

**JTS RABBINICAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM  
2010-11 / 5771**

**CONTENTS**

I.	Goals and Methodologies.....	p. 1
II.	Stage One: Beit Midrash.....	p. 5
III.	Stage Two: Iyun.....	p. 10
IV.	Appendices:	
	1. Religious Practice in the Rabbinical School.....	p. 16
	2. Mentoring and Assessment.....	p. 25

**I. GOALS AND METHODOLOGIES**

*“Cause our hearts to understand, to discern, to comprehend, to study and to teach,  
to observe, to act and to fulfill all the words of Your Torah in love.”*

*Siddur, “Ahavah Rabbah.”*

Since 1887 JTS has trained rabbis to serve the Jewish people as teachers and guardians of the covenant between God and Israel. During these years the Jewish people has experienced extraordinary changes. In order to inspire new generations of Jews to study and walk the Torah’s path of holiness, today’s rabbis require a fresh blend of classical and contemporary skills.

The JTS Rabbinical School’s mission is to transform students of Torah into rabbinic leaders who are equipped to bring the wisdom and compassion of Judaism into the world. We immerse our students in religious texts with attention to their historical development and contemporary application so that they may serve God, strengthen Conservative Judaism, and become a blessing to other people. Our faculty and staff mentor rabbinical students to integrate the academic, religious and professional facets of their education so that they are ready to develop sacred centers of Jewish life, ignite passion for traditional Jewish living and realize the Jewish ideals of truth, justice and peace in society.

JTS has unique resources to offer rabbinical students: the largest Jewish studies faculty and greatest Judaica library outside of Israel; synergy between four graduate schools; a lively Beit Midrash; the stimulating environment of Manhattan’s Upper West Side; an international network of congregations, schools and camps for field education and job placement; and a tradition of excellence in both academic and professional training of rabbis.

Our curriculum builds upon these strengths, offering a course of studies designed to develop the academic, religious and professional skills of our students in preparation for their varied careers as rabbis. The curriculum was designed by a faculty committee co-chaired by Rabbi Daniel Nevins and Professor Barry Holtz in 2007-08, with substantial input by the faculty, administration, current students, alumni and advisory board of the Rabbinical School. It was launched in the Fall 2009 semester and is constantly in a process of review and revision. Curricula, like the Torah itself, are meant to be living trees, rooted and yet dynamic.

We believe that this program of study equips our graduates to be spiritual leaders of the Jewish people as a whole and to contribute a distinctive sense of holiness for the benefit of society at

large. However, our school is specifically aligned with the vision and structure of Conservative/Masorti Judaism. It is premised on the assumption that rabbis must be well versed in the classics of Jewish thought, deeply committed to the practice of mitzvot, and positively inclined to the development of Judaism to reflect the best religious insights of our own historical epoch. This includes a strong emphasis on human dignity and the full inclusion of all qualified candidates regardless of gender, race or sexual orientation. JTS trains its rabbinical students to combine devotion to tradition with critical methods of study. Moreover, it expects graduates to be fluent in the vocabulary of modern culture and equipped to serve as social critics, advancing the cause of holiness in a world that is often materialistic and crass. Our students need to learn to appreciate the challenges experienced by people living with disability, poverty, illness or frailty so that they can help create inclusive communities.

We begin by describing the *mada* (knowledge) and *middot* (qualities) necessary for our graduates to fulfill their charge to become the rabbinic leaders of their generation. By *mada*, we refer to the types of learning and skills required of a successful rabbi. Rabbis are expected to be expert teachers and interpreters of Judaism. At JTS our students develop strong Hebrew skills, broad familiarity and considerable depth of knowledge in Bible, Midrash, Talmud and Halakhah, Jewish Literature, Philosophy and History. These academic fields are all necessary for our graduates to interpret Judaism for their own generation with substance and style.

Within *mada* are another set of skills that are equally essential for the success of our graduates. They must be effective communicators in writing and in speech as well as in new electronic media. They must be sophisticated educators, learned in the art of teaching in a broad variety of contexts. They must be compassionate counselors, self-aware and able to guide other people towards meaningful and holy lives, whether during life-cycle rituals, in times of crisis, or simply through daily interactions.

At JTS, rabbinical students study the governance of non-profit organizations, the dynamics of lay-professional partnerships and the art of working as a team with other professionals in establishing goals and effective mechanisms to achieve them, and creating a culture that balances self-critical evaluation with confidence and even audacity. They examine the religious environment within which they will work, learning from sociology and culture what tools will be most productive in their task of religious leadership. This includes familiarity with other religious systems that they will encounter in their work and the ability to forge collegial and substantial alliances for common purposes.

Finally, rabbis require professional skill sets specific to Jewish life. They must be competent leaders and teachers of Jewish liturgy. They should know how to welcome new life, sanctify relationships and honor the dead. They should have the knowledge and good judgment to decide Jewish law for their communities. Moreover, they must understand the exercise of leadership in order to prove capable of organizing communities in prayer, pursuit of justice, Torah study and the performance of mitzvot and *gemilut chasadim*. As Conservative rabbis, our graduates shall give coherent and compelling expression to a Jewish life which is deeply rooted in tradition yet vibrant with creative new paths to holiness.

Academic and professional skills are each essential components of rabbinic education. Although these are frequently taught separately, our students must learn how to integrate these components into a holistic expression of Judaism. A rabbi called upon to officiate at a funeral draws on diverse skills such as pastoral counseling, textual interpretation, halakhic decision-making, public speaking and religious leadership in order to allow the mourning family and friends to express their grief, honor their loved one, and begin to heal. Integration, or *sheleimut*, is essential to the efficacy and endurance of a rabbi. A grant from the Wabash Foundation has trained a cohort of JTS professors in integrative teaching. The Academic Strategic Planning

Committee has also revised the structure of the faculty and administration in order to augment cooperation between programs and disciplines. We have augmented the level of cooperation between the Rabbinical and Cantorial Schools, for the mutual benefit of the students in each program. All rabbinical students take courses in the Davidson and Graduate Schools. In this way, our students benefit directly from the rich offerings of JTS.

Beyond academic and professional knowledge, an additional constellation of qualities is required of a rabbi. These *middot* are elusive, but they are essential to rabbinic work. Faith is perhaps the hardest quality to nurture, and yet it is the foundation for everything else. *Hakol biydei shamayim chutz mi-yirat shamayim*, “all is in the hands of God except for reverence for God.” Without reverence—a deeply devoted sense of God’s majesty and a desire to fulfill God’s will—there is no point in being a rabbi. Flowing from reverence are other *middot*: humility, kindness, compassion, gratitude, holiness, respect, spiritual audacity, *Ahavat Yisrael*—love for the people and land of Israel, and an enduring ability to serve God and assist one’s fellow human.

Our students are expected to be role models of Jewish conduct, which includes the comprehensive practice of the mitzvot. In rabbinical school they develop life-long habits of holiness that include, for example: regular Torah study, traditional daily prayer, observance of *kashrut*, Shabbat and festivals, sexual holiness, and *tzedakah*. The mitzvot also demand ethical conduct in all aspects of life. For example: in speech, business, and relationships, both personal and professional. Our graduates are expected to fulfill their rabbinic mission as life-long practitioners and teachers of Torah. Classical codes of Jewish law and the rulings of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards set the parameters for their observance and interpretation of halakhah. They are taught to see the halakhah not as a static defense of an idealized past, but as the dynamic expression of the evolving covenant between God and Israel. These ideals are discussed in the attached *Appendix on Norms of Religious Practice*.

Our graduates must exhibit *mentschlichkeit* (decency) in their dealings with non-observant Jews and with people of other faiths. They must recognize the inherent worth of every human being. It is a privilege to represent the Torah and to teach its ideas and practices. By reaching out to others in a compassionate and thoughtful fashion, our rabbinic graduates can become *mikadshai sheim shamayim* (those who sanctify the divine name). They must be willing to challenge others to upgrade their Jewish knowledge and commitment, while remaining humble towards all. Rabbinical School functions as a catalyst for religious imagination—for our students to feel challenged to envision a sacred and committed Jewish community and to use their creativity and wisdom to help realize this vision. These *middot* are difficult to measure, yet they are as important to a successful rabbinate as are the technical skills taught in our academic and professional departments. By naming, modeling and consciously cultivating these qualities, we can indeed help students progress in the construction of their rabbinic character.

