacher, Minister of the Hebrew Congregation, “House of Love,” Richmond, VA, which was carried by Jewish Confederate Soldiers during the war, to include in the unveiling service.
Two years ago, I took an untimely and unlikely turn off the path of many young married couples. Just after my husband and I bought our first piece of real estate in New York City, I decided to move to the Former Soviet Union (FSU).

Formerly, as the Associate Director of National Women’s Philanthropy at United Jewish Communities (UJC), I often accompanied donors on missions to help them understand how their federation dollars were being put to work. I realized then that there must be a better way to connect North American donors to overseas Jewish communities. Missions, I thought, should be more than a one-time experience.

The idea to relocate east came while I was visiting Russia as a participant in the Muehlstein Institute for Jewish Professional Leadership (a joint certificate program of UJA-Federation of New York and New York University’s Wagner School of Public Service). It was my second formal visit in two years to the Adain Lo kindergarten and center for young Jews with physical and mental disabilities in St. Petersburg. A little girl I met on my first trip remembered me and we took another picture together after she updated me on her latest accomplishments—she recently celebrated her bat mitzvah and won an award in a singing competition.

All in all, being an itinerant rabbi has allowed me to be present at amazing moments in the lives of individuals, of families, of congregations, and of communities. I have driven further through the South than I had ever considered doing and encountered people who have treated me to the best of both southern and Jewish hospitality. I have been blessed to work with this “congregation.”

Rabbi Batsheva Appel at the helm of the MV David Solomon.

Rabbi Marshal Klaven, C ’09, is taking over from Rabbi Appel, who after three years as a circuit-riding rabbi is moving on to serve as Director of Rabbinic Services at KAM Isaiah Israel Congregation in Chicago.

Rabbi Eric Winnia, Jim Baker, Rabbi Batsheva Appel, and Mike Webb at the dedication of memorials for Jewish Confederate soldiers.

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My desire to build more lasting relationships with the global Jewish community became a reality in early 2007 when I was awarded the Ralph I. Goldman Fellowship in International Jewish Communal Service by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Designed to encourage interest in the field of international Jewish communal service, the fellowship is a yearlong overseas work/study program in one or two of the over 60 countries where JDC is active.

And so, while my husband stayed home to renovate our new apartment, I moved abroad to spend a below freezing winter in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, home to some 60,000 Jews.

It’s not surprising to me now that the hospitality of eastern Ukraine’s Jewish community embraced me as one of its own. Just before I left, I discovered that my great-grandparents were born in Ekaterinoslav, now Dnepropetrovsk. My great-grandfather owned furniture shops in the Ozerka and Troitsky bazaars, both in walking distance of my new apartment. It seemed to me that at one time or another, I was meant to live in this part of the world.
Eastern Ukraine, which boasts a perpetual gloomy sky and frosty temperature, is a blue-collar region connected by one long stretch of road to nowhere and dotted by villages, mines, and factories. Visiting a small peripheral community of only 2,000 Jews, an overwhelming stench from a pharmaceutical factory made it next to impossible to breathe. That small town has one of the highest rates of lung cancer in the world and the dichotomy between rich and poor, there and throughout the country, is mind-boggling. Even in the Jewish community, there are oligarchs living in luxury, a growing middle-class, elderly pensioners without electricity or indoor plumbing, and a staggering number of single-parent households and abandoned children.

The heart of JDC’s work revolves around serving the elderly through the Hesed Welfare Center network, the largest volunteer-based organization in the FSU, and through youth and family services at Jewish Community Centers. Here, history is rewritten every day as Jews, young and old, embrace Judaism again and professionals and lay leaders assume the responsibilities of community.

In Ukraine most Jewish communities still rely almost entirely on foreign donations. I conducted fundraising seminars in Dnepropetrovsk and Kharkov for local Jewish professionals in eastern and central parts of the country, where the lack of philanthropic culture makes the fundraising challenge even more difficult.

“Fundraising 101” included teaching emerging leaders to build donor relationships, solicit funds, and plan events with a curriculum developed with my local colleagues to ensure its relevance, value, and sensitivity to Ukrainian society. I also worked with a team to build Do Good Ukraine!, the first Web-based resource in the country connecting nonprofit organizations (Jewish and non-Jewish) and individuals with volunteer opportunities. The goal of the project is to help grow the third sector – a critical talent also necessary to develop self-sufficient institutions.

My greatest pleasures came while attending a Purim spiel directed by an 88-year-old Hesed client and celebrating Shabbat with Hillel students. Those informal opportunities allowed me the chance to establish life-long relationships within the community. I kept my family and friends abreast of these experiences through my weekly blog entries at www.lech-lecha.blogspot.com/

During the second half of my fellowship year, I lived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. While JDC came to the country 25 years ago to help the “lost tribe” of Beta Israel Jews make aliyah to Israel, the organization has built a wide network and great influence in the northern Gondar region where these Jews once lived, also touching the lives of non-Jewish Ethiopians. The impact of the work is astounding and embodies the true spirit of tikkun olam, the Jewish obligation to repair the world.

Today’s projects in Ethiopia focus on clean water development, education, medicine, income-generating ventures, and agricultural advancement. I have seen firsthand the life-changing nature of these projects – projects that were as foreign to me as they are valuable to the rural Ethiopian population.

At the Teda village Veterinary Clinic in Gondar I spent an afternoon with farmers who brought their livestock for medical treatment, which literally saved their only means of income. One man walked more than three hours with his cow that had developed a deadly bacterial infection from eating poisonous grass, common during the dry season. In other villages I interviewed dozens of women standing in line at the many community water taps built by JDC in the region. Waiting to fill jugs with clean water for 10 cents (a bargain compared to the 50 cents charged by their neighbors with running water), they often came several times a day to draw water for drinking, for personal hygiene, and for laundry. Before the tap was built, some women walked up to five miles to the next closest spring or used polluted stream water, a source of serious and potentially fatal health hazards such as malaria and diarrhea. During the course of my fellowship, I worked with the local authorities to help JDC determine a course for future agricultural, water, and school-building projects.

(continued on next page)
My work in Ukraine and Ethiopia varied immensely but was always coupled by strong Jewish values like tikkun olam, compassion, and the act of tzedakah. I learned that the field of international Jewish communal service demanded a certain kind of flexibility and optimism not often required at home. Electricity is scarce, civil unrest is unpredictable, muddy roads threaten to keep you in the car overnight, and overwhelming poverty can be unbearable. Our overseas colleagues help people who need assistance but who sometimes do not quite fit the bill of our more traditional clients at home. They rely on local culture and tradition to make decisions they might not otherwise have chosen.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel once said, “Pray as if everything depended on God, but act as if everything depends on you.” The job is heart-breaking and exhausting, yet tremendously rewarding.

Working in the Jewish community has never felt like a job. For me, it is a calling from God and has only served as a blessing. In Pirke Avot it is written, “You are not obligated to complete the task but neither are you free to desist from it.” With so much work to be done, I had to seize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

As I started my own life in NYC, it may have seemed like an untimely move but the truth is that there was never going to be a “good” time. And along the way, I realized that Jewish communal service is about much more than planning programs, raising dollars, and amassing donors; it is about building lifelong relationships and partnerships. Those are the signposts we leave for generations to come.

Judaism Down Under: The Doctor Who Became a Rabbi

Gersh Zylberman, L’05, Rabbi, Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne, Australia

Following the ashes of the Holocaust, tens of thousands of Europe’s Jews thought of Australia as simply the farthest place on earth they could get from the terrors they had just suffered. And so it was that the post-war Jewish immigration to Australia came to invigorate the longstanding but relatively small Jewish community that had been in Australia since the earliest days of European settlement in the late 18th century. Since then waves of immigrants have continued to increase Jewish numbers over the latter part of the 20th century with significant arrivals coming from the former Soviet Union, South Africa, Israel, and even the United States. Today Jewish Australia numbers around 120,000 (out of a total population of approximately 20 million) with about 50,000 each in Melbourne and Sydney, about 10,000 in the isolated west coast city of Perth, and the rest scattered around the sparsely populated country.

But you wouldn’t know that there were only 120,000 of us Jews Down Under. Jews have contributed in significant and notable ways to the fabric of Australian society. Two Governors-General (akin to the role of an Israeli President) have been Jews – Sir Isaac Isaacs and Sir Zelman Cowen (the latter being a member of Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne, the congregation I currently serve). A major university and a whole city have been named after a prominent general during World War I, Sir John Monash, who was also Jewish.

For a community its size, Melbourne boasts a surprising number of vibrant Jewish institutions. There are over 50 separate congregations ranging from tiny shitebelach (prayer houses) to large established synagogues. Jewish day schools provide educational opportunities for about 80% of Jewish children and span the range of Jewish outlooks from the Secular Yiddishist (Bundist) Sholem Aleichem School to the Progressive (Reform) King David School (with 900 students spanning preschool to 12th grade), Modern Orthodox and Zionist community schools, and ultra-Orthodox, non-Zionist yeshivot. Youth movements originally transplanted from Europe remain popular with new ones continuing to sprout, including the thriving Reform Zionist youth movement, Netzer, which was founded in Melbourne in the 1970s and is now international. The Florence Melton adult education program is active, there are two Jewish museums, two widely read Jewish weekly newspapers, a Hebrew language weekly newspaper, regular Hebrew and Yiddish radio programs, growing departments of Jewish studies at the major universities, and a very high level of Israel awareness and Israel-directed philanthropy.

The Progressive movement, affiliated with the World Union for Progressive Judaism, will soon be celebrating its 80th year. Over the years, congregations and other dynamic Progressive institutions have emerged in all of the Australian state capitals, some smaller Australian population centers, and beyond Australia in our WUPJ region, including New Zealand, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Mumbai. Beijing and Shanghai have the beginnings of Progressive congregations.

Growing up in Melbourne, my own journey to the rabbinate was forged in the context of this diverse Jewish community. I was raised at Temple Beth Israel, studied at The King David School, and attended Netzer. I was also influenced by the strongly Bundist wing of my family and the numerous Orthodox and secular Jewish friends I met through B’nai Brith’s Youth group, AZA. But most of all, my drive to become a rabbi was sparked by learning with and getting to know the rabbis I grew up with – especially Rabbi John Levi and the several HUC-JIR graduates from the U.S. and Australia who spent their first years in the rabbinate in Melbourne and who now serve
Compared with Americans, Australians generally are more secular, and here in Australia we are proud to live in such a diverse, multicultural, and democratic country that is home to a unique and flourishing part of the Jewish Diaspora.

One of the most exciting projects currently under way in our region is in the area of liturgical transformation. For years the dominant prayer book in our region has been Gates of Prayer – it’s 15 hours flying time from Los Angeles to Melbourne. But the world is shrinking and telecommunications technology and air travel have made Australia’s isolation far less apparent. Here in Australia we are proud to live in such a diverse, multicultural, and democratic country that is home to a unique and flourishing part of the Jewish Diaspora. If you are ever in the area, let us know and we’ll be happy to show you around!

www.tbi.org.au rabbi.zylberman@tbi.org.au
A s the descendant of a German Jewish family that helped found the Reform Movement in America, it is perhaps no surprise that Rabbi Samuel Joseph chose to enter the rabbinate. “I was thrilled about going to rabbinical school, as I loved the congregational experience,” said Joseph. This love would ultimately lead to a career focused on improving the congregational, educational, and organizational systems of Jewish life.

Rabbi Samuel K. Joseph, Ph.D., is Professor of Jewish Education and Leadership Development at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati, where he teaches in the Rabbinical School. His special interest is how Jewish institutions and organizations, ranging from schools and synagogues to national groups, can be most effective as they seek to fulfill their mission and vision. Toward this end, Rabbi Joseph consults with rabbis, educators, administrators, and communal and lay leaders throughout the world, supporting them as they lead their institutions and organizations.

Rabbi Joseph’s Jewish journey began in childhood, with attendance at URJ camps and a family active in the Reform Movement. After earning a B.S. in Education and History from the University of Cincinnati, he went straight to HUC-JIR’s Cincinnati campus to earn the M.A. in Hebrew Literature in 1974 and rabbinical ordination in 1976. Rabbi Joseph served first as a rabbinical intern and later as Assistant Rabbi at Temple Israel in Dayton, OH (1974-1979), where he worked extensively with the religious school and in adult and family education.

Upon ordination, Rabbi Joseph also began writing curricula for the URJ, but he found himself disappointed when he saw teachers using his educational materials. “I was very upset – I didn’t recognize what I’d written,” said Joseph. “I got involved in teacher training, and began to realize that the issues were larger than the classroom teacher; lots of elements of success in the classroom have to do with the entire system of the school, and the school system is part of the larger congregational system.” With these realizations, Rabbi Joseph’s career shifted from “the micro of curriculum-writing to the macro of the congregational system.”

Coming Back to HUC-JIR

In 1979 Rabbi Joseph received a call from HUC-JIR’s then-President, Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, asking whether he might be interested in taking on the position of National Director of Admissions and Alumni Affairs and Assistant to the President at HUC-JIR. “I loved HUC-JIR and had a great experience there, so I decided to return,” he recounts. This was to be the beginning of a three-decade career at the College-Institute. After serving as an administrator for several years, Rabbi Joseph became a faculty member in 1981, the same year that he earned his Ph.D. in Education and Organizational Development from Clayton University in St. Louis, MO. He has taught the students of HUC-JIR’s Cincinnati campus ever since.

These days, Rabbi Joseph splits his time between classroom teaching and consulting and coaching work with rabbis, congregations, and Jewish communal professionals. His teaching in recent years has combined his background in leadership, organizational systems, and education, including courses such as “Leadership and Organizational Dynamics,” “Teaching About God to Children and Adults,” “Leading Change in Jewish Organizations,” “Life Long Adult Learning,” and this past semester’s new course, “Philanthropy and Fundraising in Jewish Organizations for Rabbis.”

