

THE Chronicle

FALL
2015

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION



HUC-JIR'S GLOBAL IMPACT

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The Chronicle is published by the

National Office of Communications and Public Affairs

Jean Bloch Rosensaft, *Assistant Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs; Editor*

Allison Glazer, *Assistant Director for Communications and Public Affairs; Assistant Editor*

Design: TabakDesign.com Cover Illustration: Angele Osborne

huc.edu/chronicle

President's Message

Dear friends,

One of the founders of cultural Zionism, Ahad HaAm (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg, 1856-1927), once wrote: "Learning! Learning! Learning! That is the secret of Jewish survival." In his words, we hear the echoes of thousands of years of our tradition's focus on study as the key to a vibrant Jewish community.

From the earliest biblical commands to teach Torah to our children to the sophisticated curricula and online learning of our own era, our people have always employed the most contemporary methods to ensure that learning continued. Wherever that learning took place, from the ancient synagogue and early rabbinical academy to today's religious schools, camps, and seminaries, to know our texts and traditions meant that you were part of the community and its covenant with God.

And yet, our tradition also indicates that study by itself is not enough. Contrast Ahad HaAm's statement with the one we find attributed to Rabbi Shimeon bar Yohai in the Palestinian Talmud: "One who studies but does not act, it would have been better that s/he were not born." (Yerushalmi Shabbat 1:2, 3b) Here lies another core truth of Judaism: study must lead to productive action that makes a difference in our world.

In this issue of *The Chronicle*, I am proud to share with you the stories of our talented alumni who exemplify the dual mandate of learning and action. They came to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion as the graduates of Ivy League universities, leading private liberal arts institutions, top-tier state universities, and renowned international academic institutions. But it was at our seminary – the vanguard of leadership development, gender equality, inclusivity, and innovation – that they developed the deep Judaic knowledge, pedagogical and pastoral skills, and professional expertise that have empowered them to sustain our tradition while implementing transformation in the Reform Movement and the Jewish and larger world.

Their global impact is revealed in the context of rising anti-Semitism in Europe, the thirst for Jewish pride in communities 'down under,' and social and political activism in the State of Israel.



They are entrepreneurs who are pioneering cutting-edge strategies for Jewish living and learning, from revitalizing the ancient ritual of mikvah and fostering opportunities for Jewish-Muslim understanding to creating new models for community-wide teen engagement and inventing new technological applications for Jewish education and relational Judaism.

They are prominent community organizers who are advancing gun safety, Israel-Diaspora relations, humanitarian assistance, women's rights, interfaith relations, pluralism, and multi-racial Jewish inclusivity. Their visionary influence can be found in the resurgent communities of the South, on the mountains of Aspen, in the largest, state-of-the-art Jewish day school in North America, with millennials in Brooklyn or Washington, DC, in Hillels from Stanford to Miami, and in new Jewish music for congregations throughout North America.

From palliative care at the hospital bedside and sacred aging programs in the synagogue to military chaplaincy in Afghanistan, they are indispensable in providing pastoral care and counseling. And their professional leadership can be found in every Jewish organization, agency, or institution, from the Federation and AIPAC to Jewish camping and the JDC.

We are grateful to the congregations of the Union for Reform Judaism, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the World Union for Progressive Judaism, the Women of Reform Judaism, and the arms of the Reform Movement for their partnership in our sacred mission to bring forth Jewish leaders of such excellence and integrity. And we are most thankful to *you*, because *your* vital support makes possible the education of the next generations of Jewish trailblazers who will sustain the lives of countless individuals, families, synagogues, and communities worldwide.

With heartfelt wishes for a joyful Hanukkah for you and your loved ones, and a world blessed with peace for all,

Rabbi Aaron D. Panken '91, Ph.D.

President

November 1, 2015 19 Cheshvan 5776



**Rabbi Gersh Lazarow
at Temple Beth Israel in
Melbourne, Australia**

RABBIS AND EDUCATORS

Building Jewish Pride Down Under

Rabbi Gersh Lazarow '07, MARE '09, Temple Beth Israel, Melbourne, Australia

"It is very hard for North American Jews to truly appreciate the challenges for a Progressive to be able to live, study, and work in a community where our Judaism is not normative or dominant," says **Rabbi Gersh Lazarow**. "My studies at HUC-JIR's Skirball Campus in Los Angeles provided me with the opportunity to immerse myself in the very best of what North American Reform Judaism has to offer. It imbued within me a sense of pride and commitment that I never knew and it drove me to return to Australia with a commitment to transform our community and challenge what it means to be a modern Jew down under."

Gersh is well versed in the challenges facing global Jewish communities outside of North America and Israel. Born in Capetown, South Africa, he moved as a child with his parents and siblings to Melbourne, Australia, where he attended Bialik College, a Zionist community Jewish day school. While a student at Monash University, he served as Federal Director of Netzer Australia (the Aus-

tralian Progressive Youth Movement) and as Chairperson of the Zionist Youth Council of Australia. As a young professional, Gersh worked as the Youth and Program Director of the United Jewish Congregation of Hong Kong and as the Program Director of his current synagogue, Temple Beth Israel. Although trained as a high school teacher, his search for deeper knowledge and understanding led him to HUC-JIR, which "offered the perfect mix of learning and experience" that he sought.

As a first-year student in HUC-JIR's Year-In-Israel Program, he became one of the driving forces behind the inaugural "Pesach Project," now in its 13th year, which brings HUC-JIR students to Jewish communities in the Former Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Crimea) to help support Passover programs and experiences, in partnership with the World Union for Progressive Judaism. His student pulpit at Congregation Brith Sholem in Ogden, UT, a close-knit community of 50 households, was "one of the most formative experiences of my rabbinate."

In 2009 he returned to Melbourne to serve as the rabbi of The King David School, a progressive Jewish day school, where he directed

the Department of Jewish Life and Learning and served on the school's senior management team. "My goal was to inculcate in my students and their families a pride and passion in Progressive Judaism." In this capacity, he conceived and established the much-heralded Centre for Living Judaism (CLJ) that is quickly changing the face of Progressive Judaism in this region. "At the core of the CLJ concept was the idea that we need to expose our communities to the very best of Progressive Judaism and in so doing challenge any and all assumptions they might have had. By hiring song leaders and youth workers from the U.S., Israel, and Australia, we created a new paradigm and programmatic engine to support local and regional communities to engage in new and exciting ways."

In 2010, Gersh also took on the rabbinical leadership role at Bentleigh Progressive Synagogue, where he led the Congregation's transformation into the renewed Etz Chayim Progressive Synagogue.

Now the Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Israel (TBI), he has introduced live streaming services – the first synagogue in Australia to stream its services, which are also archived on the TBI website. "A grandmother's lament at missing her grandson's bar mitzvah was the catalyst for going online," he explains. The live streaming video enables rural residents, the elderly, and those who struggle with mobility to access the services. "Not everyone can travel for *simchas*. We had a bar mitzvah where family members in the United Kingdom were following it online. We have an increasing following from people in Tasmania. Progressive Jews in the Australian Capital Territory will gather as a group to participate in Kabbalat Shabbat family services on a large screen with song leaders who would not be able to travel to Canberra for face-to-face worship."

Gersh's pioneering vision for Progressive Australian Jewry is just beginning. ■

WITH GLOBAL IMPACT

The Reform Woman Rabbi Affirming Religious Tolerance in France



Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur, one of only three women rabbis in France.

Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur '08, MAJE '05, Congregation Mouvement Juif Libéral de France (MJLF), **Paris, France**

"The rising anti-Semitism in France threatens to isolate the Jewish community, which is losing its confidence in the larger French community," says **Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur**.

As rabbi of Congregation Mouvement Juif Libéral de France (MJLF) in Paris, France, Delphine is on the frontlines of what the French call "communautarisation" – ethnic or religious ghettoization – in a country where religion is increasingly seen as a destabilizing factor and a threat. Delphine's synagogue is guarded by soldiers at the same time as "laïcité"

– official secularism in pursuit of democracy – is taught in public schools where halal or kosher meals are forbidden, as are religious head-coverings for Muslim girls and Jewish boys alike.

Called “Madame le Rabbin” in the French media, she is one of only three women rabbis in France, where nearly all French Jews are Orthodox. Known for her liberal approach to contemporary Judaism, it was Delphine who was invited by the family of columnist Elsa Cayat, one of the 17 victims of the Charlie Hebdo terrorist attack, to present the eulogy at the funeral. Before hundreds in the Jewish section of the Cimetière du Montparnasse, she likened an editorial meeting at Charlie Hebdo to a Talmudic debate, where in a theological argument God delegates to his charges the responsibility for their world. She spoke of psychoanalyst Cayat, a practicing atheist, as “someone who cherishes freedom, who knows where to place her words so that the language heals you. This wordplay, this passion for language and debate, is very dear to Judaism and its sages. I think she could have made a very good rabbi.”

Delphine grew up in the Champagne area, not far from Troyes, the city of Rashi (1040-1105), the medieval Biblical commentator. Her maternal grandparents were Hungarian Holocaust survivors traumatized by their suffering; her paternal grandparents were Jews from French families predating the Revolution who were rescued by non-Jews during the Shoah. At 17, she moved alone to Jerusalem, where she lived for five years, studying Hebrew and medical sciences at Hadassah Medical School. She went on to work for French radio, TV, and newspapers in the Middle East and Europe, and then in New York as a correspondent for a national French radio station.

She delved into Jewish text studies in a variety of New York venues, but cites a lecture by Dr. Norman Cohen '71, Ph.D. '77, at the 92Y about Abraham's geographical and spiritual journey in *Lekh Lekha* as a turning point. “I was deeply influenced by my Orthodox rabbi grandfather, but lacked a female role model. On that day, for the first time, I considered the rabbinate as a ‘maybe’ and then as ‘obviously.’” Delphine received ordination and the Master of Arts in Jewish Education at HUC-JIR/New York, where she loved the sermon discussions on Thursday mornings. “The conversations we had there, as a united community on the campus, always made me very proud to belong to such a group of caring people and thoughtful minds.” As a foreign student at HUC-JIR, with a very different background, “I always felt there was room for me. HUC-JIR has a very powerful ability to integrate diversity and to recognize that there are no two identical paths to Jewish leadership.”

Delphine channels the open spirit of HUC-JIR in her congregational work, in her teaching, and in *Tenoua*, the magazine of Jewish thought that she edits – “the only Jewish publication in France

where thinkers, scientists, and rabbis of all denominations dialogue on social and political issues, including interfaith dialogue and Muslim-Jewish relations.”

“Since the Charlie Hebdo and Hyper Casher attacks, liberal, progressive voices are needed more than ever in France, voices of openness and tolerance. We need religious leaders who are willing to engage with the larger question of the ‘Other’ – the stranger, the convert, the non-Jewish spouse, women, and more largely in European society, the migrants, the foreigners, and currently the escalating refugee crisis.” ■

Advancing a Sustainable, Spiritual, and Diverse Jerusalem

Tamir Nir, Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem; Fifth-year Rabbinical Student at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem; Student Rabbi, Achva B'Kerem Community, **Israel**

Jerusalem's new Deputy Mayor is **Tamir Nir**, a fifth-year rabbinical student in HUC-JIR's Israel Rabbinical Program, who represents the Yerushalmim Party. Yerushalmim was founded in 2008 by activists to represent Jerusalem residents. During the social justice protests in the summer of 2011, Yerushalmim members played a key role in the Jerusalem tent protests. They led the Stroller Protests, calling upon the government to provide adequate conditions for raising children in Israel. The party plays an active role in campaigning against the exclusion of women in the public sphere, including the segregated sidewalks in Mea Shearim.

“My studies for the Israeli Reform rabbinate are the culmination of years in education, activism, and the struggle for a pluralistic Jerusalem,” says Tamir. “My rabbinical studies connect me with the values of human rights, Hebrew culture, and a strong emphasis on caring for our environment.”

Born in 1967 to a Sephardic family, Tamir grew up in Jerusalem and studied at an Orthodox Zionist religious high school. He served in the Israeli Army Tank Corps and Education Corps, and graduated from the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, where he studied architecture and landscape planning, with a focus on the implications of the environment on architecture and the design of living space as influenced by place, climate, light, and many other variables.



Jerusalem Deputy Mayor and rabbinical student Tamir Nir at his Jerusalem Municipality office.

"I would like to bring a broad perspective of a value-based, connected, and responsible world into the political conversation," Tamir explains. "I have experience in various fields: architecture, education, Judaism, art, culture, and the environment. These experiences allow me to offer a holistic perspective of a humane world view that is connected to the Jewish tradition and is based on equality and freedom."

Tamir has worked continuously in education in formal and informal frameworks. He was responsible for creating the *Yeled Teva* (Nature Child) Project, which focuses on the connection between Jewish sources and ecology, with the goal of fostering in children a sense of responsibility to the environment. He founded an environmental-spiritual *havurah* in Beit HaKerem in Jerusalem, called Achva B'kerem, which is committed to improving the quality of life for families living in urban settings. They have created a community garden for growing vegetables, ongoing Torah study, cultural events, and social action projects. Achva Ba'kerem is affiliated with the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism.

"Over the past few years of being involved with my local community, I have been contemplating the question of how we can enhance the individual experience by creating a community which answers to our social, cultural, and economic needs, and instills a sense of identity and social responsibility," he explains. "I have come to realize that any action within the public sphere is actually a political action. Looking back, I understand that the day that I established a community garden, I entered into local politics. The garden and many other initiatives within the community, such as communal compost or Shabbat gatherings, are all actually political decisions and require political action."

