



ZACHARIAS FRANKEL
COLLEGE

NEWSLETTER



Rabbi Professor Dr. Bradley Shavit Artson
Dean of the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at
American Jewish University

DEAR FRIENDS,

I am delighted to be able to greet you during this first academic year for the Zacharias Frankel College! Any day that devoted young Jews gather to learn Torah and grow in service is a great day, but to see young Europeans dedicating their lives in service to the Jewish community and its future is surely nothing short of miraculous.

Already we have opened classes, nestled within the School of Jewish Theology of the University of Potsdam. On its stately and elegant campus, a building has been dedicated solely to the future of Jewish thought and leadership, and it is in this fine edifice that our new rabbis will gain their training and expertise to enable them to renew the Masorti/Conservative movement in Judaism and to energize Jewish life on the Continent and beyond.

In partnership with the University of Potsdam and our colleagues at the Abraham Geiger College, we have moved forward on several Faculty appointments that the two schools will share, and we have engaged the services of two senior scholars of the international Masorti/Conservative Movement, Rabbi Dr. Harvey Meirovich of the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem and Rabbi Dr. Joel Rembaum of the American Jewish University in Los Angeles to teach halakhah from a Masorti/Conservative perspective. Our local colleague, Rabbi Gesa Ederberg has joined us as Director for Congregational Proficiency to fashion an internship program for field training in Masorti/Conservative congregations. The Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies at American Jewish University is proud to provide religious supervision and to work with the University of Potsdam to launch this extraordinary new center for Jewish learning and professional training.

In that regard, allow me to extend my thanks to Masorti Olami and Masorti Europe, whose lay and professional leadership have partnered with us in advancing the vision of a European rabbinical program to train our rabbis, as well as to thank the European Rabbinical Assembly, namely Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg – its membership and its leadership, and the international Rabbinical Assembly, particularly its Executive Vice President, Rabbi Julie Schonfeld. It truly takes a village, and these caring rabbis, lay leaders and dedicated visionaries have worked with us to help advance our dream. Of course, without the tireless efforts of our Executive Director, Rabbi Prof. Dr. Walter Homolka, truly our partner every step of the way, Rabbi Cheryl Peretz, Vice Dean, and Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer, our Co-ordinator, none of this would have ever started at all. To them, our deepest gratitude.

These are challenging times to be Jewish, to seek Jewish wisdom, to translate Torah into contemporary life. Yet never has the need been greater. Our ability to rise to this challenge is limited only by our courage, our energy, and our persistence. On behalf of the Zacharias Frankel College, I thank you for rising with us to make sure that this challenge is successfully met, and that the greatest days of Judaism remain in our future.

To all of you Happy Passover!



WELCOME FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ZACHARIAS FRANKEL COLLEGE

The Zacharias Frankel College is still a very young institution. We will grow together with our students, with the help of the faculty and the support of the staff.

What do you need to do to become a student for the rabbinate at the Zacharias Frankel College?

We are looking for women and men who believe they can and will make a difference in Jewish life in Germany or throughout Europe. We are seeking active, creative Jewish leaders, adhering to Jewish law and the traditions of the past as well as embracing and challenging the future.

Our application process:

- We invite you to have preliminary discussions with the administrative staff in Berlin as well as the dean and associate dean of the Ziegler School for Rabbinic Studies in Los Angeles. The purpose of these meetings is to begin the mutual evaluation of one another's 'fit' for the other.
- Following the preliminary interviews, candidates are invited to submit applications including application forms, essays, academic records, and references.
- Based on the evaluation of the application material, candidates will meet during the spring semester with an admissions committee for a conversation.
- Following that discussion, the committee will make a recommendation for admission. This usually takes place within one week.

Studying at the Zacharias Frankel College and the University of Potsdam:

- Classes will take place at the Zacharias Frankel College in Berlin and at the School of Jewish Theology in Potsdam
- Your studies consist of a B.A. and a M.A. and one year of learning in the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem
- You will study together with students from the Abraham Geiger College
- You will have the chance to discuss your spiritual growth and rabbinic knowledge with professional coaches
- Internships in Masorti congregations and other institutions in Germany and Europe and mentorship through experienced rabbis will provide the skills needed for a successful rabbinate

Please contact our Co-ordinator
Sandra Anusiewicz-Baer to find out more about the Zacharias Frankel College:
anusiewicz-baer@frankel-edu.de

GREETINGS FROM BERLIN!



