National Scholar Sixth Year Report

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel

National Scholar

Sixth Year Report

June 1, 2018—May 31, 2019

To our members and friends,

I now am completing my sixth 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:

Communal Symposia

This year, we reinstituted communal symposia, which is a wonderful way to bring our conversations to the broader community. Hosted by Lincoln Square Synagogue in Manhattan, the two events were well-attended and both were videoed and are posted on YouTube. We look forward to bringing more of these events to communities throughout the country in the coming years.

On **Sunday, October 21**, we held a symposium on Conversion to Judaism, featuring our Founder and Director, Rabbi Marc Angel, Rabbi Yona Reiss (Head of the Chicago Beth Din and the Director of the Rabbinical Council of America's conversion courts), and myself. The event was exceptional, and you can watch the presentations on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GG17aaahdPQ. As of this writing, we have had over 1600 views!

On **Sunday, February 10**, we held a wonderful symposium on the need for our schools and communities to do more to promote ethical behavior as a basic Torah teaching. Our program featured Rabbi David Jaffe, a National Jewish Book Award Winner for his book, Changing the World from the Inside Out; Dr. Shira Weiss, author of several books on ethics; Rabbi Daniel Feldman, a Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University who has authored several books on ethics in halakhah; and myself. You may now view the symposium on YouTube, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjL_o2e4B68.

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.

- I have been serving 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 give monthly adult education lectures in conjunction with this curriculum for parents to see how these values can be applied.

- Our new Sephardic Initiative created a very successful program this past year in Paramus, New Jersey, and held another program in Los Angeles. We bring educators together to discuss means of incorporating the best of Sephardic and Ashkenazic teachings in a robust way. Participants used our materials in their classrooms, and shared reports on their methods of implementation. We also provide educational materials and are creating a network that currently numbers at 122 educators throughout the country and beyond. We look forward to expanding this program in the coming years so that educators throughout the country and beyond will help further our work.

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 24-25: I gave five classes at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah's annual study days on Bible and Jewish Thought.

Shabbat, July 6-7: Shabbat scholar-in-residence for the Sephardic Community Alliance in Deal, New Jersey.

July: Three-part series at Lamdeinu, Teaneck.

September: High Holiday lecture at Lamdeinu, Teaneck.

September 30-October 1: Scholar-in residence in the DAT Minyan, Denver Colorado for Shemini Atzeret-Simhat Torah.

October: Four-part series on the religious significance of the Land of Israel in the Bible. These lectures, done in partnership with the Sephardic Community Alliance, are available on our website https://www.jewishideas.org/online-learning/classes-lectures.

November: Four-part series at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

Shabbat, November 30-December 1: Shabbat scholar-in-residence at the Young Israel of Teaneck.

December: One lecture at Lamdeinu, Teaneck.

Shabbat, February 22-23: Shabbat scholar-in-residence at the University of Pennsylvania.

March-April: Three lectures on Purim and Pesah at the Young Israel of East Brunswick, New Jersey.

March: Pre-Pesah lecture at CareOne, Teaneck, New Jersey.

March-April: Six-part series at Lamdeinu Teaneck.

Shabbat March 22-23: Shabbat scholar-in-residence at the Boca Raton Synagogue in Boca Raton, Florida.

Shabbat, May 3-4: Shabbat scholar-in-residence at Congregation Ohav Sholom in Manhattan.

May: Keynote speaker at Annual Breakfast for the Beit Midrash of Teaneck, New Jersey.

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

- This past year, I also taught at the newly established Beit Midrash of Teaneck, New Jersey. This program meets twice weekly. This program, open to retired men, has been a remarkable success in every way. We have created a learning community that has involved over 100 participants thus far.

Publications

I am the guest editor for Conversations 34, which will feature a collection of Rabbi Marc D. Angel's essays in celebration of his fifty years in the rabbinate. I also wrote an introductory essay, "Battling for the Soul of Orthodoxy: The Essential Teachings of Rabbi Marc D. Angel." The essay outlines my father's central teachings, and represents our core values at the Institute. We also plan on holding several events in honor of this momentous occasion in the coming year.

I also am working on a pamphlet on *Tanakh and Sephardic Inclusion in the Yeshiva High School Curriculum*, to be published and distributed through our Institute as part of our Sephardic Initiative. The goal of this pamphlet is to make Sephardic Bible interpreters from the 16th-19th centuries a meaningful part of their Tanakh curricula without any radical changes to their preparations or lesson plans. Additionally, the pamphlet calls attention to the need to bring Sephardic and Ashkenazic customs into the Tanakh classroom.

University Network

I had the privilege of coordinating the University Network and the Campus Fellowship again this year. Our fellows ran a remarkable gamut of programs to promote our vision and Institute on their campuses. You can read the most recent report about our campus fellows and their contributions on our website,

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/campus-fellows-report-may-2019

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 will continue to develop 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 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

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Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals