



ACADEMY
for JEWISH
RELIGION

SENIOR HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC YEAR

2018 / 2019

5779 / תשע"ט

28 Wells Avenue

YONKERS, NEW YORK

10701

AJRSEM.ORG

Dear Senior,

Congratulations on reaching this stage in your years of study at AJR! You have worked hard to accomplish so much. This year will be full of transitions and the accompanying emotions. There will be relief as you envision the reality of attaining your goal. There will be a powerful awareness that you are experiencing each aspect of the school year for the last time as a student. There may be some anxiety as you head out the academic door to assume your place as a fully ordained member of the clergy. It is an exciting, tender, thrilling, sentimental, vulnerable and extraordinary year ahead.

All of us on staff will do our best to make your senior year a positive experience and your ordination memorable. We have carefully planned for it.

This Handbook contains important and detailed information about your status as a senior and your obligations as an ordinee. Please read it carefully as there is information that is helpful and essential. It is important that you adhere to the information and the dates outlined and that you sign and return the Letter of Agreement (last page) to the AJR office by Monday, November 19, 2018.

We are dedicated to making this year, your ordination, and your transition into the field meaningful and stress-free. Your cooperation will contribute to making that a reality.

Mazel tov as you embark on this year. We are proud of you.

Kol tuv,

The AJR Staff and Administration

A Personal Welcome from ARC

Shalom AJR Friends,

I am so pleased to be invited to write these words of welcome and support to you – as you embark on your final year of studies to formally become a rabbi or cantor for the Jewish people. At this point in time, you have had many experiences as

you have made your way through the maze of study of Talmud and Torah, *nusah* and trope, the history of our people, the dynamics of our communities, the healing power of presence and prayer, and the wonderful rhythm of our Jewish year. You will be putting the finishing touches on senior projects and recitals. You will be checking off those final ritual skills from your lists. Your congregations or communities of your student placement will be preparing to celebrate with you. In the process, you have become a better listener – to the people around you and, hopefully, to yourself.

Listen carefully as you make your way through the coming year. What is important to you? What will you carry with you into your future? And how can the Association of Rabbis and Cantors be a resource to you? Each of our members has stood where you stand at this time. Each of us has looked ahead and thought – OMG, this is for real! Please know that we are here to help you with your questions and concerns as you think about what your future can hold.

Upon your ordination, we hope that you will consider joining ARC and receiving the benefit of our continued community, support and professional offerings, including a pension plan and opportunities for continuing education. Membership in ARC has eased the way for many members to participate in local and state rabbinical boards and receive their benefits as well. Of importance for most members is that only the AJR alumni who are ARC members are eligible for continued placement

services.

The other focus of our alumni and professional association is on the Academy and its students. ARC seeks to support and further the interests of AJR through financial contributions, through gifts and services for students, and through participation in committees and task forces at AJR.

Dues for the first year after your ordination are \$100. Full membership, including placement privileges, is \$360 a year for subsequent years. Upon joining, you will be given access to the reserved sector of our website www.thearconline.org.

I stand with more than 120 members of the ARC as we hold out our hands in friendship and support and encouragement to each of you, wishing you much success in the coming year.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be helpful in any way.

Kol Tuv,

Enid

Rabbi Enid C. Lader
President, ARC

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1306

SENIOR STANDING FOR ORDINATION STUDENTS

A. Requirements for Senior Standing

Upon entering the senior year, students must have fulfilled all but 14 of their courses, completed their proficiency exams, have significant work done on their senior projects, and be in good standing financially.

In addition, each student must meet criteria of personal suitability for the cantorate or rabbinate. Our program of training culminates with institutional *semikhah* conferred upon the candidate by the Academy in the presence of a witnessing *Beit Din*. In order to be able to ordain a candidate, the Academy must feel certain that the candidate's ways of interaction with others are safe and well-balanced. This decision will be informed by:

- the manner in which a student interacts within the AJR community;
- feedback from AJR faculty and advisors;
- feedback from colleagues and congregants at worksites; and/or
- direct discussion with the student.

