

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE AJR RABBINICAL PROGRAM

I. Introduction

The Rabbinical Program leads to ordination as *Rav U-moreh/morab B'Yisrael*, Rabbi and Teacher in Israel. It is designed to train students in academic scholarship, traditional Jewish study, ethics, professional skills and spiritual preparation.

This guide includes a list of requirements for rabbinical ordination. In conjunction with your advisor, you will keep track of these requirements through your student years on a form available in the administrative office.

It is important to begin planning your rabbinical program at The Academy for Jewish Religion as early as possible in your career here. Certain requirements, for instance, must be met in the first year or taken over a period of many semesters. This guide is intended to help you plan your program in the most efficient way. The Academic Dean will help guide you in terms of the best course of study for your needs.

II. Academic Courses

There are currently 70 academic credits, 4 semesters of Fieldwork Support Seminar, and two years of Core Concepts Seminar required for ordination. Each semester you will meet with your academic advisor to discuss the courses that you will take that semester. There are certain courses that need to be taken in order and one should strive to take the entry-level courses as soon as possible. An example of this is the Talmud curriculum where the following courses must be taken in order: Introduction to Mishnah, two semesters of Introduction to Talmud, two semesters of Intermediate Talmud and two semesters of Advanced Talmud.

Students should be aware that not all courses are offered every year. As a general rule, one may assume that most Rabbinics, Hebrew, some Bible courses and Fieldwork Support Seminar are offered every year. Introductory courses such as Introduction to Bible, Introduction to Mishnah and Introduction to Liturgy are also offered every year. Most Philosophy and Professional Skills courses are offered every other year. Students should keep this in mind when registering for courses so that they do not miss the cycle of certain courses.

It is easy for students to focus on one or two areas and lose sight of the total picture of what needs to be taken over the course of your program. There are seven areas of study and one should try to take courses in each area each year.

There is a limit to the number of courses students are allowed to take as private study or at another institution. (Please see the most recent Student Handbook for more detailed information.) It is advisable that you use them sparingly in your earlier years at school since you may need them during your last year to take courses that you may have missed and are not offered during that year.

Six semesters of Talmud are required for ordination. It is generally advisable that students take additional Talmud courses in order to develop their skills to the necessary level. Some students may want to repeat Intermediate Talmud in order to gain greater comfort with the text before continuing with Advanced Talmud courses that are on a significantly higher level. Intermediate Talmud may be repeated with permission of the Dean.

The topics covered in both Advanced Talmud and Advanced Codes change regularly to allow students to take the courses multiple times. It is advisable that students use some of their elective credits to take additional Talmud and Codes courses. There is no limit to the number of times a student may take Advanced Talmud or Advanced Codes.

Students should also be aware that AJR meets three days a week and that they may need to be flexible in their schedules to allow for the fact that certain courses may only be given on a certain day of the week. This is important when planning synagogue work schedules for the next year. There is never a guarantee that because a certain course was taught on a particular day one year, that it will meet on that day the next year.

III. Comprehensive Examinations

In order for students to be ordained they must take the following exams:

1. Hebrew

Part A: Modern Hebrew exam including grammar, reading comprehension and composition without the use of a dictionary.

Part B: A translation of liturgical texts. A dictionary is allowed.

2. Bible

Part A: Certain texts will be given to the student 72 hours prior to the test to prepare at home. The actual exam will occur at AJR. This exam will include translations and questions with a Hebrew *Tanakh* and *Miqraot Gedolot* (Rashi font).

Part B: Using unseen texts, students will be asked to translate and answer questions. A Hebrew *Tanakh* and a dictionary are allowed.

3. Talmud

Part A: Oral examination which will involve the student's reading and explication of selections from original sources. The student must choose to be tested on one of the three selections of *sugyot* found in the Comprehensive Examination Study Packet and must inform AJR which selection has been chosen at the time the testing appointment is made. The test will utilize the Vilna edition, only. The student is responsible to prepare the *sugya* with Rashi and, if indicated, also with selected *Tosafot*.

