

The Highway

The Manual for a Successful Rabbinic Search



RABBI ELLIOT SALO SCHOENBERG



The Rabbinical Assembly

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Preface

Dvar Torah

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ.

Now the LORD said unto Abram: ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will show thee.’ (Genesis 12:1)

לך לך (Genesis 12:1) is a phrase we are all familiar with. *Lekh L'kha* means "go forth," travel, be on your way. Rashi, commenting on this phrase, says about Abraham "for your benefit and for your good." Abraham needed to leave his family and his home to become a great nation. There is a tradition that this phrase לך לך begins the first of ten tests Abraham endures, including the near sacrifice of his son. Many commentators see a contradiction. How will Abraham be tested if this is clearly for his benefit? Especially if he already knows the end: Genesis 12:2 "I will make you into a great nation." Where is the test if we already know the conclusion? The *Sfat Emet* answers this contradiction: "God wants to know if Abraham is going on the journey just to receive the reward or to fulfill God's will." There is a material blessing, yet the point is the spiritual connection. This is a metaphor for the rabbinic search. The search always has two levels. On the one hand, a candidate is searching for a job in the real world that pays a competitive salary with good working conditions. And on the other hand, a candidate is looking for a position where one can do God's work to connect the community with the divine. The candidate in the search process is always mindful of this split. The candidate needs to be grounded, practical, and realistic, while at the same time using the process as a vehicle to pursue one's own spiritual growth like Abraham our Father.

Introduction

This guide reflects the accumulated experience of many rabbis and congregations that have gone through the process of looking for a new rabbinic position. There are many job search manuals and books in the marketplace. There is much help available on the Internet. While these resources should certainly be consulted, there are aspects of the rabbinic search process that are special and unique, which we wish to highlight in this publication. Placement needs to be understood in a broader context than referrals, eligibility and other technical requirements.

Although this handbook will discuss specific placement procedures for individual rabbis in great detail, we also need to be aware of the dynamic and emotional issues for both the rabbi and the institution as the process unfolds. Your task is not only to find the right position for yourself, but to be aware of the underlying emotional issues that complicate the process. Your

task is not only to find an appropriate position but to see this search process as an opportunity for professional growth.



Part 1. Touching Base

“YOU HAVE A PARTNER”

Dvar Torah

Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai said: “Our father Abraham—his own father did not teach him, nor did he have a master to teach him. From whom, then, did Abraham learn Torah? It was the Holy One who had provided him with kidneys that were like two pitchers overflowing, and filling him with Torah and wisdom all through the night.” R. Levi, however, said: “Abraham learned Torah all by himself.” It is important to know while you are in the search process you are never alone, the RA staff is here to support you. (Genesis Rabbah 61:16)

Personnel

Over the years, you may or may not have had the opportunity to touch base with the RA office’s experienced personnel and taken advantage of the many resources it offers. However, recognizing the tension, anxiety and opportunity this period generates, you may find *Chizuk* and comfort by renewing and strengthening your ties with the RA. We welcome your contact and communication with us. The RA and the RA Placement office and Career Center are here to help you.

Our international director of placement for over 20 years, Rabbi Elliot Schoenberg, strongly desires a personal relationship with each rabbinic candidate. The best way to reach the international director is by e-mail: eschoenberg@rabbinicalassembly.org. He welcomes your contact. Rabbi William Lebeau, Senior Consultant for Rabbinic and Institutional Leadership, brings a wealth of experience with more than three decades of compassionate interaction with colleagues. The RA team can be reached by phone: 212-280-6000 or fax: 212-749-9166 or email placement@rabbinicalassembly.org. Both Rabbi Schoenberg and Rabbi Lebeau will work with you to find placement. The members of the RA team will provide the support you need in considering the next steps in your rabbinic career. The more you keep them in the loop, the more they can help you.

Part 2. Self Knowledge

“WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP IN MY CAREER?”

Dvar Torah

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּדָר וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה.

Now the LORD said unto Abram: ‘Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto the land that I will show thee.’ (Genesis 12:1)

Beginning a rabbinic career, changing rabbinic positions, looking for a new career, or filling out a resume for the first time in years certainly raises anxiety. Anxiety is an appropriate emotion, yet, this is an opportunity for self assessment, self-reflection, personal growth and individual learning. We look to the *Torah* for guidance. In the phrase *Lekh L'kha*, the *Lamed* goes up and the *Caf Sophit* goes down. A *Hasidic* commentary says that when traveling you must go out to the market place as well as look into yourself. In the words of Rabbi Aaron of Karlin, "Every Jew needs to journey into himself, towards his roots because this is his purpose." Job-hunting is a rare opportunity to reflect on what we do as rabbis and how we are developing in our careers. Self-knowledge can be defined as awareness of our internal feelings, preferences, strengths and weaknesses. The greater our self-knowledge, the more informed, the more aligned and the more fruitful we will make the next step in our careers. Self-knowledge and self-awareness of who we are and what we enjoy doing will directly translate into stronger resumes, better interviews, the correct choice of position and, ultimately, more effective leadership. Why? Because the deeper and broader our self-knowledge, the better we will know how to leverage our strengths, compensate for our weaknesses and build more effective relationships with others. This internal search is counterintuitive because corporate culture values tell us to look outside of ourselves for answers. Through experience, we in the RA office have learned that self-study and self-understanding are the keys that make it possible to select the right match for one's next rabbinic position.

What Might We Want to Learn About Ourselves?

The first step towards self-knowledge requires that we **discover our strengths**. Ideally, we will look for a position that utilizes our strengths. In their book, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton define a strength as “consistent, near-perfect performance in an activity...and you must also derive some intrinsic satisfaction from the activity...What is the acid test of a strength? If you can fathom yourself doing it repeatedly, happily and successfully.” (p. 25-26). Buckingham and Clifton tell us there are three clues to strengths. “First, there are yearnings. A strength is something you always wanted to do and that exerts a consistent pull on you. Second, a strength is something you learn rapidly. Third, when

you use a strength it feels good and provides a sense of satisfaction. When performing a professional activity, if you keep asking yourself when will it be over, it is not working with a strength. However, if when performing the activity you keep asking yourself, when will I do it again, it is probably a strength.” Our first step is to discover our strengths.

Our second task of self-knowledge is to **learn what our passions are**. Passions are what drive and motivate our work. Passions are found in our hearts. They are harder to see than either strengths or accomplishments. In some cases, they lie below the surface and we may not be conscious of them. Passions motivate our accomplishments. In the job search, it is important to identify them. Passions, like values, are what you believe in. You chose them from among alternatives and you are willing and able to proclaim them publicly. Some examples might be: “I am called to do social justice work,” “I believe in the philosophy of Conservative Judaism,” “I went into the rabbinate because...” Others might be: "I am passionate about community building." "I am passionate about being a compassionate caregiver." "I am passionate about creating a democratic and egalitarian community." Embrace your passions and hold them up for all to see.

Our third task of self knowledge is **documenting our accomplishments**, those things we have done well and which give us a sense of satisfaction. Demonstrated past work is the most commonly used indicator by employers of what they can expect from the candidate in the new position. One's accomplishments are one's success stories and they prove the capability of a candidate in a chosen field. Accomplishments, glimpses into proven performance, are a statement about what you have achieved. It is important, perhaps imperative, to comprehend the distinction between a job responsibility and an actual accomplishment. Job responsibilities are common to many of us; however, accomplishments are what make us stand out. Job responsibilities are generic; accomplishments are personal testimonies to our unique abilities. Rather than state, “I was responsible for all holiday services,” say, “I created our synagogue's "learners" *minyan* and chaired the committee to establish the community-wide Holocaust memorial service.” Rather than say, “I was responsible for all office administration,” declare, “I streamlined the process of identifying the contributions of volunteers and initiated our school-wide volunteer appreciation dinner.” Rather than write, “I taught the *bar/bat mitzvah* students,” write “I developed an expertise in working with adolescents.” Resumes should reflect these accomplishments and not your rabbinic functions. Rabbinic employers regularly comment to the RA how much easier to learn about a rabbi when the resume details accomplishments rather than generic job functions.

Tools to Self Awareness

The RA suggests a variety of paths to an increase in self-knowledge. The more you know about yourself, your needs and your strengths the better able you will be to find the right fit in your employment choices.

1. Career Inventory:

The RA Career center created this document to organize, motivate and structure your path to increased self knowledge. This document has exercises on finding your strengths, documenting your accomplishments, and identifying your values. It focuses the rabbi on finding his own authentic rabbinic voice; see **Appendix C** for a copy. When you sign up for E-placement, the Inventory is sent to you automatically. The physical process of writing forces us to concentrate and think though mindfully the answers to these important questions.

2. Self Assessment Tool:

Who are you? What is your personality type? You need some objective tools to go even deeper into your self-understanding. The RA most often uses the Myers Briggs Type Inventory(MBTI). The MBTI is an instrument designed to explore basic aspects of our personality which you can use as a tool to learn about your own interview style, leadership manner and career preferences. Using this self assessment, rabbis learn what motivates, energies them and what may get them into trouble with others. There is a free instrument available on the RA website.

My MBTI TYPE is _____

Once you know your type you can use it to grow your self awareness.

As a _____ I am good at:

As a _____ I need to watch my tendency to:

As a _____ I need my job to be satisfying.

3. Self Reflection:

In the midst of the intense and emotional work of the rabbinate, how do we get a perspective on how and what we are doing? How can we stop and reflect on this situation? How do we hit the pause button? If we can self-reflect, we can ask ourselves what do we need to do that demonstrates wisdom; rather than responding in an automatic way, we can consider what options are available to us. Ron Heifitz and Marty Linsky, writing in *Leadership on the Line*, say: “Any military officer knows the importance of maintaining capacity for reflection in the ‘fog of war,’ as Walt Whitman described it, ‘being both in and out of the game.’ We call this skill, “getting off the dance floor and going to the balcony.”

The balcony is a metaphor for a safe time and safe place to assess yourself from a distance in a mindful way. After you have spent time on the balcony, and you are rested, you can go back down to the dance floor. Where is your balcony? Go there now, as you look at yourself and your current situation, what do you see? Take notes.

4. Authentic Feedback:

For most of us, even if we are self-aware and seek self-understanding, there probably are areas about which we cannot access information by ourselves. We call this the blind area. The blind area is what you know about me, what you keep from me, what you observe about me, or think or feel about me, of which I am unaware. Everyone else can see these important matters except us. Yet it is critical information. Sometimes, the only way to penetrate this area is with feedback from someone whom we trust and who trusts us. People often give out a signal that they do not want feedback; it can be scary or hurtful. On the other hand, there is some information about ourselves we cannot access unless someone shares that information with us and this information is crucial to how we function in the work place. We need to cultivate others who will give us honest feedback. We need to know when we can absorb their comments. We should only ask for it when we are ready. When we receive it, our job is to listen and ask questions of clarification. It is not the time to defend or explain our actions. When we receive feedback, make sure to thank the person so they know we appreciate the risk they took by being open and honest with us. This kind of feedback is really a gift to us.

- a. Identify at least three people from whom you can solicit authentic feedback about your leadership. They may be friends, those with more authority than you, peers, or others. If possible, try to identify people who can offer different perspectives on your leadership that are loyal to you and will keep your confidences.
- b. Jot down notes about your feedback strategy-e.g., good situations in which to invite their feedback, timing, lead questions, areas of your leadership you hope to learn more about from this person, and so on.
- c. Take a deep breath and invite the feedback.

5. Use InterviewStream

The research literature documents time and time again the benefit of practicing your interview skills. Practice makes perfect. Interviewing is a skill, and like any skill it can be honed. What exactly is InterviewStream? It is a website that allows you to record practice interviews, view them, re-record them, and practice again – as many times as you want. The RA provides this free service to you to assist you to move your career forward. InterviewStream is the

industry standard for practicing interviews; it is used by colleges and universities across the country.

InterviewStream allows you to see exactly what others see when they interview you. You will see how you look, how you sound and how you act. This is your chance to observe both your responses to the questions and view your non-verbal movements in an interview setting.

InterviewStream is designed to get you to be succinct. You are given only a certain amount of time to answer each question. It is sometimes hard to be succinct, but in interviews you have to be. Search committees constantly remind us it is very helpful to them if a rabbi can be brief.

Additionally, there is no need for you to be surprised by questions at an interview. InterviewStream uses actual questions that rabbis encountered at rabbinic placement interviews. Getting familiar with the questions will both calm you down and allow you to prepare a response in advance so that you can give your best possible answer.

We highly recommend that you avail yourself of this free service.

6. Re-Imagining the Rabbinate

Alternative Career Opportunities are pre-recorded 30 minute podcasts that explore different aspects of the rabbinate. These podcasts can help you re-imagine yourself as a rabbi and reconsider your career path. In this portal, you can listen to a colleague working outside of the pulpit talking about the satisfactions and challenges of their rabbinate. The purpose is to give you food for thought to expand your thinking about your career.

7. 'Job Description' or 'Role of the Rabbi'

Sometimes institutions or rabbis ask the RA for a job description for a rabbi. We do not have one because there is so much variability from institution to institution. Rabbinic tasks are important to clarify for each workplace setting. For example, the rabbi will or will not read Torah regularly, the rabbi does or does not tutor the *b'nai mitzvah* children or be at x number of morning *minyanim*. Institutions should establish in conversation with the rabbi what specific rabbinic tasks the new rabbi must manage in the new setting. However, the RA knows that the more important conversation is about rabbinic roles. Rabbinic roles identify the expected services that a rabbi will provide for the institution. Role is how you identify yourself. It is not only external attributes and accomplishments; it is your inner world. An example might be, 'I see my role as lead educator in this institution, or 'I really enjoy my role as worship leader.' See **Appendix D** for a list of possible rabbinic roles. This same list appears in the book *Aliyah* that is distributed to all institutions in the search process.

The RA has found it helpful for institutions in the search process to develop a list of general rabbinic roles rather than a specific detailed job description. The search committee's task then is to identify three or four roles that are key to the future. As the economy has tightened, institutions appreciate the wisdom of this process. Some institutions feel overwhelmed by the number of resumes they receive and are unable to distinguish between candidates. If at the outset of your preparation you have isolated three or four roles as important to your rabbinate, you can refer to those roles in the interview process. We remind institutions to do the same, to constantly revisit the 'role' conversation in order to find the right candidate. The selection of these critical roles now becomes the window through which you can demonstrate to the institution why you are the most appropriate candidate for this particular community at this particular time.

Before you begin your job search, ask yourself: what rabbinic roles are important to me? Which rabbinic roles am I good at? Which rabbinic roles have I demonstrated professional growth in the last few years? Search Committees often ask candidates, "why did you become a rabbi?" That is an opportunity for you to discuss what roles were important to you in the past and what roles are critical to you now. Just as Abraham, our father, was on a personal journey while traversing *Canaan*, you need to question yourself, where am I now? Highlighting three rabbinic roles that are your priorities will help you focus your job search.

Diversity of the Rabbinate

The modern Conservative rabbinate is thankfully representative of men and women from diverse backgrounds. Graduates of our seminaries are young and old, male and female, gay and straight. There are individuals at the beginning of their first career and those starting a new career, introverts and extroverts; born Jewish and committed converts. RA Rabbis come from all over the world. They are single, married, partnered and divorced. Some have children and others do not. Spiritual leaders come in all shapes and sizes. The RA regularly reminds institutions that they may do themselves a disservice if they see their next religious leader stereotypically in the model of the 1950s traditional family, in which the male is the head of the household, and the wife stays home and cares for their two children. Our Placement Director often says to them **"If your institution focuses on those immutable characteristics, you severely limit your options. Rather, your institution should look for the rabbi who best meets your current situation."** We ask congregations to recall their reflective process, their agreed upon priorities for their religious leader and then consider which candidate best meets both their present needs and their future vision. See **Appendix E** for the official statement of inclusive hiring agreed upon by the Leadership Council of Conservative Judaism which is distributed to all congregations and movement organizations doing a search. There is still much work to be done to have spiritual leaders match the diversity of our membership, and we are proud to be proactive in promoting diversity.

Engaging a Woman Rabbi

In 2010, the RA was proud to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the admission of the first woman rabbi. Since 1985, over 250 women have joined the ranks of the RA, and these numbers grow every year. While many of our congregations have enjoyed the leadership of female rabbis, for many other congregations that have not searched for a rabbi in a long time, the consideration of female rabbis is still uncharted territory. In recent years we have seen resistance from congregations that we thought were open to women rabbis in general, but to our great disappointment, were reluctant to view them as their own spiritual leaders. Schools, camps and campuses seem more open to engaging a woman rabbi than congregations.

The RA is unequivocally committed to equal opportunity and equal treatment of our female members. Furthermore, it is the policy of the RA that all egalitarian congregations agree to interview rabbis without prejudice. It is our expectation that congregations will elect rabbis to serve them on the basis of their qualifications and experience regardless of gender. We believe that the success of our women rabbis is not only of central importance to the careers of those rabbis themselves, but also to our movement that will benefit from the unique perspective and vibrant creativity of women rabbis. The RA designs focus groups for organizations and makes facilitators available to search committees to open up the conversation about the opportunities for dynamic leadership a female rabbi may bring to their congregation. We try to open their minds to the blessings and benefits of engaging a woman rabbi. The RA has as one of its major goals the elimination of gender bias as a factor in the job search process. We are aware that gender bias continues to be an issue that needs strong advocacy. **Appendix F** lists difficult questions women rabbis face, and some suggested answers. InterviewStream can assist you in answering difficult questions.

What should the candidate be doing? While the RA is continuing work on these issues, we ask you to partner with us. Despite our best efforts, search committees do ask inappropriate questions. Be grounded, be resilient. Plan and then practice your answers to inappropriate questions. If you are asked something inappropriate, let the RA know so there can be follow-up. Engage the search committee in conversation, try to find out what the question behind the question really is. We are who we are despite the preferences of places of employment. **Be Yourself.** It is a trap to try and be what someone else expects. Your authentic trust in who you are is exactly what rabbinic employers needs at this very moment.

Mature Rabbis

Looking for work over 50 has some additional challenges and benefits. Picasso painted Guernica when he was 55. Beethoven wrote the Ninth Symphony when he was 53. Aging does not mean you will be ineffective or unimaginative. There are things that you can do that will prevent search committees from looking at you as old and instead look at you as experienced.

You are not the first rabbi to deal with age discrimination. Thanks to the input of its members and consultation with experts the RA has some strategies for mature rabbis: Become current with technology, do not use dates on your resume, use the tools provided to you by the RA and understand your added value to an institution.

The RA has found that one of the biggest ways a more mature rabbi can alleviate the fear of search committees of the negative impact of age is through the use of technology. This means not just knowing how to use a computer and email (absolute musts) but demonstrating you are current with internet trends. A mature rabbi needs a real web presence. You really should be on twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Blog and publish work online. Get yourself a website that is not just your resume.

Do not put your age on your resume. Do not put the year you graduated rabbinical school on your resume. There is no reason to write about how long you have been a rabbi. Although you might be tempted to write about all of your work experience, please limit yourself to the last ten years. Nobody will hire you for the work you did in the 1980s. It is important to write down about continuing education courses you have taken and things you have learned recently. Always be thinking how to show you are current, growing and adapting.

The RA has developed questions to assist you in the interview process. The questions are available on InterviewStream and in **Appendix H**. Practice these questions. Get your answers to be concise. Master the technology of InterviewStream.

A seasoned veteran has more value than a rookie if you can explain why. Be able to establish three skills that you bring to the institution that a younger rabbi does not have. Think of: a large network of people, strong work ethic, demonstrated leadership, relevant life experience, and wisdom. You need to demonstrate that youthfulness is not the only skill a rabbi needs to have.

Institutions are often afraid that being old prevents you from connecting with the younger generation. You need to show them how you will connect to young people. Talk about events you have run and plans you have initiated with the younger generation. You need to ease their

fear of attendance dropping and younger people turning away because you are mature. Have answers to their questions and you should be able to quell their fear.

Part 3. Organization and Self Organization

Dvar Torah

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ.

“When the Holy One said to Abraham: “Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred” (Gen. 12:1), what did Abraham resemble? A vial of scent with a tight-fitting lid put away in a corner so that its fragrance could not go forth. As soon as it was moved from that place [and opened], its fragrance began to go forth. So the Holy One said to Abraham: Abraham, many good deeds are in you. Travel about from place to place, and the greatness of your name will go forth in My world. ‘Get you out. . .and I will have you acclaimed in a great nation’.” Like Abraham who needed to move from place to place, now it is time for you move to your next place and get the good word out about your rabbinate. (Genesis Rabbah 39:2)

STARTING THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

The RA organizes the placement process for members of the RA and senior students of The Jewish Theological Seminary and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies. Its major obligations are to monitor the rabbinic search and election process according to the Movement Placement Rules. The RA brings order and dignity to the process by establishing and maintaining a set of regulations and parameters both for rabbis seeking a congregation and for congregations in search of a rabbi (See **Appendix A**). These policies and regulations, carefully conceived, are continuously evaluated. The Joint Placement Commission of the RA, working together with representatives of the USCJ, JTS and the Ziegler School, makes decisions about the rabbinic employment process. For example, this body determines whether a congregation is eligible to speak to a new rabbi. The Joint Placement Commission meets six times a year. Rabbis and congregations can always direct any questions, comments or problems to the RA for a thoughtful response. If a particular action is requested, such as a waiver request, the request must be made in writing to the Commission. Every member of the RA needs to be aware of the Placement Rules in its entirety. A few rules should be highlighted: (See **Appendix A**).

1. A rabbi may search for a congregation only through the offices of the RA. Eligible candidates are those who have filed resumes, whose career inventories are filed in the RA E-placement system, and who are members in good standing.
2. An RA colleague may utilize only the placement service of the RA.
3. The rabbi uses E-placement on the RA website to forward a resume to a congregation initially. A rabbi is not permitted to forward a resume to congregation without the knowledge of the RA.

4. The RA may deny placement to any rabbi because of an ethical or *halakhic* violation or a violation of the placement code, as determined by the appropriate RA body.
5. Violators of placement rules are subject to disciplinary action by the RA or the International RA, which may include denial of placement or other appropriate consequences.

The RA Executive Council is the final decision-making body with regard to disciplinary action related to rabbinic pulpit placement in the Conservative Movement. Changes in the structure of placement may only be made by the RA at its convention. The RA is solely a referral service See **Appendix B** for our legal disclaimer.

Open an E-placement Account

To enter the Placement process, all candidates must meet the following four requirements:

1. The rabbi must be a member in good standing of the RA. Dues must be current and the dues declaration for the current year must be on file with the RA in New York. For help, be in touch with the RA's business office.
2. The Rabbi opens an E-placement account by first registering and then uploading a resume and a career inventory to their account.
3. The rabbi must be eligible to conclude their contract with their current institution during the current placement season.
4. All matters of termination between the rabbi and their prior place of employment must be completed.

When an institution files for a questionnaire, the RA will email the incumbent rabbi at the same time to confirm the availability of the position so that the search can begin. The incumbent rabbi must confirm in writing or via email that they are leaving and that all matters concerning the completion of service have been settled with respect to the contractual obligations of the rabbi and community. The rabbi self refers to congregations and institutions of interest using the E-placement system. Congregations and institutions immediately receive the referral.

Placement Lists

The RA provides different links on our website to assist you in your job search. If you go to the RA website, you will find several categories that provide information and links to possible job opportunities.

The list that you are most familiar with, the one that we previously mailed out, is now located electronically on the website and titled **Current Placement List**. It is updated in real time. As a congregation submits a questionnaire, the list is immediately updated. You can use E-placement to apply for any of these jobs. This list comprises congregational positions.

Institutions – is a listing of non-pulpit opportunities where the organization has specifically asked for one of our rabbis. Typical positions posted here include executive directors of congregations, directors of lifelong learning inside synagogues, and executives of major organizations. You can apply directly to these organizations through E-placement. As soon as an organization gets in touch with us, we update the list.

External Links – is a collection of links to outside job boards that will be helpful to rabbis. These websites are not all specifically Jewish, nor are they specifically seeking a rabbi, but they do provide possible opportunities for those seeking work outside of the pulpit. It is the place to look if you are limited geographically in your search. If you find a position you are interested in applying for, you need to follow the external website's instructions on how to apply. You cannot use E-placement to apply for these jobs. Generally, these jobs require a targeted cover letter in addition to your resume. Our External Link list is dynamic; we monitor which sites our rabbis find most useful. Your feedback is helpful here.

