First son of woman rabbi ordained

On Nov. 14 of this year an historic event occurred at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem, Daniel Meyer, the first son of a woman rabbi was ordained in Israel. His mother, Rabbi Margaret Meyer of Cincinnati participated in the ordination.

Meyer was one of six new Reform rabbis ordained in Israel this year by Rabbi David Ellenson, president of HUC.

Rabbi Margaret Meyer, who was ordained at HUC in Cincinnati in 1986, remarked proudly, “As a rabbi and parent, participating in my son’s ordination was an event to be long remembered. That Danny’s ordination occurred in Jerusalem and that he is devoting his rabbinate to teaching Israeli Jews makes his ordination even more meaningful.”

The father of the new rabbi, Dr. Michael A. Meyer, Ochs Professor of Jewish History at HUC in Cincinnati and an expert in German Jewish history, addressed the ordinands, urging them to “strive to be personal exemplars of how a Progressive Judaism can enhance the religious and moral life of this state of Israel and of the Jewish people.”

Rabbi Daniel Meyer, 46, is a Cincinnati native who graduated from Walnut Hills High School and Yavneh Day School (now known as Rockwern Academy).

Years before his ordination, the future rabbi was influenced by his parents, who took him to Jerusalem when he was eight. That year his father was teaching Jewish history at HUC-JIR/Jerusalem and his mother was studying for the rabbinate.

Later, at his bar mitzvah service at HUC in Cincinnati in 1975, Meyer announced his intention to make aliya, or immigrate to Israel. Throughout his teens he was active in the Reform youth movement in the U.S. and in the Zionist movement Habonim. At 19, after one year at Columbia University, Meyer made aliya as a step toward realizing his mission of Reform Zionism.

In Israel, Meyer became one of the founders of Kibbutz Lotan in the Negev desert, the second kibbutz of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism. On Kibbutz Lotan, he coordinated date-growing activities, developed the progressive Jewish education system, supervised youth work, organized Jewish studies for the adult members of the kibbutz and helped to lead Jewish lifecycle ceremonies.

During this period, he served in a command position in the Israeli Army. Also, he married Yehudit Ginger in an egalitarian wedding ceremony, a contrast to the Orthodox model which is prescribed in Israel. Danny and Yehudit now have two children, Ilanar and Yael.

After years of farming at Lotan, Meyer returned to his studies, completing a B.A. degree cum laude in Jewish history at Israel’s Open University and his M.A. in Jewish history, with honors, at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He worked for over three years as a student rabbi in Achvat Israel Congregation in Rishon Lezion before his ordination.

Meyer is currently working in Congregation Ra’anana in Ramat, Israel. “My goal, as I continue my rabbinical journey,” Meyer said, “is to combine Reform Zionism with my love of traditional sources and creativity within the Israeli Jewish community in order to further Tikun Olam, a better, more just society.”