

IN·SITES



A COMMITMENT TO QUALITY ADULT JEWISH EDUCATION

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THE MELTON CENTRE FOR JEWISH EDUCATION • THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

MINI-SCHOOL MOMENTUM: 30 PERCENT GROWTH

Fifteen communities have joined the ranks of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School network this year, for an unprecedented growth rate of 30 percent. Roughly 6,000 students are now studying in 63 Mini-Schools in 60 communities worldwide.

This fall, new Mini-Schools opened in **Wilmington, Delaware; Detroit, Michigan; Omaha, Nebraska; New York City and Rockland County, New York; Raleigh, North Carolina; Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee; Austin, Texas; Newport News and Norfolk/Virginia Beach, Virginia; and Toronto, Ontario in Canada.** In addition, three satellite Mini-Schools have opened in **Eau Claire, Wisconsin** (satellite of **St. Paul, Minnesota**); **Springfield, Illinois** (satellite of **St. Louis, Missouri**); and **Wichita, Kansas** (satellite of **Overland Park, Kansas**).

The range of communities is diverse, both geographically and demographically – from major Jewish population centers, such as downtown Manhattan and Toronto, to smaller enclaves, like Omaha. The sponsoring agencies are varied as well, but there is a definite trend towards consortia of community organizations and synagogues pooling resources to bring quality Jewish adult education to their constituencies.

“**The Downtown Kehillah**,” which has brought the Mini-School to New York City, is one such consortium. Despite the great number of Jews and Jewish institutions in downtown Manhattan, there was no unified

effort at developing a communal approach to Jewish learning and culture. In order to fill this void, the **Sol Goldman YM-YWHA** of the **Educational Alliance** initiated a dialogue with synagogues of all denominations in the community and eventually formed “**The Downtown Kehillah**” – a consortium of 10 synagogues and the Goldman Y. With assistance from **UJA-Federation of New York**, this consortium has jump-started a variety of communal activities and events and is seen as a powerful force in transforming the face of Jewish culture in the neighborhood.

“**THE MINI-SCHOOL OFFERS... A SOPHISTICATED AND WELCOMING JEWISH EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE... IN THE WARM ENVIRONMENT OF A UNIFIED COMMUNITY.**”

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On the occasion of **Florence Melton's** 90th birthday, *InSites* interviewed the woman behind today's revolution in Jewish adult learning.

IS: Looking back, to what do you owe your success?

FM: As a child, my family were poor immigrants and very early on I learned to take responsibility as a fact of everyday life. It was as natural as breathing. I was confronted at an early age with challenges. For example, I had to drop out of high school months before graduation to help my family financially. My options were either to accept it as a challenge

FLORENCE MELTON – 90 YEARS YOUNG

or to view it as a defeat. I learned quickly not to take this necessity as the end of the road. Accepting challenge is what I do.

When the Mini-School proposal, which I wrote in 1980, was turned down by professional Jewish education agencies in the United States, I didn't give up. I knew there was a crying need.

The events that led to the success of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School were brought about by quirks of fate. Though my husband, **Sam Melton** (z"l), was not convinced that the Mini-School would work, he nevertheless took me to the **Hebrew University's Melton Centre** in Jerusalem and introduced me to **Seymour Fox**, who headed the Centre at that time. After lengthy consideration, and a substantial grant, a beginning was made. The Hebrew University is presently, and has always been, a strong factor in the success of the Mini-School, adding status and recognition of quality.

IS: What do you see as the Mini-School's strong points, today?

It is the first school in Jewish adult education specifically designed for any and all Jews, regardless of level of educational background or denominational affiliation. It is totally trans-denominational. This was a new concept at that time.

Secondly, the school is being led by highly qualified professionals who are in love with what they do. The international team is led by **Dr. Yonatan Mirvis**, of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Institute at the Hebrew University. The North American team is led by **Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz** and her dedicated associates and staff. I am a member of the team. I don't do a lot of the work, but I do get a lot of the credit. The FMAMS Institute has a strong support lay board led by my son **Gordon Zacks** as chair, **Donald Katz** as vice-chair and **Harvey Krueger** as secretary. Our future is protected by these great people.

We have a well-planned system of quality control on every level of the Mini-

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FROM THE
INTERNATIONAL
DIRECTOR



UNIVERSAL AND UNIQUE

At this time of year, we find ourselves suspended between two festivals – Sukkot and Chanukah. These two celebrations are similar, yet radically different. Both last for eight days, with each day building on the previous. Yet, seen together, they embody the complexity of our identity.

