

HUC-JIR/JERUSALEM: PI

Sixty years. Six decades of building and struggling and searching for a way to live together – Jews with Arabs, and no less challenging, Jews with Jews. HUC-JIR/Jerusalem has been a beacon of Progressive Jewish values, emitting its light onto the Jerusalem landscape for 45 of those 60 years. What kind of impact have we had, and what role can HUC-JIR/Jerusalem play in Israel's next sixty years?



Archaeology

In the early years, the College-Institute mainly served as an institute of archaeology, offering West Jerusalem the possibility of a centrally located research hub. Archaeology was our way into

Jerusalem, and sixty years later we can reflect with pride on some outstanding achievements in this field. As I write these words, we are waiting for the final decision of a committee considering the designation of our site at Tel Dan on Israel's Northern border as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

So much has changed in Israeli archaeology since the school was established. Now in 2008, we are engaged in reviewing and re-imagining the role that our Nelson Glueck School of Biblical Archaeology should play. What does the future hold for the study of the past? There are a number of possibilities: for example, HUC-JIR/Jerusalem has become a leader in the emerging field of Community Archaeology, in which local residents are encouraged to learn about their communities. Projects in Lod and Modi'in are providing a model for this approach, and this may prove to be an important new direction (see page 26).



The Year-In-Israel Program

In 1970 the decision was made to bring all stateside rabbinical students for a year of study in Jerusalem, and later, students from the School of Sacred Music

(SSM), Rhea Hirsch School of Education (RHSEO), and New York School of Education (NYSOE) were included as part of this policy. Hundreds of students – the current spiritual leadership of the Reform Movement in North America – have spent their first year in Israel. This fact has made a major impact on the face of Reform Judaism and of Israel-Diaspora relations.

For the second year, the American students have been joined by their first-year peers from the Leo Baeck College in London, England, and the Abraham Geiger Kolleg in Potsdam, Germany. The Year-In-Israel Program comprises five key components: studies of the Hebrew language (Biblical and modern); a basic grounding in the Jewish texts (particularly Bible, prayers, the Talmudic literature, and Jewish history); the Israel experience; community building; and professional and personal development. One day each week, Israeli society in all its diversity becomes a classroom, as the students explore aspects of the Jewish State.

Through this encounter the students are encouraged to assume spiritual, educational, and communal leadership in the Diaspora, and to address key issues in Jewish identity that emerge through the unique context of the Jewish state and the Jewish-majority society it maintains. Through various avenues of learning, including textual study, film, independent research, and field trips, students explore Israeli society and culture, the complex history of Zionism and the State of Israel, and the social and political challenges facing Israel. This experience deeply imprints itself on the students' development as spiritual leaders in the Diaspora, strengthens their connection to Israel and Israeli society, and helps shape their Jewish identity.



The Israeli Rabbinical Program

For over three decades the Israeli Rabbinical Program has trained Israeli men and women to serve in rabbinical positions in the congregations

and institutions of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism (IMPJ), and in numerous other bodies active in Israeli society in the fields of education, community, spiritual counseling, and social justice. The graduates of the program have exerted a profound influence on the character of the IMPJ through their social and religious values, their spiritual charge, and their capabilities.

The curriculum seeks to expose students to the roots of our ancient heritage, while providing tools for coping with the challenges of the present and the dilemmas of the future. The program is currently based on a four-year cycle, although a recent proposal approved by the Jerusalem Board of Overseers would see it move to a five-year model.

anning for the Future

Israeli rabbinical studies include a wide range of subjects in the fields of Jewish and human studies, professional rabbinical training, training in the fields of education and spiritual counseling, specialization in one of the fields of Jewish studies, and addressing the philosophical and value-based issues raised by the fundamental questions of Jewish and Israeli existence and by issues in the field of faith and religion. Special emphasis is placed on the personal, spiritual, and professional development of the students; on nurturing their unique individual approaches and voices; and on inculcating a sense of responsibility for their own development as spiritual guides and mentors.

The number of students in the program has risen steadily in recent years. There are now some fifty graduates, constituting a majority of the members of the Council of Progressive Rabbis in Israel (Maram) (see page 25). These rabbis are working to develop new ways for Israelis to express their Judaism and apply the values of justice, equality, and tolerance. We sense that a broad spectrum of Israeli society is looking for modern, up-to-date, and progressive ways to express its Judaism, and sees the IMPJ as the natural address for doing so. The main challenge facing the graduates of the program is to answer, enrich, and encourage this search.

In recent years, the students joining the program have come from a diverse range of backgrounds, communities, and population groups, including circles that have until now tended to be less involved in Progressive Jewish activities and leadership. The extraordinary variety, versatility, and quality of these students need to be seen and experienced to be believed!



Dr. Michal Muszkat-Barkam (front, center) and students in the Master of Arts in Pluralistic Jewish Education Program.