The decision to ordain any candidate will be made by the Senior Administration. Someone who is determined to be unprepared in any of the areas delineated above will not be ordained.

ORDINATION REQUIREMENTS

A. Status Interview

During the spring trimester prior to the anticipated senior year, the student will have a formal interview with a member of the Senior Administration to review status in regard to ordination

requirements and readiness for Senior status.

B. Completion of Examinations & Comprehensives

All examinations and comprehensives must be completed by September 1st of the academic year in which ordination is expected. If a student fails a comprehensive examination, a determination will be made by the Dean as to whether the exam should be retaken or whether alternate coursework should be done in its stead. Based on the results of the exam, the decision may be made that the student will need to put off ordination for a year or more. In extreme cases, if multiple exams are failed, or if exams are failed multiple times, it may be determined that the student is not eligible for ordination.

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.

C. Senior Project

Seniors who have not completed their senior project as part of the M.A. program must produce a Senior Project as outlined in the section, “Senior Projects & Thesis Guidelines” found in the addendum to this Handbook. 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 Jeff Hoffman.

D. Senior Practicum

Senior cantorial students must present a senior practicum as outlined in the Student Handbook and Cantorial Supplement. While preparations for senior practicum are similar to regular student practica, the graduating cantorial student will have forty minutes for the practicum and has flexibility in choosing selections based on a theme or particular subject.

E. Ritual Skills

Ritual Skills requirements must be completed by the end of the first trimester of the senior year. Specific ritual skills requirements are outlined in the appropriate supplement for rabbis or cantors. The Ritual Skills Handbook provides a description of the requirements for each skill.

<http://www.ajrsem.org/students/>

F. Financial Obligations

All financial obligations to the Academy must be settled by March 1st and acknowledgment of any debt for student loans must be filed with the administrative office.

Costs related to senior year and ordination are as follows:

Senior Ordination Fee - \$950

Master's Project Mentor Fee - \$300

SENIOR SEMINAR

Senior Seminar explores the process of transitioning from identity as a student to identity as clergy and also considers important issues for new clergy such as self-care, spiritual growth, and setting boundaries. Senior Seminar allows students

who are soon to be ordained to share their experiences and ideas with one another. Senior Seminar is also a place where students receive important information about ordination.

Senior Seminar takes place over four half-day sessions and attendance is required. Dates for Senior Seminar TBD.

PLACEMENT FOR SENIORS

During this year, the placement office will work with you to enhance your employment opportunities. Please make an appointment in the Fall with Cantor Michael Kasper to review your resume and credentials and to create a strategy so that you are well positioned for the job search.

ORDINATION

The format and structure of the ordination ceremony will be determined by the Senior Administration. Changes in the customs of the Academy for Jewish Religion ordination ceremony will be discussed with the Academy for Jewish Religion community.

1. Female rabbinical ordinees may choose to use either *Rav* or *Rabbah* as their Hebrew title on the *semikhah* documents. All students will use Rabbi as their English title.
2. Each ordinee is allotted 2½ minutes following their formal ordination that may be used for teaching, musical presentation, or personal remarks. This time limit applies to cantorial and rabbinic ordinees. Seniors must submit the text of their presentation two weeks prior to ordination for approval.
3. Each senior may choose the four participants in their own ordination. There will be one presenter and three

members of the witnessing *beit din*. Three members of this group must be part of the Academy for Jewish Religion community: members of the faculty within the past five years, alumni, or a member of the Board of Trustees.

4. The members of the *beit din* must have received rabbinic or cantorial ordination (or cantorial investiture) acceptable to the Academy for Jewish Religion. The *beit din* for a rabbinical student must be comprised of rabbis.