This curriculum trains our students to develop both breadth and depth in the academic and professional disciplines necessary for rabbinic leadership. Core competencies in the study of written and oral Torah are emphasized and integrated. It engages our students in the shifting realities of the religious, sociological and technological context of North America and Israel, providing them with new tools for a successful rabbinate. It plays to the strengths of JTS, especially in the depth of academic and professional resources available to our students. It also fosters synergy between students of our four professional schools, bringing future rabbis, cantors, educators and academics together in a mutually enriching environment. Especially in the final year, we work with the Rabbinical Assembly to prepare students for the transition to their careers as working rabbis.

## **Assessment**

Benchmarks for academic, religious and professional development are discussed in the second appendix. The curriculum itself must be evaluated on an ongoing basis. A formal process of review beginning with collection of data from the outset should be completed at the conclusion of the second and fifth years after implementation (June 2011 and June 2014).

## **Prerequisites**

Our curriculum requires a substantial degree of prior education. All applicants must complete a bachelor's degree from an accredited college prior to enrollment and must demonstrate commitment to Torah study and observance of the mitzvot. They must have completed the equivalent of at least a year of college Hebrew and engaged in some study of primary Jewish texts prior to admission. The admissions process probes applicants for a strong foundation of Jewish knowledge and identity. Students generally require two to three years to complete the initial stage of our curriculum, whereas others with exceptionally strong backgrounds may merit advanced placement. Each case is reviewed by the deans and faculty committee.

## **Orientation and Elul Programming**

The JTS academic calendar is aligned with the academic calendar of Columbia University, which means that fall classes typically begin just after Labor Day. The previous week all new students are required to participate in a program of orientation on Monday through Thursday which includes logistical information as well as a religious introduction to the Rabbinical School. In addition, this week includes Elul themed classes that are open to the entire school and that allow our students to begin the year with a sense of introspection and community building. The Fall 2010 schedule is unusual in that orientation runs August 30-September 2, followed by a break for Rosh HaShanah. Fall classes begin on September 13.

## **Curricular Components**

This is a modular program in which the first stage, *Beit Midrash* (Study House), is highly structured, thematic and integrated. The Israel program has been moved earlier in the program in order to strengthen the Hebrew skills of our students at an earlier stage and to prepare them for advanced study in their final three years at JTS. The second stage, *Iyun* (Focus), includes a robust suite of professional skills courses and allows each student to design a unique program of academic inquiry leading to depth of knowledge.

As they move into the *Iyun* stage, students apply for admission to one of JTS's many masters programs (in Jewish Studies, Jewish Education, Jewish Pastoral Care, or Jewish Sacred Music). These MA programs allow our students to achieve expertise in a specific area and to design their own rabbinic identity. Students also complete our extensive program of field education. These features are described below in Section III.

## **Experiential Components**

In addition to the academic programs of *Beit Midrash* and *Iyun*, The Rabbinical School provides significant experiential programs to enrich the rabbinic development of its students and to facilitate the formation of a supportive community:

**Tefillah.** Daily communal prayer is an essential feature of an observant Jewish life. At JTS, daily minyan is presented throughout the semester in the Women's League Seminary Synagogue (WLSS) on every school day for Shacharit and Minchah. During the winter, a Maariv service is also held at WLSS; throughout the year there is a late Maariv in the Goldsmith Moadon. There are also generally services at JTS on Shabbat, Fridays and Sundays throughout the academic year. Students are also welcome to create and participate in minyanim that use a variety of alternative formats. However, the official mode of prayer for our school is traditional egalitarian. All students are expected to be

regular participants in the school minyan, which is a place to create sacred community in our service of God. Minyan is also a place to learn and hone synagogue skills such as leading *tefillah*, chanting Torah and presenting brief *drashot* to one's community of peers and teachers.

**Community Time.** Gathering as a community to share a meal and engage in thoughtful conversation is another essential feature of the Rabbinical School. Our current format is to meet over lunch every Wednesday. We alternate between all-school gatherings devoted to a communal activity or presentation and small-group gatherings with facilitators from the faculty and administration. These small groups include students from each class of the Rabbinical School, and are meant to provide a safe space for students to express their ideas and questions about their rabbinical school experience.

**Minimesters.** Each January during the week prior to spring term, our school presents an intensive four day minimester that explores a significant aspect of religious leadership that is not addressed adequately in the curriculum. Recent minimesters have included, "The Tapestry of Faith in NYC," and "The Jewish Communities of NY." The 2011 minimester is entitled, "Tools for Spiritual Leadership" and runs January 10-13. Each rabbinical student is required to participate in three minimesters over the course of his or her education at JTS.

**Senior Sermons and Shiurim.** All seniors are required to present a learned speech (*drashah*) or class (*shiur*). These presentations are made on weekday afternoons in the presence of the JTS community. Seniors work with mentors and receive written comments from a panel of responders whom they have selected.

**Volunteerism.** *Yafeh talmud Torah im derekh erez.* This rabbinic expression (*Avot 2:2*), proclaims that Torah study is most effective when combined with outside work. *Derekh erez* is an idiom that alludes to labor, to ethical conduct and even to sexual intimacy. The common thread is that *derekh erez* refers to activity outside of the formal religious structures of worship and study. The Jewish values of our school cannot be fully expressed without involvement in the broader society. We encourage all of our students to volunteer some of their time to apply their knowledge and passion for Torah to the needs of the broader community through *gemilut chasadim*, acts of love. This may involve poverty relief actions such as volunteering in soup kitchens and homeless shelters, offering hospitality to visitors, working with youth or advocating for the needs of various needy populations within society. Our school has not established a formal minimum requirement for volunteerism, but all students are expected to seek out appropriate settings for such work.

Having described the values and structures of our curriculum we now turn to its academic content, explaining the Beit Midrash and Iyun programs in detail.

## II. THE BEIT MIDRASH PROGRAM

The first stage of our curriculum is designed to help students learn the skills, content and context required to explore Judaism with depth and meaning. This stage takes 2-3 years to complete, depending upon the student's skill set with Hebrew language and the interpretation of biblical and rabbinic text upon enrollment and his or her rate of progress. Some students enter with Level 1 skills in Hebrew, Bible and Talmud, while others enter with Level 2 skills; yet others have an uneven mix of skill sets. Students must complete the Skill Level 2 courses in all of these areas before proceeding to the final Beit Midrash year in Israel. Upon admission students will be assessed for placement in either Skill Level 1 or Skill Level 2 in the areas of Hebrew, Bible and Talmud. The faculty and dean will also assess students through grades and other benchmarks for their academic and religious development in order to determine their readiness to progress to the Skill Level 3 courses in Israel.

### **Beit Midrash Themes.**

#### **First Semester: *Avodat Haborei*.**

The first semester studies the relationship between the individual and God through the practice of prayer. What does it mean to show devotion to God? How did the rabbis formulate the "service of the heart?" What mechanisms today can make Jewish liturgy a vehicle for awe and transformation of the individual and congregation?

#### **Second Semester: *Kedushat Hamishpachah*.**

Next we study the role of families in expanding the experience of *kedushah* in Jewish life. How do rabbinic rituals mark the formation, and dissolution of families? What are the protocols for admitting outsiders into the Jewish covenant? What psychological developments are essential to understand these and other moments of transformation in which rabbis are expected to play a positive role? What is the changing nature of Jewish families, and how can the rabbi infuse a spirit of holiness into the diverse lives of contemporary Jews?

#### **Third Semester: *Am Yisrael u-Moadav* (The Jewish People and its Festivals).**

Jewish peoplehood is tightly bound to the festival calendar. Studying in Jerusalem, our students consider the formulation of the festivals from the Talmud and Midrash to halakhah. The beginnings of Zionism and birth of Israel are placed within the context of marking time according the Jewish calendar, which was the first step in the Exodus. This theme challenges students to consider their own Jewish identities within the context of peoplehood.

#### **Fourth Semester: *Brit Yisrael V'Ha'Amim* (The Covenant of Israel and Other Peoples).**

This term our theme is that which is distinctive about Jewish and Israeli culture, and that which it shares with its neighbors. *Nezikin* is presented with the perspective of *Mishpat Ivri*, a source of civic law to govern the modern Jewish State and its non-Jewish citizens. Distinctive Jewish rituals such as *kashrut*, *milah* and *aveilut* are also placed within the larger civic context of the intersection of personal practice and public policy. *Sacred Sites and Scriptures of Christianity and Islam* teaches students about the religious traditions and cultures of Christian and Muslim communities in Israel, exploring the blessings and challenges of close proximity in the modern state.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: THE BEIT MIDRASH IN NEW YORK (1-2 YEARS)**

### **A. HEBREW LANGUAGE**

**Skill Level 1** (=B1/B2=HEB 2201/2 5203 R&G). Year course designed to develop basic skills in Hebrew reading, focusing on vocabulary, verb structures and written comprehension. Meets 4x/week.

