

Academy for Jewish Religion | CA

Serving as a bridge between the pillars of Judaism

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AJR, CA is a transdenominational, pluralistic institution dedicated to the training of rabbis, cantors, and chaplains. Our mission is to develop religious leaders steeped in Torah wisdom and tradition, and capable of transforming Jewish communities into places where all Jews can grow toward wholeness and well-being.



News briefs from...

The Rabbinical School

In addition to the required traditional coursework, AJR, CA offers numerous, innovative classes that reflect the uniqueness of the Academy itself. In the Rabbinical School, three such courses include “Experiential Mysticism,” taught by Rabbi Stephen Robbins, PsyD; “Creative Ritual,” led by Anne Brener; and “Rabbinic Leadership in Jewish Ritual Life,” with Rabbi Mordecai Finley, PhD.

The Cantorial School

The Cantorial School has created a forward-thinking curriculum focused on teaching the mastery of both traditional liturgy as well as the contemporary sounds that have made their way into Jewish worship. Exemplifying the latter was the recent course, “Reaching the Soul Through Music,” taught by Orthodox Cantor Avshalom Katz, which explored new models in Jewish worship.

The Chaplaincy Program

The Chaplaincy Program features such thought-provoking courses as “Psycho-Spiritual Teachings of the Mussar Movement,” taught by Rabbi Mel Gottlieb, PhD and “The Art of Crisis Counseling,” with Dr. Yolande Bloomstein.

The AJR, CA Experience

Over the last six months, the Academy for Jewish Religion, CA (AJR, CA) has been involved in the rigorous accreditation process with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). While more detailed information about this process and the meetings with WASC officials are noted in this issue, one byproduct of the preparation has been particularly noteworthy.

As we have conducted a significant amount of self-evaluation, it has become abundantly clear that AJR, CA is not simply an institution of higher learning but rather, it is “an experience.” And, while that experience differs somewhat for each of us, there are certain commonalities that resonate with all – whether students, faculty, administration or board members. The Academy is a truly unique, intellectually stimulating environment that is, at the same time, spiritually uplifting, deeply caring, and incredibly warm and supportive. There is a deep respect accorded for disparate backgrounds, beliefs and practices. Our students speak of their “chavruta” and the “camaraderie and atmosphere of mutual support” that exists among them. They also note their “brilliant,” “inspiring,” and “encouraging” teachers who are “dedicated to the deepening of knowledge and spirituality, with an eye to creating a new kind of Jewish spiritual leader.” Our alumni echo these sentiments and also express their appreciation for being given “all the tools and training” that have proven “invaluable” in their current positions. Our faculty members laud their students and describe their teaching experience as being “intellectually challenging and enriching.” Our board members speak of how “proud” they are to be associated with the Academy and, for those of us whose signatures appear below, we can think of no greater honor than being part of the Administration of the Academy for Jewish Religion, CA.

Rabbi Stan Levy

Chair, Board of Governors

Rabbi Mel Gottlieb

Dean, Rabbinical School and Chaplaincy Program

Dr. Tamar Frankiel

Dean of Students

Rabbi Mordecai Finley

Provost

Hazzan Nathan Lam

Dean, Cantorial School

Hazzan Eva Robbins

Director of Admissions and Recruitment

Alumni Making an Impact

Only a few years since our first ordination, Academy alumni are already making an impact nationwide. The following is part of a series of profiles of our graduates.

Rabbi Min Kantrowitz, '04

Current position: The Director of the Jewish Community Chaplaincy Program of Jewish Family Service of New Mexico based in Albuquerque, NM.



Making an impact: In 2006, the Jewish Federation of New Mexico awarded its annual "Woman of Valor" award to Rabbi Kantrowitz in recognition of her "extraordinary efforts in sustaining and nurturing Jewish community life."

Cantor Paul Buch, '05

Current position: Cantor of Temple Beth Israel, a congregation of 400+ families in Pomona, CA.



Making an impact: The first full-time cantor in the synagogue's 75 year history, Cantor Buch has been elected Treasurer of the Claremont Interfaith Council and was asked to serve on the Planning Committee of a landmark conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the Claremont School of Theology.