Completed Placements – is a list of rabbis who have informed the RA of their place of new rabbinic employment. You can use this list to keep your colleagues informed as to where you are currently located. People cannot congratulate you if they do not know that you have taken a new position, so let us know and we will keep everyone informed.

Old Placement Lists – is a list of congregations that have recently completed their rabbinic search. You can consult their questionnaires to compare them to current placements. Rabbis often consult it to compare financial information.

Placement for Community (Non-Pulpit) Positions

Although some think the RA primarily focuses on congregations, the RA has long worked with colleagues outside the pulpit. The RA offers a career center for rabbis. The RA centennial volume, *A Century of Commitment*, relates that the first full-time employee of the RA was a placement director working to place rabbis as chaplains in the military. More than 25% of the RA membership now serves as community rabbis. Several presidents of the RA in recent years have served as non-pulpit rabbis. We have been involved in placement beyond congregations for more than a generation. In recent years, we have strengthened our focus on serving the employment needs of our community rabbis. Community rabbis can benefit as much as our pulpit colleagues from personal time spent conferring with the RA placement team. Community positions may not be handled directly by the RA, yet we encourage a rabbi seeking placement in any venue to contact the RA placement office for advice and perspective. Think of the RA as your career center where you can turn for advice and support at every point in your career development. The placement staff welcomes these conversations. The RA web site in the placement section under INSTITUTIONS and EXTERNAL LINKS both announce community positions in real time.

How to Best Find a Community Rabbi Position

First, **Network, Network, Network**. Job boards are great resources, but every career professional knows that less than 10% of job seekers find their next job via a board. Most individuals find their next position because of personal connection. As the economy has tightened, this reality is truer now than ever before. Using the social network LinkedIn is one method to build your network.

Second, identify your transferable skills. You are not starting from scratch. List your accomplishments. Next to the list, write the skills that enabled you to achieve those accomplishments. Research the rabbinic position you are looking for. What are the key skills and requirements for doing this kind of work? So for example, you may have been a banker and an important aspect of your work was having good relations with your clients. In the transferable skills column, put down "people skills." In your pulpit, you may have raised \$2,000,000 to build a new sanctuary. In the transferable skills column, put down 'fund raising.'

Third, identify intangible assets. Again, list your accomplishments. Next to the list put the intangible assets you brought to the situation that helped make it happen. For example, after twenty years in the pulpit there are many people in the local community who trust you. Some other examples might be: Goodwill you have built up over the years; your reputation for integrity, for being compassionate; creative ideas, and new and innovative programs.

Fourth, take some small steps to demonstrate interest and gain experience in the community field you seek to enter. Go to a targeted event like a conference or a convention. Meet the people. Give a talk or make a presentation. Find a part time job in the field or volunteer in the field. Consult on a project. Do an internship. For example, if you are a pulpit rabbi but are thinking of working in a day school find opportunities to teach children, be a resource to teachers or be a presence in the school building while continuing to work full time. Do it gradually.

Fifth, do some learning in the alternative field. Of course, the best way is to have a degree in the field, such as an M.A. in education or 4 units of CPE for chaplaincy. But turtle steps also work. Take a class or seminar. Do some training on line. Sign up for continuing education. Demonstrate to future employers your interest, your commitment and your enthusiasm by improving your resume. Adding related courses and highlighting continuing education courses may be helpful.

Sixth, join the new professional association. It gives you direct access to job listings in that field. It can also be a source of networking leads and serve as a support group during an anxious period. All the Jewish professional organizations have a reduced membership fee if you already are a member of another professional association like the RA. National Association of Jewish Chaplains and the Jewish Educators Assembly also have their own placement professionals.

Seventh, create name recognition for yourself. How does a rabbi move into the community world? Meet people and let them know you are interested in a particular kind of work. You can also publish and speak on a particular subject of interest. For example, publishing an article on some aspect of pastoral care is a good way to open a door to the chaplaincy. Seek out opportunities to be a public presence in communal and conference settings.

Eighth, learn to play the rabbi card well. Most of the positions you are applying to are also open to non-rabbis. How do rabbis best present themselves? Because you are a rabbi and have an intense and extensive Jewish education, advocate how this will add an important Judaic perspective to the position. Your background will also enable you to teach. Even though it may not be part of the job description, people will gravitate to you for counseling. Demonstrate how this training will add value to the position. Think about what your ordination can offer the institution. The RA can help you best present this unique aspect of your qualifications.

Ninth, seek the job you are actually applying for. Many community employers tell us that rabbinic applicants don't really want the job available, but want to turn it into something more "rabbinic." However, employers want the applicant to do the job that is advertised. At the interview, stay focused on the current job description and do not attempt to recreate it. Stay focused on how you have the skills to do the job that is being offered.

Tenth, be authentic. Be who you are. You have no need to try and be someone else in order to find a rabbinic position. Authenticity is a strong selling point. Often times institutions are not completely sure what they are looking for in a candidate so trying to be what they want would not help you.

Networking

Many rabbinic openings are openly publicized on placement lists like our own Joint Placement for pulpits or the USJC/JEA list of school administrators and rabbis in residence or the NAJC list of available hospital positions. Most organizational positions in the Jewish world, like in the business world, are not found on job boards or placement lists. Like in the business world, most positions in the Jewish organizational world will be found by networking.

If you are looking for work in a Jewish organization or you are geographically restricted in your search area, you will most likely find work by networking. Networking is purposely and gracefully asking peers for help, advice, and contacts, and offering genuine value in return. In the business world, 90% of people commonly find work by networking. Business people are networking all the time. When searching for work in an organization or thinking of created a new innovative venture, it is like you are looking for work in the business world; you will need to network. In the new economy, all rabbis should be networking all the time. How does a rabbi network?

Create Your Contact List: "It's not what you know but who you know." Who you know is more important than what you have done. You might sit down and make a list of everyone who knows your name. The only people who should be explicitly excluded are people who do not like you. You want at least 200 people on that list. These people should be at every level and in every direction and not just in the rabbinic profession. For example your contact list should include: your neighbors, class mates from college, your dry cleaner, people you buy stuff from. And, of course, people you meet at conferences.

Networking Script: Rabbis may find it intimidating to get started networking, because networking makes us nervous. Learn the agenda of a networking discussion.

1. Build rapport.
2. Update the person on where you have been.
3. Ask for help.
4. Make it clear you are not asking them for a job.
5. Ask them for help again, for ideas, other people to be in touch with. *“Given my background and interests, whom would you recommend I go see?”*
6. Wrap up and thank you. After every networking conversation, the other person should feel

genuinely honored that you contacted them and feel enriched by the experience. It is often helpful to write out a full script in advance so you will know exactly what to say and how to say it. Having a script will make you more confident.

Track and Say Thank You: Organize and keep a list of your contacts, their contact information, when you were in touch with them and what you discussed. Track and follow up on every networking contact. Follow through on any promises you made, such as sending them a copy of a sermon you wrote. Stay visible to your contacts. Send them updates on your job search and email notes at holiday time. Think of creative ways to keep in touch. Thank everyone who helps or provides you with leads. Thank everyone for their ideas and leads even if they don't pan out. Send them your resume so they have a copy of it.

If you are in job search mode you need to be networking full time. But even if you are not searching for employment now, networking now is an investment in your career advancement.

LinkedIn

It is the experience of the RA that congregations and institutions will check the website LinkedIn before they interview you. It is to your advantage to create a robust LinkedIn profile at <http://www.linkedin.com/>. Before you interview or visit go to LinkedIn to learn about the community. Also, check to see if your contacts know anyone in the institution to put in a good word for you.

Many institutions now search LinkedIn for their new employees. Institutions will check LinkedIn after you have applied. Create a profile with a wide selection of key words using job descriptions. Optimizing your profile also means placing important phrases and keywords within your profile. Think about 10 to 15 keywords and keyword phrases that describe you professionally. Specifically, place keyword-rich content within the summary, specialties, and interests sections. It is also a great way to boost your rankings because when others search for you or your website, your LinkedIn profile will show up and will allow you to grow your network. Keywords are always important because you want to rank as high as you can to help increase traffic to your site. Social media profiles are one of the best, free ways to help increase these rankings.

Upload your resume to your profile. Make the most of every professional email you send out by linking back to your LinkedIn profile in your email signature. (You'd be surprised at how often people follow those signature links). It's also important to have at least five recommendations, since you can search LinkedIn by number of recommendations.

Use the “advanced search” option to understand how you can be found, and include the advance search categories in your profile. Some of the search parameters are by industry, geographic location, number of recommendations, and position titles. Solicit LinkedIn recommendations in the same way you would solicit other recommendations. Let your references know specifically what you want them to write about you.

Don't be passive when using LinkedIn – ask questions and get involved in sharing knowledge with others.

Update your profile every few months to reflect changes in what you are doing and how you are doing it – especially if you are changing roles within your organization. It is essential to keep LinkedIn up to date. If you are not going to keep it up to date **take it down**.

Be sure to include your photo, summary of who you are and a summary of what you accomplished at every position on your profile. Remember, our experience teaches that an excellent path to organizational positions comes from people you know or know you. **Network. Network. Network.** Use LinkedIn to check the profiles of people who will be interviewing you. Check the company profile. For example let us say you have an interview as a hospital chaplain. Check the LinkedIn profile of the hospital. Look into any information about the hospital and any background information on the people you will be meeting with. Also, see if anyone in your network is connected to the hospital and talk with them. You can also send messages to your network, keeping them up to date with LinkedIn. LinkedIn is the new way to network.

Letter of Advocacy to Non-Pulpit Employers

The RA helps community rabbis clarify rabbinic employment needs and benefits. For example, community rabbis may utilize parsonage allowance, enroll their pension funds in the Joint Retirement Board, and attend RA conventions. The RA has created an official document entitled, “A Letter to Non-Pulpit Employers” to advocate for these professional benefits for non-pulpit colleagues. It is found in **Appendix G**. We can also email additional copies to you directly. Colleagues have told us it is helpful to have a document that details these talking points in order to initiate a negotiation with their employer.

How a Non-Pulpit Rabbi Prepares to Become a Pulpit Rabbi

In this economy, some rabbis who have worked for years in non-pulpit positions have seen their type of work downsized. Other community rabbis decide it is time for a career change. If you are thinking of moving into the pulpit, the best preparation is to accumulate and demonstrate pulpit rabbi skills. Review your work history and identify where you have used skills that you will use as a pulpit rabbi. If you were the scholar in residence at a Jewish day

school you are often called in to be a pastor for families in need. Another example might be, as a hospital chaplain you regularly led *Shabbat* morning services for the residents. If possible, volunteer in your local synagogue to "do pulpit work" so that congregations can see it on your resume.

Part 4. Resume Writing

Dvar Torah

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ.

Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee.' (Genesis 12:1)

The Patriarch Abraham is referred to as the father of the Jewish people, the first Hebrew, but the most compelling name is the beloved of God. The Rambam notes that Abraham loved God with the greatest and strongest love that was possible. His love for God was constant that it was as if he was ill from loving God because it consumed him so. He could not eat, nor drink or do anything else because of the fire burning in him for God. The name "Beloved of God" captures the pivotal characteristic of Abraham. To continue our metaphor, the purpose of the resume is to capture a compelling portrait of you.

The Resume

What is a resume? Most certainly, it is not the definitive declaration of everything you have done for the last fifteen years. It is also not just a list of places, jobs and organizations. **Rather, the resume is a brief, compelling description of you as a leader in the workplace, presented in the very best possible light.** The purpose of a resume is not to get you a position. Rather, the main purpose of the resume is to arouse enough interest in the reader so members of the search committee will want to meet you personally. The resume is your marketing brochure, an excellent organizational tool to prepare you for interviews, and a personal invitation to a group of people to meet you. Your resume is not designed to impress you, but to impress the person who is reading it at the job you want.

Resumes might appear to be minutia or obvious, but they are important. Rabbis are concerned with Judaism, leading services, pastoral care and it is doubtful if these dimensions of one's rabbinate can easily be reflected on paper. That is the challenge of writing a good rabbinic resume. After the search committee reads your resume they should be able to say with confidence I know you.

What should a resume look like? There are no hard and fast rules. One can purchase a book that illustrates different formats or check resume writing in the placement section of the RA website. There are, however, accepted ways of presenting resume material that rabbis should bear in mind. A rabbi's resume *should never be more than two pages long*. The first page should detail work experience and the second page education, organizational memberships and publications. Like any good marketing brochure, a resume cannot tell the whole story. Electronic

resumes should be simple – without whistles, bells, fancy lettering, graphics or elaborate formatting. There are two accepted formats in the business world: reverse chronological and functional. The former is far more common in the Jewish organizational world. A functional resume which highlights many job skills and activities but not job history is rarely used because it is taken as a signal that the rabbi has held too many positions. You will want to build your resume on one of these two classic types.

Appearance: Institutions read rabbinic resumes very carefully. Congregations are very traditional when it comes to resumes. There is no need for you to get overly creative with your resume. In the organizational world, there is a little more room to be creative. Your readers care about appearance, spelling and neatness. To make the resume pleasing to the reader’s eye, avoid dense paragraphs of text. Use bullets, generous spacing and clear typefaces. The appearance of the resume is as much a statement about you as its content. Pay attention to the way it looks on the page; it is good to have some white space between the printed words to help organize and highlight the important components. Bold, underlining and italics can be useful, when used properly, to draw the reader's eye to key words or phrases (job title, name of organization, location, etc.) In particular, check for typos. Proofread your resume carefully. Then have some of your friends or family check it for typos and misspelled words. Your resume should use a font no smaller than 12 pt. Resumes need not necessarily include full sentences. Deleting superfluous prepositions can help save space and make for a quicker read. Understand that the reader of your resume is probably not familiar with Hebrew, so limit the Hebrew on your resume.

Action Verbs: The resume is about accomplishments. Here is where the action verbs come in. Tell the search committee what you achieved, analyzed, built, created, developed, doubled, established, expanded, implemented, invented, launched, organized, produced, reorganized, solved, strengthened, translated, unified, unraveled or wrote. Also, be careful of overuse of any one verb. Try to use different verbs that describe similar actions.

“**Wrote** Creative Service for Second Day of *Rosh Hashanah*”

“**Expanded** outreach to the Russians in the neighborhood by offering bi-monthly Coffee with the Rabbi in local Café Hillel”

“**Launched** new adult education series every year.”

“**Suggested** new *bar/bat mitzvah* standards to the synagogue board. Board implemented my suggestions for raising the education bar.”

Cross Over Strategy: While a resume must document work experience, it should highlight the most attractive aspects of your career. Emphasize actual accomplishments, rather than a list of job responsibilities. Use the “cross over the desk strategy.” The reader of the resume is asking, “What can you do for my institution?” The chair of the search committee wants to know what added value you bring to their organization. The Cross Over involves an attitude adjustment: instead of thinking about what you want, you think about what the employer wants to know. Cross Over the desk and put yourself in their shoes. Try to understand their way of thinking. As you begin to plan your resume, imagine you are the employer: what about you would be exciting to an institution looking at your record. The search committee is asking itself, how would this rabbi make a difference in our community? What can a rabbi contribute to this institution that will make a difference? Think of specific examples from your past work experiences that would make a difference in the new setting.

“Worked with the local community day school to create a religious policy that was acceptable to the entire community. Members of the school staff told me my calm presence led to a workable solution.”

“Created Tot *Shabbat* service for 4-year-olds and their parents. Vice President of Education for the synagogue publicly thanked me at the recent board meeting, “for meeting the needs of our youngest members..”

Include the dates and sizes of the congregations you served. Include more information about your most recent rabbinic position and your latest accomplishments. Above all, be honest. For example, if you are working toward a degree, say, “enrolled in a PhD program.” Among the most common questions is how many years of detailed information should be included. We have consulted with many resume writing experts and it is customary in the business world to give information on the last 10-15 years of your employment.

Elements of a Resume

1. The Heading: at the top of the page, include your name, address, a non-work telephone number, and a non-work email address. Make it easy for search committees to find you. Let prospective employers know the best way to contact you, especially if you are in between positions or residences. Adding your cell phone number to your resume is now a common feature. Make sure you use a phone number that gets picked up, voicemail that can be checked, and an email address that you read often.
2. Below the Heading goes the "Career Summary." One or two sentences highlight your

depth of experience and fields of expertise. There is no need for a career objective. Your resume should start with a summary, because it is your first chance to show the reader your ability to make a valuable contribution. Make a good first impression. Resume readers want a summary and not a written job position or career objective. The summary includes: your functional areas of expertise, breadth of experience, career advancement and particular strengths. e.g.

Summary: Eighteen years of leadership positions in three school positions of increasing size and scope. Strong experience in curriculum writing. Particular strength in resolving conflict.

3. The next section contains Professional Experience and should fill the remainder of the first page. This is the heart of your resume. Provide the name and location of the institution, your title and accomplishments. Dates should be in yearly increments, avoid showing gaps in your work record if possible.
4. The second page starts with the same heading about how to find you. Beneath the heading follows your education. Include degrees, majors, completion dates. Courses, training and awards *related to your objective*. Relevant professional certificates, licenses, scholarships and honors should also be included. Adding recent continuing education courses (CEU's) to show you are current in your field can make you an attractive candidate.
5. The remainder of the page includes activities related to your targeted job goal. Some categories might be: military experience, languages, special skills, organizational memberships, awards received and books and articles published. Even if you have done a million and one things, only include those activities that connect with what a possible rabbinic employer might want to know.

Many rabbis think of the professional section as a list that documents their work experience. "Here is a list of all the rabbinic activities I have done for the last 15 years." This is a trap. The resume is not a list of your complete work history, but a short, concise vehicle to express your rabbinic voice to a group of people who have never met you. Think of it as an opportunity to tell your compelling personal story, to display your passions and to make your rabbinic voice heard. Unlike traditional career resumes, where employers care about what you have done in previous positions so they can extrapolate how you would work for them, possible rabbinic employers need something else from a rabbi. After reading your resume, the chair of the search committee should not only know what you have *done*, but what you *care* deeply about. Search committees often tell us how disappointed they are in the rabbinic resumes they receive. When asked to clarify what they mean, they respond with comments like, "**All rabbinic resumes**

look alike." "Rabbinic resumes don't tell us much because every rabbi delivers sermons, performs life cycle events, and teaches classes." "After reading a dozen resumes, we can't tell the rabbis apart one from another." The general functions are so similar across the board that when your resume says "delivered weekly sermons", search committees feel frustrated. Take the time to write a resume that reflects your unique voice.

How Might a Rabbi Write a Compelling Resume that Distinguishes the Candidate?

One resume-writing professional who chaired a successful search recommended using the PARS formula: Describe a Problem, the Action you took, the Results you achieved and Skills you applied. Use factual illustrations to demonstrate your ability to solve problems.

"Attendance at our Friday night service was on the decline. Took initiative to reorganize our Friday Night Service by introducing instrumental music to *Kabbalat Shabbat*. Service attendance tripled. Applied my leadership and conflict resolution skills to bring those opposed to music on *Shabbat* into the conversation about the need to revitalize our prayer services"

"Analyzed the participation decline in our institute's programs. Developed plan cooperatively with program chair to rethink our goals. Applied my organizational skills."

Institutions are getting more and more resumes for each position. Due to this high volume you need a good first PARS example or they may stop reading your resume.

Contributions: Another chair of a committee informed us it is helpful when rabbis spell out what contributions they specifically made to the synagogue or Hillel or school. Search committees are looking for the unique contributions made by the candidate.

It is not sufficient or interesting to write: "Carried out all pulpit rabbinic functions."

Better to write: "Dynamic and inspiring pulpit presence. Sermons are marked by scholarship, humor and spiritual relevance."

"Praised in the local press for my expertise of working with the children in our after-school program."

"Community-wide reputation for being a sensitive and empathic listener."

Skills: Describe and document your skills every chance you get; leadership, team-building, communication, conflict resolution, public speaking, teaching, counseling, etc.

"Constantly working with our volunteers to be a team."

“Soccer Coach 2000-2005. Motivating, inspiring and teaching local teenagers to play as a team.”

“Demonstrated my conflict resolution skills when introducing the *Imahot(Matriarchs)* to the *Amidah* with grace and understanding.”

Accomplishments: What was accomplished because you were there? Make sure to both begin and conclude your resume with a significant accomplishment. How do you know if it is an accomplishment? Are there quantifiable achievements that you can list (numbers of people affected, range of grades taught, dollars raised through development efforts)? Documenting rabbinic accomplishments is not an easy task nor one we are used to doing on any regular basis. How do you demonstrate quality pastoral care during a *shiva* visit? There is much about the rabbinic world that is difficult to describe so in your resume make sure to find examples of your work you can describe and search committees will be able to measure. It may be helpful if in your head you ask yourself, “Talk about a specific project you are proud of.” How is your accomplishment measured or recognized?

“Identified that there was a growing population of young parents in our community not yet affiliated.”

"Worked with the school committee to create a program to pull in this group to the synagogue."

"Our Tot *Shabbat* program was recognized by the Masorti Foundation with their ‘Excellence in Outreach Award.’”

Ask yourself: Did you identify and resolve important issues?

“Identified that our young parents with small children were intimidated by the adult service.”

"Created a safe religious haven for the parents and the children that we call Tot *Shabbat*."

" Although the Orthodox minyan on campus has a regular volunteer leader, I make my presence felt a least once a month.”

How did you resolve a particular crisis or overcome a particular challenge?

“When the lay leader of our annual dinner dance resigned because of health issues, I recruited a new chair person within a short period of time.”

Have you served as a coordinator, liaison, representative or committee member that made a difference?

“Demonstrated leadership and conflict resolution skills when working with the local Jewish Community Center board to create a community wide Passover model *Seder*.”

Have you demonstrated a willingness to assume extra responsibilities at work?

“Led the *Kabbalat Shabbat* service at the hospital when the leader resigned because of illness.”

Have you accomplished anything that was considered difficult or impossible?

“Demonstrated leadership and conflict resolution skills when working with the Jewish Community Center staff to create a centrist religious policy that was agreeable to the religious community.”

“Working together with our hospital volunteers; reinvigorated our Shabbat visitation program.”

Many congregations, schools and other organizations are experiencing a decline in their membership. Congregations are particularly interested if you have achieved growth of your synagogue's membership or an increase in active participation of congregational activities. Most congregational and organizational search documents tell the RA they are looking for a rabbi to 'grow the membership.' Although it may be hard to describe, can you document your activities that address this issue in your place of employment? Congregations are eager to know of your involvement with this issue.

“Our synagogue's membership is spread over two distinct geographic areas. Together with the ritual committee, organized a once a month *Kabbalat Shabbat* service in the area where the synagogue does not have a physical presence.”

Many institutions are feeling stuck and would describe themselves “just holding on.” When we read their questionnaires they are looking for “charismatic leaders” or someone “to lead them into the future.” One search committee told us they were looking for someone “who thinks out of the box.” Ask yourself, “Did you install, invent, create a new program or process?”

“Created ‘Israel NOW’ club on campus to develop expertise in advocating for Israel.”

“Reinvigorated the alumni council of our school through social media.”

“Working together with our worship committee to invigorate our early Friday Night service with the addition of new tunes and more learning.”

One of the strongest criticisms about rabbis in the last few years from lay leaders is that rabbis 'work in silos.' Lay leaders want to know how the new rabbi will work with staff already in place. Ask yourself, 'Where did you demonstrate your willingness to be a team player?'

“Worked with our volunteer board to create a lay-led monthly Mommy and Me program.”

"Worked with the education director and the Cantor to write a creative children's High Holiday Service."

“Raised \$200,000 to repair the leak in the roof of the campus chapel.”

Final Section of the Resume: Be even more focused when discussing community activities, education, awards, hobbies, and memberships. It is boring to merely list the organizations to which you belong. This final section is one more opportunity to demonstrate why you are qualified to do your next rabbinic job. This is one more opportunity to display a skill or demonstrate a contribution.

Instead of listing: “President of Teaneck Clergy Council 2002-2005.”

Better to write: “Served as chair of the Teaneck Clergy Council 2002-2005, the local religious advisory counsel to the mayor. Learned how to build community with diverse and competing constituencies.”

