



## The Davidson School's Annual Visions and Voices of Israel Seminar

Every winter, first-year students from the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of The Jewish Theological Seminary spend two-and-a-half weeks in Israel. During the Visions and Voices of Israel seminar, the students grapple with many essential questions.

*continues on page 12*

As we were about to go to press, we learned that our esteemed benefactor, Mr. William Davidson (z"l), had passed away. Our hearts go out to his widow Karen and the whole Davidson family.

In our next issue we will be able to devote more space to this remarkable leader. Though many celebrated his great accomplishments in business and sports, William Davidson always preferred modesty and tzedakah over taking pride in his worldly successes. May his memory be a blessing.

R. Huna and R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Hiyya b. Abba: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in the future prepare a shade and canopies for those who give charity to sustain students of Torah. He will sit in the company of the students of Torah, in the Garden of Eden (Leviticus Rabbah 25:2).

JTS is preparing an online tribute to William Davidson's life and work for our website. Anyone wishing to submit memories or reflections is encouraged to write to Jeremy Willinger, web communications manager, at [jewillinger@jtsa.edu](mailto:jewillinger@jtsa.edu).

## Highlights

The Davidson School Welcomes New Students .....	3
Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship Helps Train Tomorrow's Leaders .....	4
Rachel Saks Is First Recipient of Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship .....	5
2008 Davidson Graduates: What They Are Doing Now .....	6
Chancellor Eisen Speaks to Congregational School Educators .....	7
Hebrew Immersion Program for Day School Teachers .....	7
Announcing a New JTS Website: Evaded Issues in Jewish Education .....	8
Strong JTS Presence at SSDSA Conference .....	8
Milestone Year for MaToK .....	9
The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project .....	9



Visions and Voices Seminar

# Letter From Dr. Barry W. Holtz



Dr. Barry W. Holtz is the dean of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education of JTS and the Theodore and Florence Baumritter Professor of Jewish Education.

Visit [www.jtsa.edu/davidson](http://www.jtsa.edu/davidson) for more information on The Davidson School.

The *Davidson Newsletter* welcomes your suggestions and ideas. Please send your name, contact information, and comments to [alocana@jtsa.edu](mailto:alocana@jtsa.edu).

Dear Friends:

Much has changed in the world—and in the world of Jewish education—since our last newsletter’s publication. On the positive side, we’ve seen the election of our first African American president, a moving event no matter what position on the political spectrum one inhabits. But on the other hand, we have all been plunged into the greatest financial crisis in decades. The destabilization of the American economy has huge implications for all aspects of our lives, but the questions looming for Jewish education, in particular, concern us here. What will shrinking resources mean for our organizations and community? How will educating institutions like day schools, summer camps, and synagogues be affected by what has happened on Wall Street? No one knows the answers to these questions right now, and a great deal depends on how long the economic crisis continues. But we do know that endowments have dramatically shrunk in value; that the decline of individuals’ personal wealth may well affect the level of donations that institutions receive; and that unemployment will further weaken the ability of people to pay for tuitions, camp fees, Israel educational trips, and other important educational ventures.

Still, we wonder about other, perhaps surprising, possibilities that may emerge out of all of this. American culture (Jewish culture, too) has been so centered on financial success and the accumulation of material goods that larger values have often been ignored. We’ve all seen the egregious example of the “conspicuous consumption” bar mitzvah in which, as one wag put it, there is more emphasis on the *bar* than on the *mitzvah*!

However, out of all this confusion, a new commitment to core values may emerge. It is possible that people will begin to reassess what matters to them, that enduring questions confronted by Judaism about the purpose of our lives will once again appear on the agenda. We may see young people turn to careers in the Jewish community, as they come to see that a values-oriented career has its own great rewards. I am reminded of Abraham Joshua Heschel’s words in *Who Is Man*, in which he described the human being as “a subject in quest of a predicate, as a being in quest of a meaning of life, of all of life, not only the particular actions or single episodes which happen now and then.”

