

SENIOR PLACEMENT: A GUIDE FOR GRADUATING RABBIS

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תשרי תשס"ט / October 2008



The International Association of Conservative/Masorti Rabbis, established 1901

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October 2008

Dear Graduating Rabbi,

Every year, one of the most important and rewarding endeavors of the Rabbinical Assembly is the introduction of new members to our work and to our *hevre*. We take this opportunity to offer an initial word of welcome to our organization that comprises over 1600 Conservative Rabbis worldwide, serving in every area of Jewish life. Please feel free to give us a call at any time for help with your search, questions about the Rabbinical Assembly, or any other way that we can assist you in this exciting moment of transition in your career.

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We look forward to welcoming you into membership in the Rabbinical Assembly. You will join over 1600 colleagues serving the Jewish people in twenty-six countries around the world. The Rabbinical Assembly serves its members through many tangible programs and services, including a Placement Service; a Pension Plan; a comprehensive program of Continuing Rabbinic Education; an extensive calendar of conventions and conferences; multiple publications of religious, scholarly and popular texts; and numerous committees that further the work of Conservative/Masorti Rabbis. The Rabbinical Assembly also serves its members through a roster of less visible, but equally vital activities including counseling and support to members on issues arising in their workplaces and in their personal lives; mediation between rabbis and their institutions and between institutions of the Conservative/Masorti Movement; and representation of the Rabbinical Assembly to other Jewish movements, Jewish organizations, and civic and religious organizations outside of the Jewish world. We look forward to formalizing your relationship to our organization, and to taking the contributions you have already begun during your seminary days and before to the next level.

We find that this is a time of great potential for rabbis and one in which the job search self-evaluation process creates opportunities for tremendous growth and a synthesis of the rabbinical school period. We encourage you to make the most of this time and we wish to be of help to you in doing so. The process of rabbinic placement for graduating rabbis gets underway in earnest with the commencement of the second semester of the senior year. There are two overarching reasons why the process begins in the second semester.

The first reason is that the majority of the rabbinic placement season for all rabbis, whether graduating seniors from our seminaries or rabbis in the field is late Winter through Spring. Most Jewish institutions, including all synagogues, seek to engage rabbis during the Winter and Spring. There are some areas of rabbinic work in which initial inquiries should take place in the Fall, those will be highlighted below.

The second reason we encourage you to wait until the second semester before beginning your process in earnest is that the job search process is a full-time endeavor which leaves little time for the completion of course work. Unfortunately, from time to time, seniors who began their search process too early found themselves unable to complete their coursework and therefore ineligible to be ordained in May and to commence the career they endeavored so hard to attain. Efforts spent in the Fall to generate job possibilities are often not a good investment of time as the placement “season” has not yet begun (exceptions, however are highlighted below). The Deans Offices of the Rabbinical Schools are responsible for notifying the Rabbinical Assembly of graduating seniors’ eligibility for placement. Please be in touch with your Dean regularly throughout the first semester to ensure that you are on track to enter the placement process.

In the Placement Office of the Rabbinical Assembly, we have come to associate all rabbinic placement with the process known in the consulting world as “Transition” or “Transition Management.” William Bridges, internationally renowned authority in the area of transition management has written at great length about the difference between the processes of “change” and “transition.” “Change” is the external process that rabbis go through when they move from one job or phase in their careers to the next. Today you are a rabbinical student. At this time next year, you will be an ordained rabbi. Transition is a more subtle, internal process that is less about where you are going and more about how you leave where you are and how you proceed in your journey. All graduating rabbis begin the senior year with a tremendous amount of experience and insight. Ordination is a powerful ritual of marking this transition, but you are already involved in a complex internal process of integrating your experiences and insights so that you will feel ready to embrace your new stage in life and your new role in the community once this ritual is complete. William Bridges refers to this time of transition as the “neutral zone,” a time of both uncertainty and immense potential. We at the Rabbinical Assembly hope that by working together, we can help to make this time of transition a fruitful and exciting one for you.

Beginning in late Fall, seniors will receive the monthly Placement Lists and all relevant questionnaires. The RA monthly placement list includes listings for pulpits, rabbinic educators in the congregational setting, day schools, chaplain posts, and organizational positions. If you have any questions about these materials, please feel free to contact me. Updated placement lists will be sent at least once a month. Any additional information that comes to our attention during the height of placement season will be sent out as a group email to the senior class as soon as it becomes available.

