National Scholar Fifth Year Report

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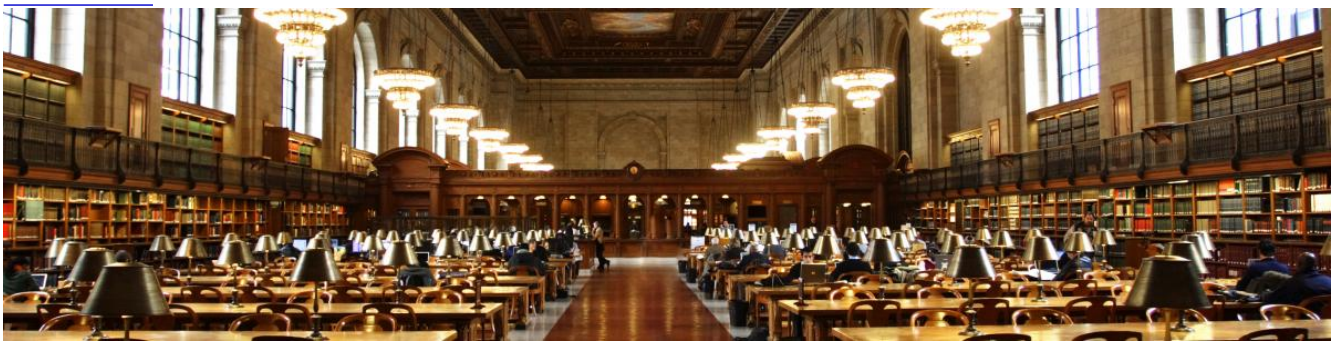

Rabbi Hayyim Angel

To our members and friends,

I now have completed my fifth year of working as the National Scholar of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. It has been an honor and privilege working to promote our vision nationwide primarily through teaching and teacher training, and also through writing and online classes. This report summarizes my various projects and activities over the past year.

My major areas of focus have been:

- Teacher Training:
    - One of our central goals is to train rabbis and educators to spread our vision of Torah to schools and communities. We build bridges with people in the field to work together, and have a greater impact on students and communities across the country and beyond.
    - My primary area of expansion has been working this year as the Tanakh Education Scholar of Ben Porat Yosef Yeshiva Day School in Paramus, New Jersey. I have worked closely with the senior administration and faculty to develop a more rigorous Tanakh curriculum that encapsulates our Institute's core values.

- I also gave nine adult education lectures in conjunction with this curriculum for parents to see how these values can be applied.

- Our Institute is expanding its teacher training significantly. The new Sephardic Initiative saw two very successful programs this past year, one in New York and one in Los Angeles. Our initiative has brought educators together to discuss means of incorporating the best of Sephardic and Ashkenazic teachings in a robust way. We provide materials and are creating a network of educators. We look forward to expanding this program in the coming years so that educators throughout the country and beyond will help further our work.

- I worked with the faculty and administration at the Community Hebrew Academy of Toronto (CHAT) on developing a new Tanakh curriculum.

- I participate annually at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah's Bible Study days in June.

- Community Education:

    - There is a serious thirst for the kind of learning represented by our Institute, and a sizable number of communities have invited me to give lectures, Shabbat scholar-in-residence programs, and classes in Tanakh and Jewish Thought. Through a combination these programs, we reach thousands of adults directly each year.

Below is an itemized listing of the various classes and programs I have given over the past year in my capacity as National Scholar of the Institute.

- **June 25-26:** Four talks at the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah annual Yemei Iyyun on Tanakh and Jewish Thought.

- **July 10-24:** Three-part series on Biblical Scandals at the Young Israel of Fair Lawn (New Jersey).

- **July 12-26:** Three-part series on Parashat HaShavua at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

- **July 12-26:** Three-part series on The Interface of Traditional and Academic Bible Study at the Young Israel of Fort Lee (New Jersey).

- **August 12:** Lecture on the Chosen People for Congregation Arzei Darom in Teaneck, New Jersey.

- **September 20-30:** High Holiday scholar at the Lincoln Park Jewish Center in Yonkers, New York.

- **September 27:** Lecture on the Book of Jonah at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

- **November 3-4:** Shabbat scholar-in-residence at the Young Israel of Oak Park, Michigan.

- **November 17-18:** Shabbat scholar-in-residence at Congregation Bais Torah and Community Synagogue in Rockland County, New York.

- **November 20-December 18:** Five-part series on the Second Temple Biblical Books at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

- **December 20:** Lecture on the Books of the Maccabees and Rabbinic Thought at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

- **January 8-24:** Three-part series on Torah Study in a Modern World: Conflict & Resolution, at the Young Israel of Scarsdale, New York.

- **February 5-March 19:** Six-part series on the book of Chronicles at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

- **February 9-10:** Shabbat scholar-in-residence at the Baron Hirsch Synagogue in Memphis, Tennessee.

- **February 14:** Book reception for my latest book, *The Keys to the Palace: Essays Exploring the Religious Value of Reading the Bible*, at Ben Porat Yosef Yeshiva Day School, Paramus, New Jersey. Lecture on "Building Bridges and Mending Rifts through Tanakh Scholarship."

- **February 18, 25:** Two-part series on the Book of Esther at the Young Israel of Jamaica Estates in Queens, New York.

- **March 30-April 1:** Pesah scholar at Congregation Beit Edmond in Manhattan, New York.

- **April 23-May 7:** Three-part series on the Book of Ruth at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

- **May 18-21:** Shavuot scholar-in-residence at Yeshiva University's Shavuot program.

- I also continue to teach courses to advanced undergraduates at Yeshiva University, something I have done since 1996.

- Publications:

    - This year, I published a new book: *The Keys to the Palace: Essays Exploring the Religious Value of Reading the Bible*.

- I thank my dear friends for their support of the publication of this book: Yael Cohen, in memory of Rabbi Daniel Beller; Levy Family Foundation, in memory of Elsi Levy; Charles and Rochelle Moche, in memory of Rochelle's father Chaim Nasan ben Meir v'Charna; and the Sephardic Publication Foundation.

- Rabbi Yaakov Beasley, a prominent Bible Educator who coordinates Tanakh at Yeshivat Lev HaTorah, wrote a review of my work that explores the key values of the integration of tradition and contemporary academic Bible study; the literary-theological approach to Tanakh; and other critical issues at the heart of modern Tanakh education. See his review at https://www.thelehrhaus.com/culture/the-tension-that-is-tanakh/.

University Network

I had the privilege of coordinating the University Network and the Campus Fellowship this year. You can read the latest about our campus fellows and their contributions on our website,

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/campus-fellows-report-april-2018

Looking Ahead

We reach thousands of people each year with our many classes and programs, teacher trainings, *Conversations*, our website, and our University Network. Looking forward, we will be expanding and streamlining our focus more into teacher trainings through our Sephardic Initiative—where we will work with Jewish Studies teachers to teach a more holistic picture of the Jewish People and their ideas.

We also are developing larger symposia and conferences where we can promote greater conversation and dialogue within our community as we build bridges between people who hold different religious viewpoints.

Our view is that we always must keep conversations alive, rather than allowing those who dogmatically espouse one or the other side of a debate to shut down dissent or alternative viewpoints from within tradition.

I am personally very excited about these developments and believe we will greatly increase our impact in the Jewish community through these new focused efforts. Stay tuned for upcoming reports!

As always, I am grateful to all our members and supporters, who generously make our work possible and who give so much hope for a better Jewish community of tomorrow.

Thank you all for your support and enthusiasm, and I look forward to promoting our Torah vision for many years to come.

Rabbi Hayyim Angel

National Scholar

Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals