



ACADEMY
for JEWISH
RELIGION

RABBINIC SUPPLEMENT

ACADEMIC YEAR

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**28 Wells Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10701**

ajrsem.org

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A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO THE AJR RABBINICAL PROGRAM

I. INTRODUCTION

The Rabbinical Program leads to ordination as *Rav U-moreh/Morah B'Yisrael*, Rabbi and Teacher in Israel. The program is designed to train students to serve the evolving Jewish community through preparation in academic scholarship, traditional Jewish study, ethics, professional skills and spiritual grounding.

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 must be met in the first year or taken over a period of many trimesters. This guide is intended to help you plan your program in the most efficient way. The Academic Dean will help guide you in the best course of study for your needs.

II. ACADEMIC COURSES

There are currently 140 academic credits, 4 trimesters of Fieldwork Support Seminar, and 4 trimesters of Core Concepts Seminar required for ordination. Each trimester you will meet with the Academic Dean to discuss the courses that you will take that trimester. 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 trimesters of Introduction to Talmud, two trimesters of Intermediate Talmud and two trimesters of Advanced Talmud. Now that AJR is running on a trimester system, Students who want to study full time all year round can finish the program in three years. Others will choose to study at a more measured pace, finishing the program in five years, or longer when completed through part time study.

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, History, Liturgy, 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 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 it can be helpful to take courses in each area each year.

There is a limit to the number of courses students are allowed to take as independent 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 have missed and are not offered during that year.

Six trimesters of Talmud are required for ordination. It is advisable that students take additional Talmud courses in order to develop their skills to the required 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 Academic Dean.

The topics covered in 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 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 the same day the next year.

III. COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATIONS

For each of the written exams four hours will be allowed. Some students find they need all that time and others find they need much less time.

For each of the oral exams, the initial testing time will be 20 minutes in the presence of two testers. Students will be asked to translate and explain passages from anywhere in the texts for that exam. After 20 minutes, the student will be asked to briefly step out to allow the two testers to confer. The student will then either be told that s/he has passed, has failed, or that another 10 minutes of testing will be required – followed by another brief conference by the testers and a final determination of pass or fail.

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

1. Hebrew

Part 1: Modern Hebrew exam including grammar, reading comprehension and composition without the use of a dictionary. Exam time: 4 hours.

Part 2: A translation of liturgical texts. A dictionary is allowed. Exam time: 4 hours

2. Bible

Part 1: Students must pick up hard copy preparatory material from the AJR office so they can open and study it 3 days (72 hours) before they take the exam. The exam itself will be taken at AJR, and will include translations and questions with a Hebrew *Tanakh* and *Miqra'ot Gedolot* (Rashi font). Exam time: 4 hours.

Part 2: Using unseen texts, students will be asked to translate and answer questions. A Hebrew *Tanakh* and a dictionary are allowed. Exam time: 4 hours.

3. Talmud

Part 1: Oral examination 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 Steinsaltz (Hebrew) edition only. The student is responsible to prepare the Talmud text and it is recommended that s/he use the commentaries of Steinsaltz and Rashi in order to properly understand the structure and logic of the *sugya*.

Part 2: Written examination including questions requiring 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. 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. Exam time: 4 hours.

4. Codes

Part 1: 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 student will be tested on texts (without translation) from the vocalized edition of the *Mishneh Torah* that are included in the study packet.

Part 2: 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. 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. Exam time: 4 hours.

Comprehensive Examination study packets for the Talmud and Codes exams are available in electronic form from 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 a list of terms, selections from Rambam's *Mishneh Torah* and secondary readings from 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 written 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. Students are allowed four hours for each written exam.

IV. SENIOR PROJECT

The Master's Project as part of the AJR M.A. in Jewish Studies fulfills the senior project requirement. Students who have earned an M.A. in Jewish Studies at another institution are exempt from the requirement of the M.A. in Jewish Studies at AJR. If their M.A. from another institution included a Master's Project then they are exempt from the senior project requirement at AJR. If their M.A. did not include a Master's Project then they are required to produce a Senior Project as outlined in the sections below.

Topic and mentor must be chosen and approved by June 15th of the academic year prior to Ordination. The final draft must be submitted to the faculty by November 30th. After final editing and approval, the student

has the option and is encouraged to present the thesis before students, faculty and administration. Presentation dates should be arranged with Rabbi Jill Hammer. Those fulfilling the Senior Project requirement at Gratz College should follow guidelines provided by Gratz College.

1. Senior Project Guidelines

The Senior Project should address 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. AJR students who have already earned an M.A. in Jewish studies for which they wrote a thesis are exempt from the senior thesis requirement.

2. Senior Project Description & Requirements

Please remember that a Senior Project takes 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 and 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.
- Senior Projects typically vary 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, 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 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 evolve into an entire paper. You may renegotiate the topic when this occurs. If you think 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.