The Department of Education and Professional Development, directed by Dr. Michal Muszkat-Barkan, promotes the professional development of rabbis and educators in the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism and in pluralistic educational institutions. The Department runs courses in the Israeli Rabbinical Program and offers professional development counseling for the Israeli students, faculty, and administrators on campus. It helps develop evaluation tools for this program and is also involved in the reflective evaluation module in the Year-In-Israel Program. The Department operates the Forum for Pluralistic Jewish Education, which encourages discussion of fundamental issues in Jewish education, and has developed diverse areas of cooperation with different bodies in the world of pluralistic Jewish education. It also runs a training program for rabbinical counselors for schools in cooperation with the Education Department of the IMPJ and the Tali network.

A new program introduced this year is a specialization in pluralistic Jewish education under the auspices of the M.A. program at the Melton Education Center in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This program is run jointly with the Education Department of the IMPJ and the Lorry Lokey International Academy of Jewish Studies. The Department of Educational and Professional Development also runs seminars for educators from around the Jewish world, and for congregations in search of high-level consultancy and assistance. Affiliated with this Department is the Pedagogic Workshop, a center specializing in topics related to Jewish tradition and Israeli culture. While including all the usual elements of a pedagogic center, the Workshop



Education and Professional Development

The issue of education is at the forefront of Israel's concerns. It is generally agreed that the education system is in crisis, and the extraordinary

human potential – our only natural resource – is not getting the education it deserves. Since Rabbi Naamah Kelman, the first woman to be ordained in Israel, became a member of the HUC-JIR/Jerusalem team a decade ago, we have made significant strides forward as we strive to play a meaningful role in the struggle to establish Pluralistic Jewish Education in Israel.

Planning for the Future *(continued)*

focuses on the development of unique curricula relating to Israeli-Jewish cultural themes within the formal curriculum of Israeli schools. The Workshop staff works with and provides individual support for diverse clients, including principals, subject coordinators, school staff, pre-school teachers, and students.



Pastoral Care

One of the most exciting fields in which HUC-JIR/Jerusalem is now involved is that of pastoral care and spiritual support. Only ten years ago, these terms were a mystery to Israelis. Now,

increasing numbers of Israelis are looking for ways to turn to Jewish sources for strength and succor.

The Blaustein Center for Pastoral Care is developing the field of spiritual counseling in Israel and supports the professional training of Israeli rabbinical students. The Center runs two unique training programs in the field of spiritual counseling open to students from inside and outside the Reform Movement. The first class of graduates of the *Mezorim* program completed its studies in the summer of 2008. This intensive four-semester program combines academic study of Jewish texts, the development of tools for support and counseling, and profound spiritual introspection. The program trains spiritual counselors who bring a wide range of approaches and techniques for use in the community and in therapeutic and medical institutions.

Another program, “Aspects of Life and Healing,” is developing an innovative approach to the teaching of classical and sacred texts. This year, Mapah is running a *Beit Midrash* program for senior citizens.



Where Now?

There is much activity at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem. There are concerts, lecture series, special learning events, exhibitions, seminars in Tel Aviv and Haifa, a Hebrew *ulpan*, the Murstein Synagogue, the

Abramov Library. Even more than the programs currently in place, the Jerusalem team is constantly searching for new ways to be relevant and significant in today’s Israel. An extraordinary teaching faculty and an entrepreneurial management team aim to put HUC-JIR/Jerusalem at the heart of what is best about Israel.

As we salute Israel at sixty, HUC-JIR/Jerusalem strives to provide Israeli society with a coherent liberal alternative; to be a living bridge between Israel and the Diaspora; and to train leaders capable of effecting change in congregations and institutions.

If the founder of the Hebrew Union College, Isaac Mayer Wise, were to pay a visit to the Jerusalem branch of his institution, much would seem strange. Since Wise’s death in 1900, the world has undergone some of the most radical upheavals in history. Rabbi Wise would probably have been alarmed at the thought of a college operating in a sovereign Jewish State with Jerusalem as its capital. After all, it was Wise who said: “We think it about as well to let the old Jerusalem rest under the accretion of ages as it is described in the Bible and Josephus. The consequences to mankind cannot be found under the rubbish of 2,000 years.”



Dr. Michael Marmur, Dean, (front, at right) and the faculty of HUC-JIR/Jerusalem.

The new Jerusalem has risen. It faces formidable challenges, and it will need passionate support from involved Jews around the world. Isaac Mayer Wise once drew a distinction between Greek and Jewish culture: “The Greek grasped the present moment, and was the artist; the Jew worshipped the timeless spirit, and was the prophet.” Now our people has determined to seize the present while not losing faith with the timeless spirit – and we need the very best leaders to help this ambitious plan come to fruition. It is to the training of rabbis, cantors, educators, care providers, scholars, and others capable of being both relevant and profound that our institution is committed.

Wise would have found Israel at 60 a strange place indeed. But it may not be too fanciful to imagine that if he were to walk through the exquisite campus at 13 King David Street, he might have sensed that the same drive and commitment that informed the creation of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio, is alive and well in the rebuilt Jerusalem.

Sixty years into the great adventure of Jewish statehood, the real adventure is just beginning. ■