

CLAL UPDATE - Spring 2005



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CLAL - The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

- ❖ Stimulates volunteer, professional and rabbinic leadership to build responsive Jewish communities across North America.
- ❖ Helps individuals to imagine new Jewish possibilities.
- ❖ Promotes inclusive Jewish communities in which all voices are heard.
- ❖ Convenes interdisciplinary seminars and conversations that explore the Jewish and American futures.
- ❖ Enhances Jewish participation in civic and spiritual life in North America.

Dear Friends,

Creating an informed, engaged and dynamic Jewish life—that is CLAL’s mission. As a leader of religious pluralism for 30 years, CLAL has built a solid reputation for creating innovative programs, leadership training, community building, and vibrant Jewish life that is spiritually engaged with the intellectual and ethical challenges of our world. Through its faculty, representing rabbis and scholars from a wide range of streams and disciplines, CLAL helps people on their own Jewish journeys while linking Jewish wisdom to the challenges of contemporary American life.

To accomplish this, CLAL’s approach is two-fold. The first, “Building Community and Leadership,” encompasses our more traditional work, providing a wide range of compelling classes, seminars, lectures, tools, and resources to Jewish communities, institutions, individuals and families. Constantly updated to address new needs, these core efforts cross boundaries within Jewish life and help CLAL to nurture a new generation of leaders, connecting Jewish thought with civic and spiritual concerns.

The second, “Taking Jewish Public,” offers a new direction, bringing Jewish wisdom to the American marketplace of ideas and making it available as a resource for everyone. Using the media, including film, documentaries, radio and TV, and creating new partnerships in new venues, CLAL has helped bring Jewish insights to the public square—the place where most Jews reside. Reaching out to the unaffiliated, representing about 70-75% of Jews, as well as to a wider audience, CLAL has begun to cross boundaries beyond Jewish life, serving the larger community.

Collectively, these two approaches encompass CLAL’s vision of re-imagining the American Jewish future and expanding the lens of what it means to be Jewish today. With your help, we can continue to touch Jewish lives in new and stirring ways. It’s an exciting challenge, but one that together we can meet. Thank you for being our partner in this important effort.

B’Shalom,

Fern K. Hurst
Chairman

Irwin Kula
President

Donna M. Rosenthal
Executive Vice Chairman

Brad Hirschfield
Vice President

FERN K. HURST APPOINTED NEW CHAIRMAN OF CLAL

Fern K. Hurst, a Jewish leader and champion for pluralism, was recently named the new Chairman of the Board of Directors of CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. Ms. Hurst succeeds Thomas O. Katz, Esq. as Chairman of the organization.

“Fern is fearless in her belief in pluralism and in bringing Jewish wisdom to a broad audience,” says Rabbi Irwin Kula. “She is committed to making the world a better place and has a real sense of *tikkun olam*, which comes from her Jewish identity.”

Active in CLAL since the late 1980’s, Ms. Hurst has been a member of the Board for many years, most recently in the position of Associate Chair/Secretary. Long involved in the work of the organization, she was a member of the delegation that went to the 2004 Parliament of the World’s Religions in Barcelona, the pre-eminent interfaith forum, and has been a key participant in CLAL’s annual seminars in Aspen, Colorado.

“It is time for CLAL to be a voice for pluralism in the wider world,” says Ms. Hurst. “When religion is as toxic and dividing a force in the world as it is today, we must be a voice for something beyond hatred or even tolerance.” One of her goals is to expand CLAL’s rabbinic programs to better promote pluralism in Jewish communities. “Rabbis and rabbinic students are the front line in this endeavor,” she says, but points out, “You cannot build a better world by talking only within your community; we must talk to the larger community and connect to others. We must take Jewish into the public square.”

In addition to CLAL, Ms. Hurst is a member of the Executive Committee of AIPAC, and was the founding president of The Jewish Women’s Foundation of New York.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND LEADERSHIP

Leadership and Community Development

Collaborating with federations and other institutions nationwide, CLAL imbues new and established leaders with the skills and training for building vital Jewish communities. Working in almost 50 cities, CLAL faculty reinvigorates leadership development, volunteer participation, programming, and practice to help communities prepare for the future. Recent highlights include:

- **San Diego:** Rabbi Irwin Kula was the Scholar-In-Residence at Congregation Beth Israel, where he led a program on re-imagining Judaism for the 21st century and a Shabbaton.
- **Charleston:** Rabbi Brad Hirschfield led a “Yearn to Learn” program for the community at Synagogue Emanu-El.