Part B: Written examination including questions requiring both short and long answers based on the secondary readings and a selection from the terms to be defined and explained found in the Comprehensive Examination Study Packet. The material in the packet may not be consulted during the exam, nor may any other study aid or informational materials be utilized. In addition, material from secondary readings or original sources may be included in the written exam as material from which questions will be asked. The relevant citations will be made available as part of the exam.

4. Codes

Part A: Oral examination for which the student must be prepared to read and explicate any selection from Rambam included in the Comprehensive Examination Study Packet. The printed edition of the text(s) of Rambam from which the student will be examined will be from the traditional, non-vocalized edition (surrounded by commentaries). The student is not responsible for the commentaries.

Part B: Written examination including questions requiring both short and long answers based on the secondary readings and a selection from the terms to be defined and explained found in the Comprehensive Examination Study Packet. The material in the packet may not be consulted during the exam, nor may any other study aid or informational materials be utilized. In addition, material from secondary readings or original sources may be included in the written exam as material from which questions will be asked. The relevant citations will be made available as part of the exam.

Comprehensive Examination Study Packets are available for purchase in the AJR Administrative Office. The Talmud packet includes a list of basic terms, secondary readings from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd Edition, as well as Talmudic *sugyot*. The Codes packet includes selections from Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* as well as secondary readings from various works in English that discuss *halakhic* topics.

The examinations must be taken at AJR. In cases where it is logistically necessary, we can arrange for students to take their exams off-site with a proctor. Permission should be obtained from the Academic Dean.

Each of these exams, including parts of the same subject matter, may be taken separately.

IV. Senior Project Guidelines

Rabbinical students not pursuing the AJR Masters in Jewish Studies at Gratz College are required to prepare a Senior Project through AJR in order to receive Ordination at AJR. Those pursuing the AJR Masters in Jewish Studies at Gratz College will write a senior thesis as part of that program in place of the Senior Project at AJR. The Senior Project should involve a topic that has been a focus of your thoughts and a point of challenge and curiosity over a substantial period of time. The following description and timeline may assist you in the allocation of your time in planning and in producing a quality work.

Senior Project Description & Requirements

Please remember that a Senior Project is not a term paper. It takes special time and attention. You should approach the project as if you were preparing a document for publication. You are encouraged to submit projects of excellence for publication to respected journals either prior to or after ordination.

- A Senior Project consists of the development of an idea or concept that will offer a usable contribution to your community of rabbinical, cantorial and educator colleagues.
- Senior Projects must have a serious academic research component as well as be reflective of dynamic imagination and creativity.
- They should be heavily footnoted from source materials, both primary and secondary. An extensive bibliography should accompany the work.
- Your project should be in proper English and or Hebrew, both grammatically correct as well as fluent.
- A careful outline will help you to develop a cohesive thought and content pattern.
- Your project can be in essay form, appear as a developed curriculum or take the form of an instruction manual or guide.
- In the past, Senior Projects have varied in length from 35 to 100 pages.
- Seniors may choose to present their projects to the AJR community during a lunchtime program. Oral presentations may take the form of frontal teaching, sample teaching or a creative format to be approved by your project sponsor and the Director of Senior Projects who is currently Rabbi Jeff Hoffman.
- Keep in mind that, when you present your Senior Project to your fellow students, you must have summarized and abstracted segments of your materials and offer a clear presentation of your core ideas and of how they can be used in the field.
- As you proceed with your project, you may find that what you thought would be one chapter, may itself evolve into an entire paper. You do have flexibility to renegotiate the topic when this occurs. If you feel that the project could lead to a substantial book size text, view the Project as a publishable article that could act as the forerunner to such a text.

Senior Project Time Line

The Time Line that is provided below begins the April before the last year of school. It is highly recommended that you begin thinking about your topic and even consider writing the Senior Project the year before your last year as there are the Comprehensive Exams and Ritual Skill requirements that also need to be completed prior to Ordination. This Time Line will give you an idea of how much time you will need to allot to this project.