Instead of saying: “Member of the Rabbinical Assembly since 1979.”

Better to write: “member of the RA since 1979. Used my organization abilities to chair local study programs for RA colleagues.”

Name Awards: The awards and commendations you have received are a great opportunity to demonstrate your skills, contributions or accomplishments. If you just list the award, the search committee will have no idea of its significance. Since there are no national rabbinic awards, congregations will not understand what the awards means. Add a sentence about the award to demonstrate how it connects to your job search. It is a good idea to describe how competitive the award is.

“Received the Bergen County New Jersey Young Leadership Award. Given every year to two leaders in the community under 35 years of age who make a difference in the community.”

After reading your resume, the search committee should be able to ascertain your passions, your priorities and your religious values as a rabbi.

Cover Letter: Your cover letter, combined with your resume, is your first written contact with a potential employer. *In the rabbinic world of pulpit job searching, a cover letter is not expected.* However, there may be times when it can be helpful: First, if necessary, use a cover letter to emphasize the confidentiality of your job application. Second, if you have done your homework well, use a cover letter to mention a compelling accomplishment or attribute that demonstrates your compatibility with this particular institution. (For example, to tell them your grandparents were founding board members of the organization.) Cover letters must be individually tailored to each prospective employer. But again, in most circumstances a cover letter is not expected for a pulpit assignment. If you are seeking a non-synagogue position, write a cover letter to indicate what value and advantage there will be to engaging a rabbi for the position. The E-placement system has the ability to forward a short electronic letter each time it forwards your resume.

References: References need not be on the resume itself, rather, you should create a separate page of about 4-5 references to be taken to the interview. Make sure you ask permission of the people you want to use and choose carefully to allow for those who can reflect on different aspects of your work and personality. Recruit the best people. Speak to them about your strengths as they apply to the particular job opportunities and decide with them what you want them to say on your behalf. Give them a copy of your resume. You probably want people who can refer to your most recent work accomplishments and your future potential. Employers want to talk with people who have actual knowledge of your work.

Hand out the names of your references to the Chair of the Search Committee at the conclusion of an interview. On a single sheet of paper, include a list of all of your references with their contact information. On the same sheet of paper, include your name and contact information. Contact your references after the interview to alert them to the possibility of a call from the interviewer. Make sure the references have the information they need to make relevant remarks about your experience and your job search. Go over with them again precisely what you want emphasized. Ask them to let you know when they are called and what they said. Stay in touch with your references and let them know how you are doing.

One rabbi told us the following story. The president of the synagogue where he was currently serving as assistant rabbi was called by prospective congregational search committees

and was asked if he would engage this promising young man as a senior rabbi. He replied, “He is an excellent young man but our prestigious pulpit would only engage someone with more years of experience.” This reference loved this young rabbi but unfortunately did not understand what he needed to do in order to be helpful to the candidate. It is the role of the candidate to educate their references on what they need to say. Because every candidate will have good references, it is important for the candidate to coach their references to reveal their rabbinic passions and advocate for them effectively.

Part 5. Interviewing

Dvar Torah

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאֶרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְצֶנָּה.

Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee.' (Genesis 12:1)

In our verse, several commentators have pointed out that Abraham reverses the normal order of departing on a journey. Usually you leave your home, then your extended family and then your country. The commentators say that this reverse order shows that Abraham's journey is special. As the father of a new nation and a new religion, Abraham needed to distinguish himself especially from the customs of his home and his family. Our rabbis suggest that separating yourself from your family is a much harder task than separating yourself from your country. This is a metaphor about the purpose of the interview process. The task here is to separate ourselves from the other candidates. How are we supposed to distinguish ourselves when we have much in common with the others? The task here is to let the search committee know what a unique contribution we are able to make.

Preliminary or Screening Interview/Stage 1

In the new economy, the number of applications received by all places of rabbinic employment has increased. Search committees are overwhelmed by the prospect of having to interview thirty to forty candidates. We encourage these search committees to hold fifteen minute screening interviews with all candidates rather than eliminate candidates randomly and without serious consideration. For the candidate, the goal of this brief screening call is to both connect with the search committee and to show them that your qualities match their needs. Be brief.

The key to a successful interview is practice. We are surprised how reluctant colleagues are to role-play or practice answering questions. We are never surprised at the difference it makes when colleagues have the chance to rehearse what they would say in an interview situation. Available on the RA website is an online interview practice tool called InterviewStream. InterviewStream allows you to record yourself answering real interview questions so you can see yourself on camera and practice your responses.

Predicting the Questions

Although every search situation is unique after our years of experience we can now predict 90% of the questions candidates will be asked in all the varieties of rabbinic placement. One good

way of lowering your anxiety before an interview is to know what questions will be asked. An excellent way to deliver a good interview is to have practiced what you will answer in advance. We can take the "surprise" out of the interview experience

The following five questions are the most commonly asked at interviews:

- In five minutes or less, tell us about yourself. (Your elevator speech).
- What is it about us that resonated for you and made you apply for this position?
- How do you view the status of Conservative Judaism today? What will make the Conservative Movement thrive in the future?
- What added value do you bring to this position as an ordained rabbi?
- What questions do you have of us?

We have compiled a list of questions commonly asked to rabbinic candidates by type of employment. See **Appendix H** for questions for non-pulpit interviews and **Appendix I** for pulpit interviews. **Appendix J** contains questions commonly posed to senior student candidates seeking pulpits at Interview Week. A common complaint by rabbis is that they "Don't dance well on their feet." We have brought the dance floor to you.

Research the Institution

Before the interview, investigate the rabbinic position you are applying for. Check out their Institutional website. Read their mission statement. Look them up in social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter). After reviewing their public information summarize what you have learned. How do they describe themselves? What image are they putting out in public? What do you learn about them from the profiles of their leaders? This information will help you decide if you and they will be a good match. Secondarily, it will permit you to ask them intelligent questions at the interview, demonstrating your interest in them.

Interview Process Stage 2

In recent years, as travel expenses have increased, telephone and Skype interviews have become more commonplace. Everyone would prefer a face to face meeting, but telephone and Skype interviews are now part of the process to determine who is invited to interview in person. Because this mode of interviewing is the new reality, you should practice interviewing over the phone or via Skype. The RA recommends to institutions that these interviews be limited to about an hour. Rabbis should be prepared to converse for over an hour and anticipate multiple questions. It is not an appropriate time to discuss finances. When you arrange for the preliminary interview ask for an opportunity to ask your own questions.

How Do You Master the Telephone Interview?

The following has been compiled from various sources found on the internet.

1. Remember that conveying warmth, openness and sensitivity is vital to creating a good first impression. Remember that the interviewer can't see you or read your body language so the committee member can't see your sincere smile or feel your warm handshake. Convey warmth by the tone of your voice, by using humor, by being responsive to their questions.
2. Do research. Before the interview, investigate the rabbinical position you are applying for. There are marked differences, for example, between the duties of a rabbi in a small rural congregation and rabbi at a university Hillel. Check them out on social media.
3. Have an organized list of information in front of you of your strengths, accomplishments and skills that are relevant to the new position. Also have your resume in front of you.
4. Conduct the phone call in a room where you're physically comfortable and able to concentrate. Make sure there are no background noises and that you are able to stay on the phone for as long as you need to. Make sure you are uninterrupted by children or pets. We have watched many videos of people who have been interrupted at inopportune times, do not become a member of this list.
5. Be sure to answer the question being asked. Don't worry about pauses or silences. It's fine to take a moment to consider a question and to gather your thoughts before speaking. When you are finished answering, confirm that you have provided information that is helpful.
6. Rabbis should be conscious of the tension that will exist between the search committee member that wants to ask more questions and the rabbi who wants to think and give purposefully thought out answers.
7. It is too earlier in the process to ask about remuneration. If a congregation asks about finances say, ["Thank you, but let us hold off on discussing finances until we meet face to face and get a better sense of each other."](#)
8. Be brief. Search committees seek candidates who can be succinct.

Usually, the final question is "Rabbi, do you have any questions for us?" Do not hesitate to ask relevant questions. Your final statement of the interview should be, "Thank you, and what is the next step in your process? When can I expect to hear from you again? If I do not hear from you by then, would it be alright if I followed up with a call to the chair of the search committee?" Search committees often attempt to ask too many questions in this short period of time. Be prepared at the conclusion of the telephone interview for the chair to ask you for references.

The process of telephone interviews by institutions may take many weeks or even months. Search committees have a sacred obligation to let all the candidates know where they stand at regular intervals, but unfortunately, some institutions do not. Be patient. Give the search committee chair a call only after the agreed to a period of time has gone by and if you had the OK to follow up.

The Skype Interview

The following was compiled from various sources on the internet.

Skype is a new form of communication often used in businesses. Recently, congregations and institutions have started using it. In many instances it takes the place of the regular telephone interview. You must master the technology as well as giving a good presentation over Skype.

Here are some suggestions to help you master this new medium:

First, remember that this is an interview. Prepare just as you would for a face-to-face interview. Everything that is true for the telephone interview is true for the Skype interview. Research the institution thoroughly. Know your resume well and have a copy in front of you. Read and understand the questionnaire of the position you're interviewing for. Prepare your answers to the most common relevant interview questions. Have your questions for the interviewer written down as well. Have your skills list written down to make sure you do not forget anything.

Spend time with Skype prior to the interview. Don't begin your practice with your first job interview. Practice with Skype before the interview. Play with it. Learn how it works and what it can do. This way you will increase your familiarity with Skype and how to make it work best for you. Your job interview is one time you can't afford to wing it. Practice diligently.

Create a professional username. There is nothing worse than interviewing as "knicksux41"

Interview in a professional environment. Make sure the background in your home or office is clean and professional. You want to create the right impression about yourself. You don't want the interviewer to be staring at the piles of laundry hanging on your home gym equipment while you describe your proactive organizational skills. Don't try to squeeze in an interview at the coffee shop or on your iPhone.

Dress appropriately. Dress for your Skype interview the way you would dress for an in-person interview. Many Skype experts recommend wearing full interview clothing from head to toe for two reasons. 1) Psychologically - dressing completely will make sure you take this interview seriously and 2) You never know when you have to stand up.

IT checklist and troubleshooting. Well before the interview test all your equipment. Turn on your computer and verify that your Internet connection is working and the Skype program is running as it should. Turn off any scans that may be scheduled so your PC or laptop doesn't lag. No IM, chat or Twitter either! Test your web cam, speakers, and microphone as well.

Distractions. Just as in the phone interview, make sure there are no background noises and that you are able to stay on the computer for as long as you need to. Make sure you are uninterrupted by children or pets. Turn your cell phone off as well as the TV and radio. Make sure your family knows when you'll be interviewing, so they won't enter the room to talk to you. Avoid distracting the interviewer by minimizing your movements. The images on Skype can be a bit jumpy. Remember that the interviewer can see you so it is easy to tell if you are not paying attention.

Make sure the lighting is good. One of the most important features of video is lighting. If necessary, get a lamp that can be in front of you (halogen lamps often work well for this). You might also want to consider a trip to a photo store to get a small lighting kit if you will be presenting in a particularly dark environment.

Webcam and microphone. Make sure your webcam is high quality. Many older and budget notebooks have bare bones webcams that don't deliver a very flattering look to the interviewer on the other end. If you want to make sure you look great, pick up an HD webcam for around \$50 to make sure you look great. If you don't have a good microphone, you may want to pair a Bluetooth headset with your computer for a better audio. If in doubt, make a few test calls to see what the recipient thinks about your sound quality. (See **Appendix K** for more tips.)

The Perfect Interview

The goal of this interview is to make the search committee "fall in love with you." Interviewing is not a demanding intellectual exercise, nor, unfortunately, is it easy or anxiety free. There is much we can do to enjoy the interview experience while being certain to make a

good impression. Ideally, a good interview is like a free-flowing conversation in which neither party dominates and both parties ask for and receive information. Most initial business interviews last for less than an hour, while initial rabbinic interviews are at least two and sometimes three hours long and ultimately include a site visit.

Here is a six-part structure for a “perfect” interview for a rabbi.

1. Preparation

The first and most important portion of the process is preparation.

Be sure to bring: pencil, paper, your resume, a copy of the congregational questionnaire or the organization's job description, other supporting documents, copies of articles and sermons that highlight your work and finally, your list of references.

Think about the people with whom you will be meeting and what you want to know about them. Do research about the institution. A congregation or institution formally listed with the RA will have a questionnaire. A questionnaire is an organization's resume. Many institutions will have additional documents meticulously prepared by professional search firms.

The questionnaire templates have been carefully crafted after much consultation with veteran rabbis and search committee chairs. The questionnaire is an initial document meant to create interest, not detail every possible truth about the community. A thoughtfully completed questionnaire will make you want to interview with the community.

One important caution about the questionnaire is in order. Sometimes institutions describe what they think the community ought to be, not what it currently is. Follow-up questions to the organization's representatives are important to confirm information they give in the questionnaire. A rabbi is always wise to check for additional information with colleagues in the area. Rabbis sometimes ask if it is appropriate to call the person who held the post previously. It certainly is, but put the incumbent's view into an overall perspective. Ask around the movement about the congregation. Check in with the staff professional associations like NAJC and JEA. Talk to your teachers in rabbinical school who may know the community. **It is the rabbi's obligation to confirm information put forth in questionnaires.**

Before the interview, ask the institution to send you other public documents such as the monthly bulletin, a membership brochure, a booklet commemorating the 25th anniversary, an outline of adult education offerings sent out to students last semester. In addition, ask for information about the general community. From these materials, prepare a list of questions you have about the institution. Be ready to state what you like about the institution and why you think

you would be a good fit. How do your skills and talents fit their needs? How can your skills be transferred from your current position to the anticipated one?

Do not neglect the Internet. Google the area, the region and local institutions. *It is particularly worthwhile to check the individual website of the synagogue or organization you are applying to.* A rabbi can find out a lot about the area visiting local websites. Most town Chambers of Commerce have websites for businesses in the area. Look up local blogs by adding the word blog to your Google search for the area. Local blogs can provide insight into daily life of a locality. Town library websites are excellent resources. They often link to many different local organizations and websites in addition to the quality information that they provide.

Next, think through what you want to say about yourself. You should expect the first question of almost any interview to be “tell us a little about yourself.” Your answer should be a short, carefully thought out response. You are preparing a presentation of yourself to people who do not know you. Now is the time to think about: Who am I? What do I like? What am I good at? Prepare a five sentence answer. See **Appendix L** on how to create a good elevator speech.

2. Presentation

You have done all this hard work to get ready, now it is time to present it. **The rabbinic position does not always go to the most qualified candidate, but to the one who makes the best presentation of their qualifications at the interview.** This is not the time to be shy; it is the time to prove that you can do the job well. First, bring your confidence. Prepare yourself mentally and emotionally. A positive and upbeat attitude is critical. Much of your attitude is communicated non-verbally. Be aware that your body language says as much about you as your words do. Maintain eye contact with the person asking the question. Use your facial expression and posture to communicate enthusiasm. Jewish institutions are always on the lookout for passion, joy, enthusiasm and vitality. If you have had a rough ride, if you were not received well in your former place of employment, if you are feeling upset or rejected, be aware that in the interview setting it is easy to communicate a negative emotional state to the search committee.

You will present the highlights you have identified in the Career Inventory (**Appendix C**) that make you the best fit for this particular position. Don't just respond to the questions being presented but think about your answer as an opportunity to emphasize what you want the committee to know about you. This is the art of interviewing. Examples of the type of questions that search committees frequently ask: “You just graduated, what makes you think you have the experience to be our rabbi?” “How will you handle liturgical innovations in our setting?” Of course you want to respond to their questions, but the key is to communicate the essential information that you have already identified that will make **YOU** the outstanding candidate for the position, no matter what they are asking. Keep a note card (or a copy of the Career Inventory)

with your list of highlights with you at all times and memorize it. Use every opportunity to refer back to your strengths because they are the assets that will sell you. Think of each of the committee's questions as a springboard to make your points. If they really think you missed the point they will ask the question again and you can answer it directly.

A candidate should prepare a *Dvar Torah* to use during the interview. If the search committee has not requested a *Dvar Torah*, but you would like to offer a teaching to begin the conversation, seek permission from the committee chair. Usually the rabbi uses the *Dvar Torah* as a way to begin, but sometimes a word of Torah is a good way to summarize and bring closure to a meeting. The rabbi's teaching reminds everyone involved of the sacred relationship that is being sought in this search process. A well thought out Torah teaching sets a religious tone that distinguishes this interview from the many other business and professional settings with which people are familiar. By creating a "teaching moment," the rabbi demonstrates religious leadership in all situations, even while being a job applicant. That *Dvar Torah* should be no longer than five minutes. You can practice getting the timing right by using InterviewStream.

3. Probe

The third piece of the perfect interview is to probe. Feel free to ask strong questions. Questions show care, thought, interest and intelligence. When you do not ask questions, you create the impression that you are not interested in the position and you did not do your homework. You will want to ask some standard prepared questions that you will use with every interview situation.

"What are you looking for in a rabbi?"

"What do you think ought to be the priorities of the person who takes this position?"

"What is the most important thing a candidate needs to know about this position?"

Your research on an individual institution will also reveal specific target questions. For example:

"I see that this is the first time your congregation is looking for a second rabbi. What factors led you to make this decision at this time?"

"This is a half-time position, how and who will determine my priorities?"

"If I am offered this position I will be the only rabbi on your hospital staff. What issues do you anticipate?"

Specific, targeted questions will show the search committee that you care enough about the position to have done your homework. The research literature on MBTI can be helpful here. Extraverts tend to ask too many questions and introverts do not ask enough.

4. Prognosis

The fourth piece of the perfect interview is prognosis. This is an internal dynamic that is not found in any job manual. Prognosis is situation-specific. Somewhere in the middle of the interview, after listening, dialoguing and intuiting, rabbi and search committee click. A light bulb goes off in the candidate's head. All of sudden, the candidate understands exactly what the institution is looking for and who is the appropriate person for this specific position. The candidate is now able to respond in such a way that the institutional leadership feels that the candidate understands them.

A rabbi told us the following story. The congregational questionnaire talked about the need for growth and new membership. "Potential" was a big word in the questionnaire. "New" was the most frequently used adjective in the congregational documents. Before the visit, the rabbi prepared several examples of how they successfully introduced new programs in their current congregation. In the interview, the candidate learned that the congregation had recently completed a successful major building project, but people were tired of being asked for money. The former rabbi had been an outstanding pastor but little programming had been going on for 20 years. As the interview unfolded, the rabbi understood that the congregation was not ready to make the changes it hoped for.

This wise candidate presented a gradual plan for change and growth. The candidate talked about what would remain the same in the community and that the first priority would be healing, loving and developing bonds with the people in the community. Then the rabbi said that a second stage would follow at a point when all the constituents felt the time was right for the next chapter in the life of the congregation and at that point, the rabbi would lead the change. There was an immediate connection to the emotional needs of the congregation and the candidate felt an emphatic response from the search committee. Because the rabbi understood that the congregation needed stability before change would be possible, there was a deep connection with the interviewers.

5. Parting

The interview is coming to a close. The hour is late. This moment can be critical to the candidate. Look at your note card for the highlights that you want to emphasize. Did you miss any? Do any need to be restated or reinforced? You might want to summarize your highlights in a way that demonstrates your fit for this institution. Possibly in the course of the interview there was a question that was unkind or difficult and you responded not at your best. Now is a time to return and restate your answer in order to put you in the best light. When the chair of the committee turns to you and says, "**Do you have final thoughts or closing comments?**" the answer is, "**Yes.**" Did you cover your points? This is the opportunity to state or restate them. It is one

more opportunity for you to express your enthusiasm for the position, the place, and the people. Special note to introverts: there are probably questions at the interview that you did not answer well immediately but you have been thinking about during the interview, it is appropriate to go back and answer any questions that you feel you could now answer better. Thank the committee for their time and consideration. Give the committee chair the list of references that you prepared. The way that you leave creates a lasting impression. In ending, thank the interviewers individually. Shake hands and make eye contact. On the way out thank the secretary, receptionists, significant others, drivers, hosts, etc., because their recommendations often count and because it demonstrates that you are a *mensch*.

Your final question should be, “[What is the next step in the process?](#)” A source of great anxiety is not hearing from an institution in a timely way. This is normal anxiety and some of it will always be present. However, the rabbi should educate the institution as to the candidate’s needs in this regard and push the institution to face this issue as well. The institution is seeing several candidates over a long period of time, but they also need to be aware that you are making decisions. Agreement about when the next communication will take place reduces anxiety for all parties and keeps the process moving forward.

6. Post-Closing

Once the interview is over and you are at home, take notes about the interview. What did you like? What didn’t you like? How did it compare to some other places you have been recently? Do some self-reflection as well. What questions surprised you? Which answers would you like to rephrase? What memorable line did you spontaneously create that you want to add to your repertoire because it made you shine? What do you need to practice doing before you go out to interview again?

Write a thank-you note within two days of the interview. Email is fine, but if you have the time write it out by hand. This note serves many purposes. In addition to acknowledging the time and effort invested by the institution, a thank-you note allows you to highlight your strengths and reframe any issues that you feel are important. This note is another opportunity to stress why your specific qualifications make you the right fit for this specific institution. If there was a point you missed in the interview, include that information in your thank-you letter. Let the committee members know that you are interested in the job. This note has often made a lasting impression on a committee. Months after an interview, an institution returned to a rabbi for a second look because the primary candidate took another position. The thank you note summarizing the fit kept this rabbi in the mind of the committee chair. A short thank-you is a wise employment investment. Do not forget any follow-up actions that need to be taken. For example, is there additional correspondence to be written? Did you talk to your references? Does the institution or school need any additional materials from you?

The institution is responsible for reimbursing the candidate for all travel and related expenses in a timely fashion. It is always best to confirm this arrangement before your visit.

Appropriate Questions

Most of the questions you will be asked are predictable and appropriate. Search committees spend hours thoughtfully crafting their questions. Their questions seek a method to distinguish one candidate from another, to establish which candidates are the appropriate fit for the institution, and if there are any deal breakers for which the institution cannot compromise. Often questions are designed with other questions in mind and you should look for the question behind the question. Just as the search committee puts in time and effort into preparing questions so too should the candidate put time and effort into their answers. Prepare for the interview by rehearsing in a role-play situation. The best way is to have several people ask questions to recreate the panel interview situation you expect to encounter on the day of the interview. A good rehearsal is the basis for an easier interview later. InterviewStream is a tool that is designed to assist you with this type of practice. This preparation is a lot of work, but will ensure that you put your best foot forward at the interview. See **Appendix H** and **Appendix I** for a list of practice questions. Legendary UCLA Men's Basketball Coach John Wooden used to say you cannot over prepare. He would tell his team every day. Practice, Practice, Practice.

Disarming Bad News

You can expect that your prospective employer will contact people who might not be your fans and you need to prepare for it. No institution will hire a rabbi without checking with people in the rabbi's past, regardless of if they are on the rabbi's reference list. You cannot do anything to prevent the institution from talking with a previous manager or an angry past-president, but you can mitigate any damage someone might do to your candidacy. You should mention at the conclusion of the interview, what these critics might say about you in a worst case scenario and you should offer your own interpretation of the events.

"I'm sure when you talk with my president you will hear about our disagreements and differences about the future of the school. One of the reasons I am leaving is that I had a different vision. Let me tell you about my vision and how it will help you..."

"I'm sure when you talk with the chairman of the ritual committee you will hear about the introduction of a new Carlebach Friday night service. The chair is correct that I did not handle it well, and in hindsight the change was too abrupt. I have learned from the experience and if I would do it at your synagogue I would do it differently."

Inappropriate Questions

“Rabbi, do you expect to have children soon?”

How do you respond when someone asks an inappropriate personal question? “What kind of child care do you have?” Or more politically incorrect, “What are your family plans?” Single people receive their share of inappropriate questions as well. “Do you plan to get married any time soon?” It has been our experience over the years that rabbis and especially female rabbis are asked these inappropriate questions. So, unfortunately, be prepared for the inappropriate question. Plan your response carefully. Be polite. Humor can be helpful. In response to these sorts of questions, you should refocus the question to its impact on the job for which you are interviewing. Stay positive, shift the focus and proceed without taking personal offense.