- **New York:** Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard was a featured speaker at a conference held by leading New York hospitals on spirituality, religious wisdom and the care of the patient.
- **Los Angeles:** Rabbi Kula conducted a session on re-imagining Jewishness and Judaism for the Orange County Community Scholar Program.
- **Tucson:** Rabbi Steve Greenberg spoke at the University of Arizona-Hillel on same sex marriage and civil and religious values in 2005.
- **Scotch Plains:** Rabbi Jennifer Krause led a program for the Jewish Federation of Central New Jersey on Jewish women and the evolving challenges in Judaism.
- **New York:** Dr. Michael Gottsegen gave a talk on Jewish approaches to conflict and reconciliation at Columbia University's School of International Relations.
- **Sarasota:** Rabbi Hirschfield offered a leadership development program at the Sarasota-Manatee Jewish Federation.
- **Miami:** Rabbi Irwin Kula led a Shabbaton and board retreat at Congregation Bet Shira.
- **Tucson:** Rabbi Hirschfield spoke at the Jewish Federation of Arizona on philanthropy and Jewish leadership in the 21st century.
- **Chicago:** Rabbi Blanchard conducted a leadership development workshop for the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago.
- **Greenwich:** Rabbi David Kalb led a lunch and learn program at the Jewish Federation on Jewish funding.
- **Philadelphia:** Former CLAL Chairman Thomas O. Katz, Esq. led a talk on philanthropy as a form of Jewish expression with University of Pennsylvania Hillel leaders.

Rabbinic Internship Program—An Evaluation

Respect for the special contribution of each movement within Judaism, and the ability to communicate critiques of movements in a positive and respectful fashion are features of this program. It provides the only ongoing setting in North America for talented rabbinic and select graduate students to learn together across the denominational spectrum, and to give students training in the CLAL method of teaching that will equip them for leadership roles in building pluralist and compelling North American Jewish communities. Led by Rabbi Tsvi Blanchard, Ph.D., CLAL's Director of Organizational Development, the program creates an appreciation for diversity as a community asset.

Recently, The Alban Institute, a renowned institution on religious leadership, conducted a full-scale evaluation of the CLAL rabbinic programs over the past twelve years. The

Institute found that the rabbis attributed a large portion of their professional success to their study with CLAL in our internship and follow-up retreat programs. They continue to use the knowledge gained in their rabbinate, and highly endorsed the program because of the seminal thinking and programming it both provoked and inspired in their work.

The evaluation examined the long-term impact of CLAL's rabbinic internship and retreat programs. Citing CLAL's narrative leadership approach, a cutting edge technique in the wider field of leadership training, the Institute found CLAL's programs to be "broadly and deeply effective in preparing leaders to work across denominational and institutional boundaries in Judaism." CLAL's impact was found to be equally strong throughout the religious streams, and that it was "prospective" in its teaching—going beyond helping to heal past community grievances to assisting leaders in forming "new understandings of Jewish identity," where community differences "lose their power to divide." In addition, the evaluation highlighted that program alumni readily ascribed their own creativity in leadership and program development to CLAL. Said one participant, "What is needed is vision and CLAL brings that...To the extent that there are creative partnerships across denominational lines, we have CLAL to thank for that vision." For a copy of the evaluation, please contact Dale Brown at 212-779-3300, ext. 104.

Rabbinic Students Convened at Ethics of Power and AIPAC Policy Conferences

Rabbis influence and play important leadership roles in Jewish communities across the country. However, nowhere in their training do they receive the most basic education on such issues as the America-Israel relationship, and the nexus between Jewish identity and political activism for Israel and other Jewish concerns.

To help address this gap, CLAL developed two programs with AIPAC in Washington, D.C. The first, "The Ethics and Exercise of Political Power," held in March, was designed to expose rabbinic students to how Jews as a minority express political strength, and to understand the relationship between American Jewish identity and the exercise of power. Joining CLAL President Rabbi Irwin Kula and Rabbi Blanchard were 23 rabbinic interns from all denominations.

Working with Jonathan Kessler, AIPAC's Director of Leadership Development, CLAL convened a new model program to give participants a greater understanding of the modern political process, and show how the many streams of Judaism function together in our nation's capital. The group met with senators, leading policy experts, and leaders from such Jewish organizations as AIPAC, the Orthodox Union (OU), the Religious Action Center (RAC), and Chabad.

The second program held in May was an AIPAC policy conference. CLAL brought rabbinic students to observe the importance of political activism for Israel and the critical nature of the America-Israel relationship. The group met with a cadre of AIPAC college leaders to begin to create an integrated next generation with a lifelong commitment to AIPAC and to a Jewishly conscious participation in the political process.