As a consultant, Rabbi Joseph has worked with nearly 300 congregations in the Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox denominations, as well as Jewish communities in Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Argentina, and Hong Kong, where he is the founding rabbi of a liberal congregation.

“What’s fun is helping congregations and organizations figure out their unique way of doing things and how to be most effective with it,” he explained. “What can they change to be more effective?”

Rabbi Joseph served as the 2006 and 2007 Walter Jacob Jubilee Fellow at Abraham Geiger College in Berlin, the first rabbinical seminary in Germany since the Holocaust. In 2007 he also taught at the Levisson Institut in Amsterdam, the Progressive Rabbinical Seminary for Dutch Jewry. He is the author of four books: Lead-
Several years ago, Rabbi Joseph discussed with Xavier administrators the possibility of creating a joint program with the College-Institute, and they welcomed the idea. Since 1999-2000, students are able to apply directly to a program at Xavier that culminates in a Master of Education degree in Educational Administration. The M.A. requires that they take courses at Xavier University and courses with Rabbi Joseph at HUC-JIR, and Rabbi Joseph offers electives geared toward the students in the joint program.

Rabbi Joseph notes that Xavier professors often comment on the joy of teaching full-time graduate students of the caliber of HUC-JIR rabbinical students, and hopes to build on the success of the HUC-JIR – Xavier program by extending the relationship between the institutions, which this past year launched a joint Jewish and Interfaith Studies Program (see www.huc.edu/support/fnecr.pdf). Xavier has one of the top M.B.A. programs in the country, and Rabbi Joseph would like to develop a certificate for rabbinical students in the area of organizational behavior and leadership. There is interest on the part of Xavier’s business school administrators, and Rabbi Joseph hopes this will lead to further cooperation and partnership between the two institutions.

After thirty years in the field, Rabbi Joseph retains an abiding passion for his work. “I still run to work everyday. I love what I do, and I consider myself incredibly privileged to teach the next generation of Reform rabbis. It is our job to help rabbinical students learn to be reflective leaders, who can build community and work for change.” He considers his ability to combine practice and theory one of the greatest assets of his job. “I’m quite lucky to do a tremendous amount of consulting with rabbis and lay leaders all over the world, and within days I’m back in the classroom with rabbinical students, so I can talk with them about what’s happening, get their ideas and reflections, and take them back into consulting,” said Rabbi Joseph. “I think I have the best of every world.”

“Xavier students and professors come with different perspectives and knowledge bases, which can expand our thinking and give us new ideas to incorporate into Jewish settings.” Xavier students also benefit from what Grossman calls “the ultimate interfaith dialogue.” He adds, “A rabbi is a teacher, so as a rabbinical student I felt it was important to learn as much as I could about the education process and Jewish education today.”

Rabbi Joseph provides an essential Jewish angle, making us aware of the innovations of schools and congregations in the field of education and current issues being discussed. I feel that the HUC-JIR–Xavier program has given me the tools to be a better teacher, a better educational resource to congregations, and a better rabbi.”

The success of the HUC-JIR–Xavier endeavor is evident in its rapid growth, with 14 graduates and 5 current students. Students and alumni praise the program and appreciate the unique opportunity to learn with diverse students in a different environment. Rabbi Adam Grossman, a 2008 alumnus of the program, remarks that

“Xavier students and professors come with different perspectives and knowledge bases, which can expand our thinking and give us new ideas to incorporate into Jewish settings.” Xavier students also benefit from what Grossman calls “the ultimate interfaith dialogue.” He adds, “A rabbi is a teacher, so as a rabbinical student I felt it was important to learn as much as I could about the education process and Jewish education today.”

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THE 2008 DR. FRITZ BAMBERGER MEMORIAL LECTURE

Opening the Door to the Deep: Creating a Women’s Torah Commentary

Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York – March 6, 2008

The Bible: A Women’s Torah Commentary received the Everett Family Foundation Jewish Book of the Year Award at the 58th National Jewish Book Award ceremony in New York on March 5, 2009. Published by WRJ and its partner, the URJ Press, this publication was edited by Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, Professor of Bible at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, and Rabbi Andrea L. Weiss, Associate Professor of Bible at HUC-JIR/New York. It is the result of 14 years of work by more than 100 women theologians, historians, sociologists, scholars, anthropologists, poets, rabbis, and cantors from the United States, Canada, Israel, and South America. The 2008 Dr. Fritz Bamberger Memorial Lecture celebrated the publication of this groundbreaking volume, which provides women a voice in commentary.

The presentations by Dr. Weiss and HUC-JIR faculty and contributing authors Dr. Carole B. Balin, Professor of Jewish History, Dr. Alyssa Gray, Associate Professor of Codes and Responsa Literature, and Dr. Wendy Zierler, Associate Professor of Modern Jewish Literature and Feminist Studies, was moderated by Rabbi Jacqueline Koch Ellenson, Executive Director of the Women’s Rabbinic Network.
This evening of celebration in honor of the completion and publication of The Torah: A Women’s Commentary is a very meaningful one for me and for many others. Many women have joined us from both the Women’s Rabbinic Network and the Women for Reform Judaism. All of us who have worked our entire careers to create a new and more complete vision of Torah that reflected the reality of women’s experiences and women’s perspectives have a great deal to celebrate with this publication. That this celebration takes place as part of the lecture series established in honor of Dr. Fritz Bamberger by his family, is particularly meaningful. I did not know Dr. Bamberger well, but I do feel a deep sense of connection to him and to his family. I do know very well the significance and impact of his life on HUC-JIR and on David Ellenson’s intellectual life. My sense of gratitude for the Bambergers’ generosity and care is very deep. We are grateful to the co-editors of this commentary, Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi and Dr. Andrea Weiss, for starting us off, rolling the stone off the well, and opening the door to some deeper reflections.

It is a distinct honor to moderate such a distinctive panel of women, all members of the HUC-JIR faculty. Being on the panel with them shows me just how profoundly our Jewish world has changed. I can never take for granted the power of learning from and with women scholars. I have learned that once women enter into the arena of Torah learning and study it never is really just mix and stir. It’s really mix and transform. The presence of women demands that the text be seen with new eyes and heard with new ears. It is this creativity and vision which we truly celebrate on this unique evening. The world has truly changed in our lifetime. Our panel really reflects the amazing transformation that has taken place at HUC-JIR. How privileged we all are to be witnesses to this. And it is a particular privilege that as moderator I am able to participate in a conversation about a text with which we wrestle so deeply.

When we complete the chanting of the book of of the Torah, it is customary for the community to acknowledge that moment by chanting “Hazak, Hazak, v’Nishazek” – “Be strong, be strong, be strengthened.” We find ourselves strengthened by the work of these four amazing scholars and the work of all whose energy, creativity, and efforts brought this volume into existence. As we conclude this evening with a song from Debbie Friedman, whose music inspires and transforms us all, my prayer is that we continue to go from strength to strength, that we continue to be strengthened, and to strengthen each other as we make our Torah’s meaning go even deeper and towards truth.

The potential for Torah study to satisfy the contemporary longing for spiritual meaning was one of the driving forces behind Cantor Sarah Sager’s dream of creating a women’s Torah commentary. In the fall of 1993, at the national assembly of the Women of Reform Judaism in San Francisco, Cantor Sager gave a talk entitled, “Sarah’s Hidden Voice: Recovering and Discovering Women’s Spirituality.” She concluded her speech with the following charge:

I present this idea of re-claiming Torah as a very specific proposal to this great gathering of Jewish women, to this unique organization dedicated to the spiritual life and religious empowerment of Reform Jewish women. If we are really serious about women’s spirituality, about re-claiming our history and our voices, about liberating the concepts of God and community, of integrating the Torah of our tradition into the Torah of our lives, then there is something very concrete that we can do. We can commission the creation of the first women’s commentary to the Torah.

Fourteen years later, Cantor Sager’s dream was fulfilled with the publication of The Torah: A Women’s Commentary, which was debuted in December at the Reform Movement Biennial in San Diego.

In the Song of Songs, the male speaker describes his lover as “a locked fountain, a sealed-up spring” (4:12); he speaks of her as “a garden spring, a well of fresh water (literally, ‘living water’)” (4:15). For women and men, for Jews and non-Jews, The Torah: A Women’s Commentary offers a new way to unlock the fountain of Torah; it provides a fresh chance to drink deeply from this well of living water in order to quench our thirst for answers and questions, for meaning, for community, for glimpses of the Divine.

How does the Commentary accomplish this? One way is by providing multiple lenses for viewing each Torah portion. First, the heart of each parashah is the “Central Commentary,” which provides a verse-by-verse explanation of the biblical text, highlighting female characters and issues involving women. Second, a shorter, “Another View” essay focuses on a specific element in the parasha in a way that complements, supplements, or sometimes challenges the Central Commentary. Third, a “Post-Biblical Interpretations” section brings together teachings from rabbinic writings and classical Jewish commentaries, showing how traditional Jewish sources responded to texts pertaining to women. Fourth, a more philosophical essay called “Contemporary Reflection” explores various aspects of the Torah portion and challenges readers to consider how the parasha speaks to us as contemporary readers. And fifth, the “Voices” section contains a collection of creative responses to the Torah portion, mainly poetry. Five distinct modes of biblical interpretation; five different doors to the deep
The idea of a multi-vocal Torah commentary is both definitively Jewish and definitively feminist. The design of the Women’s Commentary was inspired by Miqraot Gedolot, the standard form of Jewish Bible commentary since the sixteenth century. Miqraot Gedolot contains the Hebrew text and an Aramaic translation, along with commentaries by a range of different scholars, all of whom interpret the text for their own generation. So, too, our Commentary contains the Torah text, a translation (in our case, what is called a “gender accurate” English translation), and various commentaries reflecting the interests and concerns of our own day and age. A key difference, however, is that in Miqraot Gedolot all the sages are Jewish men; in our Commentary, all the sages are Jewish women. Thus, drawing upon a classical Jewish model of biblical exegesis, we have created a Torah commentary for the 21st century – a commentary for both women and men alike.

Another example of the multi-vocal nature of the Commentary is the diversity of our contributors. The Commentary was published by the URJ Press, which is part of the Union for Reform Judaism; and it was developed and funded entirely by the Women of Reform Judaism, the remarkable organization that raised the $1.5 million needed to produce this project. Nonetheless, this is a commentary by and for klal Yisrael, the entire Jewish community. Our contributors hail from across the globe – from North and South America, Israel, and Europe – and they represent the full Jewish spectrum: Reform, Reconstructionist, Conservative, Orthodox, and secular Jews.

Likewise, in the few months since its publication, the Commentary has been embraced by a diverse audience. Celebrations of the Commentary have been held or are being planned at the seminaries of the Reform, Conservative, and Reconstructionist movements; and just yesterday, we had an event at General Theological Seminary, which is part of the Episcopal Church. A recent article in the Christian Science Monitor quoted Orthodox Rabbi Bradley Hirschfield, who called the Women’s Commentary a “magnificent work” and stated: “I’d love to see more Orthodox people say, ‘No, we don’t share their theology, but boy, they’ve helped us to appreciate the text we both love better.”

Since Tamara Eskenazi unfortunately could not be with us this evening, she asked me to share with you some of her reflections on the Commentary:

“In the Torah, the call from and to the deep, the reaching for water and sustenance, is a call to holiness, which is why the book of Leviticus, which we begin reading next week, is so central – physically and spiritually. The call to holiness is not only about orienting us comfortably in the world, but it also entails examining our most public and most private actions in light of the high ethical standard that the Torah spells out: how and what we eat, how we treat each other and the stranger, how we treat the poor, how we approach God.”

As is evident when studying the Torah in general and the book of Leviticus in particular, the call to holiness is also unquestionably a call to justice. In the 21st century this call to justice takes on an added weight; and those of us who write commentaries are keenly aware of the need to heed the call. In transmitting a tradition through a commentary, one inevitably highlights certain elements. After all, it simply is not possible to comment on everything in the text, especially in a single volume commentary; so one must be selective. Yet, one also needs to know when to challenge the received tradition. The Torah itself is a collection that exemplifies both gestures. It is tradition, drawing upon the wisdom of generations past and present in order to guide a people. But it is also a counter-tradition, standing against some current ideas and practices in the biblical world.

Every commentator in every generation is obligated to replicate these two activities: affirmation and critique. Commentators who exposit the text must also be ready to expose – not only the text, but our own cultural blind spots. We live at a time when sacred texts are used as weapons against innocent people. Thus, as commentators, we cannot forget the actual context into which our comments enter. In writing the Commentary, our task has been to write about the Torah, but with an eye to how our readers are going to use these teachings.”

An illustration of this pattern of embracing but challenging the tradition can be found in Tamara Eskenazi’s “Another View” essay in parashat K’doshim. Based on her reading of the parasha, she expresses a new notion of holiness when she asserts: “Parashat K’doshim articulates more comprehensively than any other portion of the Torah what it means for persons and community to be holy. Dictionary definitions of the Bible’s concept of holiness emphasize the notion of separation. In parashat K’doshim, however, holiness comes from cultivating relationships. Connections – not only separations – define the holy community: the connection to parents whom one must honor, to the poor and the disadvantaged whom one must protect, to the neighbor and stranger whom one must love, and of course to God.”

The Torah: A Women’s Commentary is such an important addition to our collective Jewish library, an exciting new resource to help us read and wrestle with Torah. This, after all, is what Jews have been doing for thousands of years – and now we have many new voices to add to that conversation.

THE NEWEST LINK IN THE CHAIN OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Dr. Carole B. Balin, Professor of Jewish History, HUC-JIR/NY

If not now, at some later point, I invite you to pick up this book, to lift The Torah: A Women’s Commentary. You will notice that this Torah is downright heavy. Indeed, this hefty volume will take up its share of space on your bookshelf. As you “turn it and turn it again,” as Rabbi Ben Bag Bag admonishes us in Pirke Avot (2:25), notice its gold, embossed lettering on the front and binding; take pleasure in its smooth, eco-friendly green texture; admire, as my 9-year old daughter does, its delicate, border illustration of vines and pomegranates.