A good response is, “I assume your concern is in confirming that I am reliable. I can assure you that I absolutely am.” Another good response is, “I am looking forward to being your rabbi and to being the mother of my children.” “If you’re asking about children because you want to assess my commitment to my career, let me assure you that the time and effort I have spent on establishing my career will not be replaced with domestic issues.” The absolutely worst response, even though it likely is real, is to be angry about it and say, “You know, you can’t ask that,” or “That’s illegal.”

Why are inappropriate questions still asked and what can the RA do to end this practice? At every opportunity in the materials the RA sends to congregations and institutions and in meetings and seminars, whether with the USCJ, with schools, or with individual search committee members, we remind them of appropriate professional behavior. However, it is a practice that persists. RA Executive Vice President Emeritus, Rabbi Joel Meyers, teaches that, although wrong, part of the reason the questions persist is because synagogues and schools see their rabbis as a future part of the institutional family and these are the kind of questions that some people feel free to ask a future member of the family. The RA will continue to instruct all parties on how to conduct a dignified placement process, but be prepared to handle all questions in a manner with which you are comfortable. You can practice answering difficult questions by using InterviewStream.

The Bad Interview

“I did not like the interview; it made me uncomfortable. What do I do?”

Experience teaches that the “microcosm reveals the macrocosm.” The interview experience is a view into the life, the values and the culture of the institution. It is a “systems view” of the world. How an organization or a synagogue behaves during the search process reveals volumes about its ongoing life. If you feel out of sync or uncomfortable with the interview, you will probably also feel out of sync or uncomfortable as the new rabbi or headmaster of the institution. One rabbi told us that he did not have an opportunity to ask any of

his own questions at the interview. Every time he did, someone on the search committee used it as springboard to ask the candidate one more question. He felt ignored. He felt a strong desire on the part of the congregation to have a rabbi do the tasks of the rabbinate but not to have a personal relationship with anyone. He did choose to go to this congregation because it was close to family and was disappointed when the congregation did not conduct an installation ceremony for him. He left two years later, unhappy with the experience. His work experience had the same feel and atmosphere as the initial interview.

Unease with the Interviewer

There have been cases where the mannerisms, questions or general "vibes" of the interviewer have made the rabbi candidate uncomfortable. Unlike in law or business where it is possible to work at a place and not deal with that person again a rabbi does not have that luxury. If you feel uncomfortable with the interviewer, it is most likely that the person is a prominent person in the congregation or organization and it would be wise for you to take your talents elsewhere. Let the institution know you are withdrawing your application. The book, *The Perfect Storm*, shows that in the fishing industry, it is common practice to show up on the dock, look out to sea, decide not to go out, and then leave without talking to anyone. Like the fisherman, trust your intuition, but please let the institution know when you are withdrawing your candidacy.

Confrontational Questions

"We notice you were at Hillel of Hawaii for two months; what happened?"

"We heard you were a divisive force in the community."

Expect confrontational questions. Interviewers have the right to probe deeply. Remember in giving your answers to personal or employment questions, the committee is only interested in your past insofar as it may be an indicator about the future. In every answer you give, ask yourself, *"How can I answer this so as to reassure them about the future?"* Be honest, be brief and be positive. Don't go into agonizingly great detail about the experience. *"I have learned much from the difficult experience I've been through, and I have much greater compassion now for all those who have been through similar experiences."* If a search committee asks you to explain conflict or involuntary termination at a previous institution tell them the truth. But tell them this truth in a way that reassures them you will not give them any cause for concern in the future. *"I made a mistake, but I have learned from the experience."*

Do remember to speak well of your past employers, as the search committee will infer from your answer how you are going to speak about them. Negative comments about a previous employer are a sign of disloyalty, immaturity and a lack of professionalism. *"It was just one of those rare occurrences, similar to a marriage between two wonderful people that inexplicably breaks up despite the best efforts of both parties. In such experiences, as in divorce, you know*

that it always takes two before you have an irreparable break. I've meditated long and hard on what I contributed to that and I think as a result of my introspection, I am a much more mature individual now.”

No Second Interview

“I thought the interview went well; why did they not invite me back a second time?”

An interview always has two levels. One is to demonstrate competency. Rabbis can sometimes feel insulted by this probing. “Of course, I know how to do this. I was ordained over twenty years ago.” True, but the committee must do its own exploration of rabbinic work. It is important for you to document your experience and your unique professional approach. Once competency has been established, the rest of the interview is about connection. *Does this rabbi connect to us personally? Do we see this rabbi fitting in with our institution's culture? Will this rabbi relate to my study group?* If the search committee feels chemistry with the rabbi, there will be a call back for a second interview.

In the literature about interviewing it is reported that 90% of the time candidates imagine that they do better at an interview than the evaluation of the search committee. This divergence is so common it has been given a name, the Lake Wobegon effect, after Garrison Keeler's fictional lake from the radio show *A Prairie Home Companion*. You need a way to check in with reality. Go to the balcony and reflect truthfully. Find a confidant to share your actual answers with and ask for feedback. Record the interview with InterviewStream and send it to a friend to review.

From the RA's point of view, sensitivity towards the “chemistry” will help you understand why a rabbi was rejected by a search committee when from the candidate's point of view the interview seemed to go so well. The rabbi could certainly do the tasks and get the job done, but there was no chemistry. If you do not establish an emotional connection, a committee will probably look to another candidate.

Answering Questions Briefly

Rabbis are among some of the most articulate people in the world – experts at communicating. However, this strength can be a disadvantage in an interview. At the best interviews, answers are brief and to the point. Replies to queries should not be longer than two minutes. Rabbis should always bear in mind that the interview is not the bimah and a sermon is not called for every time a layperson asks a question. It is a time for a targeted response. It is best to give a short reply and leave the committee hungry for more information. If the search committee members want more information, they will ask. This is why InterviewStream limits the time for each answer. A candidate needs to be brief even to complex questions.

Talking About Money

It is always best to push off the discussion about financial details to the latest possible point in the process. At an initial interview or on the telephone, when they ask, “Rabbi, you have seen our financial offer in the questionnaire, is this satisfactory?” The best answer probably is, “You know, this is very early in the process, too early in the process. Let's determine if it is the right chemistry first. I'm sure that if we like each other, we'll be able to work out the details.” Another response is to say, “Are you making me a job offer?” Sometimes it can help to say, “I expect to be paid a competitive wage for this type of position.” The response I like best is, “I am very interested in the position, I am sure we can come to an agreement about compensation.” Another one is, “I'm very interested in the position and would consider any reasonable offer that you might make.” In the rabbinic world, the usual practice is first to agree that you have a position and then to negotiate.

One then usually accepts a position depending on the outcome of negotiations. A good way to respond to an offer is "I accept this position on the condition we are able to come to financial terms."

Conclusion

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ עֵבֶר וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאֲרָץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ.

Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee.' Genesis 12:1

Our rabbis expand on this verse. "Look at three things: מֵאֶרֶץ עֵבֶר know where you came from וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ know where you are going וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ know before who you need to give a spiritual accounting. If you do these three things you will not be in a position to be sinful." This rabbinic teaching can be applied to the interview process. The candidate needs to be able to talk about the past with understanding and insight and discuss the future with confidence. Yet most of all, each answer must connect the candidate and the institution with the ultimate goal of being in relationship with God.

Part 6. The Congregational Visit

Dvar Torah

וַיַּעֲבֹר אַבְרָם, בְּאֶרֶץ, עַד מְקוֹם שְׁכֵם, עַד אֵלוֹן מוֹרָה; וְהִכְנִיעַנִי, אִזְּ בְּאֶרֶץ.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Shechem, unto the terebinth of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. (Gen. 12:6)

Rashi comments in reference to the city of Shechem. "*Nichnas letocha*". Even though Shechem is a dangerous place because the Canaanites are there, Abraham did not pass along the outskirts but went inside the city itself. Rashi continues that Abraham did so because he went to see the good inside. To continue our metaphor, after the initial phase of a telephone or Skype interview, a candidate may be called "inside" to have an intensive interview experience on the site of the institution. The goal is for the rabbi to display their passion and to articulate their rabbinic voice. Like Abraham entering Shechem, the rabbi in a job search is in a vulnerable place when visiting an institution. Like Abraham at Shechem, it is an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate strengths at a strategic moment.

NOTE: This section is mainly about pulpit positions.

A Search Committee Visit to your Synagogue

Although a site visit to your congregation is not required, some prospective employers find it helpful, especially when weighing the choice between two finalists. The search committee feels that it can be a helpful indicator of a rabbi's suitability for their congregation. A congregation may also appreciate a "site visit" to see what you have done in your current circumstances. Unannounced visits are a violation of the search protocol established by the RA. You are within your rights to ask a search committee to come at a time that is more convenient for you and your synagogue. You may ask a search committee to reschedule their visit to a time that works better for you.

Meeting with the Entire Congregation - The Shabbat Interview

Frequently, the final stage in your election process will be a *Shabbat* experience, where you and your significant other are invited to spend a weekend with your perspective congregation. You will probably be one of the two or three finalists for the job. Ultimately, the search committee will recommend only one candidate to the board to be the new rabbi. Congregational input is a key factor in that recommendation. You should be aware that a visit to a congregation is a unique part of the search process. For the congregation the logistics are immense, formidable and complicated and for the candidate it is exhausting and powerful.

Most rabbis look forward to sharing *Shabbat* with a congregation before making a decision. On *Shabbat*, the congregation has an opportunity to meet and interact with you, and you can get a sense of the religious orientation of the congregation. While you are in the community, the RA suggests to the search committee that they should provide your significant other with resources and with people who have insight on housing and cultural life. When appropriate, this may include people who can advise your significant other on employment opportunities and on the quality of the various schools in the area which your children might attend. Let the congregation or the campus know of your personal and family interests and needs before the visit.

How will this *Shabbat* experience be structured? The search committee will probably invite you and your significant other to an informal Friday night dinner at a congregant's home. Some members of the search committee will probably attend. You will generally be invited to lead the Friday night service and preach. At the *Oneg Shabbat* following services, you should be given a chance to meet with congregants. Feel free to ask for what in politics is called a "body man," a member of the search committee to be present with you to introduce you to the congregation and to make sure no one person takes up all of your time. On *Shabbat* morning you should again be given the opportunity to lead the service and preach at the regularly scheduled *Shabbat* morning minyan. **Sermon selection is just as important evaluation tool for the search committee as sermon delivery.** Choose your sermon topic wisely. It is not the time to be controversial or lengthy. At *kiddush* following services, you will have an opportunity to interact with congregants. The congregation and the search committee should allow you and your significant other time to relax over lunch. **Do not let this be another question and answer time.** This is time for you to wind down and relax. You may be asked to *daven* or read Torah, which should be arranged beforehand. However, the point is for you to showcase your synagogue skills and not substitute for the *baal koreh*. At some point during the weekend, the congregation will probably ask you to teach. There should be no surprises for you as the guest rabbi. All expectations such as leading services, teaching classes, giving a *Dvar Torah*, should be worked out and scheduled in advance. The RA instructs congregations that it is the congregation's best interest to conclude the candidate's presentation in the early afternoon because by this point presentations are repetitious to both the candidate and the congregation. Congregations often do

not heed this advice and *Shabbat* can be one very long and tiring day. Negotiate some down time so you can be at your best when necessary.

In recent years, the central piece of the weekend experience has shifted from the focus on the sermon presentation to the public question and answer session. Years ago, the rabbi was evaluated on preaching ability almost exclusively; as the rabbi's role has expanded and shifted to a more weekday emphasis, the prominence of the question session has increased. Typically, after *kiddush* the congregation reconvenes for a formal question and answer session. A moderator, selected by the search committee, asks questions prepared by the search committee. Fifteen to twenty questions will lead to a two hour forum, which the RA considers to be the optimal time for the sessions to last. Unscreened questions from the floor are discouraged because they tend to cast the congregation in a poor light. These types of sessions are usually well attended and provide an excellent opportunity to learn a great deal about the candidate and the congregation. Your presence, responses and energy during this Q & A session is often the key to securing the position.

There is a certain awkwardness to the *Shabbat* visit if there is an incumbent in place. It is an expected courtesy for the guest rabbi to inform the current rabbi that you are coming for *Shabbat*. The congregation should inform the incumbent rabbi of the details of the weekend as well. The candidate and the incumbent should confer before *Shabbat* to review the style of services and traditions that need to be maintained. The current rabbi, the congregation and the guest rabbi all need to understand that this *Shabbat* is an opportunity for you to display your talents and abilities. The incumbent may wish to excuse himself from the regular weekend responsibilities to make you comfortable. On the other hand, there may be particular parts of the service, a charge to a *bat mitzvah*, the blessing for an *aufruf*, or reading the *yahrzeit* list that the incumbent rabbi should perform. As the candidate, make sure to ask the search committee what is the role of the incumbent during the weekend visit. More often than not, congregations ask the outgoing rabbi to take the *Shabbat* off. All these matters should be arranged before the visit to ensure that parties have the same expectations.

After the *Shabbat* visit, it is important to write a thank you letter. In addition to acknowledging the time and effort invested by the institution, a thank you note allows you to highlight your strengths and reiterate any issues that you feel are important. This note is another opportunity to stress why your specific qualifications make you the appropriate person for this specific institution. If there was a point you missed making in the *Shabbat* visit, or a point you wish to reiterate then include that information in your thank you letter.

“Thank you for your invitation to visit with Congregation Beth Shalom. My husband and I had a wonderful time. We especially enjoy visiting the Tot *Shabbat* service. We enjoyed meeting you and wish you good future success.”

"Although I did not lead you *Kabbalat Shabbat* service, I want you to know that at my own congregation I often lead alternating the traditional *nusach* with Carlebach tunes."

Travel Arrangements and Reimbursements

When congregations ask candidates to visit for an extended *Shabbat* visit, it is customary for the community to cover the rabbi's travel and hotel expenses. The RA has advised congregations, in the publication *Aliyah* that the rabbi will have special concerns for their own personal religious observance while on the *Shabbat* visit, such as the need to be in walking distance to the synagogue and *kosher* meals. The RA also suggests to congregations that it is proper to invite a candidate's significant other to accompany the candidate on a congregational visit, since this person will be involved in making the final decision. You cannot make such an important decision without the input and agreement of your significant other. If the congregation extends this invitation, then the congregation is responsible for the travel and hotel expenses for you and your significant other. It is your responsibility to clarify and verify these arrangements with each congregation so there will be no misunderstandings later.

If your children are older, being away over a weekend will probably not be a problem. If you have a young family, however, you might prefer to come without your significant other or children. In that case you might want to make arrangements for your significant other to come at a different time to get a sense of the community and the congregation. The RA asks congregations that if a rabbi and their significant other do come with their children over the course of a weekend, the congregation should provide childcare for the rabbi's children at no cost to the rabbi. This choice is a delicate one for the candidate. Bringing your family can be a positive selling point because congregations like candidates that have a family, believing that it will attract new members. On the other hand, your family will be a distraction. It is important to remember that over a *Shabbat* visit, you are the rabbi candidate first and a parent second.

One of the most stressful elements of your search may be when you need to be away from your own congregation, especially over a *Shabbat*. Obviously, coverage may be an issue. The RA and the USCJ have agreed that a congregation must expect its current rabbi to be away over weekends as part of the interview process, just as it will be necessary to free up time on the pulpit to allow a candidate to preach and teach. The RA and the USCJ agree that time away for interviewing purposes does not count against vacation time. Though there is a general agreement between the RA and USCJ you need to review the details of this understanding with your own synagogue leadership in advance. Can the rabbi take off a *Shabbat* if there is a *Bar or Bat Mitzvah*? If you are in tension or dispute with the leadership one of the places it will manifest itself, often inappropriately, is in the details of your taking off a *Shabbat* for an interview.

What happens if you have to cancel a visit that the congregation has already paid for? As travel costs have increased, the RA hears this question more often. In the business world, such an expenditure would be considered a 'cost of doing business' to the employer. Your congregational visit may be planned many weeks in advance, but then prior to the scheduled visit you may receive a job offer or the congregation may make a decision before the other candidates have an opportunity to visit. Both possibilities do occur and it is to be expected the other party will feel upset or angry. Congregations put enormous energy, time and money into planning a rabbi's *Shabbat* visit. Do not make a decision to cancel a visit lightly. The suggestion of the RA is for you to be transparent. For example, if you are considering an offer by another congregation, you should call the search committee and ask if the *Shabbat* visit should proceed as scheduled. It is an awkward situation and some congregations move forward and others do not. If you decide to cancel the interview the RA suggests that you reimburse the congregation for 50% of travel expenses, but not other costs like *kiddush*. If the congregation cancels, it is a cost of 'doing business' and you can expect them to pay whatever expenses have already been accrued. Better to end the process than go through the formalities of interviewing for a position you will not take. If a congregation offers the position to another rabbi you should not take it personally and you should not bad mouth the congregation. You never know what the future might hold, or who they are related to.

Part 7. Compensation, Negotiation and Signing a Contract

Dvar Torah

אַבְרָם, כֶּבֶד מְאֹד, בַּמִּקְנֵהוּ, בַּכֶּסֶף וּבַזָּהָב

And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold. (Gen. 13:2)

One Hassidic commentator on Abraham's wealth explains "All the silver and all the gold that Abraham acquired he acquired for the sake of his journey from place to place so he could call upon God." Abraham was a wealthy man who used his acquired possessions to assist him on his spiritual journey. It was not held against Abraham that he was wealthy. Just like Abraham, a rabbi's compensation helps the rabbi achieve material and spiritual blessing.

Decision Making: How Do You Know When it is Right?

The theme of this book is helping you find a position which is an appropriate fit for you. Most rabbis feel a call to the rabbinate. When will you know you are being 'called' to a specific rabbinic position? Here is a check list to help you make the decision.

1. **Halakhic Issue.** Is there some aspect of the community's religious practice you are not willing to live with at all? Change in religious practice is a slow process and takes time, patience and cooperation. Are you in sync with their current practice?
2. **Personal Deal Breakers.** Is there any aspect of the possible new place of employment that is unacceptable? Some examples might be: there is no *mikveh* in the community, or the drive to the day school is 80 minutes in one direction. You may like the professional position very much, but the personal life style issues are not acceptable. You like the community but it may not be right for your family.
3. **Professional Deal Breakers.** Are there professional issues that will undermine the possibility of success? For example, the Hebrew School is broken and you are not an educator. Or, there are two distinct factions in the community that have different goals for the community and you are not an expert at conflict resolution. Or, key members are still opposed to egalitarianism and you hold egalitarianism dear. Every community has issues—are the issues in this possible place of employment one you see as a challenge to be met by your strengths?
4. **Housing.** How far is the housing from the synagogue? Is it walking distance for all members of your family? Are you willing to drive? Can you afford to live in the area?

5. **Values.** You like the people. You like the community. You like the job description. In the Career Inventory you listed the values that motivated your work. Do you feel that your deepest values are reflected in the life of the work place you are considering? Can you be you in this community?
6. **Geography.** What kind of community do you need to live in? Is it close enough to family and friends who will be your support system? Are you willing to go to a less desirable location because of professional growth opportunities or quality of life? How deep do the local Jewish resources need to be for you to be comfortable?
7. **Life Partner.** Will your family be comfortable here? What do you need to do to make this work for your family?
8. **Compensation.** Is the compensation fair and competitive? Do the institution's financials look solid going into the future? Do you feel the compensation values you?
9. **Priorities.** Do the institution's priorities coincide with your priorities for the institution?
10. **MBTI.** As part of your self assessment to prepare for the job search you discovered your Myers Brigg type. Now is time to revisit your type, and see if you type will fit into the new place of employment. For example, an NT needs a work place that is challenging where there is an opportunity for problem solving. An NF seeks a place where personal growth is valued. An SP seeks a place where there a lot of variety and not a lot of bureaucracy. An ST will be most comfortable where the structure is clear and strong. Does your type fit with the new rabbinic position?

The rabbi should begin with applying the common sense of American statesman and inventor, Benjamin Franklin. Franklin invented the comparison list. When he had to make a difficult choice he would list both the advantages and disadvantages to see the differences. List your positions and rate how each one compares to your list of ten employment factors. Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? If so, you have a match!

Negotiations

Rabbis consistently tell the RA that they find compensation negotiations to be the hardest part of the job search. On the other hand, laypeople tell us what formidable negotiators rabbis are. If you think about it, rabbis negotiate all the time. We persuade people to try to put on *tefillin* for the first time in 20 years or negotiate peace between a frustrated parent and an alienated child. Rabbis need to feel comfortable using their expertise in communication and persuasion to

influence the process of their own financial negotiation.

When do you talk money? Timing is everything. Negotiate terms after you have received a firm job offer. You can expect to be asked about money at any time in the process, and usually during an interview. An interview is not the time to answer questions about compensation. If members of the search committee insist, “Rabbi, we need to know now,” keep in mind that this is just a tactic. Be patient. Respond with, ["Let's see if the chemistry is right, and then I am sure we can work out financial details later."](#)

You will probably receive an offer over the phone. You should answer, [“Yes, I accept, pending the outcome of our negotiations.”](#) Let them know how excited you are about the new position. The negotiations should then take place in person, face to face, and as soon as possible. After the search committee has made an offer, you are in a position of great psychological strength because you know the search committee thinks very highly of you and wants you to join the congregation or organization. Despite how anxious you are to complete the process or how uncomfortable you are in talking about money, the fact that they have made an offer means the institution is the more vulnerable at this point.

Laypeople think rabbis are great negotiators not because you have extensive experience at financial dealing, but because the laypeople strongly sense their own vulnerability. In their minds, you have already been engaged through a very public process. The people who offered you the position need to close this deal or they will feel embarrassed. Even though many rabbis do not think so, when you receive an offer for a new position, you start the negotiation from a place of great strength. You will negotiate better and achieve stronger results when you enter the process with a positive attitude about the outcome. Allow yourself to be confident and enthusiastic about the results.

What do You Need to Do to Start Successful Negotiations?

1. **You should negotiate the negotiation.** It is probably best to negotiate with a small group of two or three people. One person may take the discussions too personally and see it as a win-lose situation. A small group means that there are witnesses to what was said if there is confusion later. More than three is unnecessary and can be intimidating.
2. **Time parameters should be established.** When does the process begin and by when will it be concluded? These parameters should be agreed to in advance. **You do not want the negotiation to go on too long** in case it is not successful and you wish to consider other options. Concluding financial details within three or four weeks of an offer is reasonable.
3. **Establish where the discussions will be held and by what means.** If possible, go to their

turf. They will be more comfortable. The RA believes that negotiations over email is the least effective approach. Emails can easily be misinterpreted.

4. **Clarify what is going to be negotiated.** Together, create an agenda for your meetings. This is probably a discussion about money, compensation and benefits. What are the housing arrangements? Role responsibilities should also be included. For example, are you responsible for reading the Torah every week; leading the curriculum review and how often do you need to attend morning *minyan*? Leave precise contract language to a later time and to the legal professionals. The rabbi, and not just the laypeople, has a right to give input into all of these matters before the negotiations begin.
5. The most important thing, by far, **is to clarify the authority of those negotiating with the candidate.** You must ask the negotiators, “Do you have the authority to negotiate with me? Do you have the authority to close the deal?” If they do not, it is critical to send them back to the board for that authority. The trap for the rabbi is work out a deal with the committee with compromises and concessions by both parties, only to hear the chair of the committee say, “Now, the board has to approve it. I do not know what they will do.” A week later the chair comes back with lower numbers set by the board. You can prevent this scenario with some initial questions clarifying the authority of the negotiators.
6. **Finally, all interim agreements and partial understandings should periodically be put down in writing** so there are no misunderstandings later. After you and the negotiators have come to an agreement, they become your advocate.

Like a good interview or a good sermon, preparation is the key ingredient to successful compensation negotiation. Below are listed the five key types of preparation that you need to do before you begin a compensation negotiation:

People Preparation: Before you look at the numbers, look at the people. Who are they? Why were they selected to do this? What do they need from this negotiation? Build relationships. See the negotiators as individuals. Ask them personal questions. Can you create a personal bond with them as individuals? By building relationships before the negotiations begin, you increase the chances that all parties will be able to see their way to a “win-win” negotiation.