The rabbinical/political leader is ready to transform Jerusalem and the Jewish State. "I want to connect Israelis to a Judaism and Israeli culture that helps them build meaningful, happier, and socially involved lives. I want to build a better and more united society, and help close the gaps, both economic and social, for the best Israel of which we can be proud. Every day I apply my energy to create a sustainable, spiritual, and diverse Jerusalem. May Jerusalem be a house of prayer for all people!" ■

ENTREPRENEURS AND INNOVATI

Reclaiming and Re-imagining Mikvah

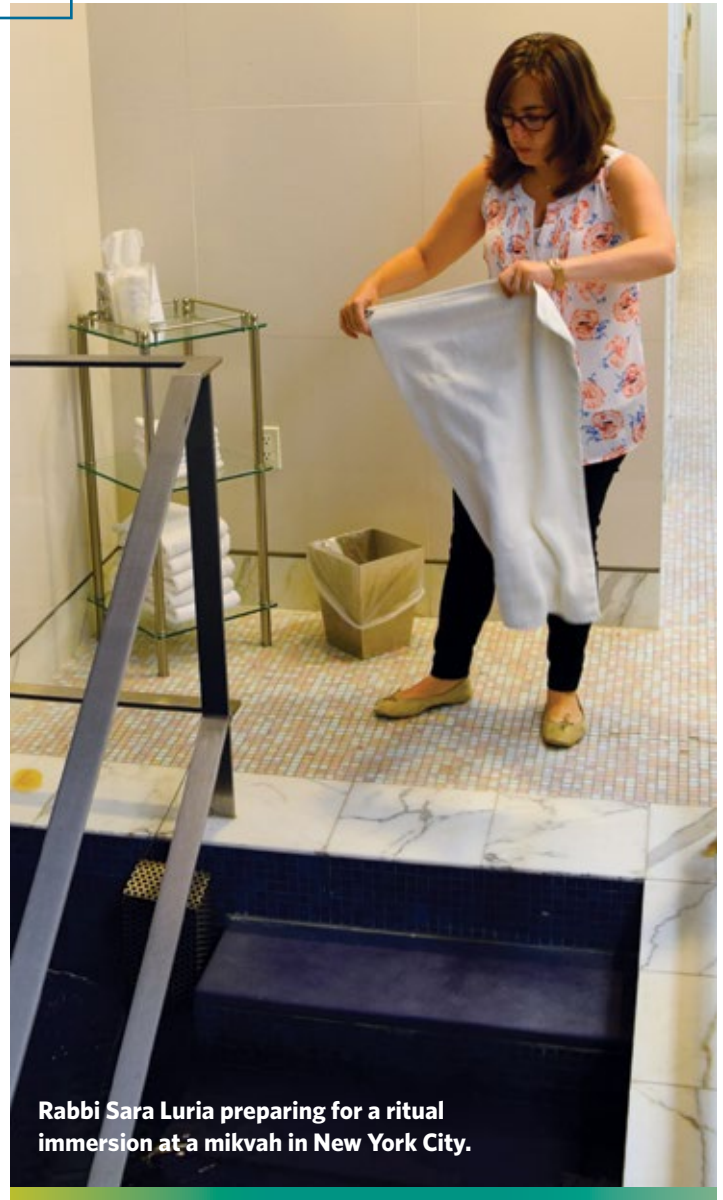
Rabbi Sara Luria '13

Founder of ImmerseNYC; Program Director of The Tisch Fellows Rabbinical Program, HUC-JIR/New York

On 9/11, Brooklyn-born **Rabbi Sara Luria** was a sophomore at Trinity College in Hartford, CT, and co-president of her Hillel. Suddenly, a surge of students, traumatized and feeling far from home, started coming to Hillel, seeking warmth and welcome. “I was hosting Shabbat meals, leading services, and creating a community for over a hundred students,” she recalls. “I realized that I was emulating my childhood rabbi, Rabbi Linda Henry Goodman '85, D.Min. '99, and that this was what rabbis do. That’s when I decided to become a rabbi.” She came to HUC-JIR after three years of professional community organizing work in the Join for Justice Fellowship, working in a women’s homeless shelter in Boston, a year in the Bay Area as a NFTY advisor, and working at Shomrei Torah in Santa Rosa, CA.

Sarah took advantage of HUC-JIR’s myriad of professional development opportunities to augment her studies with skills training that helped her become a transformative leader. As a Tisch Rabbinical Fellow, she fulfilled her summer internship at Mayyim Hayyim Living Waters in Boston, where she had gone to the mikvah before her own wedding. Founding executive director Aliza Kline and founding president and author Anita Diamant inspired her to bring this progressive, pluralistic approach to ritual immersion, learning, and gatherings to her home city.

“Dr. Larry Hoffman '69, Ph.D. '73, the faculty, and my peers pushed me to define my vision for Jewish life and gave me the confidence to launch ImmerseNYC, a pluralistic Jewish organization in New York City that facilitates ritual experiences, peer communities, and education programs that support Jews through life transitions.” In addition to deepening her knowledge of the Talmudic literature on mikvah through independent study with Rabbi Aaron Panken '91, HUC-JIR President, she also participated in HUC-JIR’s Be Wise



Rabbi Sara Luria preparing for a ritual immersion at a mikvah in New York City.

ON

Rabbi Owen Gottlieb, Ph.D., (center) with students at Rochester Institute of Technology.



A. Sue Weisler

Fellowship in Entrepreneurialism, which provides seed grants to students to carry out bold and creative initiatives through community-building and outreach techniques, as inspired by the values of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, founder of the Jewish Institute of Religion.

While still in her final year in rabbinical school, existing local mikvah venues in Manhattan and White Plains allowed Sarah to begin to train mikvah guides. She taught the guides how to listen to the stories of those preparing for immersion and how the pool of natural waters allows those individuals to honor the experience of a life transition through halakhically correct ritual. From guiding 28 immersions in 2013 to 115 in 2014, and doubling that number in 2015, ImmerseNYC is a growing success that brings meaning to people's lives.

"People of all genders come to us for this powerful experience. Some come in the context of childbearing, including pregnancy loss, fertility struggles, conception, and weaning. We see brides and grooms, people who are mourning a loss of a parent or partner, those marking a *yahrzeit* or celebrating a 60th birthday." She points to groups of people who come together to mark group transitions or the High Holy Days, when the group participates in a ritual before and after individual immersions, and describes how such a group activity strengthening community is a new way of using the mikvah. "Mikvah is a ritual that has survived throughout the millennia, but needs to be reinvented in each generation," she explains.

Faced by a world fraught with anxiety, Sara asserts that Judaism can be a source of love, community, and connection to God. Just as one is held up by the waters in the ritual of mikvah, the Jewish community can provide support, comfort, and healing. "I feel called to become a leader of the Jewish community and HUC-JIR has given me the tools and experiences to articulate who I am and my vision for my rabbinate." ■

Interactive Games and Media Promoting Jewish Learning

Rabbi Owen Gottlieb '10, Ph.D.

Founder and Lead Researcher, Initiative in Religion, Culture, and Policy at Rochester Institute of Technology MAGIC Center for Media, Arts, Games, Interaction, and Creativity

Before coming to HUC-JIR, I worked in internet software development and as a screen and television writer," says **Rabbi Owen Gottlieb, Ph.D.**, who received his B.A. in film studies at Dartmouth College and his M.A. at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts, Film, and Television. Inspired to come to HUC-JIR through his studies with Jewish teachers and artists, ranging from Rabbi Laura Geller '76 to choreographer Liz Lerman, today he is applying his rabbinical education to the world of new technology as an Assistant Professor at the School of Interactive Games and Media at Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and as an affiliate faculty member at RIT's MAGIC Center for Media, Arts, Games, Interaction, and Creativity.

At MAGIC, Owen is dedicated to exploring how game systems and interactive media provide insight into religious studies, learning, and cultural production and how the study of religion and culture can illuminate game design and the learning sciences. "Through original design and field research in games and simulations as well as through scholarly gatherings, discussions, and publications, I seek to promote religious literacy, improved dialogue, discourse, and policy," he explains.

Owen draws upon his rabbinical studies at HUC-JIR, where he delved deeply into Talmud study, worship, spiritual guidance, and Israeli drama, while simultaneously integrating his Judaic studies learning with digital media. "Together with my team at ConverJent (converjent.org), I developed *Jewish Time Jump: NY*, a digital, GPS-augmented reality game that brings interactive play to the teaching of Jewish, immigrant, labor, and women's history on site in Greenwich Village, New York."

His current core project at RIT seeks to improve literacy regarding the prosocial aspects of religious legal systems. In the game, players take on the role of villagers navigating life under ancient religious sacred law systems, which are focused on solving common problems: how can neighbors live together and care for one another. Game play models the social behavior within religious legal systems, including strategy, choice, and opportunities for transgressive action. Beginning with a medieval Jewish law code and built modularly to incorporate Muslim and potentially other neighboring sacred law systems as well, the game will provide live cases modeling religious systems for communal cooperation and collaboration. This project functions as both a design intervention for learning in religious studies and the locus of design-based research to test and develop learning theory in the context of games, simulations, religion, and culture.

Owen notes that "games and simulations are the ascendant media of today. As interactive systems, they provide unique opportunities for enhancing formal and informal learning environments. I hope to open new avenues to learning for learners of all ages." Galvanized by Rabbi David Ellenson '77, and his advocacy of "thick" Jewish learning, he seeks to open new avenues and support learners to dig more deeply into their rich heritage.

"Games and simulations move beyond storytelling systems, as they are based on rules. They are ideal for teaching skills, values, and ways of thinking. Talmudic debates function much in the same way as an interactive game system, generating hypothetical situations or cases, just as turns in a game generate cases. For Jewish learning that deals with problem solving – ethics, legal debates, communal responsibilities – games and simulations are the ideal medium. In Judaism, the Oral Law was encoded into text and eventually print. Moving from a flat text page into the embodied, interactive, case-generating systems of play can unlock deeply engaging and accessible routes to deeper Jewish learning. We are moving into an age when interactivity has risen as a primary mode of entertainment, allowing us to consider practicing more of John Dewey's notions of experience in education."

Owen credits HUC-JIR for empowering his creativity and innovation. "HUC-JIR prizes a Reform heritage that is both forward looking and steeped in rigorous Jewish studies. It is a critical institution for developing responsible and informed leadership in the Jewish world." ■

A Change Agent for Muslim-Jewish Interfaith Relations

Rabbi Sarah Bassin '11

Founding Executive Director of NewGround:
A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change;
Associate Rabbi, Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills

// I knew from the time that I was 13 that I wanted to be a rabbi," says Kansas City-born **Rabbi Sarah Bassin**. "Raised as a Jew in a mixed Jewish and Catholic extended family, I was also deeply interested in interfaith relations. Lafayette College, where I worked to make Hillel the most recognized multi-cultural center on campus, and a fellowship with the American Jewish Committee affirmed this direction."

Sarah was drawn to Muslim-Jewish interfaith work through her experience with Encounter during her Year-In-Israel at HUC-JIR/ Jerusalem. Founded by American rabbis, Encounter is dedicated to strengthening the capacity of the Jewish people to be constructive agents of change in transforming the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through leadership seminars providing access to Palestinian perspectives on the West Bank.

Continuing her rabbinical and nonprofit management studies at HUC-JIR's Skirball Campus in Los Angeles, "I was lucky to be mentored by Rabbi Reuven Firestone '82, a scholar and advocate of Muslim-Jewish relations, who helped me become the founding

executive director of a start-up organization called NewGround: A Muslim-Jewish Partnership for Change. I developed Muslim and Jewish change-makers through intensive fellowship experiences, in which participants could learn about each other, pray together, and design projects for the larger community.” She credits the Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management at HUC-JIR, which matched her with her mentor and prominent volunteer leader Julie Bram, with giving her the skills, network, and practical experience to run this organization upon graduating from HUC-JIR.

Under Sarah’s leadership, NewGround has achieved national recognition and has sparked programs building Muslim-Jewish interfaith understanding in communities far and wide. “I firmly believe that building the Muslim-Jewish relationship is essential to the

community that model positive collaboration. Alumni of the program have created viral videos of city-wide joint prayer sessions to Muslim-Jewish day school exchange programs. Its high school leadership program was named California’s 2013 faith-based organization of the year, and its young professionals’ fellowship has been featured on countless media outlets in North America, Israel, and Muslim countries.

Last year, Sarah made the leap to congregational life, taking with her a wealth of knowledge and experience from start-up entrepreneurial cultures to an established synagogue - Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills. “My synagogue is excited about my deep involvement in Jewish entrepreneurial culture, through the ROI Jewish Entrepreneurs’ Network and my fellowship with the Joshua Venture Group.



Rabbi Sarah Bassin (center) and the inaugural MAJIC (Muslims and Jews Inspiring Change) high school cohort honored as California’s faith-based organization of the year by Governor Jerry Brown.

long-term health of the American Jewish community. As minorities in the United States, our agendas overlap, especially in the areas of fighting anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Yet disagreement about the Middle East has defined and destroyed the relationship. We need the investment in each other and the skills to be able to work through the conflict through a new paradigm of building meaningful relationships and partnership on our shared agendas.”

Groups of ten Muslims and ten Jews spend eight months building relationships, gaining conflict communication skills, learning about each other, and eventually designing projects for the larger commu-

I witnessed alternative models of Jewish life that reinvigorated the community and helped me to think outside of the box.” As part of the clergy team, she applies that experimentation with her young professionals groups and her synagogue’s social justice strategy to reinforce community while making change in the world.

Sarah’s mission is to make Judaism relevant for the 21st century “as we shift how we think about our interaction with other groups and blend the best of what we have to offer with the best of our surrounding culture. HUC-JIR is the essential developer of pragmatic idealists. It ingrains a spirit of eternal optimism that is needed in the Jewish community and beyond.” ■

Strengthening Relational Judaism in the Congregation

Rabbi Yaron Kapitulnik '10, MARE '10

Temple Judea, Palm Beach Gardens, FL

“**T**emple Judea is a fast-growing congregation, not just in numbers but in the spectrum of opportunities offered for congregants to be inspired, educated, and involved in *tikkun olam* and community engagement.

But I felt that as hard as I was trying, I was failing on a daily basis,” confesses **Rabbi/Educator Yaron Kapitulnik**. “No matter how many phone calls, hospital visits, personal meetings, and ‘check-in’s’ with congregants, I always felt that I was not reaching out as much as I should.”

As a rabbi comfortable with technology and gadgets, he realized that he did not have the resources to assist him in being the best possible ‘relational’ rabbi. Together with a friend, Yaron dreamed about creating a system that would remind him of every single important event he wanted to remember, but doing so in a way that would help him communicate efficiently in a time-sensitive manner, thus reaching more people in a more meaningful way than he could ever before. At the same time, he sought to develop a system that would remain personal, rather than automatic. After eighteen months of development and testing, he launched Relational Managing System (RMS) and shared it with his rabbinical peers. “In less than six months, over 120 rabbis are using the RMS mobile app and software with great satisfaction.”

Israeli-born Yaron brings a depth of experiences to his rabbinate. His first encounter with the American Jewish community was as a 16-year-old *shaliach* at a Young Judea camp in Michigan. He served

for three years in the Israel Defense Forces, graduated from Hebrew University, was the co-founder of the “Israeli desert survival center,” and worked as an environmental guide for the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel. His encounter with diverse groups at these educational centers exposed him to the “true power of educators to make a real difference in people’s lives” as well as “the impact of Israel experiences on the identity of visiting American youths and adult tourists.”

