

Schechter Rabbinical Seminary

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Academic News

Mishlei – Bet Midrash Program Enters 2nd Year

Ten students completed their first year in Schechter's new program - *Mishlei* - an innovative two-stage track of study designed to expand the student body and broaden the pool of potential students for the rabbinical program. This new framework offers students a two-year program which meets two full days a week and combines study of Jewish sources in the Bet Midrash with academic courses leading to an M.A. in Jewish Studies from the Schechter Institute. The second stage of the program will offer outstanding students who are accepted by the Admissions Committee an additional two years of full-time study culminating in rabbinic ordination. Full scholarships and stipends will be available to those students who qualify for this second phase of study. **For 2011-12:** A successful recruitment program was undertaken by Schechter in partnership with the Masorti Movement, and an impressive group of 10 new students have been accepted for study in the fall of 2011. *Mishlei's* 2011-12 curriculum will offer a variety of Jewish studies courses and focus on Jewish social activism.

The Diversity of *Mishlei* *Mishlei's* first group of students reflects the spectrum of religious diversity in Israel. The ten students come from secular, Masorti (Conservative) and Orthodox backgrounds, and half of the students are currently active in Masorti congregations, including a congregational president, a program coordinator, a volunteer cantor and a bar/bat mitzvah coordinator. They also have a variety of professional backgrounds, including the natural sciences, teaching, social work, drama, guiding, writing and editing.

Ordination 2010 Rabbis Michael Even-David, Liron Levy, and David Touboul were ordained at Schechter's 23rd Ordination Ceremony held in Jerusalem on November 30, 2010. Legacy Heritage Rabbinic Fellow Liron Levy is spiritual leader of a new Kehilah in Holon and of the Neve Hanna boarding school (see profile, page 12); Michael Even-David was interim rabbi of Ashkelon's Netzach Israel congregation this year and now serves as rabbi of the Kerem Masorti Congregation in Karmiel;

David Touboul is serving as rabbi of the Masorti Kehilah in Nice, France.

Ordination 2012 Two rabbis are slated to receive ordination in January 2012 in Jerusalem. **Yerusha Avraham** is a veteran school teacher whose dream is to build a Masorti community in her hometown of Dimona. **Reuven Stamov** will become the first Masorti rabbi in the former Soviet Union, when he is officially installed as rabbi of the Masorti Kehilah in Kiev in summer 2012. (For Kiev installation, see page 19.) Reuven traveled to Ukraine in 2010-11 for educational work during the High Holidays, Chanukah and the annual Camp Ramah-Ukraine summer camps.

Overseas Program Strengthens the Israeli Connection 23 JTS students and a student from the Seminario Rabinico in Buenos Aires spent the year at Schechter. Program feedback was extremely positive. **2011-2012:** Next year's program will offer joint courses with JTS students and Israeli *Mishlei* students, including the highly popular *Jerusalem of the Three Monotheistic Faiths*, taught for the first time this year by Dr. Doron Bar and a new 8-part course developed by The Center for Jewish Peoplehood Education. JTS students will study elective courses in the Schechter graduate school.

Chair Honored at RA Convention Rabbi Prof. Hanan Alexander was honored by the Joint RA Campaign for the contributions he has made to Jewish scholarship and to furthering Jewish education in Israel and North America at the Rabbinical Assembly Convention in Las Vegas in March 2011.

Initiatives 2010-11

Schechter-Masorti-Legacy Partner for Kehilah Growth Two new Masorti kehilot took off this past year in Holon and Petach Tikvah under the able direction of Legacy Rabbinic Fellows Rabbi Liron Levy and Rabbi Michal Schwartz, the first Legacy Heritage Rabbinic Fellows to take up 3-year positions following their graduation from Schechter. Though representing different models of community organization, both initiatives reflect grass roots interest in Masorti Judaism. In Holon, Rabbi Liron, in partnership with

the Holon Community Center, has nurtured a group of over thirty participants, mostly young families who gather Friday afternoons for a Kabbalat Shabbat service at the center. For holiday programming, as many as 200 have participated. In Petach Tikvah, Rabbi Michal, who is a resident of the city, answered the call from a group of active lay people who were interested in forming a Masorti Kehilah. Starting in January 2011, the Masorti Kehilah in Petach Tikvah has a core group of 20 members who are reaching out to the community. The Purim reading of Megillat Esther drew 200 people, and similar numbers are expected to attend High Holiday services. (See profile page 12.)