- **Last week of April (year prior to anticipated Ordination) – second week of June:** Your Senior Project topic should be chosen, formally submitted in writing with goals and methodology clearly delineated and approved, and with a mentor selected and invited to work with you. Both the topic for your project and your mentor must be approved by the Director of Senior Projects, who will consult with the Academic Dean prior to approving the Senior Project. This should be done prior to the mentor being approached in order to avoid embarrassment should the mentor or topic not be approved. Mentors do not have to be from the AJR faculty, but should be respected as experts in the area chosen. Any fee due to the Mentor is the Senior's responsibility.
- **First week of August:** Submit an extensive outline of your project, citing several of the sources on which you will be drawing as well as your proposed meeting schedule with your chosen mentor. The submission of this outline assumes that you have done substantive reading and have acquired enough sources to write an informed outline.

- **Last week in October:** Submit the first draft of your paper to the Director of Senior Projects and to your mentor for review and comment.
- **Last week in November:** Submit the second draft of the project. This should be a fairly polished draft. The date of submission will give your mentor and the Director of Senior Projects substantial time to review the work.
- **December:** December is set aside for editing and fine-tuning. Oral presentations will occur during several lunch sessions spread from January through April. Your total presentation time will consist of one-half hour.

Mentor Guidelines

It is assumed that your Senior Project Mentor is an expert in your chosen subject area as well as a guide who will get you through this process. Please consider these guidelines prior to beginning your project and after your mentor has been approached and has accepted his/her role:

- Arrange an extended meeting to brainstorm your ideas and your proposed methodology.
- Take notes on suggested materials and references.
- Arrange a timeline including dates by which you will submit segments of your project to your mentor, and dates by which they will be returned to you for emendations and editing. While each segment is being edited, you should be continuing your research and writing.
- A duplicate set of mentor submissions should also be sent to the AJR Senior Project Advisor. In this way AJR can do due diligence in assuring timelines.
- We will attempt to accommodate your mentor's schedule so that he/she may be present for the oral presentation.

V. Ritual Skills Requirement

Students will be required to demonstrate their competence in Ritual Skills by oral examination. Ritual skills workshops will be taught in order to aid students in learning the appropriate material. Students must be tested in person; tapes will not be acceptable. The Ritual Skills requirements were revised in 5765. All students who were admitted as a matriculated student and began coursework in September 2003 or later are subject to the new requirements. Students who were matriculated and began coursework prior to September 2003 are subject to the Veteran Requirements.

A. Ritual Skills Timeline

The Ritual Skills program is divided into five units. All skills will be tested; there will not be "multiple choice" questions. The units must be completed as follows:

- Unit *Alef* must be completed by the end of 14 credits.
- Unit *Bet* must be completed by the end of 28 credits.
- Unit *Gimmel* must be completed by the end of 42 credits.
- Unit *Dalet* must be completed by the end of 56 credits
- Unit *Heb* must be completed by the end of the fall semester of the senior year.

B. Required Ritual Skills

Alef

- *Birkat Hamazon*
- *Havdalah*
- *Shabbat* and festival *kiddush* – Evening and morning
- Torah cantillation or *Haftarah* cantillation

- *Nusah* – *Kabbalat Shabbat*
- *Ma'ariv shel Shabbat*
- *Shaharit shel Shabbat*
- "Choreography" of *Ma'ariv* and *Shaharit shel Shabbat* (where to stand/sit, bow)
- Donning of *Tallit* and *Tefillin*
- Proper procedure for *Netillat Yadayim*

Bet

- *Haftarah cantillation* or *Torah cantillation*
- *Nusah* – *Ma'ariv shel Hol*
- *Nusah* – *Shaharit shel Hol*
- *Nusah* – *Minha shel Hol*
- *Qeviat Mezuzah*
- Knowledge of “where to find” the following *tefillot* and *berakhot*:
 - *Tefillat HaDerekh*
 - *Birkhot HaShemi'ah*
 - *Birkhot HaRe'iah*

