

Continuing Education Opportunities

Finding and facilitating continuing education opportunities for its members rest at the heart of IFR's mission. This article summarizes some of the available avenues to further one's education.

You can "pick and choose" courses to meet your needs, depending on your background and interests. Almost any local college or university will offer on campus courses related to general Judaic topics, including literature, law and, philosophy. Higher education institutions that do not have Judaic departments will offer some of these courses in their religion department.

Universities also offer Judaic-related courses off campus. This could include the Internet, conference calling, syllabus and other reading materials, or some combination.

A list of universities of-

fering Judaic courses (on or off campus) can be seen at www.peterson.com (go to "graduate programs" and then to "general graduate programs"). A good site is www.maven.co.il - follow their education link to a wealth of Jewish education resources. Some have expressed an interest in pursuing an off campus master's or doctorate program in a Jewish-related field. Institutions offering distance learning advanced degree programs include:

- Hebrew College in Massachusetts -- online Master of Arts in

Jewish Studies (617-278-4948, www.hebrewcollege.edu/online/degree, OnlineMA@hebrewcollege.edu)

- Spertus Institute of Jewish Studies in Chicago -- distance learning M.S. degree programs in Jewish Studies and a Doctor of Science in Jewish Studies (312-922-9012, www.spertus.edu, college@spertus.edu)
- Jewish Theological Seminary in New York -- master's degree in Judaic Stud-

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Continuing Education (cont'd)

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ies and Jewish Education (212-678-8022, www.jtsa.edu)

- Rabbi Gelberman's All Faiths Seminary International through the Commonwealth Open University (British Virgin Islands) -- master's and doctoral programs (973-226-8766, rteller@jersey.net)
- Also, Maimonides University in Florida and the Diaspora Yeshiva (Jerusalem) offer two-week accelerated graduate degree

programs in Jerusalem for rabbis. Maimonides also offers master's and doctoral distance learning programs (1-877-624-6668, www.maimonidesuniversity.com).

IFR's External Relations Committee, chaired by Rabbi David Degani, has been in contact with Hebrew College in Massachusetts. Preliminary negotiations indicate that the college is willing to modify its off-campus master's program to include rabbinic courses, provided candidates meet certain core requirements.

Before IFR proceeds any further, we need at least 10 members who would be willing to commit the program, including starting coursework at the same time. If you are interested please advise David (561-487-2501, DnL29@aol.com).

Because higher learning institutions are constantly coming up with new off campus programs, others may now (or in the future) offer distance learning Judaic-related graduate degrees. Let the listserv know what you discover.

2002 Convention Recap

The International Federation of Rabbis held its 3rd Annual Conference March 4-6 in Las Vegas. The conference began Monday evening with a spirited debate facilitated President Lew Solomon about the role of the rabbi in the 21st Century. True to the group's pluralistic nature, there were as many opinions as were rabbis and they were able to discuss their views with respect, agreeing to disagree at times. Rabbi

Solomon commented that "It's hard to come up with any synthesis of opinion other than IFR has a unique opportunity to address this issue without regard to denominational politics or polemics."

The program Tuesday morning began with Rabbi Gershon Winkler whose presentation on flexidoxy really picked up where the group left off Monday night. It would be difficult to try and

summarize Winkler's lecture but it followed along with the topic of his latest book, *The Way of the Boundary Crosser, An Introduction to Jewish Flexidoxy*. Again, although all did not agree with all of his premises each participant got something of value from his ideas and the discussion. The conversation continued with Winkler through lunch and well afterward.

Following Winkler, Rabbi

The International Federation of Rabbis held its 3rd Annual Conference March 4-6 in Las Vegas.

David Degani gave one of his famous text lectures. This year's address was on Pesach and included a really interesting midrashic take on the Exodus story. Rabbi Degani will be writing a piece for inclusion on IFR's web page and next newsletter. After Rabbi Degani, Rabbi Aaron Spiegel gave a lecture on Judaism and Technology. He said he was encouraged and surprised by the level of interest by those present. He also will be writing an article for IFR's next newsletter, which will include some of this material.

After dinner on Tuesday, Rabbi Gary Golbart continued a presentation he began last year entitled "Chorale for Dummies." Rabbi Golbart (who is also an accomplished cantor) has devised an ingenious method to create a congregational choir using both experienced musicians as well as novices. His system enables his choir to prepare for the High Holy days in a very short period of time. Members of Rabbi Golbart's choir performed for the group and many commented on how impres-

sive they were, especially since most were not professional musicians.

The conference concluded with business meetings on Wednesday and reports by various committee chair people. All the rabbis in attendance thought this year's conference was a resounding success and came away with new ideas and a new appreciation of the organization. One new member commented that this kind of meeting, where rabbis from different backgrounds and perspectives come together and share ideas and chevruta, does not happen very often. Rabbi Spiegel commented that "I know I've come to take for granted that we in IFR are comfortable with each other and welcome the learning opportunities that comes from sitting with chaverim in the spirit of pluralism." The group plans its next conference in the spring of 2003, Boston.

IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

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Future issues of IFR News will contain member items. Send your news to Rabbi Suzanne Carter (rabbis@bellsouth.net).

Watch the listserv for the announcement of the 2003 IFR Convention.

International Federation of Rabbis

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