In the days of the Temple, we sacrificed 70 sacrifices during Sukkot. These offerings symbolized the 70 nations of the world, who we pray, in the Messianic era, will unite in a spirit of monotheism and worship together in Jerusalem. This dream of universalism expresses a feeling of unity with all the nations of the world.

Chanukah, on the other hand, is a celebration of the uniqueness of the Jewish people. This festival marks our struggle to maintain our singular identity among the nations of the world, having defeated the Hellenists and restored Jewish ritual to Jerusalem.

It was during the Festival of Sukkot that the United States went to war against terrorism. Around the world, we felt solidarity with those who uphold respect for human life as a sacred principle. It was on Sukkot that we could imagine the Messianic era, when the nations of the world will be united in universal brotherhood.

As we move towards Chanukah, our focus shifts towards the aspects of our identity that set the Jewish people apart. From this perspective, our studies at the Mini-School should help us find meaning within our tradition and understand the core values of the Jewish people.

Viewed together, these two festivals represent the tension that we live with as Jews – our universal connection with the brotherhood of man and

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MINI-SCHOOL MOMENTUM – CONTINUED FROM P.1

“When looking for a sophisticated and magnetic Jewish learning program, Melton was just the right fit,” says **Beth Mann**, assistant executive director for JCC Services of the Educational Alliance.

The New York Mini-School opened on October 24 with three sections totaling more than 50 students, according to Mini-School Director **Jennifer Mohl**.

“We believe that the Mini-School will offer our community a sophisticated and welcoming Jewish educational experience, taught by brilliant teachers, fostered in the warm environment of a unified community, and with the grand credentials of the **Hebrew University** and the years of experience of its directors and curriculum,” says Beth. “We think that an opportunity like this – a world-class program offered by a consortium that crosses denominational boundaries and brings the community together – will have a huge impact on this community, and will also serve as a model for others.”

On the other end of the demographic spectrum lies Omaha, Nebraska, with a Jewish population of 5,700. According to Mini-School Director **Susan Paley**, 85 students began their Melton studies on October 22 – quite a high turnout.

“The Mini-School is redefining the way we perceive Jewish education,” says **Jan Perelman**, executive director of the **Jewish Federation of Omaha**.

“Melton’s excellent reputation has created a sensation in Omaha. I predict that our lay leadership who complete the course will become more effective in their decision making, which in turn will level the playing field for everyone in our Jewish community.”

Another trend gaining momentum this year is the opening of satellite Mini-Schools. Satellite schools are Mini-Schools sponsored by a large community whose constituency reaches beyond the greater city’s boundaries to communities of fewer than 2,000 Jews. This system brings quality Jewish adult education to outlying areas that don’t have the resources to do it on their own.

Under the leadership of Mini-School Director **Maggie Miller**, the **Denver** Mini-School pioneered the satellite concept last year by opening schools in **Ft. Collins, Evergreen** and **Boulder, Colorado**.

Following this success, three veteran Mini-School communities opened satellite schools this year, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. In Eau Claire, the Mini-School is sponsored by the **St. Paul Jewish Community Center**, under the guidance of St. Paul Mini-School Director **Sheryl Gross** and held at **Temple Shalom**. “Everyone in our *shul* (all 35 families) knows about the course. In fact, a third of them attend, which is probably a record of some sort,” says Mini-School Administrator **Rabbi Yosi Gordon**. “They love the classes.”

“I think we are seeing the results of all the efforts put into local Renaissance,” says Associate North American Director **Jane Sherwin Shapiro**. “While the buzzwords change, the reality exists that places which never thought they had capacity for adult learning are finding that they do. There are wonderful, knowledgeable people out in the field.”

90 YEARS YOUNG – CONTINUED FROM P.1

School, sophisticated materials, a committed professional team and strong lay leadership – altogether this comprises a unique formula for success.

At this point in time, the world is in an unclear position vis-à-vis how we’re going to find peace. Mini-School students find some solace in coming together to learn about our history, our past and our traditions, discovering who we are, why we are here and what’s great about being Jewish.

IS: What is your vision for the future of the Mini-School?

Because the Mini-School fortunately attracts the most highly qualified faculty and site directors who protect our quality, we are constantly being approached to grow, adding more sites to our present 63 in North America, the United Kingdom and Australia. My vision, therefore, is that in 10 years from now there will be 100,000 graduates of the Mini-School in countries around the world, who will become life-long learners and doers.

To this end, we are launching the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School Endowment Fund Campaign at a gala celebration of my 90th birthday on December 16 in Boca Raton,

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Florida. I look forward to sharing this celebration with my Mini-School graduates everywhere. ♦

INSTITUTE NEWS

CONFERENCE SPOTLIGHT

FMAMS faculty and staff are frequently called on to share their expertise in the growing field of Jewish adult education. Below is a partial list of our participation in recent conferences and meetings.