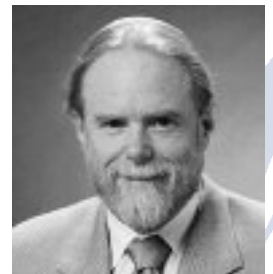
Accreditation Organization Visits AJR, CA Campus

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is one of six regional associations that accredit public and private schools, colleges, and universities in the United States. Having already passed the "eligibility" phase of the accreditation process, Academy representatives recently participated in a series of on-campus meetings with WASC officials, a requirement of the second or "candidacy" phase of the three-part process. (The final phase is "initial accreditation.") During these meetings, held on October 29th to 31st, the WASC officials met with the Academy's Administration as well as select members of the faculty, students and Board of Governors. The four main themes of the meetings, with related sub-topics, were "Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives;" "Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions;" "Developing Sustainable Resources;" and "Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement." The meetings went exceptionally well and the Academy would like to thank everyone involved, with particular recognition and deep appreciation to Dr. Tamar Frankiel who has worked tirelessly as AJR, CA's liaison to WASC.

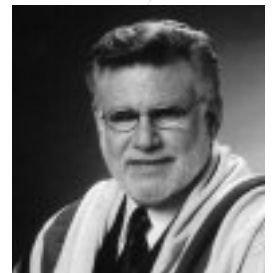
PROFILES BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Academy is fortunate to be led by a group of highly accomplished men and women who work tirelessly to further our mission and objectives. The following two individuals, like their fellow Board members, exemplify professional excellence and civic commitment.

Rabbi Mordecai Finley, PhD is the Provost and former President of AJR, CA and the founding rabbi of Ohr Ha-Torah Congregation, Los Angeles, a traditional-progressive congregation. Rabbi Finley received his ordination from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion as well a PhD in Religion-Social Ethics from the University of Southern California. For over a decade, he has taught courses in spirituality, Jewish thought and rabbinics, in the Department of Continuing Education, University of Judaism. An incisive and deeply informed instructor, Rabbi Finley has also taught at HUC-JIR, Loyola Law School, Wexner Heritage Foundation, and the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.



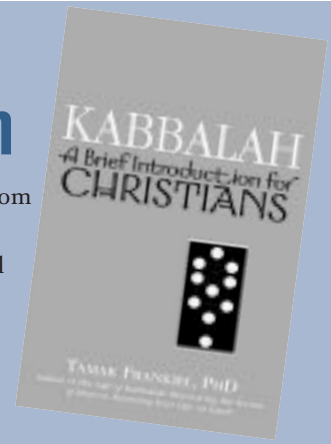
Rabbi Stephen Robbins, PsyD is the co-founder and former president of AJR, CA as well as the founding rabbi of Congregation N'vay Shalom in Los Angeles. Rabbi Robbins is also the former spiritual leader of Temple Emanuel in Beverly Hills. In addition to being a teacher of Kabbalah, meditation and healing, he is a clinical psychologist in private practice integrating spiritual, psychological and natural medicine techniques. Rabbi Robbins holds a doctorate in Psychology from Ryokan College and received his rabbinic ordination and Master of Hebrew Letters in History from Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, from which he was also awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.



AJR, CA would like to thank our next door neighbor, St. Alban's Episcopal Church, for providing us with extra conference rooms and classrooms.

New Publication from AJR, CA Dean

A Brief Introduction to Kabbalah for Christians (Jewish Lights, 2006), is the most recent publication from Dr. Tamar Frankiel who serves as AJR, CA's Dean of Students. A prolific writer, Dr. Frankiel has authored or co-authored seven other well-received books and numerous scholarly articles. She will be speaking on the topic "Kabbalah and Non-Jews," at the Tiferet Institute symposium on "Mainstreaming Jewish Mysticism," December 18-19, 2007 in San Diego. For more information, visit www.kabbalahsandiego.com.



Internships Throughout California

Reflecting the Academy's standing in the community and the caliber of our students, more and more synagogues and other Jewish institutions are choosing AJR, CA students to fill their internship openings. These internships are located throughout California and include Adat Shalom (West Los Angeles), Congregation Emeth (Gilroy), Congregation Ner Tamid (San Francisco), Jewish Home for the Aging (Reseda), Loyola Marymount University (Westchester), Milken Community High School (Los Angeles), Stephen S. Wise Temple (Los Angeles), Temple Emanuel (Beverly Hills), and Temple Emanuel (San Jose).