The mission of Jewish education, in the final analysis, is to help guide people toward exploring the great questions of meaning in their lives. Everything we do at The Davidson School—all the readings in courses, fieldwork, mentoring, discussions, and educational experiences—are ultimately aimed at preparing people to take on this great task. It is not always an easy one, but we are inspired by the opportunity to play such an important role in the lives of children and adults. At a time of great darkness around us, we have an opportunity granted to very few people—we are in the business of bringing light.

# The Davidson School Welcomes New Students

In the fall of 2008, The Davidson School welcomed twenty-five new students. The new students arrived with degrees from Brandeis, Stanford, Columbia, and Washington universities, among others. The students include twenty in the MA program (nineteen full-time and one part-time); four in the EdD program; and one in the distance learning program.

## Meet Treasure Cohen, New Davidson Student

*Treasure Cohen entered The Davidson School in the fall of 2008. She is an experienced Jewish educator who is happy to share her background and what attracted her to Jewish education and The Davidson School.*

For most of my adult life, I have been a Jewish educator—both avocational and professional. I have worked in religious schools, preschools, and a day school; been the director of family education for the MetroWest Jewish Education Association; served as an educational consultant to schools and as a trainer of Jewish teachers; and have presented workshops on Jewish education throughout the United States.

With my husband, Richard Cohen, I developed Shabbat and holiday services for young children and their families at Congregation Beth El in South Orange, New Jersey, that have become models for congregations throughout the country. Although I have degrees in child development and special education and have been a lifelong Jewish learner, I never had the opportunity to pursue a formal degree in Jewish education. Now I have the chance to fulfill a lifelong dream.

As a Conservative Jew, I have always been drawn to JTS and have had many opportunities to learn from JTS scholars. I chose to study at The Davidson School because it gives me the opportunity to learn from great Jewish thinkers while becoming more current in twenty-first-century educational theory. I am loving every moment of learning here, because it is deepening my understanding both as an educator and as a committed Jew.

I received my bachelor of arts degree in Child Development from Tufts University the same year I married Rich, who himself had been a student at JTS. After several years of teaching, I received a master of arts degree in Special-Needs Education from Boston College. In addition to many years of teaching, consulting, and developing community programs, I am currently an adjunct professor in the Department of Family and Child Studies at Montclair State University in Montclair, New Jersey. I am a mother and grandmother, and all four of my children have become Jewish educators.



### TREASURE COHEN

- Adjunct Professor, Department of Family and Child Studies, Montclair State University
- MA, Boston College, Special-Needs Education
- BA, Tufts University, Child Development

“I chose to study at The Davidson School because it gives me the opportunity to learn from great Jewish thinkers while becoming more current in twenty-first century educational theory.”

—Treasure Cohen, new Davidson student

### Have you been thinking about attending The Davidson School?

Do you know an excellent Jewish educator who would benefit from top-notch training in Jewish education? The Davidson School offers part-time and full-time MA and EdD degrees. The doctoral program priority deadline is March 31 and the MA priority deadline is May 1. Rolling admissions continue through August 1.

For more information, please contact **Abby Eisenberg**, director of Graduate Admissions, at (212) 678-8022 or [abeisenberg@jtsa.edu](mailto:abeisenberg@jtsa.edu).

For information about scholarship donations or establishing a fund, please contact **Marion Koltun Dienstag**, national director of Major Gifts, at (212) 678-8849 or [madienstag@jtsa.edu](mailto:madienstag@jtsa.edu).

## Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship Helps Train Tomorrow's Educational Leaders for the Jewish World



“I could not think of a more wonderful way to honor me than by creating this fund so that more students are able to go to The Davidson School.”

—Dr. Steven M. Brown

Dr. Steven M. Brown may be the erstwhile dean of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, but he continues to make his mark on The Davidson School. In July 2008, Dr. Brown became head of school at Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy after serving The Davidson School as director of the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education for twelve years, five of them while also serving as dean. In the spring of 2008, a broad community honored Dr. Brown's tenure at Davidson by generously contributing to establish the Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship Fund to help train tomorrow's educational leaders for the Jewish world.

Hundreds of Dr. Brown's colleagues, friends, and family from across the country created a robust fund that will last well into the next decade to celebrate all that The Davidson School embodies: scholarship, mentorship, field-based expertise, and excellence.