Following the success of last year's *Beit Midrash*, FMAMS staff and faculty will be teaching again at the **United Jewish Communities General Assembly** in November in Washington, DC. North American Director **Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz**, Associate North American Director **Jane Sherwin Shapiro** and Director of Faculty Development **Rabbi Michael Balinsky** will teach sessions exploring how our tradition guides us in our responses to September 11. A major theme of this year's GA is adult Jewish learning and International Director **Dr. Yonatan Mirvis** will participate in a panel session on "Universal Jewish Literacy."

In May, 35 alumni of the **Mandel Foundation's Teacher Educator Institute** [TEI] met to exchange innovative approaches to the professional development of teachers in Jewish schools. Educators affiliated with the Mini-School at the TEI assembly were (in photo below, from top left): **Jane Sherwin Shapiro**; Milwaukee Mini-School faculty member **Sherry H. Blumberg**; **Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz**; Chicago Mini-School Director **Yaffa Berman**; Rochester Mini-School faculty member and Director of Jewish Education Services **Jan Katz**; FMAMS Director of Teacher Education **Judy Mars Kupchan**; St. Paul Mini-School faculty member **Sara Lynn**



Newberger; and Assistant Executive Vice President of Jewish Education of the Greater Seattle Jewish Federation **Carol Oseran Starin**.

Many Mini-School faculty, staff and directors participated in the 26th Annual **Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE)** held this August at **Colorado State University** in Fort Collins. **Rabbi Michael Balinsky** taught two sessions and hosted a dinner for Mini-School directors and faculty. FMAMS faculty who taught included **Nina Rubin** of Ft. Collins, Colorado; **Rabbi Eliot Baskin** of Evergreen, Colorado; and **Peta Pellach** of Sydney, Australia.

At the June meeting of the **Alliance for Adult Jewish Learning** in Toronto, **Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz** led a session on "Focus on the Adult Learner" together with **Meredith Woocher**, one of the researchers conducting an impact study of the Mini-School. **Betsy and Jane Sherwin Shapiro** are members of the AAJL Board of Directors. ♦

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENTS

FACE LIFT – PHASE I

After many years of focusing on content, the FMAMS curriculum team has decided to grapple with form. The Student Readers and Faculty Guides are undergoing a face-lift.

In the new design, special emphasis has been placed on readability and clarity. Professional editors have been brought in to ensure consistency of style and format.

"In response to comments from faculty and students, we have made a commitment to create a more attractive and user friendly product," says FMAMS Director of Curriculum Development **Dafna Siegman**. "Now that we have completed the Second Generation curriculum revision, we can take care of the finer details of design and packaging."

This is the first stage in an evolving improvement of the curriculum's style and form. This fall, the Year I courses – the *Purposes of Jewish Living* and the *Rhythms of Jewish Living* – made their makeover debuts. The Year II courses – the *Ethics of Jewish Living* and the *Dramas of Jewish Living Throughout the Ages* – are scheduled for re-release in 2002. ♦

MEET OUR STAFF



MELTONIZED FOR LIFE

Dr. Betsy Dolgin Katz is driven by a passion for teaching and learning. Although she certainly has a lot on her plate as North American director of the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School, Betsy always makes time not just to teach, but also to study. This, in turn, infuses her work with the Mini-School.

"Teaching gives me motivation and guidance for my own learning," says Betsy. "That's a constant part of my life. I'm a non-stop learner."

That passion started her on the path of adult Jewish education and has driven her to become a leading expert in this burgeoning field. She is one of the few who saw a burning need for adults to learn more about Judaism, jumped in to fill the void and helped pioneer not only the Mini-School, but the entire field of adult Jewish learning.

Betsy, who holds an EdD in Curriculum and Instruction from the **University of Cincinnati**, says that her first experience in adult Jewish learning was a class she initiated called "JET: Jewish Effectiveness Training or How to Be a Jewish Mother." As a young mother with children, she became the neighborhood expert on matters of Judaism as many of her neighbors and peers turned to her with their questions. "These women wanted to bring Judaism into their homes and they used me as a resource," recalls Betsy. "I sensed there was a need and felt like I could contribute something."

Betsy, who recently completed a four-year term as chairman of the **Alliance for Adult Jewish Learning**, has been with the Mini-School since the very beginning, as a teacher and coordinator of the Mini-School in Buffalo Grove, Illinois – one of the first three pilot sites in

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POINTS OF (EN)LIGHT(ENMENT)

BY HAIM ARONOVITZ

At the FMAMS Institute, we approached the summer of 2001 with a sense of trepidation imbued by the events of the past year: ongoing violence and lack of safety in many parts of Israel. Plans for a bumper summer of eight seminars were whittled down to three small groups with a total of 41 participants... but what outstanding groups they turned out to be.

