

# Conservative Judaism: Halakhah, Culture and Sociology

Tuesday - Wednesday, December 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
at The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute

The Conservative Movement – one of the large religious movements in the Jewish world – is undergoing one of the most interesting and momentous periods in its history. The tension it has generated gives expression to the cultural, philosophical and ideological transitions this religious movement has made towards the social discourse and experience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Acknowledging the need to attain in-depth understanding of contemporary Conservative Jewry, encompassing its historic, halakhic, cultural, sociological, theological and educational elements, and in order to come to grips with the changes in these perspectives, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute established a research group (as part of the "Streams of Judaism" project). Participants included scholars from various disciplines who examined basic issues, processes, ideas and phenomena associated with this stream of Judaism. The papers presented at this conference include the studies produced by this research group as well as scholarly works of renowned experts in this field from Israel and abroad.

## Tuesday, December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009

**09:45 - 10:15**

### Gathering

**10:15 - 10:45**

### Opening Session

Greetings: **Prof. Gabriel Motzkin**, Head, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute (VLJI)  
**Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg**, Jewish Culture and Identity Chair, VLJI

Opening Remarks: **Dr. Avinoam Rosenak**, Conference Chair

**10:45 - 12:45**

### History

Chair: **Prof. Chaim I. Waxman**

**Prof. Michael A. Meyer**, Conservative Judaism from the Perspective of Reform Judaism  
**Prof. Jonathan D. Sarna**, How and When Orthodox and Conservative Judaism Split into Two Different Movements

**Prof. Eli Lederhendler**, Jewish Middle-Class Ethnicity?

**Prof. Guy Miron**, In Search of a Usable Past: On the German Roots of Conservative Judaism in America

**12:45 - 13:45 Lunch Break**

**13:45 - 15:45**

### Sociology and Culture

Chair: **Dr. Uzi Rebhun**

**Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman**, Conservative Elite Migration: Fluidity and Reconstruction in a Pan-Denominational Era

**Dr. Adam Ferziger**, The Conservative Synagogue Sanctuary as a Framework for Boundary Definition in Response to Assimilation and Intermarriage

**Deby Babis**, "Importing a Religious Stream" - The Conservative Movement in Latin-American Jewry

**Prof. Steven M. Cohen**, From Movement to Terrain: Post-Denominational Influences on Conservative Judaism in North America

**16:00 - 18:00**

### Theology and Philosophy

Chair: **Dr. Esther Eisenmann**

**Prof. Hanan Alexander**, Two Concepts of Conservative Judaism

**Dr. Ari Ackerman**, Individualizing and Universalizing the Jewish People: Mordecai M. Kaplan and Mid-Twentieth Century Conservative Theology

**Dr. Hanoch Ben Pazi**, The Philosophical Discourse on Tradition in the Conservative Movement

**Prof. Yaakov Ariel**, Walking Separately or Together? The Conservative and Renewal Movements in Contemporary Judaism

**18:15 - 20:30**

### Evening Session – Keynote Address

Chair: **Rabbi Prof. Naftali Rothenberg**

**Prof. Arnold M. Eisen**, Torah, Mitzvah, and Community:

Charting the Future of Conservative Judaism

Respondents:

**Prof. Sylvia Barack Fishman**

**Prof. Eliezer Schweid**

**Prof. Lee Levine**

## Wednesday, December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009

**09:30 - 11:00**

### Aspects and Phenomena in the Israeli Masorti Movement

Chair: **Prof. Tamar El-Or**

**Dr. Elana Sztokman**, Conservative Culture and Israeli Culture: A Male-Ethnographic Perspective

**Dr. Kobi Cohen-Hattab**, Exclusion and Rebellion against Authority - The Conservative Movement and Prayer at 'Keshet Robinson': A Chapter in an Israeli Public Campaign

**Dr. Michal Muszkat-Barkan**, Educational Ideologies: TAL Schools and the Conservative Movement – Teachers, Prayers and Education for Prayer

**11:15 - 12:45**

### Gender and Tradition

Chair: **Dafna Schreiber**

**Dr. Rachel Gordin**, The Struggle for Ordination of Women in the Conservative Movement

**Yakir Englander**, The Conservative Movement's Attitude towards Gay Sex: A Critical Analysis

**Rabbi Prof. David Golinkin**, The Status of Women in Jewish Law in the Conservative Movement

**12:45 - 13:45 Lunch Break**

**13:45 - 15:45**

### Halakhah, Meta-Halakhah and Philosophy

Chair: **Dr. Shmuel Wygoda**

**Dr. Ariel Picard**, The Shabbat in Conservative Halakhic Rulings

**Avraham Slater**, Conservative Halakhic Rulings: 'Yashan Mipnei Hadash Totzi'u? Does the Old Really Give Way to the New?

**Rabbi Dr. Einat Ramon**, The Halakhic Philosophy of Max Kadushin

**Prof. David Halivni**, What Attracted the Greatest Judaic Scholars to the Jewish Theological Seminary During Prof. Louis Finkelstein's Incumbency?

**16:00 - 18:00**

### Challenges Posed By the Conservative Movement to Other Movements

Chair: **Prof. Tamar Ross**

**Dr. Meir Buzaglo**, The Conservative Movement and Challenges for Judaism in Israel

**Rabbi Prof. Yehoyada Amir**, The Masorti Movement - Challenges, Concerns and Hopes: An Israeli-Reform Perspective

**Dr. Aviad Hacoen**, The Distinctiveness and Goals of the Conservative Halakhic Discourse: Between the Orthodox Hammer and the Reform Anvil

Respondent: **Rabbi Prof. Reuven Hammer**

**18:15 - 21:00**

### Concluding Symposium:

### Halakhah and the Limits of Openness

Chair: **Dr. Avinoam Rosenak**

**Prof. Arnold M. Eisen**

**Rabbi Prof. Joel Roth**

**Rabbi Prof. David Golinkin**

**Rabbi Dr. Avram I. Reisner**

**Concluding Remarks:**

**Dr. Avinoam Rosenak**