Nizan Stein Kokin

Today I would like to tell you about my first semester at the Zacharias Frankel College and some of its highlights.

First of all, Berlin is an exciting place to be with its many stimuli in arts and culture, big city life, and surprising diversity of Jewish life.

Studies at the Rabbinical Seminary have been inspiring on all levels, allowing for my own personal growth through a balanced combination of intellectual, spiritual and practical learning opportunities.

The study program has been rich, a combination of academic courses at the School of Jewish Theology in Potsdam, classes at the Rabbinical

Seminary itself, and my ongoing internship at Berlin's Masorti Synagogue (Oranienburgerstraße). I'd like to share with you here in greater detail just a few of my experiences:

Each semester at the Rabbinical Seminary focuses on an overarching theme and classes are built around it. This past semester's topic was Rosh HaShanah. With visiting Prof. Dalia Marx from HUC-Jerusalem, we studied the development of this holiday and its liturgy from biblical times, through the formative period of Rabbinic Judaism, down to the modern age.

Aside from this semester's special topic, I also enjoyed the weekly Parashat HaShavua class, in which we studied in a Beit Midrash-style atmosphere with several local rabbis. Learning with teachers actively engaged in their own synagogues, we had fun delving into the intellectual and theological challenges of the Torah while at the same time keeping to a hermeneutic perspective applicable to the congregation that one serves.

As part of our training in homiletics, each student was charged to prepare her first High Holiday sermon, bearing in mind the theological choreography of the Yamim Noraim as a whole.

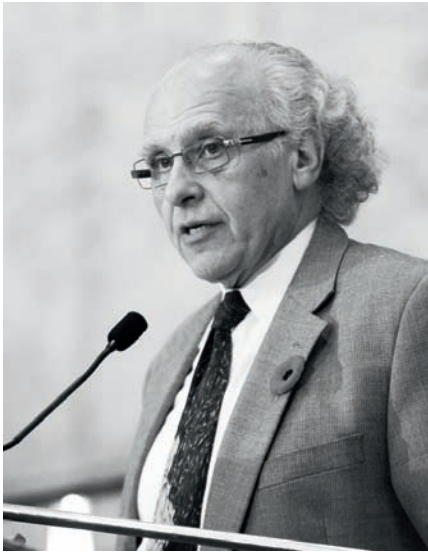
With Rabbi David Fine from New Jersey we studied Hilkhhot Rosh HaShanah directly from the Schulchan Aruch as well as in modern Poskim and more recent liberal responsa literature.

In the cantorial class, led by Prof. Eliyahu Schleifer that I attended as a visiting student, I gained new insights into the musical compositions of the great cantors of the 19th and early 20th centuries.

And even though it's only Pessach, I am already looking forward to implementing many of the things I've learned in my year-long internship at the local Masorti synagogue here in Berlin.

As you can see, it has been exciting and rewarding studying at the Zacharias Frankel College!

Hag Aviv Sameah!



Harvey Meirovich is currently the Visiting Professor in Halakhah at Potsdam. He is former dean of the Masorti movement's Schechter Rabbinical Seminary in Jerusalem. His academic career has been paralleled by his work as a congregational rabbi in Toronto, Canada and in London, England.

THE BOOK OF JONAH AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

The Book of Jonah begins with two events that are unique and without parallel in the Bible: the sending of a prophet of the Lord to proclaim imminent punishment to a gentile city, and the prophet's adamant refusal to perform his mission – to the point of preferring death. Another feature, quite bizarre, is the writer's use of exaggeration in language: we as readers, for example, confront “a great storm” (1:4); “a great fish” (2:1); the size of Nineveh and its population is magnified (3:3). There are other strange features embedded in the storyline: Jonah executes his mission, in two verses (3:3-4); most of the book describes his fierce opposition to his mission. In the end, we see Jonah as a genuinely pathetic personality who struggles valiantly, but in vain, to get God to change his mind.