“If the community can invest in terms of scholarships to put you [a Davidson student] through school, that says something about your worth to the profession of Jewish education,” noted Dr. Brown. “I could not think of a more wonderful way to honor me than by creating this fund so that more students are able to go to The Davidson School.”

The scholarship partners a senior educator as a mentor to a novice educator who is pursuing a career in day school education. “The purpose of this scholarship is to allow somebody to have a relationship with me while they are a student—and certainly when they leave—so that I can be helpful to them as their career unfolds, sharing whatever wisdom and experience I have with the student,” said Dr. Brown.

The first student to receive the Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship is Rachel Saks (see page 5). “It is my hope that she'll be able to come to my school to talk with me and walk around and feel and experience what our day school is all about,” he said.

“It was the ultimate honor to me to have the board of advisers and other friends and colleagues establish this scholarship so that my memory would linger on with future students,” said Dr. Brown. “I loved being dean of the school, and my involvement with the school for the last twelve years was extraordinarily important to me. It's nice to know that some people will know my name five or ten years from now.”



For more information about the Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship Fund, contact **Marion Koltun Dienstag**, national director of Major Gifts, at [madienstag@jtsa.edu](mailto:madienstag@jtsa.edu) or (212) 678-8849.



“I am greatly honored to be receiving this scholarship.”

—Rachel Saks

## Rachel Saks, Third-Year Student in the Day School Track, Is First Recipient of Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship

*Rachel Saks discusses what attracted her to Jewish education and The Davidson School and the importance of the Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship to her.*

### **Q: Why did you choose to pursue a career in Jewish education?**

A: I have always loved working with kids. Their smiles and laughter are what make me enjoy working in the field of education. Having an opportunity to be with children on a daily basis is what I am most looking forward to next year. Most important, I feel that as a Jewish educator I can help children make meaning in their lives by bringing Jewish texts, stories, and customs to life. Watching students discover a connection between what they learned at the beginning of the year and what they are learning now is an amazing sight. I am also amazed by how children learn to work with each other and become conscious individuals who care about their peers.

### **Q: What attracted you to The Davidson School?**

A: I wanted to study at Davidson because I felt that this school would give me the tools that I need to have a successful career in Jewish day school education. I would learn not only about the texts that I would be teaching, but how to go about teaching them in the first place. I wanted to be in a setting that could turn me into my ideal notion of a teacher, who is not only knowledgeable in content and pedagogy but who also cares about students' lives. Over the past three years I have grown as an educator. This simple fact has reinforced the clarity in my decision to enter Davidson.

### **Q: What opportunities does the Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship give you?**

A: The Dr. Steven M. Brown Scholarship is a program in which I will have an opportunity to be mentored by the former dean of The Davidson School, Dr. Steven Brown. I will

also have the chance to visit Dr. Brown's school, Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy, on a typical school day. This scholarship is quite special as Dr. Brown was not only my dean but the headmaster of my childhood day school, Solomon Schechter, Forman Center in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. I am greatly honored to be receiving this scholarship.

### **Q: Is there anything else that you would like readers of the Davidson Newsletter to know?**

A: My family has had a long history of attending JTS. Both of my maternal grandparents were graduates of JTS, as were my mother and father. My brother Ari is currently a rabbinical student at JTS and my younger brother, Dani, is in List College.



## 2008 Davidson Graduates: What They Are Doing Now

*The Davidson School's master's and doctoral programs prepare educators for teaching careers in day schools and for leadership positions in synagogue schools, Jewish community centers, camps, adult education, academia, and emerging fields in Jewish education. Following are dialogues with graduates of Davidson's synagogue school administration concentration and informal/communal education concentration about the work they are doing now and their Davidson education.*



**TALIA ANDRON**  
 • MA, The Davidson School, informal/communal education concentration, 2008  
 • BA, Binghamton University, Anthropology, 2004

The Davidson School “helped me understand that Jewish education can and should be dynamic, out of the box, and extremely engaging.”

