

Biography of Lee I. Levine

Lee Israel Levine was born on Feb. 1, 1939, in Bangor, Maine, to Rabbi Dr. Harry O. H. Levine and Irene R. Levine (née Ginsburgh). He attended the Akiba Academy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and a public high school in Steubenville, Ohio, where his father served as a congregational rabbi. Summers were spent at Camp Ramah.

Lee attended Columbia College in New York, majoring in philosophy. At the same time, he studied in the undergraduate program at the Jewish Theological Seminary, majoring in Talmud. He graduated from both institutions in 1961, earning a B.A. from Columbia and a B.H.L. in Talmud from JTS. In June 1961, he married Mira Karp of Buffalo, New York.

Lee and Mira spent the 1959–60 academic year at Machon Greenberg (Hayyim Greenberg Institute for Teachers from the Diaspora) and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. From 1961 to 1965, Lee studied in the rabbinical program at the Jewish Theological Seminary with the distinguished rabbis and scholars Saul Lieberman, David Weiss Halivni, Moshe Zucker, and Gerson Cohen. He received his M.H.L. in Talmud in 1963 and rabbinic ordination from JTS in 1965.

In 1963, Lee pursued his graduate studies in Jewish and Ancient History at Columbia University with Professors Gerson Cohen and Morton Smith. After receiving his M.A. in 1966, he continued his doctoral studies under the mentorship of Cohen and Smith and was awarded his Ph.D. in 1970. While researching his dissertation on *Caesarea under Roman Rule*, he spent the 1968–69 academic year at the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. During that year, Lee established close ties with members of the Institute of Archaeology and Professor Yigael Yadin, who recognized the need for an interdisciplinary approach that would give graduate archaeology students a solid base in Jewish history and rabbinic sources to supplement their archaeological training. He accepted Prof. Yadin's invitation to return to Israel and teach at the Institute of Archaeology upon completion of his dissertation. In the summer of 1971, Lee, Mira, and their growing family made *‘aliyah* to Israel. Their home is in Jerusalem to this day.

Lee was granted a joint appointment in the Institute of Archaeology and the Department of Jewish History at the Hebrew University. In 1985, he was promoted to the rank of Full Professor, and since 2003, he has held the Rev. Moses Bernard Lauterman Family Chair in Classical Archaeology at the Hebrew University. Lee

served in a number of administrative capacities at the Hebrew University, including Head of the Dinur Research Center for the Study of Jewish History (1997–2001) and Chair of the Department of Jewish History (2001–3). He received numerous fellowships as well as appointments as a visiting scholar and lecturer at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Yale University, and Harvard University. Lee was awarded honorary doctorates from JTS (1991) and Lund University, Sweden (2000).

In the nonacademic sphere, Lee and Mira, together with a group of close friends, founded Ramot Zion, a Conservative/Masorti synagogue on French Hill in Jerusalem in 1973. They remain active and closely involved in the development of the synagogue to this day. Lee and his friends saw the need for an alternative public school system in Israel, a system that would instill in the young the values and practices of Judaism yet also encourage modern pluralistic education and religious inquiry. As a result, Lee was instrumental in founding and developing the TALI (an acronym for *Tigbur Limudei Yahadut*, Enriched Jewish Studies) track of Israel's state school system. He was also a founding member of the Seminary of Judaic Studies in Jerusalem (now known as the Schechter Institute for Jewish Studies), which opened its doors in 1984 for studies toward rabbinic ordination and graduate studies in Judaism. In addition to teaching, Lee headed the Schechter Institute (first as dean and then as president) from 1987 to 1994. Lee was an active member of the Masorti Movement in Israel and represented it abroad as Director of the Foundation for Masorti Judaism (1986–87) and Vice-Chancellor of Israel Affairs at the Jewish Theological Seminary (1987–94).

In the course of his career of teaching and research at the Hebrew University, Lee supervised graduate students in Archaeology and Jewish History. He codirected excavations at Caesarea Maritima in 1975–76 with Professor Ehud Netzer and was director of the excavations at the Horvat 'Ammudim synagogue in 1979. Lee's professional service includes: member of the editorial board of *Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi* (1978–92), member of the board of the Israel Exploration Society (1984 to present), and member of the advisory board of the World Union of Jewish Studies (1989 to present; since 2006, he has been a member of its executive committee).

Lee has published 12 monographs, edited or coedited 11 volumes, and published more than 180 articles. Among Lee's most important works are *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 1989), which is the first systematic study of the social and political role of the rabbis in late antique Palestine; *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000; 2nd rev. ed., 2005), which offers a comprehensive synthesis of all available information on the diverse aspects of the ancient synagogue; and *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 B.C.E.–70 C.E.)* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), a thorough historical investigation of the city in this era. He is currently preparing a volume entitled *Visual Judaism in Late Antiquity: Historical Contexts of Jewish Art*. He was also commissioned by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities to head the *Onomasticon* project, an exhaustive annotated compilation of geographical place-names in the land of Israel in the Second Temple,

mishnaic, and talmudic periods according to Hebrew and Aramaic sources, the first volume of which will soon be published.

Lee has organized several international conferences: The Synagogue in Antiquity (1984), The Galilee in the Greco-Roman Period (1989), Jerusalem: Its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity and Islam (1996), Jewish Cultural Life of Late Antiquity in Its Byzantine-Christian Context (1999), and Jewish Identities in Antiquity: In Memory of Menahem Stern (2007), for each of which he has edited a volume of the proceedings.

Lee often lectures on popular and academic subjects in Israel, Europe, and the United States on ancient Jewish history, archaeology, and art, as well as on issues of contemporary Judaism.

His scholarship encompasses a broad range of topics relating to ancient Judaism, especially in archaeology, rabbinic studies, and Jewish history. Within these disciplines, he has dealt with a variety of subfields, including ancient synagogues and liturgy, ancient Jewish art, Galilee, Jerusalem, Hellenism and Judaism, and the historical geography of ancient Palestine. He is one of the first major scholars to draw upon and integrate data from all of these fields in order to afford a better understanding of ancient Judaism. The contributions to this volume are a tribute to his influence on this field of study and reflect the broad spectrum of his own interests.

In recognition of Lee's accomplishments and expertise, we selected a passage from the Baylonian Talmud (*b. Sanhedrin* 32b) as the title of this volume:

צדק צדק תרדף, הלך אחר חכמים . . .