5. The presenter will introduce the candidate for ordination using formal text prepared by the Administration. This is the ordinee's formal introduction as a Jewish professional and, therefore, this role should be given to someone with standing in the Jewish professional community who has been connected to you during your time at AJR. Presenters may also be those who have mentored you professionally or spiritually from outside the Jewish community. The presenter will be asked to submit a written piece about you for the journal by February 4th. When you ask someone to serve as presenter, *please make sure they are aware of this deadline*.

6. Ordination attire consists of a black robe and *tallit*. In keeping with the solemnity of the occasion and to create uniformity, we encourage you to wear the *kippah*, *atarah* and *kanfot* given to you by ARC and the Student Association. In addition, you are encouraged to wear an academic hood from the school where you earned your highest degree. More information on this will be discussed during the spring trimester.

ORDINATION TIMETABLE

In order to ensure that the ordination process goes smoothly and culminates in the joyful and spiritual event that it should be, it is imperative that the information and documentation outlined below

is provided by you and that you adhere to all deadlines.

Ordination will take place on Tuesday April 16th.

The deadline for submitting all information is January 15th, 2019 except where January 2nd or other deadline is noted.

This allows you to take advantage of the Winter break to make the necessary contacts and to gather the information needed. The office and administration need the time to review, format and approve the material for the Ordination Journal. It is recommended that the material be submitted earlier and January 15th is a firm deadline.

Ordination Journal

A word about invitations and Journal tributes:

Ordination is a communal event for AJR – for families, students, alumni, the board of trustees, community dignitaries and Jewish leaders. It is a celebratory highlight of the year and it is a time when the talents of our ordinees and the special character of AJR are showcased. We would like to share this experience with as many people as possible and, therefore, it is one of the reasons we stress the importance of your invitation and address lists.

The Ordination Journal is more than simply a program. Above all, it is a keepsake of messages from people who want to pay tribute to you.

The Journal is also one of AJR's most valuable promotional tools. Guests spend time reading it and it is distributed in promotional materials throughout the year. Through the essays written by you and your presenters, people are impressed with the histories of our graduates and with the institution that produces this kind of unique clergy.

Equally important are the much needed funds raised by our collective participation in the Journal. The Journal serves as a vital annual fundraiser for AJR and ordination is your opportunity to contribute to this effort and to help AJR with promotion and pride of place.

In order to reach a wide community of invitees and facilitate the preparation of the Ordination Journal, we need your guest contact information, including email address. Email addresses are used to follow up with reminders as Journal ad deadlines approach. We have extensive experience with how much people appreciate these reminders.

The following items are due January 2, 2019:

Hebrew and English Names

Your Hebrew and English names will be on the invitation and on the *semikhah* document. Please submit your Hebrew and English name/s exactly as you wish them to appear on the *semikhah* document and on the invitation. If you want your name to appear differently on the invitation than on the certificate, please note that. The *semikhah* certificates are custom made, so please take the time to confirm the spelling of your Hebrew name.

Approved List of Your *Beit Din* and Presenter

Please email the list of your *beit din* to the AJR office with the following information for each member of your *beit din* and your presenter: title, name, mailing address, daytime contact number, and email address.

Please confirm with each potential *beit din* member that they are available on the date of ordination. All *beit din* members and presenters will be contacted separately by the AJR office with detailed instructions for the presenter piece they will be asked to write and with instructions for the day.

The following items are due by January 15th, 2019:

Mailing List

Your mailing lists help AJR determine the quantity of invitations needed. AJR will mail any quantity of hard copy invitations and will pay domestic first class postage for 100 invitations. You are expected to reimburse AJR for any additional invitations sent.

*Please submit your mailing list **in an Excel file only** with separate cells for titles, last names, first names, street address, city, state, zip, phone number and email address. **The office cannot do this for you**, so please seek assistance if necessary. Please include email addresses so we can send an electronic invitation and Journal reminders. Please indicate invitees who should receive email only invitations, if any.*

Please do not include on your list any member of the AJR board, alumni, staff, faculty or students as they are already included on the AJR invitation list. Once invitations have been mailed, we recommend that you follow up with several 'spot checks' to confirm invitations have been received. Sometimes there are glitches with postal delivery. Often, people complain that they didn't receive an invitation when it turns out that they just didn't open it.