Should you know of a synagogue or other Jewish institution that needs an intern, please contact Rabbi Mel Gottlieb at 310-824-1586.

Upcoming Student Retreat

Spending a few days in seclusion from the world is one of the most important bonding experiences a community can create for itself. As such, the Academy holds an annual retreat on the beautiful campus of Brandeis-Bardin in Simi Valley. The retreat is open to students, faculty and board members (spouses or significant others as well as children are also welcome to attend). The retreat for the 2006-2007 Academic Year is scheduled for February 11-13, 2007. The theme will be "Professionalizing Our Interactions in Ethically Challenging Settings." The discussions will focus around "Boundary Dilemmas," and the ethical issues that clergy face in multi-dimensional settings. Dr. Leonard Felder, a professional psychologist who has written extensively on this topic, will be the keynote speaker. His publications include "The Ten Challenges: Spiritual Lessons from the Ten Commandments for Creating Meaning, Growth and Richness Every Day of Your Life;" and "Seven Prayers That Can Change Your Life: How to Use Spiritual Wisdom to Enhance Your Health, Relationships and Daily Effectiveness."

AJR, CA IN THE NEWS

Reflecting the caliber of those involved with the Academy as well as the importance of the work being done, AJR, CA has been increasingly "in the news." On August 22nd, the *Morgan Hill Times* ran "New Spiritual Leader in Town," a front page profile of AJR, CA rabbinical student Debbie Israel. On September 16th, the *Ventura County Star* profiled co-founder and Board Chair, Rabbi Stan Levy, in "Transcending Tradition." "Relaxed rabbi returns to his Richmond roots," about rabbinical student Dean Kertesz, ran in the September 18th issue of the *Contra Costa Times*. Rabbi Mel



Larry and Linda Seidman

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Gottlieb, Dean of the Rabbinical School and Chaplaincy Program and faculty member, Rabbi Michael Menitoff, were two of the experts quoted in the October 6th *Jewish Journal* piece, "Rabbinical marriage counseling works – up to a point." On October 13th, the *Jewish Journal* detailed AJR, CA's unique and much needed Chaplaincy Program, and included substantial quotes from Rabbi Gottlieb, Rabbi Levy and alumna, Chaplain D'vora Epstein, one of the first graduates of our Chaplaincy Program in "Wanted: someone to help suffering Jews." Finally, on November 14, the *Orange County Register* ran, "Rocketry and Religion," a profile of husband and wife AJR, CA rabbinical students, Linda and Larry Seidman.

STUDENT PROFILE **HELPING THE JEWS OF UGANDA**

Marcy Delbick, a third year AJR, CA rabbinical student, is trying to improve the lives of Jewish children living almost 10,000 miles away in Nabugoye Hill, Uganda. In the Summer of 2005, Marcy traveled to Uganda in a group that included doctors, dentists and other professionals who could provide assistance to the Abayudaya or “the people of Judah” as the

“Children are hungry but can’t afford lunch. We need to fix that.”

Marcy Delbick, AJR, CA Rabbinical student

Jewish community is called. The trip was under the auspices of Shomrei Torah Synagogue in West Hills, CA, and was led by Shomrei Torah’s rabbinic intern, Gershom Sizomu, who is also the religious leader of the Ugandan Jewish community.

While in Uganda, Marcy helped officiate at various religious ceremonies. She also visited Semei Kakungulu High School, the Jewish

community school where many of the students were too poor to buy lunch; this despite their walking miles every day in order to attend the school. In response, Marcy has established the *Dora Bloch Memorial Fund*, named after her cousin who was the hostage murdered by Idi Amin after the 1976 Israeli raid on Entebbe. It is Marcy’s hope that the Fund will garner enough support to provide daily lunches for approximately 250 students.

Kulanu, a national organization “dedicated to finding and assisting lost and dispersed remnants of the Jewish people,” is overseeing the management of the Fund.

AJR, CA is very proud of Marcy’s efforts and we urge you to learn more about the *Dora Bloch Memorial Fund* by contacting Harriet Bograd, Kulanu’s Treasurer, at 212-877-8082.



phone: 310.824.1586 | email: office@ajrca.org | www.ajrca.org



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The Yitzhak Rabin Hillel Center for Jewish Life at UCLA
574 Hilgard Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024