Chaplaincy Program: Five years ago, Schechter pioneered the first accredited chaplaincy program in Israel with Cecil Asekoff, the National Association of Jewish Chaplains, and Rabbi Zahara Davidovich-Farkash, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. The program is part of a large-scale effort spearheaded by the UJA Federation of New York, to develop health-care chaplaincy in Israel. To date, Schechter has conferred 19 certificates in Clinical Pastoral Education. Students attend an intensive two-year summer chaplaincy program which combines fieldwork with classroom lectures by Schechter faculty and guest lecturers. Students perform summer field work at the Asaf Harofe Hospital Oncology and Dialysis Departments near Rishon Lezion, at the Idan HaZahav senior citizens home in Jerusalem, and in the home hospice unit of Kupat Holim Leumit. Rabbi Michal Schwartz, a graduate of the CPE program, worked on a weekly basis with oncology patients at Asaf Harofe Hospital throughout the year.

Podcast Jewish Learning a Success In a new initiative by the Rabbinical Assembly, Schechter provided three Rosh Hodesh "Podcasts" (audio broadcasts) to RA members around the world. Schechter faculty members Rabbi Diana Villa, Dr. Doron Bar and Rabbi Moshe Silberschein joined colleagues from JTS and the Ziegler Rabbinical School in providing the monthly material. The program will be continued in 2011-12 based on the positive response from participants.



1. *Mishlei* students (left) Michaela Kelly and Liat Steinfeld 2. Chagit Dotan and Arnie Ben-Dor receive CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education) certification 3. "The Dean Triumvirate" Purim Shpiel, from left: Rabbis Tamar Elad-Appelbaum, Moshe Silberschein and Shlomo Tucker 4. Rabbi Liron Levy with Bet Midrash participants from *Masorti Kehilat Neot Shoshanim-Holon* 5. *Mishlei* student Ruti Ben Hamo 6. Schechter ordination guests of honor, from left: Prof. Hanan Alexander, Prof. Arnold Eisen and Prof. David Golinkin 7. JTS overseas student Ariel Russo Beinart 8. Our new rabbis, from left: David Touboul, Liron Levy and Michael Even-David 9. Shaharit morning Torah reading at Schechter 10. Rabbi Yisrael Warman with students

On Line Ta Shma Project for RA World A four-session Webinar on the High Holidays, organized by the **Latin American Region of the RA** and taught by **Prof. David Golinkin**, was picked up around the world by many RA members. The learning, which took place in July and August 2011 was the initiative of **Rabbis Pablo Berman** and **Marcelo Polakoff**, both of whom studied in SRS as part of their rabbinical training at the Seminario in Buenos Aires.

On behalf of the Latin American RA, I congratulate everybody for the Online Ta Shma project that we have developed together. It's a real honor for our region to work with the staff of Schechter, an institution that for most of us is a synonym for the highest Jewish academic level, and for home. Kol tuv!
Rabbi Marcelo Polakoff, Cordoba, Argentina

Toward 2011-2012

- Schechter has taken a leading role in the Israeli Network of Spiritual Care providers, an umbrella organization engaged in pioneering the field of Jewish Spiritual Care in Israel, the goal of which is to receive professional recognition by the Ministry of Health. **Dr. Einat Ramon** formulated criteria of professional standards for the training of chaplains in Israel on behalf of the Israeli network and the National Association of Jewish Chaplains.
- A new program for CPE certification combined with an M.A. degree from the Schechter Institute's Family and Community Studies track has been developed with funding by the **UJA Federation of New York**. 6-8 students will be accepted to the joint program in 2011-12.

81 Schechter-Ordained Rabbis*

Strengthening Jewish Community Life Since 1988

Israel	Congregational Rabbis	21
	TALI-School Rabbis/Pedagogic Staff	16
	Hospital Chaplains	5
	Schechter Faculty	8
	Midreshet Yerushalayim Lecturers	5
	Schechter Researchers	3
Europe	HUC Faculty	4
	Jewish Organizations	13
Asia	Retired or Working in Another field	6
	Congregations in France, Italy, Belgium, Germany and England	9
Americas	Congregations in China and Australia	2
	Congregations and Day Schools, 6 in North America, 1 in Brazil	7

* Some rabbis work in more than one position

Answering a Grass Roots Demand for Judaism

Rabbis **Michal Schwartz**, 40, and **Liron Levy**, 30, represent a new breed of “congregational rabbi,” uniquely Israeli and very much in step with the rhythms of Israeli life. Shattering stereotypes, they are non-Orthodox, they are women, and they are committed to bringing a “Jewish Renaissance” to the average Israeli household.

Both recent Schechter rabbinical graduates and today Legacy Heritage fellows, these rabbis have formed new Masorti kehillot this year in Petach Tikvah and Holon. Their work is empowering growing numbers of secular Israelis to organize pro-actively to create an indigenous brand of Masorti Judaism that speaks to their needs.

Rabbi Michal Schwartz



Michal Schwartz opened the *Masorti Kehilat-Petach Tikvah* together with the Masorti Movement in a small community center in January 2011, after a large group of 130 people, organized by community leader Yoav Bar Gil, turned up for High Holiday services in September 2010. Today, a group meets weekly for Kabbalat Shabbat services and once a month for Shabbat morning prayers. The reading of Megillat Esther on Purim attracted 200 participants and before that, a Seder Tu B'Shvat attracted over 50 parents and children.

