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W O R L D
U N I O N F O R
P R O G R E S S I V E
J U D A I S M

Moscow, July 2005

Friends

Herewith reports from affiliates and WUPJ Committees, as received from their chairmen. These reports represent a vast amount of work, hours of discussions and team work – we congratulate all involved in these achievements.

Represented in these reports is the solid foundation of our movement – the work of volunteers who give unstintingly of their time and skills, and very often also of their personal resources. There is no question that we could not function without this vast body of volunteers, neither within the congregations nor within the World Union; may they glean satisfaction from their achievements.

Of course, there are also bonuses that all we volunteers earn – seeing the progress that our own small contribution can achieve, and the joy of friendships built through our common purpose. An opportunity open to all; don't you feel tempted?

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth Cohen".

Ruth Cohen
President World Union for Progressive Judaism

Staff of The World Union for progressive Judaism

Jerusalem

WUPJ headquarters

Rabbi Uri Regev – Executive Director
Rabbi Joel Oseran – Associate Director
Lesley Sachs - Associate Director
Todd Warnick - Chief Financial Officer
Rabbi Richard Kirschan – Director of Saltz International Educational Center -
(commencing July)
Debbie Pulik – administrative coordinator
Ruti Rotem – assistant to Executive director
Michael Bertman – Information technology network system administrator
Naftali Itenberg – Russian publications
Nir Barkin – Saltz International Educational Center Project Coordinator
Dalya Levy - Saltz International Educational Center Administrator
Mali Soyonov – Accountant

Netzer Olami

Maoz Haviv – Director Netzer Olami
Alex Kagan – FSU Director of Educational Programs & Netzer
Jonny Whine – Director Shnat Program
Haim Shalom – Educational Director
Shnat counselor - Ariela Askred
Etgar coordinator – Anat Sherman
South American Coordinator – Tamara (Tati) Shagas
Rinat Israeli – Administrative Coordinator

Mercaz Shimshon Beit Shmuel

Ayala Dekel – Director of Operations and reservation manager
Ofar Shemer – Cultural and Educational Director
Hila Lev - Events coordinator
Michal Cohen - Courses coordinator
Magi Baruch - Administrative coordinator
Anna Lev – Tov – Accountant
Shani Shlomo – Secretary cultural department
Desk clerks

North America

New York Office

Daniel Nadelman - Director of Development
Ron Wagsman - grant and specialist
Aiiyn Rose – Senior Development Officer – Major Gifts
Shira Resnick – Development officer – Israel and Special Events
Stacy Schiff – Development office- coordinator FSU Eastern Europe
Chritina Ruiz – Development Associate
Stephanie Hirschorn – Development assistant, office administrator

Mandy Eisner – Regional Director, Pacific – South West Region
Marsha Felton – Regional Director, Central West Region

Former Soviet Union

Valery Sheinin – Interim Director

Rabbis of the WUPJ in the FSU: Nelly Shulman, Grisha Kotler, Michael Farbman, Sasha Lyskuvoy, Alex Dukhovny, Grisha Abramovich.

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WUPJ committee reports

Major Accomplishments of *Yad b'Yad*

Chaired by Jerry Tanenbaum

- *Yad b'Yad* was established as a North American task force within the World Union for Progressive Judaism to respond to the economic crisis in Argentina and to support Reform Judaism in South America.
- In just over two years, *Yad b'Yad* raised nearly \$800,000 for relief of the Reform Jewish community in Argentina. It established and implemented an independent audit function in Argentina to assure donated funds were applied in accordance with the donors' wishes. It established systems and controls over all donations to assure proper tracking and allocation.
- The *Yad b'Yad* project has taught all of us the real meaning of MITZVAH – helping people help themselves. It has helped *Fundación Judaica* both to become self-sufficient and to share with world Jewry their expertise in social action programming, crisis management/response and worship/liturgical music. It has provided resources that have enabled *Fundación Judaica* to expand its outreach to communities and people who were originally far beyond its scope.
- *Yad b'Yad* facilitated JDC support for the Reform Jewish community in Argentina and worked cooperatively with the JDC in a successful joint effort to pay off the mortgage of the Arlene Fern School. [*The Arlene Fern School is the most successful and only growing Jewish day school in Buenos Aires today.*]
- *Yad b'Yad* organized several successful lay, rabbinic and youth missions to South America which elevated awareness of and support for the Jewish communities in South America. The missions also built bridges of cooperation and mutual support between the North and South American Reform Jewish communities.
- *Yad b'Yad* organized the first conference of Liberal (Reform and Conservative) Jews in Central and South America. The São Paulo conference was an extraordinary success, leading to ongoing dialogue, mutual respect, the potential for strategic partnerships and plans for another conference in the coming year.

- *Yad b'Yad* raised the awareness of rabbis, organizations, and individuals in North America and, indeed, around the world, of the humanitarian needs created by the devastated economy in Argentina, and provided a vehicle for ongoing support.
- *Yad b'Yad* has worked with the CCAR to co-ordinate and report on their efforts in an *Adopt-A-Family* program, which assists dozens of Argentinean families through a two-year commitment of each participating congregation and rabbi.
- *Yad b'Yad* has brought the vibrant and growing Reform Jewish community of Central and South America into an expanded role within the WUPJ, benefiting both.
- *Yad b'Yad* has expanded the reach and mission of the WUPJ, and has increased cooperation with the URJ , the CCAR , and HUC-JIR .

Report on activity of the Human Resource committee

Chaired by Felix Mosbacher

The HR committee was established in October 2003, chaired by Felix Mosbacher (France) Member on the committee: Ruth Cohen, Adv Daniel chin, Steve Bauman, Leslie Bergman, & Uri Regev, staffed by Lesley Sachs in charge of Human resources - WUPJ head quarters, Netzer Olami and Mercaz Shimshon. Recently Adv Yaron Shavit and Adv Jonathan Livny who were members on the committee asked to be released and were replaced by Adv Daniel Chin.

The committee held five meetings: October 2003, January 2004, March 2004 and May 2004 and May 2005. The sub committees met in Jerusalem several times.

The committee defined its mission as securing the correct process regarding personnel and being available for consultation but not deciding of dealing with individual issues which remain the responsibility of the director. The committee decided it would be involved with all issues pertaining to structure and would act as the address on issues pertaining to senior staff members including when in needed to have a hearing of senior employees. The committee would like the organization to achieve optimum efficiency while being viewed as a fair equitable organization.

As far as the geographic coverage it was decided that issues pertaining to HR in the FSU should be first discussed by the FSU committee and only then be presented to the HR committee. Regarding the USA the Executive Director would update and involve the committee members. The com' in particular looks into changes of higher management positions as well as significant structure modifications.

- One of the first tasks of the committee was to ensure that every employee of WUPJ Israel has a contract. A new contract was drafted and within the first year of the committee's activity it became standard practice. In addition the com' introduced the practice of contracts with all out side contractors including lecturers at Mercaz Shimshon

- The committee encouraged the WUPJ to engage in a staff evaluation process including the establishment of job descriptions for all staff members. By April 2004 every staff member had a Job description and was evaluated by their immediate manager/supervisor (A two way feedback). This process involved a training process of staff members on all levels preparation of evaluation forms suited to the organization and integrate it into the WUPJ. The committee strongly encourages the staff to have a principle of at least a yearly feedback session and a yearly salary review have been and continue to be exceptional, given the financial situation, and must be decided by sub committees so as to secure objectivity and consistency.
- The committee formed a sub committee that drafted guidelines and practice for granting loans to employees from the Racky Newman employee loan fund and grants from the Rackey Newman professional enrichment fund. A sub committee was formed to review all requests.

The committee's future course is to secure the constant implementation of established principles and practices; and to assist in setting priorities and objectives in and overall management process.

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Report on the activity of the WUPJ's Assets Committee

Chaired by Dr. Michael Hoffman

The Assets Committee is an advisory board appointed by the president Ruth Cohen to recommend policy and practical suggestions for the management and maintenance of the physical assets held by the World Union. Its members are primarily lay leaders from Israel and abroad with significant experience in various aspects of real estate and finance. It also includes the President, Executive Director and chief financial officer of the World Union, as well as non-voting observers from MARAM and the IMPJ. The current Chair of the committee is Dr. Michael Hoffman.

The Assets Committee has acted as a consultant body. Its output has generally taken the form of financial analyses, appraisals, and assessments addressing multiple alternatives, along side recommendations for possible and preferable courses of action. Final decisions regarding implementation are, of course, left to the relevant supervisory bodies, primarily the Finance Committee and the Management Committee.

To date, the Assets Committee has focused primarily on issues regarding assets in Israel, with a particular emphasis on the complex of issues regarding Beit Shmuel and Merkaz Shimshon. In this regard, the committee has generated reports about needed changes in the underlying business and management model, as well as more specific advisories addressing physical remodeling of the building, re-vamping the profitability of the catering concession, repairing major structural flaws and resolving disputes with past vendors. Future advisories are expected to address the financial model underlying cultural activities at Beit Shmuel.

A second point of focus has involved the World Union's holdings at Shmuel haNagid, consisting of an office building adjacent to the community center housing the Har El

community. An existing contract with an external developer has committed the World Union to a plan, which will necessitate the evacuation of the Har El community. The committee is currently reviewing the economic viability and advisability of continuing in this format, as opposed to alternate forms of development. More specific advisories have been generated in regard to interim rental of office space as well as relations with a protected tenant – the Jewish agency.

A third point of ongoing interest has been the creation of a data base regarding the overall holdings of the World Union. To date, information has been spotty and disjointed. An attempt has been made to bring this data into a more cohesive, central framework.

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The ARZENU/WUPJ Youth and Young Adult (YYA) Task Force

Chaired by Mark S. Anshan Chair

At the WUPJ convention in Jerusalem, March 2003, a meeting was held to form the Youth and Young adult Task Force initiated by Uri Regev. Mark S. Anshan was asked to chair that session and the idea was to create a Committee that would oversee WUPJ activities in this area.

At the URJ (formerly the UAHC) Biennial in Minneapolis, November 2003, a meeting was held with professionals and lay leaders working in the informal educational area with representatives from WUPJ, IMPJ, URJ, Leo Baeck (Haifa), Lotan, Yael and others, to talk about the Shlichut Map and the method by which we could undertake further and consistent consultation and collaboration. From that meeting, it was decided to establish a joint Task Force of ARZENU and WUPJ. Thus, the ARZENU/WUPJ Youth and Young Adult Task Force was established.

The Task Force is chaired by Mark S. Anshan, Chairman of ARZENU and staffed by Lesley Sachs, Associate director of the WUPJ.

Under the leadership of Mark S. Anshan the task force brings together all of our Reform/Liberal/Progressive professionals and key lay leaders working on Israel programs for youth and young adults –(Netzer, Tamar, NFTY, Keshet) and professionals that are working on education and programs in Israel.

The objective is to provide a forum for collaboration, provide support as well as assist in developing and implementing new programs (HUC-JIR, Jerusalem, WUPJ, NFTY).

This past year we have been collaborating on a shared vision regarding programs and projects that will bring our young people to Israel on short and long term programs. A focus of our work is how we can work with JAFI to leverage support and resources. In this vein, we also need to think about how we optimize the use of our educational professionals at all levels - educators, rabbis, shlichim etc.

A central focus of future work will be short and long term Israel programs including Netzer's programs, NFTY in Israel, Birthright, MASA, and forming strategic partnerships

with JAFI, the WZO, our youth and young adult Reform and Progressive organizations and, of course, our ARZENU affiliates.

In October, the Task Force held an important conference call with URJ, WUPJ and JAFI professionals and lay leaders to begin talking about creating a communal norm regarding long-term programs for gap year and college age students in Israel. We also looked at the way JAFI and our Movement can continue to work closely together to advance our mutual objectives.

These discussions continued at the recent Task Force meeting in Jerusalem (last February) also covering long term programs marketing, WUPJ Education Center to be established in Jerusalem, report on Carmel, and next steps in our work. A group that will focus on joint marketing of long term programs has been established and will report to the next meeting of the Task Force (in February). Meetings are being arranged with JAFI and URJ professionals

We welcome participation from others interested in the work of the Task Force.

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Summary of the activity of the International Interfaith Task Force

Chaired by Rabbi Mark L Winer, PhD, DD

The focal activity during the first year of our existence was convocation in Rome from the 6th to the 10th of March 2005. The purpose of the convocation was to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate, the Vatican II document which declared the Catholic Church's acknowledgement of the Jewish Covenant with God, among statements about other religions. Nostra Aetate has become the seminal event in the historic evolution of Catholic-Jewish relations in particular, and in Christian-Jewish relations in general during the last 40 years.

Our planned private audience with His Holiness Pope John Paul II, did not take place on Wednesday the 9th of March as planned, due to the Pope's illness and hospitalization. However, a segment of the healing service conducted at the Pope's hospital by Rabbi Uri Regev and ten representatives of our delegation was broadcast over national Italian television and repeated on all national news broadcasts for the next day.

Thirty Italian progressive Jews had joined the thirty-five of us from the rest of the World Union on the previous Sunday afternoon. We conducted a fruitful dialogue of the Italian Chief Rabbi DiSegni. The televised and printed reports of our healing service at the pope's hospital especially heartened progressive Jews throughout Italy, and many of them contacted us in their joy of our good publicity for progressive Judaism.

Other featured activities of our convocation included a briefing by the Israeli ambassador to the Vatican, special tours of the Vatican and the Sistine Chapel, and open discussions with Cardinal Walter Kasper and Father Norbert Hofmann, the President and Secretary of the Holy See Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. We proposed follow-up activity with the Vatican on a worldwide basis. First we suggested an educational program for adults and children teaching about each other as Catholics and Jews, especially about the progress of Catholic-Jewish reconciliation over the last 40 years. Second we proposed a conference for educators to be conducted together to teach

about each other as we each understand ourselves. Third we offered a South American based international interreligious dialogue, most likely in Sao Paulo. Discussions are on-going on these three possibilities, although nothing definitive has been planned.

Donations by participants in our March convocation in Rome should fully fund our interfaith task force program for the next year or more to come. Approximately \$35,000 has been contributed to cover some part-time professional staff work and expenses, it is clear that our members around the world not only want to participate but are willing to underwrite our endeavor financially.

On 26 June 2005 many of our synagogues around the world will participate in a worldwide Muslim-Christian-Jewish peace conference by video conferencing through the internet. World Union congregations in Israel, Holland, Brazil, and Great Britain, in addition to Canada and the United States, have signed on to participating in this fascinating initiative.

The Vatican has invited us to bring a delegation of 50 to a special conference they have called to commemorate Nostra Aetate on 27 October 2005. We are planning a five day conference built around the Vatican's commemoration, drawing on our experience this last March. Once again, we will invite our Italian progressive fellow Jews, meet with the Chief Rabbi and Israeli ambassador. We hope to have an audience with Pope Benedict, meet with the Italian President, and confer with the British and American ambassadors to the Vatican.

We have already made preliminary inquiries into a future Muslim-Jewish-Christian peace mission to London, Cairo, Israel and the Vatican to experience each others' holy places, to witness each other in prayer, and to share in friendship and discussion together. Significant interest has been expressed by potential Muslim - both Sunni and Shia - and Christian - Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox partners. We would both learn about each other in the course of the mission, and also exemplify the possibilities for interreligious activity and fellowship among all of us as children of Abraham.

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Regions and country reports

Report from the Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) (Representing Australia, New Zealand and Asia)

This report will deal largely with the events of the year 2004 – 2005. The Union for Progressive Judaism (UPJ) has undergone a paradigm shift in how it operates and therefore in how it represents the interests of its constituents.