Bio, Photo, Pasuk (AJR has editorial license on all documents.)

Each student is allotted two facing pages in the Ordination Journal. One page is written by the ordinee's presenter and the other page contains the ordinee's bio with a heading consisting of a photo and a *pasuk* from a sacred text. The AJR office will be in direct contact with your presenter.

- The bio should be written by the student in the first person. If you would like to review journals from previous years, you may request one from the main office. Your bio

should be submitted electronically in a word document. Bios may be a maximum of 500 words or will be edited to conform to this limit.

- Photo - Please submit a high resolution photo (preferably professional).
- *Pasuk* - Please submit your *pasuk* in Hebrew and English and include the citation.

Presenter Piece – due February 4, 2019

Your presenter will need to submit a written piece about you for the journal by February 1st. *Please make sure they are aware of this deadline.*

Ordination Speech - due April 5, 2019

During the ordination ceremony, each rabbinical student is allotted 2 ½ minutes to speak. Please submit your talk to the Academic Dean for review by April 25, 2019. It will be timed during the ordination rehearsal.

Additional information

Robes & Hoods – *The fee for hoods is included in the Senior Ordination Fee.* All ordinees with graduate degrees are encouraged to wear a hood representing that degree. In order to have the proper robes & hoods on hand, please email the AJR office to indicate whether you have your own robe/hood or hood or if you would like AJR to provide one for you. If AJR is providing a robe, please email your height to the AJR office.

More information will be provided during the Spring trimester.

Important Dates on the Ordination

Calendar Senior Legacy – Monday, April 8,

2019

This is the continuing tradition of sharing messages from our future clergy with the rest of the student community. During your time here, you have gained wisdom and perspective in experiencing AJR studies, traditions and culture. You are asked to share some helpful hints or other advice, the “bigger picture” observations that you have gained. At this time, student awards are announced in recognition of service and achievements.

Blessing Circle – Tuesday, April 9, 2019

The Blessing Circle is a time for our intimate AJR family to circle our ordinees with the support and friendship we offer as you move forward. Led by the Director of Spiritual Education, Rabbi Jill Hammer, the Blessing Circle ceremony is a unique AJR event, one that will remain in your memory and will help create memories for this class.

Ordination Rehearsal – Tuesday, April 9, 2019

The Ordination Rehearsal follows the Blessing Circle. The purpose of the rehearsal is to get a feel for the space and to conduct a sound check. This is also when your presentation will be timed. It is expected that you will attend therehearsal.

ARC dinner – Date TBD

Each year the Association of Rabbis and Cantors fetes the ordination class by taking them to dinner.

Ordination Ceremony – Tuesday, April 16th, 2019

What to Expect at the Ordination Ceremony

Arrival and Robing

All ordinees **MUST** arrive for robing at least 15 minutes before the *semikhah* signing begins. Please allow enough time for traffic and for gathering family members. Your late arrival impacts on the timing of the day and on the special ambiance for all participants.

Minhah

Minhah offers a reflective transition to the next events.

The Semikhah Document Ceremony

The signing of the *semikhah* document is a high point for the ordinee. The ceremony is facilitated by the Director of Spiritual Education and the Cantorial Program Coordinator, who will transition from one ordinee to the next with *niggunim* and words of *brakha*. The space is set with one table in the middle of the *Beit Midrash* with seats for the *Beit Din*. Signators of the document are the Academic Dean representing AJR, and the three members of your *Beit Din*. People have likened this aspect of the ordination process to the signing of the *ketubah*. This is the time for family embraces and blessings from *Beit Din* members. While the presenter does not sign the document, his/ her role is to ceremonially present it to each grouping.

Space is restricted in the *Beit Midrash*.

Line Up Prior to the Ceremony

You will have the option during line-up at the library to use a quiet room on the side. Some graduates prefer a quiet, meditative space; others prefer the bustle of greeting friends in a public line-up.

