

schechter rabbinical seminary

chair of the board **rabbi prof. ismar schorsch**

chair of the executive committee **rabbi prof. hanan alexander**

dean **rabbi dr. einat ramon**

Highlights 2007-08



The Numbers

Israeli Rabbinical Track	20
One Year Program for Overseas Rabbinical Students	34
The Jewish Theological Seminary	19
American Jewish University	9
Seminario Rabinico-Buenos Aires	2
Other Institutions	4
Total Number of Schechter-Ordained Rabbis	73

New Initiatives Shaping Seminary's Direction

In addition to teaching pulpit skills, Schechter has widened its educational mandate to include pastoral care and grass-roots community-building. Trained Schechter **pastoral counselors (chaplains)** are providing emotional, religious and spiritual support in times of crisis, working within the health-care system. In the sphere of community life, the **Legacy Heritage Rabbinic Fellows** program is developing a new model to stimulate Jewish religious and cultural life in Israel – Community Batey Midrash.

Schechter Aims to Establish Community Batey Midrash throughout Israel

The **Legacy Heritage Rabbinic Fellowships** are enhancing the quality and focus of the rabbinical school curriculum as well as the scope and significance of its outreach and internship programs. A major grant from the **Legacy Heritage Fund Limited** established a six-year fellowship for study and field work for twelve committed rabbinical students (three are added each year). Their mandate is to establish new communities throughout Israel based on an open and pluralistic religious approach.

In cooperation with the Masorti Movement, Schechter is creating a pool of new communities with which to pair Legacy Fellows as they take on the challenge of community building.

The first three Legacy Rabbinic Fellows commenced community work in 2008. Rabbinical student **Hod Shilo** partnered with a group of residents of Mesilat Tzion, between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. He led High Holiday services, taught a Bar/Bat Mitzvah class and has facilitated a Passover workshop. Student **Michael Ben David** traveled to Maale Adumim which has requested bi-weekly lectures and prayer services for the Jewish holidays. Several members from Maale Adumim will participate in lay-leader training sessions at

Schechter. Student **Dubi Hayun** taught in Kehillat Sukkat Shalom located in the Jezreel Valley's Ramat Yishai community, as well as in Nazareth and Kibbutz Hanaton. Next year he will begin developing a community Bet Midrash with members of Kibbutz Bet Hashita (which has requested the program) and Kehillat Moriah in Haifa.

Asa Keidar, an expert in community education, was hired to coordinate the program. **A comprehensive academic curriculum to augment the field work** is in place. Rabbinical Seminary courses included "Creating and Teaching in a Community Bet Midrash," "Developing a Personal Rabbinic Vision" and "Psychology and Crisis Intervention." In tandem, **a curriculum for developing community and lay leadership was developed**, focusing on Shabbat from biblical, halakhic, aggadic, kabbalistic and philosophical perspectives. Keidar held a workshop on Pesach in April 2008 for all communities developing Batey Midrash.

Attractive source sheets for the entire family were produced for Shavuot, Tisha B'av and Tu B'av. The learning materials were widely distributed to various populations, including Schechter M.A. students and graduates. Initial response was very positive.

Broadening the Concept of Field Work

Schechter rabbinical students took "to the field" this year in a mentoring program expanded to include guidance in the area of community development. **Rabbi Roberto Arbib**, who successfully established the first Masorti community Bet Midrash in Tel Aviv, together with **Rabbi Mauricio Balter** of Kehilla HaMasortit Hakrayot, began to supervise Legacy Rabbinic Fellows in community outreach work. Other rabbinical students mentored with **Rabbi Gil Nativ** in Omer's Kehillat Magen Avraham, gaining invaluable pulpit experience conducting services, giving sermons and preparing youngsters for Bar-Bat Mitzvah ceremonies.

Tel Aviv's Midreshet Iyun Trailblazes the Bet Midrash Model

Midreshet Iyun, under the direction of Schechter graduate **Rabbi Roberto Arbib**, is serving as a prototype for the future establishment of similar learning communities through the Legacy Rabbinic Fellows program. Midreshet Iyun's cultural offerings in 2007-08 included the Actors' Bet Midrash; *Derekh Avraham*, an interfaith group that meets every two weeks to study Jewish and Muslim Philosophy; weekly Talmud and Torah Portion classes; and special event programming around holiday and Rosh Hodesh (new month). Midreshet Iyun, together with Kehillat Sinai look forward to their move to new premises in Tel Aviv's Neve Zedek neighborhood when the Schechter Center for Jewish Culture opens in 2009. (see p. 44)