As an umbrella body covering such an enormous geographic area the UPJ has always struggled with delivering relevant, meaningful programs and projects for all our members. Cost is the major limiting factor, followed closely by not having had a professional director to create, run and oversee whatever tasks the UPJ tried to undertake. Both of these imperatives have been addressed differently since the beginning of 2004.

The UPJ appointed a full time Executive Director (ED), Mrs Janice Alper, in May 2004. Upon her arrival the UPJ began a process of evaluation and restructuring and is now putting programs and projects "on the ground". We began with a leadership retreat seminar, bringing together people from all over the region for a weekend of training and workshops in the leadership skills needed for running their Jewish communal organizations. The emphasis was on encouraging these people to engage with their organizations for 5 years in an effective and productive manner, always sharing their skills to ensure succession. The UPJ funded two candidates to attend the 2nd Beutel Leadership Seminar in Israel in January 2005.

Jewish education is high priority for the UPJ and we will institute retreats, workshops and seminars in which the Jewish professionals and interested persons may participate. In the same vein we believe that synagogue music deserves our support and encouragement. This has been identified as an important feature of congregational life and many members struggle to meet expectations without some training being offered.

Another area of emphasis is in communication with our members. The ED distributes an electronic newsletter every month which is designed for inclusion in synagogue newsletters. We have asked that the UPJ be included on all congregational mastheads and other official communications to congregational members. The ED is also working closely with our Rabbinic council and has built upon a healthy partnership with all its members. This is an invaluable manner in which to promote important issues and events as they relate to Progressive Jewry and the Jewish community in general. Involving our Rabbis closely is a win- win situation as each Rabbi expands his/her own area of work to include contact with folk outside his/her immediate congregation, and our members get to know the variety of styles and experience these important people can bring to their own understanding of Judaism.

It is envisaged that funding for these projects will be sought from outside bodies, government and charitable, where possible. To this end we are building a team of people who will seek-out suitable funding sources and work with the ED to prepare submissions for programs. This will be, perhaps, the most difficult part of the work of the UPJ executive and committees. We believe we can support the ED's position from annual subscriptions, but know that much creative programming will rely heavily on successful fundraising from sources as described above.

The paradigm shift in the manner in which the UPJ presents itself to its members has lead to a greater knowledge of who we are amongst our members and we believe this has impacted positively upon them in gaining their greater support for fundraising for Israel. During the past 5 years we have grown our annual fundraising totals from AU\$ 300-400000 per annum to more than AU\$800000 in 2004. The effort by a few to make this happen has been enormous. We draw from a donor pool of about 10000 units. Sadly during 2004, the UPJ lost two of its staunchest supporters with the deaths of Mr Isador Magid of blessed memory, and Mr George Shannon of blessed memory. Both gentlemen were passionate about Israel and social justice. Mr Magid had a particular interest in Jewish education and was a loyal supporter of the King David School in Melbourne, Australia from its inception. Mr Shannon instituted a program of food relief for the needy in Israel in recent times. He was determined to help children in particular. In their memory the campaign team determined to continue their efforts and to engage more "ordinary" donors to be a part of Israel's future by becoming givers at any level.

In November 2004 the UPJ was privileged to welcome the executive and governing body members of the WUPJ to Sydney for their Board of Governors meeting. We combined this with our own annual conference and took advantage of the expertise that the WUPJ members brought to run seminars on finance, education for all levels, music, service leadership and updates on the "matsav", and many more subjects of interest to our members. The WUPJ meeting was open to all and was well attended. This was a landmark event for the UPJ constituents and the congregations in Sydney hosted our visitors superbly. A highlight of the 5 days was the inaugural performance of a concert called "Beyond the Moon" featuring an original musical presentation based on the poems of Jacob Rosenberg and presented by Cantor Joseph Tolz and Choir Director Judy Campbell with a professional ensemble.

It is hoped that the growing awareness amongst our members of the greater family of Progressive Jews worldwide will work to enrich their own lives and lead them to engage on many more levels, ensuring the viability of our movement. To that end the UPJ believes we have made a correct move to restructure as we have and we look forward to implementing our hopes and dreams with the strength this change has given us.

Penny Jakobovits
Immediate Past President, UPJ

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Report from the European Region of The World Union for Progressive Judaism

The face of Europe is changing rapidly, with several new additions to the European Union and the spread of liberal democracy (with opportunities for religious expression) in the former Soviet bloc. The work of the European Region of WUPJ ("ER") in assisting the development of Progressive communities reflects these changes and we now have members in 15 different countries.

Although the financial resources of ER are relatively small, they can be put to good use in providing small grants to help new communities become established. In addition, we have a considerable range of skills and experience which can be used to deal with those difficulties which often arise in communal life, and which new leaders may find especially troublesome. Sometimes there is more than one congregation in a particular city and we can encourage them to work together and to share resources. With the opening of the Abraham Geiger College in Germany and, more recently, the Levisson Foundation in The Netherlands, in addition to the UK Leo Baeck College-Centre for Jewish Education, there is a further area of work in co-ordinating assistance for students at these three European Progressive seminaries.

The most visible aspect of ER is its biennial conference. This year the venue was The Hague and almost 200 delegates from 17 countries met for three days in March. The opening ceremony in the City Hall was hosted by Mayor Wim Deetman and attended by no less than 11 ambassadors. The conference theme was "Changing Europe - A Challenge to European Judaism" with keynote lectures and 13 different workshops exploring different aspects of the theme. On the Friday evening, the service was held in The Hague which is embarking on an ambitious building project. Next day, the Shabbat service was held in Rotterdam. A cantorial concert was held in The Hague on the

Saturday evening. The Annual General Meeting of ER was held on the Sunday morning.

Other important activities in which ER has played a part include:

- Austria: the opening of the new Synagogue Or Chadash in Vienna
- Czech Republic: continuing visits and assistance for the congregations in Prague
- France: ER has assisted in the appointment of Rabbi Michel Liebermann in Toulouse, and was instrumental in arranging a nationwide Talmud Torah conference in July
- Germany: ER was represented at the 10th annual conference of the Union of Progressive Jews in Berlin; there has been welcome progress in the relations between the Union and the Central Council of Jews
- Italy: ER continues to help the three congregations in Milan and Florence; Lev Chadash in Milan has appointed its own Rabbi, Barbara Aiello, which the congregation is funding from its own resources.

Applications for membership have been received from a new congregation in Schleswig-Holstein and from Eurojews, which arranges activities for young Progressive Jews in Europe.

In August 2004 the European Region became a member the European Council of Jewish Communities. We will be building on this relationship in the coming months.

An important area of work carried out under the auspices of ER is the co-ordination of support groups for the congregations in the Former Soviet Union, co-ordinated by ER's Project Development Officer Linda Kann.

Dr Leo Hepner retired as ER Chairman in March and he has been succeeded by Gordon Smith, a former chairman of Leo Baeck College. Dr Hepner continues as an Officer with particular responsibility for Germany and Denmark. Leslie Bergman, the International Treasurer of the WUPJ and Peter Galgut have also been co-opted to the Honorary Officers. Vivienne Zubaida has been appointed Administrator of ER based at the Sternberg Centre where she works closely with Linda Kann.

Important future events in the diary include:-

- The 2005 Annual General Meeting of The European Region on 3rd April 2005
- A fundraising dinner in London on 3rd April 2005 in honour of Joyce and Jeffery Rose
- The WUPJ conference to be held in Moscow 30th June-5th July 2005 where ER will be sponsoring a number of community leaders to attend.
- The next European Region conference and 2006 AGM which is to be held in Hannover 16th -19th March 2006

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Report from Vienna/Austria - Or Chadasch

The most important and impressive event in 2004 was the opening of our synagogue at Robertgasse 2 in the Second District, the traditionally Jewish Quarter of Vienna. It is the very first liberal synagogue in the history of Austria and was made possible by generous financial support from the Vienna City Council and the Austrian Government. We were able to contribute a small part ourselves. The Israelitische Kultusgemeinde owns the building where our synagogue is situated and they offered us a cheap 15 years lease on premises formerly occupied by a printing shop, provided we find the financial means to renovate the desolate rooms. After completion of the work the new synagogue is now one of the most beautiful in the whole of Vienna, with an artistically designed Tree of Life, a library and study room, a small kitchen and a modern office, in addition to the tasteful Prayer Room.

The official opening ceremony took place on 22 February and at the same time we held the inauguration of Rabbi Irit Shillor and conferred Honorary Presidency on Leslie Bergman. High-ranking representatives of Austrian political and religious life attended the ceremony, including Dr. Khol, President of the Austrian Parliament, Dr. Rieder, Deputy Mayor of the City of Vienna, and leaders of the Christian and Islamic Communities. Ruth Cohen, President of the World Union and Leo Hepner, former Chairman of the European Board of the World Union also came to Vienna for the ceremony, which particularly pleased us.

Other outstanding events in 2004 included a visit by a delegation from the West London Synagogue on 30.4., when Rabbi Winer led the service. We also celebrated a wedding and a Bar Mitzva this year - the first for a number of years. On 2.7. we held our annual Erev Pride service. The High Holyday services were led by Rabbi Stuart Geller, who came to Vienna from Israel with his wife and led the services wonderfully. This year, as every year, we built our sukka high above the roofs of Vienna and were delighted to be joined by lots of young people this time. In October, for the first time in our history, the President of the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Dr. Ariel Muzicant attended a Kabbalat Shabbat service accompanied by his wife and mother, and we see this visit as a good sign.

Rabbi Irit Shillor will continue to visit Vienna regularly. In previous years she has spent 5 days a month in Vienna, but for the next 5 months she will come for 9 days a month, thanks to the support of the European Board, to whom we are very grateful.

In addition to the above our regular activities include weekly Kabbalat Shabbat services led by Rabbi Shillor or a member of the community, Shacharit and Minchah services when the Rabbi is in Vienna, celebration of all Jewish festivals including the "small festivals", religious instruction for children, teenagers and adults (including conversion classes), political and cultural lectures and activities in interfaith dialogue.

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Report from Caribbean – UJCL **The community of Aruba**

Last year was a busy one for our community. In May we hosted the 7th. UJCL Encounter, and were able to prove to ourselves that, in every community, there is

unsuspected potential for action and creativity. It was a learning experience, mistakes were made, but, undoubtedly, it was a joy for us to have you in Aruba.

There is growing interest in the Adult Courses given by Rabbi Marcelo Bater. Some of them attract the general public, and we are enriched by this outreach that had not taken place before.

Also, we have an enthusiastic group of people who have chosen to walk in the path of Judaism. They are presently taking a one-year course and, in a couple of months, after its completion, we will be able to invite a *beit din* of rabbis from the UJCL communities for them, after which we will welcome them as full members of our congregation.

Our Youth group is getting together weekly, but is faced with a problem of diminishing numbers, as our young people leave Aruba to study at different colleges and universities overseas.

Even so, they were able to raise funds to attend this 4th Youth Encounter, and have learned a lot about teamwork and responsibility in the process.

They have also taught us a valuable lesson: never to underestimate the potential of youth and their ability to make a project succeed if they deem it worthwhile. Another youth pet project is the twice-a –year collection of food and clothes for *Ambiente Feliz*, a residential facility for mentally challenged adults that receives very little government funding.

The monthly Shabbat community dinners are a perfect occasion to get together, share with our Overseas Members, sing Israeli songs, with much feeling, and really feel the warmth of welcoming this special day that defines our Judaism.

Our Passover seder attracted many visitors to Aruba, as well as local members. More than 100 guests shared with us in our celebration of freedom from slavery.

We celebrated *Yom Haatzmaut* with all of our members, high government dignitaries, and the presence of the Ambassador of Israel to Venezuela, Mr. Shlomo Cohen.

At present we have about 150 overseas members, many of whom joined us at our 5th. Annual Fund Raiser, held at the end of Dec. 2004. This year it was an Israeli dinner, with the presence of a local artist who sang beautiful Hebrew songs.

We also organized fundraisers for the Haiti victims of hurricane Ivan in Haiti and recently, to aid the tsunami victims.

There is a spirit of renewal at Beth Israel, thanks to the charismatic leadership of Rabbi Bater and the dedicated work of our volunteers. We feel that we have managed to put the Jewish Community of Aruba on the map of Caribbean Jewish communities and, more importantly, in the hearts of many of its members.

Costa Rica congregation B'nei Israel

At this moment, our community is passing through one of the most important stages in its history. A little more than half a year ago we welcomed our marvelous Rabbis Daniela Szuster and Rami Pavolotzky whose impact on the community has been enormous. Our community base has been strong since we began 18 years ago. Our members have always been identified with, and committed to B'nei Israel. Nevertheless, we have much to do and to improve.

We have increased our membership, attendance at services, participation in programs, and the level of energy and emotion in general. Our religious school has been our source of pride—a dynamic school where we can teach our children. And with the help of four young couples who are expecting babies this year our continuity is assured.

Now we have more classes and activities for the young adolescents, an age where it takes work to bring them to the synagogue. Eight of our youths attended the conference in El Salvador and all of those plus the seven students who will become *B'nei Mizvah* this year are preparing to go to Guadalajara.

We have had a cemetery for the last 10 years but now also have a well trained *Chevrah Kadisha* which aids our community during delicate moments. Our Women's Group has always been active but now meets more frequently with many more activities occurring. We have begun a very enthusiastic group of *rikudim* (traditional dances) and in a few days we will be organizing our first community chorus. Maybe we will become famous one day and will visit all of the UJCL communities.

Under the leadership of our Rabbis we are finding more dynamic ways of living our culture and strengthening our community feeling. In general, our projects for the future have as their goal to involve more and more persons in the community life, to make Judaism in our Congregation more relevant in their daily lives. We are sure of being on the right road to accomplish this goal.

Curacao

Our Community received in Mid-February Rabbi David Starr from Hebrew College (Newton Centre, MA) and he spent a week here as our scholar and gave outstanding talks on new perspectives for Purim and Passover.

During the week, he spoke about the religious movements in Judaism – their origins and current status.

Cuba Mchane and weddings

The Cuban community experienced a very active February. It began with an adult *majane* which is only one of the jointly developed programs of the American Joint Distribution Committee and the Hebrew Community of Cuba. The activity was attended by 150 people from all of the communities in the country. The *majane*, which we called *Arajim* (values), brought the possibility of enjoying oneself and at the same time learning together about the universal values Judaism teaches us.

An even more intense emotional experience also occurred this February. After a long wait, new couples realized their dreams and were married under the *chuppah*. Though some of the couples were married civilly for only a few years while others had already celebrated their 40th anniversary, all experienced nervousness at their weddings, which took place according to Jewish law. This was made possible through the efforts of the local Jewish Community, and implemented by educators from the Joint in the eastern part of Cuba.

Next, the youth organization *Macabi de Cuba* will begin one of the most awaited activities of the year: the cycle of Jewish films which combines the debate about our culture with its representation in the audiovisual arts.

Jamaica

Congregation K.K. Shaare Shalom, the United Congregation of Israelites, sent three representatives to the UJCL conference in El Salvador. From all their accounts the conference was a success. Stephen Henriques has been elected to represent Jamaica at the UJCL.

The congregation continues with its lay leadership to fulfill its religious responsibilities. Services take place twice a week and Kiddush is held in the adjacent hall every Friday night.

Of note is the arrival of a young Israeli from the Young Slichut Division of the Jewish Agency. Avishay Kahana has just completed his tour of duty with the IDF and has come to work with the congregants in a variety of activities, conducting classes with the young people and developing community programs with the older congregation. He is expected to spend a year in Jamaica.