For centuries, traditional texts of Jewish culture – what are commonly known as seforim – have appeared in a particular guise. Consider copies of the Bible, the Mishnah, the Talmud, Shulkhan Arukh, Zohar and more recently J.D. Hertz’s The Pentateuch and Haftorahs published by Soncino Press originally in 1936, Gunther
Plaut’s *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* published in 1981 by the then-UAHC Press and re-issued twenty-four years later, and the first *Torah* commentary of the 21st century, *Etz Hayim* published by the Conservative Movement’s Rabbinical Assembly in 2001. These volumes – all – stand out on library shelves with distinguishing and distinguished markings of dark, rich jewel-colored covers, glittery lettering, marbled pages. Their aesthetic sends a clear and powerful message to readers: We are classics with an elaborate form that complements our significant content. We constitute what matters in the world of Jewish study. In the case of *seforim*, it would seem, you can judge a book by its cover.

Of course, the real irony here is that leather bindings and gold letters are hardly indigenous Jewish markings. Though the Muslims may have called Jews “People of the Book” as early as the eighth century, *seforim* are a relatively recent phenomenon in the millennia-long continuum of Jewish history. Until the invention of the printing press in the mid-fifteenth century, sacred texts in Hebrew were very scarce, given the fact that they were produced laboriously by copying one manuscript from another. Unlike leaders of the Catholic Church who attempted to stop the dissemination of printed books, Rabbinic authorities were enthusiastic about printing and regarded it as *avodat ha-kodesh* [holy work]. The first printed Hebrew book appeared in 1470; it was a *Torah* commentary, that of Rashi, the eleventh-century French sage who explained obscure and difficult words while drawing on the vast reserve of *Midrash*. It took nearly an additional half century for the original printed text of the Hebrew Bible to appear. When it was first published in 1517, the Bible contained Rashi’s commentary alongside scripture. This, to me, represents tacit permission to future generations to perpetuate the interpretive act of biblical study.

Within two centuries, the Hebrew Bible would be published in languages other than Hebrew and with commentaries drawn from a world beyond the Jewish purview. In a letter dated July 29, 1779 [cited in Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study*], Moses Mendelssohn, the man known to historians as “the first modern Jew,” confessed that his own children of Berlin were ignorant of Hebrew and so he set out to translate the Bible into, what he called, “decorous and refined German as that spoken in our own time” [Mendelssohn’s words in introduction to the *Biur*]. In his translation, which appeared in 1780, Mendelssohn used Hebrew characters, producing, in effect, a Hebrew transliteration of German meant to familiarize non-Hebrew readers with the letters of the ancient alphabet. To the translation, Mendelssohn appended a commentary that came to be known as the *Biur* [i.e. explanation]. Besides relying on time-honored Jewish interpretations, particularly those of the 13th-century exegete Nahmanides, Mendelssohn, like his German counterparts, dedicated himself to the moral and intellectual improvement (known as *Bildung*) of his people. He based his desire for Jews to fashion a new cultural identity on the enlightened notion that “to instruct a nation is to civilize it” [Diderot to Catherine II, as cited by Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment* (1969), p. 512]. Mendelssohn recognized that Jewish biblical exegesis, from Rashi onward, had been pliant enough to encompass any number of new ideas, including those of his own time drawn from European philosophical discourse.

The *Torah: A Women’s Commentary* resembles Mendelssohn’s *Biur* in many respects. Beyond the simple facts that the *Biur* was a collaborative effort, involving four other scholars besides Mendelssohn and that it took more than a decade to evolve into its final form, its primary purpose, like *The Women’s Commentary*, is pedagogic in nature. It sought in its time to teach the timeless value of Hebrew scripture by making it accessible and relevant and thereby meaningful to a new generation. *A Women’s Commentary* – supremely collaborative in nature and crafted over the course of 14 years – is instructive to our generation. Its interpretations of biblical text derive from the lived experiences of women and men with women, who for over three decades now have been the beneficiaries of scholarship that asks hard questions about relations between the sexes, how society is constructed, and the value ascribed to segments of our communities.

In closing, I wish to draw on the work of Professor Fritz Bamberger, whose memory we honor this evening. In 1961 members of the Society of Jewish Bibliophiles gathered for their annual meeting at the Library of the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. At the meeting, a tiny jewel of a book – elegantly-bound in red with gold lettering – was distributed to each member of the society. Professor Bamberger was the compiler and English translator of this volume which contains a collection of sayings culled from Jewish writings extolling the virtues of the written word and taking its title *Books are the Best Things* from the verse of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In the introduction to this book, which was reprinted in 2003 and distributed as a gift to each member of the HUC-JIR faculty by President David Ellenson, Professor Bamberger wrote the following:

“The books of the Jews are much more than pleasant accessories of civilized living. They were a necessity built into the life of each Jew, prescribing...life’s goals – its conduct and its everyday routine. Reading was studying, never a sophisticated pastime...but a sacred duty...While in other cultures books might convey to the reader the distance...between life and literature, the books of the Jews verily were their life.”

I’d like to imagine Professor Bamberger’s delight in seeing *The Torah: A Women’s Commentary* takes its well-deserved place on the bookshelf of the Jews’ life, beside those that came before it and those that will most certainly follow.

**REFLECTIONS ON THE TORAH: A WOMEN’S COMMENTARY AND POST-BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION**

Dr. Alyssa M. Gray, Associate Professor of Codes and Responsa, HUC-JIR/NY

Someone studying the *The Torah: A Women’s Commentary* might wonder what the many essays on “Post-biblical Interpretations” are doing there. The running commentary, “Contemporary Reflection,” “Voices,” “Another View” – all these make sense in a 21st-century *Torah* commentary. But why should we be con-
cerned with what rabbis said in late antiquity and the Middle Ages? After suggesting two answers to my own question, I’ll turn to some reflections on the “Post-biblical Interpretations” themselves.

First, I want to point out that the content of the “Post-biblical Interpretations” essays is drawn overwhelmingly from Second Temple literature, the literature of Hazal, and the writings of post-Talmudic medieval scholars. (Hazal is a Hebrew acronym that stands for the phrase “habameitnu zikhronom l’vrakhah,” or “our Sages of blessed memory”). Hazal are the rabbis of the Talmud and the classical midrash compilations. The literature of Hazal, the great legal writings of the Middle Ages, medieval Bible commentary, and the mystical literature, are an indispensable part of our Jewish religious, cultural, and spiritual DNA. Hazal and the medieval scholars made us Jews what we are, and created the Judaism—Rabbinic Judaism—to which all contemporary Jews are heir. Without this rabbinic heritage, we wouldn’t have the seder, Hanukkah, the structure of the prayer-service, or numerous other aspects of what makes a Jewish life recognizable Jewish.

Moreover, Jews have read the Torah—indeed, the entire Bible—through the lens of rabbinic interpretation for well over 1,000 years. Late antique and medieval rabbinic interpretation made that sacred but often strange Near Eastern text speak to Jews living under pagan and Christian Rome, and in Babylonia, the medieval Christian and Muslim worlds, and eventually the New World. Second, Judith Baskin rightly pointed in her introductory essay (“Women and Post-biblical Commentary”) to the multivocality of rabbinic literature—that is, it includes (literally) many voices. Not only that, but this literature demonstrates to us that multivocality is ok—there may be a certain tension inherent in living with different and even conflicting viewpoints, but it can be done. Not only is it possible to live with the tensions presented by multivocality, but we should do so, since it is unreasonable to expect human minds to be forced to conform to any one point of view. It was likely for that reason that even the great medieval law codes became surrounded by commentary—Jewish scholars seemingly couldn’t bear the notion of not being allowed or expected to argue and present different views. Classical Jewish literature and the myriad viewpoints it presents—and the fact that it even does so—should be studied and appreciated by everyone.

Apropos of multivocality, it’s time to move on to the Commentary. In examining a selection of the “Post-biblical Interpretations” essays, I’ve been struck by a few things. First, the essays in the Commentary are neither apologetic about nor dismissive of rabbinic literature; they tell the truth. The essays do not censor the ancient and medieval rabbis in their more baldly patriarchal moments, nor do they accentuate the negative in order to condemn the rabbinic enterprise. We see here a third and better way for liberal Jewish women and men to read rabbinic literature: reading with openness to all that the literature has to say, wrestling with it if necessary, while all the while regarding it with deep respect and even love.

Second, these essays taken together constitute an early version of what I’ll call a “masekhet Nashim,” a tractate Women—not to be confused with the Seder Nashim of the Mishnah, Tosfia, and Talmud. The essays collect a vast amount of rabbinic material that presents many views about women. Adding this diversity to the diversity of the scholars who gathered this material and wrote the essays, we have at least three levels of dialogue: the rabbinic sources with themselves, the modern scholars and the sources, and the modern scholars amongst ourselves. These three levels of dialogue in the Commentary allow us to “connect the dots” of different texts and come up with new food for thought as well as new insight. The creation of a multi-layered conversation that invites readers to engage in the insight-producing work of intertextual exploration is, to my mind, one of the truly exciting aspects of the “Post-biblical Interpretations.”

First, let’s gather some food for thought. We learn in the “Post-biblical Interpretations” that the rabbis exempted women from the obligation to recite the Shema (Gray, 1083; Hauptman, 1109), as well as from the important mitzvah of Torah study (Hauptman, 1109). These exemptions are disappointing in that they cut women off from the principal Jewish occupation—Torah study—and the principal Jewish affirmation, acceptance of the “yoke of the kingdom of Heaven.” Yet we also learn that the rabbis were not unaware of women’s spiritual capacities. The biblical Hannah is the rabbinic model for how to pray (Gray, 1083); when we pursue this reference back into Berakhot 31a, we see that Ray Hamnuna said: “how many great laws are there to be learned from these verses about Hannah.”

Moreover, we learn in two other places in the “Post-biblical Interpretations” that the rabbis did at times place men and women on an even spiritual plane. The rabbis list two mitzvot applicable to men (tzitzit and sukkah) and two mitzvot applicable to women (hallah and Sabbath lights) together in referring to rewards for mitzvot performed in the city (Setzer, 1211). The rabbis also pointed out that on Yom Kippur, the High Priest would wear four garments symbolizing the four Matriarchs, in addition to offering three sacrifices representing the three Patriarchs (Labovitz, 694-695). Taking all this rabbinic material together, we see a tension: exemption of women from the Jewishly-defining mitzvot of Torah study and Shema, and yet an apparent unwillingness to make women’s spirituality secondary to men’s in all cases. This tension invites further reflection—not apologetics, but reflection based on our willingness to let ourselves see multiple points of view about women in the rabbinic corpus without succumbing to the temptations of either apologetics or dismissal.

Second, let’s derive some new insight. Looking at Judith Abrams’s discussion of famous Talmudic story at Bava Metzia 59b (761), we see that she tells us that Imma Shalom’s attention was diverted,” which had a disastrous consequence. Although it may seem to be of little consequence, let’s ask: What caused the diversion? When we go to Bava Metzia 59b itself, we see that one explanation offered for the diversion is that Imma Shalom went to give bread to a poor man at the door. Looking deeper, we see that giving bread to poor people at the door is how the Talmud Bavli most typically represents women as doing tzedqah. Moreover, the Talmud represents this sort of personal, in-kind tzedqah as superior to men’s monetary tzedqah because it is a poor person benefits immediately from food, but not from money, which is at least one step removed from food. Following this intriguing idea further, I find that Mrs. Mar Uqba makes that very point in explaining to her husband why he was burned in the course of a tzedqah venture gone awry while she was not (Ket. 67b), and Abba Hilqiah also makes this point in explaining why his wife was a more
For years, a primary goal of my teaching at HUC-JIR and other settings has been to show the ways in which modern Jewish and particularly modern Hebrew literary works can be read as an additional layer of interpretation of the Bible and our classical sources. In all my courses I insist that modern Jewish literature sources be considered part of our sacred, spiritual canon. More specifically, as a scholar of the beginnings of modern Hebrew women’s writing, I ask my students to consider what happens when after centuries of literary silence, women begin to write works of literature in Hebrew and address and enter into this canon. What new answers do they provide about the text and what new questions? How do they re-imagine the old stories and what kinds of counter-traditional interpretations do they offer?

You can imagine my delight, then, to see this approach to studying literature with and as Torah ‘canonized’ in the “Voices” section of the Torah: A Women’s Commentary. Here is a Bible, meant for synagogue, ritual use, that actually places women’s literary sources in a hard-bound, gold-lettered volume, along with exegesis by so many, wonderful women scholars. The range of contributors is truly breathtaking, including Yiddish, Israeli, German, British, American, Canadian women poets and writers, from the 18th, 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, poems by rabbis, poems by women rabbis, by eminent Hebrew women poets, among them the first women to write poetry in Hebrew, poems written explicitly in response to biblical materials as well as others that the editors, through creative juxtaposition, have brought into a meaningful conversation with the biblical text, by thinking to print them alongside a particular parasha.

The material is vast, and there is no way to survey all the kinds of interpretation that emerge from this writing. What I’d like to demonstrate for you today by way of two examples is how one might use the “Voices” section of the Commentary as a resource and an occasion not merely for quick reflection, but for deep Torah study. Specifically, I want to explore the “Voices” selections as feminist midrash, showing how they borrow the method of rabbinic midrash, building upon and responding to classical midrashim as well as creating or uncovering stories and ideas that found no canonical expression in the prior, written tradition.

