

Dear Friends,



Dr. David Ellenson

At Passover, our festival of freedom, we are reminded that each of us should regard ourselves as if we had personally come out of Egypt. At Shavuot, our celebration of the gift of Torah to the Jewish people, we are taught that we all stood at Sinai where we witnessed the giving of the law that has inspired our people's values and destiny throughout the millennia. There are seven weeks between these two celebrations, during which we observe a sacred period – *s'firat haomer* – the counting of the omer. Every night, we count the new day marking our journey from slavery to the Covenant with God.

In biblical times the Israelites were commanded to bring an “*omer*” – a measure of their first fruits at harvest time as a special sacrifice. The Rabbis considered the bringing of the *omer* as one of the most important observances: each person's repayment to God for the “*manna*” of his/her life.

Today, the resources symbolized by the *omer* are indispensable in ensuring the continuity of Jewish tradition, heritage, and ethics – the mission of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Here, Jewish scholarship, leadership, and spirituality are vitalized through a liberal engagement with 21st century life.

Your *omer* – your commitment to strengthening HUC-JIR as the academic, professional, and spiritual leadership development center for Reform Judaism and world Jewry – guarantees the Jewish future.

We are grateful for your generous help in advancing HUC-JIR's priorities:

- enhancing and sustaining our premier faculty
- providing scholarship assistance to students dedicated to serving the Jewish people
- developing innovative curriculum for our graduate and professional programs
- integrating new technologies to enhance our academic programs and research resources
- maintaining our libraries, archives, and museums preserving Jewish heritage
- offering educational and cultural outreach to the Reform Movement's congregations, schools, and institutions, *klal Yisrael*, and the community-at-large throughout North America, Israel, and the world.

We thank you for your *omer* and invite your continued commitment to building a vision for the future – a future blessed with peace in which the Jewish people lives and thrives.

With warmest wishes for a sweet Passover and a joyful Shavuot,

Dr. David Ellenson
President

Burton Lehman
Chair, Board of Governors