The planning to create a museum and celebrate the 350th anniversary of the recognition of Jewish life in Jamaica is getting into full gear. In addition, it is expected that Jamaican Jewish artists over the past 200 years will be put on show. Jamaican Jewish music will be presented on DVDs as well.

The Congregation's Newsletter is published quarterly and distributed by email. Anyone wishing a copy only need to advise the editor and publisher Ainsley Henriques at ainsley@cwjamaica.com

Guadalajara Kehila masortit

In the framework of 'Project Tolerance 100', organized by the Hebrew Community of Guadalajara and the Mexican Israeli Cultural Institute, a series of conferences and seminars are taking place in different educational institutions under the direction of Dr. Adolfo Roitman, curator of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The central theme of these expositions is a Judeo-Christian dialogue concerning the revelations in the scrolls.

On the other side, we continue with our usual activities such as classes on Judaism, religious services, and WIZO meetings

Panama congregation kol Shearith Israel

Our golden dream is getting closer to becoming a reality. The construction of the new synagogue and community center located in *Costa del Este* is advancing in giant leaps and is calculated to be completed in 6 months. Thus, we hope that very soon we will be able to move and greet you in our new facilities.

In March, with the beginning of the school year, we begin our classes and courses for children, youths, and adults. Nevertheless, we still remain active during this time of the year. On Thursday, February 17, we enjoyed a "Grand Israeli Evening" complete with delicious foods typical to the country and with *Rikudim* (traditional dances) sponsored by the youths of *Noar*.

These same youths are organizing a "Convention Night" to show all our members and friends the video and photos of the UJCL Convention that took place in San Salvador.

On that special evening the youths will be offering their first donation to the new synagogue. The proposed date is Thursday, March 3 with the proceeds going to *Noar* activities.

Greetings from Panama to all our friends! For more information you may write to us at congski@cwpanama.net or call us at (507) 225-4100.

Puerto Rico

Greetings from Temple Beth Shalom, San Juan Puerto Rico! Since July when Rabbi Moti Rotem left us to join a new congregation in Waco, Texas, we have been very lucky to have had some very special visiting spiritual leaders to guide us and enrich our lives with their knowledge and dedication.

Sue Klau and the Adult Education Committee have lined up the *crème de la crème* of service leaders. Since Rosh Hashanah, we have been blessed to have had such leaders as Rabbi Donald Berlin who was with us for six weeks. He was with us during Tropical Storm Jeanne which caused us to have candle lit services on Saturday morning of Rosh Hashanah and to hold Friday Night Services at the Marriott hotel. What a champion! We had also had the leadership of Cantor George Mason (cousin of our Past President Ron Rosenberg), Rabbi Larry Rubinstein, and Rabbi Frank Waldorf each for one month. The time they were visiting with us was filled with delightful nights of Adult Education. We are looking forward to more visiting Rabbis in the coming months. This year, we have celebrated three Bar Mitzvah ceremonies and two (2) conversions.

On December 11, 2004, The San Juan Museum of Art & History in Old San Juan opened a long awaited exhibition entitled The History of the Jewish Community of Puerto Rico. The exhibition will be held until August 2005 and is open to all. The museum is holding a Jewish Film Festival during the months of January thru June 2005. All three Congregations of Puerto Rico are sponsoring the exhibits. It is great to see the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform working together to make this a great success.

On another note, I am sorry that I could not be here with all of you due to circumstances beyond my control that prevent me from doing so. I miss you all and hope that this week-end will be a great success. I am looking forward to seeing you all soon in the near future and, if you plan to visit Puerto Rico, please be sure to contact me. Regards from Jim and Sue Klau and from all of us at Temple Beth Shalom.

Surinam

Since our first attendance at these conventions in Aruba last year, a number of major events have taken place in our small community:

- Firstly, we were saddened by the loss of our respected and beloved Mr. Rene Fernandes on the 21st of June, 2004. He had been chairman of the Jewish community for at least 15 years. Under his leadership, it was decided through a referendum that for our community to survive in the near future, the change from an Orthodox society to a Liberal one had to be made. We thus have joined the World Union for Progressive Judaism and the Union of Jewish Congregations of Latin America and the Caribbean.

- Rabbi Ruben Bar Ephraim visited us in May to finalize talks with people who wished to do the Giur and also gave a number of speeches concerning the move from Orthodox to Liberal Judaism.
- On the 17th of October a successful family day was held on the grounds of our synagogue. We started the event with the opening of our library which is used mainly by students interested in Jewish history and customs.
- In November we were visited by Mr. Etienne Denneboom who came to us from Amsterdam, Holland to give Hebrew classes to a number of people from our community. The group was composed mainly of our younger members. After the visit we were happy with his decision that he would return in January of 2005 to become our fulltime teacher for at least 6 months.
- In late November another family day was organized with 80 members but this time at the ruins of our oldest synagogue, built in the 17th century, approx. 50 km. south from our Capital. This was the first Jewish settlement in Suriname and was called *Joden-Savanna*.
- Also in November a *Beit Din* came to Suriname to perform the *Giur* for people born from a Jewish father. The Beit Din consisted of the following Rabbis: Ruben Bar Ephraim, Menno ten Brink, and Sonny Herman who all came from the Netherlands. Our membership has since grown.
- In January of this year the Secretary of Education and Cultural affairs from the Netherlands, Mrs. Maria van der Hoeve visited our synagogue. The visit was very fruitful for it resulted in the concession by her that the Dutch Government will help with the construction of a building for our archives which go back to 1680. The government will also aid in the digitalization of said archives.
- Finally, we are also well on the way to form a junior chamber since the interest of our young members has grown considerably during the last 2-3 years.

Participation in our religious services has grown considerably in our Kehila consisting of about 125 members. We do have a problem: most of the members have a minimum income making it extremely difficult to generate the required funds to keep it all going.

Tours for tourists are organized in the Synagogue complex which is well visited, especially since Suriname is the only country in the world where a Synagogue and a Mosque are side by side.

Also our Synagogue is considered as one of the best maintained historic buildings of our Capital. Tours are also made to Joden-Savanna, from which part of the generated funds flows back to our Congregation.

All this is still not enough to cover all expenses, even with generous donations made by some of our more affluent members.

Planned events/activities for 2005

1. Mr. Etienne Denneboom is planned to arrive at the end of January and will stay for 6 months to give Hebrew classes.
2. On Purim the yearly ball will be held.

3. On the second *Seder* night the Congregation will have a community celebration with members and family.
4. In mid-May Rabbi Ruben Bar Ephraim is expected again in Suriname and we will together evaluate the progress of our turnover from Orthodox to Liberal Judaism as well as talk to more people interested in becoming members.
5. We are currently busy with fundraising to make it possible for us to take part in the 32nd International Convention of the WUPJ in Moscow and with focusing on gathering funds to carry out necessary repairs to our Synagogue *Neve Shalom*.

On behalf of the Suriname Jewish Community, *Shalom* and thank you

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Report from Chile YaKaR congregation

YaKaR is a *sui generis* WUPJ congregation. It's uniqueness lies in its spirituality and purpose: to share Judaism for individual and collective human evolution of all its members. It is progressive and at the same time weaves reform with an authentic Chassidic soul, for a loving, awakened and meaningful life. Created in 1997 together with rabbi Roberto Feldmann, it is a congregation home to members of varied age, talents and Jewish ethnicities, one that not only vibrates in its beautiful, creative and yet traditional religious services, but has an unprecedented vitality in Chile. Yakar It is deliberately located in a compound of beautiful nature and varied spiritual practices, as is Villa Vida Natural, -an oasis in the otherwise modern and hectic Santiago- thus breaking with isolationism, and maintaining our Jewish identity in peace and harmony with our non-Jewish environment.

- It holds and registers in audiotapes adult retreats, courses and seminars both inside synagogue, as well as in academic realms, where it develops ongoing seminaries. It holds children's education, empowering them effectively in our Jewish tradition.
- It truly explains, at every festivity or life cycle, its deeper, multi-layered meanings, helping the adult person to resonate with ever greater orbs of personal, spiritual and moral understanding.
- It rescues a warm and joyful mysticism, far from esoteria, -a simple, intelligent and soulful one. It is a congregation that embraces its members by who they are, not their external circumstances.
- It keeps links and mutually constructive relationships with other entities of the Chilean Jewish community, as well the ones abroad, promoting unity in the encounter between different streams and sensitivities in the core of our people.
- It is active in fighting anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism, supporting Israel, while at the same time partaking in courageous and innovative instances of dialogue for peace.
- It is active in the promotion of freedom and Human Rights, unambiguous and unrelenting in its defence of the environment, justice and social action as understood from the voice of our Jewish roots and its prophetic calling.
- It carries our inter-religious dialogue, education and action in radio and TV, in universities and diverse spaces, with programs of high spiritual and intellectual

content, as well as understandable and at reach for all the citizenry, aspiring to spread the message of Judaism as the marvellous world it is.

YaKaR, meaning “precious”, “beloved” in Hebrew, whose acrostic alludes to the garden of pomegranates or “*Pardes Harimonim*” of human and mystical love, is an alternative and alterative space. It is home to some 250 Jewish families and individuals that have at some point distanced themselves from a Jewish life, coming back then to their spiritual home with a re-discovering enthusiasm. It is a crucially important space in our country, and also a pride for the Jewish Community of Chile.

Rabbi Roberto Feldmann.
YaKaR Renewal Congregation, Santiago, Chile.

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Report from Prague Bejt Simcha

Přejeme mír v duši jednotlivců, komunit a národů, zejména pak v Izraeli.
(We wish a peace in the souls of individuals, communities and all the nations, namely in Eretz Israel).

In 2004, we introduced brand new project of pre-Festival workshops. All the year we organized very successful series of 12 workshops that besides members of our community attracted also some members of Jewish communities outside of Prague. The workshop series also served as a outreach programme, some of newcomers became the members of Bejt Simcha. We are grateful for financial support of workshop series by Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund, and American Jewish Distribution Committee.

We published another volume of our monthly magazine named Maskil. It has 600 copies every month and it is distributed to all Jewish communities in Czech Republic, to the public libraries, and other public places.

With a kind hospitality of Prague Jewish community and with a financial help of European Board of WUPJ we organized historical Yom Kippur in old Pinkas Synagogue at the Prague Jewish quarter. The services were thus witnessed by all the names of Czech and Moravian Jews who perished in Holocaust.

In year 2004, we celebrated as we did for previous years all the Holidays and Festivals, weekly Friday evening services, and bi-monthly Saturday morning services. On Wednesday evenings we organized lectures on different topics, film projections and new cultural projects as well. During the whole year we hosted several precious guests, including rabbi Michael Cohen of RJF, Rabbi Douglas Charing, rabbi Andrew Goldstein, Yechiel Bar-Chaim, cantor Helen Leneman, cantor Michael Issacson, rabbi Ronald Hoffberg of Massorti, professor Anita Boeckler of AGK, rabbinic students from Leo Beck College and Abraham Geiger Kolege, youth groups from Northwood and Pinner Liberal Synagogue and Netzer of former Soviet Union.

Bejt Simcha is associated member of Federation of Czech Jewish Communities. However, the Federation does not recognize the Progressive forms of Judaism yet. We re-started a campaign for the recognition: we formulated written Platform of Progressive Judaism in Czech Republic and submitted it as an open letter to the Federation for

further discussion and negotiations. We are ready for dialogue with Prague Jewish community and with other Jewish communities organized in the Federation as well. For such dialogue we would like to contribute by bringing a Progressive rabbi to our country so we started negotiations and fundraising campaign to accommodate such person in the near future. He or she might be serving all interested communities within the country.

With all our enthusiasm we continue the work to renew the Jewish religious and communal life in open and egalitarian atmosphere, to improve the Jewish education for people with Jewish roots, to strengthen our link to Israel, and to promote the dialogue and cooperation with other Jewish communities and other minorities living in the Czech Republic.

Julius Müller, Prague

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Report from Progressive Judaism in Denmark

Robin May Schott, Chairperson
Hilsen og godt nyt år fra København!

2004 has been another year marked by major strides in our community. We are a young community (this is our third season), and our membership is small but growing. In this past year we have increased in size from 60 to 80 individual members (a growth of 30%).

Our infra-structure has solidified, and we run the following events: monthly Friday evening shabbat dinners and Saturday morning services, monthly education classes for adults and children, bi-weekly classes for Bar/Bat Mitzvah students, who also attend weekly Hebrew classes. Thanks to the support of the European Region, we have been able to hold High Holy Day services for the third time this year. In addition, we celebrate holidays such as Simchat Torah, Sukkot, Chanukah and Purim together, and meet for lectures on cultural topics four times during the year. One of our members edits an outstanding monthly electronic newsletter.

Some of the high points in 2004 include celebrating the first progressive Bar Mitzvah for a Danish boy in May 2004, and celebrating the first Bat Mitzvah in the history of Denmark where the girl read from the Torah. We have also initiated a program for post-Bar/Bat Mitzvah youths, and look forward to developing programs for youths. In 2003 we initiated the first progressive conversion program in any of the nordic countries, and on July 1, 2004 the four members of our first group were recognized by the European Beit Din. We are currently planning for our third conversion class in 2005. People have expressed interest in this program from both Sweden and Germany.

We continue to be grateful for the outstanding rabbis who lead our monthly activities. Rabbi Charles Middleburgh, former Director of Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues in Great Britain comes to Copenhagen four times a year. He serves as our Foster Rabbi and conducts the conversion program. This year we were also fortunate to have Rabbi Deborah Kahn-Harris from London conduct our High Holy Day services as well as two shabbat weekends.

We are finishing an application to the Danish Church Ministry for full recognition. Attaining such recognition will enable us to pursue other plans, such as eventually gaining access to burial grounds.

And we have gained increased visibility in the broader Danish community, with articles and letters about us in the orthodox community's monthly journal.

We have many tasks in front of us, key amongst which are fundraising and recruiting of new members. It is our dream one day to be able to employ a progressive rabbi who is willing to settle in Denmark and learn Danish. This would truly be a milestone in carrying out our vision of establishing a full-service progressive congregation in Denmark.

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Report from France - MJLF

Several major and concrete facts and plans should be mentioned in the life of Mouvement Juif Libéral de France, for the 2004-2005 period.

With **Rabbi Stephen Berkowitz** having joined us **full time** as of September, we have indeed considerably increased our potential for action, both within the existing structures and in new developments.

The MJLF founder and Senior **Rabbi Daniel Farhi** is concentrating on the **Beaugrenelle** synagogue, which is bustling with activities to a point when often we do not have adequate facilities for accommodating all needs. In particular our **Talmud Tora** (370 pupils for our 2 sites), directed by **Yann Boissière** (assistant director : Ori Reshef), needs more room. We are looking for additional space right near our building; this should enable us to host our Jewish Scouts group more easily, and also develop our own Youth section.

Among MJLF 'older' activities let us focus on **inter-religious relations**. For Yom haShoa we have more and more students, non-Jews in particular, taking part in the 24 hour public reading of names initiated by Daniel Farhi 15 years ago, and we are asked to help 'exporting' the ceremony to other regions. We also push efforts to keep increasing our contacts with younger lay and religious Moslems.

The **Paris-East** synagogue, lead by **Rabbi Gabriel Farhi**, is in full growth, with many new people coming to various activities – but not necessarily ready yet to pay dues. Gabriel ran High Holy Day services there - altogether we ran 3 sites last fall - and we already have to look for larger facilities for the next Tishri services. There too we need more classrooms for Talmud Tora, a priority project for September.