TAKING JEWISH PUBLIC

Freaks Like Me

This provocative new documentary examines religion in the age of terrorism. Filmed in Barcelona at the 2004 Parliament of the World's Religions, the pre-eminent interfaith gathering, it explores the tension between faith and violence, and confronts our fears of the "other." Featuring Rabbi Brad Hirschfield, CLAL Vice President and a speaker at the Parliament, it examines how "the faithful" look at themselves and other devouts, while depicting how the different traditions view violence, justice, and doubt.

Interspersed throughout the film are conversations with swamis, imams, monks, yogis, rabbis, priests and other earthly wanderers, all seeking a higher truth. Joining Rabbi Hirschfield are students from the University of Oklahoma, who visited this historic city to deepen their understanding of the world's religions, and face their suspicions of those from other spiritual communities. Directed by David and Sarah Holbrooke, the film is now being screened at Cinequest (San Jose), South-by-Southwest (Austin, TX), Palm Beach, Santa Cruz, Jacksonville, and Telluride (CO) film festivals, among others.

Freaks Like Me has also generated lively discussion in new settings. Premiered at the University of Oklahoma, it was the centerpiece of a program on interfaith connection. Speaking to over 1,000 participants, Rabbi Hirschfield addressed what happens "when religion kills and secularism fails." It was also screened at the College of Wooster in Ohio, the oldest Presbyterian liberal arts college in the Midwest. Rabbi Hirschfield served as the Theologian-in-Residence, one of the first rabbis to serve in this capacity.

Time for a New God

Acclaimed as a new film challenging our notions of God, *Time for a New God* continues to percolate interest and debate on what is sacred. Featuring Rabbi Irwin Kula, the film reflects on our ideas of spirituality and faith, presenting religion as a "giant tool box." Filmed in New York's Coney Island and screened at film festivals nationwide, the documentary is now available through CLAL on DVD.

Religious Communities Come Together to Support Millennium Development Goals

CLAL, as a founding member of the Consultation on Interfaith Education, organized and co-sponsored a unique consultation which brought together a wide range of American religious leaders and representatives from non-governmental organizations to focus on the Millennium Development Goals. Michael Gottsegen, Ph. D., CLAL Senior Fellow, helped lead the campaign, which looked at how America's religious communities might work together to facilitate the achievement of the goals. The event was held at the Church Center of the United Nations.

The Millennium Development Goals, adopted in September 2000, express the unanimous commitment of the member states of the United Nations to cut global poverty in half by 2015. The Consultation addressed the religious significance of the

individual goals and the broader principles of global solidarity and equity that underlie the campaign as a whole, paying close attention to how they appear when considered in light of the various religious traditions. Questions on what religious leaders can do to mobilize their own religious communities were addressed.

“The consultation builds on CLAL’s leadership role in convening pluralist, interfaith conversations, applying Jewish wisdom and values to global issues,” said Dr. Gottsegen. “This program moves beyond dialogue to action, and focuses on what we can do to guarantee that these commitments are kept.”

Religion and Violence

Recognized as an expert on interfaith dialogue, Rabbi Hirschfield was featured in a compelling conference in West Palm Beach in April on religious violence and ethnic war. “Searching for Shared Values in a Divided World” brought together leaders from the major religions to examine what they have in common, where they differ, and how they could use their traditions to build a more peaceful and humane world. The program, arranged by The Aspen Institute (a key North American think tank), the Cordoba Initiative (an interfaith foundation), the Center for Workable Solutions (a new Palm Beach-based foundation), and the Palm Beach Fellowship of Christians and Jews, was moderated by Aspen’s President, Walter Isaacson, the former head of CNN. Guest speakers included Madam Jehan Sadat, widow of Egypt’s former president, Anwar Sadat.

“It was an inspiring event,” said Rabbi Hirschfield. “The challenge we all face is whether or not we use our traditions as sticks with which to beat the drums of war, or as tools to nurture peace.” Conference highlights will air on satellite TV.

Palliative Care

Recognizing the success of CLAL’s work with the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, the Caring Commission of UJA-Federation of New York renewed their grant for providing training for rabbinic and medical students in palliative care. Six training sessions will be provided, along with the publication of a course curriculum, which will be available for wide distribution.

The training provides a holistic approach to serious illness, addressing the spiritual, emotional, ethical, and medical care aspects. It also looks at the web of relationships — the patient, family members and health care providers—who are involved in the decision-making process. “We’ve learned that religion and medicine work better as partners in this difficult life stage,” said Rabbi Blanchard, program director. “They each offer a piece that professionals need to be aware of in providing sensitive treatment.”