3. Senior Project Time Line

The time line that is provided below begins the April before the last year of school. It is recommended that you begin thinking about your topic and consider writing the Senior Project the year before your last year as there are the comprehensive exams and ritual skills requirements that also need to be completed prior to ordination. The time line should give you an idea of how much time you need to allot to this project.

A. Proposal *Last week of April to the second week of June (year prior to anticipated Ordination)*

Your Senior Project topic should be chosen, formally submitted in writing with goals and methodology clearly delineated and approved with a mentor selected and invited to work with you.

The topic for your project and your mentor must be approved by the Director of Senior Projects who will consult with the Academic Dean before approving the Senior Project. Approval should be confirmed before approaching the mentor in order to avoid embarrassment if the mentor or topic is not approved.

Mentors do not have to be from the AJR faculty but should be respected as experts in the area chosen. Please note that a proposal consists of:

- i. A title
- ii. A one - two sentence synopsis of the specific question that the paper will answer or the specific issue that the paper will investigate
- iii. Background and additional information – several paragraphs

B. Outline *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.

C. First Draft *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.

D. Second Draft *Last week in November*

Submit the second draft of the project. This should be a polished draft. The date of submission will give your mentor and the Director of Senior Projects substantial time to review the work.

E. Final Editing *December*

December is set aside for editing and final revisions. Oral presentations will take place during several lunch sessions between January and April. Your presentation time is one-half hour.

4. Mentor Guidelines

It is assumed that your Senior Project Mentor is an expert in your chosen subject area and a guide who will help 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 continue your research and writing.

V. RITUAL SKILLS REQUIREMENT

Students are 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 are not acceptable. A two-week testing period will be scheduled during the fall and spring trimesters during which students can sign up to be tested on specific requirements. In addition, there will be opportunities to test throughout the summer. Students are urged to make use of these time periods.

AJR offers an optional, non-credit, Ritual Skills preparatory course approximately once every 2-4 semesters for those who desire help in training for Ritual Skills testing. Additionally, there is a link to resources for Ritual Skills training on the AJR website, under “Current Students.” This list of resources is currently small and is to be viewed as a beginning. The AJR administration is committed to continually revising and expanding it in order to increase its utility. Sometimes students elect to arrange private tutoring to help them prepare for Ritual Skills testing. We encourage such students to first consult with Dr. Prouser or Rabbi Hoffman before arranging tutoring so that we can provide the kind of guidance and coordination that will maximize the benefit of the tutoring.

I. Ritual Skills Timeline

The Ritual Skills program is divided into five units. All skills will be tested; there will not be multiple choicetype questions. Students should make every effort to complete the units as follows:

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

Detailed information about Ritual Skills requirements can be found in the Ritual Skills Handbook.

RABBINIC COURSE REQUIREMENTS**BIBLE (18.0 credits)**

Introduction to Bible
 Introduction to *Parshanut*
Parashat Hashavua (4 credits)
Nevi'im Rishonim Elective
Nevi'im Aḥaronim Elective
Ketuvim Elective
 Electives (4 credits)

HEBREW (18 credits)

Hebrew I (8 credits)
 Hebrew II (8 credits)
 Biblical Hebrew

HISTORY (8 credits)

Period of Antiquity
 Medieval History
 Modern History
 Contemporary History

LITURGY (12 credits)

Introduction to Liturgy
 Shabbat Liturgy
 Festival Liturgy
Yamim Nora'im Liturgy
Tefillah and Seminar (4 credits)

PHILOSOPHY (13 credits)

Medieval Philosophy
 Modern Philosophy
 Personal Theology
 Mysticism Elective
 Pluralism
 Bio-Ethics (1 credit)
 Ethics Elective

PROFESSIONAL SKILLS (24 credits)

Pastoral Counseling I
 Pastoral Counseling II
 Homiletics (1 credit)
 Education Theory
 Education Methods
 Jewish Music and the Cantorate (1 credit)
 Life Cycle I
 Life Cycle II Conversion
 Conversion
 Contemporary Denominations
 Critical Issues
 Chaplaincy (1 credit)
 Congregational Dynamics (1 credit)
 Professional Skills Elective
 Fieldwork Support Seminar
 4 semesters, no credit
 Core Concepts Seminar
 4 semesters, no credit

RABBINICS/HALAKHA (30 credits)

Introduction to *Mishnah*
 Introduction to Talmud I
 Introduction to Talmud II
 Intermediate Talmud I
 Intermediate Talmud II
 Advanced Talmud (4 credits)
 Introduction to *Midrash*
Midrash Electives (2 credits)
 Introduction to Codes (4 credits)
 Advanced Codes
 Introduction to Responsa
 Critical Issues (*Halakha*)
 Rabbinics and/or Codes Elective

SPIRITUALITY (2 credits)**ELECTIVES (15 credits)****TOTAL: 140 CREDITS**