Rabbi Stephen Berkowitz is both taking over some services, some teaching and personal counselling at both of our existing sites, and launching a new venture in the **southern suburbs of Paris** – our main strategic drive for 2005. There we shall build around existing members and above all recruit new ones. The development plan has started with some 50 people having enthusiastically attended 2 separate 'hanuka functions, and a calendar through June has been set up, including an additional community seder – of which there will be 3, around each rabbi.

Félix Mosbacher,
Francis Lentschner, President

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FSU DIGEST 2004 EVENTS IN PROGRESSIVE JUDAISM

In September 2004 near Moscow was held an annual leadership conference for the activists of Progressive Jewish congregations from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. More than 120 people, representing 70 FSU congregations were present on the conference. This year, the conference had three tracks – one for the congregational chair people, one for the community workers and second year Machon students and one – for the Netzer activists. Executive Director of the WUPJ, Rabbi Uri Regev, Associate Director of the WUPJ Rabbi Joel Oseran, Financial Director Todd Warnick and Treasurer Leslie Bergman were also present during the conference. The new publication of the WUPJ in Russian, a guidebook for organizing the lifecycle ceremonies in the congregations, was presented during the conference.

Education

In June of 2004 Machon – The Institute for Modern Judaism (situated in Moscow) has had a graduation ceremony. 9 people graduated with the diplomas of community workers after two years of studies and 8 more people has finished their first year of studies and went on to the congregations throughout Russia, Ukraine and Belarus to begin their second year of practical community work. In September 2004 13 new students from Russia, Ukraine and Belarus has started their first year of studies in Machon.

Joint project with the Hebrew Union College

In 2004 Reform movement in the FSU has started the new joint project with Hebrew Union College. Rabbi David Wilfond and the Russian-speaking students from the Israeli rabbinical program of the HUC have visited Reform congregations in Russia and Ukraine, where they led the High Holidays, Sukkot and Simchat Torah celebrations. Also Rabbi Elena Rubinstein and the students participated in the Reform movement's summer camps, leadership training seminars of Netzer and Hillel in Russia and in Ukraine. This project is organized with the support from the Shusterman Foundation.

Torah Scrolls for FSU Congregations

With the assistance of the World Union for Progressive Judaism "Shomrei Torah" ("The Guardians of Torah") program number of communities in FSU has received Torah scrolls. Progressive congregation in St.Petersburg has received a scroll during the mission to FSU from their twinned community, Congregation Emanu El, in Houston, TX. HUC rabbinical students, during their regular Pesach Project in FSU, have brought a Torah scroll to Congregation Ani-ve-Ata in Chelyabinsk, Russia. This scroll was donated by Congregation Bna'i Israel in Charleston, WV.

Rabbi Nelly Shulman has brought a Torah scroll for the Congregation Hatikvah in Tula, Russia from the Temple Beth Sholom in Santa Ana, CA.

Torah donations program is extremely important for the future development and growth of the Reform movement in the FSU.

RUSSIA

Rabbi Michael Farbman, the graduate of Leo Baeck College in London, who has been an assistant rabbi in the West London Synagogue, has become a rabbi of the St. Petersburg Congregation for Progressive Judaism in August 2004. With the addition of

Rabbi Michael Farbman to the Rabbi Alexander Lyskovoy, who started his work in St.Petersburg in 2003 the Union of the Congregations for Modern Judaism in Russia created an attractive and innovative community and educational programming which is establishing even stronger Progressive presence in the Jewish community of this second-largest Russian city.

Two new rabbinical students have started their education in the Leo Baeck College in London and Avraham Geiger Koleg in Berlin. Tatiana Sakhnovitch and Tamara Arutunova, respectively, are both graduates of the Machon – the Institute for Modern Judaism in Moscow. Tatiana has worked as a coordinator of the community programs in Moscow and Tamara as a coordinator of the early childhood educational programs.

Dmitry Karpenko, a cantorial soloist of the Reform movement in FSU, has started a year program of professional cantorial training in HUC Jerusalem. The program is geared towards advanced cantorial education and professional development.

For the first time in Moscow Jewish life two Reform cantors has held their concerts in the Russian capital. Cantor Sergey Schwartz, from Temple Beth Sholom (New City, NY) has performed in Moscow and taught classes in the Machon – the Institute for Modern Judaism during Pesach of 2004.

The concert of Cantor Vadim Tunitsky, of Congregation Emanu El (Houston, TX) has been a part of the program of congregational mission to Moscow and St.Petersburg in June 2004. Both concerts have been organized in cooperation with JCC “On Nikitskaya”.

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Report from Netzer FSU

- ✓ For the first time in the history Netzer FSU organized six summer camps and winter camps, including a pilot in Siberia. Over 900 teenagers and young adults participated in the camps, which were held in Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus.
- ✓ More than 30 leadership training seminars were organized in Russia, the Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic States. Over 1000 movement members participated in these training seminars.
- ✓ Netzer has also been initiating programs in new locations:
 - Seminars, Netzer club and a winter camp were held for the first time in St. Petersburg.
 - In June, September and December Netzer organized 3 weekend study retreats for young adults in the Baltic States.
- ✓ In addition to the camps and training Netzer FSU organizes activities in youth clubs in various cities. At present, these activities involve some 1,500 youth movement members and 100 counselors in 60 youth clubs- making Netzer the largest Jewish youth movement in FSU.
- ✓ Netzer’s team participated in the Purimshpiel Festival in Vitebsk and won second prize.
- ✓ Fifty young adults participated in the second Jewish heritage visits to Prague, Warsaw and Budapest. This educational trip includes visiting Progressive communities in Poland and Czech Republic.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

During 2004 Union of Organizations for Modern Judaism in Russia (OROSIR) has held six seminars for the developing leadership of the small communities in Russia. These seminars were implemented due to the special grant that was received by OROSIR from the L.A. Pincus Fund for Jewish Education in Diaspora.

More than 150 youth leaders participated in the seminars that were held both for the Central Russia, Ural and Siberia regions. The programs of study combined both leadership training and lectures on Jewish history, tradition and culture. Young people enriched their knowledge about the beliefs and practices of Progressive Judaism and some of them went on to work as counselors in Progressive Jewish camps throughout the year.

EDUCATION

In 2004 the Union for Religious Organizations for Modern Judaism in Russia has continued the program of the educational seminars, organized with the generous help from the grant of the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. The seminars are helping the leadership and members of the Reform Jewish congregations in Russia to acquire the deeper knowledge of Jewish culture, traditions and practices.

FESTIVALS

The Pesach celebrations in Russia have been especially joyous this year. In Moscow, Rabbi Nelly Shulman and Cantor Dmitry Karpenko have conducted a Seder for the participants and guests of the community programs in the JDC cultural center "Nikitskaya". Among the participants was head of JDC in Russia Shmuel Kessler with family.

However, eight progressive Jewish communities outside of Moscow also enjoyed the Sedarim and educational activities that were conducted by the rabbinical, educational and cantorial students of HUC-JIR (Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion). This project, which also took place in the congregations in Ukraine and Belarus, has proved to be so successful that we are awaiting an even bigger group in year 2005.

The added feature to the Pesach of 2004 in FSU was an arrival of the long-awaited Russian-Hebrew Passover Haggada. It is aimed to help Russian speakers understand and participate in the Passover rituals.

This year for the first time ever Rabbi Nelly Shulman has conducted a bilingual English-Hebrew Erev Rosh-a-Shana service, which was attended by more than a hundred participants. The service was organized in cooperation with the JDC cultural center "Nikitskaya", in the framework of the new bi-weekly English speaking Shabbat services program, led by Rabbi Nelly Shulman.

Yom-Kippur service in Moscow Congregation for Progressive Judaism was attended not only by the members of community and guests, but also by the members of the foreign diplomatic corps in Moscow, including the Ambassador of the State of Israel Arkady Mil-Man and the Ambassador of the United States of America Alexander Vershboy with families.

WEBSITES

The new website for Netzer, www.netzer.ru, was launched in 2004. The site includes information on Netzer ideology and programs and articles on Jewish festivals and traditions. The website for the Reform movement in FSU, www.reform.org.ru, was also opened this year.

CONGREGATIONS

The congregational activities in Russia have been expanding and developing in 2004. The new congregation, under the leadership of the Chairperson of the Board of Governors of OROSIR, Novruz Mamedov, was opened in the Far East of Russia, in Khabarovsk. Vladimir Torchinsky, a graduate of the Machon from Ukraine is a community worker in this congregation.

COMMUNITY WORKERS

Five new community workers have joined the cadre of para-professionals that are working in Russia. Andrey Antonov, Evgenia Kulikova and Ivan Skriptchuk are working in the Central region (Smolensk and Moscow), Nadezhda Vernick is a community worker in Ulianovsk (Volga region), and Alexandra Privezenzeva – in Barnaul (Siberia).

UKRAINE

In May of 2004 Temple Emanuel in San Jose, CA, also has organized a mission to their twinned community in Odessa, Ukraine, where the scroll of Torah was presented to the congregation during a Friday night service. The emotional ceremony was conducted by Rabbi of the Temple Emanuel, Dana Magat, Rabbi Nelly Shulman and community worker in Odessa congregation, Julia Grizhenko.

EDUCATION

During 2004 two regions in Ukraine – Crimea and Cherkassy (Central Ukraine) has held a bna'i-mitzvah ceremonies which incorporated not only the bar and bat-mitzvah students, but also their parents and members of the progressive congregations of the regions. Both ceremonies included almost 50 celebrants.

In 2004 the Union for Religious Organizations for Modern Judaism in Ukraine has started the program of the educational seminars, organized with the generous help from the grant of the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund. The seminars are helping the leadership and members of the Progressive Jewish congregations in Ukraine to acquire the deeper knowledge of Jewish culture, traditions and practices. This program is scheduled to continue in year 2005 as well.

COMMUNITY WORKERS

Evgenia Bondarenko, a native of Cherkassy, has returned to her hometown after a year of studies in Machon – Institute for Modern Judaism in Moscow in order to provide spiritual and educational support for Cherkassy Congregation for Progressive Judaism.

BELARUS

EDUCATION

In September of 2004 Gomel Jewish Day School "Hatikvah" has become an official part of the Reform movement in Belarus. It is one of the five Jewish day schools in Belarus, and the second Reform day school in FSU.

The school numbers more than 150 children that, in addition to the regular study program, have a full Jewish curriculum, including Shabbat and festival celebrations. Since September 2004 the new educational coordinator for the Reform movement in Belarus, graduate of the Center for Jewish Education in London, Irina Belskaya particularly is deeply involved in the process of strengthening the work of the school.

COMMUNITY WORKERS

A new community worker has started their fieldwork experience in the Belorussian Union for Progressive Judaism. Natalia Karpik, from Grodno, has become a Union's coordinator of the congregations in Western Belarus.

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Report from Germany - Union progressiver Juden in Deutschland

The Union of Progressive Jews of Germany (UPJ) consists of 15 congregations and 1 Chavura. 3 additional congregations are in the process of applying to the UPJ for membership. The Abraham Geiger College is a member of the UPJ as well and provides vital support for the future through its education of liberal rabbis. Additionally, the Jewish Publication Society and the national youth organisation "Young and Jewish" are also facets of progressive Jewish life in Germany.

A Shlichah, Orly Kenig, generously funded by Netzer Olami and Keren Kayemeth Leisrael has been assigned to Hanover to support Adi Weichselbaum's work with our youth. She arrived in Germany shortly after the High Holidays and assists Adi in programming.

The UPJ has a board of 7 voluntary members, which confers regularly, sharing the responsibilities of re-establishing liberal Jewish life in the land of its birth. Dr. Jan Muehlstein and Katarina Seidler share the work as co-chairpersons.

Thanks to grants provided by the WUPJ and the German Ministry of the Interior, the UPJ was able to hire Irith Raub-Michelsohn as executive director. She is a valuable addition to our organization.

The Union of Progressive Jews of Germany celebrated its 10th annual conference in Berlin/Spandau with over 200 participants in attendance, including representatives of the European Region and the World Union for Progressive Judaism. The conference was a resounding success and underlined the continual development of Germany's liberal communities. Thanks go to conference organizers Debbie Tal-Ruettger and Dr. Annette Boeckler. Rabbi Joel Oseran opened the conference, followed by Dieter Graumann, vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany. This marked the first time that a representative of the Central Council had actively taken part in a UPJ Conference and was a direct result of the UPJ's political action.

Rounding off the conference, Adi Weichselbaum, UPJ youth department leader reported on the scope of his work and the popular and well-received summer and winter machanot. The youth work of the Union is very successful as Adi impressively demonstrated in a video, which was screened on the conference's last evening.

Last year, the UPJ obtained legal counsel in order to address the question of whether or not the national contract between the Federal Government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany is constitutional or if it, in fact, infringes upon equal treatment for all streams of Judaism. This expert opinion strengthened the UPJ's case and gave the UPJ the legal clout necessary to threaten to sue the Federal Government for discriminatory practices.

The threat of a legal suit was the catalyst for an impressive press campaign. UPJ chairman, Dr. Jan Muehlstein, as well as the director of the Abraham Geiger College, Rabbi Dr. Walter Homolka, were tireless in their co-ordinating efforts. Solidarity evidenced through political pressure from the WUPJ in Israel and the Reform movement in England and America insured national attention. This press campaign forced the Federal Government to apply pressure to the Central Council of Jews. The result has been that they have agreed in principle to the Union's demands to integrate the UPJ communities within the structure of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

The UPJ's efforts to gain inclusion in government financing plans through the Central Council of Jews in Germany has some small positive highlights. Initial meetings with the Central Council have taken place and indications show a change in policy toward inclusion rather than exclusion. Some successful results to be pointed out are: Two integration projects received financial support by the Central Council and three scholarships for the Abraham Geiger College will be provided. Other precise measures will be taken. The UPJ, regardless of these indications toward inclusion, remains guarded in its attitude toward the Central Council. It is a fragile progress and only time will tell whether or not there will be a lasting agreement.

The Union of Progressive Jews of Germany consists of 15 congregations, a Chavurah from Freiburg that will be established to a congregation in the future, and the Abraham Geiger College.

Reports from the congregations in Germany

Ahrensburg

established in 2003, has now 70 members. Rabbi Walter Roth-schild serves there partly. They have only rented facilities.

Bad Pymont: established in 1997 with 25 members. Today: more than 180 members, 100% from the FSU. Only small and simple rooms for the congregation. In order to celebrate Jewish holidays, they ask and receive rooms from the local Catholic Church. The congregation has a small Jewish library and an active children's theatre. The highlight of this year was receiving their own Torah scroll during a moving service at the 10th annual conference of the Union of Progressive Jews in Germany in July 2004 in Berlin/Spandau.

This sefer Torah was presented by the WUPJ to the congregation of Bad Pymont. On October 27th, a festive Torah induction ceremony, led by Rabbi Irit Shillor, took the congregation and the city's Jewish life yet another step further. The city's Lord Mayor, along with other political, church and civic leaders joined the community in this joyous

event. The congregation is exploring ways in which Leo Baeck rabbinical student Arkady Gegel could serve them on a monthly basis.

Cologne: Gescher Lamassoret

The liberal community in Cologne has grown over the last year to 87 members. While managing weekly services on Shabbat and services for all the other festivals (even the minor ones), they have trouble organising regular classes for children and adults because of the lack of suitable teachers in the area. They also feel the limitations of the shul as they only have a single room in the basement of a church. It feels a bit like a cellar and does not allow them to do two things at once (like holding children's services). On the other hand, the room is theirs and affordable.

Rabbi Walter Rothschild serves the community on special occasions.