**Skill Level 2** (=C1/2=5301/3R, G, O and 5009). Year course designed to develop advanced skills in Hebrew reading, focusing on vocabulary, biblical grammar and also on oral comprehension and expression. Meets 4x/week.

### **B. JEWISH LITERATURES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION**

#### **BIBLE**

##### **Skill Level 1 Academic Introductions**

A fall course, BIB 6563 "Reading the Hebrew Bible with Rabbinic Commentaries," introduces the classical rabbinical commentaries, while the spring course, BIB 6060 "Introduction to Biblical Hebrew," focuses on understanding the distinctive structures of the biblical text. Meets 2x/week.

**Skill Level 2.** Year course surveying the Hebrew Bible with attention to text, context and meaning; advanced use of modern works of exegesis. This course also establishes the historical context of biblical religion, focusing on the theology of ancient Israel and addressing the religious implications for the contemporary student of Bible. In the fall, the course BIB 6106 surveys the Torah and early prophets; in the spring, the course BIB 6105 establishes the Ancient Near Eastern context and religious content of the Hebrew Bible, with emphasis on the later prophets and writings. Meets 2x/week.

#### **TALMUD & HALAKHAH**

**Skill Level 1.** Students entering the Rabbinical School without extensive prior study of Talmud begin their studies at this level. Four weekly study sessions help them to establish comprehension of the language, structure and content of the Talmudic *sugya* (lesson) with the commentary of Rashi. Each semester includes two Talmud classes, one focusing on Halakhic (legal) texts, while the other focuses on Aggadic (moral and theological) texts.

##### **Fall**

TAL 6111 Introductory Talmud: Halakhic Sugyot from Tractate Sukkah

TAL 6112 Introd. Talmud: Aggadic Sugyot: Tractates Rosh HaShanah & Yoma

##### **Spring**

TAL 6121 Introductory Talmud: Halakhic Sugyot from Tractate Pesachim

TAL 6122 Introductory Talmud: Aggadic Sugyot from Regarding Revelation

**Skill Level 2.** Students who are able to demonstrate significant facility with the Talmud text begin their studies on the second skill level, whose purpose is strengthen textual skills and to expand analytical abilities with the assistance of Rashi, Tosfot and other medieval commentators. Each semester includes two Talmud classes, one focusing on Halakhic (legal) texts, while the other focuses on Aggadic (moral and theological) texts. The Halakhic courses will include instruction on how to follow topics from the Talmud page to cross references in the *Mishneh Torah* and *Shulhan Arukh*. Talmud Skill Level 2 (Intermediate) courses are generally taught in two or more sections leveled by skill.

**Fall**

TAL 6211a Intermediate Talmud: Halakhic Sugyot, Brakhot, Megillah &amp; Ta'anit

TAL 6212a Intermediate Talmud: Aggadic Sugyot from Brakhot

**Spring**

TAL 6221a Intermediate Talmud: Halakhic Sugyot from Seder Nashim

TAL 6222a Intermediate Talmud: Aggadic Sugyot from Seder Nashim

CDE 6112. Family Law. An introduction to the laws of marriage and divorce.

**Beit Midrash Chevruta Time.** The Beit Midrash is an integrated feature of our Talmud program. During three designated slots on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, teaching assistants will be present to assist students in their preparation for Talmud classes.

**C. SUBJECT COURSES AND SEMINARS**

**HIS 6117. Jews and Judaism in the Ancient World.** Fall semester course designed to introduce students to the transition from Temple-based religion to rabbinic culture within its Greco-Roman context. Sources drawn from the Apocrypha, Philo and Josephus, Dead Sea Scrolls and Roman writings, *et al* provide context for the early development of a rabbinic class in Palestine and the seeding of rabbinic-led communities in the diaspora. Great themes to be explored include the ancient synagogue, gender, worship and study, economic and cultural integration into broader society, and the varied genres of ancient Jewish literature. Meets 1x/week in the fall.

**PRO 6102. Human Development and the Jewish Family.** Spring semester course intended to introduce students to stages in psychological development, cultivating self-awareness, and considering the role of Jewish ritual and community in the development of gender identity and maturation, and transitions such as partnering, parenting, separation, disability, aging and loss. **[Not meeting in Spring 2011]**

**PRO 7101/2. Integrating Seminar.** Each semester students participate in small discussion groups that allow them to discuss in confidence with peers and a faculty facilitator matters of religious development, drawing upon their academic, personal and religious lives. The fall curricular theme of prayer and the spring theme of family will be points of departure for considering the moral and religious qualities needed to develop one's religious identity as a human, a Jew and a future rabbi.

**BEIT MIDRASH IN NY COURSE SCHEDULE**

	<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>
7:10	Shacharit	Shacharit	Shacharit	Shacharit
8:20-10:10	Hebrew R	Hebrew G	Hebrew R	Hebrew G/O
10:20-12:10	Talmud Halakhah	Family Law (Spring)	Talmud Halakhah	Ancient Jdsms (Fall)
Lunch			Community Time	
1:20-3:10	Bible	Integrating Seminar	Bible	Talmud Aggadah
3:15	Minchah	Minchah	Minchah	Minchah
3:40-5:30	Chevruta	Chevruta	Chevruta	Talmud Aggadah
5:35 (Winter)	Maariv	Maariv	Maariv	Maariv

## BEIT MIDRASH IN ISRAEL

JTS has long required rabbinical students to spend a year of their course of studies in Jerusalem. The goals of this year include improved proficiency in the use of Modern Hebrew, strengthening of textual skills in Jewish studies, building a connection to the Masorti movement, and developing a sophisticated personal and professional relationship to the State of Israel.

Our Israel program is headquartered at our sister school, the Schechter Rabbinical School in Jerusalem. There our students study a core curriculum of Hebrew, Talmud, Halakhah, and two courses related to the history of Israel. These courses explore the second two themes of the Beit Midrash curriculum: *Am Yisrael U-Mo'adav*, The People of Israel and its Calendar; and *Brit Yisrael V'Ha-Amim*, Israel's Covenant and the Nations. As such, the fall Talmud classes focus on chapters from Seder Mo'ed, whereas the spring Talmud classes draw from chapters in Seder Nezikin. Fall Halakhah classes focus on topics from *Hilkhhot Shabbat V'Yom Tov*, while spring halakhah classes focus on *Hilkhhot Kashrut*. One Israel courses focus on Zionism and the State while the other considers the sacred sites and scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam related to Jerusalem.

Additionally, our students take two elective courses in Jewish studies each semester. These courses are offered at the Schocken Library, a JTS-owned property in central Jerusalem. Our students also participate in an Israel seminar that includes lectures at Schocken and extended *tiyulim* to the north and south of the country with rabbinical students from the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies.

Here is a sample schedule for the Israel year (students take two electives per semester):

### 2010-11 Schedule for JTS Students in Israel

Color Key:  
Program at Schechter  
Program at Schocken

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
8:30	Talmud Seder	Hebrew 1	Hebrew 2	Talmud Seder	Elective #1
10:30	Talmud Shiur	Hebrew 2	Hebrew 1	Talmud Shiur	Elective #2
1:00	Hebrew 1	Fall: Jerusalem 3 Faiths	Halakhah Seder	Advanced Hebrew	Lunch
2:35	Minhah	Jerusalem 3 Faiths	Minhah	Minha	1:30-3:20 Elective #3
3:00	Spring: Hist Israel		Halakhah Shiur	Evening Israel Lectures	3:30 Minha

**Synagogue Skills.** In Israel our students are expected to lead *tefillot* at the daily minyan, and they are able to receive individual tutoring from Rabbis Tucker, Silberschein, and Elad-Applebaum at the Schechter Rabbinical School.

**Transition Back to New York.** By November of the fall semester, rabbinical students complete their application to one of the recognized MA programs at JTS. This will allow them to return from Israel prepared to enter the second stage of our curriculum, Iyun.

### III. IYUN PROGRAM

The Rabbinical School's professional skills courses are designed to be taken in order, but students have flexibility in scheduling them. Synergy between our three professional schools and partnership with our neighbors at Union Theological Seminary make this track a model for future partnerships between our graduates and other professionals.