Personal items can be left at the AJR building or at the back of the auditorium under the supervision of an AJR volunteer or staff person. They must be reclaimed after the recessional.

Someone will be assigned to collect robes & hoods at the exit.

The Reception

With the financial assistance of the Association of Rabbis and Cantors, AJR is pleased to provide ordination guests with a post-ceremony reception that takes place in the library foyer just outside of the auditorium. Traditionally, a light dessert and beverage collation is provided. Many senior classes have chosen to embellish this with a more expanded menu including

pastas, salads and fish platters. As a class, you should make this decision in February, to allow time for group discussion and choices of menu and budget with the caterer. Please be in touch with the main office to discuss menu options and make the final order.

Photography

Often AJR may hire a videographer or photographer for publicity purposes. Those who are interested in personal professional photographs should make that arrangement privately, either individually or as a class. If a professional is hired, that person will not necessarily have full access to the ceremony in progress and may not interfere with processional, recessional or movement on or off the stage.

Gifts

The Association of Rabbis and Cantors gifts each ordinee with an *atarah* for your *tallit*. It will be given to you with enough time to be able to attach it to your *tallit* of choice. The Student Association has the tradition of offering *kanfot* and a *kippah* to each graduating senior.

There is a longstanding tradition that the Senior Class presents the school with a class gift. Some examples of past gifts are a keyboard, a music stand, laptops, and sets of reference books. The administration is available to make suggestions if you wish to consult with them.

It is customary to offer a token gift to the members of your *beit din* and to your presenter.

Documents

In addition to the *semikhah* document, there are proclamations offered by the Yonkers Mayor and by the State Senator and other officials and state representatives.

Reserved Seating

As a rule, there is open seating for the ordination ceremony. There is a reserved seating section for members of the *batei din*, presenters, dignitaries, board members, faculty, administration, alumni and students. There is a separate section reserved for a limited number of immediate family/guests whose names have been submitted to the AJR office in advance. Ushers will direct your guests to that section.

It is important to inform the AJR office in advance if you are expecting guests who require special physical considerations in seating or in reaching the venue, specifically if they need help getting from AJR and the *semikhah* signing to the Yonkers Library.

Parking

Detailed directions to AJR and to the Yonkers Library can be found at the link below. Encourage your guests to use these directions. In order to reach the AJR building using a GPS, the proper coordinates (not address) are required.

<http://www.ajrsem.org/about/directions/>

Your Connection with AJR After Ordination

We look forward to your maintaining a connection with the school and community and we hope to see you at our Fall Retreats, Spring Intensives, and other AJR Programs.

In addition, there is the *Staying Connected Series* designed as a response to alumni who were seeking ways to continue learning with their AJR *hevra* and to maintain AJR contacts and were challenged by distance and demanding schedules. About three or four times per year, AJR invites a faculty member to teach a

shiur on site for those alumni ready to travel to us. The *shiur* is available via our Distance Classroom for those who cannot join us here. It has become a special way for our alumni to re-experience the AJR classroom, network and schmooze.

The *shiur* runs for approximately one hour.

Addendum I

Senior Project Guidelines

All students prepare a senior project. Students may prepare the project either as a Master's Project for the AJR MA in Jewish Studies or as part of an MA in Jewish Studies completed at another, approved, graduate program before matriculation at AJR. If an AJR student completed an MA in Jewish Studies at another, approved, graduate program but did not write a thesis, this student must complete a Senior Project as part of their ordination work at AJR.

A Master's Project (or Senior Project) represents the ability of a student to work with academic books and articles toward the creation of a project that applies these in a practical and functional, educational way. Students who wish to create a scholarly study as their Master's Project must demonstrate mastery of the primary sources in their original languages. Students will choose an appropriate mentor with the help of the Master's Projects Advisor. Such a mentor – who must have the necessary expertise for the particular project – may be chosen from the AJR faculty or from the general community. A mentor's fee will be collected by AJR and the mentor will be paid by AJR. The Academic Dean and the Master's Projects Advisor may not serve as mentors. The mentor's fee is \$300.

