



UJR-AmLat works to strengthen Judaism in our region, offering Jewish experiences to those people who believe in the daily relevance of religion in our days. Our work has caused impact in 22 communities and 17 cities in Latin America. Here are some of the most relevant activities we promoted in 2019.

Education

IIFRR

When we start to walk through a path under construction, each step, each stage requires us to make a brief stop to evaluate the route.

Today, one year after the first in person meeting of our rabbinical students, we can only be in awe by the achievements in a project that was planned, driven and executed with the clear objective of ensuring Jewish continuity in the region.

Having already realized 4 kinussim, we may say that expectations were widely overcome, and the achievements make clear and boost the urgency of such program to ensure Jewish continuity in the region.

Mr. Ricardo Rotholtz, president of the Institute, commented: “I am sure that we haven’t yet realized the changes we are producing and those we will generate in the years to come.”

The Institute finishes its second year of classes having fulfilled and overcome expectations and looking forward the year 2020 with 30 students in various levels, increasing the number of cities represented.

In May 2019, the Institute organized the first Tikkun Leil Shavuot online open for the community. Teachers and students, in a partnership with communities from Brazil, Argentina, and Spain, took turns ministering classes devoted to promoting our comprehension on connecting to the source of wisdom. A tradition inherited from the Lurian Jewish mystique teaches that, on the night of Shavuot, the windows of heavens are open for revelation, as occurred to our ancestors on Sinai.

In June, the 4th Kinus of the Ibero-American Institute for Reform Rabbinical Education was held in Campos do Jordao (Brazil). The meeting comprehended ten study sessions, conducted by Dr. Joshua Holo (HUC/Los Angeles). In December, the 5th Kinus will happen in Buenos Aires, welcoming as key-professor the Israeli Rabbi Alona Lisitsa, PhD, an important activist for the recognition of the reform movement in Israel and for the fight for gender equality.

Rabbi Dalia Marx, PhD, visited Latin America in August, ministering a lecture on “How do we count time? Secrets of the Jewish annual cycle”. Rabbi Marx is Full Professor of the "Rabbi Aaron D. Panken" chair of Liturgy and Midrash at HUC-JIR/Taube Family Campus, in Jerusalem, and was invited to our region by the Institute, when she enhanced our connection to Israel’s Reform Judaism.

Silvia Dorfman (Buenos Aires, Argentina) *“the academic excellence, the organization and, especially, the post-study spaces in which, heated by the fireplace, we would debate the type of reformist Judaism we want to build.”*

Martin Hirsch (Concepción, Chile), the Kinus produced *“a vibrant experience of study, camaraderie and awareness of the protagonism to produce changes.”*

Hernan Rustein (Buenos Aires, Argentina), the kinus emphasized that *“among the students, there is a great consciousness of the need to coordinate actions, in order to reinvigorate the movement in the region.”*

Edy Huberman (Buenos Aires, Argentina) highlighted that *“after just one and a half year from beginning, it is quite inspiring to see the commitment of the participants. It is as much a challenge as a source of energy.”*

Finally, Pablo Schejtman (Fortaleza, Brazil) showed *“great enthusiasm to be part of a foundational effort, seeking to provide legitimate and institutional responses to the current needs of Jewish families in Ibero-America.”*

Bat and Bar Mitzvah for Adults

The year 2019 started with a 3rd edition of the Bat Mitzvah for Adults project. Like other success projects, it was widened and now, not only women but also men may participate in this study program, which will culminate with the Bar and Bat Mitzvah ceremony on the next conference of UJR – AmLat, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in May 2020. There are, currently, 17 students from five different cities taking part in it.

“... the experience of reading the Torah in the synagogue of Recife, the city which received my grandfather and where my mother was born, was quite one of the strongest emotions I have ever had.” Nancy Starobinas, São Paulo - Class 2018

“All the process for the Bat has marked my life in a special way, not just through redefinitions of Jewish values through a more mature, modern perspective, but, mainly, for the opportunity to reaffirm my Judaism and my compromise to myself, to my family and my community.” Sylvia Scherb, Recife - Class 2017.