By the fall of their Israel year students apply for an MA program within JTS's Graduate School, Cantorial School or Davidson School of Education and complete that program's requirements (30 credits) in years 3-5 (if they took 3 years to complete Beit Midrash, then years 4-6). No more than 15 credits toward the MA (Concentration) may overlap with the Rabbinical School's Distribution and Professional and Pastoral Skills courses. Students who have previously earned a MA at JTS or a recognized peer institution in one of the fields below may have the MA requirement waived, and may be able to eliminate one or more semesters of requirements as a result.

**Distribution courses (DIS)** include 39 credits (thirteen courses) from the academic departments of JTS. Of these, two each are to be from the fields of history, literature and Jewish thought. Three courses are required in Bible (one on medieval exegesis, and two electives). Four are to be in Rabbinics (one in Midrash, one in Codes, one in Talmud and one elective). See the Departmental listings below for more detail.

**Concentration courses (CON)** include 15 non-overlapping credits in one of the schools, academic departments or programs that offers a Masters Degree at JTS. Degrees may also require a senior thesis or comprehensive exams. Any Masters degree offered by JTS will satisfy the concentration requirement of the Rabbinical School. The Davidson School offers an MA in Jewish Education. The H.L. Miller Cantorial School offers an MA in Sacred Music. The Graduate School offers MA degrees in: Bible and Ancient Semitic Languages, Jewish History, Jewish Literature, Jewish Thought, Talmud and Rabbinics, Ancient Judaism, Jewish Art and Visual Culture, Jewish Women's Studies, Liturgy, Medieval Jewish Studies, Midrash, Modern Jewish Studies. Students who declare a concentration in pastoral care and counseling fulfill the requirements for the MA in Interdepartmental Studies with a certificate in Pastoral Care and Counseling. There is no dual-enrollment fee charged for these Masters degrees.

**Professional and Pastoral skills courses (PRO)** include 13 courses (39 credits) designed to equip our students for professional work as rabbis in different fields. PRO courses generally meet on Wednesdays at 10:20 and 1:20 in order to allow adjunct faculty to convene for lunch meetings and participate when needed in community time (Wed lunch). Course requirements appear below. Students use years 3-4 to complete their rotations and internships.

**Field Education** is a significant component of a rabbinic education at JTS. Rotations are intended to introduce students to the wide range of work opportunities in the rabbinate. We have identified **five professional areas** of rabbinic engagement that we feel are important for students to experience and understand. In year 3, students are required to complete field rotations in an **educational setting** (with PRO5), in **chaplancy** (with PRO6), in **congregational work**, and in **youth engagement** through one of the Conservative movement's summer youth programs (Camp Ramah; or USY).

In addition, students are required to engage in one **agency** rotation that is either domestic or international in nature (e.g. with AJWS, Joint Distribution Committee, METNY-USY, Project Judaica, or Jewish Funds for Justice). The two rotations (congregational and agency) are not

attached to a specific course, and need to be approved by the Coordinator of Field Education in order for students to receive credit. Upon completion of each rotation, students are asked to submit to the COFE a 2-3 page written reflection about each of their experiences in the field. Guidelines for reflections are available on line. Once all of the five rotation requirements have been completed students register for PRO 6401 to receive rotation credit. In addition, students are invited to meet with the COFE to discuss one of their rotation experiences.

In year 4, students intern with a mentor for 400 hours by selecting one the five above mentioned professional areas of rabbinic engagement. In the spring semester of year 3, students make an appointment with the "COFE" to identify the skills they would like to further develop with the support of a mentor. The "COFE" will work with students in securing the best placement to meet their professional goals and aspirations. While serving in their internships students participate in the Resnick Internship Seminar. Alternatively, they may complete a summer internship, such as a unit of clinical Pastoral Education, as part of the Kaplan Internship. Students need complete only a Resnick or Kaplan internship, but they may choose to do both. For students pursuing a masters degree in Jewish education, arrangements may be made to complete their Resnick internship over a summer allowing students to complete their Davidson School practicum over the course of an academic year. Please know that students may not enroll in a Resnick and Davidson internship simultaneously.

**Synagogue Skills.** JTS is blessed with a large community of students, faculty and alumni who are skilled in leading prayer and chanting from the Torah, prophets and megillot. Some students commence our program with established proficiency in these areas, while others need to learn some or all of them. By the third year of study, all students should be able to demonstrate proficiency in the following areas: Leading prayers in the daily, Shabbat and festival modes of *nusach*; chanting Torah, Haftarah, and the megillot. Students should also be able to blow *shofar*, tie *tzitzit* and adjust *tefillin* knots as well as use the *luach beit haknesset*. It is the responsibility of students to develop their synagogue skills either by taking workshops, elective classes or by arranging for a tutor.

## **IYUN COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR ACADEMIC DISTRIBUTION AND PROFESSIONAL AND PASTORAL SKILLS**

### **ACADEMIC DISTRIBUTION REQUIREMENTS (39 CREDITS)**

**BIBLE .** Three courses are required.

Medieval Exegesis (*Mikraot Gedolot*). BIB 6563

Bible elective.

Bible elective.

**JEWISH HISTORY.** Two courses are required.

History Elective. Recommended: Medieval Jewish History HIS 6313

History Elective. Recommended: Modern Jewish History<sup>1</sup> HIS 6406

**JEWISH LITERATURE AND CULTURE.** Two courses are required.

Elective (Recommended: Medieval Literature)

Elective (Recommended: Modern Literature)

---

<sup>1</sup> The primary focus of the Modern Jewish History course is to be on the American Jewish experience.

**JEWISH THOUGHT.** Two courses are required.

Jewish Thought Elective. Recommended in Pre-Modern Jewish Thought

Jewish Thought Elective. Recommended in Modern Jewish Thought.

**TALMUD AND RABBINICS.** Four courses are required in Talmud and Rabbinics, one in Midrash, one in Talmud, one in Codes, and one elective:

Introduction to Midrash. MID 6101.

Living Law: The Theory and Practice of Halakhah.

Talmud Elective.

Elective from Talmud, Midrash or Codes.

### **PROFESSIONAL AND PASTORAL SKILLS COURSES (39 CREDITS)**

**Skills for Teaching (EDU 5031).** Helps students create effective and engaging lessons for learners of all ages, using student-centered techniques and diverse methods of assessment. Students are required to be teaching in a classroom at least one hour a week to fulfill the course requirement. The practicum component affords students the opportunity for structured supervision. This course is offered jointly with the Davidson School of Education.

**Methods of Pastoral Care and Counseling (PAS 7431).** Teaches techniques of compassionate listening, professional codes of confidentiality, mandatory reporting, the establishment of proper boundaries, the identification of serious issues requiring referral to appropriate mental health professionals, self-care, etc. May be co-offered with Union Theological Seminary. Includes practicum (40 hours of hospital chaplaincy).

**Rabbinic Roles at Life-cycle Rituals (PRO 7301).** This practicum focuses on the liturgy, *dinim*, and rabbinic role from intake to ceremony in the following rituals: brit milah, simchat bat, pidyon haben, giur, kiddushin, gerushin, funeral, unveiling.

**Communication (PRO 7206).** An integrated approach to public speaking, writing and electronic communication. Challenges students to identify their message, research their topic, and articulate their ideas with wit, punch and lasting impact. Students prepare sample presentations of different formats. E.g. sermons, invocations, life-cycle speeches, bulletin articles, op-eds, blogs, web pages etc.

**Leading and Managing Jewish Non-Profit Organizations (EDU 5609 or PRO 8610 Executive Leadership).** Examines the structure of non-profit organizations, their legal status, governance and diverse purposes. Basic principles of budgeting and accounting, human resources and fund-raising. Prepares students for establishing healthy lay-professional cooperation as well as teamwork within the professional team. Explores partnerships beyond the institutional and denominational boundaries of the congregation, school or agency.

**Field Education Rotations (PRO 6401).** This course code indicates completion of the five field rotations as attested by the Coordinator of Field Education.

**Resnick Internship Seminar (PRO 7401).** Students enrolled in the Resnick Internship Program take part in the Internship Seminar. By coming together with peers and a trained clinical supervisor, students have the opportunity to reflect further on what they are learning in their placements, and to integrate it within the context of the formation of a rabbinic identity. An alternative is the Kaplan Pastoral Internship.

**Resnick Internship Seminar (PRO 7402).** Continuation of fall course. The second semester addresses different models of excellence and recent research on vibrant congregations and agencies.

**Conservative Judaism Today and Tomorrow.** What is the intellectual and spiritual mandate of Conservative Judaism? In what areas are we excelling, and in what areas are we most challenged? What initiatives can strengthen our role in formulating vibrant Jewish communities in North America and beyond? Taught by Chancellor Eisen.