Invited to serve as the Jewish Enrichment Director of the JCC of the Greater Palm Beaches in Florida for four years, a “life-changing encounter with Temple Judea and the Reform Movement” inspired him to pursue his calling at HUC-JIR. As a Tisch Rabbinical Fellow at HUC-JIR, he was “exposed to some of the most brilliant leaders, temples, and institutions of our times.” He exerted his leadership with the HUC-JIR Soup Kitchen in New York, where he took on the challenges of fundraising for this program, which feeds a home-cooked dinner to over 100 homeless and hungry guests on Monday evenings throughout the year.

Today, he takes pride in his congregation with its daily morning *minyan*, packed Shabbat services, work with the homeless community, youth engagement programs, and its connection to Israel through growing relationships with Israeli Reform synagogues.

Innovation, leadership, and relationships are the hallmark of Yaron’s rabbinical mission. ■



Rabbi Yaron Kapitulnik (center) and Cantor Alicia Stillman '13 (right) officiating at a bar mitzvah at Temple Judea, Palm Beach Gardens, FL.

A Communal Approach to Educating Jewish Teens

Dana Kanter Prottas, Executive M.A. in Jewish Education '13

Executive Director, Yachad,
Minneapolis, MN



When the Jewish community of Minneapolis wanted a new vision for city-wide Jewish teen education, it was Dana Prottas who came up with the model.

She has just launched Yachad, a new program that is engaging over 200 teens from Reform, Conservative, and Modern Orthodox synagogues, in collaboration with 11 local organizations.

"Every aspect of Yachad is around innovation, where we engage teens in the process of their learning. The majority of our educational model is based on new educational theory, bringing together current best practices from secular education into the Jewish educational world."

Yachad represents a fundamental transformation in Jewish education - a shift away from the siloed institution toward a centralized communal approach. Learning is integrated in real-world and hands-on experiences through the "city as the classroom," where critical thinking skills and collaboration with others are developed through the arts, service learning, e-learning, philanthropy, and online tools. The teens frame their experiences around three primary questions: Who am I? How does this experience connect to me and to others? What will I offer the world?

Prottas explains that Yachad teens engage in the learning process through co-creation - they are in the "driver's seat" as they make guided choices about what they want to learn, how they want to learn, and when they want to learn. A broad menu of choices with personalized options accommodates their busy schedules. The key themes for their learning are their connections to Israel, the Jewish People, Jewish history, spirituality, and *tikkun olam*. They are introduced to these learning opportunities through twice-a-week opportunities for expanded college credit, weekly elective class-

Yachad founder Dana Prottas launching the communal Jewish education program for teens in Minneapolis.

es, biweekly seminars, monthly workshops, and certification in specialized areas.

Jewish learning is also embedded into the programming that teens need. "One example is our Lifeguard certification class that examines the mitzvah of *pikuach nefesh* (saving a life) while teens themselves learn how to save lives."

Prottas approaches her work through her training in HUC-JIR's Executive M.A. Program in Jewish Education. "This program allowed me to explore ways that Jewish educational communities need to grow in order to stay current. It is no longer sufficient for our schools to run programs based on the 1970s-1980s models of education."

She points to current theories on systemic change and reframing organizations that organize groups and foster teamwork, satisfy human needs and build interpersonal relationships, shape a culture that gives purpose and meaning to work, and builds team spirit through ritual, ceremony, and story.

Her teens participate in an expanded social network and community where both academic and social learning are important. Friendships are fostered within this dynamic, pluralistic environment, peer-to-peer, as well as with mentors, faculty, clergy, and community leaders. These relationships help them develop who they are as individuals in the community and the larger world.

"Our teens want more and we are able to engage them in ways that excite them to be part of the Jewish community. The time for change is now!" ■

Strengthening Congregations and Communities

Sustaining Southern Jewry

Rabbi Matt Dreffin '13, MAJE '11, Associate Director, Education Services,
Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS

“Hurricane Katrina was the catalyst for my decision to devote my career to strengthening the Jewish community,” says **Rabbi/Educator Matt Dreffin**, who went to URJ Camp Coleman, graduated from Tulane University, and was working as a glass sculptor in New Orleans at the time. His response to the devastation and human toll of the natural disaster was to “make more of a difference in the lives of my fellow human beings.”

Having grown up in the South, he was exposed to the legacy of the civil rights movement. “Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a hero of mine, had grounded himself in his faith before he began to make strides through history.” It was natural for Matt to turn toward both the rabbinate and leadership in Jewish education.

As a Mandel Fellow at HUC-JIR, Matt engaged in deep reflection that enabled

him to see his work in a totally different light – an experience that made him more capable of understanding change and enacting a vision than he ever could have imagined.

At the same time, his clinical pastoral education at Princeton Baptist Hospital in Birmingham, AL, gave him the opportunity to learn with Christian ministers and pastors who opened him up to listen more fully and to pray in an improvisational manner.

Today Matt is a leader in Jewish education at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL), where he works with small Southern communities covering thirteen states: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. The ISJL delivers rabbinical services, an education program, and cultural events to communities seeking new solutions, or where Jewish resources are limited. The ISJL also provides historic preservation and community engagement throughout the South.

“I love the South and admire the vibrant and committed Jewish communities spread all over our region. I hope to bring them impactful educational materials and strategies that will link them across state and regional lines.” He also trains the Education Fellows at the Institute, and hopes to influence them to become Jewish professionals.

Matt is at the center of transformation and change in the region – “where the story of Southern Jewish life is not merely the shuttering synagogues and diminishing numbers but also a story of growing communities, vibrant congregations, and active Jewish communities of all sizes.” ■



Rabbi Matt Dreffin (center, with guitar) celebrating Purim at Congregation Beth Shalom in Auburn, AL.

Go Tell It on the Mountain!

Cantor Rollin Simmons '10, Aspen Jewish Congregation

Rabbi David Segal '10, Aspen Jewish Congregation

Cantor Rollin Simmons and Rabbi David Segal first met at HUC-JIR during their Year-In-Israel Program. Today they are a wife and husband clergy team that is transforming Jewish life at the Aspen Jewish Congregation in Aspen, CO.

Rollin grew up in Milton, MA and belonged to Temple Israel in Boston. She received her B.A. in Art History at Vassar College and her Master's degree in Special Education at Lesley University, Cambridge, MA, prior to embarking on her HUC-JIR adventure. David was born and raised in Houston, TX, and his family was active at Congregation Emanu El, where he went to Hebrew school through the 12th grade. At Princeton University, he majored in Classics, with a certificate in Jewish Studies.

For Rollin, becoming a cantor "combined so many of my passions - working with people, music, teaching, being creative." For David, a two-year stint at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington, DC, was "a crucible for my formation as a Jewish leader, it's where I decided that the rabbinate was the right path for me. Particularly influential were my relationships with mentors, social justice activist Rabbi David Saperstein and scholar Rabbi Michael Signer, z"l, who showed me the range of what a rabbi could be."

Tefillah at HUC-JIR, where faculty and students come together for prayer, was a powerful experience for Rollin. It gave her the "opportunity to take risks in worship, to learn, to be a community. From working with Cantor Claire Franco at Community Synagogue in Port Washington, NY, to being a solo cantor at Hebrew Tabernacle in Washington Heights, NY, to my experience as *sheini* (second cantor) to Cantor Richard Cohn at Temple Emanu-El in Dallas, TX, my mentors taught me how to be an effective and thoughtful spiritual leader."

David praises HUC-JIR's world-class faculty, saying, "I refer back to their teaching all



Cantor Rollin Simmons and Rabbi David Segal lead worship on the Aspen mountain slope.

the time in my congregational work. Just this summer, I taught a film/discussion series based on the "Reel Theology" class I took with Dr. Wendy Zierler and Rabbi Eugene Borowitz '48. I was also fortunate to study community organizing through the Jewish Funds for Justice, which shaped how I think about deepening relationships within the congregation."

Rollin and David feel blessed to be working as a team, where their individual strengths complement each other very well. Their congregation had been lay-led for 35 years before they arrived, so their leadership involves a significant culture change. "In the five years we've been here, we've stabilized it communally, financially, and symbolically. Rollin is improving the religious school, which is growing in numbers and depth. We've created a haven for part-time residents, who spend summer and/or winter months here, and who often tell me that this is their 'home' synagogue. There is something to be said for being a small, intimate, alternative gathering place that contrasts with the scale of an urban or suburban temple," says David.

They have created relationships with their Christian clergy colleagues, working

together on programs that increase interfaith understanding and cooperation. "We celebrate Thanksgiving together and commemorate Yom Hashoah together," David adds.

David seeks "to bring people more deeply into a sense of belonging to a people and a place where they matter, while also bringing the Jewish story into the public square to make society more compassionate and just." He likes to quote E. B. White, who in an interview once said, "I arise each morning torn between my desire to enjoy (savor) the world, and my desire to improve (save) the world. This makes it hard to plan the day." "To me, that's what it means to be a Jew," explains David.

They both express gratitude to HUC-JIR for nurturing their journey toward Jewish leadership. "HUC-JIR gave me the tools to do sacred work, ignited my creativity, and showed me how the old and the new merge to form the holy," notes Rollin. David adds, "HUC-JIR trains leaders to be agents of tradition and change. Judaism continues to offer something valuable to the world: a transformative set of ethics and rituals, and most importantly, a story into which we are called to write ourselves." ■

From the Classroom to the Campfire

Rabbi Noam Katz '10, MAJE '08, Dean, Leo Baeck School, Toronto, ON

Growing up in Rochester, NY, as the son of Rabbi Alan Katz and Jewish educator Jan Katz, **Rabbi/Educator Noam Katz** seemed destined to follow in their footsteps. "But I really became passionate about Jewish learning and community during my 17 summers at URJ Eisner Camp, my two years as head songleader at URJ Kutz Camp, my NFTY-In-Israel trip, and my year abroad at Hebrew University," he explains.

The Brown University graduate majored in English Literature with a concentration in theater, both performance and playwriting, and was a high school English/drama teacher for three years in a suburb of Boston. "While I enjoyed teaching Shakespeare, Huxley, and Orwell, I was spiritually re-awakened every time I song-led, or staffed a NFTY event, or taught a social justice or Jewish comedy class at Temple Isaiah of Lexington's Hebrew High School."

"It was my three-month volunteer stint with the Abayudaya Jewish community in Africa that was decisive," he recalls. "My understanding of global Jewish responsibility deepened immeasurably and reinforced my desire to attend HUC-JIR and have an impact on burgeoning Jewish and interfaith communities, both at home and abroad."

Rabbi Noam Katz's students unroll a Torah at the largest Jewish day school in North America.

"HUC-JIR is the laboratory where I could experiment, challenge the status quo, invent, and learn from some of the most respected scholars in the world. Dr. Norman Cohen '71, Ph.D. '77, and his midrash class opened my eyes to the mix of scholarship and imagination expressed by the first generations of rabbis as they attempted to fill the 'white spaces' left unwritten by the Torah. It inspired me, whether through music, sermon, or poetry, to always reinterpret, re-translate, and reconsider the sacred text before me."

His teachers at HUC-JIR's Rhea Hirsch School of Education taught him about systems thinking, leadership and management, and the transformative work of vision-guided Jewish educators and educational institutions. "Much more than the 'how' of Jewish education, we grappled with the 'why' and were nurtured to create our own educational visions for our rabbinates." These experiences were reinforced by his three years as a rabbinical intern at Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles.

Today, Noam is the Dean of Jewish Living at the Leo Baeck School (the only Reform day school in Canada and the largest in North America). Noted for the guitar or drum slung over his shoulder, Noam's love for music is infectious. "I am always ready to teach my students a new melody with a

lesson about prayer, *Pirkei Avot*, or what it means to create a *kehillah kedoshah* (a holy community). For the past 15 years, he has composed and performed his own material, and says that the best moments of synergy are when "I work with the students themselves to help create a piece of Jewish art, be it musical, artistic, or technological, that represents their authentic connection to Judaism on their own terms."

In addition to curriculum development, teacher training, and direct instruction to students, Noam's focus is on "engaging and educating the entire family by creating partnerships between school, *shul*, and home. Parents and grandparents are welcomed for student-led events, celebrations, and services, as we equip the students with the Jewish knowledge, skills, and confidence they can transfer back home to create and strengthen Jewish practice with family and synagogue."

Noam is also pushing the boundaries beyond the school community by creating events with local Catholic and Islamic schools to learn about other faiths and facilitate relationship-building. His school is part of a Canada-wide campaign to end child poverty, linked with schools across the Jewish globe.

He is trying to erase the dichotomy between formal and informal Jewish learning. "Education is at its best when it is engaging, relevant, and user-friendly. This can and should occur in any setting, whether in a classroom or around a campfire." ■





Rabbi Marc Katz (second from right) visiting children from his congregation at URJ Crane Lake Camp.

Engaging the 20s and 30s

Rabbi Marc Katz '12, Associate Rabbi, Congregation Beth Elohim, Brooklyn, NY

“‘Brooklyn Jews’ is a tremendously meaningful part of my work at my congregation,” says **Rabbi Marc Katz**. “It is our 20s and 30s outreach program and fits into the general vision of the community as being open to all, regardless of Jewish knowledge and affiliation. We have Shabbat dinner, celebrate holidays, offer cultural programming, and run classes. Our hope is to help those who are at the margins to find a place in our greater Jewish community and in the larger Jewish world.”

Marc says he can’t remember a time when he didn’t want to be a rabbi. Growing up in Barrington, RI, he studied comparative religion at Tufts University, and worked for a year as a Legislative Assistant at the

Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism in Washington, DC. His 13 summers at URJ Eisner Camp showed him how Judaism could fit into everyday life and how Jewish institutions could make it come alive. His path led him to HUC-JIR, which “helped me find my voice, inspired my lifelong passion for text study, and stretched me to explore new ideas, unpack new texts, and see new sides of Judaism,” he recalls.

Marc is committed to providing opportunities to engage the young people who are unaffiliated from Jewish life. The goal of their Shabbat dinners and programs is to provide a platform for exploration and build community and connection with others in the process.

“Today there are so many people who are looking for meaning and seeking to take steps back into the Jewish community, but they do not know where to start,” he explains. “They are worried that they will be judged by what they know or how they act. If we want to help people create lives of connection and meaning through Judaism, we need to provide safe spaces for them to ask deep questions, challenge preconceptions, and wrestle with ideas.” ■



Rabbi Brian Stoller skyping with his Ph.D. *hevruta* partners at HUC-JIR's Pines School of Graduate Studies.