The Torah scroll is not kosher. They are still looking for the funds to acquire a kosher one. This Sukkot they celebrated in a new solid Sukkah. Friends donated a used mobile-wooden hut, which was converted into a Sukkah by cutting round holes in the roof. The library is growing steadily with members donating books to it. They started a collection of Jewish music in the library as well.

Thanks to a grant from the European Region, Rabbi Irit Shillor serves the congregation 2 days a month.

Halle/Saale

The legal contest in Halle is still in process. A positive culmination is hoped for by the end of the year. Parallel , negotiations for membership with the state board of Jewish communities, which is supported by the Central Council of Jews, are currently being held.

Hameln

The 1st post-war congregation in Hameln was established in 1997. 95 % of the 200 members are Russian-Jewish immigrants. In addition to services, life-cycle ceremonies, religious education of adults and children, social services and cultural activities, 2 charity concerts for the synagogue building project were given. US architect Arnold Oppler, great-grandson of Edwin Oppler (architect of the 1879 Hameln synagogue) has agreed to build the synagogue on the historical spot upon which the synagogue stood until its destruction in 1938. A foundation ("Foundation Liberal Synagogue Hameln") has been established. In addition, the community members are active participants in an inter-religious dialogue.

Rabbinical services are provided on 2 days each month by Rabbi Irit Shillor, thanks to a generous grant from the ER/WUPJ.

Once a month, an Abraham Geiger rabbinical student serves the congregation. The congregation is tri-lingual.

Hanover

The congregation grows fast, now numbering over 460 members, approx. 70% from the FSU. They celebrated 10 Bnei Mizvot (8 were Russian speakers), 1 naming.

The congregation established the foundation "Liberal Judaism in Hanover" in the end of the year 2003, which has as its main goal the embodiment of liberal Jewish life in

Hanover and to support the building of a liberal synagogue. Many prominent political, civic and church leaders are represented on a board of advisors of the foundation. A very successful benefit concert was held on September 30th, 2004 .

Tom Kucera, Abraham Geiger College rabbinical student and community member Gabor Lengyel, rabbinical student in Budapest are serving the congregation. Congregation member Israel Temerson serves as cantor. Until June 2004, Rabbi Irit Shillor served of the community.

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Hungary - Szim Shalom

Legal Matters and Local Religious Politics

After twelve years of existence of Sim Shalom in the legal form of an association we finally established and registered as an independent Religious Organisation to practice Progressive Judaism with 117 adult founding members. As a preliminary step in founding the new congregation we prepared our new constitution based on recommended guidelines of WUPJ. At the statutory meeting for founding, the new constitution was approved and officers were elected.

During the course of the World Union's European Region Annual General Meeting conducted in the Haag, March, 2004, the World Union leaders heard reports of representatives of Szim Shalom Community, concerning the status of the progressive movement in Hungary. They heard that MAZSIHISZ, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary, refuses to accept into its membership a Progressive Jewish organization, while presenting itself at the same time as a representative body serving the needs and interests of all religious Jewish groupings in Hungary. Finally the World Union adopted a resolution on actively supporting the legal and public challenge to this policy. We thank Uri Regev and the other WUPJ leaders for taking actions to implement this resolution.

Rabbi Joel Oseran, Associate Director of WUPJ visited Szim Shalom during his tour in Central Europe in July. He met with the Rabbi and leading members of our Board and also met with Mr.Heisler, president of MAZSIHISZ.

We started bilateral discussions with other Hungarian Jewish organizations, including the JDC, for further co-operation. Although MAZSIHISZ, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Hungary, refused to accept Sim Shalom into its membership, it also awarded us a small grant. Our applications for grants have been accepted by several supportive organizations. For this year we could stabilize our financial situation with the help of our institutional and private supporters.

Growth

Szim Shalom has kept on growing in attendance at services and holidays. In order to accomodate 100 people in our small premises, two separate Chanukah celebrations had to be held.

Programs and Activities

Family

Szim Shalom's family camp was held for the third time this year with 70 people attending. It was organised around the theme of „Genders – male-female relationships within Judaism”. In the special summer edition of our Newsletter on our homepage (www.szimsalom.hu) you can read an account of the main events. The camp was partially supported by the Jewish Heritage of Hungary Public Endowment.

Education

In addition to the on-going courses of Torah Study and Liturgy, the Rabbi gave the course „Everyday Judaism” for beginners with a special focus on practical issues in Judaism. This course was supported by the Budapest Office of the JDC. We have recently started a new course in beginning Hebrew.

Membership Activities

Active women of the congregation organised a Sisterhood for the purposes of running the festival celebrations and of organising various other social events.

During 2004, Simchaz, the youth group of Sim Shalom continued to be an active and vibrant participant in most of the activities of the congregation. This is an addition to their own bi-weekly program meetings of a high standard. The Chanukah weekend sponsored by EuroJews and held in Amsterdam this year was attended by two Simchaz members. The successful discussion group on Jewish Identity continues to meet regularly.

ECJC Conference

In March 2004, the Annual Conference of European Council of Jewish Communities (ECJC) was held in Budapest, where our community had an active role. At the request of the conference organisers Rabbi Kelemen conducted a Kabbalat Shabbat service for participants from other Progressive communities. During the conference we also organised a very successful English language guided tour of the Jewish Quarter of Budapest, with more than 60 attendees.

Life Cycles Events

A member of Sim Shalom completed her conversion in March before the European Bet Din, in the Hague, with the Rabbi in attendance.

The spirited batmitzvah ceremony of Ráhel Gado was held before a large number of Sim Shalom members and friends in the Synagogue of the Lauder Jewish Community School.

Visitors

Sim Shalom had many visitors from abroad during the year, especially from the US. Notable were the visits of R. Jonathan L. Singer along with 45 members of Temple Beth Am Synagogue, Seattle with whom we held a common Kabbalat Shabbat service, and of Rabbis Joel Abraham and R. Andrew Vogel with their confirmation classes.

Future Plans and Needs

Sim Shalom has started to prepare plans for a Progressive Jewish Open University, and grant support was applied for. The Rabbi is offering a Midrash course to the Sim Shalom members which will also be open to the general public. To celebrate our new status as a religious organisation and to publicize its existence, we are planning a Conference for the latter part of 2005.

Based on our new legal status, we are starting negotiations with the Hungarian government for both financial support and for premises.

György Hajnal
Vice President

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Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism

2004 Highlights

- Project Mechina - The Post-High School Leadership Training in Social Action program starting its second year, and also received official recognition from the Ministry of Defence, allowing participants to defer their military service for a year, and opening up the program to a much greater number of students.
- In 2004, the First Annual Riding4Reform fundraiser was held, with riders riding from Nahariya to Jerusalem and raising funds for the IMPJ Educational programs.
- Leadership development, both on a local and national level took major strides with the start of the Community Leaders Leadership Development Course starting with 16 participants from IMPJ communities.
- Community development continued, with new communities beginning in Carmiel, & various groups turning to the IMPJ for guidance from Rosh HaEin and Eilat.
- The number of families connected to our Pre-School system across the country broke 1000 this year. That number is expected to continue to grow as the congregations expand existing educational activities.
- The Rechler Havaya Summer Camp reached a peak of 550 kids and growing. With the Noar Telem youth movement growing each year, camp has become an important culmination of the year.
- The IMPJ School Involvement program, where Reform educational programs reach out into local schools grew significantly in 2004, with the number of schools reaching 50.
- The Young Adult Leadership Forum increased its activities and community connections. Study sessions; creative and musical Kabbalat Shabbat programs and public activities throughout the year, mainly in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, were expanded with Rishon L'Tzion programs running this year.
- The Israel Religious Action Center's Legal Advice Centers for Olim continue to help immigrants from the FSU, Ethiopia and other countries to secure their rights and navigate the maze of Israeli bureaucracy. Over the past decade, such help was provided for 60,000 of Olim through several offices around the country.

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Report from WUPJ Jerusalem Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel

Introduction

The year 2004 was a year of real accomplishment for Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel. The World Union for Progressive Judaism's international center in Jerusalem was filled with activities every day, encompassing a total of 65,000 participants of all ages and backgrounds. The center was also the venue for a large number of events sponsored by prominent external organizations. Not least, significant first steps were taken toward the

establishment of the Jack and Anita Saltz International Education Center of Progressive Judaism.

Cultural Programming

The cultural programming of Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel focuses on approaching traditional Jewish themes in new, innovative ways. In this it is unique in Israel, and certainly in Jerusalem, where Jewish tradition is usually considered the province of the Orthodox.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's approach to Jewish culture offers new perspectives and opportunities for Jewish self-understanding to individuals and families who consider themselves secular, thereby drawing these Israelis closer to Jewish heritage and to the Jewish people. Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel also offers opportunities for encounters between Israelis and Jews from abroad.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's bimonthly calendar of events is distributed to 9,500 households throughout Israel.

Courses

Seventeen new courses opened in October 2004. Most of the courses deal with various aspects of Israeli and Jewish identity and the relationship between them. The courses include Jewish mythology; the personality of the Biblical Moses; an introduction to Kabbalah and the Zohar; an acting workshop, with themes based on traditional texts; spoken Arabic; medicinal herbs mentioned in traditional texts; Hebrew calligraphy; traditional paper cutting; and others.

Seven additional courses are planned to begin in May 2005: on the book of Jewish legends compiled by the father of modern Hebrew poetry, Hayim Nachman Bialik; an introduction to psychology in Judaism; Bible stories as interpreted by the Zohar (a continuation to the previous Kabbalah course); the life and lore of Moroccan Jewry; and others.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's courses are known for their high quality, and attract some of Israel's leading lecturers and academics. Over the past year, more than 500 people of all backgrounds took part in these courses.

Beit Midrash

The Beit Midrash at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel, which offers Israelis of all backgrounds and beliefs an opportunity to study traditional Jewish texts in an open, critical and non-coercive environment, marked its 10th anniversary this year. 48 students from all the streams of Jewish life – Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and secular – are taking part in the program this year.

The Beit Midrash meets twice a week, on Tuesday evenings and Friday mornings, for a total of eight weekly study hours. The Beit Midrash has three levels: beginners, intermediate and advanced. The Beit Midrash does not limit the number of years an individual can study in the program; as a result, there are students who are taking part for the seventh and eighth year.

Participants study using the traditional *hevvruta* method – an unmediated encounter with the text in groups of two or three – supplemented by class discussions led by two teachers, one who specializes in Bible and the other in Talmud and/or Jewish Thought. The teachers, like the students, come from all the streams of Judaism.

In 2004 the Beit Midrash launched a new program with residents of the Swedish Village, a home for developmentally disabled adults in Jerusalem. A group of 10 residents comes to Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel each Friday to study Bible and Talmud for 1½ hours each time, taught by a rabbinical student attending the Jerusalem campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Once a month, the group meets with the other Beit Midrash students. In addition, the two groups hold four joint study sessions over the course of the year.

Jerusalem Theatre Group

The Jerusalem Theatre Group is a unique theatre troupe that performs original plays based on traditional Jewish texts. The group is a resident theatre troupe of Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel. This year the group is presenting *At Roget's Café*, a humoristic and irreverent look at the history of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel that combines music, song, the circus arts and dramatic performance. The play has received extremely positive reviews from audiences and critics alike.

Na Laga'at

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel continued to host the rehearsals and performances of *Na Laga'at* (Please Touch), a performance troupe consisting entirely of people with Ushers Syndrome. Ushers Syndrome sufferers are born deaf or become deaf soon after birth, and then lose much or all of their vision during adolescence. *Na Laga'at's* original play, *Light Can be Heard in Zig Zag*, has received worldwide acclaim.

Other Theatre Troupes

As a result of a new cooperative arrangement between Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel and the Jerusalem Khan Theatre, one of Israel's five repertory theatres performs in Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel every other month. In recent months, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel has hosted the Cameri Theatre of Tel Aviv and the Municipal Theatre of Beersheba.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel has also continued to support Micro Theatre, a group of immigrants from the former Soviet Union that has been performing Isaac Bashevis Singer's *Enemies, A Love Story* twice a month. The performances have been extremely well received by audiences and critics alike.

In addition, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel provides a home for the Jerusalem Circus, a group of Israeli and Palestinian children who perform together at summer camps in the Jerusalem area. The group aims to build relationships of cooperation and trust between Israeli and Palestinian youth by getting them to work together in the circus arts

Sukkah of Justice

During the holiday of Sukkot, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel, together with the Young Adult Leadership Forum of the Israel Movement for Progressive Judaism, sponsored a first-of-its-kind program, *Sukkat Tzedek* (Sukkah of Justice). The students set up a large

sukkah in Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's patio. During the three intermediate nights of the holiday, short films dealing with social justice issues were screened.

Three to five films were shown each night, accompanied by discussions of the issues they raised. The first night dealt with government economic policies, the second with the removal of settlements in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and the third with social justice in Jewish tradition. The sukkah was filled each night, and the discussions were lively.

The films were made by students at Israel's leading film schools. In light of the program's success, the schools have expressed an interest in repeating it in the future.

Bible Stories for Children

For the second consecutive year, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel is operating a highly successful series of story hours for young children based on Biblical stories. Israel's early childhood curriculum presents only a small number of Bible stories, usually tied to the holidays. Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's series, therefore, focuses on stories of relevance and interest that are less familiar to the children. The stories are read aloud by a professional actress in a dramatic manner that grips the children's attention.

Thirty story hours were held over the past year, with 20-25 children attending each one. The program is open to the public at a symbolic fee of NIS 5 (approximately \$1.20) per child; accompanying adults enter free. Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel also invites residents of the Sukkat Shalom shelter for victims of family violence, as well as children who have survived terrorism, to attend free of charge.

Special Family Activities

In August and October, in anticipation of the beginning of the new school year and on the occasion of the autumn holidays respectively, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel sponsored a series of special events for children and their parents. The events included story hours and creative activities related to traditional Jewish sources and the Jewish holidays, and attracted 100 families.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel also held events for children and their families on the occasion of the various holidays: Purim, Passover, Hanukah, etc. Some 1,500 people took part in holiday events at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel. Nine holiday events are planned for the coming year.

Saturday Morning Plays for Children

Unlike Israel's other cities, in Jerusalem municipal cultural institutions are closed from Friday afternoons to Saturday nights – leaving the television set the only cultural activity available to children. Last year, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel initiated a series of quality plays for children ages 3 to 8 on Saturday mornings. The plays take place once a month, and are available by subscription. During the first year the play series had 210 subscribers; this year it has 280. In addition, 60-70 individual tickets are usually sold for each performance.

Tour - Lecture Programs

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's unique program combining lectures on Jewish subjects with walking tours of Jerusalem sites related to the lectures' themes continued and

expanded this past year. The *Hogeh Veholech* series marked the transitions between each of the five Books of Moses with an innovative theme related to that transition. The events took place during the time that the reading of one book is completed in the synagogue and the next book is begun.

For example, in May, during the week after the reading of Leviticus was concluded and before the reading of Numbers began, Dr. Yair Caspi, a specialist in the psychology of religion, gave a talk with the provocative title *Idol Worship in the Service of God*. The talk was followed with a tour of sites related to the pagan origins of the monotheistic faiths. *Hogeh Veholech* events were also held in July (during the transition from Numbers to Deuteronomy), October (Deuteronomy-Genesis) and December (Genesis-Exodus).

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel also initiated a new lecture-tour program in 2004, *Siyur Vasiyah*, designed for students in 9th to 12th grades. The program consists of tours in Jerusalem followed by a discussion at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel, and addresses current issues such as freedom of speech and respect for differing opinions, nature in the urban environment, varieties in Judaism, the three faiths in Jerusalem, and development versus preservation. The program aims to provide young people with the tools to engage in dialogue with people of different backgrounds and opinions.