Issue Preparation: What is the organization's financial goal? What has changed in the last few years since the financial crisis hit? What are their assumptions? What interests, desires, needs and hopes give rise to their negotiating positions? What is going on behind the numbers put forth on the table? Do they need to stay within budget? Are you the first full-time rabbi? You are asking questions and then listening, not for agreement, but for understanding.

Personal Preparation: What do you, the candidate, need to have? Understand the difference between what you want and what you are willing to live with. What is your highest goal? You need to know the bottom line below which you will walk away from the job offer. You need to be able to answer two questions:

1. What is the minimum (salary and/or benefits) I am willing to accept?
2. What is the value of the position in today's dollars? (Salary and/or benefits). This value has changed in the last two years.

Write down your objective. By committing your goal to paper, you make the desired end point clear and explicit to yourself.

Psychological Preparation: Read about negotiations to get “psyched up” for beginning this process. *Getting to Yes*, by Roger Fisher and William Ury is the classic text; it is a quick and easy read. Negotiations are always stressful, but do not take them personally. Control your emotions. In *Getting to Yes*, Fisher and Ury teach that it is helpful to separate the people from the problem and the first person to separate is yourself. Control your words and actions so they work for you and not against you. There is a saying, “Everyone has butterflies. The key is to get them to fly in formation.” What can you do to make yourself feel confident and comfortable?

Financial Preparation: First, start with the financial health of the institution. Negotiations always begin with the reality of what the institution can pay. Look at a budget. A non-profit institution never says it is doing well financially. There is a big difference, however, between a institution that makes up its deficit with an annual fundraiser and a institution that just cut back its staff by 10% because they could not make payroll. Lyle Schaller points out that it is normal for a congregation to carry debt, similar to a homeowner's mortgage. It is a normal way of doing business.

Stated Compensation in Questionnaire: Both the RA and the USCJ put out salary surveys that can be used as guidelines for negotiations. Congregations tend to only use the USCJ survey, which is often lower than the RA's survey. Make sure you check both. We prefer the RA survey because it is statistically reliable and because it was conducted by the Graduate School of Nonprofit Management of the American Jewish University, an agency independent of the RA. You can explain that surveys often differ. A good example is how we deal with crime in the United States. When the FBI determines the crime rate it looks at both records from the police and the National Crime Victimization Survey which surveys victims. The NCVS is always a more accurate portrait of the crime rate than police records. Rabbis need to advocate for

themselves and show congregations what their colleagues are getting paid.

As of 2011, we can give you a rough guideline for minimal compensation levels by size of congregation. Compensation includes the value of benefits and housing:

“A” congregation (less than 250 units):	total compensation no less than \$100,000
“B” congregation (less than 500 units):	total compensation no less than \$135,000
“C” congregation (less than 750 units):	total compensation no less than \$150,000
“D” congregation (greater than 750 units):	total compensation no less than \$250,000
Assistantship:	total compensation no less than \$100,000

Additionally, the RA website is filled with various salary comparison tools to aid you in negotiating with any type of employer.

Strategies: What is the best strategy to use to get the most compensation? The best advice is *not* to put the first offer out on the table. The first offer immediately sets the upper or lower limit for the negotiation. You want to be in a position to react. When they say, “So, rabbi, what are you looking for?” defer to their expertise. Say something like, [“You’ve been thinking and meeting about this much longer than I have...”](#) or [“You are much more of an expert about finances than I am...”](#) In most situations, the best strategic advice is to let the institution make the first offer.

Second, you need to sell. Show how your talent and experience will benefit them. A strong case does not include listing your own needs, such as two children in college or your need to buy a new home. The employer’s responsibility is to pay a competitive salary, not to meet your personal needs. For example, you would make a strong case with the following information: you and the rabbi who just left the position have the same number of years of experience (so you expect to be paid in the same bracket); you are switching jobs (all employers know that this is a time when employees receive more compensation than in their prior position); your previous employer was the same size. Based on this type of information, you would have a strong case for expecting a significant increase over your last position.

Third, conclude your negotiations well. How do you conclude the negotiations well? Be gracious and generous at the end. If the offer is not okay, do not accept it. Renegotiate or decline the position, because you will only resent it later. If it is okay, it is okay. Let it go. When it is done, it is done. Write a letter summarizing the negotiations until a contract comes. Finally, remember that now you must live up to the generous salary you have successfully negotiated.

Third Party Negotiators: Should a rabbi use a third party to negotiate the new contract? Most rabbis still negotiate their own contracts but it has become quite common for rabbis, like other professionals, to engage counsel to negotiate on their behalf. In a recently completed survey of rabbis who sought new rabbinic positions, when asked, "What was the most difficult part of the process?" The rabbis answered, 'negotiating the contract and closing the deal.' The experience of the RA is that in most cases the negotiator does NOT secure more money or better benefits for the rabbis, but does significantly lower the level of anxiety of the rabbi. Some rabbis wish to engage a third party to represent them because they do not want the 'business' relationship to create any hard feelings or interfere with creating a sacred community. Most institutions understand that the rabbi is an educator or spiritual leader first, and an executive second and as a result, institutions usually have no problem when the rabbi asks a third party, most often an attorney, to represent them in negotiations.

Questionnaire vs. Offer: Rabbis often ask about the stated compensation level found in the institution's formal written material or questionnaire. Is this a hard number or is there room to negotiate? The experience of the RA is that there is a 10% or so play in the number. In other words, the number stated is not the bottom line. However, when you read the questionnaire and the number is significantly below what you as a rabbi need to earn, you should probably not be applying to this position. Our experience is that the stated compensation may be lower than the organization is willing to pay but it will not increase drastically.

Sometimes when an institution makes an offer to a rabbi the salary number is below that is stated in the written documentation. We have heard institutions say things like. "Written materials were drafted by someone else" "This offer was not approved by the board." "We don't have the financial resources to meet that". This situation should give you pause. They may be playing financial hardball or there may have been an actual mix up. It is the position of the RA that the employer is bound ethically by their original written proposal. This is a situation where the RA may intervene on the rabbi's behalf with their employer. This is a situation to stand your ground.

Benefits

1. One of the most important standard benefits is a pension contribution. We strongly suggest that the institution and you make an effort to maximize contributions to the Joint Retirement Board, the movement's pension program. It is to the benefit of you and your family and the employer that your pension fund be maximized so that sufficient funds will be available to you at retirement.
2. A second important standard benefit is medical coverage for you and your family. At this time, there is no movement-wide health plan available. The RA is often asked if it has a

medical plan. Unfortunately, we do not and we are constantly in search of ways to create this coverage. The core problem is that medical insurance is organized on a state by state basis and not nationally. Most medical coverage provided by employers are family plans.

3. The third standard benefit is disability coverage, which statistically is more important than life insurance. Disability insurance protects you and the employer as well.
4. Rabbis feel the need for companionship and for ways to continually grow as rabbis. The fourth standard benefit is coverage of the cost of attendance at the international RA convention. Attendance at the RA convention is also a benefit to the employer because the annual convention opens you up to the world of broader Jewish learning and additional practical rabbinic knowledge. From these meetings, you will bring back insights, program ideas and renewed enthusiasm. Many rabbis also negotiate other additional compensation and time off to be used for continuing professional education in a specialty area.
5. Maternity leave at full pay for three months is the common standard for women rabbis. Paternity leave is granted less frequently and often for one month. The RA suggests using the term "family leave".
6. Finally, the negotiation will include a conversation about days off and vacation. Rabbis should begin their tenure with no less than one month of vacation. Some rabbis choose to not include days off in their contract so they may be flexible and creative in how they balance work and family.

These six benefits are in addition to salary and are usual and customary. Some other items are open for discussion between the rabbi and the institution: cell phone, private telephone line for the rabbi at home, car insurance, books, professional expenses, discretionary fund and professional expenses, *Shabbat* hospitality fund and life insurance. A sabbatical is often granted in a second contract. Social Security should not be considered a benefit but an administrative expense to the congregation.

What about a bonus clause? In recent years, it has become quite commonplace for congregations to offer rabbis incentive clauses in contracts. For example, "for every 10 new member families, the rabbi will receive an end of the year onetime payment of \$2000." In the view of the RA and most rabbis, such contractual clauses are demeaning. As the financial crisis deepened and the future growth of the Conservative Movement questioned, bonus clauses appeared to be the solution to institutions. We suggest they be avoided because it is unprofessional.

Housing

Housing is a sensitive and complex issue. Over the last ten years, rabbis' views of housing have changed. Most rabbis expect to purchase their own home, while only a small minority still insist on living in a congregational manse. Our Salary Survey reveals that almost 70% of North American rabbis own their own home and the number continues to increase. Of course, if you live in a synagogue house, normal maintenance like cleaning and painting should be done before you arrive. Living in a congregational manse is often cited by our colleagues as one of the frustrating parts of a relationship with their lay leadership, so the RA advises that standards of annual maintenance and periodic housing upgrades be established at the beginning of the rabbinic relationship. Even when there is a congregational parsonage, it may not fit your needs. For example, a two-bedroom home, which served the prior rabbi and his small family very well, may not be comfortable for a rabbi with a large family. As part of a Shabbat visit even if the incumbent are still living in the parsonage, you, along with the chair of the house committee, should briefly visit the synagogue home. It is necessary to inform congregations early in the negotiation process that they may need to consider housing upgrades immediately to enable a rabbi to come. We have learned from experience that rabbis should have a conversation with the house committee about inspection and communication. Unannounced visits by the house committee or uninvited visits by someone with a key is out of bounds.

As housing prices have risen, it has become common for institutions to loan rabbis money above their compensation for a down payment or to give the rabbi some form of equity in the parsonage. Sometimes institutions make low interest loans from endowment funds or interest-free loans that would be forgiven after a certain number of years. It is often advantageous for a institution to enable the rabbi to purchase a house because it quickly builds strong loyalty to the institution. Sometimes after a rabbi has found the right match in an employer and has been able to agree to financial terms, the agreement has broken down over housing arrangements. **The RA finds that housing is the most common point where negotiations break down.** Some institutions are not aware that most rabbis wish to reside within walking distance of the synagogue. Housing is both a rational and an emotional issue and must meet the needs of the rabbi, significant other, children and the institution. The key is for you to be aware of your own housing needs and clearly communicate them to the search committee.

The financial crisis deeply affects the housing market for rabbis. We have a number of colleagues who have transitioned to new positions but still own their home in their former community. While owning a home is attractive, it may no longer be a wise decision to buy a home in your new community immediately. If your first contract is not renewed you may have difficulty selling your recently purchased home. Because of the difficult housing market, it may be a good idea to wait until a second contract to purchase a home.

Both the RA and the USCJ agree that the new congregation will pay for the actual cost of moving the rabbi and their family, plus the packing of breakables.

Contracts

The RA maintains that rabbis benefit from formal written understandings between the candidate and the organization. A formal document is an excellent tool to make sure that all the issues have been “put on the table” and discussed. Contracts are usually written, signed and then filed away. Generally speaking, contracts are only consulted in a worst-case scenario. The Rabbinical Assembly insists that when a rabbi signs a document, they are accountable for what is contained in it. A rabbi once told the RA that he was been offered a seven year contract but the rabbi was thinking he might need to relocate after 3 years. The president of the synagogue told him, "Don't worry, the contract is only binding on us." The president is mistaken; once signed, a contract is binding on both parties. If you do not understand something or do not accept some part of it, do not sign it until there has been a change or a clarification. Most often the employer will draft the contract, it is critical that your own legal representative review the document, no matter how amiable the negotiation was.

The USCJ and the RA negotiated a Model Rabbi Engagement Agreement. Although this model contract represents some compromises, we believe that overall it will serve our membership well. It is not a “standard binding upon the parties,” but a document “endorsed and supported by both the USCJ and the RA” which provides an agreed-upon outline of provisions to be considered by the rabbi and the congregation or institution. It is a good checklist to make sure you discuss all key areas of employment and compensation, whether you are working in a congregation or in the community. It will also serve our non-pulpit colleagues well as a good starting point for a conversation. We expect it to be used whenever a rabbi comes to a new position. This document is available on the RA website.

A committee of the RA worked to identify overarching employment issues for our non-pulpit colleagues. After identifying needs and concerns, the RA drafted a model advocacy letter (see **Appendix G**). The letter advocates for attendance at the RA convention, enrollment in the Conservative Movement pension fund, the right to parsonage, and the use of in-house conflict resolution mechanisms. The RA is prepared to send this letter on your behalf whenever you feel it will be helpful, or you may simply use the attached draft.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with the RA office if you need information or perspective on pulpit or non-pulpit employment documents. The senior team of the RA often counsels colleagues before they sign contracts. ***We again remind you that you should consult***

your own legal and accounting professional before signing any contracts. Both the employer and the rabbi should be careful not to take personally any decisions about finances. Employment negotiations can be stressful for all concerned. When the numbers and discussion are concluded, then the parties should commit the arrangement to writing in a formal way. Once this stage is concluded, all parties should put this phase behind them.

Part 8. Transition and Leaving Well

עת רצון *EIT RATZON* (A Favorable Time)

Dvar Torah

ויאמר, הֲגַר שְׁפֹחַת שָׂרַי אֵי-מִזָּה בָּאת--וְאֵנָה תֵּלְכִי; וַתֹּאמֶר--מִפְּנֵי שָׂרַי גְּבֻרָתִי, אֲנֹכִי בֹרַחַת.
 And he said: 'Hagar, Sarai's slave, where have you come from and where are you going?' ' And she said: 'I'm running away from my mistress Sarai.' (Gen. 16:8)

Our rabbis ask, "What is the difference between *Leholekh* and *Levroach*, and between 'to journey' and 'to flee'? They answer, "The one who journeys knows the purpose and the destination of the leaving, the one who flees knows only the purpose and not where they will end up." When one is leaving a rabbinic post one should journey and not flee. To journey means to leave well, thoughtfully and with intention. A rabbi must think not only about the physical details of leaving, but the emotional process of leaving as well.

The RA has learned from experience that transition impacts your success in the new setting. Just as our forebears used the *Mah Tov* prayer to transition into the divine service, so too does the rabbi need tools to transition into the relationship with the new institution. Just as the prayer book uses a mechanism with intent, we need to create a conscious process for our rabbis and their new places of employment.

Research attests that how a rabbi says goodbye to their former position is critical to the rabbi's future emotional well-being and their ability to engage emotionally with the new institution. By being honest about the range of emotions that departure stirs up inside, the process of saying goodbye can be a process of personal development. The rabbi passes through periods of separation consisting of grief, anxiety, guilt and anger and then peace of mind when one separates from their place of employment, similar to an individual who experiences a personal loss. Eventually there is acceptance and healing and a desire to move forward. The research confirms it is healthy to be in touch with all these emotions in saying goodbye and then to deal with their impact. Conversely, repressing the feelings or denying the expression of emotions that separation engenders cripples our ability to function well within our next community. These repressed emotions will ultimately surface in unhealthy ways, endangering the relationship with the new institution. One of the key tasks in order to be able to integrate into our new work settings is to let go of our old community.

Theory of William Bridges

William Bridges notes that there are three distinctive stages to a successful transition: Endings, the Neutral Zone and New Beginnings. In order for there to be a successful beginning, people need to take care of the Endings. The external change is when everything stops. In addition, there is an internal, emotional transition: the way things are experienced is now over. A piece of our life is now gone. That is why endings have so much impact. The task is to let go of the past by acknowledging all the emotions raised by the ending. People tend to underestimate the impact of leaving. There is a natural resistance to leave-taking; it is hard to say goodbye. But repressed emotions will ultimately surface in unhealthy ways, endangering the relationship with the new institution. Rabbis need to be intentional about the letting go. The greatest loss is what is familiar to us. Students tell us it is particularly hard to leave the nurturing community of their Seminary days.

Bridges has a brilliant insight that there is a middle stage of transition. He calls it the Neutral Zone. A colleague, quoting Genesis 1:2, called it “*tohu vavohu*,” unformed and void. The Neutral Zone is an in-between state when the old way of doing things, the old way of life, is gone, but the new one has not yet become operational. It is a chaotic time where things appear out of sync and it feels a little like being in quicksand. This is the time in-between rabbinic positions. You know you are leaving, but you have not yet started in the new institution. Because it is such an uncomfortable place, people are tempted to return to their past. Old wounds emerge. Though the Neutral Zone may feel like dead, empty space and it appears that nothing productive is getting done, in fact, important internal work is taking place. Bridges says “It is during the gap between the old and the new that the individual's system of immunity is weak enough to let truly creative solutions emerge unhampered. Only when the old way of seeing things disappears are habit patterns broken, and a new way will emerge.”

Despite the desperate feeling that the Neutral Zone engenders, it is critical to work through the feelings it evokes because it can lead to new highs and new insights. To deal with this “dead time,” first name it and then appreciate the need for reflective time and space. Journaling is helpful here, as is time alone. The rabbi can see the Neutral Zone as a blessing. If you use this time for reflection and self-evaluation, it can lead you to deeper self-understanding. If you are feeling particularly stuck, you might try to write a creative blessing for this period. It is important to understand that these feelings and this sense of chaos exist simultaneously while we are transitioning to a new place of employment.

Finally, there is the New Beginning. The New Beginning is the emotional renewal of identification with an organization. It comes slowly after a healing process. It cannot be done mechanically. A New Beginning means the creation of a new identity, a new sense of purpose and a new sense of meaning. A New Beginning is not easy, and is a long process. Creating a new

identity takes time.

Endings: Tips for a Healthy Departure

An initial announcement has been made, a letter of resignation has been sent. For most rabbis, our work is not a job but a calling. Rabbis feel intensely proud of what we do. Losing a job, choosing to change positions, or moving to a new institution can feel like a partial loss of your core identity. Whatever reaction an individual has, they always experience a level of anxiety and concern about leaving well. However, if you are to succeed in the new setting, you need to be able to do the “finishing work,” separating appropriately from your former institution. Laying the groundwork for the future must include acknowledging and celebrating the past. You have to put closure on that phase of your work life which is now coming to an end.

Here are six practical steps that will help you separate well from your former place of employment.

1. Embrace Emotions

Pay attention to your relationship with members or constituents. This is important even when you served for a relatively short period of time. You have established many personal relationships that are meaningful both to you and to many people of the institution. The principles and strategies of transition apply both when rabbi and institution separate graciously and when they do not. In fact, while they apply under normal conditions, they can be particularly helpful when rabbi and former place of employment part under less than ideal circumstances. You may be a reluctant to deal with uncomfortable feelings and hostile emotions. For example, you may fantasize that you refuse to participate in a farewell service because you are angry that your contract was not renewed. The RA strongly recommends even in such circumstances that you will benefit from a farewell service and gain a sense of closure. When transition with that former congregation or organization has been handled graciously, negative emotions have been resolved so they don't often transfer inappropriately to the new institution. Grieving is normal. Feeling a sense of loss is painful but to be expected.

2. Communicate Directly to the Place of Employment

If you are not continuing with a congregation or organization, the lay leadership with your permission should send a letter immediately to inform the members. This letter should announce that a rabbinic search committee has been established (or is being established), and should list the steps of the organization's search process. At the same time, the president should send a second public letter thanking you for your years of service. This goodbye letter acknowledges the end of an important relationship and celebrates accomplishments. You may have to remind the lay leadership that these letters are usual and customary. Then, you should

compose your own personal letter thanking the community and reminding everyone of some of the highlights and accomplishments during your tenure. The institution and you should be as neutral as possible about why you are leaving. You may need to remind the lay leadership that this public forum is not the place to disclose negative details or points of disagreement.

3. Public Goodbye

There should be a ceremonial, public good bye to you, the religious leader, to foster a sense of closure for you, your family, the community and the institution. Rabbis tell us that a public goodbye ceremony where they get to restate their values and commitments to the Jewish people and the institution is very helpful to moving on. Emotions are often better crystallized through symbolic events. Ritual can be powerful tools in saying goodbye to an institution. The symbolic farewell gesture restates your values and commitments. Lay leaders, especially past presidents, have informed us many times how they wish they had such a ceremony when they stepped down from their leadership position. The farewell may be either a service or social event, as time and place dictate.

A public good bye is important even when the relationship between you and the community has been less than harmonious. You still have had an impact upon the community, and the public goodbye serves as an opportunity to restate your message and agenda which will continue after you have left. Sometimes when you are angry or upset, you believe that this “formal” goodbye is hypocritical or superfluous. You simply may feel too much pain and not be willing to go through a public goodbye. The RA has learned that rabbis who react this way often later regret this overreaction. Sometimes the lay leadership is so angry they refuse to organize such an event. In such circumstances you may want to encourage some of your supporters to organize the formal goodbye. Healing is a crucial part of the search process for the rabbi. Ritual in general and this public goodbye in particular can serve as a healing experience for the rabbi and the institution.

4. Take Time to Reflect

Reflect on what is over and what is not. Take stock. It helps to remember the continuities. It is important to remember that not everything changes. Think about what you learned. What will be different for you? One way to reflect is to keep a log, diary or journal. As people move through a transition and feel “caught in the quicksand,” jotting down feelings and observations is a way to capture the experience, and to begin to make sense of it. The process of journaling slows us down and helps us focus, even when the journaling is a stream of consciousness. When one writes without giving thought to spelling, grammar, or anyone else reading what is written, one can frequently bypass the logical, rational self and get into one's heart space. Other rabbis take the time to find a quiet place and ruminate on the transition. You should go to the “balcony”,

your safe place.

Some questions to think about are:

How am I feeling about my departure?

At what other time did I have similar feelings?

What is my legacy?

What do I want to celebrate?

What would I do differently next time?

What do I need to let go in order to move forward?

How can I be helpful to others who are feeling a loss?

What are my family members going to lose?

What has been my greatest satisfaction?

What do I need to do at this time to take care of myself?

5. Private Goodbyes

You may also be saying less public goodbyes. Goodbyes need to be more than program-oriented; they must be people-oriented. You have established a host of personal relationships with individuals in your institution, some good, some less so. Now is the time to thank those who have been your allies and friends. Now is also the time for asking forgiveness from former members, constituents or staff. You will want to visit with some individuals or stakeholders or staff members privately. To others, you will want to send a note. One rabbi shared with us that his institution circulated a diary, enabling all the members of the community to write personal notes about their experiences with the rabbi over the years. It was a satisfying document for both the rabbi and the community. One school shared with us that they created a virtual diary on the web so parents, teachers and children could write notes to their departing school leader. By consciously saying goodbye, you will be able to move on with a fuller heart and a sense of personal closure to your next employment relationship.

6. Closure Meeting

You should meet with a sub-committee of the search committee to share your view of the institution's past and future. Your observations are an important input into the questionnaire and offer perspective for the search committee. This discussion should help the institution in its self-study. The information that you are able to share with the committee can become one part of the search committee's process of seeking the widest possible consultation on the challenges facing this particular institution. You can help delineate issues of concern, but should not be part of the process of interviewing candidates or of the formal placement proceedings. This meeting is also a

critical time to clarify expectations and responsibilities for the daily activities and planning that will occur over the next few months. What will be your final responsibilities? It is also the right time to set up the formal departure date and check in about final vacation days. This meeting also enables the outgoing rabbi and the institution to keep lines of communication open during this awkward transition period.

7. Letting Go

Take a deep breath and let go. You need to let go of your former position your previous routine, your feelings of loss, your role and some of your assumptions about yourself. Now take a step forward into the next chapter of your career.

Part 9. Transition and New Beginnings

עַת רַצוֹן *EIT RATZON* (A Favorable Time)

Dvar Torah

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץךָ וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ.

Now the LORD said unto Abram: 'Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee.' (Genesis 12:1)

The Netivot Shalom says about this verse, “Every individual has a purpose and a role designated for him in the world to repair in his life.” This teaching has two parts. First, every individual is placed in this world for a specific reason. We all have a particular purpose. Second, an individual’s task is to pursue that task mindfully and with intention in order to make the world a better place. The Netivot Shalom can be understood to say that there is a particular work place for all of us that will allow us to repair the world. In your new place of employment, you have the opportunity to fulfill your mission in the world.

New Beginnings

William Bridges teaches us that the “New Beginning” does not start right away, but is a process that takes time. In the New Beginning, both you and your organization are creating a new identity together. The New Beginning can set the tone for the relationship and the future. One rabbi told us he arrived at the congregation on July 15th, just as his contract stipulated, only to discover that the every member of the search committee was away on summer vacation. There was no one to even welcome the rabbi and his family to the community. What a way to start! The RA sees this New Beginning as an opportunity to create a transition committee to manage the New Beginning with intention.

