Editor's note

Dear Reader,

We are proud to present you with Adult Education in Israel, volume 12. Our new online format will hopefully expand our readership dramatically.

We decided to dedicate the opening section of this edition to the topic of adult education in Israel and throughout the world, discussing achievements and statewide planned programs. In addition to a well-explained summary of the existing programs (by Rachel Toktali), we include thoughts and suggestions for a new approach to public commitment to the cultivation of an adult education system which is accessible to all layers of society and made available in the city centers as well as the suburbia (Rina Cohen, Eitan Israeli and a national policy proposal document titled "Israel - a Learning Society").

A significant part of this issue is dedicated to a fascinating subject that is very central not only to adult education today but important to all of society in Israel and even beyond its borders. We discuss the causes that bring about the return, in different ways, to the cultural roots of Israel’s national identity as a democratic and multi-cultural society whose connection to the world of tradition and its ancient biblical sources are expected to be maintained, and are maintained in part, through dialogue and inner searching, while allowing for the authenticity of the individual as well as the varied cultural sectors of the population. Conservative Rabbi Chaya Rowen-Baker marks the guidelines which define the communal institution making the ideal of a "Torah of Life" that can be applied practically in our lives. An especially interesting article by Barbara Spectre discusses the return of European Jews (especially from Eastern Europe) to Judaism, after having seemingly distanced themselves from their religion or reduced their affiliation to a minimum. She describes an institute established in Sweden trying to satisfy the unexpected yearning for a lost identity. Noah Hayut, Rami Porat together
with Ayala Tzur and Tamar Alperovitz with Shraga Bar-On describe the activities of emerging institutes from perspectives that not only differ but also seem quite distant from one another (Modern Orthodox, the secular Kibbutz movement). Their educational activities encourage nonetheless a connection to the Jewish sources and the search for a Jewish cultural identity based on dialogue and pluralism.

Alongside the cathedras and educational institutes for adults which our department is responsible for, other adult educational institutes are appearing throughout the country by municipal, private and other initiative and funding sources. Many of these institutes successfully draw large audiences and attract the attention of both mature and young adults. Some of them leave a significant mark on our cultural lives and even strive to become significant influences on the Israeli world of art and culture and to influence relationships with intellectuals from other parts of the world (see an interview with Dani Danieli, director of Beit Avi Chai, located in Jerusalem).

And who will train the future generation of adult educators? Who is deserving of the navigator role and how can new "navigators" be created? The Mandel Leadership Institute gave us a summary of the ideas presented by this esteemed and creative institute for cultivating leaders in the field of adult education. Ohad David, one of the instructors in the Maarag program, describes the program’s approach and its methodology in training school principals and teachers to initiate and lead programs which strengthen Jewish and Zionist identity as well as encourage democratic thought amongst school students.

Ido Bassok