The first example that I’d like to refer is Lynn Gottlieb’s poem, “Awakening,” which can be found on page 32 of the Commentary:

Shekhinah gazed upon the sleeping form of HeShe.
“I shall divide this being
So HeShe can find loving companionship
Like the other creatures in the garden.”
HeShe lay asleep in the grass
Curled up like a snake in the warm sun
Dreaming of angels.
Shekinah thought,
“Which part of the body
Shall I take to form the woman?
Perhaps from the mouth
So she can tell stories like Serach,
The woman who smells of time.
Perhaps the eyes
So she sees the inside truth of things
Like Soft Eyes Woman Leah.
Perhaps from the neck
So she walks with pride
Like the daughters of Zelophehad
Who are Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah.
Perhaps the ears
So she hears my laughter
Like See Far Woman Sarah.
Perhaps the heart
So she can tell stories like Serach,
Perhaps the arms
So she heals and restores with touch
Like the Hebrew midwife women.
Perhaps the legs
So she goes out seeking wisdom
Like Soft Hearted Woman Rachel.
Perhaps the eyes
Oh she sees the inside truth of things
Like Shulamit.
Then Shekina blessed every part of woman’s body, saying,
“Be pure of heart
and always know you are created in My image.”
Then she awoke, first woman.

Lynn Gottlieb, a pioneering woman rabbi, is known for her book on the Shekinah, She Who Dwells Within, which attempts to bring a sense of the female presence of God into people’s lives. Fittingly then, her poetic re-imagining of the Creation of woman refers to God as Shekinah. The source references that preface as well as follow the
poem in the form of footnotes, immediately alert us that this poem is in dialogue with diverse biblical sources. What is not immediately evident is that the entire poem is a poetic rejoinder to a rabbinic *midrash* on the creation of Eve, found in Genesis Rabbah 28:2 and quoted in the name of R. Joshua of Sikhnin. The *midrash* ostensibly aims to answer why is it that in describing the creation of woman, the bible uses the verb “*va-yiven*” and he built the rib into woman. Why not “*va-yisar*,” he made, or “*va-yiser*,” he formed, as in the case of Adam? Rabbi Joshua answers with a wordplay, that va-yiven is used since it approximates another verb “*vayitonen*,” suggesting that as he built woman, he considered well which part from Adam to use so as to avoid negative results.

“I will not create her from Adam’s head, lest she be swell-headed; nor from the eye lest she be a coquette, nor from the ear, lest she be an eavesdropper, nor from the mouth, lest she be a gossip, nor from the hand, lest she be light-fingered, nor from the foot, lest she be a gadabout, but from a modest part of man, for even when he stands naked that part is covered. And as he created each limb, he ordered her, ‘be a modest woman.’”

But then what happens? Things do not come out as God expects. Referring to various biblical verses in Isaiah, and Genesis that describes feminine vice, R. Joshua notes that despite God’s plans and directives, woman turned out to be all that God had attempted to avoid: she is swell-headed, as seen in the description of the Israelite women in Isaiah 3, given to eavesdropping as in the example of Sarah in the tent who eavesdrops of Abraham and the angels, jealous and prone to thiev- ery, as in the case of Rachel, who envies her sister’s fecundity and steals her father’s teraphim; gadabouts as seen in the story of Dinah who goes out to see the Canaanite women, etc. This *midrash* on the creation of Eve thus becomes a lament on what might call the “six deadly sins” of womankind.

What Gottlieb does is take Rabbi Joshua’s question, his answer, as well as the narrative template of this *midrash*, and turn it all on its head. Instead of searching the Bible for verses that prove feminine vice, Gottlieb mines the text for stories that bring honor to women. Instead of worrying about which of Adam’s body parts not to use, the poem enumerates an excess of good choices, all of which will yield a wonderful human result. And instead of imagining God as a kind of hapless, *schlemiel* Creator, who cannot get woman to turn out according to his ‘Modest Woman Plan,’ Gottlieb imagines an effectual Shekhinah, with an affirmative creative agenda, who blesses each part of woman’s body as created in Her own image.

This is an example of modern *midrashic* poetry that borrows the method and format of a prior rabbinic *midrash* in order to convey a counter-traditional, feminist message. Gottlieb’s poem pays tribute to the literature of *Hazal*, as “an indispensable part of our Jewish religious, cultural, and spiritual DNA,” as Alyssa Gray put it in her remarks, but also argues that more and in some cases, completely different things need to be said, not just about man, woman but also about God. And that this too is *Torah*.

The other kind of feminist strategy that I would like briefly to point out to you this evening is exemplified on page 471 of the *Commentary* in the poem “Before” by Yokheved Bat-Miriam (1901-1980), one of the first modern Hebrew woman poets.

Before, in this way, in bygone days,
Women, like me, in silence
Would bear supplications, hidden flames,
With a throbbing spirit.

They would – and in splintering wails
Would prostrate themselves over ancestors’ graves.
And raise candles for the souls of the dead
With trembling hearts.

They would – for the holy arks
They would volunteer precious curtains.
On silk and velvet, in silver thread
Were interwoven secret hopes.

Many and varied were the women
Unfortunate, beaten, desolate.
Only one, only one nowadays is
Close to my yearning heart:

Hannah who went up for the festival
Year after year to the tabernacle,
To pray, to speak her heart,
Her prayer without sound and without tear.

Different from her am I
And different also is my expression
But like her longing among the shadows
I will stand and speak my heart.

This poem exemplifies the ways in which feminist *midrash* can function as feminist history – or *herstory*, as it is often called. If so much of the Bible offers male-centered stories and genealogies and only clipped, fragmented bits about women, Bat-Miriam attempts to conjure up a lost history of Jewish women’s spirituality and synagogue ritual art, which finds no representation in prior sources, and thus, to create a creative lineage to which she can attach herself as a modern Hebrew poet, even if her artistic idiom differs greatly from that of her predecessors. The idea of contribution, collaboration, shared spiritual efforts spanning generation and place is so powerful in this poem, and indeed in this *Commentary*. They, like we, have made offerings not just for art’s sake, but for the sake of our synagogues, to sustain Jewish life. Like the women who made candles, embroidered curtains, prostrated themselves at gravesites, this commentary, in a sense, is a set of women’s ritual contributions, albeit in a new scholarly, literary, and exegetical form.

The one named predecessor in this poem, the biblical Hannah, is remembered, for her invention of the *silent prayer*. If women’s prior, non-verbal artistic, spiritual, and literary contributions were formerly shrouded in historical silence – Hannah was misunderstood by the priest Eli; similarly, Bat-Miriam stands alone at the end of this poem, it seems, in her effort to “to speak her heart” – the publication of this *Commentary*, which includes so many diverse scholarly, literary, and interpretive women’s “Voices,” marks, once and for all, in a canonical sense, the end of this silence. How privileged we all are to stand together to mark this occasion, “speaking our hearts” together in dedication to the *Torah* and its ever-evolving traditions.
The Fate of Forced Converts

The ideal of Kiddush ha-Shem – accepting death or killing oneself to preserve God’s honor – was widely embraced as an ideal in medieval Europe, but many Jews nonetheless opted to save their lives and those of their families by accepting conversion to Christianity, and their status posed a difficult legal and social problem: Does a Jew have a greater obligation to preserve his or her own life (with the intent to return to Judaism when it is safe to do so) or to die for the sanctification of God’s name? How does coercion affect the status of the person who chooses to convert to save his or her life? And what of forced converts who want to return to Judaism when they are able? Should they be accepted back into the community after having left it for another religion?

Forced converts, though adopting another religion, did not necessarily abandon Judaism in their hearts, and they sustained the family ties and friendships that bound them to the Jewish community. For such reasons, many Jews sought to return to Judaism when it was safe to do so. They were not always welcome, however. As the First Crusade demonstrated, many Jews believed that they had an obligation to sacrifice their lives rather than to betray God. Those who did were treated as heroes, while conversely, those who opted to convert were often deeply resented by fellow Jews.

Seeking to resolve these issues, some medieval authorities tried to strike a balance, acknowledging the ideal of martyrdom while trying to allow room for those choosing conversion over death. Such was the case with Maimonides, for example, who may have briefly converted to Islam under duress. Around 1165, he wrote a letter in which he tried to ease the burden of the Jew who chose to convert under fear of death rather than to die for his faith: “True, it is incumbent upon him to surrender to death, but if he does not, he is not guilty.” In fact, he should choose to live, he maintained – to “leave these places (where he was persecuted for his religion) and go to where he can practice religion and fulfill the Law without compulsion or fear.” Living under Christian rule, Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg (1215-1293) echoed Maimonides’ view. Meir took the position that “although a Jew is required to choose death rather than be forced to worship idols [in this case, to become a Christian], should he violate this law, he would not become disqualified as a witness, though he would be guilty of having committed a sin.” In other words, even if forced to submit to baptism, the Jew’s core character and faithfulness are not to be doubted by his community, as long as he repents for the sin of idol worship. And Meir goes on to take an even more lenient position for those who clearly converted unwillingly, excusing their action by writing that because “they never actually embraced Christianity, but merely listened without comment to the priest’s recitation… [so they] never committed a sin.” In his mind, it was legitimate to fake conversion to survive: “A Jew is not required to choose death rather than allow the Christians to deceive themselves into believing that they have converted him.” Jews who disguise their Judaism under the guise of conversion have come to be known as crypto-Jews.

Such views created an alternative to Kiddush ha-Shem by allowing for the possibility of a tactical or feigned conversion if that was the only way to preserve one’s life. They also justified the reintegration of such Jews when they sought to return to the community. On the other hand, when Christians came to recognize the possible insincerity of Jewish conversion, that intensified their suspicions of both Jewish converts and Jews themselves.
After five years of collecting and sifting through materials from publications and archives across the world, Carole Balin and Wendy Zierler have co-edited this anthology of Hebrew writings by the largely-forgotten early-20th century fiction writer, journalist, feminist, and cultural critic Hava Shapiro. Born in Slavuta [Ukraine] in 1878, Shapiro died in Prague in 1943 during the Holocaust. Although a lifelong Zionist, she never immigrated to Palestine, but persisted nonetheless in writing and publishing Hebrew prose in the Diaspora. Besides writing in the ancient language, Shapiro was unconventional in many respects: at the age of 25, she left her husband and son to pursue higher studies and eventually earned a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Berne. Her life story reflects the sacrifices that a woman of her time needed to make in order to pursue a life of the mind and the pen. Shapiro was the first woman to publish fiction in Hebrew; her collection of stories entitled Kovetz Tsiyurim appeared in 1909, eleven years before Nehama Puchacewsky’s Bi’Yhudah hehadashah (1921) and eighteen years before Dvora Baron’s Sippurim (1927). She was one of the first Hebrew feminist literary critics, composing several path-breaking essays on images of women in Hebrew literature and on women’s reading — all of this, several decades before the emergence of feminist literary criticism in England, France, and the United States. From her vantage point in war-torn Ukraine and as a refugee in Czechoslovakia, she reported on Jewish culture and the arts, interpreted European literature for Hebrew readers, and also reported from various Zionist Congresses and gatherings across Europe. From 1899 to 1943, she kept a diary in Hebrew, which was the first known Hebrew diary written by a woman. She also wrote close to 200 Hebrew letters to Reuven Brainin, the famed Hebrew/Yiddish writer and editor, with whom she had a 20-year-long romance. Though Brainin never left his wife for her, Hava clearly never left his heart or mind, for Brainin deposited all of these letters in the Brainin archives of the Montreal Jewish Public Library, which he founded. Shapiro’s letters to Brainin constitute the first extended Hebrew correspondence between a literary man and woman. Balin and Zierler’s edited collection includes selections from all of Shapiro’s writing — fiction, essays, feminist criticism, excerpts from the diary and letters — as well as an extensive bibliography of Shapiro’s writings and a critical afterword, which they co-authored.

Preface to Kovetz Tsiyurim [A Collection of Sketches] Warsaw, 1909:

In 1909, Shapiro published Kovetz Tsiyurim, her first and only collection of stories, under the pseudonym eim kol hai [“mother of all life,” a pun on her given name Hava/Eve]. Prominently dedicated to her mother Menuah, the volume contains portrayals of women, both those Shapiro admired who broke from traditional molds and those she disdained who conformed to convention. Shapiro prefaced the sketches with an important feminist literary manifesto — the first of its kind in Hebrew literature — on the need to add women’s voices to Hebrew literature. Riffing on the famous opening line of the Hebrew poet Y.L. Gordon’s “Kotzo shel yud,” [which asks: “Hebrew woman, who knows your life?”], Shapiro responds that women ought to take up the pen and depict their own experiences.

“Our literature lacks the participation of the second half of humanity: that of the weaker sex.

In my entering now into this unfamiliar sphere, my strongest hope is that many others of my sex will be inspired to walk in my footsteps. So long as they [other women] do not take part, our literature will be impoverished and lacking a certain aspect. Time and again, when we [feminine plural] are amazed and awed by the talents of a ‘wonder worker,’ one who ‘penetrates the woman’s heart,’ we feel at the same time as though a strange hand has touched us. We have our own world, our own pains and longings, and we should, at the very least, take part in describing them.

I know myself that I have not yet fulfilled the requirements that I myself have set before the male or female artist. This collection of sketches is only an attempt, only the beginning of the revelation of...
the female spirit, which has been forced to abandon the treatment of “its sorrows, joys, hopes, and wishes” to others.

I know and recognize also the impediments and obstacles that have been placed [before women] both intentionally and unintentionally on the path of literature, in general; and I am aware of the weakness and relative smallness of our literature, in particular. Nevertheless, all of the guiles of the niggardly will not deplete my strength nor distance me from my position.

Artistic perfection is my aspiration and my ultimate goal. Now, in publishing this Collection of Sketches I am filled with confidence that it will be received as a bold attempt to tread on new ground.