Built around cores of teacher enrichment programs in **Seattle, Washington; Richmond, Virginia; Overland Park, Kansas** and **Chicago, Illinois**, the groups also included graduates from **St. Louis, Missouri; Denver, Colorado; Louisville, Kentucky** and **Bergen County, New Jersey**, thanks to the efforts of these Mini-School directors: **Stacy Lawson, Susan Lubman-Edwards, Amy Katz, Judy Kupchan, Esther Zimand, Maggie Miller, Sam Gordon** and **Renah Rabinowitz**.

Each seminar seemed to take on an intensity of learning, probably enhanced by a sense of purpose and identification with Israel at a troubled hour. Encounters with “people on the street” were at once laden with tension and extremely rewarding. Critical events in ancient times took on new urgency, while challenges of the present and future were examined soberly. Each person, whether first-timer or seasoned Israel traveler, reflected on the extent of their new perspectives and insights gained throughout the seminar.

Although, naturally, security issues had been uppermost in everyone’s minds, once participants arrived in Israel, many said they felt much safer than expected. In planning the

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Israel Seminar, we always take into account the safety of our participants. This year we placed particular emphasis on security and adapted the schedule as needed to address these concerns.

Now is the time to plan for the coming year. If your community is not planning an Israel Seminar for graduates, you can join up with one of our national seminars, scheduled for June 24 – July 4 and July 22 – August 1. For all details and queries, contact me at aronovitz@fmams.org.il and I will gladly help you find the appropriate seminar.

In the wake of the tragedies of September and the economic downturn, many are asking whether they can afford to undertake an Israel Seminar. I would turn the question around: can Mini-

School graduates afford *not* to take part in an Israel Seminar?

Ask last summer’s participants: they will all tell you, NO!

FMAMS Institute Deputy Director Haim Aronovitz coordinates the Israel Seminars for Mini-School graduates.

ON-SITES

COPING WITH CRISIS

In many of our Mini-Schools, the opening of classes coincided with the tragic terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. FMAMS Director of Faculty Development **Rabbi Michael Balinsky** and Curriculum Consultant **Rabbi Morey Schwartz** e-mailed texts to help Mini-School faculty find ways to address these difficult issues in class. Some Mini-School teachers used these texts, while others presented their own materials. Either way, students found a Jewish perspective to coping with this crisis through study. Below are reports from a few of our schools of how they handled the aftermath of September 11.

From **Judy Asuleen** of **Broward County, Florida**: “We have implemented

something new this year. During the year, we will hold *Batei Midrash* for the holidays, in which all students are invited to learn together at roundtables and examine a text or pertinent information relating to the holiday. The first *Beit Midrash* was scheduled for September 12, and we had originally planned to discuss *teshuvah, tefilah* and *tzedakah* as they relate to Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur. But in light of our nation’s tragic events, we changed that. We distributed materials that highlight the Jewish response to tragedy and began with a prayer for our country, after which the group read responsively. Each table then discussed the printout as well as their own reactions to the terrorist attacks. The students felt that it was a welcome relief to be able to share their feelings with their peers.”

From **Marion Hamermesh** of **Wilmington, Delaware**: “The new Delaware Mini-School met for its second session on the morning of September 12. I took five minutes at the beginning of class to process with the students. I told them that I had heard that some of them had a difficult time even getting out of bed to be there, but that I was glad they all had done so. It was the right thing to do under the circumstances. And then I told them the story of Rabbi Akiba’s student who questioned the wisdom of studying Torah under the noses of the Romans. Akiba tells his student about fish swimming madly to avoid being caught by the net. A wily fox suggests that they come up on shore away from the net. The fish understand that while the net presents a danger, to go up on dry land would surely kill them. And so it is with Torah study for Akiba under Rome and for us today. I gave my students permission to be there, in a

place that for many of them is reserved as time for themselves. I wanted them to know that their personal pursuit of learning has communal value.”

From **Eve Ben-Ora** of **Houston, TX**: “Our Tuesday evening classes were set to begin on September 11. At first, all of the classes gathered in one room. We talked about what it meant to be together as a community when

we feel most vulnerable. We discussed how Judaism teaches us that coming together is the best way to deal with adversity, sadness and pain, as well as joy and celebration. We

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FROM THE INTERNATIONAL DIRECTOR – CONTINUED FROM P.2

our strong desire to maintain our individuality as a people. We live this paradigm day by day as we balance these two identities.