—Talia Andron, '08

**TALIA ANDRON, a 2008 graduate of The Davidson School, is director of Havurah at the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan where she oversees the after-school Jewish education program.**

**Q: What do you do as director of Havurah at the JCC?**

A: I supervise teachers, am the liaison between the teachers and parents, oversee the parent committee and the general

functioning of the school, make sure the teachers are translating the curriculum in engaging and dynamic ways, and do all of the administrative work associated with the school.

**Q: Tell us something interesting about your current position.**

A: The thing that I enjoy the most is that I truly have a hand in shaping the Jewish education our learners receive. Havurah is a small lab school and there is a feeling of true collaboration among the staff. It allows for creativity in our planning and in our approach to education.

**Q: How do you think the education you received at The Davidson School helps you do your job?**

A: I think that it helped me understand that Jewish education can and should be dynamic, out of the box, and extremely engaging. It enabled me to think about alternative ways to impart information, but it also gave me the solid tools of educational theory and practice that form the basis of an educational experience.



**MARCIA STEIN**  
 • MA, The Davidson School, synagogue school administration concentration, 2008  
 • BA, George Washington University, Psychology, 1985

**MARCIA STEIN, a 2008 graduate of The Davidson School, is a primary/family educator at the Congregation Rodeph Sholom Religious School in New York City.**

**Q: What do you do as primary/family educator at the Congregation Rodeph Sholom Religious School?**

A: My job is to create meaningful learning opportunities for families engaged in learning in the classroom, synagogue, and home. I also incorporate the developmentally appropriate characteristics of the primary grades (pre-kindergarten through third grade) into the curriculum of these grades. I created and lead a bimonthly Shabbat b'Yahd family service and developed a pre-kindergarten family learning program called Nevatim. I work to weave community and

support through the multiplicity of interactions that transpire among the teachers, students, parents, and clergy with daily administrative tasks, staff development, and family communication to establish learning goals for all students regardless of special needs. I work collaboratively with an amazing creative team of educators to ensure that our families encounter positive, engaging, and meaningful Jewish experiences.

**Q: Tell us something interesting about your current position.**

A: I find many things interesting about my position at Rodeph Sholom. However, I would highlight that it is the diverse interaction with the families in varied settings that brings to life the value of community through learning, celebrating, and praying together that I find most compelling.

**Q: How do you think the education you received at The Davidson School helps you do your job?**

A: The learning at The Davidson School merged the skills and knowledge needed to be an effective educator and Jewish professional through study and experience. Additionally, I began working at Rodeph Sholom creating Nitzanim, a learning-center-based program for kindergarten and first grade, during my synagogue school administration practicum at The Davidson School in May 2006. I took with me the following phrase: “it's all about relationships.” This applies to relationships with students, parents, educators, and clergy; and it applies to the importance this lens provides when engaging in learning, celebrating, and praying together. I am grateful and feel very fortunate to have had the experience I had at The Davidson School and to have received the breadth and depth of Judaic knowledge and professional leadership skills needed to effectively provide and sustain meaningful Jewish learning.

## Chancellor Eisen Speaks to the Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators



The Leadership Institute for Congregational School Educators (LICSE) met at JTS in September 2008 for its first symposium of the year. JTS Chancellor Arnold M. Eisen gave a presentation titled "The Vision of the Community: Educational Implications From Moses Mendelsohn." Other meetings of LICSE in the fall of 2008 included the following:

- LICSE alumni met in November 2008 with other educators, lay leaders, and rabbis for an afternoon of learning and sharing. The program, titled "Yachdav: The Community of Innovating Congregations," offered alumni the chance to celebrate successes and discuss challenges.

- Group endeavor leads to vision, leadership, and growth more effectively than solitary effort. Consequently, other leaders from LICSE participants' congregations—their clergy and lay leaders—were invited to join their educators in November 2008 for the first of two days of study (the second will take place in November 2009). Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman, an esteemed professor and author of numerous books and articles, is designing these sessions and leading the learning.



- Also In November 2008, the Leadership Institute's educators engaged in discussion and preparation for their Israel seminar in February 2009 by exploring the three lenses through which they would experience Israel: as educator, leader, and the self.