No Place of Rest: Jewish Literature, Expulsion, and the Memory of Medieval France

Susan L. Einbinder, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009

When King Philip VI expelled the Jews in 1306, some 100,000 men, women, and children were driven from royal France into the neighboring lands of Spain, Provence, Italy, and North Africa. The great expulsion of 1306 was arguably one of the most traumatic moments of medieval Jewish history and would prove to be the harbinger of a series of recalls and expulsions, local and general, culminating in King Charles VI’s expulsion decree of 1394. Despite the upheavals of the fourteenth century, the literary productivity of Jews was astonishing. Yet there are few direct references to the catastrophic events of 1306, even in Jewish liturgical and historical texts, where one would expect to find them. In this book, Susan Einbinder coaxes out the literary traces of this traumatic expulsion. Why did the memory of this proud and vibrant Jewish community fade from historical memory? Where do its remnants reside among later communities and readers? From the lyrics of the supposed “Jewish troubadour” Isaac HaGorni to medical texts and astronomical charts, Einbinder studies a range of writings she reveals to be commemorative. Her careful readings uncover the ways in which medieval Jews asserted their identity in exile and, perhaps more important, helped to preserve or efface their history.

“In order to remember what we lost of them through their sin, let every one pay heed.”
Cincinnati HUC MS 2000, fol. 87v

In the rare book and manuscript collection of the HUC-JIR Library in Cincinnati, a small liturgical codex tells a story of wandering. It is a variation on the story told by all the manuscripts I have cited in this book. Most of HUC MS 2000 is written in a Provençal hand that has been dated to the fourteenth century, but a later writer has come along to fill in missing sections in a French-style script. The liturgy is replete with pīyyutim, many of them favorites of Provençal Jews and a number, presumably local, unknown. Although the codex itself was lovingly produced and illuminated, the opening Haggadah contains a blistering curse that suggested, according to one paleographer, “a period of severe persecution.” From this end of history, we know how that period ended. Between then and now, this small codex journeyed. By the seventeenth century at the latest, HUC MS 2000 was in Islamic lands, perhaps far to the east; additional prayers with eastern vocalization and an owner’s entry in Arabic conclude the volume. From its birthplace, the title page preceding the Haggadah still proclaims that it follows the rite of R. Amram and “the French gaonim.”

HUC MS 2000 is only one illustration of a neglected source on the medieval Jews of France and Provence. Another, Vat. Heb. MS 553, is found among the vast collection of Hebrew manuscripts in the Vatican library; this manuscript consists of two Provençal fast-day liturgies joined together to form a whole. The first section has been bound haphazardly so that some of the folios are upside down and out of order. The scribe, Simon b. Samuel, inserted his colophon on what is now folio 87v, indicating that he copied and finished his work in the imperial principality of Orange in 1389. That was two years before anti-Jewish violence would sweep across Aragon, killing thousands of Jews and leading to the conversion of thousands of others, and five years before the final expulsion from France…

These are just two examples of forgotten clues to the life and literature of medieval Jews who traced their origins to France, and continued to cling to some notion of Frenchness – first in Provence and the Comtat Venaissin, and later in places like Orange, Italy, Spain, North Africa, and farther east…. Cincinnati’s Klaun
T wentyyearslater, Crescas Caslari refractioned his 
historical judgme nts through the prism of 
spiritual disorder and alienation from God. 
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forms of liturgical verse. Yedaiah Beder in 
ways of “remembe ring” from the conventional 
encountered in the Midi preferred different 
autobiographical reminiscences among secular 
issestes and papal depo sitions….

The survivors of the great expulsion from France in 1306… did not often surface in the 
same communities in numbers that would support the use of traditional commemor ative 
laments… even where they did cluster in some strength, fragmentary communities of exiles 
were rapidly struck by new disasters and dislocations, ranging from famine, violence, and 
plague to new expulsions. If at the end of the century what remained of earlier com 
memoratives tended to the generic, this is really 
no surprise.

Whether the direct victims of expulsion and terror wanted to record their experience in 
writing – or whether they found the stability and leisure to do so – is a factor to consider 
as well. It is not accident, I think, that two of the extant prose accounts of the 1306 
expulsion were written by physicians; whatever their personal misfortunes, this group pos 
sessed unique skills and connections to start life anew and to regain status, renown, and ease 
they had formerly known at home. From this vantage, writing comes considerably easier, and 
past tears can be integrated into a longer nar 
ative of misfortune nobly suffered until patience and virtue find their merited reward. Two notable examples, Qalonymos b. Qalony 
mos and Estori HaParhim both included autobiographical reminiscences among secular 
 writings dedicated to other themes entirely.

In general, the intellectual French exiles 
encountered in the Midi preferred different 
ways of “remembering” from the conventional 
forms of liturgical verse. Yedaiah Beder in 
Perpignan, a physician, philosopher, and wit 
tness to the 1306 expulsion, chose to embed the 
traces of this event in an allegorical treatme nt of spiritual disorder and alienation from God. 
Twenty years later, Crescas Caslari refracted his 
historical judgments through the prism of 

library alone contains approximately forty 
Provençal liturgies ranging from the fifteenth 
to the eighteenth century, and each one trans 
mits a history, not always originating in 
northern France but eventually tumbled together with French Jewish history and trave 
eling with it through the centuries….

In sum , I have tried to convey in these 
pages that there is a way to read a series of 
forgotten texts and detect within them the 
echoes of expulsion’s trauma. I hope also to have 
raised some questions about why these echoes 
were eventually silenced, to ask who is respon 
sible for forgetting, how historical amnesia 
happens, and how we smooth over the gaps to 
restore a sense of a continuous past….

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Arab musical practices, including the extra-musical associations of maqamat [Arabic musical scales] that determine which of the eleven modes is to be used. Kligman contextualizes the music and liturgy of Syrian Jewish worship within the disciplines of ethnomusicology, Judaic and cultural studies, and anthropology. A CD of liturgical chanting is also included with this volume.

I also attended and participated in cantorial classes that trained young men, ages twenty through forty, in pizmon melodies and their application to the liturgy. These classes were taught by Hazzan Isaac Cabasso from November 1991 through March 1992. The discussions in the class allowed me to witness how the Syrian liturgical tradition is acquired, transmitted, and maintained. Additionally, I made use of liturgical recordings available at the Sephardic Archives of the Sephardic Center in Brooklyn. The initial phase of this research culminated in my doctoral dissertation.

Since then I have continued working with members of the community, including service as a research consultant for a video taping of the community for the Milken Family Foundation on October 6, 1999 (a weekday evening where recording was permissible). The Sabbath morning service and Rosh Hashanah prayers were also recorded, and material from these tapes is included in this study.

To more fully understand the complexity of the Syrian Sabbath service I chose to attend weekly Sabbath morning services for a full liturgical Jewish year. I participated in Sabbath services at Congregation Beth Torah, as well as other holidays and occasionally weekday services… [and] attended services at many of the other Syrian synagogues.

Walter Paul Zenner’s comment that “the most Arab of cultural forms for Syrian Jews in Brooklyn is paradoxically one of the most Jewish” refers to the Arab nature of their Jewish prayer. Thus, Syrians perform Jewish ritual with Arab melodies and aesthetics effectively blurring boundaries of “Jewish” and “Arab.” Despite Middle Eastern political tensions between Jews and Arabs, Syrians re-create or enact their identity as Jews. In other domains of Syrian life, such as food and literature, they also display a Judeo-Arab synthesis; ritual shows the most intensely rooted cultural aesthetics. Religious expression, therefore, is at times porous, absorbing many influences. Syrian Jewish religious expression fuses identity, ethnicity, and heritage.

I first attended a Syrian Sabbath service in the spring of 1990 and was immediately struck by the enthusiasm of the members of the congregation during the service, as well as the manner in which the music was an intrinsic part of worship. As I discovered how Syrians pray, I learned about individuals and their love of Jewish life, in addition to their knowledge of music and religion. This also allowed me the opportunity to reflect on my own Ashkenazi religious tradition.

This study is based primarily on ethnographic materials gathered through participant observation at Sabbath services, interviews with cantors and other members of the community, and private ud lessons. Beginning in August 1991, I studied the liturgical tradition with respected lay cantors. I conducted multiple interviews with Cantors Moses Tawil, David Tawil, and Isaac Cabasso. Our meetings focused on the cantor’s responsibilities for Sabbath morning prayers, and Moses Tawil taught through example. He sang portions of the liturgy; I subsequently tried to replicate what he taught me. I recorded each session, and portions of the transcript of our interactions appear in the text of this study. David Tawil recommended that I study the ud, stating that learning the ud was essential to acquire an understanding of the maqamat [Arabic model system]. Additionally, he recommended a specific teacher, Hakki Obadia, who has ongoing contact with the Syrian community.

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philosophy. The volume concludes with a section devoted to Philo’s influence and significance.

Philo of Alexandria (ca. 15 BCE – 45 CE) stands at the crossroads of three great civilizations of antiquity: the Judaic, the Greek, and the Christian. Philo’s primary heritage was that of biblical Judaism, but in the form it had taken on in the Diaspora of the Hellenistic world. His chief literary medium was biblical exegesis, but he sought to interpret the Scriptures by reference to the most advanced and sophisticated systems of thought of the times, which were those of Greek philosophy. In theology and what was called ‘physics,’ the system of primary importance for Philo was that of Platonism, and in ethics that of Stoicism. However, Philo’s attempt to assimilate biblical and Greek thought often finds closer parallels in the Christian world than in a Jewish or a pagan environment. Indeed, Philo came to be appreciated more by the later Christian Fathers than by the Rabbis or the Greek philosophers of the Roman imperial age. In view of his background and influence, the writings of Philo are of fundamental importance for the understanding of Judaism, for the history of Greek philosophy, and for the study of early Christianity.

Within the context of the history of Greek literature as well, Philo appears to have lived across the span of the eras in more than simply a chronological sense. For in his writings he assumes many guises and, in a manner of speaking, emerges as a representative of different epochs. At times he is a man of science or a practitioner of the technical disciplines such as grammar and advanced literary study as they had developed in Hellenistic times. At other times, his moralizing diatribes and rhetorical displays have much in common with the popular philosophical literature of the early imperial age. And finally, his Platonic religiosity and focus on the quest for the transcendent would appear to preclude certain forms of spirituality that we encounter in later antiquity, in the Hermetic literature, in the Chaldean Oracles, and in Gnosticism. Of course, Philo’s erudition was vast and he drew on an extraordinary array of sources. He knew not only secular Greek literature, but also owed much to a previous tradition of biblical exegesis, no doubt that of Greek-speaking Judaism, which he characterizes only in the most general of terms, without naming names. In fact, Philo’s dependence on earlier authorities was such that some would study him, as A.D. Nock has put it, ‘primarily as a source rather than as a man’ (Essays on Religion and the Ancient World [1972], II, p. 559). Nevertheless, this circumstance alone cannot account for the great variety in the Philonic corpus. It must also be put down to the breadth of Philo’s interests and horizons and to his versatility as a writer. His works represent a most interesting specimen of Greek literature.

Philo’s bicultural heritage in Judaism and Hellenism, however, and even his proximity to Christian thought can make him a perplexing author to read. And the sheer bulk and variety of the Philonic corpus make it a difficult sea to navigate. Thus, the role for an up-to-date handbook of this sort. Of course, a handbook of moderate size cannot address all the aspects of Philo’s works, nor can it be a substitute for reading those works directly, which, it may be acknowledged, is not always an easy or pleasant experience. But this Companion endeavors to supply them essential introductory information in a clear and unassuming format that can turn that experience into less of a struggle. While it is introductory, the Companion goes beyond the elementary level. The chapters are intended to provide not only a sense of recent progress in the scholarship on Philo, but also a certain vision of the topics under consideration.

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The wilderness suggests a vista of wide open territory, free from unwelcome reminders of past lives and sorrows – a territory wonderfully situated for a newly forming, newly hopeful people. Recently liberated from oppression, in the wilderness Israel could shape itself into God’s people, in the image offered by Moses and Aaron. They are close – very close – to accepting that vision, becoming that people. Overflowing with gifts for the tabernacle, contentedly following the pillars of fire and of smoke, listening to the sons of Aaron blow the trumpets. Suddenly, memories of their former lives, tastes and smells of Egyptian delicacies, haunt and overcome them. Cries and longings lead to rebellion and death. The rest of Numbers suggests that the visionary promise of its opening can only come into being by forcing an entire generation to watch the destruction of its elders, slowly but relentlessly over forty years. To give birth to new possibilities, Israel must reject its past. But such a rejection is exceedingly difficult, even after disappointment replaces desire. In the cries of Reuben and Gad Moses hears the futility of using the past at all. But they reassure him. They have in fact learned the lessons of their parents. So too do the editors hear memories and longings that worry them. They too face the futility of relying on the past. Yet they reach the same conclusion as Moses. They accept the necessary and inevitable use of memory in fulfilling their most pressing agenda – shaping the story of the past in such a way as to lead the present audience forward into its future.

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Chernick not only analyzes and illustrates these hermeneutical methods in great detail. He highlights the significant changes that occurred in rabbinic legal hermeneutics from the tannatic through post-amorac strain of rabbinic literature — some 500 years at least — as well as the persistence and continuity of rabbinic hermeneutical interests as evidenced through such changes.

Of particular significance is Chernick’s connecting of those changes in hermeneutical practice to changing rabbinic views about the level of the revelatory status of non-Pentateuchal parts of the Hebrew Bible and of rabbinic legal discourse as they developed during the formative rabbinic period. Indeed, Chernick’s study draws its title from the Torah’s portrayal of the Sinaitic revelation, when God spoke to the assembled people with “a great voice that did not cease” (Deut 5:19). This view, Chernick believes, is at the core of rabbinic Judaism — the Judaism that claims to hear that “great voice” through the medium of interpretation, a notion imaginatively illustrated on the dust jacket in the painting “Harim” by artist Miriam Stern.