“To have had a Bat was the realization of an old dream, that was focused on the matter of feminine. It was always very frustrating for me not to have access, not to be allowed to touch the Torah and, to go beyond such barrier, having read the Torah, even more in Jerusalem, was a golden dream come true.” Ruth Grynberg, Brasília – Class 2017.

“I get emotional when I speak about the course and the ceremony of my Bat Mitzvah in Recife. It was one of the most especial moments of my life. It was wonderful to read the Torah. With the course, I could envision a Judaism that is alive, dynamic and inclusive. I learned, I grew up as Jewess and as human being.” Livia Carneiro, Belo Horizonte - Class 2018.

“There is no distance, no language that can keep us apart. It is much more about all that brings us together on this shared space. Thanks for this opportunity!” Miriam Olchansky, Buenos Aires - Class 2017.

Study of the Parashah

For almost two years now, UJR has promoted the study of the parashah in Portuguese, online weekly. The study is also recorded and is available to those who cannot watch it live along with reading material and comments. This project is a great success on promoting the habit of studying the Torah in a regular and argumentative basis, using an accessible vocabulary, tuned to the reform view that Judaism is in constant discussion with our sources and our daily routine. Number of accesses vary, each study counting an average of 10 attendees (sometimes more than one person per connection) from at least 7 different cities.

Tikkun Olam Seminar

According to Rabbi A.J. Heschel, "some are guilty, but all are responsible" and we believe that we are partners in the improvement of the world. In the last four years, UJR has organized the Tikkun Olam Seminar, which brought together more than 80 young adults from all parts of Brazil. In these years, we have built a community center, a football field, a volleyball court, a playground and an "oca" for the local Indian village. Participants go back to their homes feeling their bodies tired and painful, but their neshamah is renewed and there are smiles on their faces, because this experiential seminar, in support of the victims of the mud from Rio Doce, renews our hopes in humanity. Last November, we promoted the 4th edition of this seminar in Espirito Santo, to maintain our partnership with Botocudos Indian tribe in their quest for an opportunity to live in dignity.

Artzenu

The political arm of the Reform movement has strengthened in recent years with the engagement of more activists, which are crucial to the international Jewish democratic process. The participation of members from our region in international meetings promotes valorization of our movement before the World Zionist Organization and the State of Israel. Promotion of meetings and political participation are crucial for the continuity of our organizations.

Publications

Chumash Plaut

After almost 5 years of intense work since the beginning of the translation process, this phase is completed and we are now in the process of Portuguese revision, lay-out, proofreading and will soon be ready for printing.

The introduction and the first of the five books, Bereshit, were printed in order to achieve refinement in lay-out and proofreading, ensuring that all cross references will be correct. We are in the finish line of this huge project that involved many professionals and volunteers and that, once published, will be a unique and transformative master work.

Chagguim pamphlets, 2 years

In the last two years, we have provided, for each chag, the brachot, the traditions and the new ways to celebrate each party, based on the material available in ReformJudaism.org site. Our intent is always to add information, complete the material already available in each community and, especially, exchange ideas and suggest creative activities based in each chag.

May we open our eyes to think Judaism in a broader way, which may bring to each one of us, personally and in our communities, even more knowledge, enchantment and beauty about Judaism, always with generosity, interaction and community sense.

Devarim

The Associação Israelita Religiosa do Rio de Janeiro (ARI) posted by mail, in August, the 39th edition of its magazine Devarim – the magazine of Reform Judaism in Brazil.

Most of the texts is exclusive; they may only be read in Devarim. The magazine is distributed free of charge (to the ones who subscribe in the site) and is available for consultation on its platform: www.devarim.com.br.