**The Art of Public Worship.** A course dedicated to the planning and implementation of Jewish worship services, using workshop techniques and expert practitioners. [To be filled in]

**Senior Seminar: Preparing for Placement (PRO 7409).** Developed together with the Rabbinical Assembly, this course prepares students to identify their goals, present themselves professionally, interview and negotiate their first jobs. In addition to practical skills it examines case studies of various expressions of rabbinic leadership in the field. Includes simulated interviews. Students use open-space planning to help develop their syllabus with instructor.

**Senior Seminar: Transition to the Rabbinate (PRO 7410).** Developed together with the Rabbinical Assembly, this course focuses on: professional ethics; maintaining records; establishing patterns of life-long learning and spiritual growth; the responsible use and potential for abuse of authority; community organizing; and working within the context of both the Conservative Movement and the broader Jewish and general community. Students use open-space planning to help develop their syllabus with instructor.

**Professional or Pastoral Skills Elective.** Choose an elective from the PRO and PAS offerings or an advisor-approved course at one of our consortium partners, HUC and UTS.

**CONCENTRATION COURSES FOR THE MA DEGREE (15 NON-OVERLAPPING CREDITS PLUS REQUIRED THESIS, COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS OR FIELD WORK)**

These are determined by each academic department.

## TYPICAL IYUN SCHEDULE: SIX SEMESTERS

PRO=Professional & Pastoral      DIS= Distribution classes      CON= MA Concentration  
 Community Time: Wednesdays, 12:20-1:10

### Iyun 1

Title	Description	
PRO	Skills for Teaching (3/39)	
PAS	Methods of Pastoral Care and Counseling (6/39)	
DIS	3/39 distribution credits	
DIS	6/39 distribution credits	
CON	3/15 concentration credits	
CON	6/15 concentration credits	

### Iyun 2

Title	Description	
PRO	Rabbinic Roles in Life Cycle Rituals (9/39)	
PRO	Communication: Public speaking, writing and broadcasting (12/39)	
DIS	9/39 distribution credits	
DIS	12/39 distribution credits	
CON	9/15 concentration credits	
CON	12/15 concentration credits	

### Iyun 3

Title	Description	
PRO	Non-profit Management (15/39)	
PRO	Field Education Distribution (18/39)	
PRO	Resnick Internship Seminar (21/39)	
DIS	15/39 distribution credits	
DIS	18/39 distribution credits	
CON	15/15 concentration credits	

### Iyun 4

Title	Description	
PRO	Resnick Internship Seminar (24/39)	
PRO	Conservative Judaism Today and Tomorrow (27/39)	
DIS	21/39 distribution credits	
DIS	24/39 distribution credits	
DIS	27/39 distribution credits	

**Iyun 5**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	
PRO 13	Senior Seminar: Preparing for Placement and Negotiation (30/39)	
PRO 14	Jewish People Today and Tomorrow (33/39)	
DIS	30/39 distribution credits	
DIS	33/39 distribution credits	
CON	Senior Project (Thesis or Comps)	

**Iyun 6**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Description</b>	
PRO15	Senior Seminar: Transition to the Rabbinate (36/39)	
PRO 16	Professional Skills Elective (39/39)	
DIS	36/39 distribution credits	
DIS	39/39 distribution credits	
CON	Senior Project (Thesis or Comps)	

**Conclusion**

No curriculum is sufficient to provide adequate training for every area of competence that will be required of a professional. This is certainly true for rabbis, who may serve in a broad variety of established and emerging fields over the course of many decades. Our ultimate purpose is to provide students with enough depth of Judaic knowledge, competence in professional skills, and experience of Jewish community to help them emerge as curious and creative life-long leaders. It is that sense of curiosity, paired with humility, kindness and a passion for holiness that will allow our graduates to become the visionary religious leaders needed by future generations.

## Appendix I

### JTS Rabbinical School Norms of Religious Identity and Practice

The JTS Rabbinical School seeks to be a supportive and nurturing community in which the process of spiritual development is taken seriously. We celebrate the diverse backgrounds of our students and are committed to be דן, לךף זכות, generous in our judgment of one another. Our faith and practice will be challenged over the course of time and through our experiences in the world. Self-reflection in an environment of dignity and compassion is an essential component of rabbinic training.

JTS trains its rabbinical students in the path made famous by Shimon Ha-Tzaddik in *Pirkei Avot* 1:2. “Three pillars support the world: Torah Study; Devotional Service of God; Acts of Loyalty and Love to People.” Explicating these obligations is the task of a lifetime. The following list of beliefs and practices is not comprehensive, yet it indicates some of our most prominent ideals as Jews, and the norms of our Rabbinical School:

על שלשה דברים העולם עומד:

#### *Torah Study* על התורה

- ❖ Belief that Torah--written and oral--is the inspired & authoritative guide to Jewish life.
- ❖ Commitment to life-long study of classical and contemporary works of Torah.
- ❖ Commitment to study *Halakhah L'ma'aseh*—the evolving path of conduct that expresses the values and norms of the covenant between God and Israel.
- ❖ Commitment to grant equal opportunity for Jewish men and women of all backgrounds, races and sexual orientations to study Torah, participate in the mitzvot, and assume leadership positions in the Jewish community.

#### *Devotional Service of God* ועל העבודה

- ❖ Committed, questioning & loving engagement with God.
- ❖ Commitment to traditional communal prayer throughout the day, starting with *tallit* and *tefillin* at weekday *Shaharit*.
- ❖ Commitment to observing *kashrut*.
- ❖ Commitment to observing Shabbat and festivals.
- ❖ Commitment to holiness in relationships, including halakhic and ethical parameters to sexual intimacy.
- ❖ Commitment to uphold the Rabbinical Assembly's Standards of Rabbinic Practice.

#### *Acts of Loyalty and Love to People* ועל גמילות חסדים

- ❖ The practice of honest, ethical and compassionate behavior towards other people.
- ❖ Responsibility for the welfare of one's fellow Jews.
- ❖ Advocacy for a peaceful future for the State of Israel and its inhabitants.
- ❖ Stewardship of the environment.
- ❖ Vigilant defense of the dignity of all people.

In order to deepen their comprehension of these and other beliefs and practices, rabbinical students consult their deans, rabbis and teachers, and engage one another in respectful dialogue. Religious policies for the Rabbinical School are formulated by the Dean of the JTS Division of Religious Leadership, who serves as its מרא דאתרא, the arbiter of Jewish practice. The following essay by our dean, Rabbi Daniel Nevins, explores the theology and application of these principles for our school:

## Pluralism and the Parameters of Religious Practice By Rabbi Daniel S. Nevins

### From Mitzvah to Halakhah

Mitzvah consciousness is the lens through which a Jew is challenged to view the world (Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement*). The great window pane of daily life can easily obscure our awareness of the ultimate plane. Mitzvot are like apertures in the pane that awaken us to the presence of the Creator Who calls us and all existence into being, and Who commands us to sanctify life. The blessing formula that accompanies many mitzvot directs our attention to YHVH our God, Who sanctifies our lives through the mitzvot. Startled from the routine of daily life, we become conscious of origins, and also of purpose. Israel is called to become a covenanted community whose relationship with God is predicated on the mitzvot. These practices are the tendon that links our people to its revelation and gives purpose to our collective existence. Finally, the practice of mitzvot offers the possibility of historic change—of reshaping material existence to reflect the glory of heaven—to reconcile opposites and pursue justice and peace. Redemption is the great goal of the mitzvot.

Yet for most of its practitioners, mitzvah consciousness is less about the grand themes of creation, covenant and redemption than about giving order to daily life. From the first flutter of our eyelids at dawn until we slip back into sleep at night, the mitzvot shape our speech, our diet, our social interactions and our interior space. There is danger that the mitzvot may become so routine that they blend into the window pane of daily life, further obscuring our view of ultimate existence. For this reason, Psalm 2 reminds us, “Serve YHVH with reverence; rejoice while trembling.” This paradoxical counsel asserts that true service requires routine-shattering emotion across the spectrum from fear to joy. Psalm 37 (among many others) exalts the role of intellect in our service, “The mouth of the righteous utters wisdom; his tongue speaks words of justice.” The intentional intellectual ferment of Torah study is therefore a mitzvah that is כנגד כולם, equal to all others in that it invests meaning into what might otherwise become a mindless habit. Through the cultivation of intellect and emotion, the mitzvot expand our consciousness so that we may come to live with God.