New Venues, New Partnerships

Reaching young Jews on their own Jewish journeys is central to CLAL’s work. Part of that is touching them in the ways and places that address their interests and habits. One good example is a new project initiated by CLAL’s new Associate Vice President Rabbi Jennifer Krause, a former CLAL Fellow and co-director of CLAL’s Rabbinic

Internship Program. Called “Oy Latte,” it is a once-a-month free evening discussion series held at “Joe,” a well-known café in New York’s Greenwich Village. Not an “outreach” program, it looks at life’s issues using the inherited wisdom for insight and thought. Topics have ranged from the difference between religion and spirituality to the Terri Schiavo debate. In the spirit of a truly open dialogue and a real search for meaning, the program brings people together for connection, community, and involvement. “Oy Latte” offers the opportunity to expand to other venues in neighborhoods everywhere, and already communities are calling to discuss how to develop this concept in their locales.

In addition to “Oy Latte,” CLAL has started a variety of new collaborations. Bridging the Jewish world with the American public square, CLAL has begun to widen the conversation on religion as a force for public good. CLAL has partnered with leading technology and business associations, interfaith communities, and other institutions to make Jewish wisdom part of the American marketplace of ideas.

Rabbi Steve Greenberg Wins Prestigious Koret Book Award

Calling it a “courageous work of self-exploration,” and a “learned, accessible, and unflinchingly honest theological work,” the Koret Institute bestowed its prestigious Book Award for Philosophy and Thought on Rabbi Steve Greenberg, CLAL Senior Teaching Fellow, for his groundbreaking book, *Wrestling with God & Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2004). The book explores homosexuality and Jewish tradition, challenging long held assumptions and text interpretations, while offering a very personal and truthful account of the author’s own ten-year struggle to reconcile his identities as a gay, Orthodox man.

“The book has had a significant impact on the Orthodox community,” said Rabbi Greenberg. “It has started conversations on an issue that heretofore was unheard of. Now synagogues and all kinds of institutions are exploring the questions not only in terms of the human element, but in terms of the dynamic quality of the tradition.”

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth

Written by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, renowned teacher, leader, and founder of CLAL, this new book contains his thought-provoking insights, as well as essays from noted Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish commentators, on the nature of interfaith dialogue. Rabbi Greenberg challenges all people to work together to create a world in which everyone can live with dignity and equality—the deserved inheritance of a humanity created in the image of God. To order, contact The Jewish Publication Society (800-355-1165/ 3151).

Judaism, Physics and God

Just released, this compelling new book offers a unique approach to the religion-science dialogue. Written by Rabbi David W. Nelson, Ph. D., CLAL Associate and former Senior Teaching Fellow at CLAL, it shows the connection between the basic ideas of modern physics and ancient wisdom of biblical and rabbinic texts, to reveal how religious faith and scientific insight need not be mutually exclusive. To order, contact Jewish Lights Publishing (800-962-4544), or go to your local bookstore.

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CLAL Online

A new feature of CLAL's popular website, www.clal.org, is a timely schedule of where CLAL faculty will be teaching. To find out if a CLAL faculty member is coming to your community, go to CLAL's weekly magazine, *eCLAL*, and click on "News from CLAL." *CLAL Across America* will list the roster of programs for each month.

Media

CLAL continues to maintain high visibility in the media and be an important resource to the press. From national and international stories such as the impact of Terri Schiavo to the tsunami tragedy to local issues such as Jewish leadership in a time of change, CLAL faculty offer new perspectives on the concerns of the day. Highlights include:

- In response to the Terri Schiavo case, CLAL was interviewed by *USA Today*, *The Kansas City Star*, *The Herald Courant*, *Beliefnet*, *AP Radio Live* (national), "The Lars Larson Show" (national, Westwood One), and "On Second Thought with Mike Newcomb" (KFNX, Phoenix). CLAL now appears regularly on "Lars Larson" and "On Second Thought."
- WWSB-TV (ABC affiliate) interviewed Rabbi Brad Hirschfield on the Pope's death.
- Rabbi Kula was interviewed on "The Joe Scarborough Show" (Westwood One) on peace in the Middle East.
- *Freaks Like Me* was featured in the *Austin American-Statesman*, *The Oklahoma Daily*, and the *Boca Raton News*.
- Rabbi Irwin Kula was quoted in *Ladies Home Journal* in an article on spirituality in America.
- Rabbi Steve Greenberg was featured in a Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) story on the Koret book award winners.
- The *Ft. Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel* published a piece by Rabbi Hirschfield on "Searching for Shared Values in a Divided World."
- Rabbi Jen Krause was featured in "The New Iconoclasts" in New York's *Jewish Week*.
- *Time for a New God* was featured in the *Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles*.
- *The Bergen Record* (NJ) and *New York's Jewish Week* quoted Rabbi Hirschfield on tsunami relief efforts.
- Rabbi Kula was profiled in the *San Diego Jewish Times*.
- Rabbi Hirschfield wrote an op ed on Passover which was published in the *Forward*.