Communities Strengthening:

Fortaleza

By the end of 2018, the Sociedade Israelita do Ceará (SIC), a community affiliated to UJR-AmLat, registered a historic event, the first baalat hakriah to be accompanied by her grandfather. For Pablo Schejtman, SIC's synagogue director, *"this is a meaningful step towards egalitarian Judaism. It reflects Julieta's enthusiasm and efforts, the support of her family and the determination from our small northeastern kehillah, which is not afraid to change nor to grow."*

Collective Bat Mitzvah at ACIB

In August 2017, five teenagers celebrated their Jewish coming-of-age ceremony, with the responsibility to improve the world having the Torah as the foundation of ethic, inclusive and egalitarian Judaism. The community of Brasília, supported by UJR, has been growing and strengthening, holding meetings for seniors, Jewish studies, various classes and celebration of chagguim.

Adat Israel - Guatemala

The mission of this group is to spread what Judaism is, in a clear, simple and realistic way, so we welcome everyone who comes with such purpose. After a long study, coordinated by Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, our volunteer rabbi, the community celebrated, in the city of Antigua, the choice to embrace Judaism by a new group of participants. It is always very especial to witness the growth and strengthening of vibrant and inclusive communities.

North Parana Israeli Association

Beit Tikvá Community inaugurated its new space in August, thus promoting a larger presence in the city and in the region of Mariana in the state of Parana. The community was also officially recognized by the Israeli Federation of Parana and, in October, participated in the Southern Education Meeting, organized by the Jewish Agency. The achievements of this community inspire us to keep working in support of organizations which promote Jewish experience in cities with a small Jewish population.

Florianopolis

The Associação Israelita Catarinense and the Holocaust Museum of Curitiba inaugurated in September, in the city of Balneario Camboriu, the exhibition on the persecution of black people in the Holocaust, which brings an important message about the risks of exclusion, racism and intolerance. The event attracted the visitation of a public composed by young people and students, the main target of the curators. With specially trained guides, visitors interact and may bring to current time and to their lives the situations of intolerance that still exist in the world today.

New communities

UJR-AmLat has grown in numbers of communities, programs offered, and number of people involved in our projects. During the year 2019, three new communities embraced the Reform movement:

Congregação Israelita Capixaba (CICAPI) of Vitoria, ES. Formed almost entirely by Jews which came from other capitals for the past twenty years, has participants meeting in houses to celebrating Shabbat and other chagguim. Meanwhile, 3 years ago, they have inaugurated a new space which, other than religious activities, is also dedicated to culture. In this new place, with support from CONIB and from the Jewish Agency, the nineteen associated families take turns in keeping regular activities; currently, they have lectures and Hebrew lessons.

We welcome Congregação Beth El to the UJR-AmLat family. As one of the oldest Congregations of Latin America, founded by Ashkenazi Jews in 1929, the Beth El Congregation preserves its history and traditions and embraces the community of Sao Paulo promoting an up-to-date, inclusive and plural Judaism. Nowadays under leadership of Rabbi Uri Lam, a graduate of Hebrew Union College of Jerusalem, along with its board of directors, professionals, volunteers and congregational members, our bonds are strengthened on a beautiful journey ahead.

In August 2019, we enthusiastically welcomed another affiliate, this time in Argentina: Judaica Norte Community of Nordelta in Buenos Aires. This young community, and its new head office, will also host the UJR Regional Meeting “Buenos Aires, 2020”.

Rabbis, Rabbinate students and Sheliach Tzibur

ARI celebrates Rabbi Sergio Margulies

In the Kabbalat Shabbat in May 2019, Rabbi Sergio Margulies, from ARI-RJ, was honored for having been awarded the title of Doctor of Divinity from the Hebrew Union College, USA, for his 25 years of Rabbinat. During that Kabbalat Shabbat, four Rabbis, Roberto Graetz, Leonardo Alanati, Joseph Edelheit and Dario Bialer, blessed Rabbi Margulies, in a moment of great emotion.