May this year be a victorious one both in our struggle to uphold the common sanctity of human life and in our aspirations to maintain our unique Jewish identity.

Dr. Yonatan Mirvis

read together a special prayer that began circulating on the internet almost immediately following the terrorist attacks and then proceeded to class. After class, many of those who had thought to stay home, but changed their minds and came anyway, expressed the appreciation for classes convening and said that the gathering had helped them move out of their shock.”

From **Peta Pellach** of **Sydney, Australia**: “Our final class before the *chagim* was held September 11, just 12 hours before the tragedy in New York and Washington. The next time we met was one month later. We began by continuing our study of the *Ethics* course. About 20 minutes into the lesson, I introduced the issue of how the events of September 11 affected our attitudes. It was something I had planned to do and it fitted with the sources. What I was not prepared for was the outpouring of emotion that followed. A number of people had been waiting to share their deepest concerns and most burgeoning questions with their Melton class. This was the safe environment in which they

could verbalize their fears and despair, unleash their anger and questions, grapple with moral dilemmas and seek explanations of the new reality. After class, many students expressed their gratitude that Melton created such a sense of community and such a ‘safe’ forum for exploring our deepest issues.” ♦

SUMMER SCHOOL – JUST CAN'T STAY AWAY

In mid-July, the **Seattle, Washington** Mini-School hosted “A Night of Melton and More: Learning for the Entire Community.” Melton educator **Dr. Raphael Zarum**, who assists with curriculum development and teacher training for FMAMS in the UK, was joined by three local faculty members – **Rabbi Dov Gartenberg**, **Rivy Poupko Kletenik** and **Rabbi Laurie Rice** – who led classes for more than 90 participants. “The popularity of the event has led to the discussion of hosting other one night programs to target different

populations such as seniors, young adults and unaffiliated Jews,” says Mini-School Director **Stacy Lawson**.

Summer School in **Houston** included a course taught by veteran Mini-School faculty member **Dr. Larry Laufman**. The course was open to the community and enabled current Mini-School students to continue their studies over the summer. “Our students experience Melton withdrawal when the regular sessions are on summer break,” says Mini-School Director **Rabbi Eve Ben-Ora**. “The summer course helps lessen the blow.”

Orly Lewis, Mini-School director in **Richmond, Virginia**, says that students met before Tisha B’Av for a lecture by Mini-School faculty member **Rabbi Zvi Ron** on “The Nine Days and Tisha B’Av.”

St. Louis, Missouri Director **Esther Zimand** taught a series of “Four Wednesdays in June” for Mini-School students and alumni. Three of the classes were extensions of Mini-School courses, giving students the opportunity to ask questions not covered in

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MEET OUR STAFF – CONTINUED FROM P.3

1986. But her involvement with the Melton family and Jewish education started long before that.

In college, while training to teach at the Conservative movement’s Camp Ramah in Wisconsin, she studied the Melton Bible method – developed at the **Jewish Theological Seminary’s Melton Research Center for Jewish Education**. She later taught at the pilot site of the Melton Research Center’s Bible curriculum, **Tifereth Israel Congregation** in Columbus, Ohio. While working as director of Reform Education and Adult Learning at the **Chicago Board of Jewish Education**, she was sent to the **Hebrew University’s Melton Centre for Jewish Education** for three summer training sessions. Over those summers, she helped write a curriculum on “Israel: A Course of Study” and then led training sessions for teachers in the United States. Therefore, when asked to join the faculty of the brand new Florence Melton Adult Mini-School, she just had to say “yes.”

“I’ve been Meltonized throughout my life,” says Betsy. “The contribution that Sam (z”l) and Florence Melton have made to Jewish education has touched my professional life in very significant ways.”

And through her professional life, she has gone on to touch the lives of thousands.

“One of the Mini-School’s greatest achievements is that 17,000 adult Jews have studied Judaism seriously over two years,” says Betsy, who became the Mini-School’s first North American director in 1989. “This is a tremendous accomplishment.”

She also cites the Mini-School’s success on another level. “We’ve been able to create a model of adult Jewish learning with qualities that no other program has: it fits into a tremendous number of settings – big cities, small cities, JCCs, Federations, synagogues;

it strengthens institutions and communities; it is infinitely renewable, growing and changing as communities change and as we learn more about the field; it meets the needs of a growing range of Jews – young and old, men and women, involved and unaffiliated; and it links Israel and the Diaspora through a partnership in very important ways. It is exhilarating to be part of a network that is so innovative and so strong. And I am proud to have found a team of staff people who have knowledge, commitment and enthusiasm for what we do.”