Gimmel

- Cantillation of *Esther*
- *Nusah* – *Shaharit L'Shalosh Regalim*
- *Nusah* – *Musaf L'Shalosh Regalim (U'leRosh Hodesh)*
- *Hallel*
- *Arba minim*

Dalet

- Cantillation of *Eikha*
- Ability to chant a brief, previously assigned selection from *Shir HaShirim/Kohelet/Ruth*
- *Nusah* – *Ma'ariv L'Yamim Nora'im* (basic *nusah* only; not melodies for *piyyutim*)
- *Keriat shem*
- *Sheva berakhot*
- *El malei rahamim*
- *Luah beit haknesset*, including determining dates of *Birkat HaHodesh*
- Ability to fill out a traditional *Ketubah* with the help of a Rabbi's manual
- "Basic *Gabbai*" skills – Proper procedure for:
 - Calling people to the Torah
 - Reciting *MiSheBerakh LaHoleh*
 - Reciting *Birkat HaGomel*
 - Reciting *MiSheBerakh La'Oleh*
 - *Hagbah* and *Gelilah*

Heh

- *Nusah* – *Shaharit L'Yamim Nora'im* (basic *nusah* only; not melodies for *piyyutim*)
- Ability to chant a brief, previously assigned selection from the Torah readings of the *Yamim Nora'im* using the proper cantillation
- Ability to tie *Tzitzit*
- Ability to tie *Tefillin*
- Ability to read a 100-year calendar
- Knowledge of the procedure for conversion at a *Mikvah* for both male and female.
- Ability to identify the three different notes of *Tekiah Shofar*, and their proper order in *Seder Tekiat HaShofar* (which follows the *Haftarah* on *Rosh HaShanah*).
- Knowledge of where to find, and ability to fill out, *Shtar Mekhirat Hametz*
- Ability to read a *Matzeivah*, including *rashei teivot*.

C. Veteran Ritual Skills Requirements

1. *Nusah*—any three of the following:

-*Shaharit L'hol*

- Any 5 consecutive pages in *Birkhot Hashahar/Pseukei D'zimrah*
- *Yishtabah* thru *Yotzeir Or*
- *Avot-Gevurot-Kedushah*
- any 5 pages in the *Shaharit Amidah*

-Pick any two of the following three:

- *Ma'ariv L'hol*—Any 4 consecutive pages after the *Barkhu*.
- *Kabbalat Shabbat*—Any 4 consecutive pages after *L'khu Neranena*
- *Ma'ariv L'Shabbat*—Any 2 consecutive pages after the *Barkhu* and *Vaykbulu* through *R'tzei Vimmukhateinu*

-*Shaharit L'Shabbat*

- Any 5 consecutive pages in *Birkhot Hashahar/Pseukei D'zimrah*,
- Any 3 pages from end of *El Adon* thru *Tzur Yisrael*
- Any 3 pages in the *Shaharit Amidah* after the *Kedushah*

-Pick any two of the following three:

- Hallel—blessing, opening/closing of 4 Psalms, *Hodu La'adonai/Ana Adonai* for Sukkot, Pesach, and Shavuot
- *Musaph L'Shalosh Regalim*—any 4 pages in the *Amidah* after the *Kedushah*, *Avot & Gevurot* for Tal, any 2 pages from *Geshem*
- *Ma'ariv L'Yamim Nora'im*—Any 5 consecutive pages after the *Barkhu*, prayers from *Kol Nidrei* service after the *Shebeheyanu*.