Given the high stakes and great energies involved in practicing the mitzvot, Judaism has developed a voluminous literature dedicated to them. How are mitzvot to be practiced, when, and by whom? What is the role of family and community in this service? How should the practitioner respond when mitzvot collide? When ritual is pitted against health, or even human dignity, how does the practitioner discern the divine Will? When the historical context of Jewish life shifts dramatically from a Temple-centered national life, to exilic wandering and settlement, from secular society to a putatively Jewish state, how does the practice and valence of mitzvot develop? How does a community covenanted to God through the practice of mitzvot relate to other communities of faith and to fellow Jews for whom the mitzvot have faded into obscurity? This conversation—this tumultuous negotiation across the generations—is known to Jews by the term *halakhah*.

Halakhah is a term that encompasses the normative, moral and religious practice of walking with God. The phenomenon of “halakhah” may also be understood as a *pathway*; this image indicates both continuity and development in our journey towards holiness.

Conservative Judaism views both development and differentiation in the halakhah as necessary and positive. Our formulation of Judaism is not identical to that expressed a hundred or more years ago, nor should it be. Yet halakhah also indicates the importance of continuity. The path has an origin, it has edges, and it has a destination. The edges form parameters of practice that allow the Jewish community to achieve coherence and focus in its quest *ליתקן עולם במלכות שדי*, to prepare the world to be governed by God. When the path is made too narrow, it becomes

impossible for people to walk together and form communities. Too broad, and the covenanted community disperses, lost in aimless and solipsistic wandering. A proper pathway requires both definition and a positive attitude towards religious pluralism.

### ***Religious Pluralism***

Various positions may be justified within a given religious system; this conviction, which we call *pluralism*, is a positive value for several reasons:

Pluralism reflects *theological humility*. God is infinite, and even the wisest of sages has but limited comprehension. Religious triumphalism is a form of idolatry—it reduces God to a possession, and denies the possibility that another person or community of faith may have attained insight into the infinite mysteries of God.

Pluralism is a consequence of *modern scholarship*. The Conservative Movement emerged in part because of the insights that history and other academic disciplines brought to our understanding of Judaism. Our formative texts, including the Bible and early rabbinic literature, have a history of development. The many voices heard within the ancient texts of our people are a model for the many voices heard in contemporary discourse. Judaism has not and should not espouse a catechism of faith. Our tradition is marvelously complex, and pluralism is a reflection of that complexity.

Pluralism is a form of *menschlichkeit*, or decency. To develop an inclusive community we must be willing to recognize other people's virtues. This in turn allows us to learn from the insights of another person. When we disagree, we should do so with kindness and humility. A truly pluralistic community is a compassionate community, which in turn has the capacity to become a holy community.

Finally, pluralism is a perspective that leads to *wisdom*. Through the cultivation of multiple perspectives in dialogue, all participants can be challenged and deepened. As Rabbi Ben Zoma taught us, אֵיזָהוּ חָכָם, הַלּוֹמֵד מִכָּל אָדָם, *Who is wise? One who learns from every person* (Avot 4:1).

That said, pluralism is not an unlimited good. It can become an excuse for intellectual and spiritual sloppiness, with any position, no matter how superficial, granted equal respect. Pluralistic communities should be marked by intensity of debate, with positions constantly challenged and refined. Moreover, pluralism is sometimes confused with chaos. Instead of instigating the process of debate and definition, it can undermine any sense of communal norms. Therefore, each religious community—even ones dedicated to pluralistic discourse—must develop parameters of belief and practice that give it coherence. While these parameters themselves are subject to challenge and periodic modification, a modicum of clarity on core values and norms is necessary for a community to function. This is particularly true of a community devoted to training religious leaders.

### ***Halakhic Norms for the JTS Rabbinical and Cantorial Schools***

Traditional Jewish values and practices give purpose and coherence to our community. Conservative Judaism provides many venues for debating matters of belief and practice through its publications, its congregations, and through the work of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards. These sources are considered by each local rabbinic authority who serves as *mara d'atra*. In the JTS Division for Religious Leadership, this function is assigned to the Dean. Observing the process of analyzing, debating and determining religious policy is an aspect of the education of clergy who will soon be performing these very functions for their own communities.

The norms of our school may, in some cases, be more intensive than the norms expressed in other Jewish communities. This is intended to create an observant community that is rigorous, creative, curious and passionate. This intensity inspires our students to create and sustain serious and committed Jewish communities wherever they reside in the decades following their ordination.

In the following paragraphs I expand on several of the policies listed in our document, *Norms of Religious Identity and Practice* (which is appended at the end). I have chosen to focus on topics that are most often subject to confusion. There are of course many other important subjects that are worthy of comment. Practices such as *gemilut chasadim*, and prohibitions such as *l'shon harah* are both essential and complicated. There are numerous ritual topics that are likewise important and complex. I hope to turn to such subjects in future essays. However, this essay is focused on topics that are *controversial*, and where ambiguity can lead to corrosion of community.

### ***Kashrut***

It is simple to say that all students must keep kosher, but complicated to define what this means. At the very *minimum*, no student may eat or benefit from:

- The meat of forbidden animals (e.g. pork and shellfish)
- Meat from any permitted land animal that lacks reliable certification of its kosher slaughter, inspection and preparation
- Any meal that mingles even trace amounts of dairy and meat products.

The safest and most exemplary path to ensure compliance with the policies above is to purchase prepared foods only when they bear a *hekhsher*, and to eat only in those restaurants that have kosher supervision. There are respected members of our community who choose to eat vegetarian products in non-kosher facilities. This leniency can easily lead to exposure to non-kosher foods, and therefore requires vigilance in inspecting the ingredients and preparation of such foods. Common sense indicates that some environments, such as vegetarian restaurants, are “safer” from a kashrut perspective than are other restaurants that serve *treife* meat. Still, one cannot assume that “vegetarian” satisfies all of the concerns of “kosher” since there may be issues of cheese rennet, vinegars and other *unhekhsered* products of concern to the kosher consumer, not to mention the common mingling of utensils and ingredients in a busy kitchen.

There are times in which a Jewish value such as *kibbud horim* and other mitzvot *bein adam l'chaveiro* may make the stringent practice of kashrut challenging. For example, may one eat vegetarian food prepared by a parent in a non-kosher kitchen? This is a challenge for many students and other observant Jews. We should recall Leviticus 19:3, “You shall revere your mother and father, and guard my Sabbaths, I am the Lord.” This verse has been interpreted to reflect the balance required between ritual and social values in Judaism. I take it to mean that we cannot eat true *treife* in order to satisfy parents or other people, but we may make accommodations within a halakhic framework in order to preserve a respectful relationship with them. This is supported by the concept of “*gadol k'vod habriot*” (*Brakhot* 19b).

In recent years we have begun to explore the connections between כשרות (ritual fitness), and ישרות (moral rectitude). The הכשר צדק campaign has challenged us to consider the well being and dignity of workers, the humane treatment of animals, and the general upright conduct of a company when deciding to purchase its products or invest in its business. These considerations

should be reflected in the practice of our community of Torah.

Finally, food should be healthful to the body. The Talmud states that *חמירא סכנתא מאיסורא*, that hazards to the health are more serious transgressions than are other prohibitions (*Chulin* 11a). A diet lacking moderation is problematic, no matter what *heksher* appears on the wrapper. On the other hand, the preference that many have for organic foods cannot justify eating *treife*. It is always possible, though not always convenient, to eat foods that are both kosher and healthful.

### **Shabbat**

Remembering and observing the seventh day has been a defining and sustaining feature of Jewish life for three millennia. Yet interpreting the 39 archetypes of labor and the general command to rest (שבות) for our contemporary lives is extremely complex. At the very minimum, no student may light fire, cook, weave or do any of the primary categories of labor listed in Mishnah Shabbat 7:2 and subsequent interpretations. Students may use an עירוב for carrying purposes, and may use automated devices set up prior to Shabbat (e.g. a coffee maker with timer) for convenience but should not perform any מלאכה.

JTS rabbinical and cantorial students may not travel on Shabbat and Yom Tov, whether by car, bus, train or plane. We recognize that there are respected Conservative clergy who have based their decision to drive on Shabbat on the minority opinion of the CJLS in 1950 that permitted isolated Jews to drive to the closest synagogue on Shabbat. That said, driving on Shabbat involves several prohibited labors, including lighting fire, carrying, and traveling; it can easily lead to many others. We should continue to welcome all Jews into our congregations, yet we must also find ways to cultivate the traditional observance of Shabbat. The cultivation of a Shabbat observant community our school provides our students with a model that can inspire a lifetime of leadership in the general Jewish community.