The Pentateuch’s description of the Sinaitic revelation speaks of how God communicated with the Israelite community. As Deuteronomy 5:19 portrays the event, God spoke to the assembled people with “kol gadol ve-lo yasaf.” This phrase does not yield easily to translation. Recent attempts have suggested that it means that God revealed “those words — those and no more...with a mighty voice.” The “words,” of course, refer to the famous “Ten Pronouncements,” better known as the Ten Commandments. Traditional Jewish targumim (Aramaic translations) and commentaries did not accept this translation or understanding of the verse. The standard targum, traditionally called Targum Onqelos, translates the phrase as kal rav vela pesak, “a great voice that did not cease,” and the so-called Targum Yonatan translates it the same way. Rashi, the famous eleventh-century Bible and Talmud commentator, follows the targumim, though he adds a comment and provides an alternative thought. His comment is revealing. He writes, “And we translate ‘and it did not cease’ for God’s Voice was strong and it exists forever…”

This study proceeds from the views expressed by the targumim and in the first part of Rashi’s comment. As I understand those views, they propose that the Sinaitic revelation was produced by a voice that spoke at that moment and did not cease to speak to the Jewish people throughout history. This view, I believe, is at the core of rabbinic Judaism, the Judaism that interpreted and claimed to hear that voice through the medium of interpretation. This study will take us even further than that claim. It seems that at certain points in time the canon that starts with the Pentateuch seems to grow and extend, or to put it in a formulation attributed to R. Elazar b. Azariah, “The words of the Torah are fruitful and multiply.” Our study proposes that each extension views the next canonical text as part of the divine revelation, as part of the “great voice did not cease.”

In order to trace the development of the ideas stated above, this work focuses on sev-
eral examples of rabbinic hermeneutics, which in this study are methodologies of interpretation applied by the Rabbis to the texts they regarded as scriptural. In rabbinic praxis, hermeneutics and midrash go hand in hand. The first generally produces the second. Midrash is by definition a form of interpretation of Scripture that goes beyond the text’s most obvious meaning. Indeed, the Hebrew root of the word (d-r-S) means “to seek, to search,” and clearly one need not search for that which is obvious and immediately accessible. This study, then, is on one level a standard academic rabbinic exploration of six interpretational methods: “even though there is no proof for this matter, there is a proofext for it” (af’al pi she-en r’aiyeh la-davar, zekher la-davar), “the resolution of two contradictory verses” (shenei ketuwim ba-makhshim zeh et zeh), “transferral of the rules of one pentateuchal rubric to another” (im ‘eino ‘inyan), “two verses that teach a single principle” (shenei ketuwim ‘ein melamedim), “two restrictions” (terei mi’utei), and “these scriptural passages are necessary” (tsirikh).

Consistent with that type of study, we analyze developments in the form, logic, and results of the interpretational methods under analysis. If there is chronological development, we chart it and try to account for it. Though this aspect of the study is mainly directed toward those in the field of historical-critical rabbinics, I have tried to make it accessible to those who are interested in the history of biblical interpretation, the development of rabbinic Judaism, or early rabbinic Jewish theology, all of which are also among the major concerns of this study.

In analyzing these midrashic methods, this work attempts to chart the interface between the rabbinic view of revelation and rabbinic midrash. I posit that because the tannaim connected the issue of revelation and canonicity primarily to the text of the Pentateuch, that text was almost the exclusive source for their halakhic midrash. Similarly, I hold that because the early amoraim extended equal canonical authority to the entire TaNaKH, they applied halakhic midrash to the entire scriptural canon. Finally, because the late amoraim and Babylonian Talmud’s redactors viewed rabbinic corpora as divine revelation, they applied midrashic methods mishnayot and baraitot as well. Since, however, their tannaitic and amoraic forbears’ legacy was for them equivalent to Sinaitic Torah, their interpretations no longer extended the borders of halakhah but only maintained them.

As Martin Jaffee has proposed, the idea of Oral Torah was hardly existent in the tannaitic period, but it grew into a more defined ideology because of the requirement in amoraic rabbinic circles that a student study under a teacher in order to become a recognized Torah scholar. I would now add to this view that by the end of the period of the formation of the Babylonian Talmud, Oral Torah came to mean the entire legacy of those Rabbis whose views tradition had preserved. This rabbinic legacy, along with Scripture, was deemed to have been revealed by God and therefore to be canonical and, ironically enough given the later rabbinic emphasis on Oral Torah, “scriptural.”

To understand the constantly changing nature of families, just flip through a photo album. Begin by opening the album to a wedding picture. Captured on the page is a newly married couple, surrounded by parents and siblings. Before the wedding, the parents of the couple, together with their respective children, constituted two separate families. Now, these family units have been altered; each, according to our understanding, has gained a member. Moreover, the two original families’ relationship to each other has been transformed; once unrelated, they are now each other’s “in-laws.”

If we turn the pages forward to the couple’s twentieth anniversary, we will see more changes. The couple now has children. Brothers and sisters have married and may also have children. Grandparents, aunts, and uncles who were present at the wedding have died. Young relatives of the couple have grown up.

It is not uncommon today to hear people lament changes in the family. Families, they claim, are not as close as they used to be. Families are also seen as increasingly unstable, owing to rising rates of divorce and remarriage. In addition, definitions of family are being challenged by an increase in same-sex couples, blended families, open adoption, and couples living together for extended periods of time without marrying. But as our photo album demonstrates, the family is by its very nature a constantly changing entity. Individual families change, swelled by marriage,
birth, and adoption, and made smaller by divorce and death. A society's definition of family can also change, reflecting patterns of settlement, understanding of marriage, and other factors.

This book explores how the sages who wrote the foundation documents of rabbinic Judaism understood kinship and family. I will argue that while rabbinic literature constructs kinship broadly, asserting that family ties may be created through both blood and marriage, through both father and mother, the primary family unit discussed in rabbinic literature is the nuclear family, comprising a husband and wife and their children. This family is defined by the obligations the individuals in it have to each other, in particular the obligations between husband and wife, and between father and children. This focus on the nuclear family prioritizes an adult man and woman’s obligations to their “new” family, the family created by their marriage, over those to their families of origin. Those earlier bonds are not dissolved — a woman remains part of her family of origin (she may inherit from her parents and other relatives, she is required to mourn for her parents and siblings, she is still obligated to honor her parents), as does a man. In fact, the bonds are extended; each spouse becomes “kin” to his or her in-laws, assuming obligations with regard to mourning, incest prohibitions, and testimony. However, the focus of family law is the nuclear family, and it is the obligations of the husband and wife to each other that take center stage in shaping their relationship with other family members.

Furthermore, this focus on the nuclear family over the extended family or clan is accompanied by an emphasis on the self over their relationship with other family members. The decisions an individual makes about taking on family obligations, specifically obligations to spouse and children, are seen in rabbinic literature as personal decisions rather than decisions made by or for the sake of the extended family. The early rabbis regard marriage and procreation as religious obligations, and these obligations fall on every individual (or, more precisely, on every male Jew). While rabbinic law does assign individuals specific rights and responsibilities in connection to relatives beyond the nuclear family, the individual remains the focus of religious law. When individuals are considered members of a group, that group is more likely to reflect marital status, physical disabilities, or priestly status (to name a few) than kinship ties. Individuals are labeled divorcees, priests, or deaf-mutes rather than members of a kindred. An individual man or woman may be part of many groups from the perspective of the law, but he or she will not necessarily have obligations to other members of that group.

This work uses as its primary lens rabbinic discussions of levirate, an institution that involves the union of a man and the widow of his childless brother. Under normal circumstances, a marriage marks the beginning of a new family unit and/or the expansion or blending of existing families. Levirate, on the other hand, comes into play when a family experiences the loss of a member. As such, it offers an opportunity to study the family at a moment of breakdown and restructuring. And, I will argue, it allows us to consider one response to the collapse of a family, namely, an attempt to mend that which has been broken, reconstituting one part of a family by rearranging its members and realigning their relationship to each other. However, as we shall see, the rabbis’ unique construct of levirate results in that institution’s creating an entirely new family rather than reforming the one broken by the husband’s death. This rabbinic understanding of levirate supports my claim that the central family unit in rabbinic Judaism is the nuclear family and that an individual man or woman’s primary obligations are to an existing spouse rather than to the extended family, as represented here by a deceased spouse or sibling.
Choosing is something we do every day, from our choice of what to wear in the morning to our decision at the end of the day to turn out the light rather than read that next chapter. Choosing is an ordinary act. We choose which seat we prefer on the bus, which route to take to work, which pen to use to write this paragraph. To choose is to select something freely and after consideration. When a person chooses, that person shows a preference for one thing over something else.

Choosing is also limiting. It is an act of identifying, of distinguishing, of separating. Although it is possible to choose “a few” rather than one, it is understood generally as singling out. The act of choosing immediately establishes a hierarchy. What is chosen is somehow different than the others. Usually, that difference represents a higher location on the ladder. It can also mean choosing a loser, of course, but that would be unintentional; when you make a choice, you hope you are choosing a winner. Being chosen, therefore, would appear to be a special and positive status that places the chosen over and above the non-chosen.

If being chosen is generally a good thing, consider being chosen by God. Jews, Christians, and Muslims—all three families of monotheistic religions—claim in one way or another to be God’s chosen community. Christian theologians have sometimes referred to God’s choosing for special favor as “election.” Whether called chosenness or election, the special nature of that divinely authorized status—it’s presumed superiority—has been glorified by religious civilizations when in positions of imperial power, and it has sustained religious communities suffering persecution. It has also made believers uncomfortable at times, especially in places where democracy, equality, and freedom are considered defining categories.

In his 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, Noah Webster used biblical language to support most of his definitions. For his definition of choose, he includes, “To elect for eternal happiness; to predestinate to life.” He cites Matthew 22:14, “Many are called but few chosen,” and Mark 13:20, “For his elect’s sake, whom he hath chosen.” This is a big jump from choosing between your beige or navy slacks...

Those of us who live deeply within one of the three families of monotheism tend to accept the assumption of chosenness that is articulated within it at one level or another. It is good to believe that we live according to the will of God, and there is certainly nothing wrong about believing that we will receive divine reward for our religious activities or beliefs. For many of us, these beliefs represent deep and abiding aspects of who we are and what our purpose in life is. If we lived entirely within our religious communities and with no interaction with people of other faith traditions, we would most likely not give the notion of being chosen a second thought. But we live in a multireligious world and bump up against people and situations that sometimes challenge our religious assumptions. This is especially true when we hear believers in different faith traditions articulating the deep and abiding belief that they belong to God’s chosen. That would imply that we do not. Can more than one be chosen? What about those of other faiths who seem so certain? Can a religious tradition that expects or requires different beliefs or behaviors than our own also represent God’s will as surely as our own?

Unless we cut ourselves off entirely from interacting with anyone outside our religious communities, we cannot avoid this kind of cognitive dissonance. Knowing something about how and why the notion of chosenness has become so important in the monotheistic traditions can be useful because it can help us navigate between our own beliefs and those of others, and it can help us make sense of our own unique place in a complex world.

At some deep level there is a lot at stake in being chosen—or not being chosen. Webster’s definition shows that chosenness is associated with scripture, with happiness and even eternal life, and with a divine sense of order. It remains for us to try to understand how and why the concept of preference of one person or people over others became so important in religion.

We will embark on this quest by traveling through the histories of emergence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam and the early interaction between the believers in these religious traditions. And we will examine the scriptures of each as well.

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work and leading Jewish social reformer, warned her co-religionists of the impending catastrophe facing German Jewry. In her opening remarks at a conference on Jewish population policy, her words bore a prophetic tone, warning of the increasingly acute “danger of extermination or atrophy of those already born and yet unborn.” Rather than predicting the extermination of the Jews at the hands of a genocidal regime, however, Wroński aimed at drawing attention to the wounds of the Jewish social body inflicted by the twin processes of modernization and assimilation and the broader social and economic crises of the Weimar Republic.

Wroński urged Jewish leaders to tend the Jewish population as the body of a people, whose “life-germ” was mortally threatened by the “unhealthy” social, political, and economic conditions of the postwar era. …

While Wroński approached the task of improving the Jewish population as a Zionist, Weimar Jews held competing visions for potential social remedies as well as the ultimate appearance of a reinvigorated Jewish community. Would a revitalized Jewish entity in Germany resemble a densely textured ethnic community bound by organic ties. Moving away from the notion of the Jewish collectivity defined strictly in the liberal sense of an assemblage of autonomous individual citizens, Liberal Jews increasingly invoked the notions of the community in its totality (Gesamtheit, Volksgemeinschaft) or “national body” (Volksganz). Though differences between Zionist and non-Zionist visions of the Jewish future certainly remained, these new articulations of community nevertheless bore a surprising degree of similarity. To capture this commonality, I use the term social body to include the variety of visions Jews held for a new kind of community that bound the individual body in dynamic relation with a larger social one. Through organic metaphors, reformers across the religious divide understood a society that functioned as a social organism, with needs and interests that extended well beyond those of the atomized individual. Equally important, they linked the health of the individual body with that of the Jewish community. Thus, in contrast to what one historian of Weimar Jews has labeled the “divisive landscape of German Jewry,” the notion of a Jewish social body calls attention to a heretofore neglected dimension of German Jewish self-perception: that among a degree of ideological disunity, there existed an overarching unity of intent not merely to relieve social distress but to reorder Jewish society and manage it as a coherent whole.