The RA strongly recommends that the search committee becomes a transition committee. If they have not done so, you can educate the leadership about why such a committee will be of mutual benefit. When you first enter a new community, you will have all kinds of questions. Some questions will need official answers. Other questions will be of a personal nature, such as which dry cleaners should the family use? Ask the transition committee to supply a list of doctors, dentists, accountants and other professionals that you and your family might need. Some members of the transition committee dedicated to your success can be available to supply practical information in a timely fashion.

It is helpful to see the difference between start-up and a New Beginning. The new situation, the external reality, starts. That happens on day one. When somebody objects to your transition management efforts on the grounds that “We have to get started right away,” agree with them. Many changes do, indeed, have to be made immediately. But then point out that, although a start-up can happen right away, the New Beginning of getting everyone realigned cannot. Parallel to Endings, New Beginning is the internal, emotional component of the change. When there are problems with beginnings, it could be because there are unresolved problems with Endings either involving the rabbi in the former environment or the congregation in the current environment. Both rabbis and organizations tend to overlook Endings and the Neutral Zone and to start with the New Beginning, so it is the final phase that gets the blame. The New Beginning requires that people be comfortable with their new rabbi, that they have rebuilt their Jewish world, and gained confidence in their new religious leader. At the same time, the new rabbi seeks a path to comfort and to feeling at home. That rebuilding takes time for the rabbi and the institution.

What can you do to manage the New Beginning well?

Create Relationships

The most important thing you can do to build success is establish many relationships with numerous people as soon as possible. Creating relationships is priority #1 for you and your institution. Recently-arrived rabbis and their institutions often rush to create new programs, but you with the transition committee and the officers need to slow everyone down and emphasize building personal relationships. Stakeholders want you to know their name more than to propose a new activity. Thomas Gilmore writes: “Perhaps the single most salient difference between the successful and the failed transitions [of the businesses I studied] was the quality of the new manager’s working relationships at the end of his first year.” People are more important than programs. You should charge the transition committee with this task. Building relationships takes time and involves several steps. See **Appendix N** for a brief essay that outlines the steps.

Many institutions create parlor meetings by dividing the community into small units to introduce the rabbi to the community in informal settings. Your role is to be open, to listen, and to learn about their needs. You should speak about your values, not your specific programs. Your goal is to make people feel appreciated for their prior achievements in the institution. Afterwards, you can reflect on all the different observations and see if patterns emerge or priorities appear that can become the basis for future programming.

Every institution has a key group of individuals. You will be building new relationships with the staff. How will you learn your staff’s strengths? What challenges does each individual staff member have? You should try to meet one-on-one with as many of your new team as

possible to create relationships and begin to build trust.

You will be building new relationships with key laypeople. Who can you depend on? Who can you trust? Past presidents in particular are a group of people to look to for wisdom. Ask the transition committee for a list of key lay leaders. What will each be able to contribute? Also, ask for a list of "hidden" leaders, those who once were active and have taken a step back. A colleague taught us that a wonderful way to build relationships is to revisit life cycle events. Ask for a list from the recent past of illnesses, deaths, and special circumstances. Your constituents will long remember your pastoral visits. Ask the leadership for a list of their desires, wishes, hurts, and dreams. Your role is to listen and not to act on it. One search chair reflected, *“We must be in relationships with people first before we can do work together.”* One rabbi summed it up this way, *“Be a lover first, then a programmer.”* Another rabbi said *“Seek to become beloved for that way you interact before you begin to change a community that is not yet yours.”*

Time Line Exercise: Learn the Community's History

Learn your institution's history as a mean to show respect. When you discover the history of your constituents, their accomplishments and their challenges, they will feel you are beginning to build a relationship. The time line exercise is a historical rendering of the life of the institution as recalled by its members. (This exercise was first developed by Roy Oswald of the Albain Institute.) This exercise should begin with the board of the institution. The goal of this exercise is to understand how the community members situate themselves within that history and how they understand the place of their congregation or institution within a broader context- local, denominational, national and global. The time line offers an opportunity for a collective effort at history retelling. It is a tool for uncovering links between external demographic, cultural and organizational shifts and the internal stresses and strains historically experienced by the institution. All are key information for you to know.

In a large room, cover the walls with butcher paper. Draw a horizontal line through the chart. Above the line, post dates in world history: i.e. WWI, President Kennedy's assassination. Mark when the institution was founded. Begin by marking 10 year intervals, then 5, and in recent times mark off yearly intervals. Then ask individuals to input institutional history above the line. E.g. when various rabbis or school leaders began or departed, significant programs added or deleted; when special events took place like a lecture by a visiting dignitary that left an impression. Then each individual present should mark on the chart when they joined the institution and jot down one or two personal memories as members of the community such as a child's *bat mitzvah* or a *shiva minyan* that was comforting. (See **Appendix M** for a prototype)

Now the individuals present go back and write in comments and questions about the dates, descriptions or events below the line. When were the days of grandeur? When were the

difficult moments for the community? What causes and campaigns were launched? Who are the significant personalities? What did these people contribute? It is a good idea for one person present to record the event for later viewing. As people write they can talk out loud to make it a community event. Participants will jog additional memories of others present. Each person's story is important; we are not looking for an expert to 'correct the history.' All this time, you are present, listening, and learning.

Now, have the participants meet in small groups to discuss the comments. The goal here is to listen to people's stories. Ask people to tell the stories evoked by looking at the time line. Memories are more important than facts.

Each small group should have a facilitator listening carefully and noting patterns that develop from the conversation. What values come out of the memories? What sustains the institution? Just as books have chapter so do institutions. Can any chapters in the history be discerned? Which stories seem to repeat themselves? Which stories best represent the community? Now bring the whole group together to hear the report of each sub group. The scribe should note down the comments. The rabbi should listen and learn.

How will the retelling of the story contribute to your success? Story and historical narrative carry the “genetic code” of the institution. The story has been built up over time, crystallized by use, forged by controversy, and supplies the facts but also the emotions behind the events. Knowing the facts is not enough because it does not communicate what is important and what needs to be respected. Stories contain values. For example, in one institution the board had a major debate over whether to include information about a *Rosh Hodesh* group in the bulletin, even though the group was comprised totally of women who were shul members. When the new rabbi probed as to the discomfort, the president reminded him that the congregation prided itself on being egalitarian, so it would be a major violation of its principle of inclusion to publicize a gathering closed to men.

The time line exercise is an excellent tool to integrate you or other professionals into the new employment setting. The new staff member is not familiar with the history, facts or memories of the institution. The new staff member is an outsider who does not know the story. Listening to the story, the rabbi learns that the institution has a plot that unfolds with personalities, conflicts, growth, twists, and surprises. The story is complicated and thick. Chapters can be discerned. Each chapter may have a symbolic event and a leader who figures predominantly.

Second, telling the story is a communal activity that binds people together and promotes healing. Members collaborate on the story. They debate. They compete. They interact with each

other. Who is a member? Someone who knows the community's stories. Who is a member? Someone who can retell one of those stories. A healthy community is one where the story is told and heard, and others feel a connection to it.

Third, the stories can be analyzed. Are there main characters? Is there a dominant mood? Is there an underlying myth that sustains the institution in its moments of crisis? Is there a master or archetypal story? What is your take away?

Fourth, the time line is a tool kit for change. The story is not finished. Together, you with other staff plus the lay leaders will write the next chapter. It is easiest to move forward by respecting the past. You want to respect the norms that are present and not violate the patterns that exists. The better way to introduce change in the congregational or organizational setting is to focus on building relationships and using those relationships to build on what already exists. You can lead the community forward by revisiting, reframing or revising the core story.

Finally, the time line is a transition tool because you publicly hear the story, listen carefully and demonstrate respect for what preceded you. When appropriate ask for further clarification. The rabbi learns the community's values and theme. You have your story. How is it congruent or different from the story of the institution? Each needs to know the other's story. During the search process the institution heard your story many times, during the transition you must hear and appreciate the institution's story. (For more details and an example, See *Studying Congregation: a New Handbook* edited by Nancy Ammerman, Jackson Carroll, Carl Dudley and William McKinney p. 43-47 and 209-210) For further reading, you may wish to consult *Finding our Story* edited by Larry Goleman *Narrative Leadership and Renewed Congregational Identity* by Gil Rendele or *Congregations: Stories and Structures* by James Hopewell.

Some rabbis have memorialized this exercise for further use. They have displayed the timeline in the institution, summarized it in the bulletin, used it as a power point presentation and kept it around. People like seeing the institution's story and love to add to it.

Learn the Culture and Identity of the Institution

It is important for you to learn the community's culture promptly. How do you learn local institutional culture and customs when sometimes this identity may be hidden? Here are some suggestions.

Do an exercise to elicit the culture:

1. Ask a representative group in a public forum to draw a symbolic representation of the institution – for example, a heraldic shield. What symbols, images or metaphors reveal

themselves? Discuss.

2. On six index cards, ask stakeholders to name six adjectives that describe the institution's culture. Discuss.
3. Ask the staff to list any acronyms, nicknames, mottos for special events. What do they mean? Now create a dictionary. Learn the private language of the institution and begin to use it in conversation.
4. Ask the lay leadership to draw an internal map of the space. What artifacts are important to the community? What ritual or which religious occasions highlight the values of the institution?
5. Ask for a list of religious and ritual customs embedded in the community but not obvious to an outsider. How things are done around here is a statement of normalcy. This information is not a form of resistance, but a baseline for future work.
6. Ask the lay leadership how many small groups does the community have? Ask the leadership to list and describe their functions. The latest small group founded was...?
7. Go on a community tour. Visit other institutions in the community together with the leaders of your institution.

Why does valuing culture lead to a successful transition? First, when the rabbi appreciates the community's culture, the rabbi builds trust and rapport with the membership. Second, if there is a conflict between the culture and a proposed change, the culture wins. If a rabbi wishes to introduce a change, the rabbi must anchor the change in the culture. Change is complex. The innovations of a new rabbi may have merit, but change also implies criticism. The best way to accomplish change is by positioning the change as congruent to the existing culture. Learn the new culture so later the change process will proceed smoothly.

Communication

First impressions count. Research continues to teach that first impressions make long lasting impressions that are difficult to change. What do you want your first act of leadership to be? Your first visible act should showcase your rabbinic talents. Consult with your leadership on when is the best opportunity to make the first impression.

Most initial conflicts between rabbis and new places of employment are not about large, controversial issues but about misunderstandings over expectations and a lack of communication. When a rabbi moves to a new community there are always surprises for the rabbi! Some surprises are small and disappointing, some are funny and some loom large. The more you can learn about the culture, the fewer big surprises will ambush you. Surprises are almost always a sign that expectations have not been met. You and your lay leadership ought to keep track of the surprises you encounter. For the first six months, there should be regular informal conversations about surprises. You and the transition committee can agree on corrective measures and can

affirm what has been accomplished thus far. Monitoring the surprises helps you and the community differentiate between expectations and explicitly expressed desires, between tacit assumptions and actual behavior.

One of the greatest tools to success in a new rabbinic position is feedback. Some leaders are able to provide feedback in a laidback and informal manner. Many rabbis naturally seek out feedback from their leadership. On the other hand, some leaders are reluctant to share information on the rabbi's job performance directly with the rabbi. Some rabbis, often because of prior negative experiences, are not open to informal channels of communication. Feedback and open lines of communication can be critical to a rabbi's path to success. Six months or so into your term, hold a discussion with the transition committee to see if there are any surprises and take note of them. The RA suggests the creation of a formal rabbinic liaison committee to meet regularly with you, at the beginning of your tenure to present ongoing feedback, so there will be a minimum of surprises and a channel to negotiate expectation.

As a candidate, you received a lot of information orally, you heard stories, you received answers to many questions. Now, ask the liaison committee to provide it all in writing. Review with the lay president or your supervisor the minutes of the board for the last two years. Ask the chairs of key committees to provide the minutes of their past meetings for at least two years. It will be helpful to know what was discussed even if it was not implemented. Ask for bulletins or newsletters for the last two years because it is an excellent way to learn about the history and records of achievement and about the community's hopes and intentions. Written documents will help you be sensitive to the history and culture.

Anticipate that First Change

There is always a certain pressure on the new rabbi to make changes. The competent rabbi will come with an agenda and normal institutional growth will mean changes as well. However, now is not the time to make quick changes, but to stress the continuities. The number one concern laypeople express about the new rabbi is the speed with which changes will be introduced. In the non-profit community, lay people fear unilateral ritual change by the rabbi. The task of the rabbi is to let people know you want to learn their needs and their priorities before you introduce a change. For example, the first *Rosh Hashanah* is a time to return to traditional congregational melodies that everyone knows, not an opportunity to introduce new tunes. Another example is when the new head of school calls together the department heads to ask them what they appreciate about the school, not to implement new policies.

It is important that the first change be viewed as a success and a result of collaboration between the rabbi and the lay leadership. The first change will make a memorable impression; it

will have great symbolic value. First impressions really matter; it takes a very long time to overcome first impressions. So, you and your transition committee might consider together what that first change will be, growing out of reflections of the communities' needs and priorities. Do you really want to squander this opportunity by changing an inconsequential congregation melody? Years later, long after you have forgotten, congregants will remind you about your first service or sermon or the time you changed the tune on the High Holidays. What do you want your first impression to be?

The ability to transfer our rabbinate from one work setting to the next is a sign of a mature and healthy professional. Most rabbis are able to do it. It may be difficult, because what works in another setting might not be appropriate for the new community, but it is part of our professional growth and our commitment to our future. How do a rabbi and an institution make a successful transition? With intention. With time. With patience.

Installation

Every rabbi should have an installation ceremony. When carefully planned, an installation can be a powerful mechanism to reduce organizational and rabbinic anxiety, and provide energy for a successful New Beginning. The installation can be a vehicle for facilitating the transition to new spiritual leadership. The installation conveys a message within the community and to the general community. The RA sees the installation as a sacred moment; a time for emotional release, education and spiritual transcendence. Rabbis tell us how important the installation is to them both personally and professionally. Assistant rabbis also tell us how meaningful these ceremonies are. If you are an assistant rabbi, or rabbi in residence in an organization, you may need to educate your employer of the value of the installation. The installation event is not just a program on the synagogue or school calendar but a religious ritual filled with symbolism and meaning. Done well, the installation facilitates both a good transition for the community and rabbi and puts people in touch with the Divine.

Why is the rabbi's installation important to the new community?

1. The installation is a key moment when God's presence and the spirit of holiness fill the lives of people. One purpose of ritual is to take everyday acts and heighten them. Everyday acts, when heightened, become sacred acts. Rabbinic installation should be more than a secular event, even more than a ritual, it should become a sacred occasion on the calendar of the community. Some institutions mark the installation by the transfer of a symbol, a gift to the rabbi that expresses the connection to Jewish life and to the Divine. Some institutions give a *kiddush* cup which symbolizes how many different roles the rabbi must now "fill." Other institutions have given the rabbi a history volume or

communal history book to declare that “the new rabbi joins together with our past to build a bright new future.” Still others give a *yad* (Torah pointer) to symbolize the rabbi’s mandate to “point the way.” The lay leader says, “By passing the *yad* to the new rabbi, the community is bestowing to you the role of rabbi of this community.” The *yad* is symbolic of the rabbi's role as teacher of Torah and interpreter of Jewish tradition and representative of Torah within and outside of this community.

2. The installation is where the rabbi, the lay leadership and the entire community meet to recommit themselves to their institution and their mission.
3. The installation is an opportunity for the community to connect to the larger Conservative Movement, to the Jewish people at large and to the setting of the institution. Therefore the installation needs to be a public occasion. Institutions are not isolated; rather, they interact, influence, and are influenced by their context and their community. Rabbis are public figures who respond and interact with the general Jewish community and the community at large. The installation of the rabbi is an opportunity for both the rabbi and the institution to make a bold statement about the role of this rabbi in the religious life of the surrounding Jewish community and the general community as well. Representatives of all these outside communities should be invited to participate in the installation, to be in attendance or to send written greetings. Invitations might be sent to the local mayor, school superintendent, neighboring rabbis and Christian clergy, and JTS, Ziegler School and USC representatives.
4. The installation is a tool to help the community move forward. Rituals, such as rabbinic installation, are denotative event markers. One period in the institution's life has ended and a new one is beginning. The installation proclaims that a new chapter has begun both for the rabbi and the community. Installation might begin with asking the search committee to stand and be appreciated for their accomplishment in a public way. The search committee chair might say a few words about the ups and downs of the search process. Everyone should feel a tone of appreciation that a long, tense and anxious process is now over. The chair ends, “Now we are ready for the next chapter in the history of our community.”
5. The installation is a moment to celebrate the new rabbi and it is also the moment to announce a new partnership. The rabbi cannot operate alone. This new beginning is not possible without the hard work and contributions of those who came before. Thus the installation is a time to recount, reenact and appreciate the past history of the community to highlight significant accomplishments of the past and to acknowledge explicitly the recent assistance of those who made the search process successful. Some institutions ask

the “historian” to briefly articulate significant events in the community's life to all who attend this occasion.

6. Installations are community building events. The institution is celebrating its accomplishments, its volunteers and the relationships between its members. Institutions have stakeholders with diverse points of view which can be competitive and acrimonious and the installation should be a moment of unity.

You will be asked to say a few words at installation. Rituals can be opportunities to create community. Community is strengthened when people gather around a set of specific values. The moment of installation is an opportunity for you and for the community to express and to recommit to their Jewish values that both would like to see perpetuated in this particular venue. Around these core values, you and the lay leadership will built their community. Now is not the time for you to propose a set of particular programs. You should talk about what values motivate you, what concepts sustain you, what aspects of Judaism are critical to the future and which *mitzvot* are most important to you without detailing an action program. It is appropriate for you and the lay leadership to highlight values that you share in common. It is not the moment to lay out a program for the state of the synagogue or school or institution. The installation will be an inspiring event when members, parents, friends and stakeholders get a sense of what values will be the core of the future and imagine how those values will blossom into community.

Part 10. Conclusion

וַיֹּאמֶר קַח-נָא אֶת-בְּנֶךְךָ אֲשֶׁר אַהֲבָתָּ, אֶת-יִצְחָק, וְלֶךְ-לְךָ, אֶל-אֶרֶץ הַמֹּרְיָה וְהַעֲלֵהוּ שָׁם, לְעֹלָה, עַל אֶחָד הַהָרִים, אֲשֶׁר אָמַר אֱלֹהִים;

And God said: 'Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.' (Genesis 22:2)

Reb Hayim of Zanz comments that God chose two mountains. One is Mt. Sinai, where God gave the *Torah* to Israel and the other is Mt. Moriah where Abraham almost sacrificed his son Isaac, and where the Temple would be built. This is surprising. Reb Hayim asks "Shouldn't the temple have been built on Mt. Sinai which was made holy by the giving of the *Torah*?" "No," he responds. "A place where a Jew put his neck out so he might be sacrificed is more holy than a place where God reveals himself and gave the *Torah*." Mt. Sinai is precious because of God's actions alone. Mt. Moriah is more precious to God than Mt. Sinai because it is at Mt. Moriah that Abraham through his actions showed his devotion to God. It is the actions of humanity that are meaningful to God. Although no one puts their life at risk in their job search, this midrash could be a metaphor of how we frame the job search process. The goal is to find work, but how we conduct ourselves, how we treat others and our actions are crucial. Ultimately, through the process, you can be a vehicle to reveal God's presence.

We hope this guide will aid you on your path. May God bless the work of your hands.



Appendix A - Placement Rules

I. Eligibility

A rabbi must be a member in good standing.

1. Dues must be current and dues declaration for the current year must be on file in the RA business office.
2. There are no ethical, *halakhic*, or placement violations.
3. There are no pending inquiries by the *Va'ad HaKavod*.
- 4a. Contractually eligible, either because the rabbi is in the last year of a contract, or has written permission of present employer, or eligible under the two-year window of opportunity.
- 4b. The two-year window states:
 - i. If a rabbi has a contract for three years or less, the rabbi may apply for a pulpit position at any time after having worked half of the contract.
 - ii. If the rabbi has a contract for 4 years or greater, the rabbi may apply for a pulpit position at any point in the final 24 months of the contract.
 - iii. Before a rabbi leaves a congregation under this window of opportunity the rabbi must give the congregation no less than six months notice.

II. Eligibility to enter E-placement

1. Rabbis:

- a. Members in good standing with the RA.
- b. Signed signature form on file with the Joint Placement Commission which acknowledges that rabbis are bound by the Placement Rules.
- c. Filed resume with the Joint Placement Commission in electronic form.
- d. Entered E-placement by uploading a career inventory.
- e. Rabbi's contract has concluded or the congregation has not renewed the rabbi's contract.

2. Congregations

- a. Members in good standing of the USCJ.

- b. Completed registration with E-placement.
- c. Completed a questionnaire
- d. All matters of termination between the congregation and the rabbi are resolved and mutually agreed upon, or are in the process of resolution by an agency of dispute resolution recognized by the RA

III. Rules of Placement

1. All candidates for placement in congregations and rabbis must agree to the rules of placement, including the agreement to use E-placement exclusively in the search process.
2. The use of any other search vehicle by the rabbi or congregation will be unacceptable unless a waiver is obtained in advance from the Joint Placement Commission.
3. Any requests for waivers from the Placement procedures described, by either a congregation or rabbi, must be submitted to the Joint Placement Commission.

IV. Seniority

Category	Congregational Size	Current Year of Service Required to Apply to Congregation	Year of Service Commencing When Rabbi Assumes the Pulpit
AA	Assistant Rabbi	Ordination pending	Commencing first year of service (Newly ordained)
A	Up to 250	Ordination pending	Commencing first year of service (Newly ordained)
B	251-500	Currently in the second year of service	Commencing third year of service
C	501-750	Currently in the fourth year of service	Commencing fifth year of service
D	Over 750	Currently in the ninth year of service	Commencing tenth year of service

In category D, an Assistant Rabbi, after completing six years of service in his/her congregation, will be eligible to assume the Senior Rabbi position.

V. Graduating Students

Graduating students, in order to be in placement, must have completed all requirements of his/her ordaining institution and completed all of the following requirements.

1. Resume filed with the Joint Placement Commission in electronic form.
2. Entered E-placement by uploading a career inventory.
3. Signed signature form on file with the Joint Placement Commission which acknowledges that rabbis are bound by the Placement Rules.
4. Returned a signed membership application.

VI. Special Placements:

1. Assistants

- a. All assistant positions must be listed with the RA.
- b. Assistants cannot automatically become senior rabbis of the congregations they are currently serving. They must go through the proper placement procedures including seniority requirements.

2. Interim

- a. Interim period extends only for 1 year
- b. An Interim rabbi agrees that he/she cannot be a candidate for the full-time permanent position

3. New congregations

- a. Any rabbi wishing to start, create, or develop a congregation (defined as any community of worshippers) must receive permission from the JPC, whether or not there is remuneration involved.

Note: The following governs the relationship between the Joint Placement Commission, the Rabbi and the Congregation:

1. Neither the Joint Placement Commission nor the International Placement Office may be party to a contract between a congregation and a rabbi and are to be held harmless for any claims arising from such a contract. In the case of a contract dispute between the congregation and the rabbi, the Placement Commission's function is only to give guidance and counsel.
2. Rabbis and congregations participating in any matter before or with the Joint Placement Commission or the International Office of the RA acknowledge by their participation that neither the Joint Placement Commission nor the International Office owe any duty of care or fiduciary responsibility to the rabbi or the congregation.

November 1, 2011

Appendix B - Disclaimer

The rabbis whose resumes are sent to interested synagogues or institutions by the RA are (1) members in good standing of the RA and (2) have the necessary years of experience to be qualified under the rules of the RA to hold the position for which the resume is submitted.

By sending a rabbi's resume to a synagogue or institution for consideration, the RA does not make any representations beyond those contained in the previous paragraph. Questions relating to judgments about the rabbi's suitability for the position applied for, or overall performance as a rabbi, must be considered and resolved by the individual synagogue or institution to which the rabbi has applied.