Bringing Scholarship to the Pulpit

Rabbi Brian Stoller '08, Associate Rabbi, Congregation B'nai Jehoshua Beth Elohim, Deerfield, IL; Ph.D. Student at Joan and Philip Pines School of Graduate Studies, HUC-JIR/Cincinnati

"I did not always know that I wanted to be a rabbi," says **Rabbi Brian Stoller**. The University of Texas at Austin graduate went into politics and worked as press secretary for Senator Peter Fitzgerald of Illinois. "While working in DC, I had a colleague who was a very religious Christian woman and curious about Judaism. When I couldn't answer her questions, I wanted to learn, began to read, and was captivated by my encounter with Judaism at a deep and intellectual level." Wanting to learn more, he took classes at Washington Hebrew Congregation, and slowly began to consider becoming a rabbi one day.

"I was working on Capitol Hill on 9/11 – I could see the Pentagon burning from my office window. And when, a year later, a childhood friend died of brain cancer at the age of 28, these two events made me realize how fragile life is – we don't know what time we have. It was time to give this idea of becoming a rabbi a try. It was the best decision I ever made.

At HUC-JIR, Brian loved learning with "the incredible faculty scholars." His rabbinical thesis, guided by Rabbi Jonathan Cohen '12, Ph.D., explored "The Use of Halakhic Language in Reform Rabbis' Sermons on the Iraq War." He collected pre-invasion sermons from around the country and used CCAR responsa on the Iraq War, drawing upon concepts that advocated for and against the war, investigating how Jewish law entered into the formulation of their opinions, and evaluating how sources from classical text were applied to a modern political phenomenon. "This thesis integrated my Senate work leading up to the Iraq War and the debate in Congress. I knew the politics of the arguments, and then learned the Jewish legal concepts relevant to them."

As a full-time congregational rabbi, he has made it a priority to continue his Jewish learning in a significant way. Encouraged by his Senior Rabbi Karen Kedar '85, and juggling his rabbinical work, young children,

and limited free time, he has embarked on a four-year doctoral program at HUC-JIR's Pines School of Graduate Studies, while serving his community at the same time. He is participating in courses taught in the electronic classrooms on HUC-JIR campuses, where he can see the classroom, teacher, and students, and they can see him, fully interacting, from the monitors in his office. He uses Skype for one-on-one classes and meetings with faculty, and has graduate student *hevruta* study partners, with whom he studies regularly between classes.

"My Ph.D. studies have been invaluable to me as a congregational rabbi. I integrate everything I learn into my work. Our weekly Talmud class has grown from 2 guys to 20 congregants. The sermons I give and my counseling sessions draw upon knowledge and access to texts and concepts I have studied for my Ph.D."

He has already published some articles in the *CCAR Journal*, contributed to Rabbi Kedar's book about counting the *omer*, and sees the practical Judaism of his pulpit and his scholarship as intertwined.

"As a rabbi, I have access to texts and ideas, insights, and Jewish wisdom that my lay congregants don't have. Halakhah is the basis for Judaism generally and for what we do as Reform Jews. Our patterns of observance, daily ritual, home life – all are rooted in the Jewish legal tradition. One of my goals is to help the Reform community strengthen its awareness of halakhah. Through these legal proscriptions and requirements, it teaches values and a philosophy of Jewish life, the basis for the path we walk." ■

Transmitting Tradition to the Next Generation

Rabbi Hannah L. Goldstein '13, MARE '11, Assistant Rabbi, Temple Sinai, Washington, DC

"I was studying abroad at St. Andrews, Scotland, and it was the first time in my life that I was truly distant from the Jewish community and unable to celebrate Jewish holidays and go to services," recalls

Rabbi/Educator Hannah Goldstein. "It made me realize how much I valued my Judaism and made me want to help others find the meaning and comfort in Judaism that I had experienced in my life. I returned home and applied to HUC-JIR the following year."

A graduate of Phillips Andover Academy and Brandeis University, and URJ Camp Eisner alumna and former counselor and unit head, Hannah loved her studies at HUC-JIR. "I channel the way my professors taught us to think - to push past the surface, derive meaning, question assumptions, experiment, and pursue excellence. HUC-JIR is a laboratory for people committed to building a strong Jewish future. It is the place that gives birth to new ideas."

Hannah added the Master of Arts in Religious Education degree to her rabbinical ordination program. "This education degree has had an impact on my rabbinate in a significant way. I spend so much of my time teaching learners of all ages, and the way I think about the 'why' and 'how' of teaching comes out of my education studies at HUC-JIR." In addition, her three years as an education intern and rabbinical intern at Temple Emanu-El in New York City "gave me the practical experience and confidence to be the rabbi and educator I am today."

At Temple Sinai, she runs the teen supplementary school program, works with a transitional housing program for families affiliated with her temple, does community organizing with the Washington Interfaith Network, and reaches out beyond the Temple Sinai walls with 20s/30s Shabbat dinners in restaurants in the district, creating community for young people who grew up in the temple.

"Being a rabbi is not the typical career path," she notes. But in her case, her father, Rabbi Robert S. Goldstein '81 of Temple Emanuel, Andover, MA, has taught her from a young age what it means to be a rabbi and continues to be a source of

guidance and understanding. "I admire his work in the community, his sermons, and his devotion to his congregants."

Hannah is optimistic about the Jewish future. "Though recent demographic studies disagree with me, I think there are a lot of people searching for what liberal Judaism has to offer. The Jewish community is a unique avenue for making meaning in our lives - it is a place where we can bring people together to make the world a better place. I want to transmit our tradition to the next generations so that they are genuinely excited to be the future of the Jewish project." ■



Rabbi Hannah Goldstein with an early childhood center student at Temple Sinai in Washington, DC.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

GUN SAFETY ACTIVIST AND RABBI

Rabbi Joel Mosbacher '98, D.Min. '07, Beth Chaverim Shir Shalom, Mahwah, NJ

A personal tragedy - the murder of his father Lester Mosbacher by a burglar at his small business on Chicago's South Side - has shaped **Rabbi Joel Mosbacher's** mission. He has emerged as one of the leading rabbis in America waging the war for gun safety. From feature articles to the op-ed pages of *The New York Times*, Joel has channeled his anger at his father's death into a passionate commitment to the prophetic tradition within Judaism to pursue justice.

Social action and justice work have been at the core of his identity, from his earliest experiences at NFTY, as an avid camper, counselor, and unit head at the URJ Olin-Sang-Ruby Institute (OSRUI) for 15 years, and as a volunteer coordinator for a homeless shelter at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Prior to coming to HUC-JIR, he worked for a year in the United Kingdom, helping the British Liberal Jewish Movement develop their national youth movement.

His synagogue, Beth Chaverim Shir Shalom in Mahwah, NJ, participates in a national network of community organizing, Metro Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), which organizes across lines of race, faith, and class to effect fundamental change in society. Joel has worked with other Metro IAF leaders to develop *Do Not Stand Idly By*, an inter-religious campaign against gun violence that takes its name from the biblical verse in Leviticus 19. The campaign seeks to use the massive purchasing power of the police and military, who collectively purchase 40% of the guns sold in this



Rabbi Joel Mosbacher (at right) at EnforceTac, one of Europe's largest gun shows, where Metro IAF was represented by faith leaders from throughout the U.S.



Rabbi Joshua Weinberg addressing the Consultation on Conscience at the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

ADVANCING REFORM ZIONISM AND THE JEWISH STATE

Rabbi Joshua R. Weinberg '13
President, Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA)

How does an American-born and educated young man end up ordained as a Reform rabbi in Israel and the leader of the Reform Movement's Zionist organization? Ask **Rabbi Joshua Weinberg**.

"I have always been interested in Jewish leadership, education, and Israel. From the time I was a camp counselor at URJ OS-RUI and a trip leader in Israel, I have sought out opportunities to provide meaningful experiences to connect Diaspora Jews to Israel. This took me on a path as a Jewish history teacher for the Reform Movement's high school in Israel, NFTY-EIE, and to work with other Israel-based gap programs, as well. I realized that this was going to be my life's work, so I sought to study Jewish text, pastoral care, and their professional application - which led me to HUC-JIR's Israel Rabbinical Program in Jerusalem." Studying with leading Israeli scholars on HUC-JIR's faculty amid a cohort of Israeli rabbinical student peers representing a diverse cross section of Israeli society, Josh experienced the growing Israeli thirst for liberal Jewish expression.

Today, as the President of ARZA (Association of Reform Zionists of America), he heads "the Reform Movement's central address for all things dealing with Israel, including representation at the World Zionist Congress."

What does it mean to be a Reform Zionist Movement? "It means to support our Progressive Movement in Israel and work toward its growth, and to engage in the political process for having a strong representation for liberal Judaism in Israel. It means to strive towards a Jewish existence in the Diaspora in which Israel, Jewish peoplehood, and the Hebrew language play central roles in our lives and identities. It means to change the definition of being Jewish in the Jewish State and, as individuals, to take part in the collective advancement of our people and the ongoing building of Israel."

Josh seeks to change the way in which we view ourselves as Jews, and to grow the numbers of Jews who visit, return, and move to Israel. This involves materials and resources for the Reform Movement's congregations and organizations to aid in their work of developing Israel-engaged communities. "We can show members of our Movement that they can take an active role in participating in what happens in Israel."

Under Josh's leadership, ARZA will help write the next chapter of Jewish history in the Jewish State. ■

country each year, to press gun manufacturers to create safer distribution systems and safer gun technology.

"My vision for gun safety includes the partnership of gun companies and law enforcement in dramatically reducing gun trafficking here and abroad, as well as the development, marketing, and sales of personalized gun technology so that guns can only be fired by authorized users." Smart guns, which do not yet exist in mass-producible form, can be fired only by their legal owners. Sophisticated devices that are now being designed, tested, and prototyped by cutting-edge technologists and gun designers will one day make that premise possible. Behavioral biometrics are being explored, comparable to voice recognition technology, to restrict the use of such guns to their owners, and the group is holding gun shows, where they introduce gun buyers and enthusiasts to companies working on prototypes of smart guns. Such technological strategies could assuage the resistance of those who fear government control of their Second Amendment-protected firearms but who also don't want to worry about those guns being stolen or otherwise turned on themselves or others.

Joel is working with people across the country to invite mayors, police chiefs, sheriffs, governors, and President Obama to use their power to reduce gun violence. To date, more than 75 public officials have signed onto the campaign. "What I'm hearing from clergy of all faiths is that we are all tired of performing funerals for gun victims and tired of bringing comfort to those in grief. We need to do something." Joel's drive to make a difference is a source of hope. ■

**INNOVATION
AND CHANGE
THROUGH A
GENDER LENS**

**Joy Sisisky, MAJCS/MPA '00,
Executive Director, Jewish Women's
Foundation of New York**

"My family's long history of lay leadership in global and local Jewish institutions, as well as my grandfather Normal Sisisky's service in the U.S. Congress for ten consecutive terms, inspired me to go into the family business!" states **Joy Sisisky**. The combination of extraordinary family role models and opportunities to participate in Jewish life and activism at home and abroad laid the foundation for her career as a Jewish leader at work in the Jewish social justice movement and as a volunteer.

The Richmond-born and Brandeis-educated Sisisky completed a double Master's degree in Jewish Communal Service at HUC-JIR and Public Administration at the University of Southern California. The hallmark of the HUC-JIR degree in Jewish communal service (today known as Jewish nonprofit management), is the ability to participate in a meaningful graduate internship at a local Jewish organization. "My graduate internship with AIPAC in Los Angeles jumpstarted my career as a future fundraiser, activist, planner, and manager," Joy says. Just a few months into her internship, she was hired as AIPAC's full-time Arizona and San Diego Regional Director, where she continued to work after graduation.

"My calling is to serve and strengthen global Jewish life," Joy explains. As Executive Director of the Jewish Women's Foundation of New York (JWFNY), she directs one of the nearly two dozen funds in the Jewish women's funding movement in the U.S. and Israel. JWFNY imagines a world in which all women and girls in

the Jewish community are ensured a healthy and supportive environment, a world in which women have equal opportunity for economic, religious, social, and political achievement. Over the past 20 years, JWFNY has granted more than \$4 million to hundreds of programs in New York, Israel, and around the world for women and girls in the areas of economic security, health and well-being, leadership advancement, and social entrepreneurship. "It is an honor to provide executive leadership in the Jewish community and innovation-driven sector using a gender lens."

Prior to her work with JWFNY, Joy was privileged to serve as the Ralph I. Goldman Fellow in International Jewish Service at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). She spent a year living and working abroad for JDC, the largest Jewish humanitarian organization that works in 70 countries around the world, by splitting her time between Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. In Ukraine, she co-founded *Do Good Ukraine!*, the first-ever organization dedicated to building a civil society in Ukraine through volunteerism. Registered in 14 cities across the country, the organization is an important resource in the Jewish and wider community during the current period of war and crisis.

In Ethiopia, Joy worked on non-sectarian public health concerns - access to clean water, medical development, and school building. Joy continues to be a lay leader at JDC, serving as the first co-chair of JDC Entwine, the organization's national next generation leadership platform; serving on JDC's Global Planning and Development Program committees; and traveling with JDC's study missions. "My work, both professionally at JWFNY and at JDC as a volunteer, allows me to improve the lives of marginalized populations through social change and *tikkun olam*, making the world a better place."

"I hope to bring more attention to the needs of women and girls in the Jewish community and the world, so that their full participation in society will help solve some of the world's greatest challenges, including poverty, the environment, war, and lasting peace," she adds.

Joy praises HUC-JIR as "a world-class institution that educates and influences some of the most important Jewish leaders in our communities - rabbis, cantors, educators, and professionals. HUC-JIR is a community of learners and doers - the ideal setting to test the limits of modern Jewish life, to make Judaism relevant to your own life and for others." ■



**Joy Sisisky at work on JDC-sponsored
non-sectarian public health concerns in
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.**

A RABBINATE OF RADICAL INCLUSION AND CONNECTION

Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder '06, Ph.D.,
Rabbi in Residence,
Be'chol Lashon,
San Francisco, CA;
New York, NY;
Atlanta, GA; and Oklahoma City, OK

As a child, **Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder** wanted to be Prime Minister of Canada. When told that no woman had ever held this position, she quickly decided to become the Prime Minister of Israel – after all, Golda Meir had done it. “In other words, from a young age, I wanted to be involved in Jewish leadership,” she recalls.