-*Shaharit Le'Yamim Nora'im*

- Any 3 consecutive pages in *Birkhot Hashahar/Pseukei D'zimrah*
- Any 3 pages from *Barukh She'amar* onwards, *M'sinai* tunes: *Ha'eil*, *Hatzi Kaddish*, and *Barkhu*, *Mi Kamokha* section, *Avot* through *Kedushah* in *Shaharit Amidah*.
- Any 3 pages in the *Shaharit Amidah*

2. Cantillation

-*Torah*—chant all sign groups in any combination; choose any 20 *p'sukim*

-*Haftarah*—chant all sign groups in any combination; choose any 20 *p'sukim*

-Any two of the following Scriptural Readings:

- Esther
- Lamentations
- Ruth-Ecclesiastes-Song of Songs
- High Holiday

3. *Kiddush* for Shabbat & Festivals

4. *Havdalah*—chant from *Hinei El Y'shuati thru Shavua Tov*

5. *Birkat HaMazon* (including additions for *brit milah*, *pidyon haben*)

6. ***Keriat Shem*** (*Brit Milah*)

7. ***Sheva B'rakhot*** for a Wedding Ceremony

8. ***El Malei Rahamim*** and a Psalm for a Funeral/Yizkor

VI. Fieldwork

Students are encouraged to gain practical experience by having a student pulpit. The Dean of Students is in charge of placement. All students, even those who have obtained a pulpit independent of the Dean of Students, should submit a copy of their contracts to the school to be kept on file.

It is important for students to obtain Life Cycle experiences prior to Ordination. It is expected that students will have opportunities during their student pulpits to obtain this experience. These experiences should include the following: baby naming, Brit, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, wedding, and a funeral.

Students have a requirement to take four semesters of Fieldwork Support Seminar (FWSS) in conjunction with a professional position in one facility with a minimum of ten hours per week. These courses may not be taken concurrently with enrollment in the Mechina program. In addition, except in extenuating circumstances, it is not suggested that they be taken in a student's first year of study at AJR. One year of fieldwork must be in a pulpit position. No course credit is awarded for FWSS. For the purpose of tuition calculations, FWSS is considered equivalent to a one-course point class. A full unit of CPE counts as one year of FWSS.

**APPENDIX I
RABBINIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

BIBLE (9.0 course points)

Introduction to Bible
Introduction to Parshanut
Parashat Hashavua (2.0 pts)
Nevi'im Rishonim Elective
Nevi'im Aḥaronim Elective
Ketuvim Elective
Electives (2.0 pts)

HEBREW (9.0 course points)

Hebrew I (4.0 pts)
Hebrew II (4.0 pts)
Biblical Hebrew (1.0 pt.)

HISTORY (4.0 course points)

Period of Antiquity*
Medieval History*
Modern History*
Contemporary History*

LITURGY (6.0 course points)

Introduction to Liturgy
Shabbat Liturgy
Festival Liturgy
Yammim Noraim Liturgy
Tefillah and Seminar (2.0 pts)

PHILOSOPHY (6.5 course points)

Medieval Philosophy
Modern Philosophy
Personal Theology
Mysticism Elective
Pluralism
Bio-Ethics (0.5)
Ethics Elective (1.0)

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (12.0 course points)

Pastoral Counseling I
Pastoral Counseling II
Homiletics (0.5 pt)
Education Theory*
Education Methods*
Jewish Music and the Cantorate (0.5 pt.)
Life Cycle I
Life Cycle II
Conversion
Contemporary Denominations
Critical Issues*
Chaplaincy (0.5 pt.)
Congregational Dynamics (0.5 pt.)
Fieldwork Support Seminar (4 semesters, no credit)
Core Concepts Seminar (4 semesters, no credit)

RABBINICS/HALAKHA (15.0 course points)

Introduction to Mishna

Introduction to Talmud I

Introduction to Talmud II

Intermediate Talmud I

Intermediate Talmud II

Advanced Talmud (2.0 pts)

Introduction to Midrash

Midrash Electives (1.0 pt.)

Introduction to Codes (2.0 pts)

Advanced Codes

Introduction to Responsa

Critical Issues (Halakha)

Rabbinics and/or Codes Electives (2.0 pts.)

SPIRITUALITY (1.0 course point)

ELECTIVES (7.5 course points)

TOTAL: 70

*These courses are taken through Gratz College