



Hillel Levine

Hillel Levine's intellectual and activist lives, from his early days, sought fulfillment in three roles: historian, social scientist, and action-oriented teacher. These divisions of efforts and commitment were influenced by his family as well as his early education at YCQ, particularly in the examples of Min Suskowitz and Rabbi Baruch Charney, *alayhem hashalom*, who remained his mentors for decades after he graduated and set overwhelmingly inspiring examples in Torah, Avoda, and Gemilat Hasadim.

During years of rabbinic studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary, he enjoyed the intensive study and mentorship of Abraham Joshua Heschel, friend of Martin Luther King, Jr. This prepared him to work for five years as Director of Research on a film, Shared Legacies, recently released in early 2020 on cooperation between blacks and Jews inspired by Heschel and King, these great leaders. He was an early leader against the oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union and Ethiopia, and the unresolved and growing enmities between Israel and its Arab Christian and Arab Muslim neighbors. This work was supported by Ford Foundation grants. He became a close disciple of Elie Wiesel. Social scientists, such as Erik Erikson, Robert J. Lifton and particularly Peter Berger, influenced the methods and substance of his life's work. At Harvard he developed interest in psychohistory and the psychoanalytical theory of Erik Erikson under whom he received training.

He received doctorates in Sociology and in Near Eastern Studies and Jewish History from Harvard. His general work on modernization of consciousness and the social and spiritual sources of religious moderation were influenced by Isadore Twersky, Yosef Yerushalmi, Seymour Martin Lipset and Jacob Katz. In later years he used these studies for understanding the forces that shaped American religious life.

He regularly volunteered to work for the US State Department in Public Diplomacy, as his penitence for refusing service in Vietnam. This provided him on-the-job training in interfaith work, civil rights, the strengthening of civic society, historical conciliation, and peacemaking as he developed his professorial devotions for undergraduate, graduate, professional, and adult non-professional education at Harvard, Yale, and Boston University. He is founder of both the Yale and Boston University Centers for Judaic Studies. From 1979 to 1983, he was Assistant Director of Planning in the US Department of Interior working on what resulted in the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington.

In 1995 he was appointed Life-Time Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Logos Theological Seminary in Kyoto and he has served as Visiting Professor in the Department of Religion and Division of the Social Sciences at Tokyo University on several occasions. As such he had significant influence on the development in recent years of at least 30 Japanese students who have become

full time professors of Judaica. He used this time in East Asia to connect with the countries victimized by Japan in WWII and to mediate on the level of government to government on the “comfort Women” of WWII. He has held additional visiting teaching and research positions in China, Ethiopia, South Korea, Poland, the Soviet Union, Brazil, Morocco, and Israel and has worked with the US State Department on preventing ethnic conflicts in Western Europe, the Balkans, India and the Northeastern Territories, particularly Nagaland under Indian control. The democratically elected leaders of Nagaland asked him to represent them in peace negotiations with the Prime Minister of India which he did for two years.

In early 2001, he became Founding President of the International Center for Conciliation. It drew the research that he had done all over the world back to Boston, New York, and Washington DC. This NGO brings community leaders to the US from four continents and at many “hot spots” of complex and enduring conflict. He established an NGO in Cambodia to deal with the special trauma and potential for violence in the memories of the Pol Pot regime. In 2013, he ran a successful intervention in the Maluku Islands of Indonesia that had been initiated by a Fellow of the ICfC from Chennai, India three years before. He also worked with the Sino-Indonesians on historical memories of the Indonesian massacres and how to prevent recurrences.

In 1996, he used the same methods and intellectual tools to explain the mystery of goodness traced through his in-depth psycho-historical analysis of a completely unknown Japanese civil servant who rescued more than 10,000 Jews in the opening years of WWII, *In Search of Sugihara*.

In the aftermath of the 1995 Kobe Earthquake, he sent distinguished experts on trauma to Japan to assist in rescue activities and in training local experts. In the years that followed he had trainings for Palestinian Israeli Muslims and Christians who were working with their Jewish counterparts. Again, there was evidence presented on the effectiveness of responding to trauma as a social issue. in groups that encouraged its participants to draw issues of their “big history,” like the wars of 1948-1949, the Naqba, the pained memories of Holocaust survivors, into the small histories of people’s own families. Particularly at times of war when social relations between Jews and Arabs were strained, those groups seem to have done better than groups where the attitude was more to ‘let bygones be bygones’.

From 2007 to 2012, he served on the Science Advisory Council of Intercultura, the alumni group of the most impressive Italian diplomats that have had a stabilizing force on the foreign policy of Italy where politics were particularly unstable.

From 2008-2010, he was active with a group of Protestant Ministers from the US, Canada, England, France, Germany, Austria, and Japan whose countries were involved in fostering colonialism. Of all the horrors perpetrated by colonial forces, the Opium War, 150 years earlier was at the core of Chinese resentment of the West that often gets manipulated by various governments and could lead to serious aggravations of the already complex and bellicose relations between China and the West, not to mention Japan. He was one of the leaders of the delegation of 350 Christian leaders in the fall of 2010, with endorsement and some sponsorship by the US State Department. Notwithstanding the fact that he is not Christian and cannot take

upon himself the type of collective guilt for which the Christian leaders wanted to offer an apology, he ended up being the spokesperson for the entire delegation and framed the apology in the very terms of the great Andalusia Torah scholar, philosopher and medical doctor, Moses Maimonides who he studied in his efforts to understand the decline of Andalusia, the Spanish Expulsion of Jews and the course and impact of so many survivors on the developments of the early modern period just as Maimonides well represented the Golden Age of Spain, but the vicissitudes of his own life represented its tragic decline.

After being honored by the Japanese Foreign Ministry for 25 years of service to Japan, he was honored by Intercultura in being asked to make some of the presentations at the commemorations of WWI in Italy, one hundred years later. His primary writings include, Maimonides and Science, "Whodunit?!: Intolerance and the Secularization of Law," Origins of Economic Antisemitism, Death of an American Jewish Community, "Jewish Reactions to Copernicus". The accessibility of his interdisciplinary scholarly work received special recognition in the invitation that he received to serve in 1996-1967 as the Harvard Nieman Foundation for Journalism's Writer-in-Residence for Literary Non-Fiction.

The study published in 1992 of redlining in Boston, and the violent conflicts that it precipitated between blacks and Jews in the years of Johnson's Great Society, 1969-1972, became and continues to be a highly influential book, shedding light on similar conflict in 20 major cities in the US and other cities around the world.

In recent years he has worked with scientists and environmentalist in the Middle East, developing cross border, community-based hazard risk mitigation and emergency mobilization, training "First Responders" in their own community to plan for and lead in emergencies, particularly when and where professionally trained people, often representing different levels of government, are unavailable or unreliable. Much of his work was done in Jericho and under the auspices of an-Najah National University. He is organizing more work on autism together with colleagues from Yale and the British Academy of Science involving partnerships between Israelis and Palestinians.

He is currently an active member of an international research and consultations organized by the foremost senior neuroscientists at Cambridge University, Simon Baron Cohen, on the Roots of Altruism and Empathy. The first stage led to a report to the British Academy of Science in London in March 2016. Several Palestinian diaspora leaders, and Israelis and diaspora Jews participated, and they will join the ICfC in its work in Palestine and elsewhere.

He enjoys and is greatly nurtured by three children and their spouses who share with him seven wonderful grandchildren, as well as active friendships of several generations of accomplished former students.