First Graduates of Accredited Chaplaincy Program in Israel

In 2007, six students became Israel's first graduates of an organized course of CPE (Clinical Pastoral Education), and received one unit towards certification as chaplains. A class of six new students began the program in 2008. Established in 2006, the program, the first of its kind in Israel, integrates academic coursework with field work. This year's coursework focused on *Psychological Aspects of Rabbinics*, and included topics on *Ethics and Fertility Technology, Dementia and Coping with Grief and Loss*. Based on the successes recorded in summer 2007, five student chaplains were warmly welcomed back in July 2008 to the Asaf Harofe Hospital Oncology and Dialysis Departments. Other interns returned to the Idan HaZahav Senior Residence where their work with the elderly was greatly appreciated. The Schechter Rabbinical Seminary works in partnership with the National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC), under the direction of **Cecil Asekoff**. The Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center in New Jersey has accredited the program, with Medical Center staff person, **Rabbi Zahara Davidovich-Farkash**, building the program and supervising all class work and fieldwork.

New Course: Teaching Judaism in Special Education Frameworks

An eight-part course on *Teaching Judaism in Special Education Classes* took place in 2008. **Ziva Nativ**, director of the Masorti Movement's Bar-Bat Mitzvah Project for Special Needs Children, taught the class to a number of rabbinical students who are not involved in chaplaincy work. The course will be expanded next year.

New Student Recruitment Campaign Inaugurated

A student recruitment campaign comprised of printed ads, a poster and brochures targeting a number of new populations including educators, members of kibbutzim and the general public, was launched. The campaign stressed the unique interdisciplinary nature of the rabbinical program which integrates religious studies with the diverse practical professional training and experience offered by the Legacy Heritage Rabbinic Fellows program.

Bon Voyage to Executive Committee Chairman

Prof. Hanan Alexander, Chairman of the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary Executive Committee will be on sabbatical during the 2008-09 academic year at the University of California-Berkeley. We wish him a most productive year abroad and commend him on the invaluable contribution he has made to the strengthening of the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary from 2005-08, both in vision and in practice. We look forward to his speedy return and continued outstanding leadership in the years ahead. In 2008-09,

Shimon Lipsky will serve as Acting Chair. He is Vice-Provost of the Rothberg International School of the Hebrew University.

New Rabbis...New Rabbinical Students

Six Israeli rabbinical students entered the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary (SRS) Israeli program in September 2007, including a veteran educator from Midreshet Yerushalayim-Ukraine, a member of the Bene Yisrael Indian community from Dimona and a professor of philosophy from the Sorbonne, France.

Four rabbis were ordained at Schechter's 20th Ordination Ceremony held in Jerusalem on December 9th, 2007:

Chaya Becker is the rabbi of Jerusalem's veteran congregation Kehillat Ramot Zion; **Gali Snir** works as a TALI rabbi and as a Jewish education counselor in a residential youth village; **Roni Klein** is doing post-doctoral work in Jewish Philosophy, lecturing in the Hebrew University's Department of Jewish Thought and teaching in a high school in Jerusalem; **Yehudit Rubin** is completing an intensive program of chaplaincy in the United States, and will return to Israel in the summer of 2009.

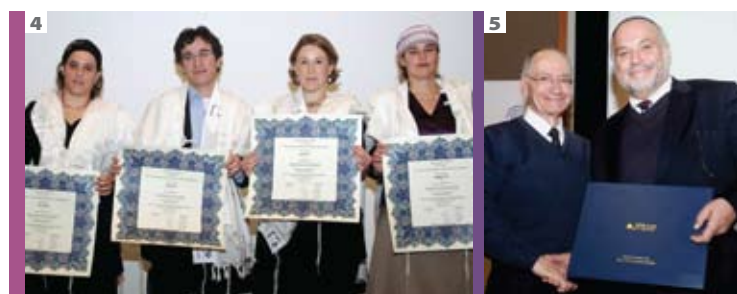
The Schechter 2008 Ordination Ceremony will take place in December. Congratulations to the following future rabbis: **Jonathan Sadoff** who has been working closely with Jerusalem's Moreshet Israel Synagogue and the Conservative Yeshiva in organizing and leading two very successful alternative minyanim; **Dr. Rafi Kassimov**, a veteran Midreshet Yerushalayim lecturer whose Tel Aviv classes continue to bring hundreds of Russian-speakers closer to their Jewish heritage and **Yoav Ende**, who served as TALI rabbi at the Neve Chana Youth Village and will be rabbi and education director of the Masorti educational center in Kibbutz Hanaton.

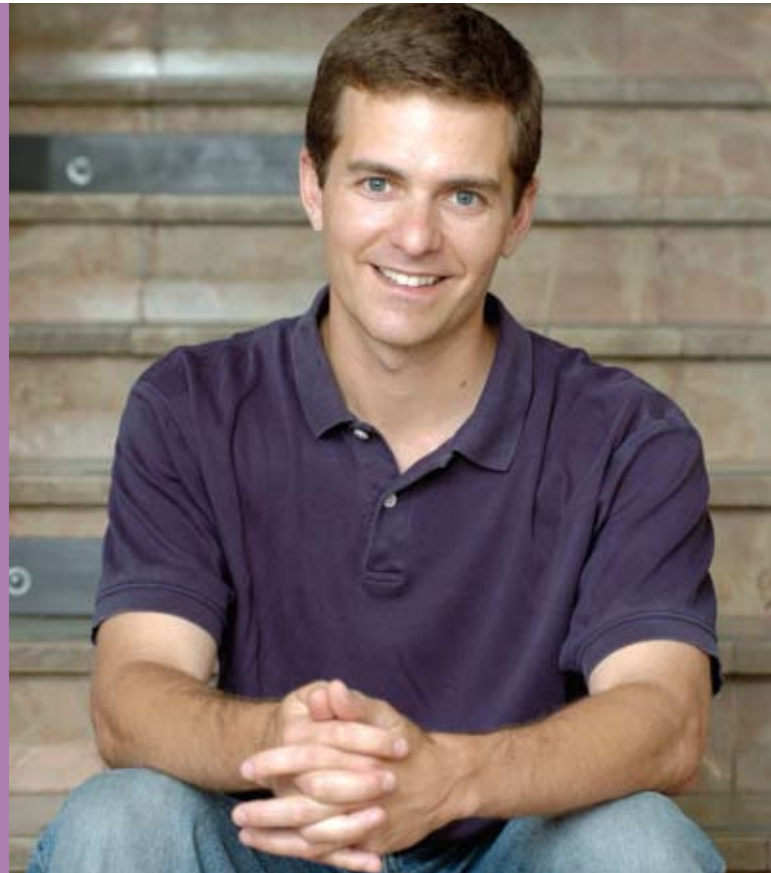
Jewish Renaissance in Downtown Jerusalem

Jonathan Sadoff has already taken the plunge into pulpit work. Coming with ideas to re-energize the aging Masorti congregation on Agron Street, he established two alternative minyanim. The well-known *Yachad* minyan, created five years ago, is a monthly Friday Night Service that draws young people from every place and denomination for a lively, celebratory service of soulful singing and dancing and is followed by a "potluck dinner" held at the Conservative Yeshivah Bet Midrash. This year, a special *Yachad* service held in May at Robinson's Arch, accompanied by musical instruments before sundown, drew more than 200 participants! The second group, meeting twice a month, is a young Shabbat morning minyan that is reaching an Israeli crowd with a beautiful and soulful prayer service.



1. Computers and Talmud go together in Bet Midrash Chevruta study 2. (Right) Legacy Heritage Rabbinical Fellow Hod Shilo, conducts a Bar Mitzvah ceremony at the Western Wall for a family from Mesillat Zion, his Bet Midrash community 3. Chaplaincy graduates (from left) Dubi Haiyun, Yoav Ende and Michal Schwartz receive diplomas from Zahara Davidovich-Farkash (center right) of the Robert Wood Johnson Medical Center 4. Schechter Rabbinical Seminary Ordination 2007. From left: Gali Snir, Roni Klein, Yehudit Rubin and Chaya Becker 5. Prof. Ismar Schorsch (left) presents JTS Honorary Doctorate to Rabbi Joe Schonwald





Eliav Bock

JTS Overseas Rabbinical Student, former Wall Street trader turned Jewish educator

On the Spectrum

Eliav grew up in Boston in an observant family that encouraged the openness of Boy Scout Camp alongside the orthodoxy of Maimaindes Jewish Day School. After earning a degree in the JTS-Columbia joint program, he worked as an equities trader on Wall Street for five years. Experiencing a “quarter-life crisis,” Eliav took a leave of absence to work at an inter-religious camp called *Face to Face - Faith to Faith*, and with Camp Ramah.

On Defining Jewish Life and Learning

“I was decent at trading, but I came alive with kids. I realized at some point, that always the happiest people are doing what they really love. It made no difference whether I had an amazing or awful day trading --- the two hours that I spent tutoring kids after work brought me the most joy.”

“Living in Jerusalem was a Jewish educator’s dream. Schechter’s supervised chevruta (Talmud study in pairs) was phenomenal. Text study was a very intimate and engaging experience led by capable and caring teachers. Learning in Hebrew greatly improved my comprehension skills.”

“On a global level, one can’t overstate the importance of Jewish knowledge. In North America, the level of Jewish ignorance is frightening. I want to play a direct role in reversing this trend.”