It is against this backdrop that we are entitled to ask: Why did the Rabbis choose the Book of Jonah to be read on Yom Kippur? What are the pivotal psychological and theological lessons of the book? There are both nationalistic and universalistic tendencies in the story. How do these polarities influence our making sense of Judaism today? Finally, if Nineveh represents the barbaric Assyrian enemy, and Jonah was commanded to offer them a chance to repent, what bearing does the story have with regard to the Jewish people's capacity today to forgive its (former) enemies?



Rabbi Joel E. Rembaum served as Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Am in Los Angeles and held the position of Dean of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Professor of Jewish History at the American Jewish University. He is a member of the National Executive Council of the Rabbinical Assembly. Rabbi Rembaum will follow Harvey Meirovich as Visiting Professor in Halakhah at Potsdam in the winter semester 2015/16.

QUESTIONS WE WILL ASK IN OUR STUDY OF HALAKHAH

Louis Jacobs has written, “The word *halakhah*, the legal side of Judaism (...) embraces personal, social, national, and international relationships, and all the other practices and observances of Judaism.” It has been suggested that this word comes from the Hebrew root meaning “to walk” and refers to the religious path on which a Jew is supposed to travel as he/she “walks” through life. Others tell us that the term derives from an ancient Semitic word that came to mean “fixed law.” In either case, *halakhah* is a large body of legal tradition that has been evolving for millennia and continues to do so in our own day. With that in mind, in our studies we will address such law-related questions as:

How did the prohibition of gay sexual activity, a capital crime in the Bible, evolve into the sanctification of Jewish gay/lesbian marriage?

How did the ancient animal sacrifice worship of God develop into today's Jewish prayer services?

How did the farming-based Jewish economic law of antiquity become the business-based legal system of the medieval and modern periods?

How did a handful of Biblical Sabbath regulations emerge over the centuries as a complex code of Jewish belief and practice?

In seeking answers to these and other questions we will explore Jewish legal sources ranging from the Bible, through the Mishnah, Talmud, medieval commentaries and codes, and down to modern responsa. From our explorations we will learn that halakhah has always been grounded in the belief that God is encountered in the fullness of human life experience, and that it is the obligation of every Jew to emulate God by living a life of *k'dushah*, holiness.



Rabbi Tzvi Graetz, Executive Director of Masorti Olami and Mercaz Olami.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING MASORTI RABBIS IN EUROPE TODAY

The mission of Masorti Olami is to develop, nurture and connect Conservative/Masorti communities around the world. While our headquarters are in Jerusalem, Ki MiTziyon Te'Tze Torah, our working philosophy is very grass roots oriented. Our rabbis are usually graduates of their own home communities and they come to serve their own people in their own languages and cultures. So training Rabbis in Europe for Europeans is exactly what Masorti Olami and Masorti Europe liked so much in the partnership with the Ziegler Rabbinical School when they opened the Zacharias Frankel College in Berlin in November 2013. In our mutual vision, these rabbis get ordained and go back to their own home communities to serve their people.

After the recent severe attacks on the Jewish communities in Belgium, France and Denmark the need for a strong rabbinic leadership is more important than ever. The attack was not just on Jewish institutions. It was on news agency, artists and museums. Our Masorti movement has never cared only for Jews and their situation in Europe, but rather for free democratic and social justice communities in all the countries that we live in. Is not that the essence of what Pessach is all about? To be free out of slavery, to be free in our own land, but first to get the Torah that frees human beings and that reminds us that all human beings deserve to be free and treated in a fair way, because we were slaves in Egypt and therefore need to make sure what happened to us does not happen to others.

So, the leaders that our movement will train in Europe will be capable of taking care of their fellow Jews and their Kehillot, but in the same time take care of the well being of the entire European community, be it Jewish and non-Jewish that seeks to live in peace and in dialogue and towards building a just society.

Masorti Olami and Masorti Europe have more than 35 Kehillot in Europe in nine different countries and more are joining each year. We invite each of you who have that leadership urge to come and take care of their fellow Jews and of the general society around them by becoming a Jewish Leader in Europe, by becoming a Rabbi, and fulfilling the mission of bringing the word of God out of Jerusalem, U'Dvar Adonai Me'Yeru'Shalayim.