According to Betsy, the greatest challenge of her work is maintaining the quality of the Mini-School as it grows. For her, this boils down to nurturing personal relationships with Mini-School directors and faculty members, Federation directors and heads of local agencies. This involves frequent site visits and constant support by phone and e-mail. “The personal connection between our staff and the field has given the Mini-School a lot of its strength,” she says.

Betsy foresees that the Mini-School will continue to grow in several directions: continuing to improve the core program, adapting it to meet the needs of specific groups and finding ways to bring the Mini-School to smaller communities. The latter involves identifying the appropriate technology that will enable distance learning without sacrificing the teacher-student and student-student interaction that characterizes the Mini-School.

Another priority for Betsy is to increase the number of alumni and faculty who attend FMAMS Israel Seminars. “Strengthening our students’ and teachers’ connection with Israel has never been more important than today,” she says.

To make the future happen, Betsy says that the greatest challenge is finding the funding to do all of these things.

One thing about the future is certain – if it is up to Betsy, you’ll find her in a classroom.

“Teaching is the heart of what I do.” ♦

ON-SITES – CONTINUED FROM P.5

class due to time constraints. The topics were “Prayer and Siddur,” “Shabbat,” “The Courage of Faith” and “Israel – Current Situation.”

The Atlanta, Georgia Mini-School held “Camp Melton,” offering five courses taught by Mini-School faculty **Debbie Goldstein**, **Dr. Steve Chervin** and **Rabbi Joshua Lesser**, plus a beginning Hebrew class. Organized by Mini-School Director **Holli Levinson**, Camp Melton was open to all adult learners. ♦

PEOPLE AND PLACES

As a result of his studies at the Houston Mini-School, **Dr. Jerome Kosoy**, has decided to become trained as a *mohel*. He is currently studying with the retired rabbi of his synagogue to learn the laws of ritual circumcision. Inspired by the Mini-School, he plans to use his knowledge and skills to give something valuable back to his community.

Miami Mini-School faculty member **Dr. Henry (Hillel) Abramson** recently published a book entitled “A Prayer for the Government” with Harvard University Press. Hillel teaches *Rhythms* and *Ethics* at the Miami Beach and North Dade campuses. ♦

ALUMNI PROFILE

BEYOND THE IVORY TOWER

Leonard Cole is a man of many hats – academia, public policy, Jewish leadership – just to name a few. As a leader in the Jewish world, he is highly involved – currently serving as chairman of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs and a member of the United Jewish Communities’ Israel and Overseas Pillar, among other roles. As a recognized expert in biological and chemical warfare policy, he is highly in demand; when we called him at home on October 8, he quickly agreed to make time for *InSites* in between television news interviews.

Over the last two years, Leonard added Jewish student to that list – as a learner in the Bergen County, New Jersey, Mini-School.

For Leonard, the Mini-School was one more step in a long road of ever-increasing Jewish awareness and involvement. It began with his first visit to Israel in 1976 – a life changing event that set off a range of activities. “I became more sensitive to my own



Leonard Cole
Bergen County

identity as a Jew and to my connection with Jews everywhere,” says Leonard.

This led him to get seriously involved in the Jewish community, serving in a broad range of leadership positions both locally and nationally – including vice president of the **UJA Federation of Bergen County** and member of the Oversight and Steering Committee of the **Jewish Agency for Israel**. It also led him, 23 years later, to study in the Mini-School.

Like many students, Leonard came to the Mini-School seeking to fill the gaps in his Jewish knowledge. His formal Jewish education ended with his Bar Mitzvah, 55 years ago. An adjunct professor of political science at **Rutgers University** and a fellow of the **Phi Beta Kappa Society**, Leonard has high intellectual standards – one of the reasons he chose the Mini-School. But he came away with much more than an academic survey of Jewish history and philosophy.

“The Mini-School has broadened the base of knowledge of who I am and where I came from,” says Leonard, age 68. “Learning enhances one’s breadth and depth as a human being.”

Despite his impressive academic credentials – a DDS from the **University of Pennsylvania**, a BA from the **University of California at Berkeley**, and an MA and PhD in political science from **Columbia University** – Leonard is hardly an ivory tower scholar. In all of his endeavors, study and community go hand-in-hand. In 1988 he received a citation from the **New Jersey State Senate** for his academic accomplishments and community service.

Therefore, he truly appreciated the sense of a learning community fostered by the Mini-School. “Part of the benefit of Melton wasn’t just the learning, but also being with 25 or so others for the common purpose of Jewish learning,” he says.

“I’m a great believer in the means being just as important, if not more so, than the ends. We may not have clear-cut answers, but hearing each other is very important, whether in the classroom or in discussions on bio-terrorism.”

Actually, it seems that Leonard may indeed have many of the answers when it comes to areas like bio-terrorism, science and social policy. He has written five books, including *Blacks in Power: A Comparative Study of Black and White Elected Officials* and *The Eleventh Plague: The Politics of Biological and Chemical Warfare*. His writings have also appeared in many professional journals and general publications, including *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*,

Los Angeles Times, *The Christian Science Monitor*, *The Nation* and *Scientific American*.

For Leonard, another element that factored into his Mini-School experience was the faculty. “I was very much impressed by the teachers and scholars who offered the course,” he says. They included **Rabbi Geoffrey Haber**, **Rabbi Lawrence Troster**, and **Eve Wimpfheimer**.

Achievement and involvement run in the family. Leonard’s wife, Ruth, is a past national president of Hadassah. “Her activities long predated mine,” he says. “She has been a big influence on me.”

Through his life work and dedication, Leonard carries that influence and his extensive expertise to thousands of others, beyond the ivory tower of academia. ♦

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MEET THE BOARD

LEADERSHIP INVOLVES LEARNING

For **Nancy and Norman Lipoff**, joining the FMAMS Institute Board of Directors was a natural choice, following a life-long pattern of volunteer leadership in a myriad of roles too vast to name. When something is important to them, they get involved and pick up the reins.

This was true from the minute the Mini-School opened in **Miami, Florida** under the directorship of **Rabbi Efrat Zarren-Zohar**. The Lipoffs were among the first to enroll. “We have always believed that leadership involves learning,” says Norman, a past president of the **Greater Miami Jewish Federation** who now chairs the Federation’s **Foundation for Jewish Renewal**. Norman was national chairman of the **United Israel Appeal** and has sat on the Board of Governors and Executive of the **Jewish Agency for Israel**. “Studying and action go together well. The Mini-School has enabled us to do the learning part with a structured and well-defined curriculum.”

Norman now serves on a task force of the **Central Agency for Jewish Education**, which sponsors the Miami Mini-School. For his “day job” he specializes in tax law as a partner in the law firm of **Greenberg Traurig**.

“Jewish education has been close to me all of my life,” says Nancy, a past chair of the **Foundation for Jewish Philanthropies**, which endowed the Miami Mini-School. Among the many hats she has worn as a professional volunteer are past national chair of the Women’s Division of the Council of Jewish Federations, president of the Women’s Division of the Miami Federation and vice-president of the Miami Federation.

Now Nancy brings her expertise in endowments to benefit the broader Mini-School network. “Endowments allow individuals to choose how and what they want to do with their dollars both before and after they’re gone,” she says. “The Mini-School needs to look at endowments as another potential source of funding.”

IS: What is your vision for the future of the Mini-School?

Nancy: The Mini-School should expand as much as possible, while maintaining its integrity. The strength of the Mini-School comes from the high quality of the teachers, the classroom atmosphere and the learning materials. We need to reach out, bringing the Mini-School to more people, but without compromising its excellence.

Norman: We need to expand the geographic reach and increase the offerings in terms of types of classes and programs, while maintaining, and even raising, the quality of



Norman and Nancy Lipoff

this already outstanding adult Jewish education program.

IS: What do you see as the greatest challenge facing the Mini-School today?

Norman: I see two challenges – finding sufficient financial resources to achieve the vision; and being able to recruit the necessary teaching talent.

Nancy: The lack of Jewish educators is a major problem in our country. We have been at fault for not paying educators what they deserve. Because of this, it requires extreme dedication to teach. At the same time, there is a growing search for roots, for spirituality, for a connection with something bigger than ourselves,

especially among young people. The Mini-School is helping to meet this need, so we must find the resources to continue its growth.

The Lipoffs live in Coconut Grove, Florida, close to their two daughters and four grandchildren. They provide a shining example of how leaders can put their learning to work in ways that benefit the entire Jewish community. ◆

DIRECTOR PROFILE

IGNITING THE SPARK

Debby Malissa likes to aim high. She wants to ignite the spark of Jewish education for as many people as possible. And as director of the **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania** Mini-School, she does just that.

“My main goal,” she says, “is to encourage ongoing adult Jewish learning, whether it

be through teacher training programs or through the creation of stimulating opportunities for personal enrichment.”

Directing the Mini-School is one of the high points in a career devoted to education: “It has been an opportunity to continue working in the Jewish community,” she says of her decision to help establish the Philadelphia Mini-School in 1998.

Today, under Debby’s leadership, the Mini-School is a thriving center with 125 students and 50 graduates. Classes are held both after work and in the morning to accommodate participants’ schedules.