LICSE is a joint program of Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion and The Davidson School. Its goal is to enhance the professional leadership skills of congregational school educators from the New York metropolitan area. The two-and-a-half-year program concentrates on three pillars of learning: leadership, pedagogy, and Judaica. The Leadership Institute is funded by UJA-Federation of New York.



For more information, contact **Dr. Evie Rotstein** at [erotstein@huc.edu](mailto:erotstein@huc.edu) or (212) 824-2248 or visit [www.leader-institute.org](http://www.leader-institute.org).

"It is truly impressive to see the enormous progress teachers can make in their Hebrew ability within an immersion setting that is geared to the special needs of the day school classroom."

—Dr. Alan Mintz, director of Ivriyon

## Hebrew Immersion Program for Day School Teachers

In the summer of 2008, twelve day school teachers and advanced graduate students participated in Ivriyon, a Hebrew immersion program on the JTS campus. The goal of the program, which is cosponsored by The Davidson School and the JTS Department of Hebrew Language, is to bring day school teachers (grades kindergarten through twelve) to a level of Hebrew fluency that enables them to conduct classes on Judaic subjects entirely in Hebrew—*Ivrit b'Ivrit*. Rather than studying the language only as a subject in an academic class, participants spoke with each other only in Hebrew while the program was in session.



Dr. Alan Mintz, director of Ivriyon, commented on the program: "It is truly impressive to see the enormous progress teachers can make in their Hebrew ability within an immersion setting that is geared to the special needs of the day school classroom. We are very proud of the opportunity we are providing the field of day school education."

The program, subsidized in part by a grant from AVI CHAI, will be offered again this summer, June 29 to July 24, 2009, at JTS. "All Fall 2009 incoming students to the day school concentration are required to take Ivriyon," noted Dr. Ofra Backenroth, associate dean of The Davidson School.

For more information, contact [Ivriyon@jtsa.edu](mailto:Ivriyon@jtsa.edu) or visit [www.jtsa.edu/ivriyon](http://www.jtsa.edu/ivriyon).



# Milestone Year for MaToK

It is a milestone year for MaToK, the Bible curriculum for Solomon Schechter Day Schools. Not only is the program ten years old, but ten full-color student booklets are now in the hands of children in Solomon Schechter and community day schools.

Teachers and children alike say they love learning Torah from the new booklets. Instructors rave about the background information and ideas they learn from the teachers' guides. Students and teachers are stimulated by the discussions about God, simulations and role-playing, and explorations of values and literary devices in Torah that they find in MaToK.

The most recent MaToK publication contains Parashat Va-era and Parashat Bo. The final four booklets will be compiled by the end of next year.

MaToK is a joint project of the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education, part of The Davidson School, and the Education Department of USCJ—the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

For more information about MaToK, contact **Dr. Deborah Miller** or **Zohar Harkov**, MaToK project directors, at demiller@jtsa.edu or (212) 678-8031 or visit <http://ssdsa.org/?page=matok>.



MaToK is now turning its attention to a new challenge: meeting the needs of diverse learners in their study of Torah. At the 2008 Solomon Schechter Day School Association conference in Florida, day school teachers from throughout the state came to learn the rudiments of differentiated instruction from Dr. Karen Gazith, director of the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning at the Bronfman Jewish Education Centre and a lecturer at McGill University, both in Montreal. The teachers are working to establish a professional support network to nurture continued growth in this area.

## The Celebration of MaToK



A celebration of MaToK—*Hagigat* MaToK—was held on December 8, 2008, at JTS. Dr. Robert A. Harris, associate professor of Bible at JTS, traced the development of the idea of *peshat*—which is usually understood as “the simple meaning of the Torah text”—and showed how it had come into being, evolved, and changed. He demonstrated that some of the most famous medieval commentators made room for what we now call “reader response,” with much leeway for personal interpretation—at least in the narrative portions of the Torah. The participants at the *hagigah* (celebration) enjoyed studying with Dr. Harris, who is a master teacher and has an indomitable sense of humor. It was the first time that representatives of all areas of MaToK had studied together. Writers and translators met with each other, along with teachers, directors of the program, administrators, and our Israeli counterpart from CET-Learning Systems in Israel. All agreed that the study time was even sweeter than the refreshments.