The Rabbinical Assembly holds a Welcome Dinner for all Seniors in the graduating classes of the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Ziegler School of Rabbinic Studies during Interview Week each year. This year, the dinner will be held on Monday, March 2, 2008.

For Graduating Rabbis Seeking Placement in a Congregational Setting

Each year the Rabbinical Assembly sponsors an Interview Week where synagogues and other institutions can meet with graduating rabbis New York. This program has provided a wonderful opportunity for graduating rabbis, congregational representatives, and school and institutional representatives to meet each other in large numbers, without having to travel long distances for each appointment. While we maintain an open invitation for many types of institutions to attend Interview Week, we have always found that it is synagogue representatives who come in large numbers, with some day schools and other institutions attending as well.

Interview Week and the process of synagogue placement that follows is an exciting and involved process in which the Rabbinical Assembly endeavors to create a level playing field so that all stakeholders in the process have equal access to jobs and candidates. Graduating seniors and congregations are required to wait until Interview Week to be in contact with each other in order to create the level playing field.

From time to time, people ask about applying to non-United Synagogue congregations. Please note that all RA members, as well as graduating rabbis, are only eligible to look at congregations that are formally affiliated with the United Synagogue and have listed their position with the Placement Commission. In some exceptional cases, waivers are granted by the Joint Placement Commission for congregations that are outside of the Conservative Movement. Should you have any questions about a particular position, please contact me at the earliest possible moment, before making formal contact with the congregation, and I will be happy to review the issue with you at length.

Beginning in the late Fall, detailed questionnaires from synagogues seeking to engage a rabbi will be distributed as they become available. Graduating seniors will be asked to provide a list of the institutions with which they wish to have an interview, these lists may be updated as additional synagogue opportunities come to light. The Placement Office will schedule all of these meetings and provide seniors with their final schedule in the week before Interview Week. While it would be our preference to provide this schedule earlier, we find that each year there are a flurry of applications by synagogues to participate in the process at the last moment. As it is in the interest of the graduating rabbis to meet with as many institutions as possible, and because we need a full roster of institutions in attendance in order to schedule these meetings, final schedules do not become available until the week prior to Interview Week. Below you will find listed the dates and deadlines for Interview Week 2009.

Relevant Dates for Congregational Placement

Wednesday, January 21, 2009: Deadline for completed Rabbinical Assembly membership applications and electronic resumes

Monday, February 9, 2009: Deadline to submit list of desired interviews for Senior Interview Week. Please note, seniors will be granted all interviews they request, but are required to keep all appointments they make, as congregations decide whether to come to New York and how many people to send based on the number of interviews requested. Graduating rabbis wishing to participate in Interview Week need to clear their calendars for those days, as we regret that the complexity of scheduling makes it impossible to reschedule appointments due to individual conflicts. Seniors are welcome to swap appointment times among themselves in order to resolve scheduling problems, but must notify Rabbi Schonfeld's office no later than three days before the scheduled appointment.

Sunday, March 1, 2009-Thursday, March 5, 2009: Interview Week begins. All Graduating Rabbis participating in Interview Week will receive their meeting schedules during the week prior to Interview Week, see above.

Friday, March 6, 2009, 10 AM EDT: Congregations may begin to offer invitations to Graduating Rabbis for an on-site visit to the congregation.

Monday, April 6, 2009, 4:00 PM EDT: Congregations may begin to offer positions to Graduating Rabbis. The choice of Monday afternoon was made based on the feedback of previous classes who preferred time to return home before they started receiving calls. This timing also allows congregations to meet formally and finish their deliberations even in the likely event that a candidate will have been with the congregation over the previous weekend.

For Graduating Rabbis Seeking Placement in the Area of Chaplaincy (Non-Military)

The National Association of Jewish Chaplains (NAJC) is an excellent source of information and support for graduating rabbis interested in pursuing a career as a professional Jewish Chaplain. The mission of the NAJC is to: set certification standards and grant certification to chaplains; promote education of Jewish chaplains; advocate on behalf of Jewish chaplains; serve as a clearinghouse for professional chaplaincy positions; and promote opportunities for mutual support and hevruta among Jewish chaplains. NAJC members span the denominational spectrum and serve in a wide variety of venues including campuses, military venues, prisons and a variety of health care facilities.