Welcome to Rabbi David Laor - Costa Rica

In August, the B'nei Israel community received with great joy its new rabbi. David Laor is Mexican, a graduate of HUC-JIR of Jerusalem and previously worked for many communities in Israel.

Yom Kippur in Santiago

Recently, Ruaj Ami community in Chile has gone through changes in its religious leadership. Aiming to support the communities, the UJR provided for the visit of Phillipe Manuard, who has already officiated services in Belo Horizonte and in Fortaleza, thus supporting the new sheliach tzibur team of Ruaj Am. Together with his violin and his enthusiasm, Phillipe could give more meaning and joy to this celebration.

American Rabbi visits Recife

For fifteen days between Rosh haShanah and Sukkot, Rabbi Cliff Kulvin was actively involved with the Centro Israelita de Pernambuco. He celebrated the Yamim Noraim, participated in the inter-religious meetings, gave classes and lectures, worked together with the community school and, above all, offered his support and experience for the new leadership of the community. It's amazing to have the opportunity to welcome an experienced rabbi, who speaks Portuguese and who is willing to get involved with the community to strengthen Judaism.

Youth programs

Veidah Olami

“Attending Veidah Olami was one of the most fulfilling experiences of the life as Madrich! This year the Veidah took us to know a pluralistic and unique Israel, plenty of dialogue and discussions!” Gabriela Sharfi and Felipe Schwartz, Sao Paulo CIP's Colonia

“Veidah Olami was a unique experience, as madrichot and as persons! Meeting people from so many countries allowed us to understand the cultural and socioeconomic differences between them, and the role of a global movement to connect them together in one place!” Bruna Black and Ruth Nusbaum, Sao Paulo CIP's Avandava

Student Exchange Programs

Netzer Australia - In January 2019, we organized an exchange with Australia! It was a unique opportunity to learn, to teach, to meet new people and different cultures. The young Brazilians went to Gibbush Seminar, a pre machaneh seminar, and participated on the federal machaneh, which is attended by madrichim and chanichim, from 14 to 18 years old, from all over Australia.

Netzer South Africa - Two madrichim got the opportunity to practice as madrichim, acquiring knowledge that inspired new projects for Avandava! Moreover, they took part on events of the South African Jewish community and got new life experiences that were certainly very enriching!!

July Winter Camps

Sao Paulo CIP's Avandava: Days were full of entertaining activities and competitions. Sleeping in tents, a novel experience for many, was one of the adventures the chanichim had and, together, they shared memorable moments.

Sao Paulo CIP's Colonia: These were four more amazing and transforming camps, more than 180 chanichim, touched by moments of connection from the spiritual to the physical sphere with much self-knowledge, exchanges of experiences, strengthening of relationships and of the power to change internally and in the world! Collective growth is the purpose for making the Colony even bigger!

Beth El, the Associação Israelita Catarinense, Associação Israelita Cultural de Brasília, and Beit Tikvá of Maringa were present at the machaneh of Hashomer Hatzair, counting expressive numbers of chanichim and madrichim.

The Centro Israelita de Pernambuco and the Congregação Israelita Mineira promoted machanot of Habonim Dror in their communities, taking children and teenagers to experience intense and remarkable days.

In Argentina, the Fundación Judaica organized the choref Jewish camp: Enjoying each day, sharing unforgettable moments all together, we exchanged songs, traditions, new experiences, peulot and the best energy around a bonfire.

Educational Shabbaton at the Ruth Daniel Residence in Yafo

About 40 participants, such as Reform Jewish educators, activists and thinkers from communities in Australia, Belarus, Brazil, Great Britain, Israel, North America, Russia and Singapore, gathered, during Kabbalat Shabbat, to reflect on the purpose of Jewish youth activism. In April 2019, they held an educational Shabbaton at the Ruth Daniel Residence in Yafo, and the theme was quite auspicious: spirituality, Tikkun Olam and activism, and Jewish culture and community.