The idea of a Jewish social body that was subject to intervention and treatment was taken directly from social and medical discourses about the health of the nation. Against this background, this book shows how Jews, many of whom had gained knowledge and expertise as professionals in the fields of social welfare and medicine, mobilized discourses devised to strengthen the German nation on behalf of the Jewish community. What is particularly striking in this

Germans into Jews turns to an often overlooked and misunderstood period of German and Jewish history — the years between the world wars. While it has been assumed that the Jewish community in Germany was in decline during the Weimar Republic, Sharon Gillerman demonstrates that Weimar Jews sought to rejuvenate and reconfigure their community, as a means of both strengthening the German nation and creating a more expansive and autonomous Jewish entity within the German state. These ambitious projects to increase fertility, expand welfare, and strengthen the family transcended the ideological and religious divisions that have traditionally characterized Jewish communal life. Integrating Jewish history, German history, gender history, and social history, this book highlights the experimental and contingent nature of efforts by Weimar Jews to reassert a new Jewish particularism while simultaneously reinforcing Jews’ commitment to Germanness.

In 1929, four years before Hitler would assume the chancellorship of Germany, Siddy Wronsky, a founding figure in German social

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regard is that social reformers’ impulse for a new expression of Jewish particularism did not depend on the surrender of their Germaness. Instead, through a dialectical dynamic of Jewish assimilation, Weimar Jews forged a new notion of Jewish difference out of the raw materials of German culture. Thus, rather than viewing assimilation as an appropriation of external elements to some kind of essential Jewish culture, Jews also expressed their uniqueness “in an idiom always acquired from their environment,” as Amos Funkenstein has argued. Like other Germans, Jews who worked in the social and medical professions viewed the strengthening of the family, the attempt to increase reproduction, the need for expanding welfare, and the rehabilitation of orphaned and delinquent youth as a crucial means of redeeming the German nation and restoring its national spirit. But in this process, self-identified Jews, who were deeply rooted in non-Jewish middle-class German society and culture and saw themselves as fully “German,” utilized the ideas and methods of contemporary social politics as a means of significantly expanding the scope, authority, and distinctiveness of the Jewish community. Thus, we see in this period not only the evolution of “Germans into Nazis,” to use Peter Fritzsche’s notable formulation, but a simultaneous development of Germans into Jews.

Modalities in Medieval Jewish Law for Public Order and Safety
Stephen M. Passamanec
HUC Annual, 2009

In his introduction, Dr. Stephen Passamanec writes: “The history of medieval Jewry presents one inescapable fact: the Jews were a people apart. No matter where or when we find a Jewish community in the Middle Ages, it was an ‘alien’ enclave in a host society which was sometimes cordial to it and sometimes not. Jews were a foreign element which managed its own communal affairs, creating religious, educational, and charitable institutions, mechanisms for collection and disbursement of taxes to the host government, and various systems for internal governance and the administration of justice. The Jews governed themselves and dispensed justice in so far as possible according to halakhah, their ancient internal legal system. This legal system was the subject of devoted and loving study and careful enhancement over the centuries by skillful interpretation, by mixture of local customs and by local ordinances, which helped the system keep pace with changing circumstances….This inquiry has exposed some of the less exalted or inspiring episodes of medieval Jewish history. Some of what was done, or was proposed to be done, was cruel and inhuman by modern standards. Some of it does not rise to a modern standard of legality, but the medieval world did not run according to our rules, and necessity overrode moral idealism from time to time even among the most sensitive, learned, and pious of our ancestors. The rabbis well understood that they were to pursue justice, but justice was justice for the greater good of the people as a whole, not necessarily for the individual. Doubtless we would not often do as they did. Yet they are by no means to be faulted or derogated for their defense of their standards of public order, safety, and, indeed, decency.”


Devoted to the topic of Reform Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls, this volume of the AJA Journal features a fascinating article by Dr. Jason Kalman, Assistant Professor of Classical Hebrew Texts and Interpretation, HUC-JIR/Cincinnati, on HUC-JIR’s involvement with Dead Sea Scroll scholarship and a documentary analysis of two sermons on the Dead Sea Scrolls by JIR alumnus Rabbi Harold I. Saperstein, introduced by HUC-JIR alumnus and principal of Leo Baeck College, Dr. Marc Saperstein, and annotated by Dr. Kalman. The issue also includes an interesting article on Reform Judaism’s reception of the Dead Sea Scrolls by Professor Richard A. Freund, University of Hartford. The online version of the journal can be accessed at: www.americanjewisharchives.org/journal
In today’s knowledge economy, the sources of power — information and ideas — are infinite. Google gives them away for free. Since we can’t hoard information, old leadership habits are becoming less effective. Leadership habits are shifting from command-and-control to connect-and-collaborate, from exerting power over people, to generating waves through them.

As the source of power is shifting, leaders are also coming to understand that how they guide behavior must shift with it. There are three ways to generate human connection and conduct: you can Coerce, Motivate, or Inspire. Coercion: “Get me the memo by 5 o’clock.” “My way or the highway.” “Just get it done, I don’t care how.” Motivation: “If you get it done, you’ll get a bigger bonus.” Coercive or Motivational leaders use external objects, carrots and sticks, to efficiently get performance out of people and connection with them, and to otherwise get people to play by a set of rules.

We are discovering the limits of carrots and sticks and learning that we can’t write enough rules to get the behaviors we want. If the only reason I work at a company is for a paycheck, I’ll leave when I’m offered a bigger one. If the only reason I buy from one company is their price, then I’ll switch my loyalty if someone else sells it for less. Motivation turns out to be an expensive way to propel behavior, particularly in a recession when there are fewer carrots to go around.

That leads me to the third and, I believe, most powerful form of human influence: Inspiration. The first two letters in “Inspiration” are ‘IN’ signifying that the conduct is intrinsic. Whereas coercion and motivation happen to you, inspiration happens in you. Inspired persons are guided by their own beliefs, in pursuit of a vision they believe is worthy of their dedication, and in fidelity to values they deem to be fundamental.

Values are at the root of Inspiration. Values are efficient: a handful help us navigate infinite situations better than any rule book. They are timeless: giving us strength to be consistent even though the pressures of life tell us to be situational. They are enduring: inspiring us to be principled however inconvenient, unpopular or dangerous that might be. Values elevate us to act beyond what we can do, to embrace what we should do.

Inspirational Leaders are mindful of the Paradox of Hedonism, the philosophical idea that if you pursue happiness directly it eludes you. But if you passionately pursue a higher, more meaningful purpose, you can achieve happiness. I have learned from my work that there is a corollary to the Paradox of Hedonism. I call it The Paradox of Success — that you cannot achieve Success by pursuing it directly. What Inspirational Leaders understand is that real and sustainable value can only be achieved when you pursue something greater than yourself, that makes a difference in the lives of others. The word I use for this is Significance.

HUC-JIR is an institution whose mission is quintessentially about Significance. Indeed, a rare institution: it both pursues and purveys significance. Each of you is graduating today because you have authentically and honorably dedicated yourselves to the Pursuit of Significance. You are now heading into the world as recognized heirs of our Tradition and as Jewish leaders not only with the opportunity but, more importantly, the responsibility to be Purveyors of Significance.

For complete Graduation Address, please go to: http://huc.edu/link/?x=DSCommencement

Prior to crossing the Jordan River, the Israelites were camped in the Plains of Moab. Looking westward, they could see the hill country in the distance, the land promised to their forebears, and they knew their journey through the desert was drawing to a close. The destination about which they had dreamed for so long was at hand. They could almost reach out and touch it. But prior to entering the land, God insisted that they had to do three things.

First, they had to turn around and look back; to rehearse their people’s journey — from Abraham’s departure from Ur in Southern Mesopotamia all the way to their 40-year-trek through the heat and the aridity of the desert. They were forced to remember past experiences; to remember the hardships they faced as a people and as individuals; the moments when they were so tired that they didn’t think they could ever reach the next oasis; all the experiences that brought them to the point of crossing the Jordan. And they had to remember all those who died in the desert and wouldn’t be able to set foot on the Promised Land, all those whom they left behind, whom they loved.

So, as you are about to commit yourselves to service as rabbis and cantors, to see your dreams fulfilled as you enter the next stage of your lives, this is a moment to turn around and look back; to reflect on what and who brought you to this place, to this moment in your lives — events and individuals who shaped your decision to embark on this journey of devotion to the Jewish people and then nurtured it — parents, grandparents, relatives, teachers, spouses, loved ones — some of whom may only be here in spirit today and you miss them — those who touched your souls and taught you what it is to be a Jew and human being, who showed you the blessing of teaching others; all those who will be standing with you on the bimah at the moment of your Ordination or Investiture.

Then, after rehearsing the journey that brought them to the shores of the Jordan, the people were asked to recall the terms of the covenant to which they had pledged themselves at Sinai — the laws, rituals and principles that were the basis of their relationship with God; the vision of the world
which they were given which became the raison d’être of their lives.

For you, as well, this is a moment of renewal of commitment to the values, ideals, beliefs that have fueled your life journey and which you will now share with those whom you will be blessed to teach and lead; a moment to focus upon what truly animates you as a Jew, what enables you to experience kedushah – holiness – in your lives.

But also to be unafraid to acknowledge your doubts and fears – which we all share, even the most accomplished leaders among us – that which makes us human. And then to come to realize that in that honest recognition of self, the moment of acknowledgement that we will always find ourselves in the midst of the journey, at times struggling to make our way through the desert of our lives, only then will we begin to model for others.

Finally, the Israelites also had to come to understand that everything they would do from that day forward would have real consequences, not only for themselves, but for the Jewish people as a whole, for all humanity; that how they chose to live their lives would have ultimate meaning.

So, too, now all of you who are about to be ordained and invested, new rabbis and cantors; the newest links in the Shalhevet ha-Kabbalah, the chain of Tradition.

This is reminiscent of a text in the basic course in Midrash; a simple text but one fraught with lasting meaning. Leviticus 26:42: “Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob; I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham.”

This is a unique biblical verse; it is the only place in the Bible in which the order of the names of the Patriarchs is reversed – And so we ask: “Why is Jacob stated first, before his father Isaac and his grandfather Abraham?”

The Midrash suggests that it focuses us on Jacob – Israel – the newest link in the chain of leadership; and as such, the newest link is as important as those who came before; they are shekulum – equal, because each ensures Jewish survival, fosters tikun olam; each new generation of leaders – every new cantor and rabbi – can bring us closer to the messianic, to a world of wholeness.

But if you were looking at the classic text of the Bible, you would notice that the name of Jacob, the newest link in the chain, has a sign over it, which points to the fact that it is written malei – full – with an extra vav.

Rashi notes in his commentary that there are only five places in the Bible in which the name of Jacob is written with the extra vav. But then he adds that there are also five places in the Bible in which the name of Elijah, the precursor of the Messiah, is written bauer – defectively, without the vav at the end. Then Rashi gives us a gift for all generations; he reaches across time and space and speaks to every aspiring leader, when he says:

Jacob holds the extra vav as a pledge, as an eiruv, that one day Elijah will come and announce the coming of the messiah, the beginning of redemption.

You, this generation of new leaders, each one of you possesses the extra vav; you hold the key in your hearts, minds, and souls to the future. You have the potential to help us fulfill the messianic vision – to bring us all to wholeness, to strengthen our communities, to repair our broken world; to transform the bitter waters of our lives into waters of sweetness and bring us from mitzrayim, Egypt, metzarim – the narrow places of our lives, where we all have occasionally lived, to God’s place, to the Promised Land. This is your blessing; this is your challenge!

For complete Ordination/Investiture Address, please go to: http://huc.edu/link/?x=NJCOrdination

Los Angeles – May 18, 2009 – Dr. Tamara Cohn Eskenazi, Professor of Bible, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles

I want us to look together briefly at the collective memory we call the Torah by going back to the garden of Eden and to Adam and Eve. Let us go to the moment just before they suddenly went shopping for clothes, to the time when the serpent enticed them and they bit the bait.

Many messages are condensed in this familiar story. It tells us, as you know, that we were created as relationships and for relationships – with God in whose image we are and whose breath infuses us, with the earth from whence we came, with the natural world towards which we bear responsibility, and with each other as women and men created equal, partners in work and play. These activities were intended as pleasurable. Because of stolen knowledge and disobedience, the story explains, these very creative activities became, in addition, also sources of sorrow. Joy now is mingled with hardship. Today I want us to focus on what the story conveys about knowledge.

Adam and Eve in Genesis seek the right thing – wisdom or the knowledge of good and evil – but they reach for it in the wrong way. The wisdom we need does not come from seizing and devouring the fruit that someone else produced. Such grasping, at best, teaches us to be ashamed.

Living as they did, in a world where so much came ready-made, seems to have lulled the first humans into believing that wisdom and joy and our highest potential can be possessed easily and quickly. We too have been encouraged by American consumerism to make the same mistake. The temptation – then and now – is just to pluck that fruit and painlessly have all the wisdom one desires; just get one more “how to” book and overnight solve our problems; just download the information from the web and calculate a formula for life.

The serpent says: yes, it’s easy; this is how you get it.

The Torah says: no. This is not how you get it, this is not how people get the wisdom and knowledge that teach us how to live truly as God’s image, how to make our life fruitful, and how to make our lives a blessing. The journey to the depth, breadth, and height of our possibilities moves in another direction, which is why we have the rest of the Torah. The journey that gives genuine knowledge begins by facing each other and facing God responsibly and responsively. The story of temptation
warns us that living fully to our potential does not come and cannot come from consuming knowledge, from swallowing some magical fruit. It is not a quick fix and does not grow on trees. It is earned with sweat and pain, joy and laughter/love in our relation with neighbors and strangers, with friends and foes. And above all, it is learned in that most precious web of relationships and links that we cultivate.

The first couple learned that lesson. We usually ignore Adam and Eve after their expulsion. Yet, it is precisely here, outside the garden, that the couple teaches us the most: they turn back – not back to Eden – but to one another and to God. The man who had blamed the woman now turns towards her. They enter into intimate relation. They have a child and the woman names him in honor of her renewed partnership with God. With those steps, the journey toward meaningful use of genuine knowledge has truly begun.

We live in a time longing to mend and a world in need of mending. We hope that you will carry the holy with you and practice what Heschel calls “moral grandeur and spiritual audacity,” and really change the world.