Regarding electricity, there is significant variety of practice within our community. Rabbi Arthur Neulander's 1950 responsum argued that the operation of electrical appliances is not inherently in violation of the forbidden labors. Other authorities have written that the operation of any electrical appliance violates one of the 39 categories of labor (though there is spirited debate about precisely which ones). The subject is very complex, and has grown even more complicated as electronics have become integrated into countless functions of our daily lives. (I am working on a responsum on this subject for the CJLS).

This much is clear: electrical appliances should not be used for a purpose which is inherently forbidden (e.g. using an electric range or microwave oven to *cook* food (בישול), or an electronic device such as a computer or camera to *write* text or *record* images and sounds (כותב), or an electric mill to *grind* pepper or coffee (תוחן). Moreover, electronic devices used for daily work (e.g. computers, cell phones and PDAs) should be set aside so that Shabbat can emerge as a differentiated day of delight.

Some members of our community may choose to use electricity to operate appliances such as lights, fans and elevators, while others may adopt the more stringent practice of not operating any electrical appliances on Shabbat. There are positive values to support either position. For example, turning lights on and off only when needed avoids בל תשחית, the waste of natural resources. Using an elevator avoids טירחא יתירא, excessive strain on Shabbat. Conversely, avoiding the use of such appliances serves to differentiate one's conduct on Shabbat from other days of the week (עובדא דחול). Moreover, it is difficult and perhaps misleading to differentiate between permitted and forbidden uses of electrical appliances (לא פלוג).

Rabbinical and cantorial students should study and debate these issues in an atmosphere of humility and respect. They should recall the words of Isaiah 58, chanted each year on Yom Kippur morning:

אִם-תִּשָׁב מִשַּׁבַּת רַגְלְךָ עֲשׂוֹת חֲפָצֶיךָ בְּיוֹם קִדְשִׁי וְקִרְאתָ לְשַׁבַּת עֲנֵג לְקִדּוֹשׁ ה' מִכָּבֵד וְכִבְדָתוֹ  
מַעֲשׂוֹת דַּרְכֶיךָ מִמִּצּוֹא חֲפָצְךָ וְדַבַּר דְּבָר: אֲזַ תִּתְעַנֵּג עַל-ה' וְהִרְכַּבְתִּיךָ עַל-בְּמֹתַי אֲרָץ  
וְהֶאֱכַלְתִּיךָ נְחֹלֶת יַעֲקֹב אֲבִיךָ כִּי פִי ה' דִּבֶּר:

If you refrain from trampling the Sabbath, from pursuing your affairs on My holy day; If you call the Sabbath “delight,” the Lord’s holy day “honored”; And if you honor it and go not your ways, nor look to your affairs, nor strike bargains— Then you can seek the favor of the Lord. I will set you astride the heights of the earth, and let you enjoy the heritage of your father Jacob—for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Because clergy are often called upon “to work” on Shabbat by leading communal worship and study, the rules of Shabbat have special importance for us. By being vigilant in our observance, we model Shabbat for others, and also maintain our own integrity and sense of rest. In Isaiah’s words, we can then enjoy the heritage of *Ya’akov Avinu*.

### **Daily Prayer**

The Shulhan Arukh opens with the famous injunction, יתגבר כארי לעמוד בבוקר לעבודת בוראו, “*One should be mighty like a lion to stand up in the morning to serve the creator.*” It is never easy to fulfill one’s obligations of prayer, and it is even more challenging to pray with a focused mind and a pure heart. This is why we ask God each Shabbat באמת לעבדך לטהר לבנו, “*purify our hearts to serve You in truth.*”

Rabbinical and cantorial students share the same obligations as other Jews to pray, “Evening, morning and noon.” (Psalm 55) As role models of worship, rabbinical students should make special efforts to participate in communal prayer. This setting is an important part of rabbinic education, and it also helps foster community within our school. The minyan is a laboratory for acquiring skills, learning synagogue customs and laws, and incorporating the use of music and meditation in addition to the traditional chanting into tefillah.

When the ordination of women was decided at JTS, there were some who felt that this step was contingent upon women formally accepting upon themselves the obligation for mitzvot from which they had traditionally been exempted (מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמה), especially the statutory prayers of *Shacharit* and *Minchah*. Yet Mishnah Brakhot 3:3 specifically obligates women in prayer (תפילה). The nature of this obligation was famously debated in the medieval period between Rambam and Ramban, but already a century ago the Ashkenazi practice assumed a full obligation for women in daily prayer. See for example, the comments of Mishnah Berurah to O.H. 106:1, especially the end of note 3, and note 4, where he sides with Ramban in considering women to be obligated to recite the full Amidah at the appointed time for Shacharit and Minchah, and adds an equal obligation to recite Shema (he comments that at his time men, but not women, had accepted *Ma’ariv* as an obligation; this is not the case in our community).

The categorical exemption of women from positive, time bound commands (מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמה) is problematic, since there are arguably more exceptions than applications of the rule in the classical literature. As Professor Judith Hauptman has written in *Rereading the Rabbis*, the exemption of women from such commands may have been a consequence of their state of social subjugation to men in pre-Modern society. Since equal responsibility for men and women is an important value of our community, such exemptions should be considered inoperative within our school. Therefore, women, like men, are expected to fulfill the mitzvot of *tallit* and *tefillin*;

these sacred objects are symbolic of the broader categories of Torah study and mitzvah observance which rabbis are dedicated to model.

At JTS, we hold that women and men are equally obligated for daily prayer, and are equally entitled to serve as *sh'lichei tzibbur*. Therefore, the primary minyan of our school (WLSS) follows the traditional format of *tefillah* with equal participation for men and women. Service leaders are welcome to use either Amidah option published in Siddur Sim Shalom: the original text, or one that includes the names of the matriarchs. An alternative minyan is available in Stein Chapel for community members who prefer a non-egalitarian service; students are also welcome to arrange for other prayer alternatives that make use of non-traditional formats.

### ***Intimate Relationships***

Some of our students are single and some partnered; some have children and others do not; many change status during their years in our program. Some changes in status, such as engagements, weddings and the birth of children, are the cause of great celebration in our community. Other changes in students' lives are painful, eliciting a response of compassion and support from the community. Even *semakhot* can be a source of awkwardness and tension among students. Moreover, students frequently struggle to balance their academic, professional and personal lives. Our goal is for all students to experience *sheleimut—integration—*as they navigate these changes within themselves, with their partners and with their peers.

Jewish values such as honesty, modesty, respect, and protecting health all inform our sexual ethic and the way that we view one another. The Rabbinical Assembly's pastoral letter composed by Rabbi Elliot Dorff, *This is My Beloved, This is My Friend*, is a useful description of such values (now available as chapter three in Rabbi Dorff's book, *Love Your Neighbor and Yourself: A Jewish Approach to Modern Personal Ethics*, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003). He argues that even in non-marital relationships, Jewish values and norms must guide conduct. Unmarried students are expected to pursue holiness in their social and intimate interactions, even as are married students.

In 2006, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards voted in subsequent sessions on halakhic norms for opposite-sex (September 2006) and same-sex (December 2006) relationships. In the first session, the CJLS approved three papers that all confirmed the traditional practice of abstaining from sex during and after a woman's menstrual period until she immerses in a *mikveh*. The papers differed in some significant details, but all are considered to be valid practices within our community.

In the second session, the CJLS again approved three papers, this time on the subject of homosexuality. These papers were in sharp contrast with one another. Two opposed any modification of the traditional ban on same-sex intimacy. One, which I co-authored, argued that the halakhic obligation to preserve human dignity supersedes the rabbinic-level prohibitions of same sex intimacy for gays and lesbians. On this basis, gay and lesbian students have been welcomed into our school, and their relationships are recognized and celebrated. The nomenclature and content of such ceremonies of commitment is still evolving, but the integrity of such committed relationships is evident.

Halakhic debate on subjects such as those listed above reflects deep issues of personal and family identity; as such, it can be particularly challenging to conduct the conversation with integrity and compassion. Different points of view are welcomed within our community. All students are expected to show respect for the sensitivities of their fellow students and to view the discussion as a *machloket l'sheim shamayim*, a debate whose goal is to draw God's presence

closer to our community.

### ***Standards of Rabbinic Practice.***

Because rabbinical students often begin to function in rabbinic roles during the course of their studies, commitment to uphold these standards is required from the time of admission. The Rabbinical Assembly has designated several policies as *Standards of Rabbinic Practice*. Cantorial students are likewise bound by these same standards, which have been adopted by the Cantors Assembly.