NAJC Executive Director, Cecille Asekoff, invites Graduating Rabbis to call her at 973-929-3168 or email her at casekoff@ujcnj.org for guidance and suggestions. NAJC holds one major annual conference per year. This year's conference will take place Sunday, February 1 through Wednesday, February 4, 2009 in Orlando, FL. NAJC helps facilitate professional training in the United States and in Israel. NAJC has a certification handbook. There are various levels of affiliation and membership, including student membership. For information about certification and chaplaincy, contact: Cecille Asekoff, National Association of Jewish Chaplains, 901 Route 10, Whippany, NJ 07981-1156; 973-929-3168; casekoff@ujcnj.org.

For Graduating Rabbis Seeking Placement in the Area of Military Chaplaincy

Rabbi Harold L. Robinson at the Jewish Welfare Board is an excellent source of information. He can be reached at: Jewish Welfare Board/ Jewish Chaplain's Council, 15 East 26th Street, New York, NY 10010-1579; (c) 212-920 7205; hlrobinson@jcca.org.

Graduating rabbis who are considering active duty in the Military Chaplaincy should speak with an active duty chaplain in the branch of service they are considering.

For Graduating Rabbis Seeking a Placement in the Area of Hillel Work

An updated list of current openings is always available on the Hillel website at <http://jobs.hillel.org>. This year, the annual December Staff Conference will take place in Baltimore, MD. In a recent conversation with Scott Brown, Executive Vice President for Human Resources and Avi Friedman, Senior Director for Talent Recruitment, they noted a few important developments taking place in Hillel recruiting at the present time.. First, "Candidates Day" that was traditionally held at the December Conference is being reconceived as a "Career Day" based on Hillel's

experience of December as too early for Hillel Directors to know for certain that they would have positions. Career Day, which will take place on either December 16 or 17 will provide opportunities for those interested in Hillel work to network and to learn more about Hillel “language, culture and trends,” but will not, as currently conceived be as much of a “interview day” as previously held.

A second important trend is the new position recently developed of “Senior Jewish Educator,” which is designed to attract candidates with extensive knowledge and abilities in informal education for the campus cohort and experience in community organizing. The model was tried on five campuses this year and is slotted for five, as yet unnamed campuses for the coming academic year. It was noted that the enthusiasm for this new model is also likely the change the way openings are conceptualized on campuses that are not chosen for a Senior Jewish Educator Position. The staff member in charge of this area is Jennifer Zwilling, Director of the Experiential Educators’ Program. Her email is jzwilling@hillel.org. Graduating Seniors interested in exploring Hillel positions should be in touch with Avi Friedman, Senior Talent Recruiter, afriedman@hillel.org.

For Graduating Rabbis Seeking Placement in the Area of Jewish Education

Most rabbis seeking education positions do so in two areas: Synagogue Education (the titles vary based on the size of the synagogue and the extent of its duties) and Day School Education. The Jewish Educators Assembly and the Education Department of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism offer important resources for rabbis seeking positions in these areas including a Placement Service with which graduating rabbis interested in seeking a position in Jewish education need to register. Copies of the Application for Educators are available on the Jewish Educators Assembly website www.jewisheducators.org (click on Placement) or can be obtained from Edward Edelstein, Executive Director of the Jewish Educators Assembly at placement@jewisheducators.org. We encourage graduating rabbis considering education positions to join the JEA. Information about membership can be found at www.jewisheducators.org.

The upcoming placement season for educators will officially commence on November 13, 2008. During placement season, JEA and the USCJ Education Department distribute an email list of job openings on a weekly basis. Signing up for placement early in season will allow you to get a good overview of what kinds of positions are available. Graduating rabbis looking for positions in synagogue schools should send the application to Edward Edelstein, along with their resume attached, being careful to ensure that the information in those two documents is consistent. JEA and USCJ work hand in hand to serve the placement needs of our schools and synagogues. USCJ works most closely with the schools and search committees themselves, while JEA advises and advocates for the educator.