In addition, there may be facts about particular rabbis that are known to the RA, but are not known to the Joint Placement Commission. Various issues about a rabbi's performance or conduct may be brought to the attention of the Rabbinical Assembly, and some of these may result in disciplinary action being taken by the *Va'ad HaKavod* or other arms of the Assembly. Some of these disciplinary actions are confidential, and would not be disclosed to the Joint Placement Commission or to other members of the RA. Accordingly, by sending a rabbi's resume to a synagogue or institution for consideration, the RA expressly does not represent that the rabbi has not been subject to discipline by the RA for performance or conduct that might be relevant to the synagogue's decision making process. While the RA encourages rabbis applying for positions to discuss with the synagogues or institutions to which they are applying any potentially relevant circumstances, including any disciplinary history, synagogues and institutions should be aware of the possibility of such a disciplinary history, and decide for themselves the manner, if any, in which they choose to address the issue with candidates they are considering.

The service provided by the RA is solely a referral service. No recommendations are ever made or withheld about individual candidates, nor are screenings applied to the experiences or skills of the respective candidates. Accordingly, the fiduciary responsibilities of synagogue and institutional leadership that applies to all areas of organization all life apply here very specifically. It is solely the responsibility of your Search Committee or designees to actively screen, confirm and validate whatever information is given it by candidates, both in writing and in any other form, that enter into the conversations, deliberations and negotiations of the search process. Sending the applicant's file to you does not constitute a recommendation of endorsement of his or her candidacy.

Appendix C - Career Inventory

Current employment situation:

Title and role description:

The purpose of this worksheet is to prepare you for the rabbinic job search process. It is your personal document, for your eyes only. The deeper the reflection and the greater the acquisition of self-knowledge will serve you well in resume writing, interviewing and finding the right fit for your interests and skills.

I. Strengths (list three):

What are you good at? A strength is something you yearn to do, learn quickly and find satisfying. When you are not doing a strength you miss it. A strength is something you are proud of. Some examples might be: ideation – coming up with new ideas; analysis – you see patterns; communication – you like to speak in public and to write.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

II. Workplace Values

Workplace values have a direct impact on your satisfaction with your job, your career and the rest of your life. When you understand what you cherish most, you can do a better job of evaluating possible places of employment – does your future employer support those values? For a list of values go to http://www.quintcareers.com/workplace_values.html. Some examples are variance of work or stability of work place or intellectual atmosphere.

Three core values you cannot live without in the rabbinic workplace?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

III. Rabbinic Values where you want to take the lead

What do you want your employer to know about what motivates your rabbinate? What are your key rabbinic values to your work? A value is a belief that you feel strongly about. You consciously choose your own values. You should be willing and able to proclaim a cherished value publicly. A value releases your energy. A value energizes your work. Some examples might be: love of family, pursuit of justice, truth to power, excellent quality in work, egalitarian.

List three:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

IV. Metaphor

What is your rabbinic metaphor? A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates a thing is used to designate another, thus making an explicit comparison. A metaphor can be a tool to see the world. Peter Senge in the *Fifth Discipline* calls them mental models – internal images of how the world works. Symbolic modeling teaches that with metaphors we are working with the sub-conscious bypassing of cognitive processes and its limitations. With metaphors, we can unlock feelings, beliefs, and experiences that can powerfully convey to others our rabbinic value system. Some examples might be: Rabbi as Park Ranger – teaches within a specific environment and enforces the rules. Rabbi as drop of water; the presence that starts it all.

My metaphor for the rabbinate is:

V. Accomplishments

Think about specific, concrete contributions. What did you create, invent, reinvent? What did you resolve, overcome, demonstrate? What, when and where did a colleague, member, or participant tell you how you made a difference for them? Use the PARS Formula. Describe a Problem, the Action you took, the Results you achieved and the Skills you applied. For example– “Attendance at a Friday night service was on the decline. Took initiative to reorganize by introducing lay-led *divrei Torah*. Service attendance tripled. Applied my leadership and conflict resolution skills.”

Using strong verbs and PARS model, list three:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

VI. Religious Leadership

When looking for employment as a rabbi, employers want to know about the rabbi's personal religious practices and theology.

Write a few comments about your religious/theological commitments.

1. Where are you on the religious practice spectrum personally?
2. Attitude towards the inclusion of women in religious service? *Imahot* in the liturgy?
3. Attitude towards the inclusion of gays/lesbians in your congregation?
4. Style Torah reading you prefer – full or triennial and why?
5. Attitude toward the inclusion of interfaith families in your religious community. Invitations and limitations are?
6. Which *mitzvah* are you most passionate about?

VII. Holland's Occupational Themes (RIASEC)

John Holland developed a theory to link personality with career choices. The parameters he measures are usually displayed as an interactive hexagon. The six corners are: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional. In 1974, the theory was incorporated into the Strong Interest Inventory. Research was done to link personality types to college majors and career choices, building a huge database of information. The results involved correlating aptitudes along these six dimensions with self-reported aptitudes of people across a wide variety of fields. Although you have already decided to be a rabbi, the Strong Inventory will still be helpful: a) for deeper insight into your work personality and b) to drill down which aspects of the rabbinate most appeal to you. The Holland Inventory is now available free on line at: <http://www.mynextmove.org/explore/ip>. Click on "tell us what you like to do."

My Holland Code is:

Which aspects of your personality drive your rabbinate? e.g., Social: I am always mindful of what others think. Investigative, e.g., I push truth to power.

VIII. Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Instrument

The MBTI is an instrument designed to validate C. G. Jung's theory of psychological type and make it practical and useful for people. It is a self-reporting instrument. MBTI is the most widely used psychological instrument in the world. There is a free instrument at:

<http://www.humanmetrics.com/>. On the site it is called the Jung typology test, just different nomenclature for the MBTI.

<http://www.myersbriggs.org>. Good introduction and background to the inventory, also a good bibliography.

<http://www.personalitypage.com>. Good place to get a picture of the 16 types, excellent place to validate your type.

Much of the work of the RA Career Office is based on the client knowledge of their MBTI. It can be helpful to better understand your interviewing style, your decision making style and your choices for employment.

My type is:

IX. Geography is Important

I want to relocate to:

I need to relocate to:

Thank you for your participation. Now apply your increased self-knowledge to your rabbinic job search. I wish you well on your journey.

Appendix D - The Role of the Rabbi

The rabbi's role is a composite of many tasks and responsibilities. Congregations (sometimes institutions) often ask to see a 'job description' for a rabbi. The rabbi is a generalist. There are times in a rabbi's work when one or another area of responsibility takes precedence and there are certain roles that predominate, either because they are a rabbi's strength or because they are a synagogue's mission or culture. The RA has found it more helpful to institutions 's in the search process to develop list of general rabbinic roles rather than a specific detailed description. To see the rabbi as a whole religious leader, we must be able to express the particular roles inherent to a rabbinic calling. As the economy has tightened congregation's report the wisdom of this process. Some institutions feel overwhelmed by the number of resumes received and unable to take a clear path. If at the outset of your preparation you have isolated three or four roles as important to you keep them in mind as you interview as we ask institutions to go back to those roles time and again, and assess candidates in light of those roles. The selection of these critical roles now become your anchor to your rabbinate.

Rabbi as Pastor

The rabbi sees as one of their major role as visiting the sick and comforting the bereaved. Many people come visit this rabbi for pastoral counseling. This rabbi is a counselor, healer and a caretaker. The rabbi is known for their ability to listen and to care. The rabbi may be a spiritual guide. The rabbi is a teacher of values. The rabbi pays close attention to those on a religious journey. This rabbi may take an extra degree in counseling.

Rabbi as Teacher

This rabbi loves to teach. This rabbi acts as an educator in every possible setting. This institution has a great adult education program. This rabbi sees his own study as an important element of the rabbinate. This rabbi's sermons are model lessons. The rabbi is well known for being conversant with text.

Rabbi as Administrator

This rabbi organizes, administrates, and manages a productive and effective organization. The rabbi supervises a staff that might include other rabbis, cantors, school principals and other professionals. This rabbi is a resolver of disputes.

Rabbi as Social Activist

This rabbi is an agent for change in society. The social action committee is very active and the rabbi takes a leadership role. In the 1960s, this rabbi marched in Selma and in the 1980s demonstrated in front of the Soviet Embassy.

Rabbi as Social Exemplar/Role Model

The rabbi lives their rabbinate every moment. They understand that where they shop and how they raise their children are carefully observed by her community. They walk their talk. The rabbi is a role model who communicates authenticity. They understand and use their power as a "symbolic exemplar."

Rabbi as Visionary Leader

This rabbi is always looking one step ahead for their community. This is the rabbi seeking to understand the big picture. They see beyond the moment. The rabbi can articulate a compelling vision for the future. The rabbi strives to lead the community to a new place and a new purpose. The rabbi is at the forefront of the change ethic.

Rabbi as Community Personage

This rabbi is the community's first citizen, active in community and Jewish organizations. This rabbi represents the religious community to first responders, on the city's interfaith council, perhaps on government boards. This rabbi thrives on politics and teaches the community the values of working outside of one's own institution.

Rabbi as Worship Leader

The rabbi is at home leading the congregation in religious services. The congregation feels comfortable as the rabbi conducts services. The rabbi loves ritual and ceremony. This rabbi is very knowledgeable about synagogue practice and practical *halakhah*. This rabbi takes preaching very seriously. This rabbi is a strong *bimah* presence.

Rabbi as Spiritual Guide

This rabbi is very concerned about the inner spiritual journey of congregants. Individual religious experience is as important as the communal worship. The rabbi might have trained as a spiritual mentor.

Rabbi as Fundraiser

This rabbi is comfortable discussing finances and sees the rabbi's role as marshalling people to fund important activities. This rabbi is an effective solicitor. This rabbi sees that the relationship between sacred means and sacred ends is a responsibility of the rabbi.

Rabbi as Employee

Every rabbi works for an institution. The rabbi needs to know and understand governance and how a board works. The rabbi needs to be comfortable with the lay-professional dynamic. Above all, the rabbi needs to accept direction from others, accept supervision and acknowledge evaluation. The rabbi meets regularly with the lay leadership to discuss goals, expectations and shortcomings.

Rabbi as Working Scholar

The presence and the respect a rabbi generates are grounded in the knowledge that the rabbi is conversant with classic Jewish texts and uses them in teachings, conversations, and writings, etc. The rabbi must maintain scholarship through personal continuing Jewish studies.

Rabbi as Community Builder

This rabbi is a symbolic leader who emphasizes selected attention and signals to others what is of importance and of value. This rabbi creates a space where people can gather safely to share common purposes and common symbols to foster a group identity. Individuals are encouraged to share their personal narratives in respect and supportive environments often through text study. As a result, these participants feel understood by and connected with other members of the community.

Rabbi as Mara D'Atra

This rabbi is the ultimate religious authority. The rabbi makes binding religious decisions for the congregants. The rabbi's role is to be the *halakhic* decisor for individuals and for the community as a whole. This role is not shared with anyone else.

Based on the work of Margaret Fletch Clark, "Ten Models of Ordained Ministry", as quoted in Pastoral Stress, by Anthony G. Pappas; Rabbi Matthew Simon wrote an initial draft; created by Rabbi Elliot Salo Schoenberg for work with congregations. Revised September 2007.

Appendix E - Inclusive Hiring Practices Statement

The Conservative Movement views diversity of opinions and practices within our congregations as a key strength. Furthermore, we celebrate the diversity of people all of whose gifts are necessary to build a strong movement. Our communities include women and men who are single and partnered of all ages and physical abilities, sexual orientations, and interests. In order to attract, understand and meet the needs our diverse community, our clergy and other professionals must be sensitive to and respectful of this diversity.

The vast majority of Conservative congregations identify as egalitarian, and a substantial number of our clergy are women. However, many congregants expect their clergy to look just like the leaders of the past generation rather than representing our current and emerging communities. We should not limit the range of candidates considered for a position based on gender, race, age, sexual preference or disability. To do so may deprive qualified professionals from employment in our movement and our movement of the talents of many of its outstanding professionals.

When seeking to engage new professionals, we recommend that each community should:

- Start by clarifying its values and its mission; then define the role and expectations of the position.
- Ask what leadership qualities are most valuable and challenge the search committee to look broadly for these qualities.
- Proactively work to meet and interview candidates of different genders, generations, sexual orientations, backgrounds and those with disabilities. Resist assuming that the qualities a community is looking for can be found only in a single demographic profile.
- Be open to the possibility that the best professional for your organization may not conform to your past assumptions of the profile of a religious leader or that your organization is “not ready” to accept someone different.
- If there is a specific *halakhic* or job-related qualification that would exclude some candidates, this should be made explicit in the job description.
- Compensation should be set based on the qualifications and experience of the candidate, not on their gender or other personal qualities.

Our communities are best served when they seek leaders for their intellectual, spiritual and social skills without regard to gender, age, race, sexual preference or disabilities. In order for us to succeed we must draw upon the talents of all of our people, lay and professional, and become discerning judges of leadership potential.

Our communities should recall God's instruction to the prophet Samuel when he was searching for the next King of Israel: "God does not look at appearance or stature, but at the heart."

Leadership Council for Conservative Judaism

February 2012 / Shevat 5772

Appendix F - Women Rabbis Respond to Difficult Questions

Some in our congregation may say, "We are not ready for a woman rabbi." This is unfortunately the most common statement made by search committees to female candidates. A candidate might respond:

"I'm sure that it is probably true that some congregants are not ready for a female rabbi, but many are ready. Your congregants experience women professionals in all variety of situations in their lives: female doctors, lawyers, corporate leaders, politicians, artists and musicians. Your congregants are probably more open to female clergy than you imagine. What do you need to get ready? And how can I help?"

An analogy from the US military might help here. Every time a minority group wanted to serve in the US military they were told they could not serve because they would cause a disruption and that the unit was not ready. Then, the minority was integrated into the military. At first the unit was disrupted because it was not ready, but the unit got over it. And the unit is better for it.

"We hear that women rabbis do not want full pulpit responsibilities because of children and other family priorities. We need a full-time rabbi committed to our congregation." The congregation is not right to ask this question, but they often do anyway.

Women rabbis should be well aware of this prejudicial stereotype and understand that even though women rabbis have been ordained now for 25 years in the Conservative Movement, others feel women still have to prove themselves. As a result, our experience is that women who go through the arduous process of training to become Conservative rabbis put 110% of themselves into their work and bring all their heart and talents to their position.

The female candidate might say:

"I agree one of the biggest challenges facing Americans today is balancing demands of work and family. I know both female and male rabbis need to model responsible boundaries and balances between work and family. "

"I'm applying for this job because I believe that I'd be good at it, and I want to do it. I intend to be your fulltime rabbi and I am committed to your congregation, the community and my family."

Another possible answer is:

"I can be an important role model for your congregation, modeling on the one hand, a serious commitment to the congregation, and on the other, a deep commitment to family."

"I am looking forward to being your rabbi and being the mother of my children."

"Engaging a woman rabbi will be disruptive of the congregation. We already have enough conflict here."

"Conflict is never desirable. Reducing conflict and disruption is praiseworthy. Any new rabbi, female or male, that comes to your congregation will go through a transition period before they are comfortable with you and you are comfortable with them. We will get through this together."

"I understand your desire to avoid conflict. A new rabbi always causes anxiety in a new congregation, but we can work through it together. After reading your questionnaire and listening to your now let me tell you how I can be a good fit for your congregation."

RA's experience shows that the conflict and disruption has less to do with gender than clarifying expectations and becoming familiar with a new leadership style. Use this question as a springboard to talk about how you will be a good match for this congregation.

Women are too emotional and we can't have that here!

The popular media promotes the image of over-emotional women, a stereotype conceived by the ancient Greeks and is still around 1500 years later. After many academic studies, there is no evidence that this stereotype is based in reality. A rabbi might respond:

"I have heard this before and it is probably a myth. You have my academic credentials before you. I have been a serious student of Torah for many years. But I will tell you that I am passionate. Let me tell you about my passion for Torah, for engaging with young people and for [secular interest of yours]."

A good anecdote: Do not forget that Super Bowl-winning coach Dick Vermille of the St Louis Rams, Kansas City Chiefs and Philadelphia Eagles cried all the time at his press conferences. Regardless of if he won or lost, he was bawling away.

"It is a man's world. In this time of economic hardship we need someone strong, like a man."

It is hurtful, disappointing, frustrating and almost impossible to not get offended by these questions that are often asked at interviews.

"Strength is not just measured by how much you can bench press. Strength can be measured by character and integrity. Let me share with you some examples of my strength as a leader."

"We do not want a woman rabbi because we are a prestigious congregation and the other leaders in the community will not see you or our congregation as a winner." Or this issue is phrased as "There are other Rabbis in the community who will not recognize your rabbinic authority."

"I may not be as tall as some of your male candidates, but I will take to you to great heights of religious inspiration. I accept that and understand how to navigate this. There will always be rabbis who question other rabbis' authority based on movement, gender or *halakhic* orientation. I bring to you over a decade's worth of experience, expertise and wisdom. My last community was very proud that..."

"I understand that there will be others who will not recognize my rabbinic authority. Many of them do not think my male colleagues are rabbis either. I cannot control what other people think, but I can demonstrate my leadership abilities to everyone.

With a woman rabbi, we will be a feminist congregation – we have congregants who think a woman rabbi will take us too far to the left. We don't want to *daven* with the *Imahot* here.

Both male and female rabbis should be sensitive to the unique culture of a synagogue. A rabbi alone does not define a congregation, but the culture emerges from a partnership between rabbi and congregants. A new rabbi will bring changes - that is true. The RA sees making change in a sensitive and caring way by the new rabbi as a crucial issue in a successful transition. The RA teaches that no changes should be made abruptly or unilaterally. Changes should be made that fit into both the history and the culture of the congregation. In particular, a rabbi should understand that liturgical changes should be made slowly, carefully and collaboratively with the congregation and its leadership.

"I will respect your synagogues culture. I will do my best to learn your congregation's traditions. When we are ready together we will decide what changes to make. Let me tell you how I understand the *halakhic* process and how I will work with you to make changes."

"I have been a rabbi for 8 years. I understand comments like these, they are not a surprise, but they also are not accurate in their portrayal of women rabbis in general or me in particular. The women rabbis whom I know understand and appreciate the diverse nature of their congregations and respect the individual wishes and customs of congregants. Ritual

changes in a congregation evoke anxiety. We will work together to pick the needed adjustments and together we will create a respectful plan to make those changes happen. Second, in all probability, because a rabbi is a role model, more women will start to wear *talitot* in the congregation or *daven* or lead services, but this will be a natural evolution over the course of time and will not be imposed by me. I think that is a good thing. Other congregants will be engaged to study *Torah* with me and still others will come to *Shabbat* morning services more often. I love the idea that our members will be growing in their engagement with *mitzvot*."

"I am sure that my being a woman will make some men and some women a little uncomfortable. That is understandable. Once they get to know me, like you are doing now, they will know I am the right fit for this congregation. I would also guess that for some of your members having a woman rabbi will be a welcome innovation and one of the reasons why I would be the perfect rabbis for you at this time is...."

"We need someone who puts the congregation first, and not their family. We are afraid if we engage a woman rabbi, she will leave us after two years to become a stay-at-home mom."

The RA's experience is that women who go through the arduous process of training to become Conservative rabbis have made a serious commitment to the rabbinate.

"I will bring to this congregation and this position all of my heart and all of my talents. All of my colleagues, young and old, male or female are concerned about creating a balance between work and family. I have worked long and hard to become a Conservative rabbi. I am looking forward to being both your rabbi and a mother to my children."

"Like my male colleagues I planning a long career as a pulpit rabbi and I look forward to working with you for years to come."

You might want to quote the RA study of the career tracks and trends of women rabbis that was published in July of 2004. The study found that women who leave the pulpit leave because they perceive that they have hit a glass ceiling, or because they have experienced bias and negativity. In the RA's experience when a congregation welcomes a rabbi with a positive attitude, open hearts, and generosity, a rabbi will succeed regardless of gender and be with them for years to come.

"The 2004 study of women rabbis taught us to understand that women rabbis who leave the pulpit leave most often because of job dissatisfaction, work environment and employment bias and not because of demands on the home front." (We are happy to provide copies of the study if requested.)

We engaged a female rabbi in the past and it didn't work out. We don't want to make the same mistake again.

"I am sorry it did not work with that rabbi. It is always sad and difficult for the congregation and the rabbi when the match does not pan out. And I am sure it still hurts. One of my strengths is as a healer and I will be able to bring the community together so we can move forward. Let me tell you how I would build community here."

The RA knows that there are many different kinds of male rabbis, and that having a bad experience with one male rabbi is not an indictment of all male rabbis. Similarly, each female rabbi is unique and a bad experience with one female rabbi should not lead a congregation to give up on all women. Unfortunately, this is a common rebound question. **Do not take this comment as a personal attack** and use it as a springboard to once again tell them why you are the right fit at this time.

We have a female cantor already, so we can't engage a woman rabbi as well. What will our congregants going to say to us?

"I know your Hazan and I think she is just great. She has many gifts and I really admire her ability to work with young people. I think we would be a great team. My skills complement her. Here is just one example where together we can take the congregation to the next level. We might..."

"Just as different men bring different strengths to a position, different women will bring different talents and personalities to your community. One of my strengths is being a good team member. I have a reputation of being able to bring out the best in the synagogue staff."

The interviewers would never ask this if they had a male cantor. Here is an opportunity to show the search committee how much homework you have done and how you will fit into their future. Use this question as a springboard to show how smoothly you will continue activities and programs they are already doing well. If you have done your homework, it may be an opportunity to show the committee how you will fill a gap that currently exists.

What would our expectations be for a woman rabbi? Are they different from having a male rabbi? This makes us anxious. We do not know what to expect.

"It is important to have a discussion about expectations. You are going through a big transition here, your rabbi of 15 years is moving on. I know you have seen the transition literature put together by the RA. It might be helpful here to study it together. I also know

that the annual *'Eit Ratzon'* conference addresses these issues as well. I hope we could go together as a team to the next one."

"Tell me about your expectations please. I know you want the rabbi to be a presence in the larger community and pay attention to your more elderly and home bound members. I am comfortable with those expectations. What would you say are the three most important and pressing expectations?"

"I expect to be your rabbi for many years to come. I expect to be a loving pastor, a dynamic preacher, and a presence in the religious school."

The experience of the RA is that this type of question is about the transition, what will it mean to have a new rabbi in our congregation? It is a normal question and probably is really about anxiety and uncertainty for the future. Anytime a congregation engages a new rabbi, a healthy congregation needs to ask itself, what do we need to keep the same? What will change? What should our priorities be? This period of time in the life of the congregation is an uncertain one, as a new religious leader finds his or her way into the customs and ways of the new setting. So whether a congregation engages a male or female rabbi, it will be an anxious time for a while and this is normal. Second, whether a congregation engages a male or female rabbi, there needs to be a negotiation and give and take about role expectations. The RA suggests that at least once a year there should be a discussion about expectations between the rabbi and lay leaders.

Are there particular issues that might arise if our rabbi were female? How do we prepare for this? In your experience as a woman rabbi, what kind of gender issues have you experienced? How has gender impacted your rabbinate?

"My experience from my last position and from conversations with other female colleagues is that we are going to go thru a settling-in period. I will have to prove myself to you that I am a good pastor and that I am a good teacher. I am ready for this challenge. But I will need your support to make it work. My experience is there will be doubters out there, and I will need the backing of synagogue leadership to support my authority and mandate. I will not be able to do it on my own. This is a partnership and we will need to work together to make it a success."

Women rabbis tell us that sometimes after they are elected to a new congregation, some congregational leaders have a hard time accepting their religious authority. For example, one woman rabbi married to a male rabbi was told, "Why don't you go home and ask your husband what the *halakhic* ruling should be?" Rabbis should be aware that after their election there are settling-in issues, and who is in charge is always one of them. With a smile and not with anger, a

woman rabbi should remind those who are suspicious of her leadership that she went to school, got her degree and has been elected to be the leader of the congregation.