—Dr. Deborah Miller, MaToK project director



## The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project

The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project is currently working with its fourth cohort of Conservative, community, and Reform day schools to improve the teaching and learning of Tanakh in their schools. Eleven participating schools receive a yearlong professional-development program that helps Judaic Studies faculties promote standards-based Tanakh curriculum units and helps heads of Judaic Studies further their skills as instructional leaders. Over the course of the year, Judaic Studies heads will have participated in three Instructional Leadership Institutes. The first Instructional Leadership Institute was held at JTS from June 29–July 3, 2008, the second from February 1–3, 2009, and the third will take place June 29–July 3, 2009.

For more information on the Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project, contact Charlotte Abramson, project director, at [chabramson@jtsa.edu](mailto:chabramson@jtsa.edu) or (212) 280-6019.

Charlotte Abramson, project director of the Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project, spoke in January in San Francisco on the topic “The Jewish Day School Standards and Benchmarks Project: Realizing the Vision for Academic Excellence” at the annual conference of RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network.

## Faculty Notes



**Dr. Ofra A. Backenroth**, associate dean and adjunct assistant professor of Jewish Education, presented a paper titled “Breaking Myths, Building

Identities: Practitioner-Researcher Reflections on Running an Israel Seminar for Education Students” with Dr. Alex Sinclair and Roberta Bell-Kilgler at the fifth International Conference on Research in Jewish Education at the Mandel Leadership Institute in Jerusalem in January.



**Dr. Aryeh Davidson** and his doctoral seminar students are developing an organizational mapping and network analysis of leadership initiatives

within JTS.



**Dr. Shira D. Epstein**, assistant professor of Jewish Education, continues this winter as project director for The Davidson School’s Evaded Issues in

Jewish Education project. She is currently working on a book-length project related to her professional-development initiatives on gender-related issues. She ran her second New York City Marathon in November 2008.



**Dr. Jeffrey S. Kress**, chair of the Department of Jewish Education and assistant professor of Jewish Education, is the author of the following: (1) Kress, J. S.,

& Elias, M. J. (2008). Distancing in encompassing education settings: Lessons from Jewish education. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 29, 337–344; (2) Charme, S., Horowitz, B., Hyman, T., & Kress, J. S. (2008). Jewish identities in action: An exploration of models, metaphors, and methods. *Journal of Jewish Education*, 74, 115–143; (3) Kress, J. S., Cohen, S. M., & Davidson, A. (2007). Perceptions and roles of Conservative rabbis: Findings and implications related to identity and education. *Journal of Jewish Education*, 3, 191–208; (4) Ingall, C., and Kress, J. S. “Nurturing Jewish Values.” In *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*, edited by R. L. Goodman, P. A. Flexner, and L. D. Bloomberg, pp. 291–298. Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2008. In addition, Dr. Kress was part of a panel at the Network for Research in Jewish Education Conference in Cleveland in June 2008 on the topic, “We’ve Got the Data: Now What? Policy and Practice Implications of the Educators in Jewish Schools Study” with Davidson School alumna Kate O’Brien and others. He was also one of

the principal investigators on a study published earlier this year by the Jewish Education Service of North America titled “Educators in Jewish Schools Study.”



**Dr. Deborah Miller**, associate director of the Melton Research Center and adjunct assistant professor of Jewish Education, taught a session on “What’s New

in Conservative Education?” to teachers from the New Jersey region of the Jewish Educators’ Assembly at Adath Shalom in Morris Plains, New Jersey. Dr. Miller focused on connecting learners’ emotions with the underlying concepts in prayer.