“I am delighted at the growing number of Philadelphians who are part of the Melton family,” says Debby. “When I attend a Jewish event – services, a private party or something sponsored by a community organization – and I look around the room and see how many ‘Meltonians’ there are, either current students or graduates, I’m proud of what we’ve achieved in a relatively short time.”

One of Debby’s greatest joys at the Mini-School is “subbing for teachers and relating to the students on a different level from ‘just an administrator.’” The most rewarding mo-



Debby Malissa with Florence Melton at the Philadelphi Mini-School graduation

ments are when “light bulbs go off during class” as participants make connections between what they are learning and their lives outside of the classroom.

Debby holds herself to the highest professional standards, a fact that her colleagues have been quick to recognize and applaud. At the FMAMS Directors Conference last January, her peers elected her to the Directors Advisory Board. She says that the support she receives from the Mini-School network is a key factor to her success. “I love the warmth and collegiality of my fellow Melton directors and all the Mini-School staff,” she says. “It’s a very nurturing environment in which to produce something we all believe in.”

Driven by her own love of learning,
Continued on p.8

“WE NEED TO REACH OUT, BRINGING THE MINI-SCHOOL TO MORE PEOPLE, BUT WITHOUT COMPROMISING ITS EXCELLENCE.”

DIRECTOR PROFILE – CONTINUED FROM P.7

Debby is the coordinator of Adult Jewish Studies at **Gratz College**, sponsor of the Philadelphia Mini-School. In addition to her position as Mini-School director, she is responsible for the Gratz Around the World Travel Seminars. She also sits on the steering committee of the **Alliance for Adult Jewish Learning**.

Debby began her career as a speech therapist and earned an MA in Educational Linguistics at the **University of Pennsylvania**. She followed that with another MA, this time in Jewish Studies, from Gratz College. Along the way she has also taught English as a second language and coordinated Israel education for the **Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education**.

Married for 27 years to a “captain of industry” who recently changed professions to become a “struggling actor,” she has two adult children, both of whom have lived and studied in Israel. A committed and active member of her Jewish community, Debby has served as educational consultant, program developer and moderator to the **North American Women’s Division of Israel Bonds**.

Debby’s vision for the future of the Phila-

delphia Mini-School mirrors the FMAMS Institute’s goal of stable expansion. “I want to have even, sustainable growth in the school, with an assured financial future,” she says.

Judging by her success to date, she seems well on her way to reaching that goal. ♦

NEWS FROM THE MELTON CENTRE

EQUIPPING EDUCATORS

As the 2001-2002 academic year opens at the **Hebrew University**, more than 120 students from around the world have come to Jerusalem to study towards graduate degrees at the University’s **Melton Centre for Jewish Education**. “The challenges facing educators who attempt to transmit the ideals of religious and ethnic particularism while remaining firmly committed to modern democratic ideals is daunting indeed,” says Melton Centre Director **Dr. Marc Hirshman**. “We are proud that the Centre is investing its finest minds and talents to illuminate these difficult educational issues.”

Among visiting lecturers at the Melton Centre this year are **Prof. Ray McDermott** of **Stanford University**, who will present a series of lectures in December; and **Prof.**

Philip Wexner, former dean of the School of Education of the **University of Rochester** and editor of *Sociology and Education*, who will be teaching in the doctoral program.

The Melton Centre’s **Senior Educators Program** opened in October with 18 participants from North and South America, England, Poland and South Africa, and with the promise of an expanded and particularly rich curriculum of classroom studies and field trips. Information about the program may be found on the Melton Centre’s website at www.sites.huji.ac.il/melton. ♦

ON THE DRAWING BOARD

PRIMING PRE-SCHOOL PARENTS

The **AVI CHAI Foundation** has provided the FMAMS North American Office with a three-year grant to embark on an innovative new pilot project – the Florence Melton Parent Education Program. The AVI CHAI Foundation, which has made increased day school enrollment its top priority, believes that a high quality adult learning experience will encourage parents of young children to enroll their children in day schools. Out of the 10 Mini-Schools that applied to participate in the pilot, **Portland, Oregon;**

St. Louis, Missouri; and **South Palm Beach County, Florida** were selected. Their directors – **Eliana Temkin, Esther Zimand** and **Mimi Seltzer** – attended a design meeting at the FMAMS North American office in October to define the parameters of the project.

The FMAMS North American staff have begun adapting the four Mini-School courses, taking into consideration the needs and interest of parents of young children, best practices in successful programs around the country, and their experience with this group of students in the core FMAMS classes. There will be more of an emphasis on the how to’s of Judaism as well as opportunities to discuss ways to communicate the joy and excitement of Judaism to children. ♦

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