It has been the experience of the RA that congregations coalesce around and in support of the female rabbis, but outsiders may not yet be ready. For example, members whose daughter is having a *bat mitzvah* are thrilled with the relationship the new rabbi has with the family, but the grandfather says he will not take an *aliyah* if the female rabbi is presiding. Again, both the rabbi and the congregation need to expect these challenges and be ready with a calm, non-anxious response. "Our synagogue policy grants the family of the *bar mitzvah* four *aliyot* and we hope Grandpa will take one."

The most common issue raised is the work-family conundrum. How will the new rabbi make time for the synagogue and her family? Our experience has been that this is not a gender issues, but a generational one. This new generation of rabbis, male and female, are concerned about preserving the boundary between work life and home life. For example, even though the model contract only includes a clause about maternity leave, young male rabbis ask for paternity leave as well. The female rabbi constantly affirms, "I am committed to being your rabbi and the mother of my children. I am outstanding at both."

We have members who believe there are *halakhic* issues that prevent us from having a woman serve as rabbi for our congregation. What do we say to those members?

The female rabbi might say,

"One of our great strengths as a movement is that we are pluralistic. We often accept different *halakhic* options in certain matters. For example, in our movement some congregations do a full Torah reading, while others, just as legitimately, read the triennial cycle. The triennial cycle is legitimate because of *teshuvot* accepted by the Committee on Law and Standards. A congregation, under the guidance of the *mara d'atra*, could choose not to accept this alternative, but neither the rabbi nor ritual committee can say it is an invalid option. Similarly, commencing in the 1950s, our movement has begun to accept egalitarianism gradually. JTS began ordaining women rabbis in 1985. Again, a congregation or a congregant could hold that they do not accept this ruling, but it has been clearly decided by the *halakhic* authorities of the Conservative Movement to be legitimate. And it is important to note, although it started out as an alternative, at this point, 95% of our congregations are now egalitarian and 50% of the students graduating JTS and the Ziegler Rabbinical School are women."

Use this as an opportunity to show how you will be the right rabbi for them at this time.

What special advantages might there be to having a female rabbi? Sometimes congregations ask, "How will the congregation benefit from engaging a female rabbi?"

"What a great question!!! As a rabbi my three greatest strengths are..." "Let me tell you about my passion for..."

Although woman rabbis have now been in the field for more than 25 years, it still feels to some like a new phenomenon in Masorti/Conservative Judaism. A female rabbi signifies that your congregation or institution is cutting edge and exciting, a great message to send to the younger generations in your community. Symbolically, it may mean the institution wants to head in a new direction or be more inclusive. On the other hand, engaging a woman rabbi may signify that the search committee made the correct choice of a rabbi who is the best fit. This is the question that you have been looking for, be prepared to talk about what strengths a woman brings to the job. One of our colleagues recalls that when she was in the Navy her superior officers would tell her "Remember in the Navy being a woman is an advantage." The Jewish Community needs your strengths.

Appendix G - Letter to Non-Pulpit Employers

Dear Lay Leader:

We are pleased and privileged that you wish to engage a member of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international professional organization of Conservative rabbis, in your institution. We offer you our help and resources.

Over 25% of the membership of the Rabbinical Assembly worldwide serve in positions throughout the organizational, educational, academic and Jewish institutional world. As an organization that supports, nurtures and advocates for rabbis we have learned much about what they desire and seek in employment environments. We write to share these concerns and issues with you in order that you and they may be better prepared to strengthen your relationship.

The rabbi you engage for your institution is fully committed to your institution, its mission and program. At the same time, the rabbi maintains their own rabbinic identity. This is vital not only to the rabbi, but to your institution because it opens your institution to broader Jewish learning and knowledge. Hence, members of the RA, working in other than pulpit positions, continually stress to us their need and desire to participate in the life and activities of the RA both locally and nationally. They wish to be in touch with their RA colleagues and they wish to participate in the collegueship of the RA. For example, they stress to us their desire to participate in their regional RA meetings that may occur during part of a weekday, or to serve on a national committee which may meet several times a year. Therefore we would like to point out to you that when engaging a RA rabbi you should be aware they may ask to attend RA meetings as part of their commitment to your institution. In return, they will bring back to you insight, program ideas and renewed enthusiasm gained from these meetings. And, sometimes the very ability or inability to attend these meetings may make the difference of being able to engage a rabbi to be part of your institution's life.

The same holds true for attendance at the annual international convention of the Rabbinical Assembly. Rabbis have continually informed us that they feel the need for companionship and for ways to continually identify as a rabbi. One way they accomplish these is by attendance at this annual conference. In effect, what our rabbis are saying is that they need to attend two annual meetings in order to best serve your organization/institution, both the annual professional meeting directly related to your work and the RA convention. Therefore, it is important to set aside in your budget not only an allocation for a primary professional meeting but also additional funds to make attendance at the RA convention possible.

A rabbi serving in an institutional setting is entitled to a housing or parsonage allowance providing certain criteria are met. The rabbi you engage for your institution or organization will most likely request such a provision as part of their employment agreement, and in those situations the rabbi should be able to secure one since in most instances the rabbi is carrying out responsibilities commensurate within broad rabbinic mandate. We are prepared to help you or your compensation specialists understand more fully the parameters of the housing allowance for rabbis serving in other than congregational settings.

The Rabbinical Assembly is a member of the Joint Retirement Board of the Conservative Movement that provides pension programs for all professionals of the movement. While your organization may have a pension plan in which your employees participate, the rabbi you engage may request participation in the retirement program of the Conservative Movement because of the unique advantages of this program. For example, the pension program is, under United States pension laws, “a church plan,” enabling rabbis to benefit from a housing allowance from their pension benefits in retirement; the program contains a disability funding insurance policy which will fund the rabbi's retirement program should the rabbi become unable to work; and the program is portable should the rabbi choose to change positions. We encourage you to allow your rabbinic employee to participate in the rabbinic pension program of the Conservative Movement because there are obvious advantages which will appeal to the rabbi. Our experience has shown that the inability to participate in the Joint Retirement Board program sometimes deters a rabbi from accepting a specific non-pulpit position.

It is important that when working with someone who is a recent graduate to understand that their introduction into the practical world of the rabbinate needs to be continually nurtured and supported. Over the years our young colleagues have informed us of this with greater and greater emphasis. In both the short run and in the long term Rabbinical Assembly programs and other conferences will help our non-pulpit colleagues become confident professionals in your field.

We look forward to our colleagues having successful work relationships with their employers. We have no greater wish or hope. However, we recognize that from time to time difficulties do arise. Therefore we encourage you to learn about Rabbinical Assembly conflict resolution mechanisms and to incorporate them into documents that you may write with your new rabbinic employee. The Rabbinical Assembly staff is available to intervene and mediate disputes between rabbis and their places of employment. We have much experience in this and are willing to travel at any time to be of help to you and to a member of the Rabbinical Assembly. If need be, we have a formal dispute resolution network overseen by the “Committee on Congregational Standards of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.” A dispute may be taken there for either mediation or arbitration.

We wish this letter to serve as the beginning of a process. You seek to engage a rabbi for your institution. You may have had one employed previously for many years, or this may be the first time you are choosing to do so. Our rabbinic colleagues often discuss with us their expectations and desires from places of employment. We write this letter, therefore, to help you in your discussions and negotiations with your rabbinic candidates. Please feel free to contact us at the Rabbinical Assembly if we can be of any help. It is often easiest to e-mail us at eschoenberg@rabbinicalassembly.org, or you may certainly call 212-280-6000.

With wishes for much success.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld
Executive Vice President

Rabbi Elliot Salo Schoenberg
International Director of Placement

Appendix H - Questions for Non Pulpit Positions

Education

Head of School

1. Describe your Jewish journey and what brings you to apply to our position as head of school?
2. What kind of school manager are you?
3. Tell about a time when you demonstrated educational leadership.
4. Tell about your experience and your philosophy of supervision of teachers.
5. Some who apply to this position are rabbis and others are not. What added value does being a rabbi bring to this position?
6. What does a graduate of our school look like?
7. Tell us about your experience and your philosophy on fundraising.
8. Please tell us about the relationship between the head of school and the lay governance structure.
9. We are at a crossroads, how will you lead us into the future?
10. Now that you come to know us, why do you think you would be a good fit for us?

Rabbi in Residence – Jewish Day School

1. What is your vision for Jewish education in a Jewish Day School?
2. Tell about your decision to become a rabbi and your Jewish journey?
3. When a student graduates our school, what should they know? What Jewish skills should they have?
4. Many of our children have one Jewish parent and one non Jewish parent, how would you do outreach to them?
5. Tell us about your experience as being a member of a team.
6. Tell us about your experience as a formal classroom teacher.
7. Tell us about your administrative experience.
8. Tell us about your experience in teaching *tefilah* especially to middle school students.
9. How would you do outreach to the broader Jewish community?
10. Why would you be a good fit for us?

Teacher at a Jewish School

1. What is your basic teaching philosophy?
2. How do you structure/organize courses?

3. Describe how you conduct a lesson.
4. How do you use technology in your classroom?
5. Describe a lesson that was particularly successful by describing it from the planning through delivery stage.
6. Describe a personal experience that had an impact on your teaching.
7. Describe a strength you have and how it relates to teaching.
8. What experience do you have in teaching diverse populations?
9. How do you think your students would describe you?
10. How have your past experiences prepared you for teaching?

Afternoon Hebrew School Director

1. How do you teach a child to think Jewishly?
2. What risks have you taken as a Jewish educator in the last five years?
3. How would you measure an afternoon religious school's success?
4. Tell us about your experience with school budgets and administration.
5. What is the added value if we asked a rabbi to take this position?
6. How would you empower our teachers to use their talents?
7. Tell us about the best practices in hiring/firing of teachers.
8. How would you set up a process to determine the priorities for our religious school?
9. What makes you a good fit as the education director of our religious school?
10. When a child completes our religious school, what Jewish skills should they have?

Chaplaincy

General- Chaplaincy

1. Tell me about a time you dealt with an ethical dilemma.
2. What have you learned about having empathy for a patient?
3. What upsets you/tries your patience?
4. How have you improved patient care?
5. What are some of your greatest achievements or successes? What are some of your worst failures?
6. Why do you want to work with this population?
7. What makes you the best candidate for this position? What do you think you bring to the table?
8. How would you fit in with our organization's mission?
9. Tell me about a client that you would be unwilling or unable to work with. What would you do in this situation?
10. What do you think will be the most challenging aspect of working here?

Hospital Chaplaincy

1. Tell us about your Jewish journey and why you decided to become a hospital chaplain.
2. How will you interact with Jews who have a different religious point of view than you?
3. How will you interact with patients who are not religious?
4. How will you interact with our non Jewish patients?
5. What will the hardest part of the job be for you?
6. What will you do for self-care?
7. Tell about your availability for *Shabbat* and *haggim*?
8. How will you contribute to our team inside the hospital?
9. How would you respond if someone says “Only an Orthodox rabbi could be of help to me”?
10. What make you a good fit for us here?

College

Hillel Executive Director

1. Tell us about your Jewish journey and how that has brought you to apply to be the head of our Hillel.
2. What added value do you bring to this position that you are an ordained rabbi?
3. Tell about your experience and your philosophy of fundraising.
4. How would you inspire the apathetic college student?
5. Tell us about your experience and your philosophy of supervision of staff.
6. Tell us what is your greatest achievement in working with college students.
7. What inspires you and how will you inspire others?
8. Tell about a time you had to balance an 'inner crowd' and a new target group?
9. What is your vision for the future of Hillel?
10. What are some Jewish experiences every college-aged Jew should have?

Senior Jewish Educator on Campus

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself and describe your Jewish journey.
2. Why should we engage a rabbi to be our senior Jewish educator?
3. How will you contribute to our team?
4. Talk about an exciting educational program you presented to college age students.
5. How will you motivate students to engage positively and proactively with Israel?
6. Talk about a time when you were able to make Judaism compelling to someone who doubted it had value.
7. Talk about a great program that did not cost a lot of money.

8. What is your vision of the Hillel of the future?
9. What will the hardest part of the job be for you?
10. Why would be a good fit for us?

Appendix I - Questions for Pulpit Positions

Pulpit first conversation

1. In five minutes or less, please tell us about yourself.
2. What is it about us that resonated with you and prompted you apply for this position?
3. How do you view the status of Conservative Judaism today? What will make the Conservative Movement thrive into the future?
4. Do you have any questions for us?

Pulpit Second Conversation

1. Tell about yourself and why you decided to become a rabbi.
2. Tell about a rabbinic accomplishment you are most proud of.
3. After read our questionnaire, what do you believe should be our priorities in the near future?
4. Describe what it means to be a Conservative Jew.
5. What do you believe to be the rabbi's role in recruiting new members?
6. What does it mean to be a spiritual leader of worship?
7. What values do you believe underpin *tefilot*? Describe a *Shabbat* morning service you would lead based on those values.
8. No one works 24/6. Tell us about your hobbies and other interests. How do they impact your rabbinate?
9. Describe your plan to balance the demands of your extended work day and time for your personal life.
10. Why do you think you would be a good fit for us?

Pulpit Third Conversation

1. How do you understand the pastoral role of the rabbi?
2. Please share with us your philosophy and your experience in fundraising.
3. Take us through the process of a religious change for our congregation.
4. What *Halakhic* changes would you propose for us in the near future?
5. The local Jewish day school is 40 minutes away. We are wondering if this will be an obstacle to taking the rabbinic post in our community?
6. The local super market gets a kosher meat delivery only once a week. Would this be an obstacle to your continued interest in our community?
7. There is no *mikveh* in our community. Would this be an obstacle to you taking a post in our community?

8. Based on what you know of our community, what would prevent you from this taking this post if offered?
9. What rabbinic roles are most important to you and why?
10. Do you have any questions for us?
11. Why do you think you would be the right fit for us?

Woman Rabbi

1. Some of our members believe that there are *halakhic* issues that prevent us from engaging a woman rabbi as our spiritual leader. What would you say to them?
2. What special advantages might there be to our congregation if we engaged a woman rabbi?
3. We are a centrist institution. We have members who are saying if we engage a woman rabbi, we will be seen as liberal. Something we are not. What would you say to them?
4. Can you tell us how you will balance work and family life?
5. What would you say to our people, who are afraid for our congregation's future?
6. We engaged a woman rabbi in the past and it did not work out. Why should we engage another woman rabbi?
7. We already have a female *hazzan* who we like very much. What should we say to the members our congregation who believe one female clergy is enough?
8. We have a 2nd rabbi who is a woman; What would you say to our members who say we need a male role on the *bima*?
9. We have never had female clergy in this congregation. Can you tell us what to expect?
10. Can you tell about your family plans? Do you expect to have more children?

Mature Rabbi

1. What would you say to our member who believe we need a younger rabbi to relate to our younger families?
2. You have more than 25 years of experience, what is the most significant thing you have learned?
3. What do we say to our finance committee who say a younger rabbi is more cost-effective?
4. Do you have any health issues we should know about?
5. You put no dates on your resume, can you tell us how old you are?
6. Do you have up to date technical/computer skills?
7. You have many years of experience and accomplished much. Are you set in your ways?
8. How easy is it for you to learn new skills?
9. What added value do you bring as a mature rabbi?
10. Do you have the energy required to do this demanding job?

Appendix J - Questions Commonly Asked at Interview Week

Dvar Torah

1. Please share with us a Dvar Torah
2. Please share with us a significant piece of Torah that has impacted your professional role as a rabbi?

Assistant Rabbi

1. Please describe an important Rabbinic text you studied while at seminary.
2. What are you passionate about as a rabbi?
3. What parts of the rabbinic role do you feel will be most challenging to you as a new rabbi?
4. Why do you think our synagogue would be a good fit for you?
5. Describe your *Shabbat* observance. What you do and what you do not do?
6. Are there any deal breakers you would not handle in a community? What are they?
7. How would you contribute as a member of our synagogue staff?
8. What do you see as the rabbi's role in education?
9. What do you see as the rabbi's role working with the youth of our community?
10. What will you bring to this rabbinic job that would contribute significantly to our congregation?

Small Congregation

1. Share with us a short Dvar torah.
2. Why did you become a rabbi and what is your mission?
3. What is your ideal job and where do you plan to be in 5-10 years?
4. How would you contribute to our congregation significantly?
5. Describe one or two accomplishments from your resume you are particularly proud of.
6. What has been your most challenging experience as a rabbi to date?
7. How would your current teachers at the seminary describe you?
8. Why would you be a good fit for our small congregation?
9. How might you grow our congregation?

Appendix K - Tips for Skype Interview

Smile and Focus

One of the easiest rules to remember when interacting with anyone is simply to smile. There is nothing more engaging than smiling throughout your call with a friendly expression. Also important is to make direct eye contact. When you scan the room or look away from the camera, you might appear untrustworthy or indifferent. The person with whom you are speaking deserves your full attention so make sure to stay focused and friendly.

Choose your Colors Wisely

Certain colors like many shades of blue - royal, navy, sky blue - look great on video while others like reds and hot colors like magenta can be too bright. Patterns like small dots or stripes can be less attractive than solids so think about a color to wear that is easy on the eye and a pattern that won't be distracting to your viewer.

Hair and Make-Up

The all-new Skype's high-quality video technology means you'll need to take extra care with how you look. You'll want to use some hair product that will keep your hair tamed and you may want to style your hair so it is off your face and won't require constant adjusting. Make-up, too, is important. Remember, higher quality video means much more detail is going to be visible on screen. A few suggestions, if you use make-up, include: high-definition foundation (creating soft-focus effect in any kind of lighting), blue ray high-definition mattifier (refines lines, minimizes pores for a polished look) and blue ray high-definition lip gloss (for a high shine, plumping effect).

Backdrop Check

While you are the focus of the call and the video, remember that there will be background material that the viewer will see. Think about how your webcam is set up and what can be detected behind you. Are you in sitting so that a blank wall is behind you or is there a cluttered book shelf or large painting behind you?

Lighting

Check to be sure you have enough lighting that doesn't create shadows or throw too harsh a look into your screen.

Script

Sometimes it is easier to have a few notes written down about what you'd like to talk about or topics that you want to discuss during your call. It's easy that way to scan your notes without losing direct contact with your caller or having long silences during your interaction. Also, keep an index card or notebook as well as a pen handy so you can jot down thoughts for additional comments you'd like to add during the conversation.

Adopted from various web sites

Appendix L - Elevator Speech

An 'elevator speech' is a term taken from the early days of the internet explosion when web development companies needed venture capital. The companies that won the cash were often those with a simple pitch. The best were those that could explain a business proposition to the occupants of an elevator in the time it took them to ride to their floor. In other words, an elevator speech that worked was able to describe and sell an idea in 30 seconds or less. Today, an 'elevator speech can be any kind of short speech that sells an idea, promotes your business or markets you as an individual.

An elevator speech is as essential as a business card. You need to be able to say who you are, what you do, what you are interested in doing and how you can be a resource to your listeners. If you don't have an elevator speech, people won't know what you really do.

Know Your Audience - Before writing any part of your elevator speech, research your audience. You will be much more likely to succeed if your elevator speech is clearly targeted at the individuals you are speaking to. Having a 'generic' elevator pitch is almost certain to fail.

Know Yourself - Before you can convince anyone of your proposition you need to know exactly what it is. You need to define precisely what you are offering, what problems you can solve and what benefits you bring to a prospective contact or employers

Answer the following questions:

1. What are your key strengths?
2. What adjectives come to mind to describe you?
3. What is it you are trying to 'sell' or let others know about you?
4. Why are you interested in the company or industry the person represents?

Outline Your Talk - start an outline of your material using bullet points. You don't need to add any detail at this stage; simply write a few notes to help remind you of what you really want to say. They don't need to be complete sentences.

You can use the following questions to start your outline:

1. Who am I?
2. What do I offer?
3. What problem is solved?
4. What are the main contributions I can make?
5. What should the listener do as a result of hearing this?

Finalize Your Speech - Now that you have your outline of your material, you can finalize the speech. The key to doing this is to expand on the notes you made by writing out each section in full.

To help you do this, follow these guidelines:

1. Take each note you made and write a sentence about it.
2. Take each of the sentences and connect them together with additional phrases to make them flow.
3. Go through what you have written and change any long words or jargon into everyday language.
4. Go back through the re-written material and cut out unnecessary words.
5. Finalize your speech by making sure it is no more than 90 words long.

Adopted from the Pepperdine University Career Center website

Appendix M – Wall of Wonder

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1990s	2000s
World Events		1967 Six-Day War		1991 Invasion of Iraq	2009 Economic Crisis
National Events		1963 Kennedy Assassinated			2007 Hurricane Katrina 2009 Lehman Bros went Bankrupt
Local Events/State Events			1976 Schechter School Opened		2000 Schechter High Opened 2006 Schechter High closed
Congregation Events	1950 Synagogue Founded 1955 Rabbi Salo elected	1960 Rabbi Felix elected			2000 Building refurbished 2010 Rabbi Felix retired
Personal Events			1972 Dan's Bar Mitzvah	April 10 1996 Gabe's Bar Mitzvah June 1993 Ari and Sandy Married	

Appendix N – Establishing Your Leadership in a New Position

Five steps to establishing your leadership upon entering a new rabbinic position.

1. Getting the job: Your ordination secures your legitimacy as a rabbi and your selection by the search committee and leadership of your congregation or institution secures your job for the agreed upon duration of your first contract. Having chosen you as “Rabbi” the leadership certainly has some imagination of the leadership role they would like to see you assume. But, in the beginning of your leadership, even though there are those who will say, “We are just waiting for you to come and take us to a new level,” it is important to understand that the community or institution is not prepared to cede leadership to a person they do not know and have not learned to trust. It is important for you to accept that the only value of your title and contract is that you have been given the opportunity to begin to establish the conditions necessary for you to, effectively, exercise leadership at a future time. Your legitimacy and job security will be dependent on your building the foundation for your leadership in a sequential manner, by developing and employing your growing leadership through steps 2-5.

2. Earning love and trust: From your first encounter with your new community and every day thereafter, your actions will either earn you love, respect and trust, or diminish from these qualities that are foundational for your leadership and continued place in your new community. The first period of assuming your new position should be devoted primarily to earning love and trust. Examples of actions that will earn you your role as recognized rabbinic leader of your community are warmth in interactions with your constituency, demonstrating your capacity to be a good listener, exercise good judgment, be a competent communicator in sermons, teaching, eulogies, and interpersonal conversations, your kindness, sensitivity, respect for others, forthrightness in expressing opinions, and ability to receive constructive criticism as an act of friendship, rather than an expression of dislike. When your community begins to recognize these qualities among many others that will earn you the love and trust of your constituency, and will raise the value of your ordination and your selection as “Rabbi.”

3. Gaining information and becoming knowledgeable about your new community: First in importance in this step of establishing leadership is your ability to learn the names of your constituency. Knowing names is the first step to building relationships. No one can use the excuse of “I am not good at names.” It is essential to achieve some methodology for learning names, including asking people to repeat their names until you have internalized them. In addition to names, it is essential that you gather information about individuals and their extended families. This information will help you in determining ways to interact and demonstrate your care for the status or well-being of a person and their loved ones. Other information that is essential includes your knowledge of the staff with whom you will work and their perceptions of

the institution you will lead, knowledge of the lay leadership structure, an understanding of the community's past history and existing challenges, and a knowledge of the physical structure and the technological resources of the institution you will serve.

4. Bestowing “blessings,” praise, and constructive criticism to others: As rabbi, you have the opportunity to assume an important place in the lives of your constituency by being aware of special circumstances in their lives. Your prayers as rabbi for well-being, for strength in adversity, safe travel, Mazal Tov for *s'mahot*, etc. all strengthen the bond between you and your constituency and make you an integral part of the lives of your community. Your praise for lay leadership or your staff takes on ever growing meaning as you earn greater love and trust. As you earn this love and trust it will be necessary for you to offer guidance and constructive criticism when necessary to tell leadership and staff that goals and responsibilities are not being met. This will be the time to urge your lay and professional leadership to take your institution to a higher level.

5. “Ultimate” leadership: You will know that you have been successful in earning the love and trust of your community when you are able to call upon your constituency to assume positions of leadership, share their financial resources, become involved in the affairs of your community, and they will say, “Rabbi, I cannot say no to you,” but really mean, „I want to support you and the mission of our community because I share your vision.“ Having worked diligently to establish your leadership, you will not want to miss the opportunity to use your status as leader and exercise your influence in building your community.

by Rabbi William Lebeau