But you cannot do it alone and you don’t have to do it alone. Turn to one another, turn to Torah, turn to those who came before you, and turn to those who are coming next.

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**Los Angeles – May 17, 2009 – Rabbi Richard Levy, Director, School of Rabbinical Studies, HUC-JIR/Los Angeles**

The Torah portion we began reading yesterday afternoon, Bemidbar, has a lot to say about lifting up. As the Israelites crowd together in the wilderness, Moses is told to lift up the head of each Israelite as he determines how many of them are ready to join the minions of God in advancing on the unknown between Egypt and the Promised Land.

The instruction is given b'midbar Sinai b'-bel mo-ed, in the midbar of Sinai, in the Tent of Meeting. What a tantalizing description! It was not given b'har Sinai, at the mountain of Sinai (they were there a year before), but at the mid-bar Sinai, the wilderness that Sinai had created. How could that be? Didn’t Sinai bring order, law – Torah – to the Israelites? How could it also have brought a wilderness?

Leading a people through a wilderness to the Promised Land is exhausting work. And so, God spoke to Moses in a protected place, in the ohel moed, the Tent of Meeting, the Tent of the Appointed Time, a place like… the sanctuary of Temple Israel in the wilderness of Hollywood. Some of you will be plying your rabbinates in synagogues like this one, protected spaces that will let you confront the crises of the wilderness in manageable terms. But others of you will have to build your own ohel moed – a private space in your day school or religious school, a corner at Hillel where you can breathe and be alone, a quiet street on your drive to your part-time appointments where you can daven Shacharit all by yourself. Heschel has taught us how important is the palace in time that God built into Shabbat – but this week’s parasha reminds us that we need, if not a palace in space, at least a room, a seat, where we can keep out appointments with the Holy One.

If you are diligent about finding this protected space, you will gradually discover that something remarkable is happening to you. If you are able to take refuge at appointed times with your God in your own private space, you will learn what an ohel moed feels like – and you will gradually realize that you are becoming an ohel moed for the people who learn Torah from you and who come to you for guidance in the wilderness. If you have found your own ohel, you will not be afraid to grow into an ohel for others, to take them in for their appointed time with you, and help them find the confidence to grow into an ohel for the people who rely on them.

If you grow into an ohel for others, opening them to Torah and prayer and the prophetic calling, then wherever you ply your rabbinate, it will become clear that you as a Reform rabbi – an authentic rabbi – matter; and therefore the Reform Judaism you embody matters. Whether Reform Judaism will still matter in 10 years, in 25 years, to a great extent will depend on you.

For complete Ordination Address, please go to: http://huc.edu/link/?x=DRJSM

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**Cincinnati – June 6, 2009 – Rabbi David Ellenson, President, HUC-JIR**

As you assume your positions today as rabbis among the people Israel, I would look to the Sephardic tradition and the titles that are used within that tradition. These titles delineate the qualifications that are necessary in order for you to serve as ro’ei yismeti, spiritual shepherds and leaders of this people Israel.

The rabbi in the Sephardic tradition is often referred to as a Marbitz Torah – a teacher, quite literally a spreader of Torah. You cannot be a rabbi without Jewish learning. However, that learning is not Wissenschaft, an academic kind of learning, alone. Of course, at this institution, we believe that Wissenschaft, the academic study of Judaism, can lead to, and in fact must be, an integral part of Jewish faith. Nevertheless, we ask you to understand your knowledge of Torah as more than Wissenschaft. It must be understood as Religionsunterricht, religious instruction, as well. The purpose of Jewish learning, the mastery of Torah that you possess, is not knowledge for its own sake. Rather, your knowledge must be engaged. You have immersed yourself in study in order to teach. Your task as a rabbi is to take Jewish tradition, internalize it within your very being, and then take that teaching, your Torah, and spread its insights and share its meanings with others.

Yet, the Sephardic tradition is not content to label the rabbi only as Marbitz Torah. The rabbi is also identified as a Haver, a colleague, a friend. You must identify with and
care for the people you serve. You must have a sense of empathy and concern for the Jewish community and for the individual Jews who comprise it. You must love them – as a group and as individuals – even in moments of trial and frustration. This is not always easy to accomplish, but your role as a rabbi cannot be fulfilled without such feelings of fondness and devotion.

Finally, you must be identified as a Habam, a Sage – a wise and judicious person. You must employ your knowledge and direct your empathy in ways that are wise. It is not always easy to know precisely how to behave respectfully and judiciously. You must listen to your heart. You must also pay attention to the instruction of your mind. Mind and heart together will help guide you as you seek to lead and assist others.

How is it that you can exercise this kind of leadership that will evidence the qualities contained in the titles the Sephardic tradition employs to identify the rabbi? As is always the case, our weekly Torah reading aids us in answering this question, and I would turn to this week’s parasha and two commentaries upon it that offer distinct guidance in how leadership should be exercised.

In our text, it states in Numbers 7:1, “Vay’hee b’yom kalot Moshe l’ha’keem et ha’mishkan – and it was on that day that Moses completed the setting up the tabernacle.” How should this verse be understood? After all, we are aware that the Torah describes in some detail all the help and assistance Moses was given in the construction of the ancient Israelite tent of worship. As it cannot be literally true, in what sense can we understand its meaning? There are two different commentaries that I would cite that give us insight into the meaning of this verse and provide us with two different models of how rabbinic leadership can and ought to be exercised.

In the first commentary, contained in Midrash Rabbah, the rabbis say that Moses went and oversaw every single activity of every artisan and every craftsman as they worked upon the construction of the Tabernacle. Moses himself made sure that every detail of what was to be done was carried out precisely as God had instructed him. And when Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks, only then did Moses bless the people at the end of the day with the words of “May the favor of the lord our God be upon us. Let the work of our hands prosper. Prosper the work of our hands.” The midrash continues by saying that Moses would then disassemble the tent of meeting by himself without the help of the Levites. In the morning, he would reassemble it alone – and this he did each and every day.

This is one mode of leadership. As leader, you carefully watch each and every activity that every single person under your guidance is undertaking. You instruct them and you critique them when they do not do precisely what it is that you want them to do or you praise them when they follow your instructions precisely. Your blessing is contingent upon their fulfilling your instructions and your words. This mode of leadership requires incredible effort and, from my own perspective, this mode of leadership does not reflect genuine leadership at all. To be sure, it bespeaks a great sense of duty and effort. However, it hardly reflects an ability to enlist others as responsible partners who collaborate together with you to achieve the task at hand.

Thus, I would turn now to the commentary found in the Tanhuma, where there is a different understanding of how it is that Moses exercised his leadership. In this mode of leadership, Moses is not alone as he works with, inspires, and entrusts his people. He depends upon the men and the women who are working on the construction of the tabernacle to undertake and complete their assignments. It is true that he provides a vision of what it is that the tabernacle should be. However, the work is carried out and performed by those whom he trusts and in whom he believes. Moses believes in persons. In so doing, he empowers them and brings out the best in them.

My hope and prayer for you on this day is that you too will exercise leadership – but not the kind of leadership where, because of a lack of trust or because of overwhelming narcissism, you feel you have to oversee each and every activity in which everyone you lead is engaged. Instead, may yours be a leadership that will inspire, direct, and allow persons to understand that the strength and goodness that resides within them can come to be manifest in the world, and that they are capable of working together with you to attain that which is proper and just. It is an exacting task and you will undoubtedly stumble more than once along your path. Nevertheless, as you leave our Beit Midrash on this day and enter into the world as a rabbi, I am confident you will employ your knowledge of Torah in kind, gentle, committed, and insightful ways, and that when you speak, your people will be moved. May God bless you and watch over you always.

Growing up in an interfaith home in the 1950s was sometimes difficult, especially when it came to fitting in. My Jewish friends said I was never really Jewish because my mother was Catholic, while my Catholic friends said I was not really Christian because my father was Jewish. Despite this, my parents never forced my sister or me to take sides. Today, she is a devout Catholic and I am an observant Jew, and we love and respect each other for our choices. Our parents, who passed away several years ago, were pleased for both of us and never biased our decisions.

“That’s an interesting story,” you might be saying, “But what does it have to do with us as we graduate today?”

Only this: when I decided to follow the Jewish faith, it was Reform Judaism and its commitment to inclusion that allowed me not only to make that choice, but to be embraced and accepted without hesitation. Without that commitment and acceptance, I would not be standing before you today, proud of my Jewish heritage, committed to my faith and, I hope, representing to
others in a positive way the foundations of our beliefs.

My story, of course, is not unique but it is worth repeating because each of you will have the opportunity to do for others what rabbis in the past have done for me. Inclusion and acceptance are transformative acts that can change a person’s life. I hope you will be that agent of spiritual and religious transformation when called upon. The responsibility is awesome, but I can tell you from firsthand experience that the end result can be truly life-changing.

The commitments to inclusion and to Tikkun Olam are sometimes seen as separate aspects when we read or talk about the cornerstone beliefs of Reform Judaism. Yet when I look back on my own life, I realize that inclusion is in itself an important way of repairing the world. Inclusion, by its very nature, combats exclusion, intolerance, and prejudice. Inclusion encourages respect. Inclusion accepts those who are different into our faith and, through them, sends them out into the world to change their own lives and all those with whom they come in contact.

And what better goal can we aspire to than repairing the world?

This belief sustained and guided me throughout the experience of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Katrina was both a natural and man-made disaster of unprecedented proportions. Its impact on New Orleans, the Gulf Coast Region, and Tulane University was devastating, and it threatened the survival of everyone and everything touched by it. The government’s response, or lack thereof, will always be a dark chapter in the history of this country.

In my darkest hours and days after Katrina I needed a lifeline to survive and lead, and a guiding light to show me the way. That lifeline and light came from my religion — its values and beliefs, and what I learned from remarkable people throughout my life who dedicated their lives to “repairing the world” at great personal sacrifice.

Would I have met the challenges I confronted if I were not a Jew? I certainly hope the answer would be “yes,” but my religion provided a context and expectation that strengthened my will and determination. In many ways, I feel blessed to have been a part of this historical moment to test my faith and to live out my beliefs. I will be forever thankful to Reform Judaism for including me and instilling in me Tikkun Olam.
The 2009 Dr. Bernard Heller Prize was awarded to Dr. Arno Motulsky, Professor Emeritus in the Departments of Medicine and Genome Sciences at the University of Washington (right), by Rabbi Ellenson and Ruth O. Freedlander, Co-Trustee of the Dr. Bernard Heller Foundation (left). The presentation took place at the Graduation Ceremony on June 7, 2009, at Isaac M. Wise Temple in Cincinnati. Dr. Arno Motulsky is the “Father of Pharmacogenomics,” the role of genetic variation in the response to drugs. Ruth Freedlander said, “Dr. Heller was deeply concerned with the survival of the Jewish people and with the transmission of Jewish religious and cultural heritage. His encyclopedic knowledge of Judaism and his life reflected his abiding interest in philosophy, Jewish thought, and scholarship. He frequently referred to himself as a trustee of his wealth for Israel. Dr. Motulsky’s survival as a teenager during the Holocaust and his extraordinary scientific contributions to humankind speak to the enormous loss that the Jewish people and the world has suffered due to the murder of one-and-a-half million Jewish children during the Holocaust. How many future doctors, scientists, writers, and artists were deprived of the opportunity to live, create, and contribute to this world, just because they were Jews? In honoring Dr. Motulsky, we also pay tribute to their memory and the infinite potentiality of their lives.”

The 2009 Roger E. Joseph Prize was presented to Helen Lieberman, Founder and Honorary President of Ikamva Labantu - Future of Our Nation (center), in recognition of her exemplary work in providing programs and hope for the future for youth, the homeless, aged, and disabled in South Africa. With more than 1,000 current projects assisting more than 70,000 people of all ages, including 45,000 children, Ikamva Labantu is the largest community-based, non-profit, non-governmental organization of its kind in South Africa. Helen Lieberman stated, “After the apartheid years in South Africa, social justice needs to heal rifts and provide a future of hope for those who have known suffering and injustice. Ikamva Labantu strives to give individuals the skills, independence, and confidence to do things for themselves. Maimonides said that the highest level of tzedakah is to strengthen the hand of the poor so that they need not beg again. My actions are informed by these Jewish values, which teach us to love others as ourselves. Our mission reflects two important African sayings: A person is a person through other people. And every child is our child.” The Joseph Prize presentation was made by the daughters of Roger E. Joseph – (from left) Linda Karshan, Ellen Joseph, Roxanne Leopold – and Rabbi Ellenson at Ordination and Investiture Ceremonies at Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York on May 3, 2009.

Left: Rabbi Lennard R. Thal, Senior Vice President Emeritus, Union for Reform Judaism, received the American Jewish Distinguished Service Award at Graduation in New York.

Right: The Presidents’ Medal was presented to Dr. Roland Chapdelaine, President, Los Angeles Trade Technical College, at Graduation in Los Angeles; and to Betty Benjamin, Former President, Women of Reform Judaism in a private ceremony.
Alumni Honorary Degree Recipients

HUC-JIR honored distinguished alumni for their 25 years of dedicated leadership and devoted service (see back cover).

The Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa, New York - May 3, 2009

The Doctor of Divinity, honoris causa, Los Angeles - May 18, 2009

The Doctor of Jewish Communal Service, honoris causa, Los Angeles - May 18, 2009

The Doctor of Music, honoris causa, Los Angeles - May 18, 2009

The Doctor of Music, honoris causa, New York - May 3, 2009


The Doctor of Jewish Religious Education, honoris causa, and (front, left) Madelyn Mishkin Katz, RJE, Director of Student Life at HUC-JIR/Los Angeles, who received the Citation in Recognition, Los Angeles - May 18, 2009.

Graduate Studies alumni recipients of the Founders’ Medallion: (from left) Richard S. Hess, Miriam Dean-Otting, and Steven M. Voth