From mid-August to the day before Yom Kippur – the season during which *selihot*, or penitential poems, are traditionally recited – Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel sponsored over 30 tours in what was billed as the *Selihot Tour Marathon*. The Marathon ended with a special event that combined dramatic and musical performances; after the event, participants went to the Western Wall for a public *selihot* service in which tens of thousands of people from all streams of Judaism participated.

Altogether, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel sponsored 96 tours with 2,100 participants over the course of the year.

Tikkun Leil Shavuot

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's observance of *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* – all-night study on the night of Shavuot – has become an institution in Jerusalem's cultural life. This year the program's theme was *Tikkun Olam* – repairing the world – with related text study and walking tours. During part of the evening, participants could choose from among a number of options, some of them in English. Approximately 750 people took part in the event.

Weddings Fair

For the first time in five years, a weddings fair presenting Israeli couples with options for a Reform Jewish wedding was held at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel. The fair was followed by a discussion on the implications of Reform weddings in Jewish religious and Israeli civil law. A major follow-up event, in which wedding fairs will be organized simultaneously in a number of cities, is being planned for 2005.

Events Sponsored by Outside Organizations

In addition to providing operating income for Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel, events sponsored by outside organizations provide opportunities to introduce new audiences to the activities of Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel and to Progressive Judaism.

Festivals

For the third consecutive year, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel was one of the main venues for the Jerusalem International Film Festival. For 10 days in July, five or six full-length films were screened daily, and were viewed by 17,000 people.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel was also the main site of the Oud Festival. This annual festival brings musicians from all over the world for an encounter with some of the world's oldest musical instruments.

In March, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel hosted five performances of the Jerusalem Festival, a festival of amateur theatre groups from throughout Israel and from abroad. This was the largest number of performances of any festival venue.

School Plays

Ten schools, as well as six informal education institutions, held year-end events at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel during the months of May, June and July.

Cultural Policy Conference

In October, for the second consecutive year, Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel hosted the national Conference on Cultural Policy, attended by the directors of all the major cultural institutions in Israel.

Municipality of Jerusalem

The past year saw a significant improvement in the relations between Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel and the Municipality of Jerusalem. In the early part of 2004, the Municipal Arts Department held, for the first time, a small number of events at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel. Subsequently, the Department decided to hold all its events at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel – a total of 25 events over the course of the year.

Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel has also established a partnership with the Jerusalem Foundation, a private foundation established by former Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek that supports cultural, educational and social service projects in the city. The Foundation provided partial funding for the Sukkah of Justice mentioned above. Following the success of that program, the Foundation expressed an interest in continuing to support it in the future, as well as in additional programs of benefit to Jerusalem residents.

Miscellaneous

A large number of organizations held major events at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel, among them:

- Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) Convention
- Israel Bonds Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration
- Outstanding Employee ceremonies of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Income Tax Authority
- International Convention of Dentists

- Retirement party of Edna Arbel upon her leaving the Ministry of Justice to become a Supreme Court Justice
- Hebrew University Board of Trustees meeting
- Na'amat donors dinner
- New Israel Fund conference
- CRB Foundation year-end conference.

In addition, dozens of families and thousands of guests celebrated life events such as weddings and bar/bat mitzvahs at Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel.

Guest House

A rebound in tourism to Israel, combined with an improvement in marketing efforts and the increased use of Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel by outside organizations, led to an increase of more than 50% in occupancy in Mercaz Shimshon-Beit Shmuel's guest house in 2004.

Further increases are expected in 2005 as the guest house becomes fully integrated into the new Jack and Anita Saltz International Education Center of Progressive Judaism. The guest house will provide accommodations to people from outside Jerusalem attending programs at the International Education Center, enhancing the programs' attractiveness by enabling the Center to offer attendees a full-service package.

International Education Center

Following confirmation by the Jack and Anita Saltz Foundation of its grant for the establishment of the Jack and Anita Saltz International Education Center of Progressive Judaism, steps were initiated to bring the Center into being.

These began with a thorough search for a director of the Center. Advertisements for the position were placed in newspapers, and a job description was also circulated to Progressive congregations in Israel. In addition, the World Union for Progressive Judaism approached a number of people whom we felt might be appropriate for the job.

Several dozen résumés were received and 10 candidates were interviewed. One candidate was close to being hired, but withdrew for personal reasons.

It became apparent early in the process that while many of the candidates were very impressive, it was difficult to find one who had all the qualities and skills we were seeking. Consequently we decided to divide the job into two half-time positions: one, the coordinator of the Center, to deal with the organizational, technical and marketing aspects of the Center's start-up, and another to focus on its educational and programmatic content.

At the end of 2004, Nir Barkin was hired to be the Center's coordinator. Barkin is a rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem with a background both marketing and education. He served for a number of years as a Jewish Agency emissary and a community consultant in the United States, and therefore is familiar with the American Jewish community.

In addition, Professor Paul B. Liptz was hired as a part-time educational consultant for the Center. A native of Harare, Zimbabwe, Professor Liptz teaches in the Department of Middle Eastern and African History of Tel Aviv University, and also gives courses on Zionism, Israeli society, modern Jewish history and contemporary Jewry at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Jerusalem. Professor Liptz will play the main role in designing the Center's programming.

Barkin and Liptz will work together with an advisory committee consisting of leading rabbis and educators from Israel and abroad. This committee is currently in formation.

An initial program of the Center is taking place in January 2005. Eighteen lay leaders of Progressive congregations from eight countries – Australia, Brazil, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Poland – are attending the Beutel Leadership Seminar, an intensive 10-day program of leadership training. Many of the participants are already officers in their home congregations, and all have the potential for further leadership.

Preliminary construction work, in advance of the renovation necessary to fully establish the International Education Center, is set to begin in February 2005.

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Netzer Olami on its 25th year

In 2004 Netzer Olami celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Going into its 26th year, Netzer has quite a lot to be proud of. From a small scattered youth movement operating in three English speaking countries – South Africa, Australia and Great Britain, with a membership of about 1500 members ten years ago, Netzer at the beginning of 2005 officially became one of the biggest international Jewish Youth movements all over the Jewish world with membership exceeding 20,000 (!!!) members in about 18 countries (!).

The major developments of the last year is the official joining of Nfty of North America to Netzer Olami, as the North American branch of the movement. Membership of Netzer Olami alone was about 8,000 worldwide. The membership of Nfty was about 12,000.

Netzer operates today in 18 countries, and it is growing each year. It is operating today in - 1- Russia. 2 – Belarus. 3- Ukraine. 4 – the Baltic's countries. 5 – Poland. 6 – Holland. 7 – Germany. 8 – Italy. 9 – Spain. 10 – Britain – RSY Netzer. 11- Britain – LJY Netzer. (Two separate organizations functioning in Britain and connected to Netzer Olami). 12 – South Africa. 13 – Argentina. 14 – Brazil. 15 – USA. 16 – Canada. 17 – Australia. 18 – Israel.

The most significant development of the movement during the last few years took place in the Former Soviet Union. Netzer actually started its operations there some 8 years ago, conducting one summer camp for 60 young people.

Today Netzer as well as TaMaR – our young adults movement, operates in the FSU countries in over than 60 centers. The average membership of each is around 50 people, ages 14 to 30. All together then the movement membership exceeds some 3000. Netzer runs today there 7 summer camps with the participation of about 900

members. Also, some 1500 young people, mainly ages 18 to 30, have been participating in weekend study seminars taking there place along the year!

Besides the FSU, Netzer has been investing during the last three years special efforts to develop the movement in **Germany**, where about 180,000 people emigrated to as Jews from the Former Soviet Union.

Our operations there are critical for the future of our people there. It is well understood that the reality of young people immigrating with the very minimal Jewish background, and busy adopting themselves into the German language and culture, will cause in the very near future, only few years from now, total assimilation of these young people into the German society. So, by offering them an informal Jewish education within the framework of our youth movement we actually keeping and developing their own Jewish identification and approach.

It is essential to allow Netzer to widen drastically our operations there, and we need for this urgently the financial recourses like it was needed some ten years ago in the FSU. Beside Netzer itself, our young adults movement – TaMaR, the graduates of Netzer ages 18 to 30, turned to become during the last few years the largest framework in its volume of activities world wide!

In Israel, Netzer Olami conducts quite a few programs directed for movement members from around the world, the most important and significant of those is the movement "**Year Course – the Netzer Shnat Program**". (Or simply- the Netzer "Shnat").

The Netzer "Shanat" offers its participants the most meaningful Jewish Progressive Zionist Leadership Program existing anywhere. With about 20 years of experience today, the Netzer Olami staff ensures the most significant and unique program, appeals personally to each and every participant, directed to strengthen Jewish identity, wide rang of learning about Eretz Yisrael as well as of the State of Israel, getting deeply involved with the Israeli society as well as with the Reform communities in Israel.

Netzer Olami has been running two sessions of the Shnat a year:

For the Northern Hemisphere – September to June.

For the Southern Hemisphere – February to November.

There is a possibility also to join the program partly for 5 to 6 months.

Netzer offers the program today to its own graduates as well as for graduates of Nfty – North America.

Netzer Olami is an officially approved organizer of "**MASA**" programs in Israel.

Therefore we can point proudly on the movement development as one of major achievements of the Reform Movement at large during the last decade.

Maoz Haviv – Mazkir Clali – Netzer Olami

Snify Netzer/report to Moscow

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Report from Milan - Sinagogue Lev Chadash

The Jewish year 5765 began with hope and promise as Sinagoga Lev Chadash welcomed Rabbi Barbara Irit Aiello to the temple family. Rabbi Aiello is the first Progressive rabbi and the first woman rabbi in Italy and along with these "firsts" are many new and exciting programs at Sinagoga Lev Chadash.

Located in the heart of Milan, the synagogue celebrates three years in its own sanctuary, a space created by the dedicated members of the community to provide regular Shabbat services, holy day services, festivals, simchas adult education programs and a new religious school as well.

Programs include a series of adult education classes designed especially for modern Progressive Jews. The “Kavanah” (Hebrew for “focus”) program began with a class on the history and tradition of the shofar as well as lessons on sounding the ancient instrument. Kavanah continues throughout the year with topics such as modern halakah, the history and process of Tikkun Olam, and the application of Kabbalah principles to modern life. Opportunities for additional study include Rosh Chodesh discussion groups and an introductory course for those with basic interest in Jewish traditions as well as those who plan to become Jews by Choice.

“Nevateem,” which in Hebrew means “blossoms,” is a perfect name for the new religious education program designed especially for children. With the help of Jewish educators, and as well as a group of dedicated parents, Lev Chadash has organized an innovative program designed specifically to involve children in Jewish traditions and Jewish life.

This year’s activities include a workshop on making chanukiyot, a Tu B’Shevat seder, Torah and Talmud for young children and, along with their parents, active participation in Shabbat services. “When I see our little ones proudly carrying our plush Torah as part of a Shabbat hakafah, I am encouraged that l’dor v’dor is alive and well at Lev Chadash,” says Rabbi Aiello.

On November 7, Rabbi Aiello was installed as rabbi of Lev Chadash by Rabbi David J. Goldberg of the European Region of the World Union. As Rabbi Goldberg passed the Sefer Torah to Rabbi Aiello, he remarked on the wonderful representation by members of the Milan interfaith community -- Muslims, Methodists, Baptists, Valdesians and Bhuddists – who played an important part in the event. Community outreach continues as the rabbi, along with Board members and congregants, participated with the Muslim community in the concluding supper for the month of Ramadan, at a Bhuddist workshop and a local community interfaith panel discussion. Lev Chadash hopes to continue these efforts by hosting an Interfaith Day of Understanding for children of all faiths to meet and share.

Lev Chadash continues its work with Progressive Jews throughout Italy as Rabbi Aiello and the Board offer assistance to Progressive groups in Turin, Rome, Trieste and Venice. Synagogue Lev Chadash is open and willing to cooperate with other Jewish institutions present in Milan. Members of other synagogues are entitled to attend Jewish education programs organized by our congregation under the same conditions and fees applied for Lev Chadash members.

Whether it is hosting the young adults of “EuroJews,” at Purim, revitalizing an ancient synagogue in Carpi with a Simchat Torah celebration, naming a baby in the sanctuary or preparing this year’s lively group of B’nai Mitzvah students, Lev Chadash continues to offer the Progressive Jewish experience to the Milan community and to Progressive groups throughout Italy. There is still much work to be done but the people of Lev Chadash take on each new challenge with love, joy and dedication to the principles of Progressive Judaism – a tradition that has fostered acceptance and inclusion for so many in Italy and throughout the world.

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Report from Italy – Florence SHIR HADASH

With regards to WUPJ, we sent Sarah H Rubenstein (President) and Susanna Myers to Den Hague to participate in the European Region's biannual conference. This really helped Shir Hadash begin to network with other young congregations that will be able to assist us grow and that we will be able to in turn help in the coming years. We attended various seminars whose themes concentrated on the reinforcement of the growing presence of congregations and the Jewish Progressive movement in Europe today.

Some of our members, including Laura Kramer, Susanna Myers and Sharon Strauss worked very hard to create a fabulous, new Haggada for Passover. It includes new translated passages in English, Italian and Hebrew. The cover was artistically designed by Sandro Ventura, with a reproduction of one of his paintings.

Our Passover seder, which took place at the American St. James Church in Florence, included over 65 attendees with members, friends, tourists or students and was deliciously catered by Tuscan Turale.

Our Bar/Bat Mitzvah lessons took place between Sept. 2003 and Dec. 2003 with weekly meetings and classes conducted by various members in the community.

Sandro Ventura organized a series of cultural meetings between January and May that featured outside orators and took place at Spazio Melauri.

With regards to other holidays:

We celebrated Sukkot at the home of Rachel Stark and Andrea Cappelli in their lovely garden

Our Chanukah party took place at Spazio Melauri

Our Purim was also held at the Spazio Melauri with Judah Engelsberg who brought her own Torah from home

Twice this year we had rabbis come visit and lead our Kabbalat Shabbats.

We organized a meeting in Milan one day with Rabbi Joel Oseran, Assistant Director of WUPJ in order to try and unify all three Italian progressive congregations, Lev Chadash, Beth Shalom and Shir Hadash.

We celebrated the high holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the presence of Rabbi Shirley Idelson, with our new Torah and the first of our new Machzors. This year we rewrote the Erev Rosh Hashanah prayer book, translated by Susanna Myers, Sarah Rubenstein, Sandro Ventura and many others who were able to translate from English to Italian. This was possible by our purchase of the Davka Writer program so that we could write in Hebrew.

We received various special donations including the following:
Shofar: from Dr. Carl and Deborah Rubenstein

Chanukah and set for Shabbat/Havdalah: from Rabbi Mark Strauss Cohn and family

Torah: from Temple Emmanuele Congregation of Birmingham, Alabama and Rabbi Miller

Yod: from Rabbi and Mrs. Thomas Libschutz and Mr. & Mrs. Ted Sulzberg

Various contributions including monetary support from the European Region for the High Holidays and from the United States with a large sum given to us by the Foundation of the late Joanne Morrison, the mother of member Susanna Myers

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Report from Luxembourg - Or Chadash Liberal Jewish Community.

Hello and welcome from Luxembourg.

It is currently snowing here and the temperature is dropping all the time.

It has been a busy year for the Or Chadash Liberal Jewish Community in Luxembourg. Firstly and most importantly our eldest member, Roland Turkel was awarded the 'Commander dans l'ordre du Merité' by the Luxembourg presidency. This is one of the country's highest distinctions.