Coming from the same generation as her congregants, Rabbi Michal understands their dilemma: “They are 30 to 50-year-old secular Israelis who are middle-class and educated. Many are employed in demanding high-tech jobs. Juggling between paying the mortgage, raising their kids and advancing professionally, the vast majority have little or no time left for soul-searching,” she explains. But she senses that many of them feel they are missing something. “Our parents’ generation formed close-knit communities through friendships. The modern world’s fast pace and tight schedules prevents people from bonding like they used to do,” she says.

Michal looked at this first year as a “reality-check.” “We needed to survey our community and see what ‘spoke to them’; what they were looking for most.” Michal, who lives in Petach Tikvah with her husband and four children, plans to enlarge the scope of her work next year. “I want *Kehilat Petach Tikvah* to provide the Jewish answer for the non-Orthodox in Petach Tikvah.”

“My community is not looking for the radical ‘other,’ but rather a genuine traditional (Masorti) approach to Judaism, that takes our modern lives into consideration.”

Rabbi Liron Levy



“Our Kehilah will be the address for the Israeli-Jewish experience, a place that everyone knows not only exists, but exists for them! I am optimistic - Israel is a country born out of a dream.”

JTS Chavruta Partners Become “Life Partners”



“An amazing opportunity came our way a year and a half ago,” remembers Liron Levy, as she recounts the founding of the *Masorti Kehilat Neot Shoshanim-Holon*. “The local community center decided they wanted to offer Jewish programming. After a few “pilot” Kabbalat Shabbat programs for parents and children, they were sold on Masorti Judaism. They knew their audience was ideologically compatible with a more traditional approach to Judaism; a Judaism that would remind residents of their grandparents’ homes, yet be creative, modern and responsive to their lives,” explains Liron.

Rabbi Liron opened a successful morning Bet Midrash (study hall) for neighborhood women that met twice a month. She conducted a monthly Kabbalat Shabbat service for parents and children, based on a siddur she wrote and edited. “Hands-on” projects focusing on the holidays took place regularly in the community center foyer. A Megillah reading for Purim drew over 100 participants.

“People are looking for a way to get close to Jewish life, but they are afraid, even intimidated by the Orthodox synagogue. With us, they are finding authentic Judaism, but a place that is ‘user-friendly’; willing to give them their rightful place in the synagogue.”

Currently living in Jerusalem, the Eilat-born rabbi will be moving to Holon. First priority: building a cadre of lay people to move the kehilah agenda forward.

“My dream is to turn our kehilah into a real home, where prayer takes place alongside all the rituals associated with the life cycle,” says Liron.

Hillary Blank and Daniel Chorny, both JTS rabbinical students, did not start off their year at Schechter “on a marriage track,” as Daniel recalls. But as the year progressed, it became harder and harder for Daniel to imagine his life without Hillary. March 29, 2011 was a memorable one at the Schechter Bet Midrash. On that day, Daniel got down on his knee and proposed to Hillary. “I had this moment of inspiration and clarity. Where could I find a more fitting place to solidify my life than in the Bet Midrash where God and life’s forces meet?” he asks with a twinkle in his eye. Hillary accepted...and the rest is history.

Hillary, from San Diego, CA, found Judaism through song. Her first jobs were tutoring Bar-Bat Mitzvah children while still in high school. From there, she started teaching Hebrew and Jewish history at local Sunday schools. “I would wake up 5:30 Sunday mornings, knowing it was worth it. I never had a bad day.” She enrolled in JTS’s Cantorial School in 2008. The program took her to Israel, where she met Daniel who was studying at the Conservative Yeshiva.

Daniel spent his childhood in Bogota, Colombia, where his Columbian-born father, Rabbi Ammos Chorny, a JTS graduate, and his mother, were born and raised. Daniel enrolled in the JTS rabbinical program in 2009. Hillary was impressed with what Daniel was learning and decided to augment her cantorial studies with rabbinic studies.

For Hillary, the year at Schechter was “the best exposure to a Hebrew education that a liberal Jew could get anywhere in the universe!” Both she and Daniel immersed themselves in the language, which afforded them the opportunity to take courses from Schechter’s M.A. program for Israelis. “We jumped in head-first—totally fearless,” says Hillary. “Schechter has so many amazing academic offerings,” adds Daniel. Always aiming for the highest level, he was privileged to learn with Prof. Shamma Friedman, who according to Daniel, “reads Talmud in three dimensions.”

Not to be forgotten, the most important detail of this story: Daniel and Hillary are to be wed in San Diego, the 13th of Tevet, January 8, 2012.

“The year at Schechter was the best exposure to a Hebrew education that a liberal Jew could get anywhere in the universe!” - Hillary Blank