These Standards are not necessarily our paramount values. For example, monotheism and the ban on murder are not Standards, yet they are universally understood to be core values of the Torah and of our rabbinate. Moreover, clergy are expected to be exemplars of morality, humility and compassion in their personal and professional lives. The Rabbinical Assembly's *Va'ad HaKavod* investigates charges of ritual violation and moral turpitude against its members. Rather, the Standards address ritual practices that affect Jewish identity and the structure of the Jewish family. They include (in my paraphrase):

- Not to grant formal Jewish status to a person who is neither born to a Jewish mother, nor converted with *milah* and *tevilah* as approved by a Beit Din.
- Not to perform a wedding between two people, one of whom is not Jewish according to the criteria listed above.
- Not to perform a second wedding for a person who has not granted or accepted a גט from his or her first spouse (or had the situation resolved by the Joint Beit Din via הפקעת קדושין).

Although rabbinical students are not yet members of the Rabbinical Assembly, they often begin to function in rabbinic roles during school, and they are granted automatic admission to the RA based upon their ordination by JTS. The same is true for our cantorial students and the Cantor's Assembly. As such, it is incumbent upon all of our students to abide by these important standards throughout their years in our school.

While each student has the right to express her or his ideas and interpretations, each also has responsibilities toward the collective group both in our school and in the larger movement and people of Israel. For example, conversion standards should not be idiosyncratic since colleagues depend upon one another to maintain the integrity of our process for the protection of the converts, their children and the communities that they will join. Indeed, many practices function in this way. It is always helpful for students of Torah to engage in learned, principled and intensive debate. But it is also a measure of wisdom for the individual to view his or her insights within the larger context of the community of Torah and to act as a member of a covenanted people.

### ***Conclusion***

This essay reflects the struggle of our movement and school to interpret the values and norms of our sacred tradition for contemporary practice in a way that is internally coherent and that welcomes principled differences of opinion. Students should adopt a curious, well-informed, humble and kind attitude towards one another. Disagreements should be explored in an atmosphere of mutual respect. By engaging in well-reasoned, principled and respectful dialogue we grow stronger as individuals and as leaders of the Jewish community. Humility is the key to understanding wisdom and to constructing community. As we say at the end of each Amidah, *פתח לבי בתורתך, ובמצותיך תרדוף נפשי ונפשי כעפר לכל תהיה. Make my soul like dust to all. Open my heart through your Torah, and through your Mitzvot quicken my soul.*

I have attempted in these few pages to clarify the purpose and parameters of religious practice in our community. More can and should be said on each of its subjects, and there is a long list of other subjects worthy of study. I pray that this essay will give us a greater appreciation of the religious challenges that confront us, and will help us sense the presence of God in our midst as we practice the mitzvot within our precious and sacred community of Torah.

Rabbi Daniel S. Nevins  
Pearl Resnick Dean of The Rabbinical School  
and of The Division for Religious Leadership

## **Appendix II**

### **Mentorship and Assessment**

#### **Religious Mentorship**

In addition to our curriculum's focus on academic instruction (*mada*) is the inculcation of spiritual qualities (*middot*) necessary for religious leadership. The primary mechanisms for this type of training are: minyan, meals, community time, Shabbat and a new program of spiritual mentoring using alumni of our program. We plan to assign each entering student a rabbinic mentor from either the faculty or our alumni in the field. These mentors will be trained by JTS and will be asked to commit to maintaining the mentoring relationship over the course of the student's training. These pairs will negotiate a mentoring contract specifying the minimum number of conversations per month, and indicating topics for each year's conversation such as faith journey, rabbinic identity, mitzvah observance, the balance of family and profession, and career plans. These mentoring relationships will be considered confidential between mentor and mentee, with the understanding that, when both agree, the Rabbinical School administration may be consulted. The administration will ask both parties to confirm each semester that contact is being maintained, and will provide an annual training program for mentoring pairs.

#### **Rotations and Internships**

All Rabbinical Students are required to complete rotations in the following fields: congregation, chaplaincy, Jewish communal service agency, education, Ramah/USY. These may be started as early as the first year, but are likely to be clustered in the third year and its adjacent summers. Year-long internships are generally completed in the fourth year with the Resnick Internship Seminar providing students with guidance in processing these intense learning experiences. Alternatively, Kaplan Pastoral Internships can be completed over the summer.

#### **Assessment**

For this curriculum to succeed we will need to enhance our assessment of students, faculty, administration and the program itself. Students will be asked each year to write a reflection on their academic, professional and spiritual progress, to prepare a portfolio of their work, and to review these reports with their academic advisers. Faculty will be invited to write a report at the end of each semester evaluating the progress of their students. Our administration must design benchmarks and measurements to be used in assessing this new curriculum and modifying it for maximum effectiveness. The first step is the identification of benchmarks:

#### **Benchmarks**

A first step in preparing such tools of assessment is to describe benchmarks for each stage of our program:

*By the time students begin year one, they should have demonstrated a pattern of Jewish faith and observance including, for example, traditional daily prayer, kashrut, Shabbat and Yom Tov, and gemilut chasadim. They should be able to sight-read simple Hebrew texts from the Siddur and Chumash. They should be able to prepare more complicated texts from the Bible and Talmud and demonstrate this competence by passing exams administered by the Bible and Talmud departments. Entering students should be familiar with Jewish history and philosophy and have already completed two years of college level Hebrew.*

*By the time students begin year two, they should have substantially strengthened the skills of reading Hebrew texts, especially Bible and Talmud, with understanding of grammar and expanded vocabulary. Their summer ulpan should prepare them for the use of spoken Hebrew in their coursework. They should have completed an overview of the *Tanakh*, understanding of its prose and poetry, and have become familiar with the use of traditional and modern*

commentaries. They should be able to present brief *divrei Torah* based upon their first year of studies. Our students should have deeper understanding of Jewish liturgy in the Talmud and halakhah and should be capable of leading the daily services with proper *nusach*. By year two, students should have a contextual understanding of Judaism informed by the lenses of history, anthropology, sociology and comparative religion.

*By the time students begin year three*, they should be familiar with the history, culture, land and people of modern Israel. Their textual skills in written and oral Torah should be strong, and they should have developed a more nuanced Jewish world view based upon exposure to Jewish philosophy, history, culture and encounters with other religious communities. These students should be ready to choose an academic field of concentration and to engage in high level learning across the gamut of Jewish studies. They should also be ready to venture into para-rabbinic roles through rotations and to accept responsibilities for teaching and leading Shabbat and festival prayer.

*By the time students begin year four*, they should have deepened their academic knowledge in Jewish studies and have made substantial progress in their counseling and teaching skills. Their knowledge of Talmud and Jewish law should be broad enough to serve as a foundation for more advanced studies. They should have completed their rotations and developed a sense of their strengths and challenges in professional areas. Students should have completed roughly half of the requirements for their Masters degree and have begun to plan their senior projects. These students should be able to perform an advanced list of synagogue skills and to demonstrate growing strength in their counseling and teaching abilities. They should have begun to establish a rabbinic identity and to have reflected upon personal areas of challenge requiring spiritual, professional and academic growth.

*By the time students begin year five*, they should be capable of synthesizing concepts and practices from a broad spectrum of Jewish civilization, drawing upon primary texts with accuracy and authority. They should have completed their Masters requirements and begun work on their senior project. These students should be role models of Jewish identity, faith and observance for younger students and for the communities which they will be leading. They should demonstrate strength in public teaching and preaching. Our seniors should have identified professional goals for the initial stage of their rabbinic career and have begun to prepare for their job search. They should be prepared to think globally about the covenantal challenges and opportunities facing the Jewish people and the Conservative Movement. They should be ready to develop partnerships with leaders and organizations both within and without the Jewish community. Our seniors should exhibit curiosity to delve deeply into various areas of Jewish study and should be prepared for the challenges of leadership awaiting them after ordination.

*By ordination, our graduates should have* a solid grasp of the language, concepts, culture and practices of Judaism. They should be capable of explaining and modeling a profound form of Jewish faith and observance with humility and compassion. They should have the skills and sense to decide basic questions of Jewish law for their communities. They should have identified goals for their rabbinic careers and be ready to begin to serve God as rabbis-teachers of Torah and guardians of the covenant. They should have identified areas of continued spiritual, academic and professional growth and begun to plan for a lifetime of study. Reviewing Jewish tradition and observing contemporary challenges, they shall fulfill the adage, *hayashan yitkadeish v'hechadash yitkadeish*—to revive that which is old, and to sanctify that which is new.