Brought up in a secular Israeli home in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, but educated in an Orthodox school, she struggled to integrate these two visions of how to live as a Jew, as well as her commitments to feminism and LGBT rights. During high school, she was active in the movements to free Soviet and Syrian Jewry, often in Parliament, and at college was involved in social action around disabilities, abortion rights, feminism, and antiwar protests. Her high school career test came back “clergy,” and her college professors suggested that she become a rabbi – but her secular family and the dearth of women rabbis in Canada at that time (there was only one) precluded her imagining herself in that role.

Instead, she pursued a doctorate at Yale University that focused on Jewish women, food, and domestic life. The influence of her advisor Dr. Paula Hyman, z”l, who provided a powerful role model of how it was possible to be a religious Jew and a community activist, as well as the insight of Rabbi Jonathan Magonet in England that she was destined to be a rabbi, ultimately helped her hear “the call.”

“At HUC-JIR, our classes in pastoral care helped me understand how to connect my knowledge of Jewish tradition with the realities and complexities of living and leading Jewish community. We talked about one measure of a community being its treatment of its weakest members. I think about that often. If the Judaism we create is not the place or answer in our times of need, then in my opinion we have failed the sacred mission entrusted to us upon our ordination.”

Ruth is fulfilling that mission as Rabbi in Residence at Be'chol Lashon, the only national organization dedicated to celebrating the racial and ethnic diversity of the Jewish community. “The face of the Jewish community in the United States is changing through adoption, intermarriage, and conversion, and 20% of American Jews are ethnically or racially diverse,” she explains. “Jews are part



Rabbi Ruth Abusch-Magder (at right) at a Be'chol Lashon Torah service.

of a complex, multi-faceted global community, where race is one of many distinguishing factors. As a community, we cannot afford to continue assuming that when Jews participate in Jewish spaces that they leave all other aspects of their identities behind; on the contrary, we need to embrace those other identities and celebrate them for the myriad of ways they can enrich and deepen our collective experience.”

Be'chol Lashon's strategies focus on research, community-building, and education, including facilitating workshops for congregations and communities to learn how to talk about diversity, organizing trips to engage with global Jewish communities, and supporting leadership by Jews from diverse backgrounds through its speakers' bureau. “When I see a bar mitzvah boy wearing a traditional Korean Hanbok as he chants Torah, I see a Jewish future that embraces the fullness and complexity of Jewish experience.”

Ruth sees her rabbinate as one of radical inclusion and connection, in opposition to the frequent portrayal of Jewish tradition as one that creates boundaries and separations. “Ours is a tradition that sees every human being as created in the image of God. Ours is a tradition that reminds us that we were once strangers and demands that we treat others as we hope to be treated. I push our community and its members to live up to those ideals, especially as it relates to its own communal members. I encourage the participation of all voices in the creation of modern Jewish life.” ■

**EQUIPPING
LEADERS FOR
FAITH-ROOTED
JUSTICE WORK**

**Rabbi Justus Baird '07, Dean,
Auburn Seminary, New York, NY**

"As a convert to Judaism, my decision to become a rabbi was fraught," recalls **Rabbi Justus Baird**. "What right did I have to become a leader among the Jewish people?" The Rice University graduate was a technology/education entrepreneur, founder of a digital library called Questia, and "the only 20-something hanging out at evening events at my *shul*."

With the encouragement of his rabbi and HUC-JIR's admissions committee, and the support of his peers and HUC-JIR's faculty, Justus pursued his dream. "To spend your days in full-time study of Jewish tradition is an incredible blessing. I soaked it in. At the same time, serving as a student rabbi in congregations around the U.S. was critical to my formation as a rabbi. These communities embraced me and gave me the space to start finding my voice as a Jewish leader."

Today, Justus fulfills his rabbinate as the Dean of Auburn Seminary, where he oversees educational programs that prepare leaders of faith and moral courage to engage in faith-rooted justice work. Pointing to the inspiring Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh leaders engaged in study there, he explains that

"Auburn is the crossroads for Jewish social justice leaders who are ready to deepen their relationships with like-minded communities of other faiths. We have equipped America's top Jewish justice leaders with media training, self-care and spirituality, digital organizing, and applied theology." The interfaith learning has brought Justus into a broad range of causes, including #blacklivesmatter, fights for economic justice, and immigration reform.

"Was there ever a time where Jews were more beloved by their non-Jewish neighbors than American Jews in the 21st century?" he asks. "We have the opportunity to use Jewish wisdom to shape the moral debates of our time. We can turn being *ohr lagoyim* – a light among the nations – from a biblical passage into a practice. As the rabbi and Dean of Auburn Seminary, I have a platform and network to reach any faith community in the country to talk about any issue facing the world today."

Justus praises HUC-JIR as ground zero for forming Jewish leaders, for the Reform Movement and beyond, who are skilled at bringing Jewish wisdom to the world. "HUC-JIR will prepare you well for what lies ahead – you will find a home and discover your potential." ■



Rabbi Justus Baird headlines a bi-partisan Congressional briefing on the subject of his report, *Lo\$ing Faith in Our Democracy: A Theological Critique of the Role of Money in American Politics*.

**REFLECTIONS
ON "PRAYING
WITH OUR
FEET"**

HUC-JIR alumni participated in the NAACP's "America's Journey for Justice," covering 860 miles from Selma, AL

to Washington, DC. Our alumni carried a Torah scroll and participated in rallies advocating for justice and equality. They demonstrated Reform Judaism's abiding commitment to civil rights.

Rabbi Jonah Pesner '97, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Washington, DC:

"Our traditions as Jews and as Americans tell us not to stand idly by when our neighbors' blood is shed, when equal opportunities in education and employment are denied, or when our brothers and sisters struggle to overcome generations of discrimination. As the "Journey for Justice" mobilizes activists around a vision that seeks uncorrupted access to the ballot box for every eligible American, a justice system rooted in principles that apply to all equally, a reality in which individuals can earn a living wage that supports our families, and equitable public education opportunities for all children, we are inspired to be present. We honor our Movement's legacy of involvement in the civil rights movement not merely by remembering it and teaching it to our children, but by making the struggle our own."

Leslie Scheck, MARE '14, Director of Early Childhood Education, Temple Solel, Paradise Valley, AZ:

"We marched with purpose, taking turns holding the Torah with pride. We told stories and shared the reasons why we were there. Some had experienced injustice in this world and hoped for a better future. Some wanted better for their children. Some wanted to end the 'school to prison pipeline.' Some wanted to make sure all who chose to vote could do so. As I came back to my congregation, I felt forever changed. As I move ahead, I still hear the voices of my fellow marchers. For me, they will forever be the sounds of justice."

Cantor Vicky Glikin '12, Congregation Solel, Highland Park, IL:

"The pain of discrimination during my childhood in Ukraine has pushed me to work toward a more just society. We gathered in a circle outside of Raleigh, NC, arms linked, black and white, policemen, NAACP staff members, and volunteers, as NAACP President William Brooks spoke about the Torah scroll's aspirational values and called on us to march in the name of justice and God. An elderly veteran, Middle Passage, z"l, who had carried the American flag at the front of the march from its beginning, said,



Rabbi Jonah Pesner (from left) with Hilary O. Shelton, NAACP Washington Bureau Director and Senior Vice President for Advocacy, and Rabbi Seth Limmer '00, of Chicago Sinai Congregation, Park City, UT.



Leslie Scheck (right) and a friend during the "Journey for Justice."



Cantor Vicky Glikin and Rabbi Evan Moffic '06, with the "Journey for Justice" Torah.

"It's about justice and love." He fell ill while marching and was not able to be revived. Those of us who were lucky enough to walk beside him, however briefly, felt the strength of his character and have been forever altered by having met him." ■

ENGAGING

JEWISH COLLEGE STUD

Jeremy Ragent, MAJNM/MPA '15

Assistant Director, Hillel at Stanford

Rabbi Dana Benson '15

Senior Jewish Educator, Michigan State University Hillel

Igor Khokhlov, MARE '10, MAJNM '12

Executive Director, University of Miami Hillel

"It was New Year's Eve in the middle of the desert in Israel," recalls **Rabbi Dana Benson**. "Together with 30 of my peers from different universities on my Birthright trip, we looked up at the expansive night sky above us. I began to sing *Y'huyu L'ratzon* and when I finished, I heard a voice in my heart - it was the realization that I wanted to be a rabbi. On New Year's day, I watched

the sun rise from the top of Masada, ready to commit myself to working for the Jewish people."

For **Jeremy Ragent**, it was his year-long Project Otzma experience in Israel, combining social action and modern Israel education, that confirmed what he wanted to do for the rest of his life. "I applied to Hillel jobs in the Bay area where I grew up, and for two years worked at Stanford Hillel - the best job in the world, meeting undergrads for coffee, hearing their stories,

and working with them to plan programs. When two students in the organic co-op wanted to know the ethics of Jewish tradition and food, we did the research, planted the first biblical garden, and did education around kashrut. When some students worried about being 'really' Jewish when a parent was not Jewish - their baggage was the starting point for deeper exploration." Shifting to fundraising work for Stanford Hillel, Jeremy saw a bigger picture of the nonprofit sector and realized how much he didn't know. "That's when I found out about HUC-JIR, which invested in me as a student."

Growing up in industrial Bryansk, Russia, **Igor Khokhlov** sought safety from anti-Semitic bullying and discrimination through his family's changed name (originally Alterman) and secular, assimilated identity - all of which imbued him with a desire to stay away from Jewish life. When his future wife, Jewish educator Olga Zelzberg, MARE



"I want to demonstrate the Jewish value to a new generation of young Jews on the college campus. Why does it matter that you are Jewish? What kinds of impact can it have on your life? How will it influence how you date, relate to your family?"

Jeremy Ragent, Stanford Hillel

ENTS WHERE THEY ARE



“Hillel is a hub for Jewish innovation, entrepreneurship, and celebration of Jewish life on campus. All of us at Hillel are committed to inspiring every Jewish student to make an enduring commitment to Jewish life, learning, and Israel.” **Igor Khokhlov, University of Miami Hillel**

'10, brought him to Hillel in Bryansk, however, he liked the bright, determined people that gathered there, enjoyed the sense of community, and wanted to learn and understand more. He began working for Russian Hillel, went to Hillel Congresses, and got to know the leaders and philanthropists who were renewing Jewish life in post-Soviet Russia. During his and Olga's yearlong MASA program at Hebrew University, they applied and were accepted into HUC-JIR's Education program.

At HUC-JIR, Bloomfield, MI-bred Dana forged strong relationships with the faculty and mentors in the field. “HUC-JIR shapes the minds of those that will help shape the Jewish future. Wrestling with the concepts, texts, and practices of Judaism in open and authentic ways helped open my mind and helped me explore how to best teach and share the richness of our tradition with others.” She transmitted this learning as a Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Fellow, fulfilling her Service Learning Program at

Kulanu, the Jewish high school program in Cincinnati.

“Working with teens during those four years confirmed that working with adolescents would be my passion, and that it would be possible to focus on teens and emerging adults beyond the walls of the synagogue.” As the student rabbi at Oklahoma University Hillel for the High Holy Days and Passover, Dana created pluralistic Jewish settings, meaningful prayer, and holiday experiences that helped the students to grow in their understanding of Judaism. Working as a student intern for the National Office of Recruitment and Admissions at HUC-JIR further developed her skills by organizing study retreats for high school and college students and connecting with prospective students at college campuses.

For Igor, “the New York School of Education at HUC-JIR gave me the language, methodology, and understanding that I should be open to the concept of lifelong

learning, constantly looking for new ideas. The Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management taught me how to fund raise, organize staff, work with lay leadership, create budgets, and more. Most importantly, its ‘hands on’ approach to education was deeply rooted in Jewish values and the ways in which we, as Jewish professionals, should approach our work as holy.”

For Jeremy, learning about the craft of running a nonprofit, financial management, and other skills at HUC-JIR's Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management was an extraordinary, individually-tailored program. In addition, his MPA at USC gave him insight into the industry of philanthropy, and the interplay of government, nonprofits, and foundations. He interned at Beit Tzedek Legal Services and taught inner city minority children at the Stephen Wise Temple Freedom School in a Jewish synagogue camp setting, where he applied his Jewish values to social change.



“I help students explore their connection to Judaism, to prayer, and to having greater dialogue about how to live Jewishly. I also empower the Hillel staff with Jewish learning and content to strengthen their programming.” **Rabbi Dana Benson, Michigan State University Hillel**

Jeremy’s studies at HUC-JIR were enriched by inspiring partnerships with distinguished Jewish lay leaders. “I learned the craft of running a nonprofit while also learning from inspiring lay leader mentors who prepared me for the key partnerships that are crucial for a thriving organization.” These experiences are indispensable to his current role as Assistant Director of Stanford Hillel, where he works with the Board. There are approximately 600 Jewish undergraduates and 1100 Jewish graduate students at Stanford, representing every denomination of Judaism. Hillel offers services for those not going to local synagogues, partners with the Office of Religious Life for inter-faith activities, and collaborates with academic departments to engage them. The Hillel is supported generously by parents and alumni.

As the first-ever Senior Jewish Educator at Michigan State University Hillel, Dana has returned to her alma mater, where she was involved as an undergraduate in theater productions and served on the Black Caucus and the LGBTQ Caucus. “I help students explore their connection to

Judaism, to prayer, and to having greater dialogue about how to live Jewishly. I also empower the Hillel staff with Jewish learning and content to better arm them with Jewish language and concepts to add to their programming with students.”

“Hillel is one of the only organizations with a real relationship with college students and a commitment to Israel,” says Jeremy. “We have to start where the students are. They are sophisticated, but most know very little about the Israel-Palestinian conflict and history. How do we present Israel as dynamic and promising, despite its problems and challenges?”

Igor points to the recent wave of anti-Semitism in the world, and especially Europe. “American Jewry suddenly realizes that the freedom of expression and the vast infrastructure for Jewish life that has been built in the U.S. in the past century should not be taken for granted. I am keenly aware of how lucky we all are to be able to say: ‘I am Jewish’ and be proud. My work on campus is to ensure that students from all Jewish backgrounds can commit to being Jewish on their terms.”

He adds, “The role of Reform Judaism in North America and Progressive Judaism in the world is critical. HUC-JIR trains highly qualified Jewish leaders that love what they do. HUC-JIR will continue to teach *l’dor va’dor* – from generation to generation – those who will teach, accept, welcome, and stand up for the Jewish people.”