The Jewish Educators Assembly is the professional association of Jewish educators serving in Conservative institutions, their website is www.jewisheducators.org. Their Executive Director, Edward Edelstein has always been most helpful to our rabbis, his email is Jewisheducators@aol.com, and serves in the role of Placement Advisor as well as Executive Director. He will work with candidates and guide them through every stage of the process including interview skills and contract negotiations.. While a few schools may get an early start, the placement season generally begins in late November and continues through April. There is no registration fee for any part of this process. New rabbis taking synagogue education positions for the first time are encouraged to enroll in the New Directors’ Institute that is run by Susan Wyner (wyner@uscj.org), the North American Synagogue Consultant, at

USCJ in the summer.

Rabbis seeking placement in day schools should also apply through the Jewish Educators Assembly as per the above procedures. Dr. Elaine Cohen at the USCJ Department of Education works most closely with the Schechter Schools and is best able to advise directly on those positions. Placement for rabbis seeking positions in day schools is generally on a calendar similar to that of congregations, but it is wise for students who are considering a day school placement to be proactive and get in touch with Dr. Elaine Cohen, who oversees placement for Schechter schools at United Synagogue, as early as the Fall in order to discuss your interest. Dr. Cohen has written a document entitled: "Seeking a Leadership Position in a Schechter School" which can be obtained by requesting a copy by email. Dr. Cohen's email is: cohen@uscj.org. A position for a rabbi in a Schechter school may be called Campus Rabbi, Rav Beit HaSefer, Judaic Studies Coordinator or Director. High schools generally look to hire recently ordained rabbis as teachers. The job descriptions will vary from school to school. Samples are available on the website www.ssdsa.org. The SREL Fellowship for Rabbis seeking positions in Solomon Schechter Day Schools is offered once a year and provides subsidy to the SSDS engaging the recipient in order to provide a more generous rabbinic salary. The "residency school" must also meet an extensive roster of requirements in order to provide an appropriate experience in which the Fellow can grow and develop. Fellows are required to make a three year commitment to serving in a Solomon Schechter Day School subsequent to completing the Residency period which lasts up to three years. The SREL committee will be holding their interviews at Interview Week. You will be able to schedule your interview as part of the Interview Week process. If you are interested in applying for a SREL fellowship, you should be in touch with Dr. Cohen directly. The deadline for applications is January 16, 2008.

Education positions in Community Day Schools are not listed by the Jewish Educators Assembly, but can be found on the website: www.jewishjobs.com or www.ravsak.org.

For Graduating Rabbis Seeking Placement in the Area of Jewish Organizational Life

Graduating rabbis seeking positions in Jewish organizations must be multi-faceted in their approach to the job search. For those who have done an internship or worked on a project in a Federation or organization, beginning the search process can be somewhat easier. Even without this previous experience, it is worthwhile to begin thinking about how one's previous experience could be useful to an organization in concrete ways. It is worthwhile to contact people who work in Jewish organizations of interest to you and request an "informational" or "exploratory" interview, that is, a chance to learn about opportunities in the field without actually interviewing for a specific position. It is good to remember that everyone's time is at a great premium and the granting of an informational interview is a generous act on the part of the professional. Being on time, prepared with relevant questions, and sending an appropriate note of thanks go a long way to leaving a positive impression on that individual whose network of contacts could ultimately help you find the type of position you seek.

Every year, several organizational positions are listed on the RA monthly Placement Lists. Another good source of information is the web site www.jewishjobs.com. While the general season for hiring in the Jewish world as a whole is late winter and spring in preparation for the coming fall, the organizational world is varied and functions on many calendars. Students thinking about organizational work should reserve the bulk of their energies for the Winter and Spring when the job season is in full swing, but utilize the Fall for some targeted informational interviews to help evaluate the opportunities in the field and develop targeted strategies.

In Summary

The Rabbinical Assembly is eager and able to help new rabbis begin their careers in a positive and dynamic way. We are excited about your ordination, and about getting to know each one of you as colleagues. Your talent and your commitment to Jewish life are invaluable resources for the Jewish future. We look forward to working with you, learning with you, and building Jewish community with you for many years to come. Please do not hesitate to call on anyone in our office if we can be of help to you.

Sincerely yours,

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