The Master's Project should involve a topic that has been a focus of your thoughts and a point of challenge and curiosity

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

- a. A Master's Project must have a serious academic research component as well as be reflective of dynamic imagination and creativity.
- b. It should be heavily footnoted from source materials, both primary and secondary. An extensive bibliography should accompany the work.
- c. Your project should be in proper English and or Hebrew, both grammatically correct as well as fluent.
- d. A careful outline will help you to develop a cohesive thought and content pattern.
- e. Your project can be in essay form, appear as a developed curriculum or take the form of an instruction manual or guide.
- f. Master's Projects range in length from about fifty to one hundred pages.
- g. Proposals for the project must be approved by the Master's Project Advisor, Rabbi Jeff Hoffman.
- h. As you proceed with your project, you may find that what you thought would be one chapter may itself evolve into an entire paper. You have flexibility to renegotiate the topic when this occurs. If you feel the project could lead to a substantial book size text, view the project as a publishable article that could serve as the forerunner to such a text.

- i. The Master's Project fulfills the senior project requirement for ordination students.

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.

- Proposal - Last week of April – second week of June (year prior to anticipated Ordination)

Your Senior Project topic should be chosen and formally submitted in writing – with goals and methodology clearly delineated and approved, and with a requested mentor you would like to invite to work with you. The topic for your project and your mentor must be approved by the Senior Project Advisor. This should be done prior to the mentor being approached in order to avoid embarrassment should the mentor or topic not be approved. Mentors do not have to be from the AJR faculty, but should be respected as experts in the area chosen.

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

- 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.

Include a section in your outline entitled “Survey of the Literature.” This section should include citations of books and articles related to your topic. Your research for these citations will ensure that you will be building on work that has already been done. Part of the research should include a search for books in the online catalog of a major Judaica library such as the library of [The Jewish Theological Seminary](#) or [Hebrew Union College](#) and for articles on RAMBI, [click here](#).

- **First Draft - Last week in October**
Submit the first draft of your paper to your Senior Project Advisor and to your mentor for review and comment.
- **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 Senior Project Advisor substantial time to review the work.
- **Final Editing - December**
December is set aside for editing and fine-tuning. A digital file of the final document should be sent to the Senior Project Advisor. Oral presentation will occur during lunch sessions scheduled between January and April.

Mentor Guidelines

It is assumed that your Senior Project mentor is an expert in your chosen subject area as well as a guide who will help you through this process. Please consider these guidelines prior to beginning your project and after your mentor has been approached and has accepted their 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 editing. While each segment is being edited, you should be continuing your research and writing.

Check list of items to collect & submit:

AJR has editorial license for all written material.

Due on or before January 2, 2019:

- Hebrew & English names exactly as they are to appear on the invitation and *semikhah* document

Due on or before January 15, 2019:

(May be submitted earlier.)

- Mailing List(s) - for Ordination invitations, Excel file only including separate cells for title, last name, first name, phone, street address, city, state, zip, email address
- Women rabbinic students: Indicate whether you are using *Rav* or *Rabbah*
- Approved list of your *Beit Din* & presenters with contact info
- Bio - 500 words max in a word document
- Photo - high res jpg
- *Pasuk* - Hebrew and English
- Approved musical selection for cantorial ordines

Due February 1, 2019: Please make sure your presenter is aware of this deadline!

- Presenter piece - 400 words max in a word document

Due April 5, 2019:

(May be submitted earlier.)

- Ordination Speech for approval - 2 1/2 minutes max.



Letter of Agreement

Due in office on or before Monday, November 19, 2018

By signing this document I confirm that I have read and am responsible for the contents of the information provided in this Senior Handbook.

Signature

____/____/____
Today's Date

Please return via email or hard copy to the AJR office by Monday, November 19, 2018.

info@ajrsem.org