Jeremy sums it up, saying, “Jewish nonprofits are accomplishing really important things for the Jewish and broader world. Who are heading these nonprofits? Graduates of HUC-JIR! If you want to work hard, effect change to the problems in the world, come to Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.” ■

PASTORAL CARE

WITNESSING LOVE IN THE HOSPITAL

Rabbi Edith M. Meyerson '07, D.Min. '13, BCC, Director of Pastoral Counseling and Bereavement Services, The Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute, Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, NY

"I was seeking a career in which I could change someone's life for the better and help them find their own path to being Jewish," says Baltimore-bred and Brandeis-educated **Rabbi Edith Meyerson**. Initially drawn to becoming a doctor because her father was a doctor and the hospital environment was comfortable for her, she soon realized that she did not mesh with the pre-med track. What really appealed to her, however, was healing and how one can bring it into the world.

The path of counseling called her to rabbinical school at HUC-JIR, where Clinical Pastoral Education, spiritual direction, and

daily *tefillah* were most impactful for her. It was the Doctor of Ministry program, specifically, that enhanced her rabbinical education. "I developed the skills for counseling, creating ritual at the bedside, and being actively present at the bedside with those in need of healing."

At Mount Sinai Hospital's Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute, Edie is part of an interdisciplinary team of providers caring for serious illnesses - doctors, nurses, chaplains, massage therapists, yoga specialists, social workers, and music and art therapists. She explains that the medical staff members are experts about what is happening within the body, but the patient and the family are experts in who the patient is.

She defines patient-centered care as "being able to hear the patient, and helping them make an informed decision based on who

they are, what is important to them, and understanding their condition." Edie helps guide the medical team to offer treatment within the context of the patient, family, or healthcare surrogate or proxy. Issues include the patient's wishes, how to use limited time, the impact of side effects, decisions on remaining in the hospital or returning home to be with a grandbaby, extending time when a cure is not available, and what time means when one is in the hospital with side effects. "The Palliative team is in constant dialogue, in daily rounds together. We pre-meet to make a plan, train others to have these conversations, and support each other through these difficult discussions."

Known as Rabbi Edie at the hospital, she explains that "Reform Judaism informs spiritual care and palliative care, which are centered on asking key questions: Who are you and what is important to you? We all have one life to live, how do you want to live yours?"



Susie Cushner

Rabbi Edith Meyerson (at right) officiating at a bed-side wedding ceremony for cancer patient Jeremiah Miller and Jeffrey Dicker.

For Edie, being able to show up for those in need is an inherently Jewish value, as well as a universal connector. “There is a difference between religion and spirituality – they are connected but not necessarily the same. Everyone is spiritual and has something that gives meaning to their life. Being able to tap into each person’s humanity informs me how I need to interact in the world, but I am not there to tell others how to be and act. I am there to help *them* guide *me* on how *they* want to be and act in the world. For patients, for their families, for medical providers, for all human beings, to be known and understood, to be heard, that is the basis for spiritual and pastoral

care.” Edie describes that in her theology, “God is love and God’s divine spark exists in every person. I get to witness love multiple times each day – seeing a nurse gently combing the hair of a patient or applying lotion on her hands, family members walking in with love and concern, people working there as acts of love for humankind or working to support the families they love. Seeing that love is a deeply fulfilling experience.”

HUC-JIR offers the support, diverse curriculum, and opportunities for students to pursue the many ways one can be a rabbi in the world. Edie asserts that “while the

pulpit is important, there is a great need for people interested in the counseling world, in having the one-on-one interactions that really do help change people’s lives at very sacred moments. My Mandarin patient, with interpreter, points to me and says: ‘Who are you? What kind of doctor are you?’ I answer: ‘I am not a medical doctor, but I am a chaplain, and some people call me a doctor of the soul. My expertise is knowing all of you and knowing what is important to you.’” ■

FROM THE BATTLEFIELD TO THE BEMA

Cantor David Frommer '11

First Cantor U.S. Military Chaplain; Congregation Shomrei Torah, Santa Rosa, CA

Cantor David Frommer is unique – he is the first and only cantor to serve our nation as a Jewish military chaplain. “Every day in uniform is a meaningful experience,” he explains, “because it represents a future of full clergy partnership that cantors are working hard to earn.”

Two experiences led David Frommer to the cantorate: the innovative worship services at his Upper East Side synagogue in Manhattan that created a Friday evening service of accessible music designed to be sung by the laity, and singing in Yale University’s Jewish a capella group, Magevet, at synagogues around the world. “The thrill of connecting with Jews from such different backgrounds through our common musical heritage made a future in the cantorate an obvious choice,” he recalls.

At HUC-JIR’s Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music, David found classmates who shared his arcane interests in Jewish music and a program where special talents were encouraged and nurtured. “Through five years of study together, we formed bonds of friendship that will last a lifetime.” At the same time, the faculty took his passion for Jewish music and molded it into a sense of

mission and purpose. “They exposed me to the entire narrative of Jewish musical history and to all genres of Jewish musical expression.”

David led Passover seders for the Jewish men and women serving our country in Kabul, Afghanistan, and spoke with Christian military chaplains on the importance in Reform Judaism of marriage equality for all. In his current work with the National Guard, he serves as an ambassador of Judaism to soldiers who know little about Jewish religion, history, or culture. “Teaching a soldier about the Shoah who had not known of it before was a powerful reminder that the work we do for soldiers who aren’t Jewish is just as important as the work we do for those who are.”

As cantor of Congregation Shomrei Torah, Santa Rosa, CA, David describes how “my congregants can feel a sense of community, the presence of God, and personal renewal, through music – the language of sacred emotion. They may enter the synagogue burdened with their individual worries, but they can leave rejuvenated by the power of singing together as one.”

“As clergy, our hope is to help our congregants forge deeper connections with the beauty and wisdom of our faith. I want to



U.S. Army Chaplain Cantor David Frommer celebrating Passover in Afghanistan.

empower them to own their Jewish musical experience. By singing the melodies, they can find meaning in our liturgy, at the same time accumulating a repertoire of Jewish sacred music not only for Shabbat and holidays, but for the personal moments in their lives – including bedtime rituals with their children.”

David feels strongly that “If you really want to lead people, you have to be transformed into a leader. HUC-JIR charts the course for the entire Reform Movement to navigate the difficult currents of tradition and

innovation, to speak with moral clarity on the great issues of our time, and creates among its religious leaders the bonds of collegiality that sustain them in their sacred work. Through its graduates, HUC-JIR

reaches the majority of Jews in North America and communities around the world. It offers Judaism’s blueprint for the ethical and moral perfection of the world.” ■

“WISE AGING” IN THE SYNAGOGUE

Rabbi Marion Lev-Cohen ‘10

Rabbi for Community Engagement,
Central Synagogue, New York, NY



Rabbi Marion Lev-Cohen (second from left) teaching text to congregants at Central Synagogue in New York City.

Trained as a clinical social worker at a Harvard teaching hospital, and practicing in the field for some time, **Rabbi Marion Lev-Cohen** “began to question the limits of psychotherapy.” Simultaneously, as a lay leader in several well-known Jewish communal organizations, her areas of interest were “how to make Judaism more relevant and compelling in contemporary times and how to better connect North American Jews to Israel.”

Marion began to explore how spirituality and Judaism could address major issues in people’s lives. Courses in theology and theodicy ensued, and “it was Rabbi Larry Hoffman ‘69, Ph.D. ‘73, who suggested that I apply to HUC-JIR to become a rabbi. Becoming a rabbi has effected the confluence of all my areas of passion.” Guiding her journey was her mentor Rabbi Nancy Wiener ‘90, D.Min. ‘94, who taught Marion how to be an effective and compassionate

pastoral rabbi while supervising her rabbinical thesis.

Today based at Central Synagogue, a large New York City congregation of 2,350 member units, Marion is part of a clergy team that is addressing the challenges of creating a sense of community for all its members. They have embarked on an ambitious program of small groups designed to eventually connect each congregant to a group. Each group will be thematically based on either discussions of Jewish theological questions, values, or Shabbat dinner.

“As Rabbi for Community Engagement, I have focused my work on creating small groups for congregants over the age of 65, which has an impact on 1,300 members. Our synagogue attracts many people who choose to move to Manhattan from the suburbs after their children have left home. As newcomers to the city, they are looking

for new friendship circles. Many are often newly retired, searching for meaning and purpose, and are often focused on their legacy.” A new initiative, “Wise Aging,” sponsors facilitated groups that examine the issues at this stage of life through the lens of text, Jewish values, and contemplative practices.

“So much of our work depends on our capacity as rabbis to be attuned, compassionate, and available to address the life cycle events and pastoral needs of our congregants. I believe that every aspect of being a rabbi is, at its core, a pastoral function. From giving sermons, to sitting with a dying congregant, our calling is to inspire, teach, and heal each congregant as well as our congregation as a whole. Based on the ethical teachings of our tradition, it is incumbent upon us to create sacred and supportive communities.” Marion facilitates three pastoral groups, as well as meets with individual congregants for short-term pastoral counseling.

She feels that HUC-JIR has been ahead of the curve in preparing Jewish leaders to address the ever-changing needs and concerns of North American Jews generally and Reform Jews in particular, including training in welcoming and engagement to respond to the changing demography of the Jewish community. She praises HUC-JIR for “developing a cadre of leaders who are building communities, transmitting Jewish values and ideals for a just society, teaching Jewish texts and traditions, and advancing an open and pluralistic approach to Jewish life.” ■

THE SOUND OF JEWISH MUSIC

Cantor Daniel Mutlu '08
Congregation Beth Israel, Houston, TX

Cantor Andrea Rae Markowicz '13
Am Shalom, Glencoe, IL

Cantor Daniel Mutlu singing the national anthem at a Houston Astros baseball game.



Cantor Andrea Rae Markowicz (right) guiding a bar mitzvah Torah reading.

Today's cantors are revising their roles as a key member of the Jewish clergy team. While once defined primarily as a *ba'al tefillah*, a prayer leader skilled in voice and liturgy who inspires his congregants, cantors have expanded their roles to encompass a broad range of clergy functions as educators, pastoral counselors, and composers contributing new Jewish music, in addition to their leadership in spiritual guidance and worship. **Cantor Andrea Rae Markowicz** and **Cantor Daniel Mutlu** exemplify this new generation of cantors.

The son of parents born in Istanbul, Turkey, Daniel discovered music during his grade school years in a Lubavitch yeshiva in Worcester, MA, an interest that ultimately led to the New England Conservatory of Music, where he majored in vocal performance. His frequent travels to Israel reinforced his love for Jewish music, tradition, and identity. He began to imagine becoming a cantor – and this idea became a reality “due to the most wonderful miscalculation.”

“My grandfather was living right next to a Reform synagogue, where he attended daily *minyan*,” says Daniel. “He mistakenly thought the congregation was in need of a cantor. Naturally, he thought that I, his grandson who had just graduated from music school, would be a perfect fit. He called the synagogue every day, incessantly, until the cantor there called me. She asked if I would like to be a soloist for their High Holy Day quartet. More importantly, she said that if I were considering becoming a cantor, she would guide me through the process toward ‘this most wonderful and fulfilling profession.’ The rest is history.”

Growing up in the suburbs of Toledo, OH, Andrea discovered her voice in a junior high school where singing was highly regarded and the chorus, show choir, and musical theater programs were skillfully led. Private lessons, summers at the famed Interlo-

chen Arts Camp, State Honors Choirs in both Ohio and Michigan, and other special choruses led to a scholarship and Bachelor of Music in voice performance at the University of Michigan's School of Music, followed by a Master of Music degree at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

It is important to promote Judaism and contribute to the multicultural strengths of my city.

"Just a few weeks into graduate school, my music theory professor pulled me aside," recalls Andrea. "He was the choir director of a synagogue and needed an immediate substitute for a soprano. I soon became a regular member of his professional choir and was mentored by its extraordinary cantor. In short order, I was invited to be the High Holy Day cantorial soloist at synagogues in Lorain and Toledo."

Moving to New York City for a musical theater career, she worked part-time as a member of Central Synagogue's professional choir, where she observed at close range its master cantors - Cantor Ida Rae Cahana '93, and Rabbi/Cantor Angela Buchdahl '99, '01. She also taught *tefillah*, tutored b'nai mitzvah students, and served as the cantorial soloist that inaugurated the Community High Holy Day Services for non-members. "The more immersed I became in the synagogue, the more my heart and mind told me that my life had to

change. I felt the most at ease - the most myself - when I was at the synagogue. It was the synagogue where I was finding true meaning. HUC-JIR was the next step."

At HUC-JIR, Andrea loved the creative collaborations of the Wednesday cantorial practica sessions. "Through these presentations, Debbie Friedman School of Sacred Music students develop practical examples of prayer services, special musical events, and concerts. The student presenter collaborates with other students, professors, musicians, staff, and others, on campus and beyond, to realize their visions. These weekly programs brought our wider community together, stretched our personal beliefs and styles, and served as a source of inspiration by being part of someone else's creation."

Daniel enjoys the special qualities of life in the Jewish community of Houston, which he describes as being "tight-knit, supportive, and cross-denominational," and where Conservative and Orthodox Jews regularly worship at Congregation Beth Israel. He also feels that "it is important to get out into the greater community to promote Judaism, the cantorate, the Reform Movement, and my synagogue, and contribute to the multicultural strengths of the city." Examples include his performing with the Houston Opera, singing the national anthem at an Astros baseball game, and participating in the non-denominational Rothko Chapel's Twilight Meditation Series, where "I brought in meditative texts and music from Hasidism, traditional hazzanut, contemporary Jewish songwriters, and some of my own compositions."

Andrea's praises her incredible team of clergy and administrative staff at Am Shalom and partners with them to engage her congregants through music, "connecting people to God, to Judaism, to the

Jewish community, and to themselves." She organizes Jewish Music Heritage Shabbat programs to present the ever-evolving modes of worship and musical expression, including leading composers and Sephardic traditions, to expand the congregation's horizons. Israeli performing artists, klezmer bands, rock and roll, and soul music are featured, as well.

Like Daniel, Andrea brings Jewish music into the larger community, notably by premiering a new symphonic pops concert called Shalom Broadway. Furthermore, as the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, she has been privileged to sing at events at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Illinois Holocaust Center. She sees her cantorate as a platform for "transforming the communal worship experience, creating opportunities to intersect the spiritual and the secular, building bridges between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, and expanding Jewish pluralism and gender equality."

Both Andrea and Daniel demonstrate that today's cantor is a new breed, fulfilling the interests and needs of changing Jewish communities. She explains, "The cantorate is a blend of artistry, scholarship, and pedagogy and HUC-JIR is the top cantorial program in the world." ■

Music connects people to God, Judaism, community, and themselves.