We celebrated Passover in style at the Hilton Hotel, with Panoramic views looking out over the city. David Mittel, a long standing member of the community led the service, helped by his family and the community.

Our AGM was held in June 2004 and two new members were elected to the committee. Mark Oliver as the new treasurer and myself as the new secretary.

We hosted a 'thank you and bon voyage' party to Doreen Merkel and her family. Doreen had been the previous treasurer and is currently in Brussels. We also thanked John Wittenberg who has given several services for us and given us lots of new ideas and support.

In July Rabbi Pete Tobias from Elstree synagogue held a Shabbat service for us. We hope to see him again this year but appreciate he is now a budding radio celebrity! (Pause for Thought – Radio 2)

We celebrated a Barmitzvah in October of Aaron Mittel.

For the High Holy days we were fortunate to have Celia Surget visit us, a student rabbi from London. We celebrated Rosh Hashana with the traditional honey and apple and some honey cakes. We then broke the fast with the help of Celia on Yom Kippur. Celia also speaks fluent French, a big advantage in Luxembourg.

We had a lovely service in November led by David Mittel and a small lunch was held afterwards in a local Italian restaurant.

December saw the festival of Channukah. The Rosenbaum family hosted a wonderful Channukah party. Definitely the best bit for our younger members of the community with all the channukah gelt that our President was dishing out!

So all in all a hectic year and I just wanted to extend my thanks on behalf of the community to Betty Preston, our chairperson and co-founder of the community who without; none of this would be possible. Wishing you all the best for 5765.

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Report from union of liberal synagogues in the Netherlands

The Union of Liberal Synagogues in the Netherlands (known as the Union) recently welcomed its ninth kehilla (congregation). After Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Gelderland, Twente, Brabant and Northern Netherlands, the Liberal community of Flevoland has joined the Union. There has been growth in other senses as well.

Perhaps the most striking development has been in the field of construction. In Utrecht the relatively new kehilla was looking for premises for a synagogue its own. There was still a synagogue in the pre-war Jewish orphanage. The children were murdered in World War Two and the building was no longer under Jewish ownership. The Utrecht kehilla was able to regain control over this part of the building and renovate it. After an emotional service a few weeks ago, it is now once again the synagogue it was in the past.

In The Hague the Liberal community holds its services in the old Sephardi synagogue. A large glass hall has now been added as a site for the kiddush or other activities. There is a large wooden shed in Lelystad that is soon to start serving as a synagogue. In Amsterdam, by far the largest kehilla in the Union, the present building has become too small for the 150 pupils attending Hebrew school there and for large-scale activities. Preparations are underway for the construction of a larger complex not far from the existing building. Lastly, the kehilla in Amsterdam now has a new cemetery at an excellent spot. The old cemetery had to be closed because a new airport runway was opened.

Other extremely important activities have also been launched. The retirement of a number of rabbis created a need for new rabbis. This is one reason why the Levisson Institute was founded, where new rabbis are now being trained under the supervision of Rabbi Lilienthal. Rabbi Lilienthal retired as rabbi of the Amsterdam kehilla and now engages in a number of other activities. He was replaced by Rabbi Menno ten Brink, who was already a familiar face in Amsterdam.

The Sja'ar Foundation was set up several years ago, funded by reparations from World War Two. The foundation conducts a number of projects that play an extremely important role in our community. Numerous books for children and adults have been translated into Dutch. Three volumes have been published of *A Torah Commentary For Our Time* by Rabbi Harvey Fields. Rabbi Lilienthal is working on the publication of the second part of the Prayer Book project, a machzor (prayer book) for Sukkoth (Feast of Tabernacles), Pesach (Passover), and Shavuot (Feast of Weeks), which there is a great need for. The two-year teacher's training programme run by Sja'ar was completed this year with the graduation of ten teachers. There is also an extensive programme now of courses for adults.

Significant funding has been provided by the Dutch government, banks, insurance companies and the stock exchange to compensate for inadequate reparations after World War Two. Most of the funds have already been distributed to individuals. The funding that was left over is now being distributed among numerous Jewish organizations. The Liberal Jewish community is to receive significant funding for construction and education purposes. A number of other projects will also now be able to be implemented. This will be a stimulus for our work.

The Conference of the European Region was held in The Hague in March this year. Our Rabbi Awraham Soetendorp is the President of the European Region and Luc Stranders is the Vice-Chairman.

We are very concerned about the friction in Dutch society nowadays, particularly between Muslims and non-Muslims. Increasing anti-Semitism has manifested itself, in particular among small groups of Muslim youngsters. This is a difficult problem that affects the entire Jewish community. A dialogue committee was set up in the beginning of 2004 by several of our kehillot to promote regular contact with the Muslim community. This has resulted in exciting and positive actions. In Amsterdam a group of about forty Turkish men and women came to sit and have a meal at the sukka, where there was a discussion on the subject of fasting in Judaism and Islam. Seventy members of our community later returned the visit. There was a project enabling students to visit the synagogue and there have been monthly meetings of Jewish and Muslim women at their homes, visits to various mosques, lectures and so forth.

The board of the Union of Liberal Synagogues in the Netherlands consists of representatives of the various kehillot. The board chooses an executive committee from its members. Elja Schwarz is chairman of the Union and represents the Union in the nation-wide Central Jewish Consultations (Centraal Joods Overleg). Though the work has been too much for volunteers alone for some time now, there was not sufficient funding to appoint an official secretary. Our situation is now such that a salaried secretary may soon be able to be appointed, who will serve a coordinating function and do other work as well.

An interesting development is taking place in Surinam, a former Dutch colony in South America that we still have significant links with. There is a Jewish community there that speaks Dutch and consequently has a hard time maintaining contact with the surrounding countries, where Spanish and Portuguese are spoken. A few rabbis from our Union paid a visit to the kehilla in Paramaribo, the capital of Surinam, a few weeks ago and reinforced the ties. A teacher of our Union is to spend half a year there in the near future. One prerequisite for the assistance we are now granting to the community in Surinam was that they join the World Union for Progressive Judaism, which they did. The services are held there in the existing Sephardi synagogue.

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Report from the Levisson Institute for Rabbinical Training in the Netherlands

Introduction

It is with pleasure that we present our first report of the Robert A. Levisson Foundation. In our Annual Report of July 2004, we told more extensively about the goals and progress of the Levisson Institute from its setting up till the end of June 2004. This report is available in electronic form and can be requested from ravdav@ljq.nl. In this brief report, we can only give a summary of what has been achieved until the beginning of 2005.

Why a rabbinical training in the Netherlands

It became apparent from a survey by the Union of Liberal Religious Jews in the Netherlands (the Verbond) carried out in 2001, that there was a growing need for new

Rabbis and a knowledgeable leadership to our congregations and organisations. Of the present Rabbis, two are retiring, the Liberal Jewish Communities are expanding and the need for knowledge of Jewish matters continues to increase. We also found that potential students for various reasons - such as age and work or family circumstances – were not in a position to follow such a course of study for a long period abroad. For this reason, the Verbond established the Robert A. Levisson Foundation on 23 August 2002. This foundation then set up the Levisson Institute, which is named after the great post-war Dutch Liberal Jewish leader Bob Levisson z.l. (RAL) from The Hague, who died at the end of 2001.

The goals of the Foundation

The training given by the Levisson Institute is aimed at granting rabbinical certification (semicha) and in the future possibly also qualification as Cantor, teacher of Jewish subjects and Jewish pastoral worker. The training will also be open for those who wish to enrich their knowledge of Judaism at this level.

Where existing institutes such as the Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden and the Crescas Educational Centre, provide courses and lectures at the required level, the Levisson Institute can let its student follow such courses and lectures. Where they are not available, the Levisson Institute will provide such courses and lectures itself. This applies both to the academic and to the more professionally oriented parts of the training.

The Dean, in close collaboration with the Academic Committee and the International Advisory Council, is progressively developing the tuition programme. The latter has the specific responsibility of overseeing the programme and for guaranteeing the quality of the training at an internationally recognised level.

A short description of the curriculum

The course of study is divided into an academic part and a vocational part aimed at professional skills. In the course of the training these two parts become more and more integrated.

The academic part involves amongst other things: Hebrew, Aramaic, halacha, history, the Land and the State of Israel, liturgy, rituals, philosophy, Jewish music, art and literature, other religions. The academic part is completed in the fifth year with the writing of a thesis.

The professional (vocational) part consists of, among other things: Halacha in practice, liturgy and rabbinical tasks in practice, the art of the sermon, public speaking, teaching both children and adults, writing of professional, popularising and opinion-forming articles, pastoral work, pastoral psychology, administrative and policy-making tasks, working with the (congregational) board, committees and volunteers.

Close attention will be paid to the personal development of individual students, by way of mentoring and support for the way in which the student adapts and integrates the material learnt into his/her own life and spiritual development.

The student is required to spend one or more periods for study in Israel, unless he/she already has had a sufficient Israel experience. A thorough first-hand knowledge of the Liberal Jewish institutions and their work in Israel is also an absolute requirement.

Developments up until the present

The Levisson Institute started its educational programme on 3 September 2003. Seven students were admitted to the course. Six completed the first year satisfactorily, one student has since left for personal reasons. There was no intake of new students in 2004, but at the time of writing four potential students have indicated an interest in beginning in September 2005. They will be interviewed by the Admissions Committee during the spring.

So far, all students are “second career” people, who have served and serve in various leadership functions within the Dutch Liberal Jewish movement. Of the potential new students, two are younger, just finishing their academic degrees.

We have been fortunate in finding excellent teachers. The Department heads of Hebrew, Jewish Studies, Bible and Rabbinic Literature at the Universities of Amsterdam and Leiden and their senior lecturers now also teach for us, as does the head of the Folkertsma Foundation, a former Director of Education at the Hartmann Institute in Jerusalem, and our own present Rabbis. We are also supported by visiting lecturers, in Bible from England and in Liturgy from the Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem.

The Board members of the Levisson Foundation and of the Institute are all past and present leaders of long standing within our Dutch movement, from the congregations and from the Union itself.

The Finances

The Levisson Institute is financed by the student tuition fees, by a group of Friends, two Foundations and – for the moment – by monies from the government restitution funds from WWII. Administrative costs are being kept to an absolute minimum and the funds available are spent almost exclusively on paying the lecturers and, since end 2004, on building a basic Rabbinic library. Physical facilities for the lessons and for housing the library are provided by the Liberal Jewish Congregation (LJG) in Amsterdam. The yearly budget now is approximately €100.000.- but this will increase as the number of students increase.

The Future

Who knows? But we are hopeful that this new venture will help to raise the level of knowledge and commitment of our small Dutch Jewish community and to help in its further development. Who could have dreamt after the Shoah that something like this could even be tried in this country?

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Report from North America

The World Union for Progressive Judaism significantly strengthened its organizational infrastructure in North America in 2004. Three important organizational bodies were established: a North American Council, whose members are lay leaders committed to playing an active role in the World Union’s international work; a Development Cabinet, consisting of major donors who are also taking an active role in raising funds from others; and a Rabbinic Advisory Group of leading rabbis giving of their knowledge and insight to the World Union.

The North American Council is currently forming a number of committees that will become actively involved in various aspects of the World Union's mission.

Steven M. Bauman of Los Altos, California is chairing the North American Council; Nani and Austin Beutel of Toronto, Ontario are chairing the Development Cabinet; and Rabbi Peter J. Rubinstein of Central Synagogue, New York City, and Rabbi David J. Gelfand of The Jewish Center of the Hamptons, New York, are leading the Rabbinic Advisory Group.

The World Union sponsored major fundraising events in New York City, Chicago, and Washington, DC, raising over \$600,000 for our movement's institutions and programs in Israel, the former Soviet Union and throughout the world. The central event, in New York, focused on the remarkable growth of Progressive Judaism in the former Soviet Union, and included a presentation by Rabbi Nelly Shulman, the World Union's Director of Community and Leadership Development in the FSU, accompanied by young leaders of Progressive congregations in the FSU. Previously, the group visited Reform congregations in California for a first-hand experience of Jewish life in the United States.

Altogether, the World Union's lay leadership and development staff in North America raised some \$4 million during the year for its worldwide operations from individuals, foundations and Jewish federations.

The World Union has also been working together with the Union for Reform Judaism to promote the *Hineini* initiative announced by URJ President Rabbi Eric Yoffie last year. We hope to use this initiative as a tool to further deepen the involvement of North American Jews with Israel and the Progressive movement internationally.

One of the year's most exciting developments was the agreement in principle that NFTY, the North American Federation of Temple Youth, would become a part of Netzer Olami, the international Progressive Zionist youth movement. A summit of NFTY and Netzer leaders took place in January 2005 to conclude the agreement, which is awaiting final ratification by the NFTY Board in February. NFTY's affiliation with Netzer is expected to lead to greatly increased contacts and interactions between young Reform Jews in North America and their counterparts overseas.

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Report from Poland BEIT WARSZAWA Progressive Jewish Community

The year 2004 was a breakthrough year for our community. We moved from a tiny apartment located in downtown Warsaw on the 4th floor of an old building with no elevator, where 20 people attending the Shabbat service made a crowd, into a beautiful, spacious ultra-modern facility with two large meeting halls, large kitchen, two guest apartments and a separate office, rented for us by our main sponsor. The *mezuzah* on the entrance to the new building was put up by Rabbi Dov Marmor. That *simcha* was soon followed by another: at the beginning of 2004 we were fortunate to receive two substantial grants and, consequently, we were able to put our constant financial worries aside and focus on building up the community. Immediately the number of people attending weekly Shabbat services grew to 50-60 and then, for the first time, we were able to hold High Holy Day celebrations in our own home rather than in a rented restaurant or hotel hall. Indeed, now we had sitting room for 160 people and a kitchen that could feed them all at the same time!

One of the grants we received was earmarked for a specific project named "Shabbatonim". Since we do not have our own rabbi (there are no Progressive rabbis in Poland nor any other Progressive community besides Beit Warszawa), the grant money was put into inviting foreign visitors to officiate Shabbat and High Holy Day services, and provide Jewish education and spiritual guidance to Beit Warszawa members. And so we had a long string of Jewish professionals from abroad staying at our beautiful new facility and providing spiritual leadership throughout the year. Craig Taubman - a well-known promoter of Jewish music, culture and tradition from Los Angeles - guided us through the celebration of the Passover Seder and Shabbat, and then graced our community with a fabulous sing-along concert. In early June we were visited by Cantor Mindy Harris, who gave us a series of workshops and led Shabbat services. At roughly the same time we were joined by Scott Perlo, a senior rabbinical student at Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies, University of Judaism, who stayed with us for three months organizing religious programming, teaching and serving as our rabbi. Then followed a visit by Rabbi Henry Levin from New York State. Rabbi Levin concentrated on teaching us to decode Hebrew and chant the Torah. In August we had the pleasure of hosting Rabbi Michael Cohen from the Arava Ecological Institute in Israel. He gave several talks on Judaism and the natural environment and on Albert Einstein. Yom Kippur, Rosh Hashana and Sukkot were officiated by Michelle Denker-Pearlman, a graduating student at the New York campus of Hebrew Union College. In addition to officiating the Holy Days, she gave a series of lectures on Jewish mysticism and women in Jewish law. In mid-October we were joined for Shabbat and a series of workshops by Arkady Gegel, a graduating student at Leo Baeck College in London. Finally, in December, we had the pleasure of hosting another Leo Baeck College student, Nathan Alfred, who led the Shabbat service and gave a series of lectures and workshops.