### Frances Urman Facilitates “Giving Effective Feedback” Workshop



Frances Urman, project director of the Day School Leadership Training Institute (DSLTI) at The Davidson School, facilitated

a workshop titled “Giving Effective Feedback” at the Solomon Schechter Day School Association Conference in Boca Raton, Florida, in December 2008. Urman commented about the workshop: “One of the most important skills for any leader to master is how to give effective feedback to others. It is also one of the most difficult skills to apply consistently and well, and it is a core skill required of anyone engaged in the development of others. Workshop participants learned the Situation-Behavior-Impact model developed by the Center of Creative Leadership, one of the foremost leadership-training organizations. They also had opportunities to practice the technique in small groups.” In January, Urman facilitated a similar workshop at the annual leadership conference in San Francisco of RAVSAK: The Jewish Community Day School Network.



## Alumni Notes

**Rachel Ain** (MA '04) and her husband, Rabbi David Levy, had a baby boy (their second), Zachary Ain Levy, in May 2008.

**Talia Andron** (MA '08) is director of Havurah at the JCC in Manhattan. In the fall of 2008, she became engaged to Michael Kushnick, a JTS rabbinical student.

**Joshua Krakoff** (MA '00) moved to Tarrytown, New York, in February 2008 and took a new job at the JCC Rockland as chief operating officer in October 2008. He married Philippe Selo in September 2008.

**Aviva Lebson** (MA '97) is assistant principal and upper school director at B'nai Israel Congregation in Rockville, Maryland.

**Jennifer Newfeld** (MA '05) moved to St. Louis, Missouri, in June 2008, and became director of congregational learning at Congregation B'nai Amoona.

**Debbie Cohen Savage** (MA '03) is a teacher at the Paul Penna Downtown Jewish Day School in Toronto and also serves as Judaic Studies coordinator. She is married to Eli Savage, a fellow Jewish educator, and they have one son, Koby Lev, who is two-and-a-half years old.

### Yoni Stadlin Receives Grant To Start Jewish Summer Camp

**Yoni Stadlin**, a 2008 graduate of The Davidson School, has received a grant to start Camp Eco Eden, a Jewish overnight summer camp devoted to environmentalism, social justice, and spirituality from UJA-Federation of New York and the Foundation for Jewish Camp's Specialty Camp Incubator, which is funded by the Jim Joseph Foundation. Projected to open in the summer of 2010, Camp Eco Eden will be a nondenominational, nonprofit, coeducational camp in upstate New York for sixth through twelfth graders. Camp Eco Eden will be a "green" Jewish camp, offering healthy food, an organic farm, green building technologies, and goals of renewable energy and zero waste.

**Ivy Schrieber** (MA '06) Ivy and David Schreiber had a son, Brady Solomon Schreiber, in October 2008.

**Charlie Sherman** (MA '98) is the Jewish Studies principal at the Milwaukee Jewish Day School.

**Aliza Slosberg** (MA '07) is teaching second grade at the Solomon Schechter School of Manhattan. She is engaged to be married to Stuart Weinstock in August 2009.

**Karen Stein** (MA '98) had a baby boy, Avi Benjamin Monaco, in March 2008. In 2008, she celebrated ten years at the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism (USCJ), where she has worked since graduating from The Davidson School, and is assistant director of the Department of Youth Activities.

**Dayna Wald** (MA '07) and her husband moved to south Florida in the summer of 2008 and are living in Boca Raton. She is working at Hochberg Preparatory School in Miami as the Judaics teacher for grades four to seven.

**David Wolkin** (MA '07) is coordinator of elementary and family learning at Congregation Emanu-El in New York City as of August 2008.

### Davidson Alumna Wins Prestigious Covenant Award

**Susan Werk**, an alumna of The Davidson School, was honored with the prestigious Covenant Award in the fall of 2008 for her work as educational director at Congregation Agudath Israel in Caldwell, New Jersey. The Covenant Award is a significant honor in the world of Jewish education. Werk is also a Davidson Field Practitioner, serving as a mentor for future educators in The Davidson School.

According to a statement made by the Covenant Foundation, Congregation Agudath Israel is led by a three-person partnership composed of the rabbi, cantor, and Werk, "who have created a cohesive community with multilevel educational programming that incorporates congregants at all levels. She [Susan] has touched everyone from preschool to adult learners; from birthdays to hospice."