SUSTAINING THE ORGANIZATIONS OF JEWISH LIFE

Aaron Gorodzinsky, MAJNM '13

Director of Outreach and Community Relations, Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley, Allentown, PA

When **Aaron Gorodzinsky** was growing up in Mexico City, he was imbued with the core value that “all of Israel are responsible for one another.”

tional, nonprofit organization dedicated to informing the public about Israel, combating the extremism and anti-Semitism that often distorts the issues

Jewish professional. He applied to HUC-JIR’s Zelikow School of Jewish Nonprofit Management, where he says the rigorous education featured “the caring

and supportive faculty and administrators who are com-

mitted to ensuring that the next generation of Jewish leaders has every tool to succeed.”

“In my position, I have the opportunity to meet and talk with Jews from all denominations, sexual orientations, political views, and ages. Despite the superficial differences that exist in our community, every person I meet wants to ensure that the next generation grows up in a Jewishly enriched environment.”

EMBODYING JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD

Hooked into Hillel as a freshman at the University of Winnipeg in Canada, where he received degrees in both political science and conflict resolution studies, he rose to be President of his campus Hillel and involved with national Hillel. He became a StandWithUs Fellow, associated with the interna-

around the Arab-Israeli conflict, and promoting discussions and policies that can help advance peace in the region.

After graduation, his work as a Spanish Media Fellow at the Israel Project office in Jerusalem convinced him that he wanted to become a full-time

His nonprofit management education prepared to him to head up his Federation’s Community Relations Council, Young Adult Division, Partnership2Gether, and Super Sunday.

As a nonprofit leader, Aaron says that he wants to “ensure the continuity of the Jewish people and strengthen the special connection between Israel and the Jewish communities around the world.” He adds, “Every single organization that I have the opportunity to partner with has an HUC-JIR alumnus working for them. HUC-JIR graduates are working every day to shape the future of Jewish communities throughout North America and around the world.”



Aaron Gorodzinsky (third from left) with the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley’s mission to advocate for seniors and students with state legislators in Harrisburg, PA.

Michelle Shapiro Abraham, RJE, MAJE '96

Director of Program Development, URJ Youth
Consultant, Foundation for Jewish Camp;
Clinical Faculty, HUC-JIR Executive
M.A. Program in Jewish Education

Michelle Shapiro Abraham is one of the three visionary educators named as the 2015 recipients of The Covenant Award for excellence in the field. The Covenant Foundation states that Michelle demonstrates “the power of inspired Jewish education to create change and drive impact.”

Michelle credits HUC-JIR’s Rhea Hirsch School of Education for her career path and excellence. “Everything I am as a Jewish educator has its roots at the RHSOE – the way I think, the way I approach issues, and the colleagues I turn to for advice and collaboration.”

Michelle is lauded for elevating and inspiring the field of Jewish education “with unwavering devotion, strong leadership, sacred obligation to the future, and dynamic approaches that fuel individual community enrichment, cohesion, and growth.”

A Jewish educator who has altered the educational landscape in myriad settings and for a cross section of students and colleagues, Michelle explains that her work takes her “from synagogues, classrooms, and offices, to camps, conferences, and preschool programs,” and that her award validates “all of these settings and the many places Jewish educators can make an impact.”

Her roles encompass being the author of children’s books, a writer of curricula, director of a synagogue school (where she launched a markedly successful approach to family and congregational learning that engages the entire synagogue in the same topics concurrently, fortifying community and cross-generational ties), and creator of summer camping programs, among others. Her multi-faceted professional career reflects that Jewish education transcends labels, boundaries, and silos to make lasting impressions and generate short- and long-term rewards. When queried about her specialization or her being a formal or informal educator, or author of curriculum or prayer books, or teacher of adults or children, she replies that she does “whatever is required; for me the lines are fluid.”

At the URJ, she has created educational experiences that have transformed the lives of thousands of Jewish youth and altered approaches of camp staff and educators. At the Foundation for Jewish Camp, she designed Jewish values-based curricula customized for URJ specialty camps, including the 6 Points Sports Academy and 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy. As manager of the URJ Service Corps program, she works with college-age camp staff to bring camp-type experiences to synagogues during the off-sea-



GUIDING JEWISH EDUCATION IN SYNAGOGUES, OFFICES, CAMPS, CONFERENCES, AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

son, building a continuum of exposures throughout the year and solidifying community. She helped develop the Kivun program, designing a series of professional development opportunities to equip camp specialists with skills and Judaic knowledge to deepen and enhance learning and experiences for campers.

URJ President Rabbi Rick Jacobs notes, “Abraham’s outstanding work enacts bold, new ideas that represent the URJ’s 2020 Vision, our strategic, ambitious action plan.”

Michelle replies, “I believe that the liberal Judaism cultivated by HUC-JIR and the URJ makes our entire world a better place.”

Michelle Shapiro Abraham with a young congregational school student.

Stephanie S. Bressler, MAJCS/MCM '07

Senior Development Officer, Pediatrics, Cedars-Sinai, Los Angeles

"Hebrew School, camp, Hillel – I checked off all the boxes, but the one that really sealed the deal for me was my involvement in youth group as a teenager – I truly felt like I had found my Jewish home," recalls **Stephanie Bressler**. "When I originally thought about becoming a Jewish communal professional, it was because I wanted to ensure that all Jews would get to experience the comfort of finding 'their Jewish home.'"

At HUC-JIR, Stephanie's classroom learning was integrated with internship placements that applied her studies into action. "As an intern with an executive director of a national organization and with the senior rabbi of a local congregation, I was able to put everything I was learning into practice. Additionally, these opportunities put me into the context of senior staffs, board of directors, and major donors – I was at meetings that young professionals at the start of their careers simply don't have access to in any other arena. Upon entering the field, I already had relationships and experiences representing two years of professional experience in the field under my belt."

As the primary development professional for the Department of Pediatrics at Cedars-Sinai, she works in partnership with the medical staff to raise the essential funds needed to allow her medical center to remain on the cutting edge of clinical care and research. "The physicians, nurses, scientists, and other clinical care providers and researchers save lives every day, and they rely on funds raised to support this work. I not only have an impact on direct fundraising, but I help create a 'buzz' so that more people know about the exciting research taking place."

Stephanie's donors are the families of patients. "Providing an outlet for families to express their gratitude, or their grief when necessary, is an important part of my work."

She thinks about Cedars-Sinai as a Jewish organization that has impact on the Jewish and larger world, and uses the Kabbalistic teaching about

FUNDRAISING AS A TOOL TO REPAIR THE WORLD

tikkun olam to describe the sacred aspect of her work. "The vessels containing God's Divine light have shattered throughout creation. It is our job to retrieve the shards and thus repair the world. HUC-JIR's students and alumni are retrieving these shards. Every child we teach at school or camp, every dollar raised toward the support of Jewish continuity, education, special needs, medical research, or ending genocide, every prayer led or person counseled – each is a shard and, because of HUC-JIR and our work, the vessels are beginning, every so slightly, to resemble their original form."

Stephanie Bressler raising support for Pediatrics at Cedars-Sinai in Los Angeles.





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with Rabbi Dr. Tamara Eskenazi and Rabbi Sarah Bassin
Tuesday, December 15, 2015 @7:00 pm PST

The Mystery of the Dead Sea Scrolls
with Rabbi Dr. Joshua Garroway
Sunday, February 28, 2016 @9:30 am PST

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with Dr. Sharon Gillerman and Dr. Leah Hochman
Tuesday, April 5, 2016 @7:00 pm PST

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The Joan and Phillip Pines Scho

Rabbi Richard S. Sarason '74, Ph.D., Director, Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies

HUC-JIR's Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies (PSGS), which will celebrate its seventieth anniversary in two years, addresses a central element of the College-Institute's mission: the creation and wide dissemination of knowledge about Jews and Judaism both within and beyond the bounds of the American Jewish community. Its larger purpose is to further the academic study of Judaism in the context of religious studies among students of all faiths in a respectful and pluralistic learning

environment, thereby also modeling and shaping interpersonal, interfaith relationships. This was, in fact, a part of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise's expansive vision for the Hebrew Union College when it first opened its doors in Cincinnati 141 years ago. The College was never envisioned *solely* as a professional school for training American Jewish clergy (and now other professionals as well); it rather has striven to address and shape the broader context of

Jewish life and learning in America, and now globally.

The School of Graduate Studies has recently received a transformative gift from Board of Governors member and Chair of the Central Region Board of Overseers, Joan Pines, and her family, through the Phillip and Joan Pines Charitable Foundation, which will strengthen the School's work and reach for many years to come. The gift creates an endowment that will secure the Graduate School. It also

provides funding for several annual prize fellowships that will allow the School to compete with other excellent graduate programs for the strongest possible candidates. In recognition of the depth of the Pines family's commitment, the School of Graduate Studies was renamed the Joan and Phillip Pines School of Graduate Studies (PSGS) at a dedication ceremony that took place on October 26, 2015 during the Fall meeting of the HUC-JIR Board of Governors in Cincinnati.



Joan Pines (right) and Rabbi Aaron Panken at Graduation on the Cincinnati Campus.

ol of Graduate Studies



Graduate students of diverse faiths in the classroom learning together.

Joan Pines, as featured speaker at this past year's Graduation ceremony, expressed her own appreciation for the work of the PSGS: "Upon graduation, one of our hopes for our students - and for us - is that they become advocates for HUC-JIR and for interfaith understanding in the non-Jewish world. For three years, our Ph.D. candidates study with rabbinical students and, hopefully, each group comes to understand the other in profound ways. I believe deeply that this kind of exposure to Jewish students and faculty, by mainly non-Jewish students, and vice versa, in an interfaith context of learning, produces people who can ultimately

make a difference in the world, by mutual action."

Professor John C. Reeves, Blumenthal Professor of Judaic Studies, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, who, at the same ceremony, received the Graduate Medallion for 25 years of distinguished service to the academy and for his consistent support of the PSGS, recently reflected on his own learning experiences at HUC-JIR: "I remain deeply grateful for the opportunity afforded me by HUC-JIR to sit at the feet of teachers like Professor Ben Zion Wacholder and to drink in the wisdom of their words. In memorializing this apprenticeship and the

model for scholarship that was provided to me, I hope to perpetuate in one small way the precious legacy that he and the school have bequeathed to me."

This academic year, the PSGS has welcomed ten new students - six Ph.D. candidates and four M.A. students, including an ordinee of our Israel rabbinical program who joins two other Israeli Reform rabbis and a third Israeli in the Ph.D. program. These new students are a diverse and highly motivated group of individuals who are already valued members of our academic and religious community.

Since its founding in 1947, the PSGS has conferred more than 500 M.A., D.H.L., and Ph.D. degrees. The PSGS offers individualized programs leading to the Ph.D. in Judaic and Cognate Studies, with specialization in Hebrew Bible, History of Biblical Interpretation, Jewish Studies in the Greco-Roman Period, Rabbinic Literature, Jewish Thought, and the American Jewish Experience; the M.A. in Jewish Studies; and the Doctor of Hebrew Letters. ■

To learn more about the PSGS, please go to huc.edu/become-a-scholar.

Like many other vocations, the rabbinate has changed and rabbinical education needs to change as well. The HUC-JIR/Cincinnati campus is being transformed by a visionary service learning project funded by the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati. During this academic year, 33 HUC-JIR/Cincinnati rabbinical students are devoting 8,000 hours to enrich and enhance the lives of the approximately 25,000 Jews who live in Cincinnati.

The Jewish Foundation (TJF) of Cincinnati Fellows are integrating their classroom learning with real-life experience in the educational Jewish institutions of the larger community. Second-year rabbinical students are serving as teachers in Reform and Conservative congregations, a pluralist Jewish day school, and the Miami University Hillel. Simultaneously, they are enrolled in a year-long education course so they can translate their learning into their teaching.

Innovation Meets Tradition: The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati Fellows Program

Rabbi Jan Katzew '83, Ph.D.
Director of Service Learning,
HUC-JIR/Cincinnati

Third-year rabbinical students devoted the past summer to Jewish community agencies, with a focus on human relations that prepared them for a course by the same name – once again reinforcing the link between experience and education. Fourth-year students are apprenticed to leaders in the Jewish community while they take a course in leadership so that they have living case studies upon which they can reflect and integrate into their own rabbinical careers. Fifth-year students choose to focus on an area of concentration to match their interest and deepen their understanding while they take a course designed to connect the dots in the matrix of the Jewish community system.

All of the students receive stipends, which mean that the synagogues and agencies where students are serving have added human and financial resources to achieve their sacred missions. The students receive direct supervision, often by the executive director or senior

leader of the organization. The supervisors meet regularly as a cohort and, in addition, they can opt to receive individual executive coaching in order to hone their leadership skills. The Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati is acting as a centripetal force, a catalyst for Jewish community collaboration, and HUC-JIR students are the beneficiaries as well as the leaders of this symbiosis. These rabbinical students are the College-Institute's best ambassadors. They are changing minds, hearts, and souls as they themselves are in formation as rabbis.

Alumni of the TJF Fellows project testify that their experiences in the field of practice in combination with their academic studies have helped them reshape their understanding of the rabbinate. Perhaps this realization should not be a shock. In 1910, Abraham Flexner, a Jew and an educator, but not a Jewish educator, published a report that was highly critical of higher education, especially in medicine. As a direct result of his research, Johns Hopkins inaugurated what has become standard practice – internships coincident with academic learning. Indeed, in some medical schools today students are in hospital settings in their first year. John Dewey published *Experience and Education* in 1938, arguing passionately to take experience into every learning setting. HUC-JIR is in auspicious company, as the Cincinnati campus becomes the first rabbinical seminary in which every one of its rabbinical students will be gaining supervised experiential practice in a rabbinate that is increasingly diverse and dynamic. ■

The Jewish Foundation Fellows meeting with Cincinnati communal leaders.



Israel Engagement and Seminary Education



Rabbi Reuven Greenvald

Why is Israel engagement so essential for the Jewish seminary environment that educates future Jewish leaders? Rabbi Reuven Greenvald, the newly appointed Director of Israel Engagement, a joint position at HUC-JIR and The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS) on their New York campuses, has the answer:

“On one level, HUC-JIR as an institution answers this question with its statement that students spend their first year in Israel, which according to the admissions website, is ‘an intensive encounter with the land, culture, and people of the Jewish State.’ Like this seminary, I cannot imagine a Jewish pre-professional education without Israel engagement as one of the cornerstones. Today more than half the Jews in the world live in Israel, where they speak a modernized form of our sacred language, and strive to bring Jewish symbols and values into a diverse public space. Future cantors, educators, and rabbis have a lot to gain by being exposed to this expression of modern Jewish living. On the flip side, Israeli Jews have a lot

to gain by being exposed to the rich Jewish life across the globe – the graduates of HUC-JIR should become prepared to be a living bridge between these different forms of contemporary Jewish life.”