In addition to visits covered by the grant, we hosted a lot of other interesting visitors. A Shabbat service in late June was officiated by Rabbi Laura Geller of Temple Emmanuel in Los Angeles, whereas Theodore Bikel, the celebrated American actor and Jewish performer, visited us twice in 2004, each time sharing with us his profound knowledge of and insight into things Jewish. We were also graced with a visit by Leo Hepner, former President of the WUPJ European Region, who officiated a Shabbat service with his usual gentle humour and charm. Another long-time Beit Warszawa friend and supporter, Rabbi Joel Oseran, WUPJ Associate Director, visited us in late July. Rabbi Oseran led a Shabbat service and spent several days helping us with community organization.

The other grant went into covering current expenses and programming other than the "Shabbatonim" project. And thus in the summer we initiated a series of lectures by Miriam Gonczarska, an Israeli religious instructor, entitled "Between Freedom and Identity". These weekly workshops drew a lot of attention and we plan to continue them in 2005. Another series of weekly lectures that has become very popular and will continue next year is one called "Historiography of the Holocaust" given by local Jewish historian Pawel Szapiro. His latest workshop dealt with the phenomenon of blackmail under the Nazi occupation of Poland. We also hosted a lecture on Polish/Israeli relations by His Excellency David Peleg, Israel's Ambassador in Poland, a lecture on Judaism and business ethics by Rabbi Michael Shudrich, the Great Orthodox Rabbi of Poland, a lecture by Professor Hasia Diner from New York University on the topic "350 years of Jewish life in America" and a talk by Israeli writer Uri Huppert on the occasion of the publication of the Polish edition of his new book. In 2004 we were also visited by many Jewish groups touring Poland – from the US, Israel and Great Britain. As a rule, we offer these groups a delicious home-made dinner followed by a discussion of living as a Jew in today's Poland and a concert. Many of these visitors catch the BWB (Beit Warszawa

bug) and stay in touch with us after they go back home. We have also established a partnership with the Temple Emmanuel community of Baltimore.

Nowadays we also run a Saturday school for children. As a consequence, the number of children attending Beit Warszawa activities has been growing fast. For example, at our Chanukah ball in December we had about 50 kids. It was a lot of fun: we all wore costumes and danced to Jewish music played by a fabulous klezmer band from London.

The year 2005 promises to be as eventful as its predecessor. As I am writing this report we are preparing for a Tu B'Shevat family seder and then will start planning the forthcoming Passover. All that in addition to hosting weekly Shabbat services attended by 50-60 people. The late spring and summer will be particularly busy as we are bracing for thousands of participants in the March of the Living, which this year coincides with the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. We are expecting 18,000 Jews from North America alone. Also, we hope to be hosting many participants in the WUPJ conference scheduled to take place this June in Moscow. Indeed, conference organizers have planned a series of side trips to several East European cities, and Warsaw is among them. So if you are planning to attend the Moscow conference, make a little detour and visit us in Warsaw. Then you will see for yourself how Beit Warszawa is going about its pioneering work on re-establishing Judaism in Poland. And, in addition, you will be also able to attend the fabulous Cracow Jewish Cultural Festival. See you then.

Jan Weinsberg

President, Beit Warszawa Progressive Jewish Community

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Report from South African Union for Progressive Judaism

At the recent SAUPJ conference it was decided to amend the Constitution to ensure that there was greater participation by all the member congregations. This has resulted in a regionalised and decentralised structure that hopefully will result in greater activity and co-operation at a regional level, while consolidating the National Executive. This allows us to have a new management structure, which will lead us to strengthen our progressive movement in South Africa.

National Chair	Steve Lurie
Regional Chair – Gauteng	Steve Lurie
Regional Chair - West Coast	Greg Flash
Regional Chair – East Coast	Stanley Lipschitz
Chair of SAAPR	Rabbi Hillel Avidan
Mentor	Steve Cohn

The past few months have proved particular significant for many of our Congregations: Temple Emanuel in Johannesburg celebrated their golden jubilee and on the 19th November was the actual founding day of the Temple. We congratulate Temple Emanuel on this occasion and on their achievements over the past 50 years and wish them everything of the best for the next 50. Undoubtedly their service to the community will continue to enrich the lives of those they serve.

Temple Hillel in East London are looking forward to celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2005 they are a very small congregation with a band of willing and dedicated individuals

who keep the Congregation together, interested and committed. Over the last few years' numbers have fallen drastically but fortunately there is still an enthusiastic and loyal congregation.

The Chairman of the youngest branch of the Cape Town Jewish congregation in South Africa sent this wonderful account of her involvement:

"Six Years ago I saw an advert in our local free newspaper of a Shabbat service for the first time for Progressive Jews in our suburb. As I was not a regular Shul goer I shyly attended this inaugural service held in a Town Hall. About 2 to 3 hundred people were there and I was really moved by the number of like-minded people living in the area.

Since then the West Coast Temple Israel, a Branch of the Cape Town Jewish Congregation continues to function in the area, however still from rented premises. We have approx 130 family units as members and there are many more families that live in the area that are still unaffiliated to any Shul.

The potential growth for a community here is phenomenal due to the high cost of housing the traditional Jewish suburbs of Cape Town. Younger couples are buying their first houses in the area and old more mature couples are downsizing and also moving here.

We hold Shabbat services every Friday night and at least every second month we follow the service with a Communal dinner. There are always lots of children at these functions and it feels like a large extended family. On Saturdays we have our Jewish Studies and Hebrew classes for children not at the Jewish Day School, this is followed by a very short children's service.

Our Rabbinical support is shared with our Wynberg and Green Point Temple Israel, Rabbi Hoffman and Ass Rabbi Elect Matitiana are supported by a lay leadership to run our services. Over the last few years we have been privileged to have visiting Rabbis, Rabbi Sheridan, Rabbi Zacahrow, Rabbi Feinberg and Rabbi Alexander.

Following a very successful full High Holy Day programme this year the Cape Progressive Jewish Community unanimously voted to buy a property to permanently house this young and growing congregation.

I have chaired the management committee of this congregation for the last 3 years and am very proud to say that the congregants have persisted though periods of almost no minyan to services of over 200. We need to set up the Hall prior to each service and pack up afterwards, as these premises are not for our sole use. The congregants do this, which often means arriving late for family dinners and the like.

To be an active member of West Coast Temple Israel is truly a blessing and an inspiration. I am very pleased that my son of 9 and daughter of 5 have the privilege to grow up in such a community."

Debbie Staniland

Chairman West Coast Management Committee

SOUTH AFRICAN ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE RABBIS (SAAPR)
New National Chairman who was voted in this year is Rabbi Hillel Avidan, although the Movement is small than in the past. These days, the SAAPR comprises a mere 5 or 6 rabbis but they are all highly experienced and hard working.

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Report from Zurich, Switzerland - Or Chadasch

Congregation Or Chadasch, Zurich in existence for 26 years, is well established and independent, financially (through membership dues and donations) and vis-à-vis the larger Jewish community, as we have our own cemetery..

We have 369 adult members and 168 children (from cradle to age 18, at which time they can become members in their own right).

Both our President, Mrs. Nicole Poëll and as Rabbi Tovia Ben-Chorin are involved in the Jewish life in Zurich as well as in the Jewish-Christian-Moslem dialog.

The President is also involved in the political life in Canton Zurich. Under her leadership, together with the Liberal French speaking congregation GIL in Geneva, an agreement was signed between the Organisation of Swiss Congregations (SIG) and the two Liberal Congregations (called "Plattform"), whereby any statement made in the name of Swiss Jewry, as well as any representation to the Swiss Authorities, must be coordinated between the two afore mentioned bodies. Given this unprecedented agreement, as well as other facts on the ground, we at Or Chadasch feel that we have broken through the acceptance barrier of the Jewish Community in Switzerland.

As for the ongoing activities we continue to hold our regular services and usual events for the Chagim as well as expanding Heder and youth activities.

A few years ago, we acquired a permanent Sukkah, with a movable roof and wherein 40 people can be seated, so that during Sukkot, despite the changeable weather, various activities and classes can be held there..

Nicole Poëll, President

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Report from Geneva, Switzerland CILG-GIL

Les Juifs libéraux de Suisse assurent tous leurs frères et soeurs en Israël et dans toute la Diaspora de leur solidarité. Soyons unis et parlons d'une seule voix pour répandre les bénédictions de la Réconciliation et faire progresser en tous lieux la Justice et la Paix.

- In 2004 we had an increase in the number of Bar/Bat-Mitzvah celebrations (27). Our Talmud Torah roll now stands at 110 children and we have 124 teen-agers registered in our ABG (Congregational Youth Group) who have engaged in some promising activities since September. A first Group of ABGs visited London, then another Group of 32 post Bar/Bat-Mitzvahs visited Prague and Theresienstadt.

- We have found a plot for the building of our future Synagogue and Community Center and hope to obtain in 2005 the required authorisations from the City Council.
- Shabbath and Holy Days' Services continue to draw a growing attendance of faithful. About a thousand were present at Kol Nidrei and Neila.
- On Erev Shabbath Sukkot , to commemorate the 70 offerings made for the 70 nations in Temple days, we invited Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps and Religious Dignitaries in Geneva to join us in worship. Some fifteen of them responded, amongst them the Ambassador of Germany, the Apostolic Nuncio and the newly appointed Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations in Geneva.
- As in preceding years our Rabbi participated in a number of TV programmes and Radio broadcasts and a number of his articles and interviews were published in the local and national press. He also remains very active in the Geneva Interreligious Platform.
- Our Congregational Sisterhood Gilah has become a mixed Cultural Association and changed its name to Gilatenou.
- With Or Chadasch, our sister Congregation in Zurich a Platform of Progressive Congregations in Switzerland has been created to represent our stream of Judaism with the Federal Authorities, on a par with the *Fédération Suisse des Communautés Israélites* (FSCI).
- HAYOM, our Congregational magazine now has a distribution of 3000 copies and will soon be available in Business Class on EL-AL flights between Zurich and Tel-Aviv.
- ARTZA maintains its activities, mostly around Geneva as a new leadership in the German-speaking area has not yet been forthcoming. By the end of the year it will have transferred SFR 10'000.00 to some of our Institutions and Congregations in Israel through IMPJ.
- The NGO Representation of the WUPJ at the UN in Geneva, composed of Rabbi Garaï, David Littman and Eliel Masson participated actively again in this year's Sessions of the Commission and Sub-Commission on Human Rights, where our spokesman, David Littman presented and delivered several oral and written Statements to the Plenary Sessions . Our WUPJ NGO also organized two Special Public Events at the Palais des Nations within the framework of the UNCHR.
- We continue to host Christian parochial and School Groups which receive from our Rabbi an introduction to Judaism and the Synagogue.

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Report WUPJ – Brazil Office

By Miriam Vasserman and Berta Zylberstajn

April 2004 – The WUPJ held the Conference of the Jewish Communities in the Americas in São Paulo, Brazil, from April 29th to May 2nd. It was a unique experience that joined participants and guests from South America, the US and Israel. This meeting resulted in a series of activities and improved the integration among Liberal Congregations in Latin America.

February 2005 - An official WUPJ office was installed in Sao Paulo. A new website was created with the purpose of promoting activities and events held by the local Progressive Congregations. This website was developed in three languages: Portuguese, English and Spanish with the help of volunteer work.

Events

New Leaders

January 2005 - Brazil sent the biggest delegation, 7 participants, to the Beutel Leadership Seminar in Jerusalem, which was promoted by World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). This Seminar, which was very productive and instructive, provided information and qualification for a committed group of lay leaders. The investment made in attending this seminar has already reaped good results that are in practice in the Progressive Congregations of the region.

AIC- Associação Israelita Catarinense - Santa Catarina

April 26th 2005 - Miriam Vasserman visited AIC in Santa Catarina. The community is organizing a Chosh Chodesh studies group for women. The integration among congregations will permit the celebration of the bar and bat mitzvah ceremonies of members of the AIC. The larger congregations will send professionals as well as some infra structure to aid in the preparation of these ceremonies.

April 15th-May 13th – Volunteers from Congregação Israelita Paulista (CIP), David Léo, Gabriel Eizenkraft, and Uri Lam celebrated Shabbat spiritual services.

ARI – Associação Religiosa Israelita - Rio De Janeiro

May 12th - Marina Gotlieb, Ari's President, is honored by City Hall on the occasion of Yom Haatzmaut.

June 3rd-5th – A seminar, organized by ARI was conducted in Friburgo, Rio de Janeiro. The theme was “Judaism in our Time”. This event joined 100 congregants to discuss and study the future of Liberal Judaism in our region. Speakers and coordinators: Rabbi Daniel Goldman from Beth El Congregation–Buenos Aires, Rabbi Sandra Kochmann, and Rabbi Sergio Margules from Ari-Rio. Miriam Vasserman, WUPJ Board representative, participated in this important meeting.

CIM – Congregação Israelita Mineira - Belo Horizonte

With great support from the WUPJ, CIM is developing two important projects:

Project AVIV – The objective of the Project Aviv, is to help unemployed professionals find work or a source of resources, under the optics of the Judaism. The Project already exceeded the limits of the CIM, encompassing the whole Jewish Community, even those who had distanced themselves, making their return to Judaism possible.

Tsedaká Project - It offers:

- Shuttle service from the Synagogue to the home of lower income people and/or with difficulties to return home after the Shabbat services.
- Tsedaká Fund that pays part of the living expenses of senior citizens in financial difficulties, purchase of food and medicines for the sick and needy,

supplies Jewish books free of cost to students in financial difficulty, it offers medical services to needy Jews and non-Jews, provides interest free loans.

- Shabbat Lunches: Every month, the Congregation conducts Shabbat lunches for the elderly, with recreational activities related to Judaism.
- Visits to children's shelters: program for teenagers, post-bar/bat mitzvah, and youngsters from the Habonim Dror. One Sunday per month, we conduct a series of activities in a government shelter for orphans, abandoned children or victims of abuse.

CIP – Congregação Israelita Paulista - São Paulo

April 2004 – The donation of CIP's first Torah, which came from Germany with its founders, to a German congregation during the Conference of the Jewish Communities in the Americas, was an unforgettable event for all those that participated. This deed demonstrated the important role that CIP, the largest liberal congregation in the region, has in sharing its large infrastructure with other smaller congregations to fulfill their needs.

Some of these efforts include providing information and material on its tsedaka projects as well sending volunteers and professionals.

- Job placement services;
- Bar and Bat mitzvah courses;
- Fritz Pinkus Summer Camp - children from other communities in Brazil are again attending the camp in Campos do Jordão (SP);
- Tachles- voluntary work that integrates all the departments within CIP so as to strengthen the Jewish content of the congregation according to current Liberal Judaism;
- Institute of Jewish Culture - with various courses and Chagim lectures with the participation of the whole community.

May 13th - Celebration of Yom Haatzmaut with more than 1000 people in a special Cabala Shabbat service;

Shabbat Neshamá- after the conference in 2004, we began to conduct a second Shabbat service where families sit together and effectively participate in the religious ceremony, conducted by Rabbi Alexandre Leone and Chazan Alexandre Edelstein.

May 14th - first Arvit and Havdalah Neshama service.

SIBRA – Sociedade Israelita Brasileira - Porto Alegre

25 of April – a large communitarian Pessach Seder with over 500 people from the Jewish community of Porto Alegre, as well as government representatives and friends of Israel was conducted. The spiritual leader Guershon Kwasniewski conducted this beautiful event and is ready to begin his rabbinical studies in our movement. Miriam Vasserman was invited especially for this occasion and represented WUPJ.

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