## Davidson Faculty and Alumni Contribute to New Book Titled *What We Now Know About Jewish Education*



The newly published book *What We Now Know About Jewish Education: Perspectives on Research for Practice* (Torah Aura Productions, 2008)

features a number of chapters written by faculty and alumni of The Davidson School. It was awarded the National Jewish Book Award in the Jewish Education and Identity category on March 5 at the Center for Jewish History.

Faculty authors include (*in bold type*):

- **Jeffrey S. Kress** and **Carol K. Ingall**: "Nurturing Jewish Values"
- **Ofra A. Backenroth**: "Incorporating the Arts in Jewish Education"
- Adina Ofek coauthored with Lifsa Schachter: "Hebrew Language Instruction"

Alumni authors include:

- Michael Ben-Avie: "A 'Who-ness' and a Wholeness: Optimizing the Learning and Development of Elementary Children"
- Evie Rotstein coauthored with Jo Kay: "Jewish Family Education"
- Lisa D. Grant coauthored with Diane Tickton Schuster: "Adult Jewish Learning"
- Nehemia Ichilov: "Supervision for Improving Teaching"
- Leah Strigler coauthored with Judah M. Cohen: "The Cultures of Jewish Education"
- Susan Wall coauthored with Sally Klein-Katz: "Jewish Educational Israel Experiences"

**William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education Faculty List**

**Dr. Barry W. Holtz**  
Dean,  
Theodore and Florence Baumritter  
Professor of Jewish Education

**Dr. Ofra A. Backenroth**  
Associate Dean,  
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish  
Education

**Dr. Aryeh Davidson**  
Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

**Dr. Shira D. Epstein**  
Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

**Dr. Michael B. Greenbaum**  
Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating  
Officer of JTS,  
Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

**Dr. Carol K. Ingall**  
Dr. Bernard Heller Professor of Jewish  
Education

**Dr. Jeffrey S. Kress**  
Assistant Professor of Jewish Education  
Chair, Department of Jewish Education

**Dr. Deborah U. Miller**  
Associate Director, Melton Research  
Center for Jewish Education,  
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Jewish  
Education

**Dr. Michelle Lynn-Sachs**  
Assistant Professor of Jewish Education

**Alumni, We Need Your Help!**

The Davidson School wants to continue to connect with you and act on our commitment to the environment by sending you this newsletter via email. Please send us your current email address by filling out the alumni update form at [jtsa.edu/DavidsonAlumniForm.xml](http://jtsa.edu/DavidsonAlumniForm.xml)

*Visions and Voices (continued from page 1)*

This year the trip was especially powerful and poignant. Operation Oferet Yetzuka, the war in Gaza, began while we were spending Shabbat in Dimona and ended as we were leaving Jerusalem to return to New York. Our students learned about Israelis' ability to compartmentalize their lives. We listened to the news on an hourly basis, watched Israeli television, and discussed the war with Jewish Israelis, Palestinians, and Israeli Arabs.



*Following are the impressions of three students who participated in the Visions and Voices of Israel seminar:*

"I am able to wholeheartedly say that this has been the most worthwhile Israel experience that I have been a part of. As a Jewish educator who works primarily with American youth, engaging with Israel in a meaningful way is often challenging, but this trip has provided us not only with new prisms through which to look at Israel, but also ideas for how to engage the students in our classrooms, summer camps, and youth groups."

**—Mara Berde**

"It has been an amazing experience, and I do not know if I can find the right adjectives to describe how grateful I am that I was given this opportunity. We were indeed exposed to different visions and heard many different voices. It will take a long time to process this tremendous amount of information. But I know that I have developed new relationships with Israel, and I am coming back a different person."

**—Sonia Levin**

"Though I had already studied and lived in Israel for an entire year as part of my first year in the H. L. Miller Cantorial School [at JTS], I honestly have to say that these past two-and-a-half weeks have been transformative for me in terms of my relationship to Israel and my thoughts about many of the issues that face Israel and Israeli society."

**—Mike Weis**

**JTS**

3080 Broadway  
New York, NY 10027-4649

Non-Profit Org  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
New York, NY  
Permit No. 9910