Rabbi Greenvald’s appointment, made possible by a generous grant from UJA-Federation of New York’s Commission on the Jewish People, will enable HUC-JIR and JTS to build upon the important work in which both seminaries are engaged in Jerusalem through a Federation grant.

“Jewish life, whether in the U.S. or in Israel, is complex due to the diverse nature of what we describe as the Jewish people,” he explains. “We have different religious outlooks and political leanings, and being able to talk across the spectrum about Israel has become harder and harder. As the State of Israel approaches the 70th year of its existence, the Jewish collective still finds itself dealing with issues (like no peace between Israelis and Palestinians, the barriers to practicing liberal Judaism in Israel, etc.) that

we thought would have been resolved by now. This perceived lack of progress has resulted in disillusionment among some and hardening of positions among others.”

Rabbi Greenvald will develop a comprehensive and broad-reaching approach to Israel engagement for all students at both seminaries that will embed Israel engagement more systematically into each institution and will enhance the personal and professional capacity of these future rabbis, cantors, educators, and lay leaders to explore and lead Israel engagement activities. Anticipated projects include Israel studies courses, an Israel leadership skills intensive for students and alumni, on-going opportunities for dialogue and discussion on Israel-related subjects on each campus, and programs that will bring together students from each institution.

“I see my work as preparing future Jewish leaders to be skillful facilitators for those critical conversations that we can’t seem to have right now.

We need constructive engagement as the foundation of Israel and Jewish peoplehood engagement.”

Rabbi Greenvald has been leading efforts to promote deeper understandings of Jewish peoplehood and Israel engagement among and between Jews in North America and in Israel for the last eight years at the Jewish Agency for Israel as Director of Strategic Outreach in North America (2012-2015), and as Makom’s Director of North American Community Initiatives (2007-2012). Previously, he served as head of school at Kehillah Jewish High School in Silicon Valley, and as upper school principal at the Charles E. Smith Jewish Day School in the Washington, DC area. He spent two years as a Jerusalem Fellow at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Israel, when the idea to work in Israel engagement began to take root. Rabbi Greenvald received his M.A. and rabbinical ordination from JTS, and he received his B.A. (*cum laude* with distinction) in Ancient Near Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. ■



HUC-JIR YOUR *Home* IN JERUSALEM

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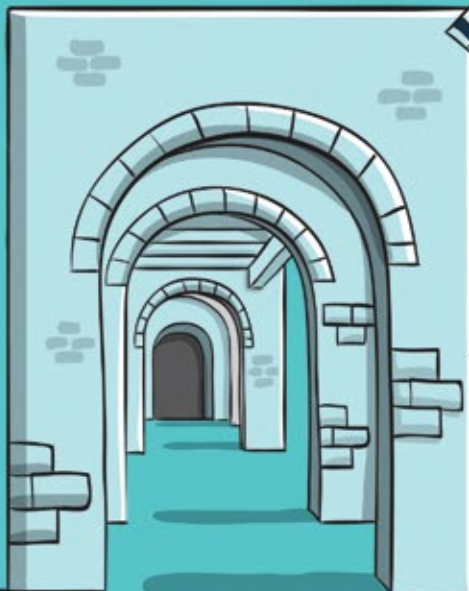
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Judaism

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Your home away from home in Israel.
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PRAY WITH US

- Join our Shabbat morning or High Holy Day services
- Witness our rabbinical students at work



EXPLORE WITH US

- Visit our Skirball Archaeological Museum's treasures
- Tour the extraordinary architecture of our campus, designed by Moshe Safdie
- Tour our beautiful gardens, courtyards and skywalks



ENGAGE WITH US

- Meet with Israeli students and professors
- Encounter an Israel that will inspire you



LEARN WITH US

- Join our world-renowned faculty for class or lecture
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CELEBRATE WITH US

- Plan your next event on our beautiful campus
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CHANGE THE WORLD WITH US

- Support this unique haven of Jewish pluralism
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Rabbi Rachel Sabath Beit-Halachmi '95, Ph.D., National Director, National Office of Recruitment and Admissions (NORA), Community Engagement, and President's Scholar

The next generation of Jewish professional leadership is uniquely poised to lead us into the future. Wildly imaginative, decidedly entrepreneurial, and exhibiting a unique passion for honest spirituality, intellectual development, and social justice, these aspiring future Jewish professionals will lead us into and beyond the next new phase of North American Judaism.

Working synergistically with many of our HUC-JIR alumni and the leadership of the Reform Movement, we are committed to the sacred work of engaging and mentoring these aspiring Jewish leaders. Every person can play a role in identifying and inspiring the next generation by engaging personally, hosting an event, connecting professional leaders, and engaging multiple stakeholders.

Working synergistically with many of our HUC-JIR alumni and the leadership of the Reform Movement, we are committed to the sacred work of engaging and mentoring these aspiring Jewish leaders.

We find them in every context you can imagine. They are – just to name a few examples – in the small towns of the deep South serving in “Teach for America,” in Israel as Israel Teaching Fellows, engaged in lobbying at the Religious Action Center and in political offices throughout North America, and they are completing a wide array of degrees in universities. Whether interning or working in the for-profit world, a few hundred are in conversation with our staff and faculty and beginning to imagine what they need to know, how they will contribute, and what kind of a community they will lead.

Over the past year, the professionals of HUC-JIR's National Office of Recruitment and Admissions (NORA) engaged with thousands of young people on questions of leadership and Jewish identity. At least 3,500 young people met members of our professional team over the past summer at a record number of 45 summer camp visits across North America and while participating in NFTY-in-Israel programs, Birthright Israel experiences, and BBYO trips.

Rabbi Adam Allenberg, Jordanna Flores, Rabbi Haim Shalom, Rabbi Joui Hessel, and I – along with additional HUC-JIR faculty and staff – met individually and in groups with these young people. In a wide-range of environments of Jewish living, the staff was teaching and speaking about big questions of Jewish life and of

Judaism in a changing global reality, while listening to and responding to the big questions of these prospective students' lives.

Whether a participant or a leader or a young professional, the people we met asked searching questions about the future and their roles in it, including: 1) How can I balance my commitment to the Jewish people with larger universal questions? 2) How can we make the Jewish community more inclusive and more diverse? 3) What will be the new roles for a rabbi, cantor, educator, scholar,

Engaging with future Jewish leaders at URJ camps.



camp director, federation leader, or Jewish entrepreneur a decade from now? 4) How can I best prepare to play a leadership role? 5) What will I need to know? 6) How will I afford it? 6) How can I best prepare for the future?

In the past year, the NORA team visited more than 25 different college campuses, double that of the prior two years. In the current year, we are already geared to visit an even larger number of college campuses in every region of North America – the Ivy Leagues, the Big Ten universities, small liberal arts schools, and many others.

We are dramatically increasing programs for high school and college students. Our ongoing recruitment programs will feature a unique Multidenominational National Teen Spirituality Retreat in January as well as a leadership seminar for college students on “Jewish Identity and Israel on the College Campus.” In addition, together with rabbinical student interns, we have developed a unique fellowship to develop collaborative leadership to strengthen progressive Jewish life on college campuses, the “Smashing Idols Fellowship,” which we launched this year in the Eastern region.

We are in the process of increasing the number of seminars and programs for youth professionals that HUC-JIR launched in 2014 in partnership with the URJ. Together, we have doubled the number of youth professionals seminars taking place on all three stateside HUC-JIR campuses, and we are launching a series of webinars this year to deepen the knowledge and skills of these essential professionals. Many of them are wonderful candidates for each and every one of the graduate programs of HUC-JIR. Whether in high school, college, interning, or working, all of these future leaders are reimagining the present and the future while absorbing – together with us – the boundless wisdom of the past. ■

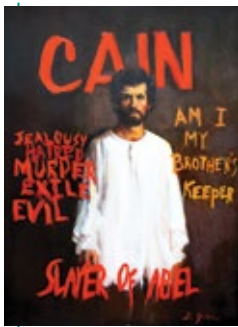
ON VIEW AT HUC-JIR MUSEUMS

THE HUC-JIR MUSEUM, HUC-JIR/NEW YORK

EVIL: A MATTER OF INTENT

(Through June 30, 2016)

Racism, xenophobia, religious fanaticism, homophobia, sexual violence, senseless brutality, and indifference to innocent suffering are flourishing in our world. Fifty contemporary artists of diverse backgrounds, nationalities, faiths, and mediums grapple with these



issues as a forum for remembering, expressing outrage, and exerting a call to action.

LAMED VAV: PAINTINGS BY PETER LEVENTHAL

(Through June 30, 2016)

Legend says that at all times there are thirty-six people, known in Yiddish as the *lamed vavniks*, whose good works protect humankind from disaster. Peter Leventhal imagines the *lamed vavniks* as regular people in his own life.



Location:

One West Fourth Street, New York, NY 10012

Admission: Free

Hours: Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am - 5 pm;
Fridays, 9 am - 3 pm

Contact/Tours: museumnyc@huc.edu
or 212-824-2218

THE SKIRBALL MUSEUM, HUC-JIR/CINCINNATI

TEN TREASURES OF THE B'NAI B'RITH KLUTZNICK COLLECTION

(Through January 24, 2016)



Since May of 2015, the staff of the Skirball Museum has been hard at work unpacking, condition reporting, cataloguing, and photographing nearly 1500 works of art acquired from the B'nai B'rith Klutznick Collection.

Ongoing rotating exhibitions offer visitors a preview of this remarkable collection as the Museum prepares for a permanent display.

CHASING DREAMS: BASEBALL & BECOMING AMERICAN

April 14 - July 7, 2016

This exhibition, organized by the National Museum of American Jewish History, explores the central role that our national pastime has played in the identity of Jews and other minority communities.



HELEN SUZMAN; FIGHTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

(Through January 24, 2016)

Helen Suzman was one of South Africa's most vociferous opponents of apartheid during her 36 year career (1953-1989) as a member of Parliament. This dramatic exhibition captures her work, courage, and voice through photographs, letters, and moving narrative. Presented in partnership with the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Cincinnati, and the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education.

Location: 3101 Clifton Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45220

Admission: Free. Current government issued photo ID required for security.

Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11 am - 4 pm; Sundays, 1 pm - 5 pm

Contact/Tours: jmendelson@huc.edu
or 513-487-3098



AN ETERNAL PEOPLE: THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

(Permanent exhibition)

Fascinating artifacts portray the cultural, historical, and religious heritage of the Jewish people.

THE SKIRBALL MUSEUM OF BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGY, HUC-JIR/JERUSALEM

(Permanent exhibition)



A showcase for the archaeological work of HUC-JIR's Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology, the exhibition tells the story of three ancient biblical cities: Laish/Dan, Gezer, and Aroer, as presented in four major themes: fortifications, Canaanite burial customs, portrayal of the human image, and cult practices.

Location: 13 King David Street, Jerusalem, Israel 94101

Admission: Free.

Current government issued photo ID required for security.

Hours: By appointment only

Contact/Tours: ngsba@huc.edu
or 972-2-620-3257

THE SKIRBALL CAMPUS, HUC-JIR/LOS ANGELES

7,567MI: JERUSALEM TO LOS ANGELES

(Through December 31, 2015)

The physical, spiritual, and cultural connections between Los Angeles and Jerusalem as seen through the imagination of seven members of the Jewish Artists Initiative of Southern California (JAI). Their works apply contemporary interpretations to key Jewish or Israeli historical, political, or social events.

Location: 3077 University Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90007

Admission: Free. Current government-issued photo ID required for security.

Hours: Mondays - Fridays, 9 am - 8 pm
Contact/Tours: hpearson@huc.edu
or 213-765-2106.



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LOS ANGELES / November 16, 2015 and March 10, 2016

NEW YORK / April 7, 2016

**INTERFAITH DOCTOR OF MINISTRY -
NEW YORK** / November 16, 2015 and March 14, 2016

DELET - LOS ANGELES / February 2, 2016

**DEBBIE FRIEDMAN MEMORIAL CONCERT -
JERUSALEM** / January 30, 2016

JOINT HUC-JIR / URJ YOUTH PROFESSIONAL SEMINARS

CINCINNATI / December 16-18, 2015

LOS ANGELES / March 28, 2016

NEW YORK / December 5, 2015 and April 11, 2016

LEADERSHIP WEEKENDS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

CINCINNATI / January 8-10, 2016: HUC-JIR/NFTY-OV
Study Kallah: **Social Justice and the Power of Youth**

CINCINNATI / January 29-31, 2016:
Multi-Denominational National Retreat: **Teen Spirituality**

CINCINNATI / April 1-3, 2016:
National High School Leadership Retreat:
Creating Community: You, Me, Us, and Now

NEW YORK / Miller High School Honors Program:
Twice Monthly, Saturdays, 10:30 am - 2:00 pm

LEADERSHIP WEEKENDS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

CINCINNATI / November 13-15, 2015:
Israel, Jewish Identity, and the College Campus

CINCINNATI / March 4-6, 2016:
Judaism and Social Justice Imperatives

NEW YORK AREA COLLEGE STUDENT SHABBATON
April 8-9, 2016:
The Self, The Community, and Our Global Impact

"SMASHING IDOLS" FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

NEW YORK / March 24-27, 2016: A collaborative leadership program to strengthen progressive Jewish life on college campuses. Application deadline: December 1, 2015

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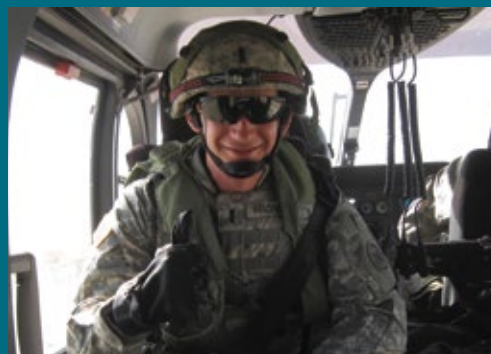
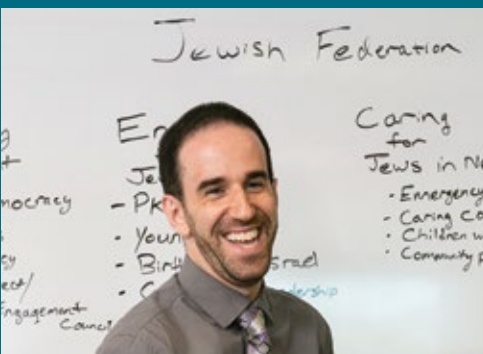


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