Liron Levy

Schechter Rabbinical Seminary student, interns at Magen Avraham congregation in Omer, Jewish Studies teacher at Beersheva secular school, counselor at Neve Chana Youth Village

On the Spectrum

Liron was born in Eilat and grew up in a secular environment. A community activist from an early age, she founded and chaired Eilat's first city youth council. She became an officer in the IDF and annually continues to volunteer for reserve duty. While a student at the Hebrew University, she tutored disadvantaged children in a "big brother" program. With a B.A. in hand, she knew she wanted higher studies, but also sensed something was lacking Jewishly in her life.

On Defining Jewish Life and Learning

"I realized that I wanted to do something that connected to Judaism but I didn't have the background. I needed a program that was intelligent and practical. I found that at Schechter."

"I opened my first page of Talmud and learned how to pray here at Schechter. At no other place in Israel could I have done that. Schechter provides a unique Bet Midrash experience but demands a total commitment. The program is not just 'one more thing you do' but rather, the essence of what you do. Studies are not just 8 am 'till 6 pm, but rather, an integral part of my life, friends, family, being. This experience feeds my entire self."

"Israeli society must get closer to its Judaism. Through a language that speaks 'Israeliness,' the discussion of Jewish Law must be based on dialogue, not coercion. Masorti rabbis coming out of Schechter have the tools to effect this change."

My dream? To be the first woman Chief Rabbi!"

Rabbinical Students and Rabbis in TALI Schools

The Schechter Rabbinical Seminary encourages rabbinical students to participate in TALI school internships. Supervised by the TALI Education Fund, the program operates in 32 schools and 15 pre-schools, including six Tel Aviv schools and three pre-schools. A number of Schechter students and rabbinical graduates fulfill the role of school rabbi in these schools. The program reflects the ideal integration and application of Schechter education in the field. Established in 2001, the TALI school rabbi has, in many cases, evolved into a central figure in the school and an important consultant to the principal.

Listen to the Music...

Liturgical notes filled Schechter's halls this year in a four-part lunchtime series, "Kehillot Sharot" (Communities Sing) open to all M.A. and rabbinical students. Sephardi melodies were taught by modern liturgist **Maimon Cohen** to an enthusiastic crowd.

Overseas Students Volunteer

A required "year at Schechter" is an integral curriculum component of all rabbinical schools affiliated with the worldwide Conservative Movement: The Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies (at the American Jewish University) in Los Angeles, and the Seminario Rabinico in Buenos Aires. In addition, rabbinical students from the Boston Hebrew College and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College also participated in the program.

Volunteer work, which exposes visiting students to Israeli culture and the Hebrew language, is a mandatory part of the program. This year, students were involved with the Masorti Movement's Conversion Institute; Ramot Zion Congregation learning community; tutoring in TALI schools; the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information; the Task Force Against Human Trafficking; Reut: The Center for Modern Jewish Marriage; a soup kitchen in Jerusalem; and the Rape Crisis Center.

Iyunei Shabbat Online in Three Languages

Iyunei Shabbat, located at www.schechter.org.il, and distributed weekly by email, is a weekly Torah Portion commentary published by the Schechter Rabbinical Seminary in conjunction with The Rabbinical Assembly of Israel, the Masorti Movement in Israel and Masorti Olami. *Iyunei Shabbat* appears in English, Hebrew and Spanish.



Dear Professor Golinkin,

My year of studies at Schechter ... was the best academic experience ever, probably as intense as my entire student life combined. Schechter was the perfect atmosphere for a serious text-based learning experience, and I'm sure that much of the wisdom that I will teach my congregants in the years ahead is material I learned at Schechter.

I'm already serving as the congregational rabbi at Libertad Street Synagogue, the oldest congregation in Argentina, together with Rabbi Sergio Bergman. I miss the Bet Midrash but I am also happy to start this new stage of my rabbinic vocation.

I have no words to express my gratitude to Schechter, and to you in particular. Not only because I learned so much Torah from you, but also having the doors of your office always open – for listening and talking – also showed us an example of a true Rabbi.

Todah Rabbah!

B'brachot,

Rabbi Guido Cohen, Buenos Aire, Argentina



1. (right) Rabbinical students Arnon Bruckstein and Liron Levy participate in a Bar-Bat Mitzvah Ceremony for Special Needs Children at Moreshet Avraham Synagogue **2+3:** A Yalta meeting of women rabbis, all of whom are Schechter graduates: (from left) Valerie Stessin, Gali Snir, Sandra Kochman, Diana Villa and Hagit Sabag-Israel **4.** Rabbi Guido Cohen, Seminario Rabinico, Argentina